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The Moon Among Stars and the Throne in the Forest: Image and Formula in the 'Nibelungenlied' and the 'Rāmāyaṇa'

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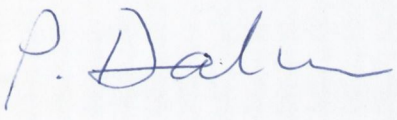

In memory of John Henry, my grandfather, and Enid, my mother, and for my father, Ron, who each showed me that education is a lifelong process.

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Summary

The point of reference in earlier comparative studies of epic featuring either the medieval German *Nibelungenlied* or the ancient Indian *Rāmāyaṇa* as one component of the comparison has been narrative content, narrative technique and/or structure. To my knowledge this is the first study not only to combine the two poems in question but also to make a text-based examination of imagery rather than narratology the basis of a comparative study of epic. The absence of an intertextual link between the two works makes the analogies more remarkable, but the methodology used takes note both of homologies and of disparities, since it is difference as much as similarity which broadens knowledge about the nature of the epic genre.

Having outlined the ongoing debate on oral and written narrative poetry, especially with reference to formulaic expression and the opposing theories of 'composition in performance' and 'verbatim memorisation', this study proceeds to discuss the internal, and, where possible, external evidence indicating the oral composition and aural reception of the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Then follows a general consideration of the poetic image in concept and in practice, drawing in part on prescriptive material found in each tradition and making frequent use of illustrative examples from the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It establishes definitions of the terms which will be used to distinguish between the two types of imagery to be explored in this thesis, namely a) the poetic image as figure of speech and b) the poetic image as symbol.

Building on these definitions, the study proceeds to textual examination of examples of stock simile common to the texts and to suggest possible functions of formulaic imagery in the compositional dynamics of the epics. A comparative analysis of symbolic images of sovereignty follows. The imagery centres around the formulaic diametrically opposite symbols of the City, the centre of socio-political structures, and the mythical Forest (the location of the metaphorical throne of the thesis title) which is at the same time both the negation and the validation of these structures, and thirdly the City which lies within the Forest and contains elements of both City and Forest. This contextual investigation leads to an assessment of the function of these three types of symbols in portraying the kingship of Siegfried and Rāma: what these symbols tell us specifically about the similarities and differences in their nature and rule.

The study enables the drawing of conclusions about the importance of formulaic imagery, both theme-bearing figuration and symbol, in the compositional dynamics of the chosen texts. It raises the possible function of stock simile as an oral narratological device and suggests that it may be an index of epic orality. It also leads to an assessment of the link between ancient world view and epic which adds a specific, text-based dimension to the debate on Indo-European versus universal commonality engendered by the comparison of epic poetry in languages of the Indo-European group. The formulaic imagery common to both texts appears to be in the main of universal or near-universal rather than exclusively Indo-European origin. The study concludes that the *Nibelungenlied* as a composite poem is a much older work than it is widely considered to be, and also that the *Rāmāyaṇa*, though containing much that is specifically Indian, is firmly rooted in the Indo-European epic tradition.

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1

Introduction

We must be willing to use the new tools for investigation of multiforms of themes and patterns, and we must be willing to learn from the experience of other oral traditional poetries. Otherwise "oral" is only an empty label and "traditional" is devoid of sense. Together they form merely a façade behind which scholarship can continue to apply the poetics of written literature. (A. B. Lord).[1]

Lord was a scholar whose work, based on the seminal field research and theories of his teacher Parry, has engendered an extraordinary degree of controversy in the area of traditional epic studies over the past forty years. Unlike the comparatist Dumézil who might with some justification be accused of courting controversy with his imaginative, sometimes perceptive but often extravagant and unsound claims, Lord appears not to have consciously sought the heatedly mixed scholarly reception which greeted his bringing of Parry's theories on oral poetry before a wider international public. There was a period during the early years of the orality-literacy debate when battle-lines were drawn and detractors and defenders of the Oral Poetry Theory hurled learned missiles at each other. It seems to have been a question of being unequivocally either for or against, not of synthesising the most reasoned of Lord's arguments and those of the opposing camp into a more widely applicable critical tool. Perhaps this was inevitable. Now, well after the dust has settled, seems an opportune time to reassess the Theory in the light of both sets of arguments and to reapply a modified version of it.

It is not the aim of this study to defend Lord's interpretation of Parry's theories nor Lord's writings in general, nor even to undertake a reappraisal for its own sake, but rather to examine the use and function of imagery within my chosen epics. However, since during the course of this examination I have become increasingly convinced of the essentially oral traditional nature of both poems I intend to use the theories as a starting point for my discussion. I began with a quotation from Lord, not because it exercised any influence on this study, indeed I discovered it at a late stage in my research, but because it coincidentally encapsulates the methodology that I have used. I believe that he is right in calling for comparative studies of the 'themes and patterns' found in oral traditional narrative works, and I endorse his caveat against appraisal of these works in terms of poetics designed for the

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[1] Albert Bates Lord, 'Homer as an Oral Poet', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 72, 1968, 46.

written rather than the spoken word. A different type of critical apparatus and vocabulary is required for an undertaking of this nature, and I have endeavoured to make use of such. My comparative study of the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* seeks to explore parallel imagistic themes and patterns in terms of a methodology which takes account of the likely oral origin and function of the images. Although it is true to say that much has been written on the *Rāmāyaṇa*, especially in India given the understandable place of this work in the Hindu national consciousness, a great many more *Nibelungenlied* studies have been produced in the German-speaking world and beyond, with the result that almost every conceivable aspect of the poem appears to have been explored. A comparison, therefore, of the German epic with the *Rāmāyaṇa* (with which it has no possible genetic links whatever) allows us to see the *Nibelungenlied* in a fresh light and affords new insights into both. Our perception of one begins to inform our perception of the other.

1. Opening Notes on the Texts

The *Nibelungenlied,* an anonymous early 13th century epic, is based on two legends: the story of Siegfried's life and death and the annihilation of the Burgundians in a foreign city, the disparate narratives linked thematically by Kriemhild's all-consuming agenda to avenge Siegfried's murder. As I shall argue shortly in a discussion of genre, the poem's content is principally heroic-Germanic and its predominantly traditional formulaic language[2] has a distinctly archaic ring in comparison with the high medieval language of the troubadour-inspired courtly love poetry and Arthurian romance. It is generally speculated that, in studied deference to contemporary mores, the last *Nibelungen* poet - probably a writing one[3] - made occasional adaptations to the narrative content of the ancient legends and also included here and there current expressions indicative of a newer culture. Such changes, typical of orally composed and transmitted works, have long been observed in narrative poetry, especially in relation to vocabulary: epic language is a mix of archaisms and newer forms, as noted, for instance, in two very different traditions, Homeric and living Rajasthani epic.[4] A singer inherits a venerated tradition and makes his own cultural-linguistic additions to suit a new audience. Indirect audience influence on the *Nibelungenlied*, as on all epic narrative, is therefore a significant factor.

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[2] As the most cursory consultation of the *Nibelungenlied* concordance of Bäuml and Fallone 1976 will demonstrate. See also Capek's 1965 exploratory study on oral formulism in the *Nibelungenlied* which instances 66 examples of the use of *mære* in four distinctive metric-grammatical patterns.

[3] Since this is by no means proven and is likely to remain so, I myself prefer to use the qualifier 'possibly a writing one'. I shall discuss critical views on oral and written input in my next chapter.

[4] Smith draws attention to expressions in the Rajasthani epic of Pābūjī whose meaning is unknown to performer and audience alike but which continue to be repeated because they are part of the corpus (1999, 283).

An oft-cited key example of narrative adaptation in our text is a much toned-down variant of the Nordic account in the *Thidreks Saga* of Sigurd's deflowering of Brynhild on behalf of Gunnar. Such unchivalric behaviour would have scandalised southern high medieval audiences and so the *Nibelungenlied* has Siegfried subdue Brünhild sufficiently for Gunther to consummate the marriage. Nevertheless it is true to say that regular deletion of older themes and vocabulary and insertion of new in its place does not appear to be a common feature of the work, rather that, generally speaking, contemporary additions were assimilated into the received narrative. On the socio-linguistic level such culturally mismatched terms as 'recke' and 'ritter', 'strît' and 'bûhurt', 'snelle' and 'milte' co-exist happily as do 'bouge' and *Schneiderstrophen,* and references to 'alte mæren', 'messe' and 'minne'. From the experience of those who, like Smith, have observed and recorded a living epic tradition, it seems unlikely that thirteenth-century audiences would have had difficulty in accommodating the mix of old and new. If they had, the work would presumably have fallen into obscurity and would certainly not have been reproduced in the number of manuscripts in which it is found today.[5] Instead it is *Nibelungen* scholarship which tends to find this mix problematic and a rich resource for generic and other speculation. Keeping the poem's oral heritage in view, therefore, helps us understand that there has perhaps been too much scholarly emphasis on underlying tensions seen to be operative in the *Nibelungenlied* between heroic and chivalric cultures and, more recently, between oral and writing cultures. Minor innovation is part of the singer's art.

The main story of the approximately 40,000-line *Rāmāyaṇa,* of which a brief synopsis is appended to my study, is in essence a variation on the giant-killing/dragon-slaying, order-overcoming-chaos narrative theme. Rāma pursues Rāvaṇa, the monstrous abductor of his wife, into the latter's city-kingdom, takes his life in battle as punishment and thereafter lives a virtuous, if not altogether happy, life in the absence, by reluctant banishment, of his beloved Sītā. Traditionally attributed to the poet-seer Vālmīki, the poem is now believed by most scholars to have been composed over an extended period in a series of stages. On linguistic

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[5] We are talking here of the work's popularity in secular circles. There was a degree of interest in heroic poetry taken by some, perhaps maverick, clergy, witness the monastic scribing of the early ninth century vernacular *Hildebrandslied* fragment on the first and last pages of a Christian theological work in Latin and the tradition recorded in the *Nibelungenklage* of Bishop Pilgrim instigating the writing down of the poem he had heard sung (3463-8). However, disapproval was voiced in the main, for example by the twelfth century anonymous clerical author of *Vom Himmlischen Jerusalem*: 'swa man aine guote rede tuot, [... daz ist] dem tumben ummare. /der haizet ime singen von werltlichen dingen /unt von der degenhaite, daz endunchet in arbaite'. (26, 3-5, ed. Maurer). In the mid fourteenth century Konrad von Megenberg, in a sub-title-like preface to his *Deutsche Sphaera*, likewise condemned those who preferred false worldly tales (which, according to Brévart, were stories of giants and heroes) to (religious) truth : 'Ein sträffleiche vorred wider die, /die lieber hören türssenmär dan /die warheit,' (*Die deutsche Sphaera* , ll. 1-3, ed. Francis B. Brévart, Tübingen 1980, annotation on 'türssenmär' p. 136.) The layman was censured for his penchant not only for heroic narrative but also for the new-fangled effete customs imported from Provence: perhaps some of his clerical detractors, therefore, despite their attitude towards heroic poetry, would have approved of Volker's dispatching of the foppish Hun. I think one should conclude that the average high medieval worshipper heeded his priest's (or even bishop's) sermons as little as his present-day counterpart.

grounds Brockington places this period roughly between 500 BCE and 300 CE and detects three compositional stages: firstly court-centred bardic material comprising slightly more than a third of the text of the Critical Edition, then oral expansion by itinerant rhapsodes, comprising roughly the same amount, and finally additions in the form of an extended prologue and epilogue, most likely of priestly origin, constituting the *Bāla* ('Boyhood') and *Uttara* ('Further') *kāṇḍas*,[6] just over a quarter of the text.[7] Such a protracted genesis at the hands of many generations of rhapsodes means that any study of the work must inevitably take account of theories of oral poetry composition and performance, and this I shall do in the following chapter.

Epic not only entertains but, more importantly, has a socio-political function: the legitimating of the status quo. This is clearly seen in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which validates in its early stages the power of the ruling *Ikṣvāku* dynasty, and by extension the whole *kṣatriya* (aristocratic-warrior) class, and in its later stages that of the increasingly influential and puritanical *brahman* (priestly) class. Unlike the consensus reaction of *Nibelungen* scholars to the juxtaposition of old and new, *Rāmāyaṇa* scholarship does not, to my knowledge, find difficulty with the input in the one work of early aristocratic/heroic and later priestly material.[8] Western scholars from Jacobi on have generally followed the accretion theory and their Indian counterparts have either done likewise or, in orthodox Hindu fashion, have viewed the corpus, from the standpoint of its final form, as a composite entity: the story of the earthly life of Viṣṇu in the form of Rāma. Both camps have been sensitive to the ancient (and continuing) Indian respect for the spoken word (*vāc*), which, once uttered, is accommodated without difficulty and assimilated unquestioningly into the tradition. As Brockington points out, the narrative and linguistic development of both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and its sister epic the *Māhabhārata* has been more a process of accretion than replacement (2000a, 209-10). I noted earlier that, with the exception of the Sigurd-Brynhild material, a similar process appears to have taken place in the *Nibelung* tradition.

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[6] Following a number of contemporary *Rāmāyaṇa* scholars I prefer to use the Sanskrit term (the nearest English equivalent to *kāṇḍa* is probably 'part') in preference to 'book' which is often used, since the latter implies written composition and we are dealing here with material of oral origin. I suppose 'canto', which has often been employed, especially by early *Rāmāyaṇa* scholars of the modern period, both Western and Indian, would be a better alternative to 'book', but it is ambiguous and too much associated with secondary epic where it is strictly speaking a misnomer, as if its writing authors were consciously trying to assume the traditional rôle of the oral singer-poet.

[7] Brockington 1985, table on p. 329. He terms *kāṇḍas* 2-6 the 'core' *kāṇḍas*.

[8] Brockington 1998 does not attribute specifically written composition to the brahman accretions of stage three, but estimates written *transmission* as having begun between stages two and three. I think it not inappropriate to describe the Indian relationship between oral and writing cultures in the same terms as for medieval Germany, that is, as a symbiotic one.

Folk epic and the oral tradition

Traditional epic poetry bears two major distinctive features: its heroic[9] narrative content (frequently, though not necessarily, in the form of a protracted battle) and its oral/folk origin. While written literary imitations of the genre found in the European tradition[10] share the first characteristic, the second belongs exclusively to the traditional (or primary) epic. Whatever accretions followed the original composition of the primary epics which we now have in written form - and some of these may typically be redactorial insertions - much material remains that must belong to the earliest tradition. It is with reference to traditional heroic narrative poetry of specifically oral origin that the term 'epic' will be used from this point on.

Measured by these two basic indices of heroic theme and oral pedigree, comparisons of epic poetry the world over should indeed exhibit *ipso facto* substantial parallels, as scholars for the past century at least have been eager to demonstrate. There has been much, sometimes unscholarly, speculation about the possible genetic connection between epics which appear to share common narrative themes or motifs and about their origin in folktale. A study of the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* which set out, in the face of currently available historico-cultural evidence, to argue for a genetic link would almost certainly ignore, or at least discount, textual evidence of the considerable divergences which exist. The Chadwicks 1912, Parry (ed. A. Parry 1971) and Bowra 1952,[11] among others, were convinced of overwhelming similarities in the oral poetic tradition *per se*, taking Homer as the starting and constant reference point of their studies. As we shall see in due course, Homeric epic is not the perfect instance of narrative poetry against which all other forms must inevitably be found wanting or even deviant. Besides common narrative themes, textual evidence of oral composition was also avidly sought. In the 1930s Parry, in his seminal research on oral poetic formulas in Homer, devoted much effort to the search for a paradigm to test a written text or lines within a written text for evidence of oral origin, an approach followed by his pupil Lord 1960 in the light of his experience with the then living performance tradition of Guslar epic poetry in Yugoslavia. This school of oral formulism, now generally considered too extreme, maintained that true oral poetry consists entirely of formulas, or repeated traditional expressions, a mental reserve on which the poet/singer draws in order to compose his narrative extempore, thus rendering each performance he gives of the epic a variant of all the others. However, the Theory did not wholly stand the

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9 A discussion of this term will follow in a sub-section on genre.

10 Secondary epic, which does not concern us here.

11 H. Munro and N.K. Chadwick: *The Heroic Age*, Cambridge. C.M. Bowra: *Heroic Poetry*, London/N. York.

test when applied to a contemporary epic tradition: even Lord observed that an exceptionally gifted Guslar occasionally inserted non-formulaic material.[12]

Much debate followed as to what constituted a formula - exactly how many words or syllables were required to be repeated in order for a certain expression to qualify as a formula, (a full line, a half line or less, or even a single word), whether or not the expression had to occur in the same metrical position and whether verbatim or merely approximate repetition was permitted - and, unsurprisingly, no consensus was reached. There was no universal agreement on the terms 'formular' and 'formulaic', some scholars favouring one or the other and some using them interchangeably. My own feeling is that 'formular' should denote the strict use of verbatim repetitions and 'formulaic' the use of expressions which are strongly resonant of each other but not entirely identical.[13] More recent scholarship has moved away from the ideal of the formula as the sole test of orality in a text, not only identifying additional features which seem to indicate oral provenance but questioning the validity or indeed relevance of using such indices to determine whether a text was composed orally or in writing. After all, it has long been accepted that formular and formulaic patterns are found in early works of known written composition.[14] Watts 1969 quotes Adam Parry 1966 who suggests that the Parry-Lord Theory (even with regard to Homer, which is strongly formular) in fact describes a style rather than a method of composition. 'That the style [of the Homeric epics] is traditional and therefore *oral* (for composition in performance and not dependent on the use of the written word) may be taken as proved: it is not necessarily proved that our *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were composed orally'.[15]

The quest for an infallible test of 'pure' orality as also the arguments for extempore composition in performance[16] and the counter-arguments for memorised verbatim transmission[17] have mostly been abandoned in favour of textual research into the impact of a growing chirographic culture on the prevailing oral one at the time epics were in the process of becoming textualised, that is, fixed in writing. Perhaps this shift is more one of pragmatics, since an infallible test of orality is as elusive as the Philosophers' Stone. For a

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12 Lord's oft-quoted qualification: 'We should not be surprised to find a fair number of nonformulaic expressions in such a talented oral singer as Avdo Međedović', (1960, 131).

13 Following Parry 1930, frequent verbatim repetition is normally termed a 'fixed formula' and many scholars use his term 'formulaic system' to denote the looser type of repeated verbal patterning; for instance, ubiquitous longer single words, which do not fill a half line in *Beowulf*, Watts calls 'parts of formulaic systems', 1969, 84-5.

14 Von Hinüber 1990 instances the common introductory formula *evaṃ mayā śrutam* ['Thus I have heard'] in ancient Indian texts as an unsafe index of orality, (23-4). Cf. Watts' 1969 rhetorical question: 'At what point does a small degree of formular content [as found in *Beowulf*] become conventional diction in a literary composition as opposed to formular phraseology in an oral composition?', ibid. 197.

15 Adam Parry: 'Have we Homer's *Iliad* ? ',*Yale Classical Studies* 20, 1966, 178, n.4, quoted by Watts 1969, 43.

16 See for instance Pandey 1979 and 1982 who reaches much the same conclusions from a study of living Hindi epic as Lord in Yugoslavia.

17 Kiparsky 1976, who, with reference to Homer, points to the apparent capacity of Vedic poets to preserve verbatim over several centuries an entire memorised tradition, is one proponent of this view.

number of reasons that I shall touch on in my next chapter there does not seem to be widespread doubt as to the orality of the earliest sections of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* but some scholars such as Brockington 1998 express reservations as to the two later sections which he believes may be of written composition, although it is possible to argue (as I shall in due course) that these late sections may well still be in the main orally composed. As to the *Nibelungenlied*, I concede that there are convincing arguments against the oral composition of other medieval European works such as *Beowulf* and the *Táin*,[18] but I do not consider the matter by any means settled as far as this epic is concerned. The perception of orality expressed by Bäuml and Bruno 1972[19] in terms of relegation to a proletarian sub-culture by a dominant writing culture which conferred status on the literate is disputed by Curschmann 1977, who speaks of 'an active interdependence of the two cultures' (ibid. 74), a view later echoed by Green 1994. Wenzel 1992 detects in the *Nibelungenlied* evidence of a transformation of the 'reductive' symbolism operating in the Nordic tradition to a more complex, ambiguous symbolism which highlights the tension of the 'Sein und Schein' of human interaction. This shift he attributes to the developing means of written aesthetic expression. On the other hand, Green, using a wealth of non-literary as well as literary sources from 800CE onwards, concludes that despite the growth of writing, orality remained a very powerful force in both socio-cultural and literary terms well into the high medieval period in Germany. Such a context has clear implications for the *Nibelungenlied.*

Long before the orality-literacy debate began Jacobi maintained that oral transmission of the *Rāmāyaṇa* must have persisted alongside recorded versions of the poem and possessed 'wenigstens eine ebenso grosse Autorität [...] wie etwa vorhandene Handschriften', (1893, 8). More recently von Hinüber 1990 stresses the - to the literate mindset - unexpected lateness of the development of writing in ancient India relative to the length and intellectual complexity of the material traditionally transmitted by oral means. Certainly brahmins had an antipathy to writing and did not use it as a medium of instruction. It is my intention to postpone further discussion of the question of orality and the epic until my next chapter, but let us note meanwhile that the *Rāmāyaṇa*, with its later brahman custodians and poet-redactors, must clearly be read with due consideration for the weight of oral tradition operative in ancient India where priestly learning was not equated with the written word as it was in medieval Europe.

Epic and the poetic image

Epic is crafted episodic narrative, the treating of universal themes in a manner calculated to exploit to the full the dramatic potential of each episode. A strong story-line linking these

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18 These works are almost certainly written clerical attempts aimed at a newly Christianised public to accommodate traditional material within a Christian world view.

19 'Weiteres zur mündlichen Überlieferung des Nibelungenliedes', *DVLG* 46 (1972), 479-493. See Curschmann 1977.

episodes is essential to audience entertainment on one level and audience catharsis on another. The 'rattling good yarn' which is epic not only captures and maintains the attention of its listeners - after all, a singer's livelihood depends on this - but also, coincidentally, makes itself sufficiently popular to merit eventual preservation in written form. In this narratological respect the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* are no exception. But these works, like all epics, are also poems, not variants of, or mere inflated re-telling of, folktales or the oral history of particular tribes. These poems have been crafted with considerably sophisticated aesthetic skill, and at the heart of poetry lies the image, either as figure of speech or as motif or symbol. The image is ultimately responsible for effecting the complex, often subliminal, intermeshing of the extra-worldy and the lyrical, the universal and the personal which distinguishes poetic language from other types of discourse.

The concern of my comparative study is principally the common formulaic imagery typical of epic, but it will also take account of the occasional instances of apparently unique imagistic contributions by individual *Nibelungenlied* and *Rāmāyaṇa* poets, within what may well have been a still oral tradition. In other words, I suggest, in so far as it is possible, given the vast distance in time and culture separating the European reader in a post-structuralist age from medieval German and ancient Indian audiences, that the - to the modern sensitivity - developed, aesthetically pleasing image is not necessarily the product of a chirographic culture. However, since oral/epic poetry is, above all, conservative, even seemingly original images must have been produced within the tradition of a system of received values. These images therefore represent a variant way of expressing the shared world view of poet and audience.

What is the enduring appeal of epic poetry? Why should epic poems of remote historical and cultural origin such as the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* still have the power to move the modern reader? The answer must lie partly in their universal thematic content but also in the arresting vitality of much of the imagery, sometimes culturally disconcerting, sometimes apparently strikingly original, more often reassuringly formulaic in that the reader was introduced in childhood through folktales to many of the formulaic patterns shared by epic. Epic imagery, then, engages us through its mix of the unfamiliar and the familiar. In its imagery, perhaps even more than in its narrative content, epic poetry represents the paradox of the mythico-universal, outside time and place, within the historico-particular and the culture-bound. It is for this reason that I have chosen the image, both tropic and symbolic, as the principal means of assessing my texts.

Epic and myth

Epic is not only an amalgam of traditional folktale, quasi historico-dynastical narrative and fictional interpolations but also, and very importantly, a commentary on human existence, often influenced by myth. Many studies therefore take account of the degree to which myth

and epic intermesh, some more successfully than others.[20] Fontenrose 1971, in his successful critique of the the 'myth as ritual' school,[21] makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the origin of the much overworked term 'myth', firstly by listing the hotch-potch of meanings assigned to it by scholars and popular usage: 'we throw traditional tales, magico-religious beliefs, theology, false beliefs, superstitions, ritual formulae, literary images and symbols, and social ideals into a common pot [...]', (ibid., 53). He then narrows permissible scholarly usage of 'myth' to the first definition: 'traditional tales of the deeds of *daimones*: gods, spirits, and all sorts of supernatural or superhuman beings. That is, when we say *myth* we shall mean a *story* of a certain kind', (ibid. 54). It is narrative mode, therefore, as well as subject, which determines what is categorised as myth, regardless of whether the story is held to be true or not. When it is no longer believed, it remains myth, is not subsumed into the category of folktale, (ibid.)

In his exploration of 'the tale', Honti describes epic as both timeless, as myth and legend are, and also exemplary, as legend is, (1945, 138). His observation of a subliminal blurring in traditional narrative of the essence of myth, epic and legend is an important one. Certainly all three function as legitimators of particular, inter-related socio-religious cultures, that is, of composite world views.[22] Thus the mythic as well as the legendary, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the work in question, is part of epic. The *Rāmāyaṇa* clearly has a significant mythico-religious content, especially in its later stages, but this content is not theology or ritual, as Fontenrose points out in his definition of myth. Antoine 1973/4/5, wrongly in my opinion, ascribes overriding importance to the mythico-religious in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, arguing that belief in the hero's divinity was present from the very beginning of the telling of the Rāma story, and that a later secularisation of the work took place under the influence of its compilers, a growing literary elite. But even if one considers only the core *kāṇḍas* two to six, Rāma's victory over Rāvaṇa, who is represented as the embodiment of anarchic *anārya*[23] behaviour, has the same mythical resonance as the monster-slaying theme found in much heroic poetry.

In contrast, the *Nibelungenlied* has a considerably less obvious mythico-religious content. Nevertheless it is there, as in all epic. Wailes (1978, 138-9), among others, identifies the Burgundians' crossing of the Danube as an archetypal motif of travel to the Other World.

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[20] For example Dumézil's massive 1968 study of myth and epic based on an idiosyncratic interpretation of the *Mahābhārata* is not generally highly regarded today.

[21] The 'myth as ritual' school was strongly influenced by James Frazer's opening chapter of *The Golden Bough*, 1890, entitled 'The King of the Woods', based on the tale from classical antiquity of a king who is killed in combat, when he becomes too weak to defend himself, by another man who in turn becomes victim to a newcomer, to which Frazer adduced numerous dubious worldwide variants.

[22] Fontenrose, following Malinowski 1926, is clear that myths are primarily legitimating rather than explanatory: 'a myth narrates the primeval event which set the precedent for an institution.' Most myths do not explain, and those that purport to explain the world are the products of late, intellectually quite advanced cultures, (1971, 57).

[23] Base; not conforming to the stringent Aryan code of socio-religious ethics.

The swollen river, the reluctant ferryman, Hagen's foreknowledge gained from the *merwîp* who live in the Danube all have a mythical resonance that announces that the Burgundians are crossing to their death. The parallels with Charon, the Styx and the underworld of Graeco-Roman myth cannot be missed (though whether these may be ascribed to a common Indo-European source, a vernacular popularisation of Vergil, or to Jungian universal symbolism is uncertain) and the incident is the more remarkable because it forms part of the quasi-historical narrative widely thought to be based on the routing by the Huns of the Middle Rhenish Burgundians under King Gundahar in 436/7 CE.[24] And, of course, we are introduced at an early stage to the magico-supernatural in Hagen's account of Siegfried's acquisition of *Balmung*, *Nibelunghort* and *Tarnkappe* and his killing of the dragon. The three magical items which bestow on him invincibility in battle, fabulous wealth and invisibility appear in the vicinity of a mountain. Tally Lionarons suggests that this *berc* may be one of the 'hollow hills' typical of Germanic lore which can be burial mounds or symbolic entrances to the underworld. Schilbung and Nibelung are perhaps attempting to divide their inheritance outside their father Nibelung's burial mound, and Siegfried's entry into this hill with its treasure could be seen as a rite of passage (1989, 155).

Gillespie's 1987 essay on myth and reality in the *Nibelungenlied* applies the designation 'mythical' to the work not in the restricted sense of tales of the gods but in the wider context of the supernatural, the symbolic and the timeless which together allow the recipient insight into the human condition. He notes the shifting from the time- and place-bound to the mythical and back again, the latter mode being dominant in the first part of the poem, ('Die Hauptereignisse sind also mythologischer Art trotz der Einführung zeitgenössischer Nebenhandlung', ibid., 59), the former operative to a much greater degree in the second part. And yet, he observes, even the strongly mythical dimension of the Danube crossing is shot through with reality, since it takes place near Mehring, the horses swim over (and, I would add, there is a further graphic touch in the poet's information that some are carried downstream by the powerful current but all cross safely) and the priest who survives Hagen's test of the *merwîp*'s prophecy is seen shaking his sodden garments on the home bank. As Gillespie concludes, the *Nibelungenlied* is a narrating of 'Historie', not 'Geschichte', (ibid.)

The transformation over time of remembered historical event and the chief protagonists associated with it into their perceived mythical or mythological counterparts, a process termed secondary mythicisation or mythologisation[25], is now recognised widely as

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[24] Attila (Etzel) was not in fact the Huns' battle leader: responsibility for the massacre of the Burgundian army and much of the civilian population was later attributed to him.

[25] Mythicisation is the term used by Eliade, 1954/1989. I propose to use it when referring to the 'mythic', that is, the supernatural, the symbolic with non-specific religious undertones, the timeless which expresses the universal. 'Mythologisation', derived from 'mythology' (as in 'Nordic' or 'Hindu mythology') is the term I shall use for the process of identification with specific deities. Thus mythicisation is detectable in the *Nibelungenlied* and, generally speaking, in the core *kāṇḍas* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but mythologisation

operative in epic. Eliade's classic definition of the process whereby history takes on a mythical dimension is worth quoting yet again. He cites the Chadwicks' maxim 'Myth is the last - not the first - stage in the development of a hero',[26] and writes:

[...] the historical character of the persons celebrated in epic poetry is not in question. But their historicity does not long resist the corrosive action of mythicisation. The historical event in itself, however important, does not remain in the popular memory, nor does its recollection kindle the poetic imagination save insofar as the particular historical event closely approaches a mythical model. [...] The structures by means of which [the popular memory] functions are different: categories instead of events, archetypes instead of historical personages. The historical personage is assimilated to his mythical model (hero, etc.), while the event is identified with the category of mythical actions (fight with a monster, enemy brothers, etc.). (1954/89, 42-3).

Clearly both our texts exhibit these mythical models and actions. We even have the fight with enemy brothers: Sugrīva's with Vālin and Vibhīṣaṇa's support of Raṁa against Rāvaṇa and also - a variant - Kriemhild's combat by proxy with her siblings. Wailes 1978 argues that the Burgundians' exemplary heroism is transposed to the mythical, as of course is Rāma's, Lakṣmaṇa's and Hanuman's; and it is evident that the battles in Etzelnburg and Laṅkā are elevated to the level of mythical actions.[27]

Eliade and also Smith quote first-hand observed instances of latter-day popular application, within a relatively short time, of mythical models and actions to local persons and events. In the late 1930s the Romanian folklorist Constantin Brailoiu recorded a ballad of tragic love in which a bewitched young man is thrown from a cliff by a jealous mountain fairy shortly before he is due to be married to his fiancée who proceeds to lament her sad fate when shown his corpse. The lament is imbued with mythical allusions. Brailoiu discovered that the ballad was based on a real incident which had taken place less than forty years earlier in the living memory of most of the inhabitants of the village where he recorded it. He learned

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applies to the later *kāṇḍas*, where Rāma is viewed firstly as a son of Viṣṇu, and later becomes explicitly identified with that deity. Hanuman is designated 'son of Vāyu' (a mythologising exception for the core *kāṇḍas*) rather as ancient Greek heroes such as Hercules were considered sons of Zeus, their superlative feats being attributed by posterity to direct descent from a god. Mythologisation has also taken place in the *Volsunga Saga* (c. 1260); here Sigurd is the great-great grandson of Odin and his horse Grani is descended from Odin's steed Sleipnir. The absence of the mythological dimension in the only extant German version of the Nordic source highlights the difference between the traditions.

26 Chadwick, H. Munroe and N.K.: *The Growth of Literature,* Vol. III, 1940, 762.

27 Just now I made the distinction between mythicisation, which is the process at work here, and mythologisation. There has been some rather strange mythologisation read into the Nibelungenlied (and the Rāmāyaṇa as well, as we shall shortly see). Höfler for instance considered Hagen to be the mythical embodiment of evil, the slayer of the Siegfried god-figure, the latter, in Höfler's view a representative of the now largely discredited 'king-must-die' theory of myth as enacted in ritual. (Otto Höfler: 'Siegfried, Arminius und die Symbolik' in Festschrift für Franz Rolf Schröder, Heidelberg, 1959. See Ehrismann 1987, 59). Raglan developed from Frazer's *Golden Bough* a theory of an annual sacrificial ritual 'based on the existence of a king who was killed and replaced annually' (The Origins of Religion, London, 1949), quoted by Fontenrose 1971. Cf. n. 21. See Larson 1974, 1-16, for a brief survey of the different theories of the function of myth.

from the bereaved fiancée the historical fact that the young man had slipped and fallen from a cliff and she had taken part in the communal ritual female funeral lamentation. No fairy and no sole extempore poetic lament. The other villagers maintained that she had nearly lost her reason with grief and therefore could not remember the true story. '[The authentic historical fact] could not satisfy them: the tragic death of a young man on the eve of his marriage was something different from a simple death by accident; it had an occult meaning that could only be revealed by its identification with the category of myth'. (Eliade 1954/ 89, 44-6).

Smith describes a very similar phenomenon encountered in a part of Western India where a folk hero, Ompurī, is celebrated in ballad. In fact this man was a *dacoit* (bandit) who had killed himself in a shoot-out with security forces twenty years earlier. The tale, in the telling, assumed cosmic significance. The hero is represented as being punished for his *adharma*[28] in robbing women. Traditional heroic motifs, widely typical of epic poetry, including our texts, are adopted. On the day of his death his wife has a premonition like Kriemhild's and Tārā's, but in narrative formulaic fashion Ompurī sets out, ignoring his wife's pleas that he stay at home.[29] As experienced by *rākṣasa*[30] and *Nibelung* warriors before a battle which they do not survive, his band is confronted with bad omens on the way. Smith suggests that the hero might well be deified in the future, in the same way as Pābūjī, a fourteenth century figure who was quite possibly in reality a bandit chieftain, is now worshipped as a god in rural Western India, (1980, 54). Such recent evidence from field studies is the final repudiation of the historically opposite critical view that narrative about mythological events and characters gave rise to their secularised counterparts.

By no means all of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is mythic in nature. Jacobi (126ff), with reference to the core *kāṇḍas*, described what he called the first part of the work, the beginning of the 'original' poem, that is, the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa,* as quasi-historical dynastical narrative. On the other hand, the second part, as he termed it, (the *Araṇya, Kiṣkindhā, Sundara* and *Yuddhakāṇḍas*)[31], consists of mythologically-based narrative, which he described as essentially 'phantastischer Stoff'. Certainly the account of the events in Ayodhyā which open the main story have an air of plausible quasi-historical reality which is suspended as soon as Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā enter the magical forest, and this state of suspended reality continues dominant throughout the visit to Kiṣkindhā, Hanuman's survey of Laṅkā, the Battle and the triumphal return to Ayodhyā. The 'fantastic' material in Jacobi's 'second

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28 Ignoring of one's socio-religious duty towards the gods and fellow human beings.

29 Tārā tries in vain to dissuade Vālin from going out to fight Sugrīva, [4.15] but her premonition is based on military intelligence, not doom-laden dreams as Kriemhild's is. It is interesting to note that Sītā, far from exhibiting the typical female premonition before disaster, is the unwitting instigator of events leading to her abduction, firstly in sending Rāma to chase the Golden Deer and then demanding that Lakṣmaṇa, against his better judgement, leave her in search of Rāma. Of course the story dictates her innocent collusion with Mārica and Ravaṇa as Mary Brockington points out (1999, 102), but in any case the disaster which she might have foreseen is not that of epic formula, that is, her husband's death in battle.

30 The most significant ill omens appear as Rāvaṇa rides out to the fray in 6.83.

31 Parts entitled respectively 'The Forest', 'Kiṣkindhā', 'The Beautiful' and 'The Battle'.

part' is charged with a diffuse mythical resonance not based, in my definition, on the strictly mythological pattern which Jacobi associated with some of the protagonists.[32] This material is more likely to have begun its existence not as myth but as secular folk narrative (the hero who loses his bride and has to regain her by a series of trials culminating in a battle with her abductor) which became identified with the near-universal eschatalogical myth of the hero, as embodiment of good, fighting and defeating the embodiment of evil. Turning to *kāṇḍas* one and seven, we are introduced to the principal characters of the story in the *Bālakāṇḍa* in an ambience of, for the most part, suspended reality; on the other hand, after Sītā's successful ordeal by fire with its mythical resonances and the magical aerial return to Ayodhyā we are suddenly back, at the beginning of the *Uttarakāṇḍa*, in the quasi-historical, normality-based narrative mode which continues through Sītā's exile in Vālmīki's *āśram* ('hermitage'), notwithstanding its forest location, until the last few *sargas*[33] which start with Sītā's supernatural disappearance and gradually become increasingly mythopoetic as the god-king Rāma, as he is now perceived,[34] founds cities, then divides and hands over his kingdom in preparation for his bodily return to heaven. Thus we find in the *Rāmāyaṇa* a narrative fusion of the real and the mythical similar to that observed by Gillespie in the *Nibelungenlied.*

Epic and the Feast

Another important characteristic of epic is the symbiotic link between poetry, war and the feast: each inspires and nourishes the others, and it is the poet-reciter's duty to maintain this link.[35] Epic narrative is typically directed towards a climactic series of encounters between single combatants which, for the particular warriors whose story the poet is relating, end either in victory, as in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Iliad* and the *Táin* or in glorious defeat, as in the *Nibelungenlied* and *Beowulf.* The feast is traditionally the setting for the eulogistic narration of fearless warrior conduct which keeps the listening fighting-men in a state of preparedness for war. The connection between feast and heroic poetry is immediately evident in the *Rāmāyaṇa,* where, in the tale within a tale, Rāma's sons Kuśa and Lava sing the epic of Rāma at his great *aśvamedha* (sacrificial horse-feast), and in *Beowulf* which has Hrothgar's

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32 Jacobi suggested divine agricultural implications for Rāma, firstly by association with his consort Sītā, whom he identified with a Vedic goddess of fertility of the same name, and secondly by conflation with Kṛṣṇa's brother Rāma, epithetically named 'plough bearer', a popular god of the field (134). Even more speculatively Jacobi saw Hanuman as a rain-god, the personification of the monsoon, because of his association, on account of his speed of movement, with Vāyu, the wind god (132).

