1. Night and Day as an "Absolute Difference"

The present paper addresses one of the greatest and most essential of all differences: that between night and day. In making this statement, I am not seeking to attribute greater importance to my subject or even to my paper in itself than is warranted. But I do wish to highlight the often neglected fact that the difference between night and day was and is for many if not all human beings – anytime and anywhere, even after the invention of electricity – one of the most crucial kinds of difference they experience and which structures their lives. In order to give some additional weight to this claim, it must suffice to begin with to remind you that, according to Hegel, the night comes first and is the absolute. Light, he argues, is younger than the night, and when it eventually comes forth from the night, this event produces an "absolute difference".

I can do no more than to indicate themes and pathways in the anthropology of the night, and, then only by way of special consideration of, and emphasis on, the conference theme. In a nutshell, my question is: What can we learn about the making and unmaking of difference, if we examine this problem from the perspective of an anthropology of the night?

2. The "Real Night"

Before I enter into the realms of "culture" and "society" – that is, before I concern myself directly with socio-cultural encounters with and dimensions of the night – I would like to remain with the topic of what one might call the "real night" or the "natural night" for a little while longer. At first sight, the eternal shift from night to day and from day to night has nothing to do with human agency or social construction; it is nothing but the result of the fact...
that our planet "Earth" rotates regularly around a shining star called the "Sun," and also around itself. It is only because of this planetary coincidence that the night exists at all. Not all "real nights" are the same. Generally, people almost everywhere distinguish between "light" and "dark" nights or "thick nights," as the Maori would say (see Reimbold 1970: 20), and star-lit nights. This difference and others result mainly from the varying monthly phases of the moon and from the yearly course of the sun, as well as from the weather and from where in the world one experiences night-time. The movements of the sun and its planet earth also lead to some "special real nights," which basically amount to six and which have to be distinguished from "ordinary real nights." To start with the first two, there are full moon and new moon nights. Then there are the longest and the shortest nights of the year, known to us as midwinter and midsummer night. And we have the nights which are close to the equinoxes ("Tag- und Nachtgleiche") in spring and winter. These latter four kinds of the night also mark significant temporal changes in the solar year and are more often than not linked to changes in the natural seasons of plant and animal life. Then there are those "special real nights" which are singled out to fill the time gap between the solar and the lunar year. In our time-reckoning these are those twelve nights which are celebrated between "Christmas Eve" and "Epiphany," the famous "twelfth night.\textsuperscript{3}3. Furthermore, there are three different natural structural units in the night as such, namely dusk, the "deepest night," and dawn, though one must acknowledge that in tropical and sub-tropical countries dusk and dawn may be very short, and that the "deepest night" is not necessarily everywhere considered to come at 12 o’clock or midnight.

3. The "Other Night"

3.1 The Night as a Socio-Cultural Matter

So far I have tried to speak of the "real night" only. In other words, I have retained my description of the natural, astrologically explainable planetary difference between day and night separate from what human beings have made out of it. But elements of society and culture, or human evaluations of and dealings with the night, invariably creep in as soon as we start digging more deeply into the matter. It is therefore time to look more closely at what could be called, with Blanchot (1955), the "other night.\textsuperscript{4}4 At issue, then, in what follows are socio-cultural constructions, religious evaluations, philosophical conceptualisations, mytho-poetical speculations, literary expressions, ritual representations, popular celebrations, scientific explanations and artistic representations of the night, and, last but not least, behavioural patterns as well as the individual and collective interactions of human beings in
and through the night. I might have started right here, because examining the socio-cultural
dimensions of things is the proper business of an anthropologist. But there are various reasons
for not simply ignoring or forgetting the material and factual basis of what it is that is actually
being encountered, dealt with and eventually transformed by humans. First of all, it might be
appropriate in these times of theories celebrating human agency and social construction to
remind ourselves that there are certain things and phenomena which are pure and simple
essences, not just inventions, imaginations and constructions. Secondly, it is only through an
understanding of the "real night" that we can try to understand the socio-culturally embedded
and constructed "other night," or, more precisely: it is only by acknowledging the interplay
and tension between "real" and "other nights," and the transformation of the former into the
latter, that an anthropological understanding of "other nights" can be approached.

3.2 Human Evaluations of the Night
If one examines cross-culturally the various human evaluations and representations of the
night, generally it appears to have a rather "bad press." Wherever and whenever one
investigates the matter, it invariably appears that not only the night, but also many of those
traits and elements which are intimately associated with the night, appear quasi-naturally as
negative, while components of the day are usually seen in a rather positive "light." Associated
with the oppositional pair of night and day, there are, more often than not, the following kinds
of dualisms:

- darkness versus light
- cold versus warmth
- chaos versus cosmic order
- the unpredictable versus the foreseeable
- the obscure versus the manageable
- the hidden versus the transparent
- evil forces versus good ones
- nightmares and fear in sleep versus reason and optimism in waking
- deception and illusion versus truth and wisdom
- danger versus safety
- nature versus culture
- pollution versus purity
- death versus life, and so on.5
These differentiations between and, more importantly, these differential evaluations of two sides – one nocturnal, the other diurnal in character – are based to a certain degree on natural or factual characteristics of the night; for even the most die-hard constructionist must admit that at night we see less and that it generally tends to become colder when the sun has gone down. But there is no immediate and apparent reason why the night should be associated with evil or death. Even the fact that it grows colder after sunset might only be viewed negatively by inhabitants of the northern hemisphere. It would then be necessary to look at human evaluations of the night in a much more exhaustive, penetrating and comparative way.