33 'Sections'. I prefer this translation to the usual one of 'chapters', which again carries the unsafe connotation of written composition. Of course the definitive division of the poem into *kāṇḍas* and *sargas* must have taken place once the poem began to be committed to writing, and in this sense these divisions are a construct of literacy.

34 For a detailed study of the gradual metamorphosis of Rāma from idealised kingship to identity with Viṣṇu see Brockington 1985, 317ff.

35 For a consideration of the rôle of the epic poet's predecessor, the ancient Indo-European maker and performer of sacrificial verse to effect success in war, see Watkins 1996, 68-84.

minstrel sing the lay of the disastrous but glory-conferring battles between the Danes and Frisians during the feast to celebrate Beowulf's defeat of Grendel the previous night in that very hall, (*Beo.* 1063 - 1159). The link is less explicit in the *Nibelungenlied,* which has no direct reference to the recounting of glorious battles, nevertheless it is significant that hostilities between the Burgundians and Huns break out during a feast.[36] The great hall is here not the scene of the telling but of the actual performing of deeds of exemplary heroism, as it is for Beowulf's fight with Grendel. The place of feasting and celebration in song of the warrior ethos is now a building disintegrating in flames, the setting of the doomed fight to the death by warriors who have supernatural foreknowledge that none will survive. The subliminal link beween feast, epic and battle-preparedness, crucial to the successful waging of war, is not hard to discern. It must have been clear to the earliest hearers of the tale of the valiant fall of the Burgundians, and the fighting mettle of much later feasting knightly audiences, used to the fabulous world of chivalric encounters in romance, could not have failed to be roused by the *Nibelungenlied* account as the traditional singer-poets once intended.

2. Methodology

Since I have already nailed my colours to the mast by entertaining the notion that not only the ancient Indian *Rāmāyaṇa* but also the medieval *Nibelungenlied* may well be orally composed, I begin by putting forward arguments for the rejecting of certain terms commonly used in discussions of such works.

'Oral' or 'unwritten' literature

These must be self-contradictions, since 'literature' is, by derivation and definition a written construct, a type of aesthetic expression made possible only by the advent of literacy, (Bascom, 1955; Ong, 1985, who calls 'oral literature' a "strictly preposterous term", 11). Bascom, objecting amusingly, but, I believe, unnecessarily, also to 'oral' because of its associations with dentistry (as in 'oral hygiene') terms folktales, riddles and proverbs 'verbal art'. (Interestingly, while declaring himself unhappy with the designation 'literature' in conjunction with 'oral', Bascom seems unaware of an inconsistency in referring to the

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[36] Rather as the visiting Danes engage in battle with their Frisian hosts as recounted in the minstrel's lay cited above. 'Đā wæs heal roden / fēonda fēorum', ('then the hall was made red with the lives [i.e life-blood] of foes'), *Beo.* 1151b - 1152a, though strikingly much more succinct, is strongly reminiscent of similar descriptions in the *Nibelungenlied* account which are pointers to the work's heroic pedigree. Typical parallel *Nibelungenlied* references among many are found at 1932, 3-4 and 2078, 2-3. 'doch beleip ir (the Huns, temporarily driven out of the hall) dar inne fünf hundert oder baz. / đô was daz ingesinde (the Burgundians) von bluote rôt unde naz'. And, graphically, 'daz bluot allent halben durch die löcher vlôs / unt dâ zen ringelsteinen von den tôten man'.

'literary' nature of those same folktales, riddles and proverbs. My objections to this misuse of the adjective will be dealt with below). While conscious that 'verbal', strictly speaking, applies also to the written word, he thinks it justified to "follow common usage", (ibid., 246). I disagree. He concedes in a footnote that Thomas A. Sebeok subsequently suggested the alternative expression 'spoken art'. This appears at first a more precise description, but we are soon faced with a dilemma of musical dimension in that, as Bascom would surely admit, some riddles are traditionally sung, not spoken. Now, primary epic is believed to have been sung or chanted, probably to musical accompaniment. Modern-day performances of Indian and Caucasian folk epic, as also internal references in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and external references roughly contemporaneous with the *Nibelungenlied* would indicate this manner of presentation. 'Spoken art' is not specific enough for epic; 'vocal art', though possibly better in theory, is too closely associated with the *bel canto* style for our purposes; 'chanted' or 'sung art' paradoxically take us further away from a satisfactory alternative to 'oral literature'. My suggested interim alternative 'extra-literate formal (or aesthetic) expression' is closer but wordy.[37] Not sharing Bascom's objections to the term 'oral' I have adapted his term 'verbal art' (which he uses to define works of a less polished aesthetic level) to 'formal oral art' as an alternative. However, since this study mainly concerns primary epic in verse form, straightforward terms such as 'oral poetry' or 'oral narrative poetry' seem to me more practical.

Similarly the adjective 'literary' should strictly only be used of written works. When referring to works of oral provenance, descriptives such as 'aesthetic', 'polished' or 'refined' easily replace it and obviate muddled thinking. 'Semi-literary' is sometimes employed to describe works which appear to exhibit marks of mixed oral and post-oral composition. The term appears to me somewhat condescending, and the commoner designation 'transitional' is perfectly acceptable.

Text

Ong (1985) is unhappy with the application of the term to oral compositions in that 'text' has become historically associated with the written word, even though its derivation might suggest otherwise,[38] and the association remains strong. The term is certainly applied very loosely today in metaphorical concepts such as 'reading a media text', meaning the process of

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[37] Ong (1985) notes the modern tendency of scholars towards circumlocution to avoid the term 'oral literature'. The shift is, however, by no means universal. Up to his death in 1991 Lord (1995) continued to use it, admitting the paradox but arguing '[...] if literature can be defined as "carefully constructed verbal expression", carefully structured oral verbal expression can surely qualify as literature', ibid., 1. (I have already expressed reservations about the designation 'verbal'.) Watkins (1995) also persists in referring to 'oral literature', as in 'six "performances" in the language of oral literature [...] of the same Indo-European text', p.49. I object also to his (and Lord's 1995) use of the word 'text' in conjunction with 'oral' for reasons given below.

[38] From Lat. *texo*, 'weave; compose'.

discovering the hidden purpose of television commercials or computer-generated graphics in print advertising; or the expression 'sub-text', which can sometimes carry the notion of subversiveness, and is used of the spoken word or visual art. I would argue that insisting that a 'text' can only be written is not precious but rather makes for clearer thinking about the nature of written versus oral or visual communication.

Let us consider what this means in relation to epic. The audience encounter which it engenders in its oral phase is both an aural experience, (the listening to words, spoken or sung, probably to musical accompaniment), and a visual one, (the viewing of the singer-reciter's gestures and possibly also dance). The eventual textualisation, that is, the recording in writing, of this story-discourse is a very different process from either that of initial composition, which produces a story in oral form, or initial transmission which disseminates the story by oral means. To begin with, the story-discourse neither comes into being nor exists in textual form but rather in the creative memory bank of the poet-performer. When a writing poet-performer or a scribe initiates the recording of the story-discourse, the process of textualisation begins. Once the story is written down, we have a text, but in its earlier form it is a narrative, or, more precisely, an oral narrative. Perhaps the latter is etymologically speaking a tautology, the Latin *narro* , 'tell' or 'relate', (alternative form *gnarigo* , related to *gnarus* , adj., from *gnosco /nosco* , 'know', cf. Skt. *jñā* , know'),[39] almost certainly having been used first in oral/aural contexts when the transmission of collective wisdom is taking place in story form. Since, however, 'narrative' has long been more commonly used of written accounts it is necessary to add the rider 'oral'. In relation to oral composition and transmission the link between 'knowing' and 'telling' is significant: one tells or passes on what one knows, others learn of it by hearing and thus a particular world view is preserved. The term 'narratology', denoting study of the structure of a story and techniques employed in the telling of it, may clearly be used of both oral and written material, but the method of constructing a narrative of either type will differ, depending on whether the author is a speaking/ singing one or a writing one. (See notes below on plot).

Kahane 1997 makes a very useful comparison of oral and written poetry in terms of their respective acoustic dimension. He points out that although written poetry can be appreciated for the way it sounds when spoken, it requires its visual form - the original text - for full, contemplative communication to take place. On the other hand, oral poetry has no text in this sense, although it can be written down, and therefore does not depend on its written version in order to be understood. It is, he says, the quality of 'sameness' expressed through groups of words which sound the same, although they may not always be identical, which is

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[39] Lewis, C.T. and Short, C.: *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford,1879/1975) 819,1186. It is helpful also to bear in mind with reference to oral/aural contexts two of the secondary meanings of *jñā,* 'learn' and 'remember', as also its meaning in its causative form 'make known, announce', (McDonell, A.A.: *A Practical Sanskrit Dictionary*, London, 1924, 102).

essential for appreciation of the epic world. A written version of these similar groups will highlight minor differences, whereas the original spoken version was acoustically the same.

> Epic words relate to and recall, not so much this or that fixed point elsewhere in a *text*, [as words in written poetry do] rather they activate a whole "theme", a "myth", a "mode" in the tradition. [...] Inasmuch as the poetry of Homer is traditional, and inasmuch as tradition implies "sameness", Homer's poetry is not, nor can it ever be, *textual* . However, this does not mean that it cannot be written down. It can, it has [...], and furthermore [...] the written voice does "sound" the same. (Ibid, 136 and 137).

Although Kahane does not call these groups of words which sound the same 'formulas' or 'formulaic systems' in Parry terminology, it is clear that these are what he has in mind. A written recording of epic enables statistical surveys of formulas and helps establish how the genre is composed, but Kahane shows us that we are missing the full picture if we concentrate on reading epic solely in its visual dimension. We should be reading it for the way it sounds and hence for the world view encapsulated in these like-sounding word clusters.

I shall maintain the distinction between 'text' and 'oral narrative' throughout my study, but when context makes the usage unambiguous 'narrative' alone will be applied both to oral poetry which has since been written down and to poetry transposed directly into written form. 'Text' will never be used of non-written discourse. It is, of course, acceptable, indeed correct, to refer to the works chosen for this study as 'texts', although they show strong oral content, since all that remains of their wholly oral antecedents is their written form. The term 'text', therefore, cannot refer exclusively to works of expressly written provenance.

Plot

This is a term borrowed from a younger genre, drama, (and transferred much later to the novel), which should not strictly be used to denote the course of events recorded in primary epic because it implies a degree of extra-mental organisation, for example a written outline schema, unknown to an oral poet. The term is another construct of post-orality. Because primary epic is additive, that is, generally composed in relatively loose episodic form, albeit with a climactic end in view[40] - typically a battle related in a series of combat situations between named protagonists - additional material can easily be inserted both between and within episodes by generations of singer-poets, an extended process often leading to repetitions and narrative inconsistencies which may only come to light after the story has been written down. Such inconsistencies of the 'Homer nods' variety, typical of oral epic, can be eradicated by a writing author who has no sense of the fixity of a passage once it has been expressed. But for an oral author or transmitter the composition, once it has been

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[40] By describing epic as being constructed in a series of episodes I do not rule out the possibility of the author's/authors' having an overall structure in mind. This must be the case with many works. See my remarks below on long-range parallelism in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and Mary Brockington in M. Brockington and Schreiner 1999, especially p.100.

spoken/performed, becomes part of the tradition, and thus inconsistencies which may even be obvious to reciter and audience alike are repeated in deference to the tradition. This oral fixity is of a kind which, while not permitting subtraction from the corpus, embraces addition in the form of indefinite expansion.

Written narrative, on the other hand, is normally the work of a single author and therefore much more tightly constructed. Within this tighter format the writer can resort to conscious manipulation of structure, can even play chronological games with the reader, who, if lost, can search the text for narratological clues. The oral author has a very different relationship with his audience because they do not share a text. Periodical summaries of the action so far narrated help to keep the aural audience 'on track'. As Ong makes clear, the non-writing author starts telling the story at an arbitrary point in the events, (although of course he will have in mind the climax of the tale towards which the entire narrative is directed). This beginning *in mediis rebus,* (Horace's noted disparaging observation of Homeric epic structure in the light of Aristotle's prescription in *Poetics* 1450b that a [dramatic] plot should have a beginning, a middle and an end), is for the oral poet a necessity, not the consciously deviant device which imitators such as Milton, authors of secondary epic, erroneously attributed to Homer, (Ong, 1985, 142f). While a writing author may choose between a number of narrative strategies, the non-writing author has only the one option, that of *in medias res.*

That said, it can be argued that epic does nevertheless show evidence of long-range parallel structure which does not necessarily point to written accretion but would seem rather to indicate extraordinary powers of mental organisation on the part of oral poets. This is certainly true of the *Rāmāyaṇa*: for instance Söhnen 1979[41] detects and analyses a carefully organised 'ring' structure of speeches in the epic. Ramanujan 1991[42] notes a pattern of repeated incidents and forward and backward references in its sister epic, the *Mahābhārata,* (though the work contains much non-narrative material extraneous to the story-line between these references). Roney 1983 sees a symbolic recurring narrative structure of pairing and opposition in the *Rāmāyaṇa* which he terms binary. His somewhat extravagant simile suggesting that the theme of the repeated pairing and parting of the lovers Rāma and Sītā is first stated in the symbolism of the epic's opening *Krauñca-vadha* episode[43] in the same way that a baroque fugue announces its theme at the beginning of the work must be rejected on linguistic grounds.[44] However his argument is valid in so far as it is possible to trace the initial binary theme of pairing and parting in the older core books of the epic: the departure

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41 R. Söhnen: *Untersuchungen zur Komposition von Reden und Gesprächen im Rāmāyaṇa* (Reinbek, 1979).

42 A.K. Ramanujan: 'Repetition in the *Mahābhārata* ' in: *Essays on the Mahābhārata* ed. Arvind Sharma (Leiden, 1991) 419-443.

43 This brief passage relates the killing by an aboriginal hunter of the male of a pair of mating cranes.

44 See Brockington (1985) who puts forward conclusive linguistic evidence that the first and last kāṇḍas of the *Rāmāyaṇa* are of considerably later origin than the rest of the epic.

of Rāma and Sītā towards the end of the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* into an idyllic shared forest exile, followed by their separation caused by Rāvaṇa's abduction of Sītā in the *Aranyakāṇḍa* and lastly the climactic reversal of this state of love in separation by Rāma's defeat of Rāvaṇa and Sītā's successful undergoing of trial by fire to demonstrate her unblemished chastity as related in the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*. It is then justified to argue that this basic element of narrative structure is imitated by the later authors of the *Bālakāṇḍa* in the *Krauñca-vadha* story-symbolism which can be seen as prefiguring the *Uttarakāṇḍa* account of Sītā's grief in separation when Rāmā banishes her to the forest, in the temporary reconciliation effected by his recalling her to Ayodhyā and the final irreversible parting when Sītā is received by Mother Earth as the ultimate proof of her innocence.

The above represents a rather loose narrative pattern in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. However, *Rām.* 6.111, an example of passages which Brockington (1985, 345, and 1998, 22 and 396) considers inflations attributable to itinerant oral poet-singers known as *kuśīlavas*, is a considerably more remarkable instance of mental organisation of narrative material. This sarga contains an exact summary in chronological reverse of the principal episodes of the narrative from the leaving of Ayodhyā to the battle in Laṅkā. Rāma, Sītā and entourage are returning to Ayodhyā in Rāvaṇa's flying chariot taken as war booty and Rāma points out to Sītā the landmarks below as they pass over them, reminding her and, in effect, the audience of the events which took place in each. The mirror-image account represents a remarkable feat both of mental narratological organisation and of the imagination in a pre-aeronautical age. A textual study, of the type carried out by Söhnen, examining the passages describing both the outward and the summarised homeward journeys would demonstrate whether long-range verbal as well as narrative parallelism is in operation here.

Kiparsky 1976 points not only to long-range structural parallels in Homer but also to striking long-range verbal parallelism, for example in the opening and closing episodes of the *Iliad*, as evidence of the verbatim transmission of a fixed oral narrative. I shall discuss the hotly debated question of memory and improvised performance in the next chapter. Returning to our review of terminological misuse and specifically of the term 'plot', I would argue that to speak of 'story' or 'action' or, better still, 'structure' is preferable when discussing oral narrative.

Character development

Authorially controlled development of character takes place during a play or novel, both of which are written constructs, often, but not exclusively, as a result of the external action, and is therefore a device associated with written composition. Character in literature is portrayed in the round and in depth, and the process is frequently accompanied by internalisation, a device unknown to epic. (Significantly enough, internalisation occurs for example in Hartmann's *Heinrich*, an earlier text than the *Nibelungenlied* but of known written

provenance). Character portrayal in epic is flat and stereotypical, a consequence of epic function to convey a tendential world view that is fixed and conservative: protagonists are exemplars of particular values which either affirm the prevailing social structure or threaten to destroy it. In addition, the very nature of oral composition and transmission militates against carefully controlled systematic character development, there being no written record to consult or amend, hence narratological interpolations can make protagonists appear to act inconsistently. One can assess the different ways in which a particular protagonist is portrayed by generations of poet-singers in the case of an epic such as the *Rāmāyaṇa* which has clearly undergone an extended process of accretion. See Brockington (1985, 323-6) where he reviews the succession of socio-religious attitudes towards Rāma as he is portrayed there. Although Brockington discusses the development of the figure of Rāma during the course of the epic, he is describing changes brought about by different perceptions of Rāma's status, first as idealised king and later as divine king, not developments occurring in the process of carefully constructed character portrayal which often reflects the action. Thus it may be seen that plot and character portrayal are closely-linked features of written composition. It is therefore inappropriate to discuss character development in epic.

Method of analysis

The point of reference in earlier comparative studies of epic featuring either the *Nibelungenlied* or the *Rāmāyaṇa* as one component of the comparison has been narrative content, narrative technique and/or structure.[45] To my knowledge mine is the first work not only to combine the two poems in question[46] but also to make a text-based examination of imagery rather than narratology the basis of a comparative study of epic.[47] Having outlined the ongoing debate on oral and written narrative poetry, especially with reference to formulaic expression and the opposing theories of 'composition in performance' and 'verbatim memorisation', I shall begin with an examination of the internal, and, where

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[45] e.g. *NL*. Zell 1843; de Vries 1965; Fenik 1986; Kumari 1991. *Rām.* Weber 1870; Telang 1873; Vaidya 1906; Lillie 1912; Peter 1934; Molé 1960; Derrett 1992; Alles 1994; Guttal 1994.

[46] Kumari's brief comparison of the *Nibelungenlied* with the Tamil epic *Cilappatikaram* is the nearest from the standpoint of texts chosen, but again her point of reference is narrative, not imagery. Kraatz (1961) uses a broad initial comparison between the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Mahābhārata* as the starting point for her review of German theorising on whether verse or prose was the formal forerunner of epic.

[47] Alles examines the *Iliad* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* in broadly imagistic terms as part of his study, focussing on what he calls the element of 'failed persuasion' in many of the speeches and suggesting that this element constitutes the 'defining narrative' of each epic. He attributes to Homer and Vālmīki the 'imaginative manipulation' of the narrative through the device of divine intervention, a process of 'religious mystification', in order to put an end to the cyclic violence which the speechmakers have failed to avert. This 'mystification', though valid only in the context of the poems, is, according to Alles, effected in order to help the respective audiences confront and avoid the possiblity of societal breakdown. His study, which in my view wrongly asserts unilateral authorial control without consideration of the poems' likely protracted genesis under the custodianship of numerous generations of rhapsodes, is essentially a variation on the comparative theme of narrative content rather than principally a consideration of imagery.

possible, external evidence for assuming the originally oral composition and aural reception of the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Textual references to singing, speaking/reciting and reading will be discussed, as also examples in both poems of persisting oral traits in apparently late material of suspected written origin.

I shall proceed to a general consideration of the poetic image in concept and in practice, drawing in part on prescriptive material found in each tradition and making frequent use of illustrative examples from the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. I shall establish definitions of the terms to be used to distinguish between the two types of imagery to be explored in this thesis, namely a) the poetic image as figure of speech and b) the poetic image as symbol. I shall then examine examples of the former in my chosen texts and suggest possible functions of formulaic imagery in the compositional dynamics of these epics. There will follow a comparative analysis of symbolic images of sovereignty. The imagery centres around the formulaic symbols of the Forest - the location of the metaphorical throne of my thesis title, with its important associated symbols of trees, rivers and islands[48] - and the City.[49] This contextual investigation will lead to an assessment of the function of such symbols in portraying the kingship of Siegfried and Rāma: what these symbols tell us specifically about their nature and rule.

The method of analysis adumbrated above will enable me to draw conclusions about the importance of formulaic imagery, both theme-bearing figuration and symbol, in the compositional dynamics of my chosen texts. It will also lead to an assessment of the link between ancient world view and epic which will add a specific, text-based dimension to the debate on Indo-European versus universal commonality engendered by the study of epic poetry in languages of the Indo-European group.

Available evidence rules out intertextual reference with regard to my chosen texts, yet this very absence of an intertextual link makes the comparison more significant and the deep underlying homologies more remarkable. That said, it is clear that divergences should not be ignored but should be considered an integral part of the comparison. Alles (1994, 4ff) rightly defends J. Smith's assertion with reference to the study of religions that comparison must develop a 'discourse of "difference" '. 'Comparison' says Smith, 'requires the acceptance of difference as the grounds of its being interesting, and a methodological manipulation of that difference to achieve some stated cognitive end.'[50] The second part of Smith's statement is surely suspect in that it seems to promulgate academic tinkering with the evidence. The first part nevertheless puts forward a methodological approach to the study of

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[48] The term 'forest' may, by metaphorical extension, also be used of trackless areas such as wilderness and sea which feature in the two epics.

[49] At a later stage in this section on methodology I shall defend my decision to take imagery as the central comparative referent. See 'Choice of imagery as a means of comparison and the non-linguistic comparative method'.

[50] Jonathan Z. Smith: *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago, 1991)

comparative literature which is as valuable as the search for similarity. However I find too extreme, as does Alles, his rejection of the traditional comparative discourse of similarity and his insistence on difference as the only basis of comparison, ('It is axiomatic that comparison is never a matter of identity').[51] Just because comparatists of the last generation, including Eliade and Dumézil, focussed exclusively on similarity because they were uncomfortable with the notion of difference - certainly Dumézil seemed to regard difference as a threat to his theories[52] - there is no reason to throw out the baby with the bath water and to dismiss the notion of similarity as uninteresting and unworthy of contemporary academic study. Comparison which establishes a parallel dialogue taking account of both similarity *and* difference and which explores the resulting tension is surely the most interesting and balanced methodological option of the three.

Genre

It is necessary at this stage to consider whether the proposed comparison is indeed one of like with like and therefore justified. Are my chosen texts both heroic epics? Although a good deal of generic ambiguity attaches to both, I am convinced after an in-depth investigation of each poem that they are. Space does not permit me to present in full my reasons for this conclusion, but I summarise them here. The *Nibelungenlied,* having first been considered epic, enjoyed a brief period in the 1950s and 60s as a 'romance' and is now once again treated as epic with due consideration for the feudal backdrop against which some of the *âventiuren* are played out.[53] Hatto (1980, 165) is in no doubt that the *Nibelungenlied* is epic, directly descended from the old Germanic alliterative poetic tradition[54] despite its non-alliterative lyric metre, since it is ethos, not form, which characterises genre.

Let us deal first with the question of form. Most Germanists assume that the metre in which the poem is composed is essentially a lyric one modelled either on the Middle Latin four-lined lyric stanza, in particular that of the Goliards, as instanced in *Carmina Burana*, or on an indigenous vernacular four-lined lyric verse form, each genre marked by two rhymed pairs of lines. Hatto ascribes the origin of the rhymed, non-alliterative *Nibelungen* strophe to Middle Latin poetry composed of 'assonating couplets in the manner of the Ambrosian hymns' which ousted the old alliterative heroic metre whose passing he appears to regret. Curtius, tracing the development of rhymed Middle Latin poetry out of the assonated Ambrosian tradition, concludes: 'Im Anfang des 11. Jahrhunderts finden wir die Tendenz, je zwei Reime einer Strophe zu binden. [...] Der Reim, den Römern so fremd wie den

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51 J. Smith, ibid.

52 See n. 72.

53 For a detailed historical survey of the ebb and flow in scholarly attitudes to *Nibelungenlied* genre see Hoffmann 1987.

52 Represented by the OHG *Hildebrandslied* and the OE *Beowulf.*

Germanen, tastend ergriffen, [...] ist die große Neuschöpfung des Mittelalters'.[55] Sperberg-McQueen (1987, 126) rejects the view that the *Nibelungen* strophe is modelled on the Middle Latin goliardic stanza - which, like the former, has a longer fourth line - on the grounds of significant divergences between the two. Rather, he supports Heusler's hypothesis of an indigenous vernacular verse tradition. Heusler himself attributes to Kürenberger the adaptation of the Germanic heroic narrative *Langzeilenpaar* for his rhymed lyric poetry. According to Heusler Kürenberger doubled the traditional paired long line (the *Langzeile* is, he observes, typically found in a syntactically linked pair) and the *Nibelungen* poet used Kürenberger's (by 1200) old-fashioned lyric model rather than the short narrative rhymed couplets of the romance poets, his immediate predecessors.[56]

Whether Kürenberger was indeed the inventor and the *Nibelungen* poet the conscious imitator is doubtful and in any case cannot be proved. Hoffmann 1967 is non-committal: 'Gegen alle [..] Herleitungen der Kürnberger-Nibelungenstrophe lassen sich im einzelnen Einwände erheben, und es erscheint überhaupt zweifelhaft, ob die Nibelungenstrophe auf e i n e Wurzel zurückzuführen ist.' [57] What is certain only is that the Kürenberger and the *Nibelungen* strophes are metrically very closely related. (Hoffmann terms them 'identisch').[58] My own feeling is that Heusler may be partly right in that both strophes could possibly be examples in written form of a popular oral verse tradition transmitted by itinerant minstrels which evolved out of the alliterative heroic long line of 'great hall' bardic origin. Such minstrels would presumably have found the new rhyming convention a powerful mnemonic tool. Of course their wandering lifestyle would have meant inevitable contact with both the Goliards and monastic Ambrosian-style hymn singing, thus it seems most likely that the Kürenberger-*Nibelungen* strophe is a hybrid, as Hoffmann implies. But there is no reason to assume, by association with Kürenberger, that the *Nibelungenlied* was composed in a metre reserved exclusively for lyric, just because no other contemporary example of heroic narrative survives, nor that the metre is unquestionably a written one.

Whatever the verse model, we are faced with one of the *Nibelungenlied* enigmas: a poem of heroic content with clear traces of an archaic legacy couched in high medieval verse form. The content is so frequently at odds with the form, and there is the added anomaly of the apparent fusion of formula and metre, on which more in chapter four. It is interesting to note in passing that the heroic content of the poem we now have - a work which must have been largely based on very much older sources - did not survive in a form of the Germanic *Stabreimvers* rather than in the newer popular rhymed strophic hybrid which I posited

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55 Curtius, Ernst Robert: *Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter*, 11. Auflage, Tübingen/Basel 1993, 393.

56 Heusler, Andreas: *Deutsche Versgeschichte I*, para 351 and *II*, para. 715-737, repr. Berlin 1968.

57 Hoffmann, Werner: *Altdeutsche Metrik*, Stuttgart 1967, 77.

58 Ibid., 75.

earlier, whereas the tradition of alliteration (as a compositional device), to which the new rhymed verse endings were added, persisted in high medieval England.[59] Judging by extant Middle High German texts the metre for some reason died out much earlier in German-speaking areas, although of course in view of the total lack of manuscript evidence between *Hildebrandslied* and *Nibelungenlied* this can only be speculation. However, as Voorwinden points out, the existence of a new rhyming form is already discernible in the Old High German *Muspilli* along with a less strict observation of the traditional rules of alliteration, as in the following example: 'denne uarant engila uper dio marha, / uuechant deota, uuissant ze dinge' (ll.79-80) which comprises rhyme in the first line and alliteration in the second.[60]

Notwithstanding its apparently high medieval form, which in any case is metrically different from that of romance, there are insufficient grounds for regarding the *Nibelungenlied* as belonging thematically to the latter genre. It is more than a love-story of Kriemhild's enduring passion for Siegfried[61], exploring as it does themes of power and the wealth that purchases it, of savage revenge, of warrior *triuwe* and of ineluctable fate, themes typical of epic which play a much lesser role in romance. Epic the poem is considered to be, but, in view of its concessions to contemporary (i.e. high medieval) sensitivities, generally not without qualification. Wailes (1978,125ff), for instance, in a collection by various contributors on the subject of world heroic epic, terms it a 'feudal epic'; Hoffmann (1987, 150), while presenting a well-argued case for treating it as epic rather than romance, finally suggests calling it a 'höfisch-heroisches Epos' or a 'feudalhöfisches Epos' in view of the clear socio-cultural tensions at work in the poem which make it more complex than a straightforward glorification of the heroic ideal. However, it must be said that epic, and by this I mean heroic epic, cannot always be reduced to the simplistic heroic common denominator: for a start, Homer raises (but does not answer) moral questions beyond this mere glorification, particularly in his treatment of Akhilles' anger in his early dealings with his fellow officers and his king and his later excessive pursuit of revenge meted out on Hektor's corpse in response to Patroklus' death.

Hoffmann is right in pointing to the anomaly of the *Nibelungenlied* phenomenon in that, with the exception of *Beowulf*, all extant narrative poems from the Germanic heroic age are lays, not epics, and that German epic emerges belatedly in the high Middle Ages, at a time when romance is the dominant narrative form, (ibid., 130). However, I would argue that the work shares sufficient characteristics known to be typical of heroic epic to make the broad designation 'epic' without any qualification entirely appropriate. Homeric epic it is not, but

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59 Turville-Petre, Thorlac: *The Alliterative Revival,* Cambridge 1977. Gerald Morgan considers alliteration in high medieval English narrative poetry to be a survival, rather than a revival. (Personal communication).

60 Norbert Voorwinden, personal communication.

61 Bert Nagel terms it a 'Kriemhildsroman' in 'Widersprüche im Nibelungenlied', Wege der Forschung 54, 367-431.

then the *Iliad* is not the definitive example of the genre any more than Sanskrit or Caucasian epic is. Passing references by the poet to contemporary high medieval manners and pastimes and to Christian worship - fashions in dress, jousting matches, *minnedienst*, the celebration of mass, for example - do not transform the poem into romance. They merely represent an attempt to adapt the old narrative in superfical aspects only to the interests of a new audience, interests in fact more fully served by the new, eclectic genre of romance, already well established by the time the *Nibelungenlied* was written down; but an audience still able to respond with enthusiasm to the heroic ethos of the old order. As has often been observed, the plethora of manuscripts testifies to the extraordinary popularity of the poem. Indeed, there must have been relatively little in the old Nibelung story that had to be modernised to make it accessible to a high medieval audience. De Boor 1972 highlights the survival of the ancient heroic ethos (which most scholars believe was operative during the period of the *Völkerwanderung)* into the high Middle Ages as evidenced in a similar prizing of weapons in both societies and a common aristocratic ethic. For the ancient warrior and the medieval knight alike 'die kostbare Rüstung, die zuverlässigen Waffen sind sein stolzester Besitz', (ibid. VIII). Medieval audiences could well understand the significance of gifts of weapons and accoutrements presented at various points in the narrative, (ibid. IX). De Boor's summary of a shared aristocratic world view deserves quoting in full.

Starke Brücken schlagen sich von der heroischen Welt zu der hochmittelalterlichen: Tapferkeit, Treue, Ehre, Rache, Freigebigkeit als tragende sittliche Kräfte, die Waffe, der Hort, der Saal, das Fest als Manifestationen adligen Daseins. Die Möglichkeiten waren groß, Gestalten und Taten der alten Sage einem ritterlichen Publikum nahe zu bringen. (Ibid., IX).

In fact the only significant socio-cultural ideal which a medieval audience is likely to have found lacking in the *Nibelungenlied* is that of chivalric temperance, *diu mâze*, a virtue extolled in works of a different genre, especially in romance. The lack only serves to highlight the former poem's intrinsically epic nature. We have in effect returned to Hatto's assertion, that *ethos* is what determines genre, which I cited at the beginning of this discussion. The predominantly heroic, traditional nature of the Siegfried response pattern[62] and the Siegfried narrative in general, the failure of the attempted new-style chivalric diplomacy of the three would-be peacemakers, Rüdiger, Hildebrand and Dietrich, to prevent further violence during the savage hostilities in Etzel's great hall,[63] and Hagen's characteristically Germanic world view ensure that the *Nibelungenlied*, despite its grey generic areas, cannot be considered other than heroic epic.

Schneider and Mohr's early definition of the differences between epic and romance, which has not in my view been surpassed, serves to underscore the distiction between the

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62 See Appendix 2 for a discussion of Siegfried's challenge to Gunther on his arrival in Worms.

63 Dick describes this attempted mediation as the new, i.e. medieval, style of heroism (1989, 92). It is, however, ineffectual against the unrelenting old-style culture of heroism practised by Hagen which gives no quarter and ultimately predominates.

Nibelungenlied and the works of Wolfram, Gottfried, Konrad von Würzburg, Hartmann and others.

So stellt sich doch wieder der alte Begriff des ‚Volksepos' ein: Der höfische Epiker[64] steht seinem Gegenstand überlegen gegenüber, er spielt mit ihm und mit seinem Publikum, er hat seine eigenen Ansichten und seinen eigenen Stil und deckt sein individuelles Werk mit seinem Namen. Der Dichter des Heldenepos bleibt anonym. Er steht mitsamt seinen Hörern in der Märe und versucht, ihre Vorgänge objektiv gemäß ihrer inneren Wahrheit und im Sinne eines Gemeingeistes, der an ihrer Wahrheit teilhat, darzustellen'. (Schneider and Mohr 1925/6, 19)

This definition of epic could equally well be applied to the *Rāmāyaṇa.* Goldman 1996, despite his dissatisfaction with the appraisal of Indian works in terms of the Western literary tradition, and despite his attempts to attune his own perception of such works to a conservative Hindu critical ethos, does not question the designation 'epic' in relation to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, using it interchangeably with 'poem'. Although the work is in fact generally believed to be epic, it is important to determine whether this poem is heroic or, as it appears to some scholars in its later stages of expansion, religious epic.[65] There is little doubt that the earlier *kāṇḍas* 2-6 are heroic. Most scholars outside India view the sixth and by far the longest *kāṇḍa*, the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, the protracted saga of the battle of Laṅkā, as the climactic heart of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, typifying the poem's essentially heroic ethos. Accounts of armed combat couched in similarly hyperbolic descriptive language punctuate *kāṇḍas* 1, 3, 4 and 5 as well.[66] However, even the relatively late *Bālakāṇḍa*, which, together with the probably even later *Uttarakāṇḍa*, is marked by a puritanical priestly socio-religious ethos, nevertheless exhibits well-established heroic themes: the initiation and 'first kill' of the young warrior (Rāma's vanquishing, after Viśvāmitra's tutelage, of the *rākṣasa* disturbers of the sacrifice with named charmed weapons given him by the sage) and the bride-winning contest (Sītā's *svayaṃvara*). Examples of epic parallels are firstly Siegfried's victory over Schilbung, Nibelung and Alberich and his acquisition of *Balmung* and the *Tarnkappe,* and secondly Draupadī's *svayaṃvara* in the *Mahābhārata* in which Arjuna is the successful suitor, Brünhild's *Brautwerbung* and also Penelope's second bride-winning contest when Odysseus regains his wife.

A further indication of the essentially heroic ethos of the work is its verbal cultic aspect, typical of heroic poetry, that is, the agonistic confrontation of champions before combat and the convention of named weapons. Rāma and the *rākṣasa* army exchange the same pattern of ritualistic challenges leading to pre-battle taunts and then expression of intent to kill in 3.19.7-15 not unlike those between Tlepolemus and Sarpedon in the *Iliad* (V. 632-54) and

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64 The use of the term 'Epiker' to denote an exponent of either narrative genre is typical of the time and survives in some contemporary studies. It is one which I find misleading, especially since the designation 'höfisches Epos' has often been used of the *Nibelungenlied.* Schneider and Mohr are referring to the author of romance.

65 For example Brockington 2000a.

66 *Rām.* 5. 40-46 depicts Hanuman's defiant stand at the gate of Laṅkā and his defeat of a succession of aristocratic *rākṣasa* champions in a *kāṇḍa* which the Indian tradition considers to be of central religious significance to the poem.

Hildebrand and Hadubrand in the *Hildebrandslied* (39-40, 55-6).[67] In the *Bālakāṇḍa*, significantly enough in a section, as I have just indicated, of chronologically late brahmanistic origin, Rāma acquires named weapons, similar to Siegfried's Balmung[68], such as Kāpāla, 'Made of Skulls', (1.26.12) and Modaki, 'Sweet Meat', and Sikharī, 'Sweet Curds', (1.26.7), twin maces which, presumably, handle 'sweetly'. As with all such weapons, the riddling nature of the names is intended to reassure the owner and daunt the enemy.