Though such an enterprise is, of course, far beyond the scope of this paper, some examples may help nevertheless to illustrate the complex nature of the dualism of night and day being discussed here. Let us start by looking at the Judeo-Christian world view concerning the night. Take the very first lines of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good, and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day" (Genesis 1, 1-5). In this view, quite similar to that put forward by Hegel, the inception of being and becoming – in short, God’s creation and the existence of mankind – started with the making of light. While night was ‘just there’, light is a divine creation. It is no wonder, then, that given such an aetiology of the world, in Christian belief and practice the night is associated with evil forces and unholy, or at least unethical and amoral actions. It is the time when thieves, werewolves, devils, witches, goblins, sorcerers, demons, the undead and other "creatures of the night," whether real or imagined, start their uncontrollable and life-threatening activities.

However, the case is not as clear cut as it seems at first glance. In the biblical view referred to above the night is not completely erased by the Christian demiurge, but remains in existence, if only during half of the ‘day’. These two halves together are called "one day," not "one night." Hence, night is still there, but reduced to a half and subsumed under the day. Night is, in Dumont’s terms (1978), "encompassed" by the day, just as, again according to the biblical world view, woman is encompassed by man. Darkness and light, night and day, are thus not only seen as two diametrically opposed and hostile sides. Rather, night and day are also (and ultimately) perceived as standing in a complementary relationship to one another; representing two unequal, but also two necessary, interconnected and interdependent partners, which cannot do without each other. Despite all the differences and even antagonism which
the relationship between day and night and the numerous associated relationships exhibit, in the Christian world view (and in most other religions of the world), then, there is a "hierarchical solidarity" between the two. In this interconnectedness the day represents the superordinate norm, the night being the (albeit more fascinating) denial, reversal and sometimes transgression of this norm. And before we attribute too much dominance to the day, we must not forget that, even in the rather "night-hostile" Christian view of things, the night was there before the day, and in a way light was born out of the womb of darkness (just as, one might add, in this view man is born out of the womb of woman).

3.3 Positive Aspects of the "Other Night"

All this means that we cannot look at the night without looking at the day, and vice versa. Seen in the light (or darkness?) of the idea of the night as the "mother of all things," it is hardly surprising that the night in human imagination is seldom just negative. In the representations and evaluations of the night of many cultures, we can very often (if not always) also find elements, traits, activities and agents in and of the night which have positive connotations and are believed to have benevolent reverberations in human life.

Let me give some examples. For most human beings before, but generally also after the invention of artificial light, night is the time and space when they do not work, when they are free from the burdens, obligations and constraints of the day. It is the time when the heat of the day cools off and when the rush and noise of diurnal activities calm down; it is the time when the flies stop pestering you, and when the boss, the police, the neighbours, the priests do not see (or see less well) what one is doing. Consequently, night-time can be filled differently than daytime: with leisure activities and pastimes; with narrating stories and breeding fantasies; with privacy or being together just with one’s closest kin; with sleeping and dreaming; with dancing, drinking and merry-making, and, last but not least, with sex, whether marital or "illicit." And not all agents of the night are seen as negative, dangerous, amoral and so on. In Hindu religion, for example, we can find that not only demons, but also certain revered deities of the so-called "great tradition," the goddess Kali perhaps being the prime example, have greater presence and energy (sakti) at night and are more easily accessible then.

In any enumeration of the positive aspects of the night, one should also point out that many religions, no matter how much they dislike the night in principle, have certain nights in the year which are considered holy. Among these nights, one can almost universally find the six "special real nights" pointed out above, i.e. new moon and full moon nights, midsummer and midwinter nights, as well as the nights close to the two equinoxes of the year. In different
socio-cultural and religious settings, each of these nights may be filled with different meanings, mythologies, cults and appreciations, although they have in common the fact that they are special almost anywhere. In Nordic countries, for example, we find that great importance is given to midsummer or Johannis-nights and to midwinter or Yule nights, each with its specific sets of beliefs and practices, such as the killing of a boar at midwinter night or the dancing around a bonfire at "Johannis" night. At the night of the autumn equinox, Jews celebrate the "Feast of Tabernacles" ("Laubhüttenfest"), while the Christians celebrate "Thanksgiving" ("Erntedankfest"). Numerous other examples could be given. Apart from these six nights, there are, more often than not, the fixed nights of New Year's Eve and the night leading to the first of May, which in German is called "Walpurgisnacht" and is associated with the dancing of witches and with all sorts of amoral behaviour (see Dohrn-van Rossum 1998: 169-171). However, although this night is associated with amoral beings, it is not wholly negative, at least not as far as ordinary people are concerned, although church officials may condemn it wholeheartedly. Hence, different people judge differently whether a night is good or bad, evil or benevolent, holy or not.7