The *Uttarakāṇḍa*, on the other hand, contains no strong epic themes. Rāma is no longer the ideal warrior but the ideal king, eventually the god-king. This is not as problematic as it might seem. A number of scholars have noted the link between the heroic and the religious: literal hero-worship. I have already referred to the evidence from field-studies that cultic hero-worship is still associated in India with the performance of epic narrating the deeds of local god-heroes (Smith 1980, 1989, 1990 and Roghair 1982), and it certainly appears to have been a tradition in ancient India. Thapar 1981 refers to a fifth century BCE passage in Pāṇini, which relates the practice of turning distinguished *kṣatriya* heroes into objects of devotion, (iv.3.99). She also cites the evidence of hero-stones on which the dead warrior is shown deified, his soul having been transported straight to heaven by supernatural female figures depicted in the panel below.[69] 'The ultimate appeal [of a hero's death] transcended heaven and lay in the fact of deification. In a culture where the bestowal of divinity on animate and inanimate entities is common, deification was in itself perhaps not startling [...]' (ibid. 312). Rāma does not die in battle, but his victory over the forces of evil embodied in Rāvaṇa imbues the deed, in Indian tradition, with cosmic significance and renders the hero fit for deification. It is also a socio-culturally saving act, not unlike Siegfried's rescuing Worms from invasion by the Saxons and his defeat of Brünhild (of which more in chapter five) and Akhilles' slaying of Hektor who has been wreaking havoc in the Greek lines. Thomas (1996, 2) cites a parallel: the immortal mystic saviour-figure of King Arthur, portrayed in the twelfth-century chronicle *History of the Kings of Britain* by Geoffrey of Monmouth, waiting in the wings to deliver the oppressed Welsh as he once led his people, the indigenous Celts, to victory over the foreign Saxon aggressor.

It is reasonable, therefore, to conclude that the deification of Rāma does not transform the *Rāmāyaṇa* from a heroic epic into a religious one. The cosmo-sacred, in either its

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67 A comparative textual analysis of these passages appears in Appendix 2.

68 Gillespie 1973 suggests the meaning 'found in a cave', based on MHG *balme*, 'rock, rocky cave' (9,46). Perhaps, though, the reference to rock simply indicates hardness, indestructibility, or, more likely, it may be a punning combination of the two. A parallel example is Roland's sword Durandal/Durendal, which Lejeune 1950 suggests is derived from 'durant dail', *dail* being found in southern dialects and meaning 'scythe'. The first component is a play on 'dur' and 'durer' expressing the temper and strength of the weapon. Sigurd has three swords: Gramr (which may combine the meanings of *gramr* 'furious' and 'warrior'), Riđill (perhaps indicating a slashing movement or a heavy weapon or both, derived, I suggest, from ON riđ, 'swing' or 'weight') and Hrotti (simply 'Sword').

69 Not unlike the female *Valkyries* of Nordic mythology transporting fallen warriors to *Valhalla*..

subliminal[70] or overt forms, or both, is part and parcel of heroic epic. The degree of emphasis on the cosmo-sacred and its explicitness will differ from epic to epic. The fact that the *Rāmāyaṇa* exhibits this element to a far greater degree than the *Nibelungenlied* does not mean that it is not heroic epic. We would do well to apply Hoffmann's caveat on the subject of Homer as the paradigm for all epic: 'sowenig es d e n Roman gibt, sondern nur R o m - a n e, sowenig gibt es d a s Epos, sondern nur E p e n' (1987, 141).

Choice of principal texts: the basis of a genetic or a typological study?

A comparison of epic poetry from two apparently disparate chronological, geographical and cultural contexts not only makes for original research but is also methodologically sound. Though the *Rāmāyaṇa,* (now generally believed to have been composed in its various stages over a period dating from c. 500 BCE and 300 CE), is much older than the *Nibelungenlied*, (committed to writing c. 1200 CE), the German epic shows evidence of much earlier oral residue. Homer is typically the reference point in comparative studies of epic,[71] though Dumézil 1968 is a notable exception, basing his study of myth and epic on the *Mahābhārata,* ignoring Greek sources altogether.[72] Using as a referent an epic outside western culture but within the Indo-European tradition widens the study of epic genre.

Although the comparatist trend is now towards a much broader search for typological parallels in narrative and other genres of oral poetry in historically unrelated languages, for example G. Nagy's 1996 comparison of ancient Greek and traditional North Amerindian lyric, there is still room for the more closed approach. After all, there remain many so far untested combinations of comparative study of epic alone within the Indo-European language group, and these, once tested, may be used as referents in typological comparisons with traditional epic poetry in, say, various Amerindian or African language groups. In a single study based on works from two or more entirely different language groups the comparison of certain indices, for example an examination of narratological parallels, is

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[70] This is true even of Germanic epic: cf. Beowulf's slaying of supernatural monsters and Hagen's dealings with the *merwîp*.

[71] See n.43. All these studies except Peter's, which compares the *Rāmāyaṇa* with *Beowulf* , the Iranianist Molé's, which briefly traces parallels between the *Shāh Nāmah* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and Kumari's use the *Iliad* as reference point. Weber, Telang, Vaidya and Lillie concerned themselves exclusively with the common narrative theme of wife-abduction (Helen/Sītā) and the subsequent siege against their abductors; Weber and Lillie were convinced that the *Rāmāyaṇa* was based on the *Iliad* narrative which was much older, whereas their Indian counterparts argued the reverse equally passionately. Derrett has recently revived the old debate, suggesting the likelihood of Alexander's bringing Homer to India during his campaigns of c.327-325 BCE and citing Greek writers of the first to third centuries CE who refer to reports that Homer had long been sung in translation in India. Since, however, on linguistic grounds much of the core narrative of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (concerning the abduction and retrieval of Sītā) is believed to have been composed during the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, (see Brockington 1985, 1998) Derrett's view of the old position which he acknowledges to be 'unproven, but tantalising' (1992,50) is insecure.

[72] Generally speaking he found these problematic in that they tended not to fit his theories. Typical of his reluctance to consider Greek sources is his reference to 'the peculiarity of the Greek myths, and the impossibility of reducing them to the Indo-European systems' (1948/88, 119).

easier to accomplish using translations of the original than is an image-based study such as mine which would require in one scholar extremely rare language-skill combinations drawn both from within and outside the Indo-European group.[73] Thus it is hoped that my relatively narrow study of imagery will in time serve as a referent for wider image-based studies by scholars conversant with epic in languages outside the Indo-European cluster, of which my study will form a small part. The only way to build up a composite picture is by piecemeal intra and inter comparison of texts from within and outside this cluster.

There are two comparative approaches: the genetic, (based on what Meillet 1925 termed the 'méthode comparative,' namely the study of cognate forms) and the typological. Used by comparatist non-linguists the term 'genetic' pertains to a shared socio-cultural aesthetic attributable to a posited common origin. It could be used to describe the observation of socio-cultural parallels in texts of oral provenance within a given language group, (the equivalent of Meillet's cognate forms), but the difficulty lies in demonstrating conclusively that the parallels are unique to that particular group. The more widespread a given image is in texts of different branches of a particular language group the more likely it would seem to be descended from a common proto-source. There is, however, need for caution here, since not all that glisters comparatistically is perforce gold. What at first appears to be an image distinctive to discourses belonging to one language group may prove to be indicative of a world view of any society at a certain point in its development. The typological method, on the other hand, is more general and must of necessity be applied when comparing works from disparate language groups. All non-linguistic genetic comparisons are in the first instance also typological, but clearly not all typological comparisons are genetic. Dumézil, ardently convinced that he was strictly following the genetic approach in his studies of Indo-European mythology, himself described both methods as 'également saines, également légitimes et d'ailleurs complémentaires', (1943, 26, quoted by Belier, 1991, 22).

Dumézil's studies from the 1920s onwards were, he argued, genetic comparisons, representing an attempt to acquire proof of a common Proto-Indo-European socio-religious heritage which parallelled the traceable shared linguistic origin of the Indo-European group of languages. While the existence of a distinctive common socio-religious origin is a reasonable possibilty, given the clear linguistic ties, it is not as yet proven. In any case it is questionable whether Dumézil's theory of a mythology-based tripartite structure of socio-religious organisation is the best or only means of testing that hypothesis. A less tendentious image-based study such as mine is no less appropriate. Certainly Dumézil has not produced incontrovertible evidence for a shared Proto-Indo-European heritage. He defended his theory by arguing that any society outside the Indo-European group with a tripartite mythology must have undergone Indo-European influence. Yoshida attributed just such a

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[73] There are exceptions, for example the Japanese indologists Minoru Hara and Muneo Tokunaga, although neither is a comparatist.

structure in Japanese mythology to contact with nomadic Scytho-Sarmatian tribes.[74] While it is reasonable to posit such a powerful influence on, for instance, numerically small tribal peoples of India by an all-pervasive majority Hindu ethos,[75] the likelihood of nomadic tribes effecting such a change in Japan seems remote. Belier himself, while no apologist for Dumézil, claims that it is 'virtually impossible' to falsify the Theory on the grounds that tripartite structures exist in some non-Indo-European societies since 'a situation of complete insulation against Indo-European influence is nowhere to be found' (ibid., 232). However, both Dumézil and Belier himself must be referring to influences which could only have taken place in the prehistoric or early historic era, when it is possible to imagine vast tracts, for instance in the heartlands of the Americas and Africa, which were totally isolated from Indo-European contact.

Perhaps sufficient textual evidence will eventually be amassed to convince scholars that certain images now generally believed to be Indo-European are in fact universal or at least near-universal.[76] Or perhaps, and this seems more likely, the evidence will never be conclusive. As Nagy himself concedes (1996, 3), 'the adducing of typological parallels need not be taken as proof of a given argument, but only as an intuitive reinforcement'. Nevertheless, even though the 'grail quest' may never prove conclusive it will inevitably throw up much fascinating research. Meanwhile, since I shall be dealing here with texts in related languages it would be more proper for my methodological approach to be provisionally termed part genetic, (though not in Meillet's strict linguistic methodological sense, as I am about to show), as well as part typological. If in time text-based comparisons of epic in historically related and historically unrelated languages show that the images examined here are clearly paralleled in works outside the Indo-European group, my approach must retrospectively be termed typological. Although such information might eventually cast doubt on genetic hypotheses, my typological conclusions will stand.

Essential to the analysis of figurative devices is the use of annotated critical editions of my chosen texts, and, where relevant, of epic material in the Indo-European language group,

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74 A. Yoshida: 'Mythes japonais et idéologie tripartite des Indo-Européens' in *Diogenes* 98, 1977, 93-116. See Belier 1991, 232.

75 I am grateful to N.J. Allen for this insight.

76 Oguibénine (1998, 13) refers to Campanile's conclusion that an image which occurs only once in texts of a given Indo-European language sub-group, e.g. Homeric Greek, but is found in corresponding semantic form in another Indo-European sub-group, (e.g. Vedic Sanskrit, as Oguibénine suggests), must be of Proto-Indo-European origin. If, however, argues Campanile, that single instance of image occurs elsewhere only in texts of non-European origin it must be borrowed. ('Indo-European Metaphors and non-Indo-European Metaphors' in: *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 2,3, 1974; 247-8). Oguibénine then raises the two issues, which he does not address, of parallel images commonly found in both Indo-European and non-Indo-European texts and of possible universals. Brough (1959) expresses similar doubts in relation to a tripartite socio-religious system along Dumézilian lines which he sees reflected in Semitic (Old Testament) imagery. Dumézilians would argue the case here for Indo-European influence, but it is inconclusive.

from which quotations will be given in the original.[77] Thus the method followed will be both synchronic and diachronic.

Choice of imagery as a means of comparison and the non-linguistic comparatist method

The use of poetic images, both figures of speech and symbols, illustrates the hermeneutical relationship of the part to the whole, of the signifier (the figurative device) to the signified (the composite world view). A micro survey of images is therefore a significant key to the disclosure of the socio-religious world picture of a given group. In the case of the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* this type of survey reveals in what aspects and to what extent the respective early and medieval Germanic and ancient Indian world pictures, disclosed by those images, overlap and diverge.

What if the signs for the images compared in this study - and such is indeed the case - are linguistically unrelated? In his examination of Vedic symbolism in terms of Saussurian-based linguistics Oguibénine 1998 defends a comparatist method which takes account of semantic links between certain expressions in Indo-European discourses, i.e. the texts, without recourse to convoluted and contrived attempts to prove doubtful, often spurious lexical links. Dumézil has himself been criticized, by Gonda (1974, 141) among others, for bending linguistic rules in order to support an intuitive hypothesis. A case in point is his linking of the Skt. *gandharva* with the Gk. *kentaur*, (1929, 253ff). Even Dumézilians admit to spurious etymology in this case while defending the substantive association of the two orders of supernatural beings.[78] Oguibénine, (1998, 32ff) himself no critic of Dumézil's Theory, chooses the example of Horowitz's untenable etymology linking the Vedic noun *kṣatriya*, ('member of the warrior class'), with the epic Gk. adjective *skhétlios*, ('bold, ruthless, wild'), principally in its epithetical usage.[79] Having demonstrated Horowitz's false lexical connection, Oguibénine argues instead from the texts of the Odyssey and the Ṛgveda for a 'special relationship of two *different* linguistic forms to an *identical* concept', positing a shared Indo-European legacy of 'concepts and ideas which goes beyond correspondence of forms. [...] Reducing them to a common original form is strictly excluded, but comparatism must not stop at the irreductibility of the form, for there exists a far more complex universe behind isolated forms', (ibid., 51).

While questioning his claim that *kṣatriya* and *skhétlios* represent an identical concept and suggesting instead that the terms are aspects of a broadly similar concept, I believe that Oguibénine is justified in arguing that the comparatist's field of study is properly the entire

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[77] Translations or summaries will accompany all quotations except those taken from the *Nibelungenlied* .

[78] E.g. Joseph Nagy in his address 'Celtic Infidelities and Indo-European Myth' presented at the Oct. 1998 Royal Irish Academy colloquium "Indo-European Mythology and Religion".

[79] Franklin E. Horowitz: 'Greek *skhétlios* and Sanskrit *kṣatriyaḥ* and the Indo-European Image of the Warrior' in *Studia Linguistica* XXIX, 1975, 99ff.

discourse, itself a complex linguistic sign, rather than the isolated word, (ibid., 4-5). Context is paramount. In short, the discourse, not merely the lexeme, is the signifier. The linguist's interest remains with the reconstructed lexeme, the signifier, whereas the comparatist's progresses from the signifier to the signified, the reconstructed world view.

Watkins 1995 takes a similar view, positing an Indo-European poetic proto-language whose grammar consists of formulas, the vehicles of themes. The totality of themes may be thought of as the culture of a given society (ibid., 9), hence their repetition and preservation. Lexical correspondences of formulas are more frequent in closely related languages, for example Indic and Iranian, principally in Vedic and Avestan, their ancient forms. Indeed, as Watkins points out, Schlerath and Gercenberg[80], both authors of Indic and Iranian comparative studies, insist that only formulas containing at least two cognate words may be considered.[81] However, I agree with Watkins and also Campanile[82] and Oguibénine that lexical parity is not necessary. Instead, semantic identity is the essential element. Thus we may see that the study of formulaic images is extended from closely related languages to all languages of the Indo-European group. We are introduced to what I would call the 'semantically cognate' in addition to the lexically cognate formulaic image in frequent cases where lexical identity disappears as different branches of the parent language develop. The signifier changes, but the signified remains.

It is another well-established feature of historically related languages that the reverse process also takes place. Over the course of time etymologically linked words in different languages may lose their semantic identity while retaining lexical similarity. MHG *tan* , 'forest,' a formulaic image which will figure during my study, could well be a case in point.[83] It is not unreasonable to posit a lexical connection between *tan* and a number of variants of the Skt. *dhanvan* (meaning 'bow' and also 'dry land, desert') or *dhanu* ('sandbank, island'). However, these linguistic associations, though interesting, are irrelevant to our comparative study. Supposing that one of the suggestions is correct, (and one could conceivably argue that the semantic notion either of trees from which bows are made or of inaccessible terrain contained in the various Sanskrit alternatives is shared by MHG *tan*), the inescapable fact remains that none of the Sanskrit words put forward as possible cognates actually means 'forest' as *tan* does, and none of them is used in the *Rāmāyaṇa* to express that idea. Instead, we commonly have the signifiers *araṇya* and *vana*. My intention here has not been to cast

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80 B. Schlerath: *Awesta-Wörterbuch* , Wiesbaden, 1968. L. Gercenberg: *Morfologiceskaya struktura slova v drevnix indoiranskix jazykax* , Leningrad, 1972.

81 Some scholars argue for the existence of the single-word formula, others are unhappy with the notion. I find it more satisfactory to adopt Watts' 1969 suggestion that repeated single-word expressions are 'parts of *formulaic systems* ', 84. On which more later in the following chapter when I shall consider the oral poetry theory of the Parry-Lord school.

82 E. Campanile: 'Réflexions sur la réconstruction de la phraséologie poétique indo-européenne', *Diachronica* 10. 1993, 1-12, cited by Watkins.

83 Single-word recurring images such as 'forest' may reasonably be termed parts of a theme-bearing formulaic system rather than formulas in themselves.

doubts on the validity or usefulness of comparative linguistics but to show that the application of such a method to comparative textual studies involving different branches of a given language group is neither necessary nor by any means always appropriate, since the phenomenon of both lexical *and* semantic immutability rarely exists in the one lexeme. The fact that this phenomenon is not found in key parallel images of my selected texts does not of itself mean that these images are not of common Proto-Indo-European origin.

To return to our examples. It is clear that the signifiers *araṇya/vana* and *tan/walt* ('forest') exhibit no cross-linguistic commonality whatsoever. More significantly, in a passage essential to our understanding of the nature of Siegfried's kingship relating his early wanderings between Xanten and Worms, in what are clearly wild, isolated places beyond the ordered domain of the city,[84] neither *walt* nor *tan* nor any other word expressly denoting the idea of wooded surroundings is actually mentioned. Yet in the received understanding of an ancient or medieval audience such wondrous deeds as are described would of necessity have been performed in the context of the forest, outside the familiar surroundings of human habitation, a space where the accepted rules of social intercourse are suspended. It is interesting to note that the only explicit references to 'forest' in the *Nibelungenlied* occur during the narrative of the hunt. Elsewhere, at 738.4 and 1174.4, we have hints of the dangers lurking outside the city, where the king's rule of law does not obtain, a beyond-the-city which must have been either forest or heathland-wilderness inhabited by brigands. The magical forest with its giants, dwarves, talking bears, witches, robbers, enchanted castles and treasure has of course been the stuff of folktale since time immemorial. The Grimm Brothers' 1810 handwritten recording of such orally transmitted folktales as 'Zwölf Brüder und das Schwesterchen', 'Das Brüderchen und das Schwesterchen' (published in 1812 as 'Hänsel und Gretchen'), 'Goldne Gans' and 'Raüberbraütigam' (sic), all marked 'mündlich' in the manuscript, is strongly reminiscent of the spare, unadorned style of folk story-telling that I have heard in rural South India.[85] It seems reasonable to conjecture that these German tales are very old indeed and their characteristic motifs even older. All have the recurring formula 'in den (großen) Wald gehen/führen', and the forest is the setting for mysterious, frequently violent events and a period of testing for the virtuous, brave or ingenious protagonists.

Besides acquaintance with the forest theme in folktale, the first audiences at performances of the *Nibelungenlied* as we know it would doubtless be familiar with similar material in romance. For example a large part of Hartmann's *Erec* takes place within the forest, the

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[84] The term is normally used throughout this study in its ancient and medieval sense of 'centre of human population' or 'seat of government', not in its modern connotation which denotes a sprawling, dense conurbation.

[85] *Die älteste Märchensammlung der Brüder Grimm. Synopse der handschriftlichen Urfassung von 1810 und der Erstdrucke von 1812* , ed. Heinz Rölleke, Cologny-Genève, 1975. Cited folktales appear on pages 64-8, 70-6, 160-2 and 234-6 respectively.

home of giants, dwarves and robber knights; explicit references to the forest as marker for forthcoming strange occurrences abound. The forest is clearly the place for a knight to seek adventure: the dwarf-knight Guivreiz is characterised thus at 7398-9: 'dô er nâch sîner gewonheit/ze walde nâch âventiure reit'.[86] The beginning of Chrétien's *Erec et Enide* (the work which Hartmann admiringly acknowledges as his source) supplies material doubtless missing from the lost opening of Hartmann's manuscript. In Chrétien King Arthur commands his court to take up the hunt for the white stag: 'Irons chacier le blanc cerf tuit/ An la forest avantureuse', (64-5).[87] Dense woodland is the location of key episodes in *Parzival.* The young Parzival is brought up in just such a setting (Wolfram's *Parzival* 117.7-8), his first adventure as would-be novice knight takes place in a forest (129.5-6) and he visits his hermit-uncle Trevrizent in wooded, craggy terrain (446.9, 458.14, 459.14-15).[88] The Grail Castle is set in a supernatural forest. Parzival rides there 'über ronen und durchez mos' (224.20), the castle's bleak forested isolation, far from ordinary human habitation, stressed by Sigune who tells him:

> ‚iuch möht des waldes hân bevilt,
> von erbûwenem lande her geritn.
> inre drîzec mîln wart nie versnitn
> ze keinem bûwe holz noch stein
> wan ein burg diu stêt al ein.' (250.21-5)

Here the stark contrast of 'erbûwenem lande' and 'ze keinem bûwe' underlines the Otherness of the forest. After many adventures, Parzival has to return to earn his inheritance of the mysterious grail kingdom in the forest, an instance of the forest-validating authority theme to be discussed later in my study with reference to my chosen epics.

In addition to folktale and romance sources we have further references to the magical forest in ancient epic: Gilgamesh, eager for glory, undertakes a journey through mountainous terrain to the Forest of Cedar to bring back precious cedar timber, the property of the god Enlil. In order to do so he must slay the ogre Humbaba, Enil's forest guardian.[89] Odysseus' journey back to his kingdom takes him to a series of wooded islands, for example the one where he encounters the enchantress Kalypso - her cave has thick woods growing around it - (*Odyssey* V.63) and the forested island on which Odysseus and his men stay opposite the giant Kyklops' coastal territory (IX.118).[90]

Hartmann describes the convergence of three territories separated by forest, Oringles', Guivreiz's and Arthur's: 'disiu driu enschiet niuwan der wald/dâ er enmitten inne reit' (*Erec*, 6757-8). We know from geological studies and from early documents that a high

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86 *Erec* , ed. Albert Leitzmann, 4. Auflage, Tübingen, 1967.

87 *Erec et Enide* , ed. Michel Rousse, Paris, 1994.

88 *Parzival* , Berlin, 1965, repr. Karl Lachmann ed. 6. Aufgabe, Berlin and Leipzig, 1926.

89 *The Epic of Gilgamesh* , trans. Andrew George, Harmondsworth, 1999, IV and V.

90 *The Odyssey of Homer* , ed. W.B. Stanford, 2nd. edn., vol. 1 (I-XII), New York, 1967.

proportion of the earth's land mass was densely forested until relatively recent times, when population pressure forced the clearing of ever greater tracts of woodland for agriculture. Significant in this respect is the naming by early Portuguese explorers of the Atlantic island after *madeira*, the common term for 'wood/timber', an island now extensively denuded of forest. Even today, the European visitor, used to the open countryside between urban and village settlements occasioned by pressure on the land to support growing populations, especially during the nineteenth century, is struck by the vastness of the natural forest in much of North America which still stretches between giant urban and modest rural settlements as far as the eye can see, uninterrupted except for relatively small cultivated clearings. A matter of low population density relative to available land. It is therefore possible for the modern reader to imagine the forested terrain which once extended from city to city: woodland bordered directly with cultivated field at the city limits, in medieval Europe as in ancient India.

Hagen's *récit* referred to above, (str. 86-101), while making no specific mention of a forest backdrop to Siegfried's exploits, has three references to *berc*, enough to establish the remoteness of the location which we can assume to be within the tree line. After all, mountaineering is nowhere claimed as one of Siegfried's many superlative physical accomplishments. *Berc* is a term linked in the hunt narrative with the notion of forest at 940.3b ('den berc und ouch den walt') and at 941.3b ('der berc und ouch der tan'), references which seem to make clear that 'mountain' and 'forest' are interchangeable and imply the same wild, untamed terrain. Earlier, at 902, Kriemhild makes it clear to us, when she confides to Hagen the exact location of Siegfried's vulnerable spot, that her husband killed the dragon in the *forest* (athough again the word itself is not mentioned) before bathing in its blood, for she tells us that 'ein lindenblat' fell on to his back and prevented the blood from doing its magic work there. At *NL* 977b Siegfried leans his spear against a lime-tree branch beside the forest spring where he will meet his death.

In light of the evidence in folktale, romance and ancient epic sources the forest is clearly an Indo-European (and quite possibly near-universal) signifier. Thus it may safely be assumed that the unnamed signifier or theme-bearing formulaic image denoting the backdrop to Siegfried's youthful warrior exploits is indeed the forest. I stressed earlier the importance of context in the comparatist's study of parallel imagery. The examples cited above enable us to apprehend from context the unspoken signifiers *walt* and *tan* in Hagen's and Kriemhild's discourses and to make the connection with the parallel signifiers *araṇya* and *vana* in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and their parallel reconstructed signified of the place where the novice warrior-king undergoes trials, the successful completion of which will validate the powers accorded to him at his eventual installation as monarch.

The comparatist, therefore, is not searching for the linguistically related sign whose Saussurian value, as redefined by Beneviste (1966, 54),[91] 'is an element and an attribute of its form, not of its substance,' (Oguibénine, 1998, 166). It is rather the *substantially* related sign, the manifestation of an apparently similar ideological code, Oguibénine's metaphorical 'language with its own structure', (ibid., 23), which the comparatist seeks to identify. It is important however to note Oguibénine's reminder that reconstructed cultural features, though they may correspond in significant ways, will only be partial.

> Distinct discourses of Indo-European origin thus occasion partial reconstructions of Indo-European *signifiés*, reconstructions that vary according to the preferences of a particular Indo-European culture. [...] The common *signifie'* will however be represented only fragmentally [sic] and this is due not only to the differences in approach in individual cultures to the common *signifie'* [...]. In fact, the interesting feature of the formation of signs belonging to a particular culture is the disparity and the variety in the conceptual effort of various Indo-European fields when dealing with elements of their common heritage, (ibid., 6).

Such a view reinforces my earlier stated intention not to ignore difference in the search for convergence.

An obvious reason why the formulaic image appears only in fragmented form in the various Indo-European discourses is the oral nature of the composition and transmission of these discourses. One must assume that much more has been lost than is preserved in written form. Although the comparatist may be tempted to help fill the lacunae pertaining to one Indo-European cultural group by inserting information gleaned by analogy from early discourses of other Indo-European groups, he or she would do well to remember that the information provided by formulaic imagery available to us in the texts and, one can speculate, in the oral material now lost, was in itself selective, depending on the emphasis placed by a particular group on the type of information it thought necessary to preserve. We cannot therefore assume that because Vedic and Indian epic sources convey the most comprehesive and detailed picture of ancient Indo-European society, or because Ṛgvedic sources are the oldest, that these texts provide a blue-print for the reconstruction of a composite Proto-Indo-European world view. Gonda (1966, 143) warns:

> It would [...] be wise not to rely on the *argumentum e silentio* and to ascribe to the prehistoric Greek [sic], Romans and Germans all beliefs and customs found in the ancient Indian documents, but rather to regard both the eastern and the ancient western conceptions of royalty and rulership as, *in the first place*, representative of a generally human belief, and *secondly* as a continuation of common Indo-European ideas and practices. (Third set of italics mine).

As Gonda has already pointed out, (ibid., 139-40), separating aspects of the ancient Indian ideology which are Aryan from those which are attributable to indigenous non-Indo-European Dravidian influence is a matter of speculation without solid linguistic and other evidence. Thus we see that the ancient Indian world view can only be an idiosyncratic

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91 E. Beneviste: *Problèmes de linguistique générale,* Paris 1966, to which Oguibénine makes reference.

development of the Proto-Indo-European one. It does not *a priori* represent a world view closest to that of the Proto-Indo-Europeans, neither can it safely be used as a basis for the filling of lacunae in our knowledge of the ancient Germanic world view, specifically in relation to sovereignty imagery. It is at the points where the ancient Indian and the Germanic world pictures, encapsulated in the formulaic imagery of our texts, appear to converge that our investigation begins.

2

The Sounded Word: Evidence of Orality in the 'Nibelungenlied' and the 'Rāmāyaṇa'

1. Oral Narrative and the Orality-Literacy Debate

For the purposes of this review I propose to apply the designation 'oral' to both categories of epic poems: not only those known to be wholly oral, such as have been recorded in field studies by Parry and Lord in former Yugoslavia and by Pandey, Smith and Roghair in India, but also those works believed to be of oral origin, that is, composed orally and later textualised, either in ancient times (e.g. Homer and the Sanskrit epics) or in the more recent past of the medieval era. Some scholars prefer to call the second category (those epics not empirically known to be incontrovertibly oral) 'transitional' texts since they may be written reworkings of orally composed and transmitted poems rather than verbatim written reproductions of the spoken/sung works. 'Transitional' implies that such poems must *a priori* contain elements of both oral and written composition, but isolating for certain the oral from the written in a given early text without known written sources has to be an impossible task, since the oral tradition must have contained the seeds of the written one, or, put the other way, the earliest written works drew on an inherited oral one and must therefore have contained much material almost identical with their oral predecessors. Nevertheless it is helpful to establish a rough rule of thumb in this regard.

Green notes the oral/aural dimension of written composition in that authors frequently dictated their work to scribes who themselves were in the habit of repeating the words aloud as they wrote them. In fact the early act of writing was as much fused with the act of speaking as was the act of reading. The art of silent reading and writing did not develop in Europe until a considerable time after printing became widespread (1994, 15-16). Even if an author did his own scribing he would be speaking his creation as he wrote it down. It seems entirely possible that poems and, presumably, other works in medieval Germany were first drafted, reworked and honed aloud before the final stage, that of committing the finished product to writing. This makes the term 'transitional' all the more problematic, especially with reference to epic. It could feasibly be used of works with proven written sources which nevertheless exhibit oral compositional features, principally formulaic diction, of which one would expect to find a stilted, imitative preponderance of fixed formulas rather

than the mix of fixed formulas and freer formulaic systems characteristic of oral composition. But in the case of epic we are dealing with works with no known written sources. Niles makes a useful contribution to our understanding of the difference between oral and written/dictated composition. 'In seeking evidence for the mode of composition of a text, one must not only count the number of fixed formulas in the work, for these are easily imitated by a lettered author. One must look for evidence that the poet in question made formulaic language his *habitual mode of thought*'.[1] It is interesting to compare this view with Sweeney's observation of the living Malay *Kulit Wayang* tradition of puppet drama[2] which, unrestricted by metrical requirements, permits a greater degree of extempore composition than does oral poetry but nevertheless makes not inconsiderable use of formula: 'The *dalang* ['puppet master-cum-storyteller'] thinks in *wayang* speech, and the formulas at his disposal determine, to some extent, what he will say,' (1980, 61). I believe there is sufficient evidence in my chosen texts to suggest that the poets who composed them did indeed think habitually in formulaic language and that the term 'transitional' is not applicable to them. To all intents and purposes they are oral. It is possible to argue that late accretions in both works are of likely written origin, (and therefore could be called transitional), but I shall argue below that this is by no means necessarily so.

The designation 'semi-literary' is sometimes used in apparently the same sense as 'transitional'. This seems to me to indicate a rather condescending, indeed mistaken, post-oral view of oral works. Lord is right in stressing that the rise of a developed poetics was not dependent on written expression. 'Literary style was formed and reached high complexity before the invention of writing. That it did so in Greece is proved by the tradition that led to the Homeric poems. [...] There was no period of written literature [in Greece, presumably,] before the Homeric poems were *written down*. They needed writing to be recorded but not to be composed [...]', (ibid., 105). The argument advanced by Wenzel that the spread of writing in medieval Germany gave rise to a flowering of refined aesthetic expression and a much more complex and ambiguous treatment of subject-matter in the *Nibelungenlied*, although persuasive to the literate mind-set, cannot be proved. Additional catalysts must also have been at work. Certainly the Latin rhetorical tradition influenced writing authors, but the extent to which it impacted on *Nibelungen* poets, if at all, is impossible to assess with any degree of certainty, especially as it is by no means proven - nor is it ever likely to be - that these poets, or even the last one, read the vernacular, let alone

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[1] John D. Niles in *Oral Traditional Literature : A Festschrift for Albert Bates Lord*, ed. John Miles Foley, Columbus, 1981, 410-11, quoted by Lord 1995, 118.

[2] The tradition draws principally on a corpus of stories, loosely based on the *Rāmāyaṇa* , about Seri Rama and descendants.

had a classical education.[3] However, it seems to me entirely possible that the last oral poets of every non-living epic tradition were already beginning to acquire more sophisticated techniques. Homer would be an obvious example, taking him to be the last of a line of non-writing poets working in the inherited epic tradition, but we should also bear in mind the lyrical nature descriptions[4], for example Lakṣmana's beautifully observant portrayal of winter in the forest at 3.15., which belong to the second-stage *Rāmāyaṇa* expansions, exhibiting as they do a high degree of ornamentation, especially the piling up of developed similes, attributed by Brockington 1985 and 1998 to non-writing itinerant rhapsodes. We see here the beginnings of a 'literary' style with its increased sensitivity to aesthetic expression. One of Lord's most helpful observations on orality was made much earlier than the one quoted above, in a chapter entitled 'Some notes on medieval epic', where he speaks of *traditional* composition as a more significant term than *oral* composition.

> Oral tells us "how", but traditional tells us "what", and even more, "of what kind" and "of what force". [...] It is of the *necessary* nature of tradition that it seek and maintain stability, that it preserve itself. [...] The traditional oral epic singer is not an artist; he is a seer. The patterns of thought that he has inherited came into being to serve not *art* but religion in its most basic sense. [...] His balances, his antitheses, his similes and metaphors, his repetitions, and his sometimes seemingly wilful playing with words, with morphology, and with phonology were not intended to be devices and conventions of Parnassus, but were techniques for emphasis of the potent symbol. (1960, 220).

I would take 'religion' here to mean a fixed socio-political/religious programme. Once poets cease to perform this service of preserving the status quo in the repetition of traditional

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[3] Fechter 1964 attempts to demonstrate conclusively by narratological and imagistic parallels found in the *Nibelungenlied* and the secondary epic of Statius and Vergil that the *Nibelungen* poet was not only a cleric, as generally maintained, but one steeped in the classical tradition. The author conveniently attributes any deviations in the examples he quotes to the German poet's skilful adaptation of his model. These parallels are, however, of a fairly standard nature for epic and therefore their presence in the *Nibelungenlied* is more likely to be coincidental than borrowed, just as there are parallels in the *Rāmāyaṇa* which could not possibly have been sources. For instance he gives a lengthy account of classical references to warriors' horses throwing up dust, unaware that this is a motif in *Rāmāyaṇa* battles. It is quite possible that most of Fechter's examples were part of a widespread inherited oral tradition which could perhaps have been influenced peripherally by casual contact of German vernacular singer-poets with Goliards who, since they composed in Latin, must have had the rudiments of a classical education. One or two instances, such as Siegfried's sword being adorned with a jasper (1783.3) as is Aeneas's, the panther skin covering his quiver (953.3 - 954.1) [though Fechter's classical reference is to a quiver covered with lynx, not panther, skin], and the gold-ornamented furs (954.3) for which Fechter finds a further model, if these were indeed taken from antiquity, might be the work of a redactor unable to resist adding the allusions which came to mind as he worked. Okken, convinced by Fechter's arguments, when reviewing Jens Haustein's book on *Dietrichepik*, is unhappy with the latter's suggestion that it is a legacy of the Germanic/Indo-European poetic tradition, independent of Latin culture. 'Als ob es germanisch-deutsche Sonderwege [...] hätte geben können!' counters Okken. He sees the *Nibelungen* story as owing much to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in particular for the queens' quarrel, Gudrun's/Kriemhild's revenge and Siegfried's magic invulnerability, whereas these stock narratological themes are much more likely to be part of the common Indo-European tradition whose existence he rejects. (L. Okken: *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik : ...Daz ir dest werder sint...*, Bd. 30. 1990, 186-7).

[4] Later termed *svabhāvokti* , 'expression of the real', by Sanskrit poeticians. An outline of the most important aspects of ancient Indian poetics in relation to the *Rāmāyaṇa* follows in the next chapter.

patterns of thought and expression and devote themselves instead to the stylistic, semantic and lexical innovation accelerated by the spread of writing, the phenomenon of the idiosyncratic, fully literary text of an author such as Wolfram emerges. This is not to say that stylistic, semantic and lexical invention is beyond the means of non-writing poets - far from it - but it is invention within certain accepted parameters. It is not innovation. I do not consider the *Nibelungenlied* to be the ground-breaking work that Wenzel appears to think it is, neither do I see its imaginative treatment of the traditional *Nibelung* themes as being necessarily indicative of written composition.

The *kuśīlavas* were not the final custodians and expanders of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, as we saw at the beginning of the first chapter, that role being taken over by the priestly tradition. I argued then for the probably largely oral make-up of the third-stage accretions in view of the ancient brahman antipathy to writing and also von Hinüber's adducing of linguistic and orthographic evidence which suggests that Middle Indic Pāli appeared in written form before its parent language, Sanskrit. It is possible, therefore, that, apart from minor localised redactorial interpolations as the work was being textualised, the process of composition (by which the *Rāmāyaṇa* reached more or less the form which the Critical Edition attempts to establish) was entirely oral. If the poem had been reworked in its entirety by later writing poets, the language of all seven *kāṇḍas* would be roughly homogenous, which it is far from being, as Brockington shows. He does note, however, the overall general similarity of language in the core *kāṇḍas* within which linguistic and stylistic deviations, which he attributes to *kuśīlava* (second-stage) interpolations, can be detected (1985, 16-61 and 329-46). We can infer from this that a non-writing compiler of the Rāma story known traditionally as Vālmīki - like Homer possibly the last of a line of bardic poets - was responsible for the body of the core *kāṇḍas*. But we cannot infer that because the *Bāla* and *Uttarakāṇḍas* are linguistically and thematically younger they must be written expansions. They may be, but we cannot be certain, given the brahman scholarly propensity and preference for oral transmission and, therefore, oral composition.

Formula as index of oral and written composition

Brockington notes the stressed reference in the two youngest *kāṇḍas* to the poem's orality and also the higher proportion of formulaic diction in the later stages of the epic which could, paradoxically, be signs of written composition (2000a, 2). He suggests that borrowings of late formulaic material between the two epic traditions (the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Māhabhārata*) not only indicate a gradual merging of the two traditions as far as written transmission is concerned but also point to written composition.[5] Perhaps, though, this may

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[5] See also Brockington 1998, 396.

only be attributable to redactorial intervention, a phenomenon which I discuss briefly below. Lord 1995 notes the rigidly formulaic Old English poetry based on Latin sources: 'If anything, their style became more markedly and more mechanically formulaic as they lost the art of free oral formulaic composition in performance', and he sees this as an indication of written composition, (220). I would endorse his view without the qualification 'in performance' because I believe this narrows the compositional options too much.[6] However, we are considering here an ancient Indian situation which may well be of a different order from Lord's Old English one in that it is by no means certain that third-stage brahman poets, although highly educated, were writing ones, and there are no known written sources. These poets were brought up in the tradition of a fixed body of learning and they presumably composed out of the fixed poetic tradition in a more mannered, deliberate style. Their predecessors, the court bards and the *kuśīlavas*, not initiated from an early age into a vast corpus of learning,[7] produced their material by a freer use of formula, whereas the brahman poets relied more heavily on the self-conscious use of stock expressions. Perhaps it was formal (orally transmitted) education and an increasingly strict socio-religious agenda rather than the use of writing which led to such rigidity of formulaic diction. Brockington rightly, in my opinion, concludes that the brahmans' deliberate highlighting of the poem's oral composition and transmission may have been used as proof of the veracity of its contents, (so that the work, as the ancient Indian mindset would have viewed it, would appear to have the indisputable weight of oral tradition behind it), or even as a means of imbuing the work with 'the appropriate quality' (1999, 129), but I am not wholly convinced by the suggestion that this stress on orality may of itself be a sign of the decay of the oral tradition. As I observed at the beginning of my opening chapter, the exact opposite of the priestly medieval European conviction - that whatever is written is true - pertains in ancient brahman lore. To adapt Niles' and Lord's arguments cited above, brahman poets may have 'thought habitually' in the more rigid forms of formulaic language, having, through a tradition of formal education heavily dependent on strict verbatim oral transmission, 'lost the

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6 I shall discuss the question of composition in performance shortly.

7 Von Hinüber comments on the doubts which have been and continue to be raised as to the genuine capacity of ancient Indians to retain verbatim such an enormous store of material. 'Diese Ungläubigkeit gegenüber den eindrucksvollen Gedächtnisleistungen der Inder ist nun keine Erscheinung der Gegenwart, sondern reicht weit in die Vergangenheit zurück. Denn schon die Chinesen schenkten den indischen Missionaren des Buddhismus um die Mitte des ersten nachchristlichen Jahrtausends wenig Vertrauen, bis diese ihre Kenntnis auch sehr langer Texte und ihre Fähigkeit, Auswendiggelerntes zu bewahren, unter Beweis gestellt hatten.' (1990, 11). Even so, says Hinüber, the ancient brahmans had more prodigious powers of memory than the Buddhists, who turned to written transmission much sooner than the Hindus. He attributes the brahmans' extraordinary ability to retain Vedic material to the very young age (seven to eight years) at which their sons began to learn it, whereas Buddist novices started their task aged fifteen, thus losing seven highly retentive years.

art of free oral formulaic composition' practised by the *sūtas* (bards) and *kuśīlavas* before them.

Brockington further notes the tendency in the epic's third stage of composition for the traditional stock formulas to be replaced by new ones (2000a, 2). While this new formulaic vocabulary could be a sign of written composition, I suggest that it may on the other hand merely reflect the brahman poets' altered, more openly tendentious, perception of the story of Rāma and his cosmic significance in it as well as a changing poetics of still oral composition which prescribed a more frequent use of formulaic material than that exhibited by the core *kāṇḍas*. Lord's western examples of works with known Latin sources and a formulaic content that is laboured, imitative and excessive are, as I have already argued, a rather different case. It seems to me that hypothetical writing brahman poets imitating the oral style in order to legitimate or at least flavour their work appropriately would simply have given their audiences more of the same in increased measure, that is, they would have made repeated use of the traditional stock formulas rather than substituting new ones indicative of a reconstituted world view which was in fact even more conservative and inductive of social cohesion than the old one. Later in this chapter I shall discuss the link between societal conservatism and orality.

There came a time when the brahmanic tradition began to lose its antipathy to writing and started to textualise the epics, a process which Brockington suggests began for the *Rāmāyaṇa* between the second and third stages of accretion (1999,129). In view of the scant and ambiguous late references in the epic to the method of its transmission, (i.e. by recitation/singing or by reading), it seems to me impossible to tell with absolute certainty not only precisely when textualisation began, but which parts of the epic known by their linguistic features to be late expansions are in fact of written composition. Of course redactorial changes, expansions and copyings of lines and passages from other manuscripts, in addition to oral adaptations and accretions, would have been made. Jacobi summarises the work thus:

'Nachdem [die] Recensionen einmal festgestellt waren und dann im wesentlichen schriftlich, durch gelehrte Tradition fortgepflanzt wurden, war ihr Schicksal durchaus dem aller ähnlichen Texte ähnlich. Die Erklärer strichen Verse und Stellen, die sie als *prakshipta* ['interpolated'] bezeichneten, wählten zwischen verschiedenen Lesearten, oder suchten durch Conjectur eine verdorbene Stelle zu verbessern', (9-10).

The Northern Recension of the *Rāmāyaṇa* exhibits a great deal more standardisation of language than the Southern, which is why the latter forms the basis of the Critical Edition. The location and extent of redactorial intervention in any epic written down before the Parry era tends to be a matter of speculation, but Brockington is able to draw on textual evidence to show that some third stage *Rāmāyaṇa* formulaic expressions may not only have been influenced by the *Mahābhārata* but in certain cases may well have been borrowed from a written version of the latter, and vice versa, (1998, 396). On the other hand, as Hara 1993-4

points out in his exploratory study of phrases not common to both epics, a good many stereotyped expressions, some of them stage three *Rāmāyaṇa* phrases, are used exclusively in one epic or the other, others occurring frequently in one appear only once in the other, and others again are found in both works but in different contextual locations. Perhaps most significant of all, the commonest phrase in the *Mahābhārata* is never found in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In general I consider that Hatto's caveat in the context of his censure of narrative inconsistencies in the *Nibelungenlied* is more usefully applicable to the question of redactorial activity in epic: '[...] it must [...] always be borne in mind that a revisor has intervened between the poet and us, so that we can never be absolutely sure of the poet's text,' (1965/88, 303, n. 2), though I would be happier to replace 'text', which implies written composition, with the less specific term 'original'.

The majority of scholars seem to take it for granted that the extant version of the *Nibelungenlied* is the work of one, writing, poet. Voorwinden and de Haan 1979 contrast the readiness of some scholars of Anglo-Saxon and Old French epic to apply the oral poetry theory with the lack of response shown by German medievalists. They point out that Brackert's 1963 cautious passing reference to the possible multiple authorship of the Nibelungenlied[8] was ignored and suggest three reasons for the general lack of response. Possibly so much critical time and effort was expended on speculation about the likely single author of the work, speculation accepted as fact, for scholars to be amenable to the idea of countless anonymous singers. The uncompromising stance of the oral poetry theory's proponents is perhaps more likely to blame. Or perhaps scholars were simply concerned with other questions. Indeed, since 1979 the consensus view of a writing author has rarely been challenged. Hatto's view is a representative one: 'The safest guess is that the strange genius who wrote the *Nibelungenlied* was a semi-clerical poet by profession, technically of the order of *vagi* or wayfarers, though probably sedentary for much of his life', (1965/88, 357). On the flimsiest of grounds Hatto states that *âventiuren* 8 and 15 are the last poet's creation, (ibid, 296, 304). However, dealing as they do with Siegfried's journey to mythical *Nibelungenland* and the motif of the sewn cross they must surely consist of much older traditional material. Just because these narratives do not appear in the scant manuscript parallels of the Siegfried story which we possess, there is no reason to suppose that the last poet invented them. Hatto generally, in the 'Homer nods' critical vein, attibutes the poem's hotch-potch of narrative themes and its lack of continuity to the poet's 'carelessness', not taking account of the oral epic tradition and its characteristic accretions. Thomas is another *Nibelungen* scholar who takes it for granted that the poet was a writing one: 'It is likely that [the] narrator was [...] a "clerk" in the modern non-ecclesiastical sense of that term, namely a

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[8] Helmut Brackert: *Beiträge zur Handschriftenkritik des Nibelungenliedes*, Berlin 1963, 170-71.

literate person with access to parchment and the ability to produce over two thousand verse quatrains which were probably designed to be read less as a sermon than as an (albeit sombre) entertainment' (1995,1). Incidentally, Thomas seems unaware that 'sombre entertainment' is the stuff of traditional epic, in fact a very apt description of the genre, and it is most improbable that the *Nibelungenlied* was in any way intended to be taken as a sermon. As I indicated at the beginning of my thesis, epic was a narrative form generally much frowned on by the clergy who considered it far too worldly for their flock.

Müller 1998, while conceding that the Nibelungenlied displays certain formal characteristics typical of oral narrative style, is adamant about the work's status as 'Buchepos'. Even narratological features in the poem that are normally associated with oral composition (features to be discussed in due course) are, he maintains, crafted by its writing author as part of his narrative strategy. Whatever modern scholarship generally finds problematic in a presumed written work is thus accounted for by Müller: contradictions, ambiguities, redundancy, narratological non sequiturs which appear alongside what he terms 'schriftsprachliche Kontexualisierung' (136) are there by design, not accretion. Furthermore we have in Hagen's recounting of Siegfried's acquisition of the fabulous Nibelung treasure and the dragon-slaying episode (narrative widely believed to belong to a much earlier stratum of the Nibelungen corpus) a studied imitation of oral story-telling style presented 'als eine mündliche Erzählung von präzis kalkulierter Unschärfe' (130). According to Müller, the author shifts from one 'Erzählregister' to another, depending on whether he is relating incidents belonging to this world or to the Otherworld where different narratological and behavioural laws obtain (125). It is for me a superfluous, indeed misguided, explaining away of inherited narrative material belonging to the composite poem. Perhaps most controversially of all, considering the lengths to which he goes in order to defend his stance towards the work, including detailed references to variant Nibelungenlied manuscript readings and to other Middle High German epic poems, he states in a footnote as if it were a known fact, without any supporting evidence, that the *Lied vom hürnen Seifried* (generally assumed to be of written origin) is an orally transmitted tale that was later fixed in writing (125, n.43).

Voorwinden, on the other hand, eschews the widespread opinion of the poem as a written construct based on traditional material. Citing the references to Passau and Bishop Pilgrim as being clearly interpolations belonging to the most recent stratum of the corpus, he raises the question: 'Kann man bei der fast unentwirrbaren Verwobenheit so vieler Schichten überhaupt bis zu einem individuellen Dichter vorstoßen?', and later affirms: '[...] ich gehe von einem Kernepos aus, das bereits beide Teile umfaßte, das in der Vortragssituation auch teilweise rezitiert werden konnte' (Knapp 1987, 22 and 38-9). For him, the final version of the *Nibelungenlied* came about when this 'Kernepos' was eventually fixed in writing (ibid. 39). Ehrismann too envisages not written reception but rather an oral performance situation

for the transmission of a poem in a form much the same as we have it today, estimating the time it would have taken for a singer to present the entire work (1987, 75), on which more in due course.

We saw earlier the general lay suspicion in high medieval Germany of written transmission, that grapho-centric culture was not dominant. Haubrichs 1976 notes the early (post-Merovingian) medieval aristocratic antipathy towards clergy-taught book learning for noble sons (though not always, incidentally, for daughters). In the high Middle Ages literacy appears to have been still largely the preserve of the church and of laymen such as scribes, and the populace in general seems not only to have been wary of it as a reliable means of transmitting information, (Green, citing Köhn, notes the custom of messengers delivering oral vernacular versions of the letters they carried in Latin)[9], but to have managed for most practical purposes without it. Even Minnesinger were not all necessarily writing poets. A literate nobleman was the exception: see Hartmann's *Heinrich* 1-3. Even Minnesinger were not all necessarily writing poets. The *Manessische Liederhandschrift* depicts four vernacular poets dictating to scribes, one of whom is, exceptionally, a young woman,[10] and several more in the close vicinity of very prominent blank scrolls - presumably symbolising their scribed poetry - some of which appear to be being read. No poet is shown in the act of writing. There is strong internal evidence that some poets, like Konrad von Würzburg and Gottfried, had a classical education. Konrad is in fact one of the four poets portrayed in the *Liederhandschrift* dictating his work, so it is clear that the act of dictation does not necessarily imply a non-writing state, but it is nevertheless entirely possible that many High Medieval poets were not writing ones. The assumption, therefore, that the last *Nibelungen* poet wrote the version that we have is by no means secure.

The 29th *âventiure*, the episode of Hagen's refusal to stand for Kriemhild, is another passage attributed by several scholars to the last *Nibelung* poet.[11] Yet it is markedly formulaic. It may well be the last poet's invention, but imagination is not the preserve of writing authors: oral poets are thought to add their own contributions to the tradition. Whether or not it was actually composed in writing - and there is no entirely reliable means of testing this, despite Lord's unchanged contention that such a process is not only desirable

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9 1994, 15, citing research by R. Köhn: 'Latein und Volkssprache, Schriftlichkeit und Mündlichkeit in der Korrespondenz des lateinischen Mittelalters' in J.O. Fichte ed.: *Kongreßakten zum 1. Symposium des Mediävistenverbandes in Tübingen,* Berlin 1986, 340ff).

10 Folios LV, LXXXXVII, CIII and CVI.

11 I use the term *âventiure* because it is common currency in *Nibelungen* criticism. Like *kāṇḍa* and *sarga* it is probably a redactorial convention.

but necessary[12] - it contains a preponderance of stylistic features typical of oral epic, as I shall shortly demonstrate. Therefore to all intents and purposes it is oral. I think there is sufficient textual evidence in such a spirited dramatic confrontation between Kriemhild and Hagen and Kriemhild's fighting men to suggest that *âventiure* 29 is not 'mechanically formulaic', (to apply Lord's criterion of early written textuality in reverse), and that its singer-originator indeed 'made formulaic language his *habitual mode of thought*', (Niles again), although the judgement, like Lord's and Niles', cannot be other than subjective. I did not select this passage for examination because of its strong formulaic content - I was not aware of this at the time - but because it exemplifies an *âventiure* widely believed to be a late addition to the corpus. My intention was to investigate how it differed stylistically from presumed earlier material such as the hunt episode, and it was with some surprise, therefore, that I discovered just how formulaic it is.

A random survey of the sixty strophes of this *âventiure* shows up examples of formulaic patterning found elsewhere in the work as a whole, among them the epithetic 'ritter/helde küene unde guot' variation, which occurs three times here, each combined with the end-rhyme 'muot/gemuot' in the previous line, at 1759.4b, 1763.4b and 1803.4b, cf. 2219.4b rhyming with 'bluot'. 'Nu lôn' iu/dir got von/im/in himmele' is a common formulaic half-line filler throughout: in this âventiure the variation is 'Nu lôn iu got von himmele, (vil edel Volkêr)', 1779.1, repeated exactly at 1831.1 with 'vil lieber Volkêr' and later at 2199.1 with 'vil edel Rüedegêr'.[13] The formula 'die ûz erwelten degene', used at *âv.* 29,1760.4a (cf. 'zwêne ûz erwelte man', *âv.* 29, 1807.1b) occurs passim in the *Nibelungenlied* with its variant 'ein ûz erwelter degen'. A few more examples of many formulaic clusters found here must suffice. Compare 'daz Etzelen wîp/ der schoenen Kriemhilden lîp' (âv. 29, 1762.3b and 4b) with 'daz Sîfrides wîp/den sînen schoenen lîp' (1026.1b and 2b), 'daz Nuodunges wîp/den ir vil minneclîchen lîp' (1906.3b and 4b) and 'der schoenen Helchen lîp/ gewinnen edel wîp' (1144 1 and 2b); 'die liehten brünne' and 'diu liehten wâfen' (âv. 29,

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12 Lord's argument is somewhat circular and inconclusive. '[...] on the level of aesthetics, one needs to know whether a text is oral traditional or not in order correctly to apply the criteria of referentiality. There *is* a difference between oral traditional poetics and written poetics, and one must know with what kind of poetry one is dealing in order correctly to appreciate its aesthetics and to describe and edit its texts', (1995, 202). This would be axiomatic if only one could know for certain whether a text is oral or not. Lord in general declined over the years to respond to his detractors, (though he did take issue with Smith, as we shall see), however Green's view doubting the desirability and appropriateness of the attempt to discover such a distinction, expressed in 'Orality and Reading: The State of Research in Medieval Studies', *Speculum* 1990, Vol. 65, 267-80, stung him into making a gentlemanly rebuttal which ends with the lines quoted above. Much more scathingly, Curschmann 1977 had termed the oral formula theory, particularly as interpreted by the *Beowulf* scholar Francis P. Magoun 'an impediment to our understanding of medieval oral poetry'. The condemnation appears in the title of his article.

13 The Christian content marks these particular references as thematically later than the rest may be, but their oral formulism shows that this compositional device persisted into the high medieval period.

1775.3b and 1776.3a respectively) with 'der liehten schilde' 1602.2b; and 'mir enkunde in dirre werlde lieber nicht geschehen' (âv. 29,1813.2) with 'mir enkunde in disen zîten/ nimmer lieber geschehen' (1313.4) and 'ir enkunde in dirre werlde leider nimmer gescehen' (13.4). Lastly, the quasi-formulaic end-rhyme combinations, the one 'tragen/sagen' and the other 'gân/stân/hân/getân', plus variants, both types common throughout the poem, occur passim in our passage. There are also the repeated half-rhyme line-end patterns *ân/an* and *an/ân*. In all, the *-ân* ending appears in twenty-six out of sixty strophes compared with twenty-one out of eighty-six strophes in the episode of the hunt, *âventiure* 16, widely believed to be much older.

One could be forgiven for assuming that the author of *âventiure* 29 had got himself stuck in this particular rhyming mode. Examined in isolation, these stock end-rhymes certainly seem excessively repetitious and inept. Read in context, however, they are virtually imperceptible. I myself was not aware of their ubiquity in this passage until I had almost completed my cursory search for formulas. Such is the singer-poet's narrative art that the reader is swept along by the graphic impetus of the scene with its tension-charged exchanges, its threats and counter-threats, its postponed violence. A contemporary listening audience, caught up in the drama, would almost certainly not have noticed the repeated rhymes at all: story line, not form, is of supreme importance in the oral tradition. Of course it could be argued that the numerous examples of formulaic language and stock end-rhyme repetitions in this passage are in fact a sign of written composition. To my mind, however, a writing poet composing in the oral style would have arrived at a much more constrained narratological product in which these borrowed conventions would have drawn attention to themselves instead of being subsumed in the collective means of the telling of the tale which is the epic poet-singer's *raison d'être*.

Let us remind ourselves of Adam Parry's statement: 'That the style [of the Homeric epics] is traditional and therefore *oral* [...] may be taken as proved: it is not necessarily proved that our *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were composed orally.' [14] This much we can state with certainty of the *Nibelungenlied* too. Whether in fact the *Nibelungenlied* is largely a written recording of an oral tradition is impossible to prove, but, as I argued in relation to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, I believe the evidence suggests on balance that it is. Unlike Hatto, Thomas, Müller and others Green concludes that the *Nibelungenlied,* like the *Hildebrandslied,* was 'written down', and that both were transmitted orally, (1994, 105-6). We have already noted that Lord similarly describes Homeric epic as having been '*written down,*' (1995, 105). For Green the *Klage* reference to Bishop Pilgrim having his scribe take down Schwämmel's vernacular narrative in Latin (*Kl.* 3350ff), while German versions of the poem continue to be transmitted (4316f), accords with contemporary accounts which establish that in general the vernacular was the

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[14] See Ch.1, n. 15.

spoken language and Latin the written one, (1994, 161). However, the text in fact literally states only that the poem was written down in Latin/Roman letters. It is nevertheless interesting to note the allusion to Latin characters as being presumably indicative of the poet's desire to show proof of the poem's authenticity:

[...] der bischof Pilgerîn [...]
hiez schrîben disiu mære, wie ez ergangen wære,
mit latînischen buochstaben, daz manz für wâre solde haben. (4295ff)

Presumably such a reference was inserted by the vernacular poet in order to add weight to his version of the tale.[15] 'The parallel between this linguistic interplay and what we have seen elsewhere,' asserts Green, 'is so close that it is difficult to dismiss this account [of the scribing of the tale] as completely fictitious,' (1994, 161). However this begs the question as to how the *Klage* and the *Nibelungenlied* came to be recorded in German if such a process had been initiated in Latin. One can hardly imagine a Latin text which could faithfully reproduce the formulaic German and constitute the basis of a later vernacular version which turned the formulas back to near enough their original state. Dictation, if indeed it took place, is surely much more likely to have been directly into the vernacular. The *Klage* poet gives us a clue, however, albeit an ambiguous one, in 4316f: [...] 'getihtet man ez sît hat/dicke in Tiuscher zungen', which suggests that the *Nibelungen* story was later either written or composed in German versions, (*tihten* has the primary meaning 'write' and secondary meaning 'compose'), but my own feeling is that taken in context this reference refers to the process of textualisation - not composition - in German.

'Composition in performance'

In the missing section of his argument quoted above Adam Parry adds in parenthesis his definition of the oral traditional style '(for composition in performance and not dependent on the written word'). The second statement is clearly valid, but the first is disputed by many. Field experience of living epic indicates that there are two types of epic: one apparently composed extempore, with frequent variation demonstrated by the same singer between performances, as observed by Lord and Pandey, and one apparently memorised verbatim with scarcely any variation of core material between performances and performers. Kiparsky 1976 argues that those epics functioning as entertainment are composed in

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15 Cf. Twinger von Königshofen's disbelief in the *warheit* of the Dietrich narratives since they do not appear in Latin: 'Aber wie her Dieterich von Berne und sin meister Hiltebrant vil wurme und drachen ersluogent und wie er mit Ecken dem rysen streit und mit den querhen und in dem rosegarten, do schribet kein meister in latyne von. dovon habe ich es für lügene'. (*Elsässische Chronik* 1386, cited by George Fenwick Jones: 'Dietrich von Bern as a Literary Symbol', *PMLA* LXVII, (1952), 1094-1102, p. 1098). I am indebted to Lesley Ní Bhriain for this reference.

performance and those with mytho-ritualistic resonances such as the Finnish *Kalevala*[16] are recited near enough verbatim.

> Performances [of the *Kalevala*] recorded even many decades apart are, as a rule, far more alike than the corresponding Yugoslav cases presented by Lord. Changes in the content and organisation of the story are rare. Usually, the differences within lines are a matter of small changes of wording, most of them changes of word order or substitutions of synonyms. [...] It is evident that the differences in stability between the Finnish and the Yugoslav oral epic poetry spring from their different roles in their respective cultures. Where the Yugoslav poetry functions largely as storytelling and entertainment, the Finnish poetry has strong elements of *myth* and ritual'. (1976, 95 and 98).

Smith 1987 endorses this view of the more or less verbatim recitation of mythical material from his own experience: the living Rajasthani epic of *Pābūjī,* the ritual singing of which constitutes worship of the god, is fixed and memorised in a singer's repertoire. For him, the living Hindi epics recorded by Pandey, *Lorikī* and *Canainī,* which differ substantially in versions by the same singers, are composed in a similar manner to the South Slavic epic poetry observed by Parry and Lord and their purpose is likewise entertainment. In another article he compares four remarkably parallel recorded extracts from *Pābūjī* by four different singers and maintains that they show 'substantial agreement tempered by some variation in order, in grammar, in the use of synonyms, etc.' (much the same as Kiparsky on the *Kalevala*). ' The epic text is essentially one and fixed: the singers have committed the entire tale to memory'.[17] Kiparsky's and Smith's conclusions would suggest extempore composition for the *Nibelungen* tradition and the core *kāṇḍas* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, since these are works which entertain in a non-ritual environment, and more or less verbatim recitation of the epic once the priestly tradition took over from the secular, but, as I have already indicated, it is not the method but the style of composition, as expressed in Adam Parry's statement, minus the qualification in parenthesis, which interests me. We have already noted the characteristically freer formulaic make-up of the *Nibelungenlied* and the core *Rāmāyaṇa kāṇḍas* and the apparently more deliberate use of stock formulaic diction in the stage three *kāṇḍas* which in the Indian context is not neccessarily a sign of written composition. The uncompromising insistence on extempore composition in performance is, I suggest, an unfortunate Milman Parry red-herring which detracts from his ground-breaking theory, based on observations of Homer, that the epic oral style is one which draws heavily on the use of formula.

The second theory of performance, that of memorised transmission was a later development. We have seen that experience in the field appears to indicate two methods of performing living epic, by extempore composition and from memory, as Kiparsky 1976 observed, however it must be said that in the main most scholars of oral traditional poetry

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16 Collected by Elias Lönnrot and David Europaeus, published 1849.

17 'The Singer or the Song? A Reassessment of Lord's "Oral Theory" ', *Man.*, n.s. 12, 141-53, quoted by A.B. Lord *Oral Tradition*, Vol. 2, No.1, 1987, 66.

belonged to one camp or the other. Much earlier, Jacobi suggested what is now obviously a compromise position: that the *Rāmāyaṇa* was transmitted more or less verbatim apart from unconscious shifts in the sequence of lines and minor 'in-performance' changes to cover brief lapses of memory.

Denn nichts ist natürlicher, als dass die Reihenfolge auswendig gelernter Verse sich im Gedächtnisse verschiebe, namentlich wenn ihm viele tausende von Versen aufgebürdet werden. Ferner ist natürlich, dass der Wortlaut mündlich überlieferter Verse teilweise bedeutende Veränderungen erleiden musste, da jeder Rhapsode mit Leichtigkeit dasjenige, sozusagen, aus eigenen Mitteln ergänzen konnte, was sein Gedächtnis nicht genau festgehalten hatte. (1893, 9).

This seems a reasonable supposition, given the ready memory bank of formulaic stock expressions which an epic singer-poet must have had at his disposal and which would also have allowed him to cater extempore to individual audience taste and location. It is not difficult to imagine, on the other hand, that each poet would want to add his own contribution to the corpus, composing and fixing it prior to performance or that he inserted memorised material adapted from another performer's repertoire. Lord, for years a faithful proponent of his teacher Parry's theory of extempore composition, gave considerable ground in 1987, agreeing to Smith's concept of a 'more or less stable core' while maintaining that this core was 'remembered' rather than 'fixed' and 'memorized'.[18]

It is extremely important to realize the distinction between *memorizing*, with its conscious attempt to reproduce every word of an 'original', which must be fixed for the process to be meaningful, and *remembering*, the basic, normal process of recall, which is more potent, I believe, than it is generally credited with being. It is through learning the art of verse-making and through remembering given, discrete, units of composition, rather than through word-for-word memorization, that the South Slavic songs were both composed and transmitted. I believe that it was in this way that the epic songs in ancient Greek tradition were transmitted from one generation to another.

The opposing camps, then, appear to be more or less reconciled, although Lord himself emphasised the divergences in Smith's four examples mentioned above,[19] which the latter considered insignificant, and continued to maintain until his death: 'Stability does not necessarily mean fixety', (1995, 212). I think it important, however, to preserve the distinction between a relatively fixed narrative performed in a ritual setting, such as the *Rāmāyaṇa* is likely to have become under brahman influence, and a freer, secular 'remembered' narrative with a 'stable core' such as the *Nibelungenlied* probably was. It is tempting to infer from two third-stage references a memorised tradition of *Rāmāyaṇa* performance. 1.4.5 describes Vālmīki's singer-disciples Kuśa and Lava as 'medhāvinau', which Goldman translates '[having] excellent memories', but this seems to be reading more into the adjective *medhāvin*, 'wise', than is justified: the word probably signifies no more than 'intelligent' or 'quick-brained' here. More promising is 1.4.11 with its 'vāco vidheyaṃ [...] kṛtvā' ('having made it [the poem] subject to [i.e. 'suitable to'] the voice', glossed by

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18 1987a, 66-7.

19 1987b, 307.

Goldman as 'learned by heart'. I would prefer to read it as meaning 'having made it suitable for recitation' which leaves the reference ambiguous, as the original is, so that both 'easily memorised' and, in a much wider sense, 'easily told' are implied. It is clear that the *śloka* cannot be used to support speculation as to memorised transmission.

While still on the subject of performance it is interesting to consider briefly the possible duration of the presentation. Brockington and Ehrismann have both made educated estimates as to the likely length of time the epics would take to perform. A third-stage *Rāmāyaṇa* reference suggests the singing/reciting of twenty *sargas* a day ('divase viṃśatiḥ sargāḥ geyāḥ', 7.84.9), which, says Brockington, would mean five hundred verses, (2000a, 210), that is, roughly one thousand lines. Perhaps this was to give time for meditation and worship during or between sessions. A December 1990 recitation in Mysore of the roughly sixteen thousand lines of a version of the Siri epic reported by Gowda and noted by Brockington seems to have been somewhat less protracted than this in that it lasted twenty-five hours, which, says Brockington, would mean three hundred to a thousand lines per session of a half hour to an hour and a half, (ibid.).[20] Judging by night performances of oral narrative I have witnessed in rural South India, (not always as a willing spectator but as a passive, sleepless listener, thanks to extraordinarily powerful public address systems), such a figure would suggest a possible duration of six nights, including intermissions, for a recitation of sixteen thousand lines. This is considerably less than half the epic's length as constituted in the Critical Edition, so that one could project for ancient times a possible extended performance over several nights/ days of the core *kāṇḍas* or else a considerably truncated rendering of the narrative contained in all seven *kāṇḍas,* at a stage before many accretions were added to the corpus. Ehrismann estimates: 'In einer Stunde könnte [der Sänger] etwa 125 vierversige Langzeilstrophen vortragen; 19 Stunden würde ihn also unser Lied in Anspruch nehmen, etwa eine Woche mittäglicher oder abendlicher Vorträge,' (1987, 75).

Recording of the performance

Curschmann 1967, commenting on the Parry-Lord theory of composition in performance, considers it out of the question that medieval oral poetry could have been written down by a scribe or by a singer himself since the process would have been so slow as to make spontaneous composition impossible. For evidence he refers to the observations by Parry and Lord 'that the Yugoslavian singers find it difficult either to recite slowly enough for someone to follow in long-hand or (if they are literate) to write their songs down

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20 K. Chinnappa Gowda: 'A comparative study of the dictated and taped versions of the Siri epic', reproduced in *XIth Congress of the International Society for Folk-Narrative Research, Papers Vol. 1,* 69-81.

themselves. Consequently it is in this purely technical matter that the theory of oral-formulaic composition has its most patent defects,' (45). Referring to *Bede's Story of Cædmon* which Magoun[21] believes was written down by clerical scribes (though Curschmann's doubts on the likelihood of dictation apply equally to other works including the *Nibelungenlied*) Curschmann goes on to stress just how slowly an oral poet would have to recite, 'much slower [...] than he would have to in our days of better transcribing techniques (not to mention the tape-recorder). [...] And if the singer had simply sung, without paying attention to the scribe's capacity, these texts would be even more garbled than we think they are', (ibid.) On practical grounds, therefore, Curschmann believes that medieval epic must have been written. It is possible also to imagine that the performer would have found the process of dictation inhibiting when deprived of an audience and the ensuing mutual interaction. Lord suggests that a singer of Homeric poems would have given a longer performance when dictating, since the process allowed him more time, (1995, 105), but he does not hazard a guess based on the South Slavic experience, although he referred earlier to the 'unfamiliar circumstances of performance such as dictating and singing for a microphone' with which Parry's subjects had to contend, (1960, 115).

I believe that Curschmann's objections arise mainly from Lord's earlier insistence on a strict application of Parry's theory of improvised composition in performance. When we bring in Lord's later concession to the power of 'remembering' a 'more or less stable core' the possiblity of much slower dictation becomes far less remote since the reciter is not in fact composing his entire poem from scratch. An epic which was for the most part memorised, (or a much longer one like the *Rāmāyaṇa*, textualised in an unknown number of hypothesised stages), and which therefore required only minimal improvisation to carry the singer through the performance, would surely have enabled a much more comfortable speed of dicatation, both for himself and for the scribe, than Curschmann allows. As has often been stated, the texts of our epics that we possess do not represent *the* definitive version of each. There is no such hypothetical entity since no immutable text exists without writing, the nearest approximation to absolute verbatim transmission in the Indo-European poetic tradition being in all probability the *Vedas*. However, it is reasonable to suggest that the versions of the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* as constituted in the critical editions do not differ substantially from others that the particular singer-poets recorded might have transmitted on other occasions or from other versions in circulation at the time. We have Smith's evidence of only slight variations between his different recorded versions of the *Pābūjī* epic.[22] It is by no means beyond the bounds of possibility that the bulk of the

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21 As cited by Curschmann ibid.

22 See n. 17.

Nibelungenlied was written down at the dictation of a single poet, his version of the German *Nibelungen* corpus. In the case of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, with its innumerable accretions and lack of homogeneity, the CE text must represent a considerable number of recorded performances as the entire narrative gradually underwent textualisation. As Brockington suggests, it is entirely possible that some of the material not included in the earliest written versions of the story continued to be transmitted orally before being included in the written corpus at a later stage (1998, 396).

Baugh, writing on the mid-fourteenth to mid-fifteenth century anonymous Middle English romances disseminated by minstrels, has no difficulty with the notion of dictation. He argues that these minstrels were not themselves the authors of the romances but that they had great powers of memory and of improvisation if that memory failed them in performance and that the very anonymity of the romances suggests that these are written oral versions rather than scribes' copies of a poet's work. Whether the romances were composed by minstrel-transmitters or by writing poets, a question which Baugh discusses, is not the issue that concerns us here. Rather it is the practical possibility of performance for dictation, which seems feasible, and the reasons why a minstrel might decide to record his romance. Baugh suggests the following reasons, among others, which could well have motivated the *kuśīlavas*, at least, if not the brahman custodians of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and the last *Nibelungen* singer-poet: 'as an insurance against forgetfulness [...], to give it to a fellow minstrel who would reciprocate in kind, to satisfy the wish of a patron, to make a little money on the side', (1967, 31). And the importance of the *Manessische Liederhandschrift* in establishing that the dictation of poetry was a common medieval practice should not be underestimated. One may assume that scribes had of necessity developed relatively rapid dictation skills even if they did not possess the secretarial shorthand used during the past hundred years or so until the invention of the dictaphone. Contemporary Indian pictorial evidence of dictation is unfortunately not available, as far as I am aware, though the use of tablets for writing, as in medieval Germany, is borne out by a 2nd century BCE terracotta bas-relief depicting a child writing on a tablet the first few characters of the alphabet in Brāhmī script.[23]

2. Other Indices of Orality

We have seen that the use of formula, although the key characteristic of the oral style, is not itself a *test* of oral composition, however formulaic a text may appear. There are other factors which must also be taken into account when attempting to posit the likely medium of

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[23] Excavated at Sugh in 1968. B. Ch. Chhabra: 'Sugh Terrracotta with Brahmi Barakhadi', *Bulletin of the National Museum of India*, New Delhi, 2, 1970, 14-16 and other sources, cited by von Hinüber 1990, 17. Since he has not himself seen the original in Delhi Hinüber cautiously implies that, from Chhabra's reading of the artefact, the alphabet depicted is that of Middle Indic Pāli, not Sanskrit, which he believes to have been written down later than Pāli.

composition of a particular text. Even then, positive proof is, as I have said, out of the question. As Ong observes, oral narrative typically exhibits a number of significant characteristics,[24] all of which are recognisable in my chosen texts to a greater or lesser degree. Firstly, oral narrative is dependent on a sophisticated system of mnemonics which enable the dual process of remembering and literal 're-call' (i.e. the voiced performance of narrative retained in the memory) without recourse to a written text. The use of standard themes is one *aide-mémoire*, as observed by Parry. In his attempt to establish an inclusive definition of epic worldwide Hatto 1991 adds to the category 'mnemotechnische Mittel', alongside formulas and traditional themes and motifs, what he calls 'epic moments,' the dramatic high points towards which the poet-singer works as he tells his story. Kuhn had a similar concept, 'Gebärdenszenen', which Hatto regards as essentially synonymous with his own term.[25] For Hatto these 'epic moments' are a more refined means of structuring material for recall than formulas and standard themes: 'Organisatorische Faktoren einer noch höheren Stufe sind die großen, meist bildhaft einprägsamen, mit Symbolik getränkten Wendepunkte. [...] Solche *epic moments* sind mit Sicherheit der mündlichen Phase der Tradition zuzuschreiben', (1991, 11).

Kriemhild's tears of blood over Siegfried's coffin exemplify an 'epic moment', says Hatto. Even more dramatic and symbolic and of greater narratological significance I find the fresh bleeding of Siegfried's wounds as Hagen approaches the coffin in the same scene and the placing of Siegfried's corpse outside Kriemhild's chamber at Hagen's order. Much has been written on the 'epic moments' of the taking of Brünhild's ring and girdle and of Brünhild's tears, to name two more instances among many. Parallel examples of the use of this mnemonic narratological technique in the *Rāmāyaṇa* are Rāma's breaking of Śiva's bow in Mithilā, Kaikeyī's triumphant claiming of her boon from Daśaratha, Rāvaṇa's abduction of Sītā, the capturing of Hanumān in Laṅkā, Sītā's ordeal by fire, again to cite only a few. Other key elements of oral poetics have a similarly mnemonic function: rhythms (formulaic material is of course strongly rhythmic and therefore memorable), balanced patterns, repetitions, antitheses, alliteration, assonance, all techniques employed in our epics in varying measure. The need for recall, then, determines thought-pattern, in mnemonic structures which tend to be fixed but are nevertheless open to variation within certain parameters as required. By contrast, it is clear that Joyce and Beckett monologues, for instance, free-roaming and lacking mnemonic patterning, are dependent on writing and can only be memorised from a text.