One possible yardstick for measuring the condemnation or appreciation of the night which a certain culture or religious system exhibits, or the specific way in which the relationship between day and night is envisaged, is by looking at the number of holy nights which each entails and by looking at how exactly they are celebrated. In Christianity, one can find only two explicitly religious holy nights, at Christmas and at Easter, and both are marked by somewhat subdued spirits. The Christian "Holy Night" is a "Silent Night." Hinduism, by contrast, has an abundance of celebratory nights. There are, to mention only the most important, Shiva Ratri (ratri meaning "night") in February and Nava Ratri (the "nine nights") in honour of Durga in October. Both count as the most important dates in the Hindu religious calendar, including the diurnal festivals; in addition there are numerous other festivals such as the important Diwali, which are not specified explicitly as nights, but are mainly celebrated in the evening and at night. Furthermore, in Hinduism we find numerous regionally or locally specific religiously motivated "night watches," called jagas, during which believers must stay awake until dawn in order to show their great devotion to the gods. And still in Hinduism, full moon and new moon nights have more than just emotional significance, but generally also some kind of religious significance. In particular, full moon and new moon nights that are close to seasonal changes are often a time to celebrate important pan-Indian gods, such as when Hindus honour Krishna in the spring. Again there are many local and regional variations on this, for example, when people in Orissa celebrate Thakurani Yatra during the spring and
earth goddesses in autumn nights, or when some festivals, such as the "Dance of Punishment" (Dando Nato) require that their participants stay awake for thirteen nights in a row unless they want to attract the anger of Kali. And these nights are far from being silent (see Hauser 2005, Henn 2003, Schnepel 2005. For "holy nights" in Islam, Buddhism, Christianity and other religions, see especially Reimbold 1970: 190-191, 204-210).

Hence, almost universally the six "special real nights" plus, more often then not, several further "ordinary real nights," are made into "special," even "holy other nights." Some cultures single out less, others more "real nights" in order to make them into "special other nights;" and while in some cultures these special nights are celebrated in silence and seriously, in others they are full of ribaldry, obscenity and noise.

3.4 **Internal structuring of the night**

So far we have seen that not all nights are bad and that not all creatures typically belonging to this time-space are evil. But we have to go one step further and emphasize that nights are seldom seen as unstructured wholes. Rather, the night is often divided into clearly identifiable units. For example, in medieval European descriptions of the night or of nocturnal happenings, one can often find the standardized pattern of sunset, dusk, appearance of the evening star (Venus), silence, total breakdown of all activities or stillness, the first crow of the cock, dawn and sunrise. The old Roman division of the day and the night into twelve units respectively, each half also having four quarters – a division which stemmed from older Babylonian, Greek and Egyptian astronomical explorations – later entered Christian ways of structuring the night. In popular Christian conceptualisations these four units are evening, midnight, cock-crow and morning, which also figure prominently in the New Testament, especially in descriptions of the night of Christ’s passion. There are ritual expressions of this nocturnal passion in the form of prayers and singing, the so-called vigils or night watches, either on special nights by all members of the Church or "daily" by ascetic monks. Apart from memorizing and re-living Christ’s passion, these night watches are also connected with the desire to praise God incessantly as well as with the belief that the saviour will come at night and that one should be prepared for this. As far as monks are concerned, these vigils were also connected with an ascetic ideal of sleeping less and killing all bodily desires. Since night and sleep are seen as the domains of sin and the devil, one must be watchful and awake. The coming of daylight is eagerly awaited, and when it finally arrives it is greeted with prayers of praise. During some of these temporal units, especially the last hours of the night, at four o’clock or so, the monks’ night is quite distinctly not characterized by the absence of God, but
by the greater possibility to reach out to God, to communicate with him, to gain access to him and obtain a response from him through prayers, contemplation or simply being awake. In other periods, especially "the deepest night," the hour after midnight, that is, the true believer may not just experience nightmares and fears: this is also the time for divine visions and enlightenment (see Dohrn-van Rossum 1998: 171-173; Reimbold 1970: 185-189, 198-203, 210-220; Seitter 1999: 83-99; Verdon 2002).