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24 1982, 31ff. Ong acknowledges his debt to the work of Havelock, Goody and Watt for many of the categories of orally-based thought and expression which he sets out.

25 Hugo Kuhn: 'Über nordische und deutsche Szenenregie in der Nibelungendichtung' in *Dichtung und Welt im Mittelalter*, Stuttgart 1959, 196-219.

Ong stresses the aggregative rather than analytical nature of oral thought and narrative, a characteristic of its conservative ethos expressed in the piling up of stock parallels, antitheses and epithets. 'Traditional expressions in oral cultures must not be dismantled: it has been hard work getting them together over the generations, and there is nowhere outside the mind to store them,' (1982, 39). Commenting on Ong, Lord rightly points out not only the usefulness of the epithet in epic composition (it serves, of course, as a line-filler) but also its repeated reference to a certain characteristic quality attached to a particular protagonist which holds good for most of the action, even if the protagonist is temporarily displaying quite a different mode of behaviour, (1987a, 57). Our epics certainly contain a good many examples of aggregative style, for example the stock epithets *küene* and *grimme* associated with Siegfried and Hagen respectively (though Hagen is more frequently dubbed *küene*) and *schoene* with Kriemhild;[26] and *akliṣṭakarmaṇaḥ/akliṣṭakārinaḥ* ('tirelessly acting') used of Rāma, *surasutopamā* ('goddess-like') of Sītā and *rākṣasādhipaḥ* ('supreme lord of the *Rākṣasas*') of Rāvaṇa.[27] In the *Rāmāyaṇa* name plus epithet fill the *pāda* (half line), whereas name plus epithet in the stressed *Nibelungenlied* half line can be made either to fill it or to accommodate extra words as required. Both epics use half-line patronymics as epithets, another hallmark of epic poetry, as in *rāmo daśarathātmajaḥ* ('Rāma, son of Daśaratha') and, together with the name derived from the city of her birth, *maithilī janakātmajā* ('the lady from Mithilā, daughter of Janaka')[28]; compare *daz Sigmundes/Siglinde kint, der edeln Uoten kint* and *daz Aldrîânes kint* for Siegfried, Kriemhild/her brothers and Hagen/Dancwart respectively, occurring usually without the name in the previous half-line or even in the strophe, in which case context determines the identitity of the sibling. Like almost all types of formula in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, names plus patronymics tend to occur in the second and fourth *pādas*, and patronymics - with or without the associated name - in the *Nibelungenlied* in the second half-line, i.e. in parallel position.[29]

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[26] Bäuml and Fallone 1976 list 30 examples of *küene* used epithetically of Siegfried, all before his death less than half way through the poem, and 19 associated with Hagen; *grimme* occurs 7 times with reference to Hagen, never to Siegfried. Kriemhild has the epithet *schoene* attached to her name 18 times, though it must not be forgotten that it is used several times of Brünhild and even of marginal personages like Helche.

[27] Brockington observes that *rāmasyākliṣṭakarmaṇaḥ* and *rāmam akliṣṭakārinam* together occur 26 times in the entire poem, *sītā surasutopamā* 10 times, *maithilī janakātmajā* 13 times and *rāvaṇo rākṣasādhipaḥ* 28 times (1998, 367). Considering the relative brevity of the *Nibelungenlied* and the number of times the same epithet is repeated in that work, the much longer *Rāmāyaṇa* does not exhibit the same intensity of particular stock epithets. However it has a much greater variety of epithets than the *Nibelungenlied,* many of them synonyms of equal metrical length. For a detailed survey of the names of Rāma and Sītā see Brockington 1993-4 and 1995.

[28] *Sītā janakātmajā* would not quite fill the strictly eight-syllable *śloka pāda* .

[29] Brockington 1998, 366. Bäuml and Fallone 1976, 369.

The traditionalist nature of oral societies ensures that epic conserves received wisdom, preserves the inherited order, legitimates the status quo. In time old themes and formulas may be adapted by the use of new motifs, but there is no radical change of world view or aesthetics, no innovation.[30] As I said at the beginning of this chapter, singer-poets may be inventive but they are not innovative. Innovation gradually emerges when written culture is established. For Ong, writing supplants remembering as the means of conserving; it frees the mind to undertake new speculation, (ibid. 41). For example, villainous behaviour in epic is always censured, but if the protagonist is nobly born he is handsome just as the hero and heroine inevitably are. There is a rugged grandeur about Hagen[31] and Rāvaṇa's pleasing physical features are constantly stressed along with the opulence of his attire and his debauchery. On the other hand, a low-born villain such as Mantharā is ugly and deformed. A physically unattractive noble heroine is unthinkable. Like all heroines of epic and romance, Enit, for instance, is portrayed in relation to the traditional beauty/nobility nexus. She is beautiful, although she is poor as a church mouse; yet beneath the rags that scarcely cover her body her bearing is such that she appears to be of noble birth, and it is no surprise to discover that she is in fact a king's daughter. A far from novel twist in the convention, since the penniless prince or princess commonly appears in folktales which end with a restoration of his or her fortunes: the rightful order of wealth plus birth plus beauty, temporarily disturbed, is once again intact. Erec similarly performs this service of restoration for Enit's family, and so there is no innovative breaking of the convention in Chrétien or Hartmann. Innovation in time questions the beauty/nobility nexus and examines the psycho-social ramifications of physical unattractiveness, even disfigurement, but not for several centuries. The facially unattractive - even repellant - but passion-inspiring heroines

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30 Sweeney 1980 briefly considers the art of the *dalang* in the living *Wayang Kulit* tradition. The *dalang* composes from an outline of the action, a basic schema as Sweeney terms it, and each performance is a variation of this schema made up of typical themes. The underlying narrative patterns must be familiar to the audience: a *dalang* may vary his motifs, but the schema must not be altered. Sweeney observes that as a known student of *Wayang Kulit* he has been approached by *dalangs* seeking new material, by which, he has discovered, they mean new motifs, not new themes. Sweeney's deliberately convention-breaking narrative inventions were doctored by the *dalnags* to fit the old themes. '[Schemata] are necessary not only to the *dalang* in presenting his story, but also to the audience in understanding it. The nature of audience conditions and the composition of that audience (all age groups are included) make it imperative that the *dalang* does not depart from the pattern which the audience has come to expect or, in other words, which conforms to their mental set,' (62). Furthermore, the stereotyped figures in the plays remain constant, despite the modern appearance occasionally given to some minor puppets, 'e.g. peaked caps, modern hair-styles, Malay national dress, etc.', (51).

31 We are given a very detailed description of his appearance in 1734 as the Huns take note of it on his arrival in Etzelnburg. His eyes are cold, but he is 'wol gewahsen' and has 'hêrlîchen ganc'.

endowed with nobility of spirit portrayed in Stifter's *Brigitta* and Webb's *Precious Bane* are much later creations.[32]

This tendency to socio-organisational homeostasis in oral culture is generally reflected in the language as well as the content of oral poetry. We have already seen that both our epics preserve archaic vocabulary which, as Ong points out, remains functional within the context of epic transmission, a live tradition relevant to the needs and expectations of the community, although this language is dropped from speech outside the tradition once the vocabulary becomes redundant. Sweeney notes that in *Wayang Kulit* the proportion of language used by the puppet master which belongs exclusively to the narrative is relatively small: '[The *dalang* thinks in *wayang* speech, [...] although it should be noted that only a part of the vocabulary of *wayang* speech differs from that of the regular dialect, and the proportion varies from *dalang* to *dalang*,' (1980, 61). A few epic archaisms no longer have any semantic significance whatever, yet it is clear from performances of living epic that certain words whose exact meaning is now lost still possess a hallowed significance within the sung tradition,[33] and one may infer that this was sometimes the case with certain obscure archaisms being repeated to ancient and medieval audiences. Of course, as we have also seen, preservation of the traditional does not preclude insertion of the contemporary, a large part of an oral poet's skill lying in his ability to adapt received material to the expectations of his listeners.

Ong and Lord both recognise the redundant, or repetitious, nature of orality, the expressing of the same idea in lexical parallelisms, the 'amplificatio' noted by ancient rhetoricians which persists today in speech-making. For Lord the device as used in oral narrative is more than a practical aid to help the singer think on his feet or to keep the audience on track: rather the repetition has an ancient ritual function. He cites as an example the ritual of the message given first to the messenger and then recited by that messenger to the recipient only a few lines later. The audience has not forgotten the message meanwhile; instead the 'ritual character of the communication' is emphasised by repetition, (1987, 58). Certainly to a modern reader, used to the much sparer written style, the glosses and

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32 Prue Sarn's hare-lip and Brigitta's swarthy, wild appearance which marks her out among her conventionally beautiful sisters make the women withdrawn and slow to be convinced that they are lovable and therefore to permit themselves to love. Both authors maintain, perhaps somewhat simplistically, though Webb writes from personal experience, that this social isolation forges great strength of character. 'In dem Angesichte eines Häßlichen ist für uns oft eine innere Schönheit, die wir nicht auf der Stelle von seinem Werte herzuleiten vermögen, während uns oft die Züge eines anderen kalt und leer sind, von denen alle sagen, daß sie die größte Schönheit besitzen,' (Adalbert Stifter: *Brigitta*, Insel Verlag, Leipzig, [1920?], 3). The aggregative residue which dictates that heroines must be beautiful dies hard. It survives to this day in mainstream Hollywood productions.

33 For example, Smith notes this phenomenon in living Rajasthani epic. See ch.1 n.4. As Ong puts it, communal semantic memory, even in the context of epic transmission, is not indestructable, (1982, 48).

sometimes almost word-for-word repetitions and extended, often synonymous descriptions appear redundant to the narrative: they are tedious and tend to be skipped. However, one can appreciate that they may well have carried a (secular) ritual significance now lost. In our texts we find for example Gunther's invitation to Siegfried and Kriemhild given to the messenger Gere and relayed by him to the royal invitees a few strophes on in the same *âventiure*, with the formula *vor disen sunewenden* appearing in both passages at line 3b (735 and 751). Of course there is no way in which the audience would be expected to have forgotten the contents of the message between its despatch in Worms and its reception in Xanten. A striking example of the repeated message, much commented on, is Hanuman's lengthy reportage to Rāma of his - even longer, and no doubt much interpolated - series of conversations with Sītā in captivity, some of it consisting of almost verbatim repetition of the exchanges. Much of 4.36 surfaces again in 4.65, with a similar pattern for *sargas* 37 and 66. However, it must be said that not all signs of redundancy, though characterisic of oral style, are necessarily indicative of oral composition, and this is quite possibly a case in point which could be attributed to a redactor's hand. Brockington certainly views *sargas* 36-7 as later additions, (1985, 342).

The repetitious description of the half-naked sleeping women in Rāvaṇa's harem - clearly the work of more than one poet, each anxious to take advantage of the erotic potential of the narrative - which stretches with minor variations over three *sargas* (*Rām.* 5.7-9) is another instance of redundant oral style, though it treats a decidedly non-heroic subject more typically associated with *kāvya.*[34] Most striking of all are *ślokas* 8.34-41, each depicting in very similar terms a woman asleep clutching her musical instrument which in several cases is a type of drum: parallels and synonyms abound. In 5.7.41-46 and 48 the jewellery adorning the voluptuous sleeping bodies is similarly treated. Their costly, transparent attire, such as it is, has much the same ritual significance as the opulent *Schneiderstrophen,* both serving as validation in hyperbolic terms of royal or noble breeding and riches. The *Schneiderstrophen* reach their acme in the three-strophe description of Siegfried's hunting garb, (952-4). Here, rather like the different types of musical instruments and jewellery in Laṅkā, the passage regales listeners with a word-picture of the supreme hunter's attire trimmed with all kinds of fur, some named and some left to the imagination. Taking 951-956 together, we have an extravagant description of his full appearance complete with gold-adorned arrows and golden hunting-horn.

Another feature of traditional oral expression is very much linked with the notion of redundancy. During my discussion of genre in the previous chapter I examined examples of another characteristic of epic, the agonistic battlefield confrontations. Ong suggests that these

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[34] Classical court poetry. Such passages are closer in ambience to the non-heroic interludes in the *Odyssey*, for instance the Kalypso and Nausikaa sections.

confrontations mirror the essentially agonistic nature of oral narrative itself. Taking this idea further, the act of performance, the declamation to the audience, the reaching for effect, the capping of one gory battlefield description with another even more graphic, the verbal contests which take place between protagonists, the exaggerated praise passages, these are all facets of a world view which finds its expression in agonistic activity. Such delight on the part of singer and audience alike in the protracted use of the sounded word almost for its own sake, an aesthetic generally unappreciated by a post-oral audience[35] impatient to follow the action, is clearly discernable in the *Rāmāyaṇa* in its frequent lengthy speeches and debates, as for example the series of exchanges between Bharatha, Jābāli and Vaiṣiṣṭha with Rāma, the former all trying unsuccessfully to persuade Rāma to take the throne (2.98-103), and between Rāvaṇa and Sītā, he alternately cajoling and threatening, she steadfastly rejecting him (*kāṇḍas* 3 and 5); its not infrequent proverbial insertions[36] and hyperbolic *svābhāvokti* passages depicting the different seasons (*kāṇḍa* 3) attributable to the *kuśīlavas*; its lyrical description of the deserted city of Ayodhyā after Rāma's departure by means of *śloka* upon *śloka* of developed similes (2.106, equally an example of the redundancy outlined above) and its second- and third-stage, often lengthy, insertions of *purāṇic*[37] material, the exuberant telling of gnomic oral tales within the tale. The *Nibelungenlied* is also conceived and executed in agonistic mode: not only in the obvious context of the verbal exchanges between Siegfried and the court at Worms (*âv.* 3), between Kriemhild and Brünhild at the joust and in front of the cathedral (14), beween Hagen and Kriemhild outside the great hall (29) and between Brünhild and Gunther on the one hand and - a parallel scene - between Kriemhild and Etzel, each wife persuading reluctant husbands to initiate a fateful feast (12 and 23); but also with reference to the hyperbolic descriptions of the Brünhild-Siegfried field and marriage-bed contests (7 and 10) and Siegfried's strangely assorted kill during his last hunt (16), passages which, like those indicated in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the modern reader finds the most difficult to accommodate.

Oral narrative is also typically marked by internal narratological inconsistencies and contradictions, as Jacobi noticed at an early stage in *Rāmāyaṇa* scholarship. He was, however, searching in the pre-Parry era for 'Echtheit', the material which he believed appeared in the 'Urrezension' before interpolation intervened, and his purpose in pin-pointing these discrepancies was to eliminate what seemed to him at odds with the 'original' story-line. He highlights for instance the cases of the *rākṣasa* champions Virūpākṣa and

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35 The tradition lingers in present-day India where the art of extempore speech-making with its stress on form more than content, its use of punning and other rhetorical devices, its striving for the approbation of aurally discerning listeners, is still cultivated.

36 Proverbs are part of the oral gnomic tradition.

37 The *Purāṇas* are ancient mythological tales, the 'lore of yesteryear'.

Akampana who die twice in battle, Virūpākṣa being killed first by Hanuman during his lone *Sundarakāṇḍa* stand against all-comers and subsequently once more during the battle of Laṅkā by Sugrīva, and Akampana meeting his death early in the siege at the hands of Hanuman and later apparently returning to life to be pointed out to Rāma on the battlefield by Vibhīṣaṇa, (Jacobi 35-6). The German Sanskritist is also bothered by the contradiction of Sugrīva's double commissioning of agents to search for Sītā, first the four search parties and then Hanuman alone, to whom Rāma entrusts his ring as proof of identity, confident that Hanuman will indeed manage to reach her: 'Wir müssen, um das Ursprüngliche wiederherzustellen und die nachgewiesenen Widersprüche zu heben, die betreffenden Gesänge [...] streichen, in denen die Entsendung der vier Expeditionen erzählt [... wird]', (ibid. 38). Post Parry, rather than rejecting this passage as not genuine, we accept it a valid contribution to the corpus. Among the many other such inconsistencies to be found in the work are the following: Laṅkā is twice set completely on fire, first by Hanuman in 5.52 and later by the Vānaras in 6.62, a much longer and aesthetically more developed *sarga*, which Brockington 1985 considers to be a *kuśīlava* insertion. Rāvaṇa, in keeping with his epithetic alternative name Daśagriva ('ten-necked'), is frequently portrayed as having ten heads, but sometimes he appears to have only one, as at 6.98.10, where the poet responsible for this particular section of the corpus describes one of the dead ruler's mourning wives holding his head in her lap,[38] otherwise this begs the reductive question: 'Which of his heads?'. And Rāma, having returned with Lakṣmaṇa to the empty ashram, is abruptly back at the beginning of 3.58 on his homeward journey alone to find Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa, another *kuśīlava* expansion, according to Brockington 1985, which, on account of its shared language and imagery, he believes to be a borrowing from the Nāla episode in the *Mahābharata*.[39]

Hatto and others before him observed similar narratological discrepancies in the *Nibelungenlied*. In fact, even after the publication of the Parry-Lord theories, Hatto, convinced that the poet was a writing one, attributes the inconsistencies in the epic to his refusal, in deference to listeners familiar with the story, to remove all traces of the older *Nibelungen* tradition. What he is in effect saying, although he does not make reference to Parry's theories on epic, is that the poet is working from an established corpus, in oral poetic mode grafting new material - which, one could add, is not necessarily his own but borrowed from other singers, as Smith has witnessed in India (1980, 55) - onto perhaps sometimes incompletely remembered older material.[40] To be sure, there was a widespread medieval

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38 This is, I believe, an ancient Indo-European formulaic image which I shall discuss elsewhere.

39 Brockington points out more narrative inconsistencies (1998, 385-6 and 1985,168-9).

40 For example the inconsistent emphasis on Kriemhild's having her son Ortlieb brought to Etzel's feast solely in order to start hostilites with her guests (31.1912) when she has already plotted with Bloedelin

lack of concern for total consistency, but certain instances in the *Nibelungenlied* seem to go beyond even these lax norms of poetic licence. One of the most obvious in the *Nibelunglied* is the 'cross' motif, the sign of unwitting betrayal stitched by Kriemhild in collusion with Hagen on Siegfried's battle tunic which somehow becomes an undershirt revealed by Siegfried when he strips off his outer garments before the race to the spring. It seems unlikely that Kriemhild would have been such a thrifty royal housekeeper as to have her husband's used battle tunic cut down as an undershirt and, moreover, the cross retained in exactly the same position. Bloody and tattered tunics were surely discarded by royal warriors. A writing poet reworking the tradition for a reading audience, becoming aware of the discrepancy, would probably have felt obliged to make a digression to account for it to his audience, perhaps surmising that Kriemhild had sewn the cross on his undershirt after her dreams of foreboding so that Hagen could protect him, or that she was in the habit of stitching one on all her husband's new clothes so that he would not be in danger at any time.[41] The presumably oral *Nibelung* poet-singers see no need for an explanation: the cross is an essential part of the tale, part of the tradition - how else will Hagen know the exact spot at which to hurl Siegfried's spear? - and no matter that one poet went into an elaborate description of Siegfried's hunting gear so ornate that a tiny stitched cross would not have shown up on it, or that another added the detail of the discarded outer garments.

One further possible index of orality deserves exploration: the medium of presentation. There is evidence to suggest that both the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* were sung

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(1903-9), and the massacre of the Burgundian squires is in fact the catalyst and Hagen's subsequent murder of the boy retaliation for this outrage. Hatto points out that at the parallel point in the *Thiðreks Saga* Grimhild orders her son to punch Hogni in the face, (which would indeed be sufficient in heroic tradition to cause the warrior to punish the boy and start the fighting). Hatto calls this incomplete mixing of two narrative components 'shoddy, even stupid work' and continues: 'We have found [the poet] compromising again, attempting to please the moderns and yet giving the ancients as much of the old version as he dared', (1965/88, 303). Presumably he assumes that high medieval audiences would have considered this murder, and that of the boy's tutor, unmerited punishment for a child's insult and therefore the poet simply transferred Hagen's harsh reaction to the moment at which news of the squires' mass death reaches the Great Hall, but without removing the explanation for Ortlieb's presence: Kriemhild's belief that there was no other way to provoke the Huns into battle. This may well be, but Hatto is surely missing the point. The far from seamless combination of the two versions of events is not a sign of the last poet's incompetence but more likely of his part in the process of oral transmission and accretion, either by invention or by borrowing from other poet-singers' versions of the story. Once intertwined, however imperfectly, two (or more) versions become part of the corpus. A writing poet reworking the tradition would presumably have noticed and corrected this inconsistency or, if he had invented his own version, made it fit the rest of the narrative.

41 Hartmann, for instance, in fact goes out of his way to explain what he thinks his audience may find difficult to understand in his reworking of his Chrétien source for *Erec* where he tells us at considerable length that the reason why the hero cannot see or hear his attackers approaching, while Enit can, is that he is wearing full armour including his helmet. ('nû endarf niemen sprechen daz:/„von wiu kam daz diu vrouwe baz/beide gehôrte und gesach?"/ ich sage iu von wiu daz geschah,' *Erec* 4150ff; cf. Chrétien 2765ff with no explanation). Of course it is more likely that Enit's involuntary calling out in spite of Erec's command that she not speak to him is simply part of the story, his testing of her and his own sense of knightly worth, and has nothing to do with the practicalities of impeded hearing or vision. Hartmann appears to have missed the point.

epics, and the likelihood of their being sung, or perhaps more accurately chanted in musical fashion, from manuscripts is somewhat remote, especially as these singers would probably have accompanied themselves on musical instruments: the *Rāmāyaṇa* in fact has late references at 1.2.17b, 1.4.7d, 7.84.14dand 85.3b to its being *tantrīlayasamanvita*, suited to the accompaniment of stringed and probably also percussion instruments.[42] The evidence for a sung presentation is, rather surprisingly, only external as far as the *Nibelungenlied* is concerned. I have already quoted in a different context (that of clerical disapproval of the worldly content of heroic poetry) the reference by the twelfth century anonymous author of *Vom Himmlischen Jerusalem*: 'swa man aine guote rede tuot, (das ist) dem tumben unmare./der haizet ime singen von werltlichen dingen/und von der degenhaite', (26.3). Since, as I observed earlier, the proliferation of *Nibelungenlied* manuscripts testifies to the immense popularity of the poem, it is not unreasonable to suggest that our epic might well have been uppermost in the cleric's mind when censuring heroic poetry (he speaks of *degenhait*, an archaic term replaced in the High Middle Ages by *ritterscaft* and surely constituting a reference to this genre rather than to Minnesang or romance).[43] Green argues that *singen* and *degenhait* refer here to Germanic oral poetry, as does the opening of the *Annolied*, in particular 1.1: 'Wir horten ie dikke singen von alten dingen', 1994, 31.[44]

If we look further at these opening lines we find a thematic summary of heroic poetry which, apart from the reference to *veste burge*, could accurately apply to the *Nibelungenlied*: 'wi snelle helide vuhten, wi si veste burge bræchen/wi sich liebin winiscefte scieden, wi riche kunege al zegiengen', (*Annolied* 1.2-3).[45] Of course the poet could conceivably be referring to written sources in Roman epic or Old Testament narrative, but this seems less likely in that we have *horten* reinforcing the literal sense of *singen*. Scholz's theory of a 'Hörerfiktion' convention, which addresses the private reader as a figurative audience in a recital situation, is to my mind successfully refuted by Green who stresses the importance of reading *hoeren* and *sagen* in context since even writing authors composed with a literal audience in mind, their work being mostly transmitted by being read aloud or performed as a recitation, (1994, 12 and 30-1).[46] Interestingly enough, all but one of the *Nibelungenlied* uses of *singen/sanc/sungen/gesungen* refer to the singing of mass, and the one reference to

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42 The notion of percussion is carried in *laya* ('rhythm, tempo').

43 The term *ritterscaft* of course appears interchangebly with *degenheit* in the *Nibelungenlied*, e.g. at 12.2, but, as we have seen, oral poets characteristically graft contemporary vocabulary and concepts on to old.

44 Cf. the *Beowulf* account of the lay sung by the minstrel to harp accompaniment.

45 Maurer II, 9.

46 Scholz: *Hören und Lesen: Studien zur primären Rezeption der Literatur im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden 1980.

lesen is used in the same context, at Siegfried's burial, presumably of the reading of prayers, (1065.3). (Incidentally, there is one direct mention of writing in the work, the assertion that no scribe/writer could put into words the grief caused by Rüdeger's death, [2233.2], an aside which underscores the notion of the co-existence of oral and written communication, and one in which I feel the poet is distancing his art from written composition. One other, indirect, reference to writing occurs at 1421.1, where both *brieve unde botschaft* are sent from Ezelnburg to Worms, one which in fact serves to further support Köhn's description of the oral as well as written dimension of medieval letter writing,)[47]. To return to *singen,* the sole use of *sanc* in a secular context in the epic refers not to the performance of heroic poetry but to Volker's offering of what appears to be a *Minnelied* to Rüdeger's wife, (1705.3).

So much for *singen.* However it is immaterial whether the work was actually sung or chanted, or simply recited, since there are numerous references in the poem to the acts of hearing and of speaking which I believe reinforce the poem's likely oral dimension. Most significant of all are those which occur in the context of the performer-audience relationship, that is, the telling and hearing of tales (e.g. 'nu hoert ouch disiu mære' [581.1 and 630.2] and 'nu/hie muget ir gerne hoeren' [419.2 and 1723.2]). Narratorial asides such as 'des kan/enkan ich nicht gesagen' (1099.2 and 1321.2) and 'dann' ich iu kan gesagen' (129.2) highlight the same oral/aural relationship. The formulaic hoeren sagen nexus is freqently explicit, as in the example 'alsô wir hoeren sagen' (764.1), which the *Nibelungen* poets insert not only as a line-filler, but, in oral epic tradition, to lend authority to what they are recounting: because they have heard tell of it, the story is necessarily true. It is of course the direct opposite of the formulaic *an einem buoch lesen*, the medieval writing author's professed foundation for the validity of his - more often than not equally fictitious - account. It is interesting to note that traditional epic narrative formulas creep into Hagen's *récit* of Siegfried's early adventures (*âv.* 3) as Gunther's liegeman temporarily takes on the role of narrator-performer to the Worms court: 'nu hoeret wunder sagen' (89.2), 'daz ist mir wol geseit (88.2) and 'sô wir hoeren sagen' (9.1).[48]

I have already mentioned the *Rāmāyaṇa* references to the transmission of the epic with musical accompaniment. We are further told at 1.4.7a that it is both recited and sung: *pāṭhye geye ca.* Now, it must be said that the verb *paṭh* can refer to text-based as well as non text-based activities (i.e. reading as well as reciting) and also that we are dealing here with late material which could well date from a time when the poem had been at least partially textualised, and, which, as Brockington argues, could even be of written origin; however, taken in the context of the adjacent reference to the accompaniment (*tantrīlayasamanvitaḥ*), it

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[47] See n.9.

[48] This is the passage which Müller unjustifiably, as I suggested earlier, describes as spurious oral story-telling: 'Erzählen in fingierter Mündlichkeit' (130).

is much more likely to mean 'recite' in this *śloka*. My own feeling is that when *paṭh* is used outside a musical connection in stage three material, as in 1.1.77 and 79, it still signifies reciting rather than reading, and this may even be the case with many stage four *passage references which stress the spiritual and material benefits of hearing the *Rāmāyaṇa*.[49] Scholarly opinion is divided on the issue: Brockington and Falk,[50] for example, argue respectively for and against *paṭh* being taken in the *phalaśrutis* as meaning 'read' rather than 'recite'. Of course, there are *passages which clearly point to a written/reading dimension, as for instance 6.3703(D)*7b with its mention of *pustaka*, a manuscript or book. Nevertheless, Green's view of the medieval European oral/aural dimension of the book read aloud transfers well to the early Indian context. The following *passage makes it clear that the transmitter is a brahman, not a *kuśīlava*: 'vācakāya ca dātavyaṃ vastraṃ dhenuhiraṇyakam/ vācake pari tuṣṭe tu tuṣṭāḥ syuḥ sarvadevatāḥ' ('a reciter should be given a garment, a milch cow and gold. If the reciter is satisfied, then all the gods are satisfied', (7.1522*7-8). Incidentally, it is interesting to compare this reward with the rich gifts dispensed to travelling entertainers at royal celebrations in the *Nibelungenlied*, the purpose of such munificence being not the obtaining of sons or good fortune or release from sins, as in the late *Rāmāyaṇa* passages, but the acquisition of fame and honour by the donor whose praises were sounded abroad, much as one imagines the early court *sūtas* sought to achieve through their praises of the Ikṣvāku dynasty in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The 'varende diet' or 'fremde man' receive 'ross unde kleider' at Sigmund's feast to mark Siegfried's investiture as knight (41.2a) and 'kleider unt golt vil rôt,/ross unt darzuo silber' during Gunther's wedding celebrations (687.2b-3a).

Returning to the musical dimension, it is important to make clear that even the concept of singing the poem is not what it appears to the non-Indian reader today. The root usually translated as 'sing', *gai*, is similarly ambiguous in that it can also signify 'recite'.[51] My only experience of the art of a travelling minstrel took place in the late nineteen-sixties in rural Andhra Pradesh when a young lad of about fifteen appeared on my verandah with a large stringed instrument, a type of lute, which he set on the ground in front of him before sitting cross-legged to sing to his own accompaniment. I seem to remember being told by someone that he was of the musician caste and came from Maharastra. I do not know the genre or

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[49] The *phalaśrutis* or 'fruits of hearing'., e.g. 6.3703(G)*7-8 which declares that *kṣatriyas* hearing the poem with heads bowed as it is recited by brahmans will assuredly obtain sons: 'aiśvaryaṃ putralābhaś ca bhaviṣyati na saṃśayaḥ'. Star passages are those interpolations which the Critical Edition considers so late as not to merit inclusion in the body of the text. See Brockington 1985, 329.

[50] Harry Falk: *Schrift im alten Indien: Ein Forschungsbericht mit Anmerkungen* (ScriptOralia 56), Tübingen, 1993.

[51] Monier-Williams has 'speak or recite in a singing manner', *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1960.

content of his song - I assume he was singing in Marathi, a language of the Indo-European group totally different from the local Dravidian one that I was learning at the time - only that the medium of presentation, although very different from Western singing, was melodious and therefore one that I would describe as singing, quite unlike the intoned recitation belonging to the Telugu oral narrative *burrakathā* tradition which is more familiar to me. The boy's voice was full, unexpectedly high and strangely sweet. The singing of Kuśa and Lava is sweet, *madhuram,* in possibly the same sense (1.4.7a and 17c). As for Monier-Williams' definition of *gai* as 'speak[ing] or recit[ing] in a singing manner', the sound of modern-day brahmans chanting the Hindu scriptures and Vedic hymns could perhaps be best described as such. These two examples may give a clue to the mode of presentation by the ancient custodians of the epic: to my mind, the originators, the *sūtas*, and the subsequent disseminators, the *kuśīlavas,* could have sung the tale in the sense that I have tried to convey above, and the brahmans could have chanted it in approximately the same manner as they practise today.

Further references to singing by Kuśa and Lava, again using forms of the root *gai*, are found principally in 1.4.13 and 16-18 and 21,[52] for example *kāvyam agāyatām* ('sang the poem') 13d, and *gītasya* ('of the song') 16a, and 7.84.3-4 and 85.1, as in *kṛtsnaṃ rāmāyanaṃ kāvyaṃ gāyatāṃ* ('sing the entire poem of the *Rāmāyaṇa*') 84.3c-d. Their consummate vocal and interpretational skills are elaborately described in 1.4.9 and 17-18. Vālmīki's instructions to his twin pupils mark these as archetypal wandering minstrels and suggest that the reception of the epic was widespread, being heard by all classes of society: *ṛṣivāṭeṣu* and *brāhmaṇāvasatheṣu ca* ('in the abodes of sages and brahmans') 7.84.4a and b, *rathyāsu rājamārgeṣu* ('along highways and the king's roads') 4c, i.e. by the common people,[53] and *pārthivānāṃ gṛheṣu* ('at royal courts'). Given the early Indian emphasis on the authority of the sounded word, such references to sung transmission and the recital episodes themselves would have lent credibility to the expanded story content which constitutes the *Bāla* and *Uttarakāṇḍas*, performing much the same function as the *hoeren/sagen* formulas in the *Nibelungenlied.* If these *kāṇḍas* are indeed written appendices to the core *Rāma* narrative, as Brockington suggests, these allusions to orality are a device to manufacture a spurious authority for the texts.

However, although rational conjecture could only assume writing brahman, not *kuśīlava*, authors, it is unthinkable that socially prescriptive brahman poets would invent the figures of Kuśa and Lava as *kṣatriya* street singers, a juxtaposition of two classes set apart by a great

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52 1.4.12 is a further such reference, but since its 3-line rather than couplet length marks it as later than the others I do not propose to use it as evidence.

53 This formula occurs also in 1.4.21 where Rāma sees the pair of singers who are praised everywhere on the streets.

socio-religious divide. Internal evidence indicates a small measure of fluidity at this stage between the aristocratic and priestly classes, so that, in rare circumstances, a warrior could become a brahman,[54] but *kuśīlavas* would have had so low a social standing as to make a royal popular entertainer almost certainly their own invention. The oral transmission of the tale of Rāma must have been attributed to his twin sons by non-writing *kuśīlava* poet-performers anxious to enhance their social status by implicitly claiming descent from Rāma's sons by phonological association. It is not clear whether the attribution of the entire epic to the idealised ascetic-poet figure of Vālmīki was a *kuśīlava* or subsequent priestly action, but it seems likely that the *kuśīlava* aetiological concept of archetypal royal wandering minstrels, pupils of Vālmīki, was retained by brahman poets for its validating function (in that it had the weight of oral tradition behind it) and hence incorporated into the narrative. Nevertheless, it must be said that this taking over of the *kuśīlava* tradition does not of itself either prove or disprove the hypothesis that brahman expansion of the core narrative remained for the most part an oral activity. However, in much the same way that Green makes a case for taking many *hoeren/sagen* passages literally, not figuratively, I would suggest, in view of the evidence already adduced, that we similarly read the references to *gai* in context, that is, literally. Furthermore, as I mentioned earlier, the numerous allusions to the hearing of the poem (especially the *phalaśrutis)* stress its oral/aural dimension and reception, whether by singing or recitation or even by reading aloud from a text, though this last activity could of course only have taken place once the epic had been textualised.

Oral tradition and the education of warriors

The earliest setting of both the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, prior to expansions by later generations of singer/reciters which reflect a changing world view, is the heroic age, a part-remembered, part-mythicised golden past to which two conservative aristocratic, still oral, warrior societies looked back with veneration and used as validation for the socio-political structures of their time. Before leaving the orality-literacy debate as it relates to our texts, therefore, a brief consideration of the method by which such warrior values were preserved by inculcation into the young. We have already noted the aristocratic antipathy to book-based education for boys observed by Haubrichs who then goes on to list the accomplishments required of novice warriors in the early Middle Ages, all acquired by oral means:

Das Bildungsethos dieser Schicht ist aus der germanischen Zeit ererbt und entspricht dem kriegerischen Selbstbewußtsein der *maiores*. [...] Den körperlichen Exerzitien gebührt absoluter Vorrang: erlernt werden Reiten, Jagen, Ringen, Steinstoßen, Springen, Laufen, Schwimmen, Fechten, das Kriegshandwerk usw. Wettspiel und Wettkampf sind Bestandteile der kriegerischen, agonalen Welt. [...] Das Ideal des *vir strenuus* wird ergänzt durch historisches Wissen (Wissen um das Woher und Wohin der eigenen Sippe,

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54 There is the case of Viśvāmitra which I cite below. He is in fact the exception that proves the rule.

Kenntnis heroischer *exempla*) und juristische Kenntnisse (Wissen um die gesellschaftliche Position der eigenen Person, um diese zu verbessern oder verteidigen). [...] Genealogie und Geschichte konnten in Helden- und Preisliedern, welche von den *gesta priorum* berichteten, gelernt werden. [...] Moralische Regeln (Weisheitssprüche) konnten in einer mündlichen Kultur durch Gnomik [...] vermittelt werden. [...] die volkssprachlichen Zaubersprüche des frühen Mittelalters offenbaren auch für das christianisierte Europa des 6.-9. Jh.s magische Vorstellung der laikalen Oberschicht. Noch später tauchen Mantik (*nigromancie* , [...]) und Magie gelegentlich unter den Künsten auf, auf die sich ein junger Adliger verstehen soll. (1976, 600).

I have quoted Haubrichs extensively because he unknowingly describes so much of what the royal sons Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are taught in the *Bālakāṇḍa*, as we shall see in a moment. *Nibelungenlied* references to Siegfried's warrior accomplishments are limited to the supremely important physical ones which Haubrichs notes. Firstly, a note on the young prince's upbringing: we are told that it was done with great care as befitted his station, mention being made specifically of riding and the bearing of arms (23-6). As a grown man, Siegfried rides superlatively well (723.3) in battle and the hunt, both activities in which he excels, killing more men and game respectively than any other participant, (*áv.* 4 and 16); he surpasses Brünhild in throwing the spear (459) and the stone and in the long-jump (464); he outwrestles her in Gunther's bedroom (*av.* 10); he outruns Hagen in the race to the spring (976); and finally he outshines the other warriors in the mock-battle contest of the *bûhurt* (814 and 17), a performance which prompts the queens' quarrel and ultimately leads to his death. Swimming is the only prescribed warrior activity not attributed to Siegfried. There is, however, one allusion to the knowledge of the law which Haubrichs tells us was required oral learning for young aristocrats: after Siegfried ascends his father's throne he acts as judge in a manner that earns him awed respect (714). Nothing indicates that this *Rechtswissen* was acquired through book-learning, but we should hardly expect this since, as Wenzel 1992 indicates, the legal process was still largely an oral one in high medieval Germany.