Another description of how important the culturally specific structuring of the "dark half of the day" is in understanding how human beings encounter the night and its "creatures" can be found in Kapferer’s study of exorcism and healing rituals in South Asia. In the Sri Lankan (Buddhist) context, demons are regarded as lowly, filthy and insatiable in their cravings for food and sex. They may especially announce their presence in unsettling dreams or in the form of dark mysterious figures moving in the stillness of the night. Humans are especially prone to be attacked by them at night, especially if they walk about alone on unfrequented paths. Kapferer describes the various ways in which exorcists attempt to bring back health to the victims of demonic attacks and to restore order in their social environment. If all minor curative measures fail, there is often a final recourse to great, all-night ceremonies.

What is important here is not only that demons are basically creatures of the night who start their attacks at night, or that the cure from demonically caused illness takes place at night. Rather, the issue is "the importance of the performance structure of large ceremonies" (Kapferer 1983: 82) and the fact that "the movement of a patient from a condition of demonic control to a condition freed from the power of the demons is presented and validated in the order of the performance" (ibid.). Some such ceremonies, like that of the "Great Cemetery Demon" called Mahasona, 8 can be described as well-structured transformational journeys, guided by music, dance, drama, ritual and other forms of the aesthetic. During the "evening watch" from 5 pm to 9.30 pm, the Buddha and other major Sinhalese deities are honoured with gifts and prayers. The midnight watch, which starts around ten, reaches its climax around midnight and concludes around 2 am. During this period demons are summoned to the ritual ground and "celebrated" there. This is the time for comical performances and for the splendid enactment of the "Dance and Death of Mahasona." The "morning watch" starts around 3 am. This is again the time for a number of comic episodes and for further dramatic dances with masked representations of minor demons which are performed by the chief exorcist and his aids. The ceremony ends at daybreak with salutations to Buddha and other major Sinhalese deities.
At the end of this sequence, order and health are restored in a tripartite nocturnal passage during which, paradoxically, or so it seems at first, the demons are first "invited," or better lured on to the ritual stage, only to get rid of them afterwards. This dispelling of the demons is made possible, so to say, because their controlled presence was assured first. Having been brought from the wilderness on to the ritual stage, the demonic forces are made visible, approachable and touchable; in this ritual frame and at this special time of the night, they can be controlled, mocked and subordinated to Buddha and the major deities; and from there they can finally be expelled. The night is a structured time in which demons and humans, in different periods of this whole nocturnal time—space, play different roles and relate to each other in different ways.9

3.5 "Hyper Nights" and "Hypo Nights"

It appears from the evidence discussed so far, however scarce and selective it undoubtedly is, that in most religious, philosophical, mythical and literary evaluations of the relationship between night and day, this relationship is conceived as being dualistic and even antagonistic in character. At the same time, however, it is also a relationship that is characterized dialectically by interconnectedness, interdependency, hierarchy and overlapping. Night and day are partners in a relationship of *conjunctio oppositorum*, opposed and yet inextricably and complementarily linked. Similarly, and in accordance with this observation, the night in itself is seldom viewed as only, and completely, bad, dangerous, evil, etc. Rather, it is frequently seen as an ambivalent time–space, and its very own creatures are equally ambiguous in character. Some of them may even be or become fully benevolent beings, if only at certain nights of the year, if only in certain structural units of the night, and if only in the case of some of the actors involved, and when properly treated.

This ambiguity of the night and the oscillating multiplicity of meanings it may carry along with it correlate with the numerous distinct ways in which human beings approach and construct the "other night"10. In this section, I would like to argue that there are two principal sentiments or attitudes concerning the making and unmaking of the night which produce what one could call a) "hyper nights" and b) "hypo nights."11

In the case of "hyper nights," we find that actors are seeking to turn the phenomena, things, beings and actions of the nocturnal *chronotopos* (Bakhtin) into something which is more intensive and vibrant and which represents an alternative or even counterpoint to the day. "Hyper nights" are nights which offer spaces for rebellious and even revolutionary forms of behaviour, spaces in which the normal, diurnal form of life, with all its behavioural patterns,
norms and moral values, is questioned, mocked and even transgressed. "Hyper nights" entail, for examples, witches dancing at Walpurgisnacht or, less dramatically, young Madrilenians dressing up and going to their favourite disco or ancient Greeks sleeping in temples in order to see God. "Hyper nights" are the nights cherished by Kafka as the time of writing and the nights seen by Novalis as the metaphorical abodes in which it is possible to join the beloved and dead ones and to free the soul from its earthly cravings. "Hyper nights" are the nights in which Indian Adivasis become possessed and sacrifice goats to the earth goddesses in order to promote fertility and well-being for human beings, animals and crops. "Hyper nights" are the nights when women of the Chinese diaspora go to their favourite gambling halls, or when people in a north German village stay awake until 3 o’clock in the morning in order to see Muhammad Ali fight Joe Frazier on TV. "Hyper nights" are New Years Eve and all the other special nights mentioned above. They are also the time–spaces of those who need darkness for their special activities: thieves, demons, hunters, warriors, exorcists or healers; they offer the shelter and opportunity to beg, steal, fight and murder, but also to heal and cure. "Hyper nights" are "heterotopias" (in the Foucauldian sense), where fantasies and erotic desires become possible and are realized. "Hyper nights," then, are characterized by the fact that in them, human beings wish to achieve, experience and feel more than is possible during the day and in ordinary nights. "Hyper nights," in a nutshell, are the domains of a different and heightened (nocturnal) way of living.

"Hypo nights," by contrast, are the result of the human desire and emotional need to tame and colonize the night; of the ambition to control and overcome the night’s dangers and evil creatures, or just to cope with its inaptitude and disadvantages. Just like "hyper nights," "hypo nights" may thus contain a great number of different things, from demon-expelling rituals in Indonesia to hiring night watchmen in a medieval town. "Hypo nights" are nights in which people sleep together in one room with age mates behind locked doors. "Hypo nights" are also the results of the everlasting attempts by human beings at all times and everywhere to bring light into the threatening darkness of the night, attempts starting from the early torch to candles and petroleum lamps, from a naked electric bulb in the shabby living room of a South African miner’s household to the present-day glitter of New York’s Time Square. Furthermore, stressed managers taking sleeping pills, people calling the police when the neighbour makes too much noise, old couples staying indoors and watching TV behind closed curtains are all indicative of a desire to establish "hypo nights." "Hypo nights" are the nights when the family members reunite and when, in the marital bed, procreation is attempted. "Hypo nights," in a nutshell, are the results of the human attempt and need to shelter oneself
from the night and its creatures, of the desire to master and even "enlighten" the night and its creatures. When human beings exhibit this second, conservative approach to the night, they seek to make less out of what the night has to offer; they want to minimize, diminish and get rid of its otherness, to make it closer to, even into, the day.

Certainly "hyper nights" and "hypo nights," or rather the emotions, intentions, motivations, attitudes, sentiments and ambitions that lie behind their creation, cannot be separated too strictly from each other; there are no distinct "hypo" and "hyper nights," or even "hypo" or "hyper night cultures." One and the same night may have been designed and experienced by two different actors either as "hyper" or "hypo," such as when a thief finds that the door he so eagerly wants to open has been heavily locked by the household head from the inside. Even when two actors are doing the same thing, their motivations may differ according to our hyper and hypo schemes. Thus one participant in a nocturnal prayer wants to overcome his fear of the night and its forces (hypo), while the other actively seeks a vision of God (hyper). Or one structural unit of the night may be "hypo" while the next is already "hyper" in character. Or a "hyper night" be may safely embedded in and subsumed by a "hypo night," such as when visiting the moon or fighting an enemy only takes place in the visual and virtual reality of the TV room. Or a "hypo stance" may be embedded in a "hyper" one, such as when someone at a wild party spends most of the time in the kitchen with his wife and best friends only, feeling too shy to talk and dance with the others. Or some approaches towards the night are ambiguous and exhibit both "hypo" and "hyper stances." For example, when a philosopher seeks to "enlighten" the world through his ponderings or when a Soviet committee puts the electrification of a remote Siberian village at the top of its agenda, then these actions may be motivated by both a desire to make more out of the night and a wish to control the night and what is going on there. Celebrating the night of the spring equinox or staging a great festive bonfire or firework may be as much an expression of a "hyper-attitude," which seeks to transgress normal behaviour and achieve an exalted time, as they may be an expression of a "hypo-attitude," which aims to dispel the demonic forces of the winter.

3.6 Some Sub-fields in the Anthropology of the Night

So far we have explored only one sub-field in the anthropology of the night, which concerned the philosophical-ontological, aesthetic, artistic and religious dimensions as well as evaluations of the night. These dimensions were inevitably connected with the question, more or less directly linked to all the others, namely how, in a given culture, day and night are seen in their opposition as well as in their dialectical interdependence. This sub-field might be
called "Night and Day" (sub-field no. 1). And of course, in this connection one would have to inquire into all the beings, whether dangerous animals and demons or certain deities, who only appear when darkness falls and are at their most powerful then. This is what one might call the "Creatures of the Night" sub-field (sub-field no. 2).

Another sub-field in the anthropology of the night involves questions such as: How do people actually sleep? Do they all have futon beds with duvées, etc.? When do they go to bed? When do they get up? For how long do they sleep? Are there any moral evaluations connected with sleeping for long or short periods? Do people sleep alone and, if not, who sleeps together? Do only people of one sex and age-group sleep together? Do parents and children sleep separately or jointly? Related to this is the question of noise. Many of us who have done fieldwork in foreign places may have felt that the concept and legal dictum of nightly disturbance does not exist in all cultures, at least not at all times and not as rigidly as, for example, Germans see it.\textsuperscript{15}