Information about the education of the Ikṣvāku princes is found in the *Bālakāṇḍa* and various *passages, and even these latter very late insertions do not imply written instruction and scarcely differ from the earlier material. For example, Rāma and his brothers become skilled in elephant and horse riding, handling a chariot and archery and well-versed in the Vedas (an orally transmitted tradition, the equivalent of Haubrich's gnomic 'Weisheitssprüche') and wait on their father (1.511* and 513*), whereas in 1.17.14 they are similarly described as being versed in the Vedas, devoted to their people's welfare, full of knowledge and virtues and 1.17.18 as hunting on horseback. Kuśa and Lava are said to have learned about the arts and also astronomy, astrology and poetry, but there is no reason to suppose that this was by anything other than oral means (7.1313*). By comparison with Siegfried's physical accomplishments, Rāma's and Lakṣmaṇa's are less varied, comprising not prowess in athletic contests but the skills necessary for war: handling horses and archery; and in battles described in *kāṇḍas* 3 and 6 we learn that they are excellent marksmen with the spear. Their education, however, is much wider than Siegfried's and covers all aspects of the medieval European aristocratic wisdom tradition enumerated by Haubrichs.

During their symbolic journey of initiation through the forest led by their tutor, the *kṣatriya* ascetic Viśvāmitra, they are taught what is necessary for *kṣatriya* princes to know. From him they learn the cosmic history of their people through his retelling of *puraṇic* tales, the mythology associated with the forests, rivers and mountains which they traverse on their journey. For Rāma particularly *das Woher* (to adopt Haubrichs) is essential in that it leads to *das Wohin*: for example, he is instructed in the mythologically-based geography of the area around the Ganges confluence (1.22.9-14 and 23.7-9 and 15-23), including the menacing forest of Tāṭakā nearby (1.23.24-30 and 24.3-12), and thus prepared by Viśvāmitra to meet and kill the *rākṣasī* Tāṭakā who inhabits it (24.13). This is to be Rāma's initiatory kill, and his tutor gives 'heroische *exempla*' (Haubrichs again), in the despatchings of Mantharā and Bhṛgu's wife by Indra and Viṣṇu respectively (24.17-18) in order to justify in cosmic terms the killing of a woman. The princes also learn something of their genealogy by *puraṇic* means, for instance the sage Śatānanda tells them in a story that Viśvāmitra is from the house of Ikṣvāku and so we learn that he is therefore a royal ancestor (1.56.20). This king turned ascetic is not only tutor but, most importantly, guardian of magic weapons. Like medieval Germanic aristocratic boys, who, according to Haubrichs, were expected to learn magic, Rāma is taught spells (*mantras*) by his guru which make him unassailable in battle and unsurpassed in beauty and knowledge (1.21.10-18). Furthermore, he receives from him magic weapons and the spells to control them (1.26.2-20). We are reminded here of Siegfried's acquisition of almost total invulnerabilty in battle through the performing of the dragon-blood ritual and, again, of the magic power of Balmung, although there is no hint of Siegfried's practising spells like Rāma and certainly no suggestion that either dabbles in the black arts as Haubrichs' sources suggest of some medieval aristocrats. All the foregoing passages cited from both works, lacking as they do any reference to book-centred education for their young heroes, are yet another index of the orally-based dimension of the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

To sum up my argument: if an epic text is dependent on mnemonic devices, conservative in that it eschews innovation and preserves archaisms while accommodating newer expressions, if its style is redundant, agonistic and at times narratologically inconsistent, if there is textual evidence that it was originally sung, chanted or recited rather than read - in addition to being formulaic - it is much less likely to be of written composition. All these characteristics are, I believe, amply represented in both the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Furthermore we have in these particular texts, though by no means in all instances of epic, clues which strongly suggest an exclusively oral context for the education of the respective young warrior-heroes. Bearing all this evidence in mind one may assert with a reasonable degree of certainty that the above characteristics are collectively a more reliable guide to the oral provenance of a text than formula alone and that these are the considerations which ultimately influence assessment of our texts in this respect.

3

The Poetic Image and the Language of Poetry

It is my intention to explore here the much used and frequently abused catch-all term 'image' in order to separate its several semantic strands and to establish the sense in which it will generally be employed in the following two chapters. Theoretical discussion of figuration, comprising mainly metaphor and simile, and of symbol (both with particular reference to epic and more especially to our two epics) will be illustrated by textual examination of selected key examples taken from the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In order to obtain as wide and productive a view as possible in my search for an adequate definition of the poetic image, my theoretical discussion will be undertaken with reference to early medieval Sanskrit poetics and to ancient and medieval European rhetoric and poetics as well as to theories advanced by modern literary critics, linguists and philosophers. Since figures and symbols, far from merely embellishing a work, have an essential narratological function, I shall then consider how successful the respective poet-singers have been in making use of metaphor/simile or of symbol in their narratological aspects to heighten the cumulative emotional or graphic effect of particular chosen passages.

1. What is an 'Image'?

It has often been observed that the term is a misleading one in that, in general use, it carries connotations of an exclusively visual dimension, as in 'photographic image' or quasi-visual dimension as in 'mental image'. Images can, however, be apprehended in other dimensions beside the visual. There are, for instance, aural and olfactory 'pictures' or 'representations' In short, images can be linked to all five senses and construed in terms of such. Images may be either concrete or abstract, and indeed the word 'image' is typically employed in the latter, transferred, sense in literary criticism as a synonym for both 'figure of speech'[1] and 'symbol'. Let us therefore begin our examination of the poetic image with two linked propositions: firstly that what distinguishes poetic language from ordinary language is its use of images, that is, its figurative or metaphorical nature, and secondly that since it is by nature figurative, poetry is characterised principally by the use of metaphor. The first proposition is a

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[1] The terms 'figure of speech' and 'figure' will be used henceforward in the narrower sense of 'trope' or 'figure of thought' not in their other sense of 'scheme' or 'figure of sound' such as rhyme, alliteration and assonance. Sanskrit poetics terms the former *arthālaṃkāra* ('figure of sense') and the latter *śabdālaṃkāra* (figure of sound).

relatively straightforward one to deal with; the second, being more complex must be examined in much greater detail, and I shall return to it in a moment. The use of non-literal images is clearly not confined to poetic language. It is also a feature of normal, even of scientific, discourse, it may be argued, since image-free discourse does not exist. For example, a particular figure of speech, hyperbole, is not unknown in the courtroom and on the political platform. Indeed, Aristotle's and Cicero's works on rhetoric were written with these utilitarian uses of figurative language in mind. What makes poetry different from ordinary language is that it generally exhibits dense concentrations of tropic and/or symbolic expressions, indeed some poems, for instance the hymns of the *Ṛgveda,* move almost entirely on the figurative level from one tropic or symbolic expression to another. In epic poetry, these dense concentrations of tropic and symbolic expressions support and intensify the narrative. Ordinary discourse, by contrast, is merely interspersed with occasional forays into conscious, or 'foregrounded'[2], tropic language and/or symbolism.[3]

Now for my second proposition, that poetry is characterised principally by the use of metaphor. That the overworked term 'metaphor', a notion once so carefully defined and applied by grammarians and poeticians of both East and West, has become devalued by latter-day literary criticism should be a truism. Unfortunately it is not. So much recent textual analysis uses the term indiscriminately and apparently unnoticed as a collective synonym for 'image', calling symbol 'metaphor' and even referring to what is manifestly simile by the same term. The gradual abandoning of more rigorous ways of examining and classifying language seems to me not merely unfortunate in that it leads to vagueness and confusion. Rather, it actually makes the critic's task more difficult: to call a symbol a 'metaphor', either knowingly and deliberately or out of ignorance or carelessness, apart from being incorrect, is not describing anywhere near precisely enough how the expressions analysed in a given text function within it. In other words, I believe that reference to the traditional classification of language as practised by the grammarians and poeticians is indispensable to the proper understanding of what certain words and groups of words 'do' in poetry. More than forty years ago Brooke-Rose saw the dangers and was critical of writers who use the term 'image' interchangeably with 'metaphor', although she had no objection to the use of '[image] in the wide sense of all pictures evoked (as in C. Day Lewis' *The Poetic Image*), where it includes metaphor, comparison, myth and literal description' (1958, 35). In other words, 'image' is a collective term for expressing a view of the world. A given image can be a metaphor, but 'image' does not equal 'metaphor'. While I shall occasionally

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2 Jan Mukarovsky: 'Standard Language and Poetic Language', 1932 in Donald C. Freeman ed.: *Linguistics and Literary Style* , New York, 1970, 40-56..

3 There is a sense in which the novel and also prose allegory and parable use 'poetic' language, since some novels and both the latter typically exhibit a high degree of figuration or symbolism. These are, however, only general observations and properly the subject of another study.

speak of 'image' during the course of my entire study in relation to 'figure of speech' and/or to 'symbol', it is my intention in this chapter to define the term in its separate meanings of 'figure of speech' and 'symbol' so precisely as to make clear to the reader in exactly which sense I am using the term 'image' in a given context. The discussion will not include the notion of image in the sense of naturalistic description (termed *svabhāvokti* in Sanskrit) as practised, for instance, by Wordsworth. I shall use the collective term 'imagery' to denote connected figures of speech (principally metaphor and simile) or symbols, as for example in the expression 'sovereignty imagery'.

The image considered in terms of the traditional Indian poetics of figuration

Is an exploration of figuration along these lines justifiable or even appropriate, considering the fact that all extant texts on poetics postdate Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa* ? And, more generally, is it feasible to apply observations on simile-based figures of speech made by the Sanskrit tradition to poetry of later European origin? The answer to the second question requires little elaboration: inasmuch as Sanskrit poetics (*alaṃkāraśāstra*) describes figures of speech recognised in European poetry and poetics, a comparison using insights from a different tradition can only be fruitful. Of course, there are figures described in the Indian tradition which have no equivalent in western poetics, but this fact does not invalidate the above assertion. The first question must be answered at greater length.

A prescriptive poetics does not have to predate the use of the figures it describes. In fact it cannot. The figures are first employed, then poeticians analyse them contextually. This is no chicken and egg syndrome: poetic language, an important element of which is a specialised use of images, or representations, either by analogy/comparison (principally metaphor and simile) or by association (synecdoche, metonymy and symbol), must logically predate a theory of poetry. The earliest (8th century CE) Indian poeticians on record, Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin, did not 'invent' the figures they classified any more than Aristotle brought into being the contiguous notions of metaphor and simile which he observed in Homer. Sharma (1964, 3) notes that even primitive keening (frequently, it might be added, a precursor of more formal poetry) exhibits characteristics of poetic language such as 'alliteration, repetition, rhythm, allegory'. Primitive peoples have unconsciously used these technical devices of poetic expression without needing to give them a name. The extant version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (probably mainly composed between 500 BCE and 300 CE) could well have been similarly constructed without the pre-existence of an established poetics.

Gerow (1977, 219 ff) points to references to earlier theories in extant works on poetics as evidence that a much older hypothetical poetics is likely to have been recorded in texts now

lost, probably dating from 0-500 CE. He notes, too, that the grammarian Pāṇini[4] describes the technical use of the four-part notion of the simile or *upamā* (to be examined in detail in due course) in much the same way as poeticians were to do many centuries later. Gerow cites the very early definition of simile attributed to a certain Gārgya, quoted by Yāska, (who probably predates Pāṇini) : '*upamā yad atat tatsādṛśam*',[5] ('not that but like that'), which definition, says Gerow, must entitle Gārgya to 'qualify as the first *alaṃkārika*' (poetician). Gerow also refers to the argument that stray mentions of various figures of speech in early works of poetry (not the *Rāmāyaṇa* or the *Mahabhārata*) similarly point to the existence of a hypothetical early poetics, maintaining that in the absence of systematic definitions of the technical uses of these terms in such early references, the argument is inconclusive. They could merely have been observations about linguistic features rather than descriptions of figures as expressly technical devices of poetic composition or *kāvya*.

However reasonable, therefore, it may seem to posit the existence of an embryonic poetics, whether it had an influence on the composition of the *Rāmāyaṇa* can be no more than speculation. More certain - and much more important - is that early Sanskrit narrative poetry exhibits characteristics of a literary technique which prefigure later poetic development. Winternitz (1927, 461) considers the *Mahabhārata* to contain 'many passages which remind us of the *kāvya*[6] style'. Similarly, Gerow believes that its sister epic the *Rāmāyaṇa* is literature bearing the stamp of the *kāvya* style and applies the term 'self-conscious literature' to it. The *Rāmāyaṇa* has been rightly regarded by Indian literary tradition as the *ādikāvya*, or first poem, its aesthetic form (metre) believed to have been inspired by the overwhelming upsurge of pity and grief experienced by Vālmīki as he witnessed the killing of a crane, a ritually protected species, by an aboriginal hunter, as recounted in the prologue to the epic. Vālmīki is for Sanskrit poeticians as revered a poet as Homer is for Aristotle. Poetry, then, in Indian tradition, is seen as inspired by emotion. Viśvanātha defines it as the language of emotion: 'vākyam rasātmakam kāvyam',[7] *rasātmaka* meaning 'whose self/nature' (*ātma*) is *rasa*, 'taste; delight; sentiment'. The phrase can be translated 'poetry, a language whose nature is emotion' and/or 'poetry, whose nature is tasteful (or) delightful speech.' It is very possible that all three meanings of *rasa* are implied here, since punning is a traditional predilection of Sanskrit writers.

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4 Generally believed to have lived sometime in the 5th or 4th century BCE and therefore either predating Aristotle (384-322 BCE) or roughly contemporaneous with him.

5 *Nirukta* 3.13, quoted by Gerow, 1977, 221.

6 i.e. 'classical poetic'.

7 *Sāhityadarpaṇa* 1.3, quoted by Sharma, 1964, 3.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* is indeed self-conscious literature in that it makes use of figures of analogy[8] or of association, (more commonly figures of analogy, the simile being the overwhelmingly preferred trope[9] in the *Rāmāyaṇa*), which give access to a non-literal language of the imagination and the emotions in order to express that which could not be described so vividly or so strikingly by literal means. We have here a preliminary working definition of tropic language, one which will be superseded, during the course of this chapter, by a more precise one. This non-literal language which carries emotion-charged, mood-enhancing overtones is termed in Sanskrit poetics *rasavat* , 'conducive to *rasa*,' (emotion, mood). As observed above with reference to Viśvanātha's definition of poetry, we should be aware that the term *rasa* also carries meanings of 'taste, pleasure, charm,' important to our understanding of these figures as self-conscious literary embellishments. We should be careful, though, not to confuse the term *rasavat* as applied to the language of figures used in epic verse with the technical term *rasa* when strictly applied to the brief 'mood poem' of later classical court literature whose *raison d'être* is the creation and sustaining of an all-pervading mood. Ingall's (1965,14) description of *rasa* as a refined 'decoction' of raw emotion effected by the poet for his audience to savour, though devised in the context of the classical *kāvya,* is nevertheless helpful towards an appreciation of the process by which mood-enhancing figurative language enables the poet to communicate with his audience directly and yet, paradoxically, at one remove. 'The mood is not the original emotion itself or we should not enjoy hearing sad poetry like the *Rāmāyaṇa* '(ibid.) is how medieval Sanskrit poetical tradition viewed the phenomenon, denoting 'emotion' as confined to the personal and 'mood' as extending to the universal.

In Sanskrit poetics the simile is considered to be the basic component of poetic diction, the language of the senses and the imagination, of *vakrokti* ,[10] or the 'bent/oblique expression', (*vakra* meaning 'crooked', *ukti* 'utterance'). To speak ambiguously, that is, in *vakrokti*, the poet makes use of the simile or allied figure (or the symbol, we could add, though this concept does not come within the purview of *alaṃkāraśāstra,* the study of figuration). *Vakrokti* is the essence of poetry, expressed in simile-based figures as something described in terms of something else which it is not, but which shares with it (or can be made by a skilful poet to appear to share with it) a common property or attribute.

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8 Principally *upamā* (simile), *rūpaka* and *utprekṣā* (both, broadly speaking, arguably types of metaphor, though *utprekṣā* is rather different in that it contains an element of simile also). These last two figures will be examined in detail later in this chapter with reference to the western concept of metaphor.

9 Simile is not considered a trope in traditional western poetics. In this instance I do not follow the traditional view, which I shall shortly set out, but rather use the term as a synonym for figures of speech in general, including simile. I hope to show in due course that simile is the basis of metaphor and therefore of at least equal importance. Both tropes and symbols are figures, but symbol is not a trope.

10 The term is used here, as in Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin, to describe figurative language in general, not the figure expressing a specific type of ambiguity which some later poeticians considered it to be.

The image considered also with reference to medieval western poetics

It is interesting to compare this view of simile as the basic unit of figurative analogy with Aristotle's. For him the basic unit is metaphor, simile being defined as extended metaphor.[11] From Quintilian[12] onwards, however, metaphor is described as contracted simile, (that is, I would argue, in terms of simile, as in the Indian tradition). In medieval European poetics it is nevertheless considered superior to simile in poetic composition and classed as a trope (*translatio*) among ornaments of style (*ornatus difficilis*), whereas simile (*collatio*) is a type of amplification (*amplificatio*) on a par with other means of amplification such as *circumlocutio*, *digressio* and *descriptio*. Geoffrey of Vinsauf, the most innovative member of a new school of prescriptive poetics influenced by Horace's *Ars Poetica* (as opposed to the earlier prescriptive grammars which were heavily indebted to Ciceronian rhetoric), producing his *Poetria nova* at about the same time as the *Nibelungenlied* is believed to have have appeared in written form, is somewhat ambiguous in his treatment of *collatio*, 'comparison'. He makes mention first of two types of comparison, 'open' (*aperte*) and 'concealed' (*occulto*) (Faral, 1962, 204) and from his description of 'concealed comparison' appears to be talking here about metaphor. However, he later describes metaphor among ornaments of style, considering it the first of tropes (ibid, 221).

Another interesting difference is the development of early medieval[13] Sanskrit poetics from the science of grammar, whereas European poetics, a study which grammarians appropriated from the rhetoricians during the later middle ages, has its origins in Aristotelian rhetoric as interpreted and expanded by Cicero. As we have seen, the early Sanskrit grammarian Yāska was defining figures such as *upamā* (simile) long before the earliest medieval European poeticians on record began to do so. Thus Sanskrit poetics grew out of a normative science (*śāstra*) of linguistic features,[14] while its western counterpart emphasised the affective nature of the *ars poetriae* , inheriting as it did rules for composition from an ancient rhetoric designed to enable an orator, whether politician or lawyer, to sway an audience to his point of view.

I have already placed the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the context of early linguistic observations on simile approximately contemporaneous with the beginning of the process of the epic's composition (about 500 BC). Mention of the *Nibelungenlied* with reference to Geoffrey of

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11 *Art of Rhetoric* 3.4, 3.10, 3.11

12 *De Institutione Oratoria Libri Duodecim* 8.6

13 Many Indian scholars use western chronological terminology although some refuse to do so because they believe it distorts the view of Indian history and culture outside India. I follow western terminology in order to bring Indian theoretical discussion into a comparative time-scale.

14 Aristotle, interestingly, records his celebrated, brief 'genus/species/analogy' definition of metaphor in *Poetics* 21 in a section on grammar (he terms it 'diction'), though *Rhetoric* 3, which is clearly written for the public speaker, treats of metaphor in much greater detail.

Vinsauf raises the question of the possible influence which medieval rhetorical theory may have had on the composition of this epic. On the one hand, in view of its much older oral heritage as evinced by a significant proportion of formulaic similes, the use of certain words considered outmoded in the early thirteenth century[15] and oblique references to a much older view of kingship which will be discussed in the body of this thesis, such influence seems unlikely. On the other hand, the *Nibelungenlied* undeniably contains instances, particularly in the case of metaphor, of highly developed aesthetic awareness. Some of these metaphors will be examined later in this chapter. Whether they were inspired by theorists, Geoffrey in particular, is not the concern of this study. The issue raises questions about the poets' social and educational status which I have discussed in the previous chapter. Suffice to say that if the *Nibelungenlied* poet/s were literate, (and I have already given my reasons for doubting this possibility), he/they would have learned rhetoric-based grammar, *the* basic, compulsory element of a medieval education, but the suggestion that the new prescriptive poetics of Matthew of Vendôme and Geoffrey of Vinsauf might have been an influence would be no more than speculation. My reasons for making reference to medieval poetics are the same as those for including traditional Indian and twentieth century theories: in order to come closer to a satisfactory definition of the most common figures of speech found in my texts and of the ways in which they function.

The purpose of this preliminary examination of metaphor and simile, then, is to establish a clear profile of the difference between the image as figure of speech and the image as symbol in order better to define the concept of 'symbol'. It is partly a question of defining 'symbol' in terms of what it is not, but we may also find that some observations about the way figures 'work' may help us to understand more about 'symbol'.

2. Simile and Metaphor as Defined in the Alaṃkāraśāstra

Upamā

I have indicated that simile, the figure of explicit expression of analogy or comparison, is the basic unit of poetic language in the Sanskrit poetic tradition. Sanskrit epic contains more examples of simile than any other trope. (I use the term 'trope' advisedly here, since in post-renaissance literary criticism simile has acquired that designation, and also because simile is, in Sanskrit poetical tradition, the figure *par excellence* and would therefore have been accorded the status of trope had that tradition made a distinction between tropes and lesser figures.) For this reason, therefore, it is appropriate to begin a brief review of definitions of

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15 De Boor, 1959, XXVI: ' [Die Sprache des Nibelungenliedes] ist weniger individuell und modern als die Sprache Hartmanns, Gottfrieds und Wolframs, episch vorgeprägt, pathetischer und archaischer. Schon die Zeitgenossen müssen den Abstand empfunden haben.'

the three most commonly used figures (*alaṃkāras*) - *upamā, rūpaka* and *utprekṣā* - with *upamā* (simile). We shall find the definition of *upamā* identical with the one with which we are already familiar.

Probably the earliest definition of simile with specific reference to poetry is Bhāmaha's: 'The [expression of] similitude in terms of the qualitative aspect, between the subject [of comparison] and an object [of comparison] *incompatible* with it in place, time, activity, or the like, is called simile.'[16] (Italics mine.) The Indian tradition recognises four elements in simile:

the subject of comparison (*upameya*)

the (apparently incompatible) object of comparison (*upamāna*)[17]

the shared property or *tertium comparationis* in western poetical terms

the linking word or morpheme to express comparison, i.e.'like' or 'as', (e.g. *iva* , *yathā* or *-vat*)

The third element may be dropped and the audience, or recipient, be required to supply the missing attribute shared by the subject and object of comparison, as in 'like the wind' instead of, for example, 'swift as the wind'. The *dhvani* theorists of the eleventh century who consider *vyanjaña* (overtone or suggestion) rather than *rasa* (mood) or *alaṃkāras* (figures of speech) to be central to poetic language - again, as with *rasa,* with specific reference to classical court poetry - maintain that suggestion is often crucial to simile. This is an important observation about simile in general, for it clearly applies when the *tertium comparationis* is omitted. In the example 'like the wind', other properties may be implied at the same time, such as the coldness or destructive power of the wind as well as its speed. Simile, then, conveys the idea that A is *like* B. It tells us more about A by making reference to B, frequently relying on the power of suggestion to enable the recipient to decide in exactly what way(s) A is like B. The clues are present in A and B. The twin, complementary, balanced nature of A (*upameya*) and B (*upamāna*) as viewed by the Indian poetical tradition is illustrated in Jayadeva's definition of simile,[18] the definition itself in the form of a simile: '*upamā* is a figure of speech in which the beauty of similarity exists between the two objects as between the two breasts of a woman'. The following examples of *upamā* are taken from our texts.

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16 *Kāvyaālaṃkāra* 2.30, quoted by Gerow, 1971, 19. This 'criterion of misapplication', as Gerow terms the notion of incompatibility, reminiscent of Aristotle's definition of metaphor, could aptly be applied also to metaphor.

17 To be termed 'predicate' in this study.

18 In *Candralōka* 5.3., quoted by Sharma, 1964, 15.

A. rāmam evābhidudrāva *gharmārtaḥ salilaṃ yathā* *Rām.* 2.35.17 cd

('[the crowd] ran towards Rāma *as one tormented by heat [runs] towards water*')

B. dyotayan vanam vyagraṃ śobhate *śaśisaṃnibhaḥ* *Rām.* 3.41.13 cd

('shining *like the hare-marked moon* he lights up the entire forest'. A description of the magic jewelled deer. As is frequently the case with *upamā*, this example is marked by alliteration. The particle of comparison here is *saṃnibha*. A stock *upamā*).

C. sam vliegende vogele sah man si varn. *NL* 1343.3

(Used to describe the swift advance of Etzel's retinue. Note the alliteration in this example also).

D. Mit kraft begonde ruofen der degen ûz erkorn, / daz sîn stimme erlûte alsam ein wisentes horn. *NL* 1987.1-2

Rūpaka

The figure expresses metaphorical identification, the notion of one thing assuming the form (*rūpa*) of another, of total identity with, rather than straightforward similarity: A *is* B, is indistinguishable from B. The predicate, B, is clearly stated. *Rūpaka* most frequently occurs in Sanskrit in the noun plus noun compound, with the object of comparison in the final position. Examples of *rūpaka* from the *Rāmāyaṇa* are: *puruṣavyāghra* (lit. 'man-tiger'), i.e. 'tiger among men'; *dhanūratna* (bow-jewel'), 'jewel of a bow'; *mṛtyupratima* ('death-image'), 'image of death'. Like most epic *rūpakas,* these are all stock metaphors and therefore occur passim in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. *Rūpaka* is a figure of explicit predication, and as such is similar to the Old English metaphoric compound noun, for example *hronrād* (lit. 'whale-way'), 'sea'; *bānhūs* ('bone-house'), 'body'; *beadolēoma* ('battle-light'), 'sword'. I give examples from Old English because it is particularly rich in metaphoric compound nouns, compared with, say, Old High German or Old Saxon. Western poetics also recognises the notion of metaphor as a figure without predication, i.e. the predicate is implied rather than stated, as illustrated in Aristotle's exemplar 'the ship *ploughs* the waves'. (Italics mine.) This second type of metaphor is classed in Sanskrit poetics as *utprekṣā*, the figure of implication, and I shall deal with it shortly.

The last half century has witnessed an explosion of interest, in western linguistics and philosophy as well as literary criticism, in the phenomenon of metaphor. Multi-disciplinary scholars like Ricoeur (e.g. 1974, 1978) have returned to Aristotle's definitions in *Poetics* and *Rhetoric* as referents for the study of metaphor in its hermeneutic as well as semantic aspects. Indian poetics, while stressing *upamā* as the means *par excellence* of expressing analogy, also maintains the primacy of the element of analogy or comparison in *rūpaka.*

Ricoeur would perhaps consider the Sanskrit view similar to his own. Arguing from Aristotle, and in respect of metaphor, he states: 'the semantic innovation through which a previously unnoticed "proximity" of two ideas is perceived despite their logical distance must in fact be related to the work of resemblance', (1975/8, 6). Aristotle himself says: 'the successful use of metaphor entails the perception of similarities,'[19] and: 'one must also draw the metaphor [...] from related but not obvious things.'[20] Thus in stressing the notion of similarity within dissimilarity in metaphor, Aristotle and Ricoeur are not so very far removed from the *alaṃkārikas*' consistent description of *rūpaka* (metaphor) as being grounded in the concept of comparison, or analogy, and therefore a variant of simile.

Medieval European poetics, as we have seen, is ambivalent towards simile, defining metaphor in terms of simile, that is, as contracted simile, at the same time considering simile an inferior figure. Much, though by no means all, of modern western literary criticism has followed these views. Opinion is divided as to whether metaphor is a closed, or suppressed, simile or a totally independent figure in which the element of comparison has been transcended to produce a concept which is more than the sum of its parts. Beardsley 1958 in his chapter on imagery and meaning develops the latter view; Gerow and Sharma, following the Indian tradition, hold the former. This tradition maintains the primacy of the element of comparison implied in metaphor and, in my opinion, makes a valid distinction between two notions which, following Aristotle, are both termed 'metaphor' or 'transference of meaning' in the western tradition. We have already looked at the first type of metaphor, *rūpaka* . It is now time to consider the second.

Utprekṣā

The term means literally 'a disregarding' of the object of comparison (Gerow, 1971, 36). Other translations are 'ascription' and 'poetical fancy' (Sharma, 1964, 133). It is defined by the poetician Ruyyaka as 'presumption of identity' (*tādātmyasaṃbhāvanā*). Here the predicate is not stated but merely implied, unlike *rūpaka* whose predicate is always present. Not: A is B, rather: A has a quality or is behaving in a manner that is clearly understood to belong to B, although this cannot literally be the case. As in simile where the *tertium comparationis* is dropped, the recipient supplies the missing element, in this instance, however, the object of comparison. It is *as though* something were happening. Indeed, *utprekṣā* is frequently, (always, in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahabhārata*), but not necessarily, introduced by the particles 'as though' or 'as if', usually *iva* or *yathā*, as in the following example:

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19 *Poetics* 22 (trans. Halliwell, 1986, 57).

20 *Art of Rhetoric* 3.11 (trans. Lawson-Tancred, 1991, 239).

ādīptāniva Vaidehī sarvataḥ puṣpitānnagān

rūpaiḥ puṣpaiḥ kiṃśukānpaśya mālinaḥ śiśirātyaye *R.* 2.50.6

(' "Vaidehī, look at the *kiṃśuka* trees covered in blossom after the winter. With their garlands of colourful [i.e. red] flowers they are *as if aflame*" '.) The *utprekṣā* is *ādīptāniva*, 'as though blazing forth'. The image is of (red) flowers lighting up or consuming the trees (the root *dīp* conveys the dual meaning of brightness and fire), the implicit predicate being 'like flames.' The poet does not describe the flowers as 'red' because his audience would be well aware of the colour of *kiṃśuka* blossom. Such ellipsis (here of colour and the predicate 'like flames') usually serves to intensify the image.

An example of *utprekṣā* in the *Nibelungenlied* is given below. In western poetics this would be considered simile, but as we have seen, it is technically a type of metaphor. Siegfried's comeliness is such that he appears as though painted on parchment. Implied is the notion that he looks in reality like an artist's idealised portrait. The particle *sam* introduces the *utprekṣā*. 'Dô stuont sô minneclîche daz Sigmundes kint, / sam er entworfen wære an ein permint / von guotes meisters listen' (286.1-3a). Although technically a type of metaphor, this figure is clearly based on the concept of simile. Sharma maintains that '*utprekṣā* is nothing more than *upamā* intensified' (1964, 136). Even *rūpaka* implies likeness. Sanskrit poeticians make a distinction, however, between the *mechanics* of expressing similarity, measured by the *degree* to which that similarity is expressed, the element of comparison being most explicit in *upamā*, less so in *utprekṣā* and least explicit in *rūpaka*. Indeed, there is a sense in which *utprekṣā*, when used with the particles 'as though' or 'as if', straddles the notions of simile and metaphor.

3. Metaphor, Simile and 'Metaphorical Language'

The strict grammatical distinction between simile and metaphor has been necessary for an initial defining of terms, especially with regard to the different emphases on the mechanics of figuration in European and Indian poetics, which, as, we have seen, are no more than alternative ways of explaining the same phenomenon of similarity in apparent dissimilarity, with or without the particle of comparison. As I indicated at the beginning of this chapter, a number of recent writers on metaphor equate the two figures and talk loosely of 'metaphor' in particular contexts where they are really referring to figures which are technically similes, and in so doing miss the full semantic impact of the simile within the metaphor. For example, Hawkes (1972/84, 75) terms 'metaphor' [21] the opening lines of Eliot's

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21 As does Tuve, 1947, in respect of the same quotation. See Brooke-Rose, 1958, 14. The latter, ibid., 287, deplores 'the constant confusion between comparison [by which she means simile] and metaphor found in almost every writer on the subject.'

Prufrock [22]: 'Let us go then, you and I, / When the evening is spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherised upon a table'. In fact the imagery here, strictly speaking, consists of three instances of metaphor: 'spread out', 'against the sky' and 'upon a table', and one simile: 'like a patient etherised'. It is the simile which causes the transference of meaning to 'table'. In this altered awareness we understand 'table' as 'operating table' and we perceive the evening transfixed before us, at our mercy, prepared for minute observation and dissection. Thus simile is the key figure in this particular piece of imagery.[23] Similarly Weinrich (in Haverkamp 1972, 319), referring to a discussion by Ullmann 1960 of Proust's use of 'metaphor' repeats a quotation from Proust cited by Ullmann which is formally not metaphor but simile: 'Ça et là, à la surface, rougissait comme une fraise une fleur de nymphéa'. *(Du côté de chez Swann).* Weinrich seems unaware of this technical oversight. Despite traditional Aristotelian reservations about simile, it would appear that the early Sanskrit poeticians were right in maintaining it to be as fit a vehicle for poetic expression as metaphor. Indeed, Michel 1987, in a monumental work illustrated, just as medieval grammars were, by generous quotations, and from a vast range of sources, devotes three times as much space to simile as he does to metaphor, categorising simile exhaustively by the different functions it performs.

Clearly, then, simile has far greater potential for the expression of hidden meaning, for functioning simultaneously on two semantic levels, than many theorists who maintain the supremacy of metaphor would allow. They are equally valid examples of devices which transform language into figurative language. Having established this, I think it is now appropriate, therefore, to begin to speak of 'metaphorical language' as a synonym for 'figurative' or 'imagistic' language. Now it is clear that when we use the adjective 'metaphorical' we are not referring exclusively to metaphor. Before leaving this discussion I refer to an interesting theory suggested by Kurz (1982, 20) which makes the term 'metaphorical language' even more apt. Kurz notes the existence of similes where the particles of comparison do not point to a straightforward *tertium comparationis* but rather to a metaphorical comparison: 'Die Vergleichspartikel ››wie‹‹ kann viele Bedeutungen haben. Sie kann auf ein tertium comparationis abzielen, aber auch [...] auf einen metaphorischen Vergleich.' Metaphorical comparisons are, he says, formulated as similes. To illustrate this concept of the metaphorical simile he gives the following quotation from Kafka: 'Heute lag eine abgeschlachtete Stopfgans draußen in der Schüssel, anzusehen wie eine tote Tante'. This example, like our simile quotation from *Prufrock*, clearly makes nonsense of

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22 *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* , 1917, in *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot*, London, 1978.

23 Having argued earlier (p3) that in some contexts simile may be a more powerful means of suggestion than metaphor, Hawkes seems here to be using the term 'metaphor' loosely, synecdochically, one might say, as a synonym for 'imagery'.

Nowottny's statements: 'In simile, words are used literally' (op. cit., 54), and that simile depends for its success on the accuracy of the comparison in the visual sense (1962/75). By no stretch of the imagination can a dead goose look *literally* like a dead aunt: the analogy is apprehended, the simile interpreted, on a different plane, a metaphorical one.

I would argue that metaphorical language in general, (to widen Aristotle's definition), not only metaphor, says 'this is that'. At the same time we know that this is *not* that, 'not that but similar to that', as Gārgya is thought to have expressed it, yet we engage in Coleridge's process of 'willing suspension of disbelief'. Ricoeur describes the phenomenon in terms of a tension between the two aspects of metaphor: subject and predicate, literal and metaphorical semantic, likeness and dissimilarity and finally the paradox of that which is and is not. He is here describing poetic language, as opposed to that of philosophy, but his definition surely applies to metaphorical language in general. I give the quotation in full in order to place in context his statement on 'being' and 'not being'.

La poésie, en elle-même et par elle-même, donne à penser l'esquisse d'une conception "tensionelle" de la vérité; celle-ci récapitule toutes les formes de "tensions" portées au jour par la sémantique: tension entre sujet et prédicat, entre interprétation littérale et interprétation métaphorique, entre identité et différence; puis elle les rassemble dans la théorie de la référence dédoublée; enfin elle les fait culminer dans le paradoxe de la copule, selon lequel être-comme signifie être et n'être pas. (1975, 398)

Nowottny (op. cit., 53) discusses a similar concept which she calls the 'Yes/No relationship' connecting the two objects in a figure of speech. This is the 'Yes/No relationship' of all metaphorical language.

World Shift and World Disclosure

Levin [1977, 116ff] takes Coleridge's 'willing suspension of disbelief', of collusion with the poet, a significant step further. He suggests that, instead of having to cope with the semantic tension of metaphorical language in poetry as Nowottny and Ricoeur see it, we simply enter the world of the poem and take everything at face value, including 'deviant sentences', by which he means statements which, taken literally, are untrue. Levin suggests a hypothetical unwritten sentence with which the poet prefaces the poem: "I imagine (myself in) and invite you to conceive a world in which..." This results in a shift in world orientation. Instead of attempting to construe the expression, i.e., make it conform to a sentence that has a truth value in this world, we as it were construe the world - into one in which the deviant sentence is no longer deviant' (ibid., 127). In other words, it seems, the reader makes the shift, the words themselves do not. There are no individual metaphors[24], says Levin, only a single metaphor, the world of the poem. He makes it clear, however, that this world shift applies only to lyric poetry. Other types of poems, according to Levin, do 'create a world',

24 I assume Levin means 'image' rather than metaphor in the strict sense.

but it is a *variant* of the empirical world, not a total shift of world view. He does not elaborate this suggestion.

If we proceed, however, in the absence of Levin's development of his own argument, to apply his theory to another type of poetry, epic, and to the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* in particular, we shall find our understanding of these texts as entire entities enhanced. Levin would, presumably, argue that these poems create a variant of reality, that there is one metaphor [image?] in each poem, the variant world of that poem. Now the variant epic 'world' of the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* has its origin in the 'real' world in that the poems treat of power games at court, war, human relationships and frailties; but this world is periodically invaded by another which exists alongside it, the extra-natural world which, Levin would say, we must also take at face value. Is the epic world a variant of the real world, centred on Ayodhyā, Worms and Etzelnburg, which encompasses without difficulty the 'deviant' (metaphorical) worlds of Kiṣkindhā, Laṅkā, Nibelungenburg, Isenstein and the Forest, or must the recipient keep making the 'world shift' from variant to deviant and back again? Presumably we do not have to keep making the shift because we take literally everything within the world of the poem. Certainly it appears to me to be the likely intention of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Nibelungenlied* poet-singers to elicit this audience response to their narratives. Levin argues that non-deviant linguistic expressions in poetry, for instance names of actual people and places, are transformed by the presence of deviant linguistic expressions and become part of the world of the poem.

For Levin 'deviant linguistic expressions' are not only tropes (and symbols too, to judge from his choice of poems for textual analysis to illustrate his theory) but also ' "non-existent entities - angels, fairies, muses, dragons, gods, seraphim, centaurs, etc. [...] personified objects [...] "impossible" states of affairs.' To contemporary audiences in ancient India and medieval Germany, however, such ' "non-existent" entities' did exist: the Hindu pantheon of gods, *rākṣasas* and *apsarases* ,[25] as also *risen* , *lintrachen* , *merwîp* and *der tiuvel.* In the same way, ' "impossible" states of affairs' were possible. They were part of the 'real', though unseen, world. Thus contemporary audiences would have no difficulty in conceiving the whole of the epic world, seen and unseen, as a variant of the real world. It is the modern reader who has the problem, who has to 'suspend disbelief', to enter consciously the world of the poem, for the duration of the poem, and take both the variant and the deviant literally, to 'construe phenomenalistically, not linguistically', as Levin says, 'all the novel, strange, alien, "impossible" objects, events, and actions described in the world of the poem.' This is precisely how, I believe, we should approach epic (and medieval romance). In childhood we accepted literally everything that happens in folktale; we entered its world without difficulty.

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25 Forest-dwelling celestial nymphs.

In the same way we must accept that in the other two genres virtually anything can happen: mythical beasts suddenly materialise in the middle of a conventional forest hunt, as in the *Nibelungenlied*, Hanuman reaches Laṅkā in a single leap. Nothing then surprises us or appears incongruous or problematic within the world of each text. We receive everything on a literal level, knowing that there is a 'phenomenalistically' metaphorical subtext in operation. For even as we take the 'variant' and the 'deviant' at face value, allowing them to coalesce as one 'variant' world, we are conscious that they are making a comment on, are portraying in a sense, 'reality', since, as Levin states, the poet's referent for poetic creation, and our referent for interpretation, is the empirical world. 'The reader must interpret the linguistically deviant descriptions of the imagined world against his consciousness of the actual world's phenomenalism' (op. cit., 132).

Levin's theory is certainly an interesting one, and a useful hermeneutical tool in the context of lyric, epic and romance, but it cannot be applied to all types of poetry, for example that of the medieval European mystics. To take literally - despite the knowledge that there is a metaphorical subtext - the arrestingly graphic sexual imagery used by a poet like Mechthild to portray, for instance, the spiritual relationship of Jesus Christ with his mother, even in the atheistic post-structuralist western world, offends against an inherited consciousness of religious propriety. Adopting Levin's hermeneutical method in this instance would merely be perverse and would clearly not be the reception intended by devout medieval poets. However, this does not detract from the appropriateness of the method in relation to my chosen epics.

4. Metaphor and Symbol

The foregoing discussion of metaphoric expression as a means of world disclosure, especially in regard to Levin's talk of ' "non-existent" entities' and 'personified objects', has brought us away from the concept of 'figuration' in grammatical terms and closer to the notion of 'symbol', a different type of image. Indeed, the distinction between 'figure' and 'symbol' is frequently blurred in literary criticism, as we have seen, for instance, with Levin, the overworked term 'metaphor' being used to describe both figure and symbol. We have, therefore, reached the point at which an examination of 'symbol' is both appropriate and necessary.

Let us begin with a very basic definition: a symbol represents, stands for or points to an object (by which is also meant an abstract concept or a person in addition to a concrete object) with which/whom there is an implicit connection principally through a process of association. This is not *primarily* connection by analogy or comparison which is the basis of metaphor and simile, though this is not to deny that a certain, subdued, element of analogy

may be present in some symbols.[26] There are two types of symbols: those which represent or 'stand for' by association, as in the Red Cross or its Muslim equivalent the Red Crescent which are internationally recognised signs for humanitarian aid agencies; and those which represent by association and some measure of likeness, such as heraldic animals like the eagle and the lion, whose behaviour and status in the animal kingdom is viewed in some respects as being similar to those of an emperor or a king.[27] A symbol is a direct short-cut to the concept for which it stands, just as a short-hand cipher or a chemical symbol, to the initiated, is the equivalent of a word or an element in the periodic table. A symbol conveys a coded message (it may be verbal or visual) which we equate directly with something else without going through an intermediate process of comparison, even in relation to symbols which contain some element of analogy such as an ordnance survey map or the heraldic animals already referred to. Sometimes, as in the case of the short-hand cipher, the coded message is clear to those who have learned to decode it, sometimes the symbol can only be 'read' in conjunction with the clues which surround it. The decoding takes place either at the relatively superficial level of social interaction, (learning to 'read' the colours of traffic lights or, in medieval Europe, initiation into the courtly symbolism of birds of prey), or else at a deeper level requiring specialist knowledge of, for instance, anthropology, social history or methods of psychological analysis.

Symbols in earliest times, both visual and oral, were used in magico-religious contexts to avoid the direct naming of concepts considered taboo, the naming of which would cause extreme harm, if not death, to the namer. Literary symbols range from the primitive, archetypal kind, of magico-religious origin, such as sun, tree and water, which first appear in myth and folktale, through the fixed-meaning symbols of poetic convention like wheel (of fortune), crown, orb,[28] through symbols which depend for their interpretation on appropriate cultural or technical knowledge to symbols whose significance can only be inferred by hermeneutical means. Metaphorical world-pictures, a means of 'ordering' reality, are frequently symbols. Referring to Cassirer who demonstrated that an awareness of symbol is a universal anthropological characteristic, Kurz, in his chapter on symbol, (1982, 66ff) states: 'Mittels des Symbolbewußtseins kann die unübersichtliche Empirie übersichtlich und geordnet werden'.[29] Earlier, giving as an example of pragmatic

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26 Barfield defines symbol in terms of the element of comparison which is 'concealed' in metaphor and 'drops still farther out of sight' in symbol (1947, 107ff). I think we should be careful not to over-stress the element of analogy in symbol. More important is the sense of direct connection by association.

27 The lion in some contexts also symbolises Jesus Christ or the devil. See Michel, 1987, 539.

28 These symbols, like the eagle and the lion, are, grammatically speaking, metonyms. They are not metaphors, as Brooke-Rose classes them, 1958, 32.

29 This idea of the function of symbol as the 'ordering' of the empirical world is in essence the same as that attributed by some writers, e.g. Usener and Levi-Strauss, to a loose concept of metaphor, evidence of the blurring of the two distinct terms which Kurz deplores.

symbolism the military manoevres of one state beside its border with a neighbouring state, (a show of power, a warning, even a threat), he remarks: 'Die Kraft der symbolischen Bedeutung liegt darin, daß das Bild dessen, *was die reale Handlung ist,* evoziert wird'. It is a definition which we could apply equally appropriately to the literary symbol.

Kurz argues convincingly for the perception of symbol as a separate entity from the notions of metaphor and allegory.[30] 'Symbol' is, he says, a term frequently misused in modern literary criticism as a synonym for these two traditional figures of speech. He stresses the function of symbol as empirical referent. It is this function which, for him, makes possible a distinction between metaphor and symbol. Metaphor, he argues, focuses attention on the words, symbol on the empirical experience represented by the symbol/object. Secondly, in symbol the literal meaning is preserved, in metaphor the literal meaning is extended or played with. Kurz's theory of symbol, then, is very similar to Levin's theory of metaphor, with its emphasis on literal meaning and empirical experience, but Kurz maintains that it is *metaphor* which we construe linguistically and *symbol* which we construe phenomenalistically, to borrow Levin's terminology. However, as I suggested earlier, it seems reasonable to infer that Levin is referring to symbol as part of a broader concept of metaphor than the grammatical figure itself.[31]

There is a case for arguing that the figures synecdoche and metonymy are really symbols in grammatical guise. Certainly they are based on the semantic perception of index, of 'standing for', either as part for the whole (synecdoche, e.g. 'mouths' [to feed]) or as name/object (metonymy, e.g. 'the throne'). According to Kurz there are also metaphorically motivated symbols, but they must be object-linked. If the metaphorical expression is not object-linked, it is not symbol but metaphor, as we have already observed. De Régnier identifies an important function of symbol, its linking of concrete and abstract in that symbol is an object which can represent an abstraction (1900, cited by Brooke-Rose, 32). Examples

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30 I would define allegory as the multiple use of a set or system of symbols in a single text, often, but not necessarily, with a didactic purpose, with or without a supplementary explication of the significance of these symbols. I have not discussed this device because it is not typically used in epic, though it could be argued that the Burgundians' crossing of the Danube in the *Nibelungenlied* is an allegorical portrayal of a mythical passing over to the realm of the dead. Ohly considers that *Allegorisierung* is appropriate to Arthurian romance but not to the *Nibelungenlied* where 'kaum Allegorisches' is to be presumed. 'Hier könne es sich um posthume Aufladungen handeln, die den ursprünglichen Werkintentionen nicht gerecht würden'. (Remarks attributed to Ohly in the *Diskussionsbericht* following Wells' paper 'Allegorie als Interpretationsmittel mittelalterlicher Texte' in Harms, 1992, 22.) Possibly one instance in the *Rāmāyaṇa* is the interlude of the entrapment of Aṅgada and his warrior search-party in the cave of Māya ('illusion') which can be viewed as an allegory of the snares which beset those lesser individuals whose aims in life are not fixed (unlike Rāma's and Hanumān's). This is, however, considered a late passage which does not make a significant narratological contribution to the poem, although it does of course heighten the dramatic tension by delaying the eventual finding of Sītā.

31 Indeed two of the poems he selects for analysis are by Dickinson and Blake, poets noted for their predilection for the symbol.

would be night or a dark cloud symbolising doubt, ignorance, despair, fear, grief or evil, depending on the context. The idea of darkness can also, of course, be expressed in metaphor, as in the hymn which begins 'Through the night of doubt and sorrow', technically a metaphoric compound noun, or *rūpaka*.[32] The following example from the *Rāmāyaṇa* should help to illustrate the difference between metaphor and symbol. At 2.58.57a we have the idea of darkness used as symbol: Daśaratha dies 'gate 'rdharātre' (lit. 'the night being half gone') i.e. 'at midnight', that is, we infer, when the night is at its darkest. The image 'at midnight' is, in fact, an example of Kurz's metaphorically motivated symbol: we construe the phrase in the *transferrred* sense of time indicating absence of light (as we would interpret straightforward metaphor) and then proceed to construe the resulting symbol - darkness - first of all *literally,* and secondly *empirically*, as all symbols must be treated. The darkness is an outward sign of the blackness of the despair and abject grief which surround Daśaratha, like the darkness, at the moment of his death. The night is therefore an object (as all symbols are) which points to an abstraction which we construe from the text.

Symbols, as we have seen, being object-based, can be either visual or verbal, sometimes both, as in the example of heraldic animals with which we began our discussion of symbol. It is interesting to consider at this stage, having observed the difference between metaphor and symbol in the above examples from the *Rāmāyaṇa* , whether metaphor, like symbol, can also be visual in certain contexts. An example of visual metaphor is the caricature sketch. Worth 1974 describes a skilful caricature as being more than a portrait in that it must comprise sufficient reference to key physical features belonging to the subject to enable immediate recognition in the recipient, but at the same time must suggest idiosyncratic features of the subject's personality. Worth quotes the example, borrowed from Perkins 1974, of the celebrated caricature by Levine of Samuel Beckett in which the writer, instantly recognisable, is given vulture-like attributes such as a beaked nose and scrawny neck. From this we can infer that a *symbolic* portrayal of Beckett, on the other hand, would not be a fusion of the two elements of the life-like and the metaphorical reference to the man and the oeuvre. The writer would be represented by a picture of a vulture, an object-symbol without any anthropological associations, and the artist would have to make us aware by some other means that the vulture signified Beckett. This comparison of visual metaphor and symbol helps us understand more clearly the difference between verbal metaphor and symbol. Nowottny also stresses the object-based, as opposed to word-based, characteristic of symbol. 'It is as though [...] the poet were trying to leap out of the medium of language altogether and to make his meaning speak through objects instead of through words. Even though he does not tell us what the object [...] stands for, or even that it does stand for

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32 Bernhardt S. Ingemann, trans. S. Baring-Gould.

anything, he makes us believe that it means, to him at least, something beyond itself' (op. cit., 175).

How, then do we decide whether this object, to which the poet seems to be drawing our attention, carries a meaning outside itself, and, if so, how do we crack the code? Sometimes the solution is text-internal and we construe meaning from clues or other pointers which the poet, it may be consciously or unconsciously, has left for us. Sometimes, and this is frequently the case in the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the meaning is text-external and we must refer to culturally transmitted knowledge. This is relatively easy when we are dealing with a poem belonging to our own cultural tradition, or, in the case of one which lies outside it, with concepts which are so basic to collective empirical experience that they are universally apprehensible. However, some symbols are so specifically culture-based, being part of a perception of reality which differs from the one with which we are familiar, that they will not give up their meaning without acquaintance with that world perception. Such would be the case with some of the symbols arising from the medieval courtly background of the *Nibelungenlied* and the ancient Hindu socio-religious environment of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Some symbolism we might decipher partially and intuitively without background cultural information, symbolism such as that of Kriemhild's *valkentraum* and the *krauñcavadha* episode which I shall examine shortly, but without the relevant knowledge the full significance would be lost. The meaning of other symbols would be missed entirely without such knowledge. In fact these symbols would probably not appear to us to be symbols at all. These are what I term culture-specific images.

I begin my consideration of the culture-specific image with an example of symbol readily accessible to recipients of all cultures. After Rāma leaves Ayodhyā the town is plunged in literal darkness symbolic of the universal sorrow of its inhabitants at his departure, (2.36.9: 'suryaścāntaradhīyata', 'the sun vanished', like the earlier example 'gate 'rdharātre', 'at midnight', a metaphorically motivated symbol). Images of light/darkness and sun/moon/night have been basic to every society since prehistorical times, and the significance of darkness in this scene from the *Rāmāyaṇa* would, therefore, have been equally appreciated by medieval audiences who relished performances of the *Nibelungenlied.* Hindu audiences, however, both ancient and modern, would be deaf to the significance of the *Nibelungenlied* reference to 'vor einer vesperzît' (814.1) which is a culture-specific image. Before it is time for vespers Kriemhild and Brünhild are watching their respective husbands jousting, an occasion which soon leads to a bitter rift between them that has fatal consequences for Siegfried, and, ultimately for the entire Burgundian court. The recipient requires experience, or at least second-hand knowledge, of Christian liturgical tradition to understand that vespers are evening prayers and therefore connected with sundown. This symbol, as symbols frequently do, conveys a powerful sense of foreboding: it tells the

initiated recipient that the sun is about to set on present happy times, that the darkness of tragedy is about to descend on Worms.

Of course there is always the danger that we might try to read too much into a text, to see symbols where no symbols are or to give them a more exotic interpretation than the text suggests. While not opposed in principle to uninhibited hermeneutics, I consider this approach less suited to texts of medieval and ancient origin in that authorial intention here is much more subject to cultural constraints than it is in more recent works. Even in the case of romance, interpretation without reference to the poet's likely sources and world view runs the risk of imputing levels of meaning which go beyond authorial intention. That said, the fact that we know nothing for certain about the poet or, more likely, poets of our respective epics should not rule out informed attempts, with recourse to scholarship on the respective socio-cultural contexts, to interpret the works on a symbolic level. I have already indicated that such constraints must be taken into account, as far as possible, in textual analysis of symbolic imagery in epic.

5. Textual Analysis of Selected Images from the Nibelungenlied and the Rāmāyaṇa

The methodology of this section of my study is to examine examples of imagery, both figures and symbols, taken from each text, with the aim of demonstrating how the individual, or 'local', image is in itself a key to the interpretation of the text as a whole. As we observed earlier, these images, like all literary images, effect a world disclosure, constituting as they do an index of the socio-culture from which they spring. Examples of simile and *upamā* will be followed by instances of *rūpaka*, metaphor and *utprekṣā* and finally symbol.

Simile

I begin with a short passage from the *Nibelungenlied.*

‚Der sitzet bî der strâze und ist der beste wirt,

der ie kom ze hûse. sîn herze tugende birt,

alsam der süeze meie daz gras mit bluomen tuot.' (*NL* 1639.1-3).

In this passage Eckewart uses the simile to describe to Hagen and the travel-weary Burgundians, sorely in need of hospitality, the unrestrained generosity of Rüdiger. It is a courtly image, redolent of medieval lyric, which stands out in sharp relief against the fate-laden, starkly Germanic background of the journey-of-no-return to Etzelnburg. The ominously swollen Danube has been crossed; the Burgundians, informed by Hagen that

none will live to return to Worms, have survived the bloody forest ambush of Gelpfrat, their grim march to death so far relieved only by the brief stay in Passau with Kriemhild's uncle. Eckewart was formerly Siegfried's vassal,[33] is now Kriemhild's,[34] and therefore no friend of Hagen's. As he tells Hagen: 'sît ich Sîfriden verlôs, sît was mîn freude zergân. (1633.3) [...] ir sluoget Sîfriden: man ist iu hie gehaz' (1635.3). Guarding Etzel's frontier alone on behalf of Rüdiger, he has been discovered asleep by Hagen who has taken his sword. Then, in a rare display of warrior generosity, mirrored by his later refusal to fight Rüdiger in the great hall because they are bound by ties of guest-friendship, Hagen returns the weapon and gives Kriemhild's liegeman six gold arm-rings as well. When he removed the sword Hagen was unaware that the sleeping man was Kriemhild's vassal, but he returns it in the knowledge that it will later be used against the Burgundians.

The same sword is set down by Eckewart on his arrival in Bechlarn to show that his mission is a peaceful one.[35] The unwitting irony of this gesture is apparent, for in bringing the Burgundians to Rüdiger's castle he is sealing the fate of the margrave and his men. Yet all dealings between Rüdiger and the Burgundians, both in Bechlarn and Etzelnburg, will be marked by courtesy and guest-friendship. The simile, with its comparison of courtly virtue with May flowers, prefigures the momentary blossoming of unstinting, even reckless, warrior generosity amid the stark carnage of Etzelnburg. The motif of the lone guardian of the frontier is an ancient one.[36] That Eckewart is made to speak this simile, with its courtly resonances, in such a context typifies the interweaving of old and new conventions in the fabric of the narrative.

Upamā

sā padmagaurī hemābhā rāvaṇaṃ janakātmajā

vidyudghanamivāviśya śuśubhe taptabhūṣaṇa *R.* 3.50.22

('A lotus of a girl, golden-hued, adorned with burnished gold, the daughter of Janaka gleamed *like lightning caught in* [lit. 'entering'] *the cloud* [that was] Rāvaṇa'.)

This is one of three verses in this sarga (cf. vv. 13 and 21), all marked by *upamā*, which play with the image of gold glinting against a dark background. Sītā is being carried away by Rāvaṇa in his aerial chariot, her slight body trapped in his arms. In v. 13 reference is made to her yellow silk garment as well as the gold ornaments which v. 22 mentions (these

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33 'Eckewart der grâve der volgete Sîfride dan' (700.4)

34 'dort her gâhet Eckewart, ein Kriemhilde man' (1642.3)

35 The sword is a symbol throughout this passage of goodwill between fighting men.

36 Cf. the giant guarding the gate to Nibelungenburg encountered by Siegfried in 487ff; Charon and his Germanic equivalent, Else: 'er hüetet disses landes' (1547.4); Janus.

are the items which she will let fall when she sees the group of *vānaras,* 'forest-dwellers', sitting on the mountain top and whose discovery by them will lead to Sugrīva's involvement in the quest to find Sītā); in v. 21 she is likened to gold sparkling against a sapphire.

The verse chosen for examination is the best crafted of the three because it suggests the image in the most economical and forceful manner. We are not expressly told, for instance, (as we are in v. 21) that Sītā is fair-skinned while Rāvaṇa is dark. Instead, by means of the simile, we are allowed to picture for ourselves the contrast between the golden aspect of Sītā - her skin and her ornaments - and Rāvaṇa's massive, blue-black body which, like a billowing, threatening stormcloud, envelops his struggling captive. In v. 21 Sītā appears 'like lightning in' (literally translated 'which belongs to') a cloud, a stock simile in Sanskrit epic. The picture in this verse, however, of a cloud overpowering the irresistable energy of a lightening flash, that is, not allowing it to escape, is an extraordinarily graphic one and serves to emphasise Rāvaṇa's monstrous strength and the violence of the abduction and therefore the heinousness of the crime committed against Sītā and her husband.

Rūpaka

sa nunna iva tīkṣaṇena pratodena hayottamaḥ

rajā pracodite'bhīkṣaṇāṁ kaikeyīm idam abravīt

dharmabhandhena baddho'smi naṣṭā ca mama cetanā

jyeṣṭam putraṁ priyaṁ rāmaṁ dṛṣṭumicchāmidharmikam *R.* 2.12.15-16

('Like a great horse stung by sharp goads, the king in a state of extreme pressure said to Kaikeyī, "I am tied in the bonds of righteousness. I am losing my mind. I wish to see dear Rāma, my eldest son" ').

Verse 16a contains a stock *rūpaka* (*dharmabandha*, 'the bond, or fetter, of compulsory socio-religious duty') which is nevertheless used by the poet to powerful emotive effect. The compound 'dharmabandhena baddho'smi ' (in 2.12.15a), with its combined alliteration and assonance of the *ba-* phoneme which highlight the figure, doubles the notion of captivity in the words *bandha* 'tie' and *baddha* 'bound'. The *pāda*[37] expresses poignantly the drama of the ageing Daśarata's inescapable predicament. It is the eve of his abdication in favour of his eldest son, Rāma. He is in the bedchamber of his favourite wife, Kaikeyī, where he has found her apparently in deep distress. In order to comfort her he promises her whatever she desires. Kaikeyī, in the face of what should properly be her *dharma*, for the law of primogeniture should be obeyed, claims two boons previously granted her by her husband.

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37 Foot or quarter verse, usually a *śloka* or couplet in epic.

When she triumphantly demands that he exile Rāma and install their son Bharata in his place, the king is overwhelmed with anguish and horror at the sacrifice which he must make.

He is doubly entrapped, first in the snare of his desire to lie in his young wife's arms, 'kāmapāśenaparyasta', 'beset by the snare (*pāśa*) of desire', as Rāma describes him (2.28.3c), and then, as a result, by the fetter of *dharma* . He has given his sacred word and he cannot take it back. If he refuses Kaikeyī her boons he will be acting unrighteously, yet *dharma* also demands that he treat Rāma justly and keep his promise to make him king. And the bitter certainty weighs heavily on him that if he accedes to his wife's demands, as he must, he will never see his beloved son again: he himself is old, and Rāma must endure fourteen years of exile. It is a trap from which only death from a broken heart will release him. Rüdiger, too, is caught in an archetypal dilemma of tragic dimensions. Bound to Kriemhild by an oath of loyalty and to the royal brothers, Hagen and their men by ties of guest-friendship, he must break faith in Etzelnburg with one or the other party. Daśaratha's cry of anguish is echoed by Rüdiger's: 'owê mir gotes armen, daz ich dize gelebet hân [...]/ Swelhez ich nu lâze unt daz ander begân / sô hân ich boeslîche unde vil übele getân: / lâze aber ich sie beide, mich schiltet elliu diet'. (*NL* 2153.1 and 2154.1-3). Whichever he chooses, he must lose his reputation for *triuwe* and *zuht* (2153), the very attributes which demand that he act in accordance with his conflicting pledges as liegeman and host.

A variation on Daśaratha's 'dharmabandhena baddho'smi' occurs at a later point in the narrative, this time to describe Rāma as he leaves Ayodhyā steadfastly following the path of duty and subduing his affection for his parents: the phrase 'dharmapāśena saṃkṣipta' at 2.35.29 ('caught in the snare of righteous duty') is used here to less telling effect. There is none of the desperation of Daśaratha's dilemma, no overiding sense of entrapment, like that of a helpless animal. For Rāma there has so far been no agonising conflict between personal considerations and moral duty: he has accepted the undeserved sentence of exile without demur. In this context the *rūpaka* has lost its power and sounds flatly formulaic.

Metaphor

Metaphor, especially verb metaphor, which is often the most powerful form of this figure,[38] is used to great dramatic effect in the *Nibelungenlied.* I shall give two examples of metaphor taken from the context of the fight. Firstly, the poet describes Kriemhild as declaring a private war on, or beginning a feud with, happiness from the moment she hears that the body of a knight is lying outside her chamber, even before she dicovers for certain that it is Siegfried's: 'von ir was allen vreuden mit sînem tôde widerseit.' (1008.4). Kriemhild determines at this moment never to allow happiness to enter her life

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38 See Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova* and Brooke-Rose on verb metaphor.

again. It is a feud which she will pursue to the bitter, bloody end. She will cling stubbornly to her grief, encouraging it to nurture plans of revenge. Much has been made in some critical circles of the hiatus in the portrayal of Kriemhild from the loving, dutiful daughter, sister and wife of Part I to the scheming, vengeful *vâlandinne* of Part II. In my opinion this metamorphosis begins in Part I, convincingly, in this very line. The poet uses a strong metaphor, a deliberately military one: he tells us that she takes the initiative, that she is not the passive victim of grief. She does not become simply a stranger to happiness, as he might have expressed it. She fights against it. In the same strophe as she realises that Hagen is responsible for Siegfried's death she begins a relentless feud on her own happiness. It is the conscious act of a strong-willed women capable of devising in time the most savage possible revenge.

The second example of metaphor depicts Siegfried's dying moments as a brief battle with death personified as an armed adversary:

dô rang er mit dem tôde. unlange tet er daz,

want des tôdes wâfen ie ze sêre sneit. (*NL* 998.2-3)

It is possible to read 'rang' in the general sense of 'struggle', but construing *ringen* more specifically as 'wrestle' leads to an enhanced appreciation of the metaphor. Siegfried is, then, metaphorically wrestling with death who appears in the form of a man armed with a dagger or sword.[39] At first reading the poet seems to have mixed his metaphors, for with them he makes reference to two types of fighting methods. Closer investigation reveals that this is more than a fight to the death. It is unequal combat, because death is armed and Siegfried is not, and that is why the duel does not last long: 'unlange tet er daz'. The metaphor of Siegfried's doomed, unarmed struggle mirrors the events which have just taken place: Hagen has removed all the hero's weapons and strikes him with his own spear (980.1). Thus the internal action dramatically reflects the external.

Utprekṣā

I shall discuss instances of this figure occurring firstly in adjacent verses in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and secondly in the *Nibelungenlied.* The context of the first quotation is Rāma's chariot journey out of Ayodhyā.

tathā rudantīṃ kausalyāṃ rathaṃ tam anudhāvatīm

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[39] This could well be 'the short stabbing-sword' (the "German sword" or *seax*) [...] used against the lower body and abdomen' to which D.A. Miller refers in 'Trisecting Trifunctionality: Multiplying and Dividing Dumézil', 14. (*Shadow* Vol.9, 1992, 13-22). He does not quote his source, but since he gives the Latin term, it could be Tacitus recording Roman struggles with the Germani, in which case the image in the poem would be of considerable antiquity.

krośantīṃ rāma rāmeti hā sīte lakṣmaṇeti ca

asakṛt praikṣata tadā *nṛtyantīm iva* mātaram

tiṣṭeti rājā cukrośa yāhi yāhīti rāghavaḥ

sumantrasya babhūvātmā *cakrayor iva cāntarā* (*R.* 2.35.32 and 33)

('He [Rāma] looked often then at his mother, Kausalyā, running weeping after the chariot, crying out, 'Rāma, Rāma! O Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa!', and she *seemed to be dancing*. The king cried, 'Stop!' and Rāghava [Rāma], 'Go on!', and Sumantra's soul became *as though* [seemed caught] *between two wheels*').

These are two graphic and, apparently, unique instances of *utprekṣā* which together serve to underscore the pathos of the scene. Rāma, Laksmaṇa and Sītā are beginning their forest exile, driven by Sumantra, king Daśaratha's charioteer. Rāma's parents, anxious to delay the final parting, follow. The royal couple, we are told in 2.35.30, accustomed to comfort (*sukhocitau*) and to being driven (*yānārnau*), are on foot (*padātinau*) and cannot keep up with the chariot. Daśaratha orders Sumantra to slow down, while Rāma, wishing to avoid the prolonged suffering for all parties of an extended farewell, urges Sumantra to goad the horses. Kausalyā, Rāma's mother, overcome with emotion and (we infer) swaying and stumbling as she tries to keep up with the chariot, looks as though she is dancing (*nṛtyantīm iva*). It is an arresting image. Spontaneous, as opposed to ritual, dancing is an activity normally associated with emotions other than grief, performed in most circumstances as an expression of joy and celebration. There is something hauntingly mimetic about this particular action, reminiscent of classical Indian narrative dance, but that genre of dance acts out a theatrical imitation of sorrow: the emotion is not personally experienced by the dancer. Kausalyā here seems to be dancing in her grief. The fact that the poet does not say that she *is* dancing, rather that she *seems* to be, would imply that in ancient Indian society as well as our own, dancing in sorrow is not a usual activity.

In order to try to discover the precise nature of the mechanics of transference involved in this image we would do well to consider applying a theory of Weinrich's (Haverkamp 1983, 316-339). Striking or daring metaphor ('die kühne Metapher') must, he argues, contain an inescapable contradiction. Secondly, it is not created by the collocation of concepts from widely differing fields (he terms this 'eine grosse Bildspanne'), as much quite commonplace metaphor is. Rather it is effected by a slight shift of concept within the same field ('eine kleine Bildspanne') which produces a sea change in semantic emphasis, for instance an adjustment of one colour (the one we anticipate) to another, unexpected one, or the juxtaposition of one part of the body with another, as in Celan's 'schwarze Milch der

Frühe'[40] and Rimbaud's 'au coeur de tes oreilles'.[41] These are examples from modern lyric poetry, but the mechanics of transference can surely apply to an image of much older composition. Kausalyā is almost dancing, the poet tells us. The action of dancing (the running steps and the swaying) is the much the same, for whatever reason she performs it, but the metaphorical shift implied by the context is from one expected emotion - joy - to an unexpected one - grief - that is to say the poet has selected an image from the same field of the emotions (Wienrich's 'kleine Bildspanne') and the semantic effect of *nṛt* ('dance') is a totally transformed one.

The verse that follows contains an *utprekṣā* which, in context, is another striking one, though not for the reason which Weinrich observed. The image, representing the inner conflict experienced by Sumantra, is, appropriately enough, taken from the field of charioteering. Torn between loyalty to the king and affection for prince Rāma as they issue conflicting commands to stop ('tiṣṭeti') and go on ('yāhīti'), he feels as if he is trapped between two turning chariot wheels. As we saw in the case of Siegfried's metaphorical unarmed fight with death in his literally unarmed state, the action of the speeding chariot carrying Rāma into exile is skilfully and movingly reflected in the parallel internal image.

My example of *utprekṣā* from the *Nibelungenlied* occurs during the narrative of Kriemhild's journey to Etzelnburg.

Si was ze Zeizenmûre unz an den vierden tac.

diu molte ûf der strâze die wîle nie gelag,

sine stûbe, alsam ez brünne, allenthalben dan.

dâ riten durch Osterrîche des künic Etzelen man. *NL* 1336

As with the image of red blossom from the *Rāmāyaṇa* instanced earlier to explain the notion of *utprekṣā* ('ādīptamiva'), the figure 'alsam ez brünne' implies an action of burning, but whereas before the allusion was to flames from imaginary fires, in this passage it is to smoke. The dust kicked up by the horses' hooves appears like smoke. A similar image occurs in 596.3-4a:

das velt begonde stieben, sam ob al daz lant

mit louge wære erbrunnen.

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40 From 'Todesfuge'.

41 From 'Quatrain'.

The context is the tournament held to welcome Brünhild to Worms as Gunther's bride. It is a conventional image used for descriptive purposes to enliven the narative. Little is left to recipient participation in the perception of the image: even the notion of metaphorical flames is spelt out in the phrase 'mit louge'.

The first example quoted, however, carries a much more subtle message. Kriemhild has halted in Traisenmauer on her journey to Hungary to marry Etzel and thereby to contrive her revenge on Siegfried's muderers. She stays there four days while Etzel's retinue is riding ahead of him through Austria to receive her. The two narrative pictures juxtaposed here have a strong visual, even cinematic, quality. First we are shown a static image of Kriemhild resting in Traisenmauer, then a dynamic one of Etzel's men riding meanwhile towards her through clouds of dust. The poet tells us that during those four days the dust on the road never settles, the implication being that an uninterrupted stream of mounted fighting men is riding out. Kriemhild is able to see for herself the fabled might of king Etzel which is the sole reason for her acceptance of his marriage proposal. The dust is a measure (and, incidentally, a symbol) of the number of vassals and their men ('von kristen und von heiden vil manege wîte schar' as we learn from 1338.3) whom Kriemhild will have at her disposal when the time is ripe for revenge. This picture of clouds of dust suspended above the countryside like smoke from imaginary fires can be seen as prefiguring the real smoke that billows from Etzel's great hall which Kriemhild will order to be torched during the battle between the Burgundians and the Huns: 'Das fiwer viel genôte ûf si in den sal; [...]der rouch und ouch diu hitze in tâten beidiu wê'. (2118.1 and 3). Thus our *utprekṣā* 'sine stübe, alsam ez brünne' is at the same time a metaphorically motivated symbol which also, as many symbols do, conveys a strong sense of foreboding. The arrival of Etzel's retinue sets in motion the series of events which will culminate in the mass slaughter of the great hall. The joint fate of the Burgundians and the Huns is sealed in this strophe.

Symbol

Parallel examples of birds used as straightforward object-based symbols occur at similarly early points in each narrative: the falcon in *âventiure* 1 and the pair of cranes in the prologue to the *Bālakaṇḍa*. They can be seen to function as introductory paradigms in each work.

The falcon appears in Kriemhild's dream:

in disen hohen êre troumte Kriemhilde

wie sie züge einen valken, starc, scœn' und wilde,

den ir zwêne arn erkrummen. daz sie das muoste sehen,

ir enkunde in dirre werlde leider nimmer gescehen. *NL* 13

She relates the dream to her mother who interprets the falcon as the man whom she will marry and most likely soon lose.[42] For contemporary audiences this is a straightforward and almost unneccesary interpretation. In medieval lyric and paintings the falcon clearly symbolises the beloved, sometimes female but more commonly male. However, to forestall any possible misconstrual, the poet explicitly identifies the falcon image with Siegfried in 18.4 and 19. The strophe describing Kriemhild's dream contains a remarkable amount of compressed metaphorical information. It tells us much about Siegfried's characteristics which are essential to our understanding of his later behaviour: he is described as 'starc' and 'scœn' ', and, most importantly, that he is 'wilde'. Convention requires that epic heroes be comely and strong in order to demonstrate their royal or aristocratic pedigree and their potential prowess in battle. The element of wildness, however, is particularly significant with regard to Siegfried. Wild falcons, not those born in captivity, make the best hunters, but they are far more difficult to train and therefore more prized. There is always the fear that they will fly away to regain their freedom when unleashed during the hunt. Siegfried will not become the faithless falcon lover of much medieval lyric, but Kriemhild's 'taming' referred to in this strophe is incomplete. A pet bird does not make a hunter, and so, in order that the story unfolds as it should, Siegfried must remain stubbornly his own man, thus inciting Brünhild's and Hagen's enmity. Kriemhild 'leashes' Siegfried in unknowingly compelling him to stay on in Worms for many months before her brothers allow him to see and woo her, during which time of waiting he is exposed to and learns courtly manners or *zuht*. It is this *zuht* which will be his undoing in 980.1a ('Dô engalt er sîner züht'), for, in waiting courteously for Gunther to arrive and drink before him at the forest spring, he gives Hagen sufficient time to catch up with him after the contrived two-man race and thereby to make preparations to murder him as he stoops to drink.

Two eagles tear the falcon apart in Kriemhild's dream. The young girl is distressed as, trapped in the immediacy of her nightmare, she is forced to watch the destruction of a creature for which she instinctively feels affection (13.3b-4). At the same time, the poet invests these lines with the sense of foreboding (frequently a feature of symbol, as we noted earlier) which nightmares produce in the dreamer, and they become powerfully prophetic of the night when she will discover Siegfried's bloody corpse lying outside her door. Present and future suffering are fused in the one psychological moment: for those who know how the tale must unfold, the image of the dead hero is superimposed on that of the torn falcon. Signifier and signified become one.

While the falcon dream is concerned explicitly and exclusively with the relationship of the lovers and the tragic events to come, the *krauñcavadha* ('crane-killing') episode has a rather

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42 Epic convention frequently includes such explication: cf. Brynhild's dream in the *Vǫlsunga saga.*

more oblique and complex function. This brief reading, however, will concern itself with the symbolism of the crane pair as a narratological device rather than with assertions about the inspiration and composition of the epic as a whole which the passage also seeks to justify.

vicacāra ha paśyaṃs tat sarvato vipulaṃ vanam

tasyābhyāśe tu mithunaṃ carantam anapāyinam

dadarśa bhavagāṃs tatra krauñcayoś cāruniḥsvanam

tasmāt tu mithunād ekaṃ pumāṃsaṃ pāpaniścayaḥ

jaghāna vairanilayo niṣādas tasya paśyataḥ

taṃ śonitaparītāṅgaṃ veṣṭamānaṃ mahītale

bhāryā tu nihataṃ dṛṣṭvā rurāva karuṇāṃ giram *R.* 1.2.8c,d - 11

('He [Vālmīki] wandered about looking at the vast forest surrounding him. Beside [the bathing-place in the Tamasā river] the blessed one saw a sweet-voiced pair of cranes moving about in the same spot. But as he watched, an evil-minded Niṣāda with enmity in his heart struck one of the pair, the male. His wife, seeing him mortally wounded and writhing on the ground, his limbs covered in blood, uttered a mournful cry'.)