What does a "good" night and "sleeping well" mean in a given socio-cultural setting? Is it always the Western ideal of sleeping for eight hours without any interruptions and disturbing dreams? For instance, during my fieldwork in India, I was surprised at the fact that, generally, Indians were able to sleep in situations (for example, next to a loudspeaker blasting out devotional music) in which I myself could not even dream of getting a wink of sleep. Or, if they did not sleep, they did not mind. There thus seem to be different ideas of "being quiet" and what a "good night" and "sleeping well" entail. This sub-field may be called "Good Night! Sleep Well!" (sub-field no. 3).\textsuperscript{16}

Yet another sub-field, integrally linked with the phenomenon of sleeping, might be headed with the words "Sweet Dreams, Bad Dreams" (sub-field no. 4). How and what do people dream? How do they evaluate dreams? How do dreams affect their lives when awake? How, if at all, and to whom are dreams narrated? How are they interpreted and acted upon? This sub-field therefore entails a myriad of questions concerned with the anthropology of dreams, dreaming and dream interpretation, which is, no doubt, one of the most and best studied of all nightly phenomena.\textsuperscript{17}

But at night we do not only (try to) sleep and dream. The night contains a lot of other activities when awake. There are first of all those which one could subsume under the title "On the Night Shift" (sub-field no. 5), concerning people who work at night: taxi-drivers, nurses, night watchmen, policemen, thieves, businessmen, prostitutes, television studio technicians or disc jockeys, that is, people whose activities refer to and take care of all those things that typically relate to and happen in the time–space of the night. But people on the
night shift also include those who do jobs – office-cleaners, maintenance people on the underground or bakers – which get everything ready again for the coming day. This sub-field leads directly to another which is also closely connected with a former one, namely to the "Creatures of the Night" sub-field (no. 2), which embraces all the extra-human agents of the night, the vampires, werewolves, witches, goblins and demons, like the Icelandic *huldufolk* (see Heijnen 2005) who shirk the sunlight and the ever-increasing artificial electric light. Then there are those night-time activities which are leisure activities and are often distinctively meant to be different from what you do during the day. This sub-field, which might be given the title of "Night-clubbing" (sub-field no. 6), includes such varying phenomena as dancing in a disco to Hindu festivals which must last all night without anyone being allowed to fall asleep if the gods are to be satisfied (see, for example Brunt 2003, Erenberg 1994, Tinat 2005).

Another sub-field might be called "Let there be Light" (sub-field no. 7). This refers to all activities that aim at the colonization or domestication of the night, with its creatures and dangers. Among the most important means of trying to reach this aim since the inception of mankind are the steadily improving ways of illuminating the night: open camp-fires, torches, candles, oil and gas lamps, electric lighting. One of the first attempts to illuminate the night on a grander, communal scale happened in Poitiers in 1542. Anyone who wanted to walk through this town at night had by law to carry a lamp and was forbidden to carry a sword. The domestication of the night was therefore achieved by a combination of illumination and disarmament (see Seitter 1999: 88-90). Similar motives of surveillance can be traced in connection with the illumination of Paris in 1662 with gas lamps, followed by Berlin in 1680, London in 1694 and Leipzig in 1701. But nightly illuminations such as bonfires and fireworks were also used, especially in the Baroque period, to celebrate, to create festive environments and to display wealth and splendour. In this connection, therefore, there arise questions such as whether illuminating the night is connected with an intention to police the people or whether it aims to construct a world full of possibilities of forgetting, of joy and transgression. Last but not least, there is the sub-field of nocturnal eroticism," which might be labelled as "Love Nights" (sub-field no. 8). Night is the favourite time–space for sex, as well as for marital procreation. Thus, it is also the time–space for one of the most important domains in which the genders regulate their respective values and interconnectedness. Moreover, the night itself is gendered, being female in most cultures we know of. And the genders act differently at night.
4. Summary and Conclusions

Let me summarize my argument so far and offer some conclusions. During the preceding discussion, I hope it will have become obvious that looking at things from the perspective of an anthropology of the night can throw much new evidence not only on nocturnal phenomena, but also on socio-cultural life during the day and in general. As far as the conference theme of the making and unmaking of differences is concerned, this claim to the great heuristic value of a decidedly nocturnal anthropological focus is even more valid because of the importance of the difference between night and day. In addition, it leads to many subsequent differences, differentiations and transformations, all of which have a considerable impact on human life.

Let us recall what these differences are in detail. To start with, I found it necessary to distinguish between "real nights" and "other nights." These in their turn were both qualified by the adjectives "ordinary" and "special," which led to two further kinds of difference, first that between "ordinary real nights" and "special real nights" (for example, full moon nights), and secondly that between "ordinary other nights" and "special other nights" (for example, the "twelve nights"). One variant of the "special other night" was the "holy night," for example, Shiva Ratri. All these kinds of night may appear in a great variety of guises: we can have cloudy ordinary real nights or some with the sky full of sparkling stars; or we can have silent or noisy holy nights. To complicate the matter even further, we have seen the multiplex, relative and ambiguous ways in which the relationship between night and day and the character of the night in itself can be envisaged. As Alvarez puts it, "night contains whatever you care to put into it, and, because you can't see, or can see very little, it gives your imagination unlimited space to work in" (Alvarez 1995: 35).

Moreover, we have seen that the night is not an unstructured whole, but is made up of different structural units which are filled with various kinds of human imagination, evaluation and action. Especially important here are times of transition, namely dusk and dawn, as well as the "deepest night," – and what humans make of it. As far as human approaches and attitudes towards the night are concerned, I distinguished between two basic attitudes connected with the making (and unmaking) of "other nights," namely one which results in "hypo nights" and a second one which results in "hyper nights." This distinction multiplies the complexity of the present issue in a great number of ways, such as when we find "hypo holy other nights" (e.g., the "silent" Christmas night) contrasted with "hyper holy other nights" (such as Walpurgisnacht), and so on. On top of all this, I found it useful and necessary to distinguish analytically a number of themes and typical activities relevant to an anthropology of the night, from the "metaphorical night," to sleeping and dreaming, to being on the night-
shift, to working, dancing and making love at night. Focusing on these sub-themes allows us in nuce to investigate all the types of cross-cutting and dynamically shifting differences, differentiations and transformations outlined above.

While these distinctions may look somewhat artificial, let me emphasize that in one way or another these differentiations are made (and experienced as real) by the actors themselves, though of course with different terminologies, and seldom with the systematic stringency exhibited here. The various "cultures in the dark" which anthropologists encounter in all regions of the world and which historians can detect down the ages, like their diurnal partners, each have their own concepts of personhood, their own religious systems, their own human and extra-human beings, their own natural habitats, their own philosophies, their own rituals, their own secular activities, their own joys and freedoms, their own fears and burdens, their own hopes and ways of relaxation, their own moral standards, their own heroes, and so on. With regard to the conference theme two basic questions therefore arise. First, in what dimensions and aspects do different "cultures of darkness" differ from each other? This is a cross-cultural question. Secondly, how, in any given socio-cultural setting, do its "diurnal culture" and its "nocturnal culture" differ from each other. In pursuing this second question, it is of course necessary to break it down sociologically even further. In a given socio-cultural setting, for example, do different age groups or the two sexes, or the rich and poor, exhibit different approaches to, different kinds of behaviour in, and different evaluations of, the night? The days of these different actors are of course also different, but these diurnal differences may be different from the nocturnal ones. Does the night belong to young people only, while the day belongs to the adults? Or are there cultures in which, at night, the poor start to dance and be merry, while the rich and good citizens (have to) stay at home and protect their belongings and morality? If so, night-time may provide relief and offer opportunities for reversal; in the long run, this freedom of the nocturnal time–space may even lead to a change in the moral standards and power structures of the day as well.

Or do the distinctions and differences that rule during the day between, let us say, black and white, or polluted and pure castes, become even stronger during the night? Do the poor sleep badly in cramped, overcrowded, sticky rooms? Are oppressed women in rigidly patriarchal systems even more strictly prohibited from leaving the house than during the day, while rich men frequent expensive bars and restaurants or indulge in other costly pleasures or simply sleep in comfortable beds behind well-locked doors? This latter variant, namely that the night reinforces and even multiplies the differences and injustices experienced during the day, seems to have more plausibility than its alternative, namely that the night offers relief and
reversal for the downtrodden. There is one chief reason for this, namely that illumination is costly, especially before electrification. Hence, not going to bed, but reading, celebrating, dancing or gambling instead was and is a form of conspicuous consumption, an ostentatious kind of behaviour with which the have can singularly exhibit – and ferment – their otherness from the have-nots. Finally, in this argument, it is also necessary to add another analytic criterion, namely to consider how the night is celebrated and/or contained in rural areas, and how, by comparison and distinction, city nights are lived.

Last but not least, there is one final kind of difference that I would like to point out, one which refers, at long last, directly to the title of my paper: Who are these "strangers in the night"? The answer is, of course, that they are those who are the others during the day as well, only maximized or minimized in accordance with the "hyper-" or "hypo-movements" which we find otherwise. But this is not the only story. The night may create "other others," that is, others who do not figure in this capacity during the day; or it may make some diurnal others into friends and playmates at night, while some diurnal acquaintances become strangers: "friend by day, enemy by night" (see Keiser 1991).

And finally, "strangers in the night" are not only the others; they are not only nocturnally deflected and fragmented versions of diurnal others, and they are not only other others than the diurnal others. Rather, the other, whom one meets in the dark, this stranger in the night, may also be "another me." It is, so to say, another self which might be quite different from one's diurnal self. Night offers one a space to transcend one's diurnal self and personhood through fantasies, divine visions, dreams, artistic creativity, sexual ecstasy, violence, or simply by ignoring the night. Thus, at night not only are the others othered, but sometimes oneself is othered as well. In making this point, I am not intending to present a merely psychological or socio-psychological argument. Rather, I propose to look at this nocturnal construction of another me quite deliberately from a performative or even theatrical point of view. The night offers a privileged stage, a special frame, as Goffman says (see Goffman 1974), in which it is easier to become another me, in which it becomes possible to other oneself, to create and act out different personae, which cannot be displayed during the day at all, or only with difficulties.

In a nutshell, therefore, and in conclusion, it can be suggested that it is not only the difference between a given group of people during the day and the same group at night, and not only the difference between various "cultures of darkness," but also the difference between (the possibilities of) a diurnal self and a nocturnal self, which needs to be explored more

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thoroughly if we want to understand the issue of the making and unmaking of difference in all its dimensions.


2 Anthropological investigations of the night are not as plentiful as one might expect, considering the enormous significance of the night for human existence. Certainly a lot of information can be gained from studies in which nocturnal phenomena are discussed in connection with other topics, such as club culture in New York, the social history of urban illuminations, exorcism in Sri Lanka, representations of the night in Western art, Durga puja in India, sleep patterns in Japan, political dreaming in the Carolingian empire, and so on. But there have hardly been any attempts more generally, comparatively and cross-culturally, to venture into an "anthropology of the night" per se. Some exceptions are Alvarez 1995, Ben-Ari and Schnepel (eds.) 2005, Bronfen (ed.) 1993, Melbin 1987, Seitter 1999 and Verdon 2002.

3 Depending on the calendar, this number does not always and everywhere need to be twelve, and the "extra nights" are not necessarily located at the end of the year of the Roman calendar. See Reimbold 1970: 174-179.

4 My concept of the "other night," however, is much more basic than Blanchot’s. I simply take it as a convenient term to distinguish the "social night" from the natural, physical or "real night." For a discussion of Blanchot’s concept of the "other night" see Bronfen 1998: 157-8.

5 The first opposition, between darkness and light, should receive special treatment, because it is more essential and dominant than the others and has its own "follow-ups." Darkness is almost always and everywhere made synonymous with the night, light with the day. And then, more often than not, light is considered "better" than darkness, such as when, for example, evil forces are dark forces, or solving an intellectual problem "brings light" to the matter.

6 As far as I am aware, there is only one scholarly study which tackles this task cross-culturally, namely Reimbold 1970.


8 Fully discussed in Kapferer 1983: Chapter 7.

9 Kapferer mentions the important role of the cock as a sacrificial victim and patient-substitute in these ceremonies, though he does not link this symbolic quality of the cock with its being the harbinger of a new day.

10 One could argue that the human creation of "other nights" consists of two kinds of transformation which somehow combine into one. First, there is the transformation of the "real night" into the "other night." Second, there is the transformation of the "other day" into the "other night." Both these transformations combine to create the "other night."

11 Since it should be clear that at issue here are variants of "other nights," I shall drop the word "other" from now on. This terminology is inspired by kinship anthropology and its terms of hypergamy and hypogamy, i.e. "marrying up" and "marrying down."

12 On Kafka’s, Novalis’, Shakespeare’s, Schnitzler’s and other writers’ aesthetic exaltations of the potentials of the night, see especially Bronfen 1998. On "heterotopias," see Foucault 2005. On night as a time for transgression, see Allison, Jun 2003, Nottingham 2003 and Palmer 2002.

13 The aspect of the "colonization" of the night is especially strong in Melbin 1987.

14 All these dimensions of course require independent treatment as well. For a consideration of the religious aspect, see especially Reimbold 1970. In philosophy, the "metaphorical night" is well treated by Seitter 1999: 40-156. For the night in art and literature, see especially Haus der Kunst München (ed.) 1998.

15 As a matter of fact, the concept of "nächtliche Ruhestörung" seems to be an invention of the Swiss. For "Noise as Cultural Struggle," see Roberts 1994.


17 For a comprehensive bibliography on the anthropology of dreams, see Schnepel 2001.

18 For a social history of lighting, see especially Schivelbusch 1983, 1988; see also Garnert 1997, Jakle 2001 and Schmid 1998.

19 For an example of this possibility, see Bastide 1978.

20 Many of the relatively free moral and sexual standards which Western people in particular enjoy today have first been "tested out" and "propagated," so to say, in night life and within the framework of night-time institutions, such as bars, cabarets, etc., or in nocturnal metaphors. See especially Erenberg 1994.

21 Such as when sleeping little (or even not sleeping at all) is taken as a sign of manhood, or is taken as the expression of a strong belief or of being a hard worker.

22 This has also been emphasized, among others, by Handelman 2005.
In this context, it is important to realize that many "special other nights" and even "holy nights" mark times of seasonal and collective transition. The same applies to rites of passage in the life-cycle of the individual, such as the wedding night. Hence, the night is also a privileged time-space for creating more permanent other me-s, not just different me-s oscillating between day and night.

Bibliography


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