Vālmīki, full of pity for the grieving bird, goes on to curse the Niṣāda (aboriginal hunter) for killing a bird infatuated with desire (*kāmamohita*, v.14d). The hunter has taken unjust advantage of the preoccupation of the pair with the sexual urge.

Clear anthropomorphic resonances are detectable in the passage. The birds are engaged in - or are about to engage in - the act of copulation, which, given the context, would more properly be described in human terms as 'love-making'. The female (the *krauñcī*) is referred to as *bhāryā*, the everyday Sanskrit word for 'wife'. This crane couple in the *Rāmāyaṇa* has been traditionally associated with the sarus, a species noted for the lifelong fidelity of its pairs and, as is sometimes maintained,[43] the habit of a bereaved partner of fasting to death. In any case, the crane is ritually taboo in ancient India, possibly because of such anthropomorphic associations with the sarus, which would be a further reason for the sage's sense of outrage. Distressed at her mate's sudden death, our *krauñcī* cries out in her grief. The vocabulary which Vālmīki uses to describe this action, 'rurāva karunaṃ giram', ('cried out a piteous sound') could just as appropriately be applied to a human expression of sorrow. Indeed it is possible that this passage may be influenced by an older genre of traditional lament, or *śoka*, (which means literally 'grief') in ballad form of a sorrowing female singing bird symbolising a human wife mourning the loss of her beloved.[44] This

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43 For instance by the 17th c. Mughāl emperor Jehāngir in his journal.

44 See Vaudeville 1963.

apparently widespread lament with its anthropomorphic associations surfaces in medieval European literature in, for instance, Chaucer's *Squires Tale* and the twelfth century Irish poem *Oisín agus an Chorr*, in which a female falcon and a female crane respectively bewail the loss of their lovers.

Given this tradition, it is possible to see in the *Krauñcavadha* episode an implicit prefiguration of the suffering which Sītā, bereft of her husband, will have to undergo. Her laments in captivity in Lankā and, later, after being abandoned beside the Ganges in a forest full of the mournful cries of peacocks, echo the *krauñcī*'s plaintive, distracted cries. As in the *Nibelungenlied* , the death of a bird heralds overwhelming grief for the heroine, and, like the falcon in Kriemhild's dream, the *krauñca* symbol is an overtly erotic one. It is also possible to view the figure of the future suffering Rāma, separated from Sītā, as symbolised in the graphic image of the writhing, bleeding *krauñca*. We are not so very far here from the *Nibelungenlied* image of the mortally wounded dream falcon and the figure of the bleeding, accusing Siegfried lying among the flowers in 998.1. While the *krauñca* pair are not explicitly identified with Rāma and Sītā in the way that Siegfried is clearly shown to be the falcon of Kriemhild's dream, they nevertheless constitute as poignant and lyrical an anticipatory motif as that of the falcon lover.

Summary

As we have seen, the rhetorical distinction between metaphor and simile has been blurred since the beginning of written normative observations on the subject, Aristotle seeing little difference between the two and Sanskrit poeticians considering all *arthālaṃkaras* (figures of thought) to be simile-based. The medieval European attempt to separate metaphor from simile in the Ciceronian tradition by classifying metaphor as a trope and simile as an inferior device for amplification is a misguided one. Simile and metaphor are, in principle, equally valid and suggestive types of figurative expression. The foregoing text-based examination of examples of both figures has shown that it is possible, indeed desirable, in critical analysis to keep separate, without becoming pedantic, the grammatically differentiated notions of the two tropes, instead of subsuming them under the collective term 'metaphor' as has so often been the case.

Simile is the explicit likening of the subject of comparison with an apparently incompatible element which paradoxically serves to tell us more about the subject than naturalistic circumlocution would do, and it achieves this more economically, too. It does not entail an exclusively visual perception of the object of comparison, nor does it depend on the literal accuracy of the comparison. Far too many literary critics (and philosophers) have underestimated the power of suggestion which simile has the potential to exert. The examples of simile from the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* selected for analysis

demonstrate that simile is not *per se* the poor relation of metaphor. Context is paramount in determining how strong or weak a given simile or metaphor is.

Metaphor, like simile, is based on the concept of analogy, the perception of similarity within apparent dissimilarity. It is implied comparison of subject with predicate, not explicit comparison, as simile is. As Kunz suggests, some metaphors are formulated as similes. The examples of *upamā* examined on pages 89-90 illustrate clearly the different, though allied, notions of simile and 'metaphorical simile'. In *R.* 3.50.13 we have straightforward comparison: Sītā with her golden aspect is likened to a flash of lightening in a cloud. At 3.50.22, however, she is described as looking like lightning enveloped in a cloud. We have metaphorical comparison here in that lightning, the moment it is seen, leaves the sky. This energy cannot literally be trapped in the atmosphere in its visible form. Furthermore, the retention of the grammatical distinction between metaphor and simile referred to at the beginning of this summary allows us to analyse more precisely the mechanics of comparison in operation in a particular context. In the above example, for instance, the metaphor describing Rāvaṇa as a cloud ('ghanam' [cloud], precisely speaking, stands in syntactical apposition to 'Rāvaṇam') is dependent on the simile depicting Sītā as gleaming like lightning. The simile enables us to infer that 'cloud' in this context means 'thundercloud'.

Metaphor and simile, then, are based on the notion of analogy. Symbol, on the other hand, while sometimes containing a muted element of analogy, principally operates by a process of direct association. It is an object which functions as an index, that is, it points to or stands for another object which may be either concrete or abstract. We construe symbol first literally and then empirically. Symbol must be object-based; if an image is not object-based, it is metaphor. Some symbols may be synecdoches or metonyms, others may be metaphorically motivated, as we observed in the *Rāmāyaṇa* image 'gate 'rdharātre' ('at midnight'). Symbol in epic often carries with it an implicit sense of foreboding, as we have seen in the examples drawn from our texts.

While it is useful in textual analysis to distinguish between metaphor and simile (as also synecdoche and metonym) on the one hand and symbol on the other, we should be aware that these are all types of figurative, or metaphorical, device. Provided a clear definition of each device has been established, as has been the aim of this chapter, it is then justifiable, in general discussion, to use the terms 'figurative' or 'metaphorical language' or simply 'imagery'. In succeeding chapters the term 'metaphor' will always be used in its strict grammatical sense, never loosely as a synonym for 'simile', 'metaphorical language', 'image', 'figure of speech' or 'symbol'. The term 'symbol' will similarly be understood exclusively in the specific sense outlined in this summary. Although, as we have seen, these figurative

devices are a common feature of ordinary as well as poetic discourse, my discussion will henceforward be concerned solely with their use in epic poetry.

It became clear during the discussion of Levin's and Ricoeur's similar theories on the relationship of the 'local' image to the text in its entirety that the individual, isolated metaphor, simile or symbol is an essential component of the hermeneutic whole. Each image reveals in itself part of the world picture contained in the complete text. The instances of metaphor, simile and symbol selected for analysis in the previous section of this study have served to illustrate the hermeneutical relationship of the part to the whole. The images, consisting mainly of formulaic similes and symbols, to be studied in the two succeeding chapters, should reveal in what ways and to what extent the respective worlds disclosed by those images overlap and diverge.

My study has been an attempt to separate and clarify the notions of image as figure of speech and image as literary symbol, tools with which the poet crafts a transformation of empirical experience into a work of aesthetic appeal. The task of definition is no easy one, for, as I suggested earlier, language is a medium so fluid and so ephemeral, especially when used in poetry - a form of discourse more suited than any other to exploiting the essential ambiguity of language - that it appears innately resistant to dissection and definition, however precise the intention of grammarians, linguists and philosophers, however valuable their contributions to our methods of talking about it. Furthermore it is virtually impossible to arrive at a single definition which can be applied to imagery in all types of poetry, from the earliest recorded Vedic hymns to poems of the present day. As we have seen, it has sometimes been necessary, with the purposes of this thesis in mind, to exclude twentieth-century poetry from general observations.

This chapter began with a passing reference to the visual aspect of the term 'image'. Lodge, in a contribution on literary narrative to a conference concerned mainly with the visual or quasi-visual image and its perception, talks of the 'multilayeredness, the polysemy inherent in language. The cinema, and other visual arts,' he argues, 'can do more immediate justice to the visible world, but cannot match the power of language to *mean*', (in Miller, 1990, 153). Perhaps even more fundamental to language, especially in poetry, is its power to suggest. This potential of language to evoke the unexpressed, specifically in the classical court poem, was perceived by Ānandavardhana in the ninth century who observed the use of *dhvani* ('intimation') for the purpose of *vyañjanā* ('suggestion', literally 'mark' or 'token'). The term *vyañjanā* is derived from the root *vyañj* which carries the meanings 'anoint', 'beautify' and 'manifest'. *Vyañjanā* therefore suggests as it manifests. It is close to Joyce's concept of the 'epiphany of the word'. The language of poetry, in its use of figures and symbols, has the power to *mean* because it has the power to *suggest*.

4

The Formulaic Image as Figure of Speech: the Theme-Bearing Stock Simile

1. Formula and Structure, Sound and Meaning

As we noted in chapter 2, Parry emphasised the supreme importance of the formula in the compositional dynamics of oral narrative poetry. That its use is the ultimate test of orality and therefore proof of wholly extempore composition during performance, as he propounded, has since been convincingly questioned. This we have seen. Nevertheless, Parry's perception of the formula as the 'building block' from which epic is constructed - a remarkable contribution to the study of oral poetry - endures. He observed that Homer's basic unit of composition was the formulaic epithet with its own preferred metrical position in the hexameter line. (Much more recently, Martin 1997 has found that simile also plays a rôle in the narratological dynamics of Homeric epic, an observation made briefly by Gonda 1949 of the Sanskrit epics and one to which I shall return). It is important to note at this stage, however, that formulas, both fixed and flexible, to use Kiparsky's distinction,[1] of whatever type, are more than building blocks in an improvised performance: since they are firmly embedded in the fabric of the narrative, formulas are a key factor also in the transmission of oral narrative poetry. I believe that epic is composed for transmission - not only to an immediate audience but also to future generations of poet-singers - not that transmission is a by-product of composition.

However, there is more to it than this. We are in danger of concentrating exclusively on the textuality of epic, on the recorded story-discourse as it is preserved in manuscript/print format if we treat formula solely as a compositional and mnemonic dynamic eminently suited to computerised statistical analysis. In my introductory chapter I touched on the importance of formula as an acoustic dynamic. I made reference to Kahane's timely emphasis on the aural (as opposed to visual) quality of 'sameness' belonging to epic, expressed in like-sounding, though not necessarily identical, word-clusters, by which he clearly means the formulas identified and explored by the Parry school. ('Homer's poetry is not, nor can it

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[1] Kiparsky 1976. 'Fixed' refers to verbatim repetitions and 'flexible' to variations of similar word clusters which differ slightly from each other. Parry called them 'fixed formulas' and 'formulaic systems'. See Ch.1, n.13.

ever be, *textual*. However, this does not mean that it cannot be written down. It can, it has [...], and furthermore [...] the written voice does "sound" the same'. Kahane 1997, 137). His conclusion about the non-textuality of Homer can surely be applied to epic in general and to our texts in particular. Too much regard for the epic formula as it appears on the page and too much emphasis on the distinction between fixed and flexible formulas and their importance relative to each other divert our attention from the content of the (originally) sounded words. Formulas, especially formulaic figures of speech, are indeed a useful strategy for composing and transmitting epic poetry, but, even more importantly, as we have already seen, they are also the poet-performer's strategy for reminding himself and his audience, perhaps often subliminally, of their common world view which it is the business of epic to perpetuate.[2] The stock figure of speech - frequently varied to a degree so slight as to be imperceptible to the ear and only detectable by close analysis of the text, variations which occur through the replacement of a word by a synonym or by a change in word order or by other similar, perhaps often unconscious, means - encapsulates the traditional theme, imbues the work with the quality of 'sameness' which Kahane identifies. The audience hears fixed and parallel flexible formulas in effect as one and the same.

I have just described these minor variations as unconscious, since it is clear that they are not 'literary' devices. The aim is not to avoid sameness, rather to reinforce it. Before a self-conscious post-oral style gradually sets in as a consequence of written composition, one that is marked by increasing demands for variety and innovation, the oral style deliberately pursues similarity. Contrary to the opinion of some writers on epic up to the nineteen-sixties and even beyond, this pursuit does not demonstrate the inferiority of oral poets as against written ones, the primitive nature of their craft, their lack of poetic imagination and limited command of vocabulary. Instead, this difference in styles merely highlights the difference in expectations. Scholarly understanding of the genre has fortunately progressed to the extent that it is now almost a truism to remark on the dilemma facing translators of epic: either they give a rendering of the original which conveys its authentic flavour, that is, by faithfully reproducing the frequent repetitions verbatim, thus ensuring a 'lifeless' work which will not appeal to modern readers and will therefore not be accepted for publication, or they are untrue to the text and 'enliven' it by varying the vocabulary as frequently as possible. Understandably, the second option is the favoured one. Interesting to note in the context of the oral/aural dimension of epic is the fact that similes in the *Rāmāyaṇa* are not infrequently alliterated,[3] an acoustic device which draws attention to the subliminal message of societal

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[2] Cf. 'Epic words relate to and recall, not so much this or that fixed point in a *text*, [as written poetry does with its inbuilt self-referentiality] rather they activate a whole "theme", a "myth", a "node" in the tradition.' (Kahane 1997, 136).

[3] Alliteration of similes is not unknown in the *Nibelungenlied* , as for example in 'sam vliegende vogele sah man si varn' (1343.3) which alludes to the number and travelling speed of Etzel's vassals who make up

continuity which they carry. If, then, as readers in a post-structuralist age, we want to appreciate epic insofar as it is possible, we must firstly 'hear' the composite sounds of these stock word-groupings as well as viewing and comparing them on the printed page, and secondly we must accept their 'sameness', that frequent - to the post-oral mindset excessively tedious - repetition, as the essential conservative theme-bearing ingredient of the performance-act that is epic.

2. The Narratological Rôle of Simile in Epic: 'Iliad', 'Rāmāyaṇa' and 'Nibelungenlied'

There is more again to epic than aural and thematic association in the use of tropic, predominantly stock, imagery. In his study of similes in Homer, in particular the battle narratives of the *Iliad*, where they are especially common, Martin makes a case also for what he terms the 'rhythmic approach':[4] '[...] the most noticeable feature of [Homeric] similes is the way in which they punctuate the narrative, giving it an almost musical rhythm and providing episodic definition', (1997, 144), though even here, it seems to me, the aural is intermeshed with the structural, demonstrating how closely linked the functions of simile are. I shall apply Martin's statement to our texts in due course. It is clear that in the *Rāmāyaṇa* also the occurrence of similes is marked in battle scenes, although the figure is regularly found throughout.[5] Of course the Homeric simile tends to be much longer and more developed[6] than the generally half- or full-line *Rāmāyaṇa* simile,[7] but Martin's

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his welcoming party for Kriemhild. Though the figure may well be used consciously for affective means by the *Nibelungen* poet concerned, it does also highlight an ancient heroic theme. The line may also be a remnant of the old Germanic alliterative verse and therefore a sign of antiquity.

[4] Martin does not dismiss either the rhetorical or the thematic approach in Homeric scholarship, arguing that affective techniques to reinforce the act of performance and pointers to the wider application of the image are both essential to our understanding of the function of similes. He sees the 'rhythmic' approach as complementing the others, and in this he is surely right. However, we would do well to note with reference to our texts that the scholiastic approach, lacking Parry's insight into the techniques of oral composition and transmission, has tended to overplay the criterion of semantic and aesthetic suitability, the aptness (or otherwise) of an image within a given context, when other, more immediate factors such as metre and, in the case of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* syllable count very often determine the choice of the, generally, stock image. Pathak's 1968 eulogistic study of *Rāmāyaṇa* similes is a typical 'scholiastic' case in point. Following the historical scholarly convention of attributing sole, written, authorship to Vālmīki and furthermore dubbing him a 'literary genius' (23), he considers only the aesthetics of simile as *alaṃkāra* , at pains to demonstrate the appropriateness and beauty of every instance of the trope which he examines, however stereotyped. 'There are repetitions, no doubt', he acknowledges, 'but these repetitions in most cases are due to the similarity of incidents, situation, characterisation and conventionalism', (14).

[5] According to Brockington 2000b, the *Araṅyakāṇḍa* , with its several battle *sargas* , has 388 similes in its 2066 stanzas, whereas the proportions in the non-martial *Ayodhyā* and *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍas* are 344 to 3170 and 278 to 1984 respectively, (127).

[6] Damon thinks it likely that the short comparisons are Mycenæan whereas the long similes are later Ionic accretions. 'Indeed, the many similes which have late linguistic forms in the epiphoneme but not in the basic comparison strongly suggest that the Ionian minstrels were accustomed to use traditional comparisons

findings make a useful starting-point for comparison. By contrast with both epics, similes in the *Nibelungenlied* battle narratives are sparse in the extreme, but there are imagistic parallels here, expressed typically by means other than simile, which I shall examine in due course. Rather than functioning as what appears to be a relief from long drawn-out descriptions of carnage, the battle similes of the *Iliad*, according to Martin, play a structural rôle, that of 'demarcat[ing] narrative segments', (ibid, 144). He has observed that similes not only mark the 'emotional peak' of the action, as they have long been thought to do, but also occur at the beginning or end of a confrontation, not in the middle, that is, they are found at the 'episodic boundary', (ibid, 146).

Do battle similes have a parallel function in the *Rāmāyaṇa* ? To begin with, these occur much more frequently than in Martin's 848-line *Iliad* sample, which, he says, is typical of the others he has examined, and, as I have already indicated, they are generally much shorter.[8] Nevertheless, I have found broad functional similarities in the use of the figure in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Having made a brief study of battle similes and having drawn my own conclusions as to their narratological function, I was encouraged by the discovery that Gonda in his notes on Sanskrit similes reaches much the same basic conclusions.[9] Certainly these figures tend to appear at the beginning and end of *Rāmāyaṇa* episodes, as Martin found in the *Iliad,* that is, they frame individual narratives recounting combat between two champions, but they also feature in close succession within episodes, describing sometimes the warriors, sometimes their weapons and sometimes the action of the weapons and their effect on the opponent. There appears to be a deliberate patterning as regards the opening and closing of encounters, but intra-episodic use seems to be more random, though even here there is evidence of a loose schema of figuration in the verse clusters: the use of the trope as the narrative shifts from one combatant to the other achieves a certain balance in descriptions of the appearance or actions of the warriors as they face each other and in the sending out and receiving of missiles. Thus we have some clue as to the significance of similes in the narratological structuring of the *Rāmāyaṇa.*

As for marking emotional peaks in the narrative as Martin, with justification, claims for the much rarer *Iliad* battle similes, the case for a parallel function by the episode-framing *Rāmāyaṇa* similes is quite strong, witness the powerful simile-enhanced descriptions of

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as nuclei for their own expanded versions,' (1973, 264). There appears to have been a similar process of expansion of core similes in the *Rāmāyaṇa* by later *kuśīlava* poets.

7 Gonda 1949 notes the rarity in Sanskrit texts of 'independent or "Homeric" similes', para. 54, p.96.

8 Nine- and six-line similes feature quite routinely in Martin's sample analysis, though there are shorter ones and even two examples found each within one line (ibid,144-46).

9 1949, paras 34-5 and 37 where he observes the occurrence of similes in Sanskrit literature at culminating points in a story or argument and their accumulation in epic as the most important events are recounted.

each *rākṣasa* warrior's entry to the fray and later of his fall, where a succession of parallel similes tends to appear: Gonda notes the affective purpose of simile accumulation and calls it 'a figure of repetition', (1949, para 35). The tropic portrayal of champions going out to battle and the eventual defeat of one highlights obvious emotional peaks in the narrative, but the use of the subsidiary, often highly stereotyped similes within that framework might appear a different case. Gonda suggests that many similes in Sanskrit texts, especially those that have become fixed formulas, are used as line-fillers, most noticeably in the fourth *pāda*, (1949, para. 61). While this may often be so in epic, I think it is only part of the picture in that simile line-fillers also perform an essential function: the imagistic ritual repetition of the cultural certainties (themes) which it is epic's task to perpetuate subliminally through the sounded word. These intra-episodic similes in fact mark mini-peaks in the episode: the dealing and receiving of potentially mortal wounds. With their insistent rhythmic force the figures do not interrupt the narrative, rather, they control it and, paradoxically, perhaps, to the post-oral mindset at the same time carry it forward with the intensifying weight of their subliminal emotion-charged associations. Just because these stock similes have become bland and empty of significance to the modern reader through seeing the countless repetitions on the printed page does not mean that their sounded presence was not once essential to performer and listeners alike. The similes allow both parties a moment to savour the drama and significance of each action and to anticipate the next. For each of them, the means of telling the tale which the audience already knew backwards must have been at least as important as the tale itself.

Perhaps some of the parallel instances of simile within verses and in consecutive verses - though I suggest by no means all - can be attributed to rhapsodic accretion, the agonistic compulsion to pile figure upon figure to which I referred in my second chapter. But as a rule, even in very similar *ślokas*, we do not find verbatim repetition of the same simile cluster: there tends to be variation in word order, depending partly on where precisely they occur in the second and fourth *pādas* (where the figure regularly occurs), that is, on which particular metrical pattern they fill within those *pādas*, and also variation of vocabulary through the use of synonyms, in which Sanskrit is particularly rich. For example, in 3.24 *ślokas* 16b and 17d both contain stock similes likening Rāma's arrows to the snares of death (*pāśa*, 'snare' and *kāla*, 'death') which he shoots as though in sport (*līlayā*), but the variations effected ensure that the second *śloka* reinforces the first rather than simply repeating it. The similes fall in different metrical positions, the two key nouns are reversed in 17 and the particle *upama* ('like') in 16 is replaced by the synonym *iva* in 17: 'kāla pāś opamān [raṇe]' (16b) and 'pāśāḥ kālakṛtā iva' (17d). Even the repetition of *līlayā* in 17 is not a straightforward one, for it occurs as chiasmus: cf 'līlayā rāmaḥ' (16c) with 'rāmeṇa līlayā' (17b). Furthermore, synonyms for 'arrow' are employed: *patrīn* in 16d and the more usual *śara* in 17a.

To return to the concept of emotional peaks, I suggest that linking the repeated use of simile with the expression of emotion is not inapt in the context of battle narrative in particular: the adrenalin rush experienced by fighting men in action is mirrored in the poet-singer's impassioned performance, his repeated, hyperbolic attempts to bring the attacking and the parrying alive through figuration to equally enthralled listeners. The much later poetician Ānandavardhana would no doubt have approved: 'The Alaṃkāra remains a true instrument of decoration, Ānandavardhana says, so long as it goes to highten [sic] the emotional effect,' (Bhattacharyya, 36).[10] But, as we have seen, this is not the only function of *Rāmāyaṇa* battle similes, since these operate on the thematic and rhythmic levels in tandem with the affective.

A brief examination of two sample passages, from the *Araṇyakāṇḍa* and the *Yuddhakāṇḍa,* illustrates the use of simile in the structural dynamics of the combat episode. Let us look first at the forest duel between Rāma and Khara which, including the agonistic speeches of these two combatants, stretches from 3.26.20 to 29.28. I have selected from this narrative the verses which recount the physical rather than verbal confrontation of Rāma and Khara. The similes employed are too numerous to treat in full, but I intend to note in passing some thematically assorted similes which occur typically in *Rāmāyaṇa* battle accounts and to concentrate on the commonest group of all, similes which express the notion of light and fire in images of flashing, shining, burning, sparking. When we come to compare these latter with *Nibelungenlied* battle imagery we shall find significant parallels, as I have already indicated. I begin with the key opening and closing similes, the episode-framing figures of our *Rāmāyaṇa* passage. Two stock mythologically-based battle similes mark Khara's entry into combat: at 26.20d he attacks Rāma like the eclipse-bringing Rāhu the moon ('rāhuś candramasaṃ yathā') and at 27.3d like Namuci falling upon Vāsava ('namuci vāsavaṃ yathā'). The end of the episode, Khara's eventual fall, is marked by a typical series of parallel similes, equally mythological in nature: the fire of Rāma's arrow ('śarāgninā', 29.27b) consumes him as Andhaka was burned up by Rudra in the White Forest ('rudreṇeva vinirdagdhaḥ svetāraṇye yathāndhakaḥ', 29.27cd). Then come similes comparing his fall to Vṛtra's and Bala's, both struck by Indra's thunderbolt, and Namuci's, overcome by (sea) foam, ('sa vṛtra iva vajreṇa phenena namucir yathā / balo vendrāśani' [...], 29.28abc). Thus figurative references to Namuci open and close the episode. We see also the characteristic use of synonym in that first *vajra* and then *aśani* are used, both meaning 'thunder/lightening bolt'.

Turning now to the subsidiary similes within the passage we find to begin with the comparison of arrows to snakes which occurs passim in *Rāmāyaṇa* battle narratives. The

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[10] Sudhisankar Bhattacharyya: *Imagery in the Mahābhārata: Influence on Later Sanskrit Literature*, Calcutta 1971.

figure follows immediately after the second opening frame simile announcing Khara's entry into combat with Rāma and is used to highlight the method of Khara's attack, his salvo of arrows looking like angry, venomous snakes, 'kruddhān āśīviṣān iva', (27.4d). Rāma's counter-attack is marked by a description of his flashing arrows by means of another stock simile accompanied here by alliteration, ('sa sāyakair durviṣahaiḥ sasphuliṅgair ivāgnibhiḥ', ('by his irresistible arrows giving off sparks like fires', 27.7ab). We must perceive this counter-attack as taking place simultaneously, although the accounts appear consecutively, since the poet prefers to bring the scene to life by dwelling on the actions of each combatant in turn rather than blandly telling his audience that the warriors shot arrows at each other.[11] Another common animal comparison, one likening a warrior to a lion, which we shall see used in our *Yuddhakāṇḍa* passage, appears at 27.12a where the narratological focus shifts back to Khara as he advances on Rāma, '[...] siṃham iva vikrāntaṃ', reinforced in the second *pāda* by repetition using the implicit comparison of metaphor instead of simile, 'siṃhavikrāntagāminam', ('like a fearless lion, moving with a fearless lion's gait,' 12b). The lion is an agent of comparison found also in the *Iliad, Nibelungenlied* and *Táin*, and I shall cite examples in due course. In 12cd the narrative switches back to Rāma, who in turn is compared to a lion who does not fear a deer, and in the following *śloka* back again to Khara. The figure used to describe Khara's further advance is another battle simile beloved of *Rāmāyaṇa* singer-poets, one which likens a doomed warrior's rush towards his opponent to a moth flying towards a flame. This particular trope straddles the two categories which I have chosen to examine. While it is not strictly speaking a 'fire' simile in that neither the warrior nor his weapons are directly compared to the element, (Khara himself is 'like a moth'), the notion of fire is semantically an integral part of the extended simile. In this passage the stock simile occurs at 27.13d as 'pataṅga iva pāvakam', (note again the alliteration).

I proceed now to the 'fire' similes proper, those which refer to flames or to light produced by fire as in lightning or the sun's rays. I have already commented on the image of Rāma's flashing arrows appearing to give off sparks like fires, 27.7ab. At 27.15d Khara, having shattered Rāma's bow with an arrow, shoots seven more, 'śakrāśanisamaprabhān', ('like Indra's lightning bolts'), and the narrative returns to Rāma to show his reaction. Wounded and enraged he looks like a blazing fire without smoke, ('vidhūmo 'gnir iva jvalan', 27.17d), and one of the arrows he shoots back shatters Khara's golden standard which the poet describes as falling to the ground like the sun falling at the gods' command ('jagāma dharaṇīm sūryo devatānām ivājñaya', 27.21cd). The comparison of a heavenly body disappearing from the sky is commonly used as a closing frame simile to draw attention to a warrior's reaction to his death-blow, but here, applied to Khara's standard, it prefigures his

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[11] See Martin 146-7 on this narratalogical phenomenon in Homer.

own fall in *sarga* 29. He responds by hurling his club at Rāma, yet another weapon likened to a blazing thunderbolt ('pradīptām aśaniṃ yathā', 28.25d). Finally he meets his end when Rāma's arrow strikes him with a sound like the great thunderclap of doom ('nirghātasamaniḥsvanaḥ', again the alliteration for effect, 29.26b). The closing frame similes which follow allude mainly to fire, as we saw earlier (29.27-28).

The second passage I have similarly selected at random, a much shorter one from the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* depicting the fight between Kumbha and Sugrīva, typically follows the same general simile-based narratological structure. I will discuss both the frame and the subsidiary similes, of which almost all consist of images of fire. The opening frame simile, which happens to be another lion simile, describes Sugrīva's furious attack on Kumbha in revenge for the *rākṣasa's* wounding of his nephew Aṅgada: 'śailasānucaraṃ nāgaṃ vegavān iva kesarī', ('like a lioness pouncing with alacrity on a snake moving about a rock', 6.63.30cd). The episode-closing similes highlight Kumbha's fall in terms of light and fire, as we have now come to expect[12]: the poet likens it to Lohitāṅga, the red planet, with its rays becoming invisible (eclipsed) in the sky, ('lohitāṅgà ivākāśād dīptaraśmir yadṛcchayā', 63.51cd). Then in the following *śloka* Kumbha's sinking, broken body is compared to the shining figure of the lord of cows[13] overcome by Rudra in the line 'babhau rudrābhipannasya yathā rūpaṃ gavāṃ pateḥ', (52cd). Clearly this is not a stock simile, but it follows the common pattern of mythologically-based figuration that we have observed in the Khara passage. Turning back to the action contained within those boundaries, the two warriors engage in battle for a while and then, while they pause, Sugrīva, taunting Kumbha, causes his warrior pride to flare up like a fire becoming brighter when an offering of clarified butter is poured on it ('agner ājyahutasyeva tejas tasyābhyavardhata', 63.45cd). Kumbha then attacks Sugrīva with renewed ferocity and the impact of the blow he delivers

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12 Gonda cites *Rām.* 4.17.9-10 and 18.2 as examples where a concatenation of similes marks a high point in the narrative, here the fall of Vālin at Rāma's hands (1949, para. 37, p.64). Closer observation shows that all but three of the similes in these passages are images of light/fire: 'gatārciṣam ivānalam', ('like a fire that has been extinguished', 17.9b; 'ādityam iva kālena yugānte bhuvi pātitam', ('like the sun thrown down to earth by Time at the end of the age', 17.10ab; 'mahendram iva durdarṣaṃ mahendram iva duḥsaham', ('like Indra the invincible, like Indra the irresistible', 17.10cd), a double simile, one of the three similes which do not fit the general pattern in content but one that I have included here because it demonstrates admirably the typical use of alliteration and parallelism beloved of *Rāmāyaṇa* poets: the double simile's key position at the end of the two interlinked *ślokas* serves to emphasise Vālin's defeat despite his great prowess in battle; lastly, two further fire similes relating to Vālin's fall which occur at the beginning of the next *sarga* : 'niṣprabham ivādityam' ('like the sun deprived of radiance', 18.2a) and 'upaśāntam ivānalam', ('like a fire that has been extinguished', 18.2d), a variant of the formula 'gatārciṣam ivānalam' in 17.9b noted above, these two forming an excellent example of flexible formulas 'sounding' the same in the sense which I defined earlier.

13 'Lord of cows' is an obscure term. It is occasionally associated with fire and also the sun. Perhaps the most feasible explanation, the one favoured by most of the *Rāmāyaṇa* commentators and based on the mention of Rudra, is that *gavām pateḥ* is an oblique reference to Pūṣan (a minor Vedic deity with solar aspects) whose teeth were knocked out by Rudra. (Personal communication from J.L. Brockington).

with his fist is described as a flame blazing up like fire issuing from Mount Meru struck by a thunderbolt, ('vajraniṣpeṣasaṃjātajvālā merau yathā girau', 63.48cd). There is an implicit comparison here of Sugrīva's massive frame to a mountain, but whether it is intentional on the part of the poet responsible or whether the reference to Mount Meru is used merely for rhetorical purposes is impossible to tell. Now attention switches back to Sugrīva who deals Kumbha a death-blow with a fist likened to a thunderbolt ('muṣṭiṃ [...] vajrakalpaṃ', 63.49cd), all the while resembling the blazing sun: 'arciḥsahasravikacam ravimaṇḍalasaprabham', ('radiant as the shining disc of the sun with a thousand rays', 63.50ab). And so we have reached the boundary similes, already cited, which close the episode.

In these examples we see the symbiotic three-fold function of the *Rāmāyaṇa* simile: as affective intensification of high points in the narrative, as structural demarcation of episodes, as medium for the essential socio-cultural message, all reinforced by rhythmic patterning. While mortal combat is pictured raging back and forth, the audience receives and endorses that message which intensification and demarcation highlight in complementary fashion: warriors are fearless as lions, in their heroism shine like the sun, use weapons that flash and destroy like flames or fiery snake venom. They are therefore to be admired by all and their deeds emulated by the rising (male) generation of *kṣatriyas.* Similes in general clearly play a key narratological rôle in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and they must have been regarded as essential tools of composition by the singer-poets, so much so that, as Brockington observes: 'similes often remain as the only similarity between the divergent readings of the two main recensions, which is linked to the stereotyped nature of many similes,' (1998, 397). They anchor narrative, not only to its own internal context (the telling of the story) but to the wider performance context (the preservation of the socio-political world view). Now let us see how stock figuration is employed in the *Nibelungenlied.*

As I noted earlier, similes are used much more sparingly here than in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and there are only a few examples in the battle accounts. This being the case, I shall deal first with the instances of *Nibelungenlied* battle similes which are to be found. Since these are too sparse to make a representative judgement, I shall then consider the function of similes in general throughout the epic in order to see how they are used by comparison with those in the *Rāmāyaṇa.* As I have already indicated, language other than simile is typically used to express the aspects of brightness and burning associated with armed combat with which we are now familiar from looking at the *Rāmāyaṇa* examples. Only one *Nibelungenlied* battle simile is an image of this type. I propose therefore to postpone discussion of the fire/light imagery in *Nibelungen* battle episodes, and my observations will be appended to a review of similes in the *Nibelungenlied, Rāmāyaṇa* and *Iliad* which share parallel thematic content. For the moment, it is image function rather than image content with which we are concerned.

The *Nibelungenlied* battle similes, like their *Rāmāyaṇa* counterparts, appear at narratological high points in the action for rhetorical intensification and for socio-cultural reinforcement of a heroic world view. We find them here in mid-episodic position, but there is generally speaking no patterning of episode-framing similes as we observed in the sample *Rāmāyaṇa* battles. In rare instances similes mark the beginning of combat, but they are never used to close it apart from one exception which I shall discuss shortly. I have found three examples of *Nibelungenlied* episode-opening battle similes, of which two are *utprekṣās*. I include these examples of *utprekṣā*, a figure discussed in the last chapter, since western poetics makes no distinction between the two types of comparison (the ' "like" + noun' type, considered *upamā* in Sanskrit poetics, and the ' "as if" + verb' *utprekaṣā* or 'flight of fancy' variants), subsuming them both under the category of simile. For the purposes of *Nibelungenlied* criticism, therefore, these examples constitute types of simile. During the hostilities at Etzelnburg we find the impetuous Wolfhart described as bounding towards Volker 'alsam ein lewe wilder [lief er vor in dan]' (2273.3a),[14] a simile reminiscent of the one depicting Sugrīva's rushing like a lion upon Khumba in *Rām.* 6.63.30d. Wolfhart has come with Hildebrand and Dietrich's fighting-men to ask for Rüdiger's corpse, but the Burgundians refuse to give it up. An increasingly heated exchange begins between Wolfhart and Volker during which Hildebrant, bound by Dietrich's orders not to fight the Burgundians, restrains his nephew. The lion simile is prefigured in the metaphor of Volker's taunt to Hildebrant: 'Lât abe den lewen, meister', (2272.1a),[15] and Wolfhart, incensed, bounds like a lion towards Volker, causing Hildebrand to break his promise to Dietrich by running in front of Wolfhart to attack Hagen in the hope that his nephew will stay out of the fray. But general conflict is inevitable, and thus the lion simile marks the beginning of the final battle. There are three instances of episode-opening battle *utprekṣās,* of which the first marks Siegfried's encounter with Liudegast, the formulaic *sam ez/si wæte ein wint*, always used to express a heightened notion of speed, here emphasising the force of the charge each man makes. 'Diu ross nâch stiche truogen diu rîchen küneges kint / beide für ein ander, sam si wæte ein wint,' (185.1-2). The second *utprekṣā* marks the opening preparations for the martial *Brautwerbung* contest between Siegfried and Brünhild. The setting of the circular contest ground is described in 433 and followed by Brünhild's *utprekṣā*-enhanced arrival in the next strophe: 'Dô was komen Prünhilt. gewâfent man die

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[14] Cf. the formulaic 'alsam die lewen wilde sie liefen an den berg', a mid-episodic simile highlighting Siegfried's struggle with Alberich during the battle for the *nibelungenhort*, (*Nib.* 97.2).

[15] This strong image eclipses the stock simile which follows, but the inclusion of the latter is a measure of the indispensability of the stock simile to the make-up of epic. It is not a fault, as would be considered the case in a literary work, but simply an index of orality.

vant, / sam ob si solde strîten umb elliu küniges lant,' (434.1-2).[16] The third, another variation of the formulaic wind *utprekṣā*, this time accompanied by stock battle imagery of fire, follows the preliminaries and marks the start of the games with Brünhild's inaugural spear throw: 'daz fiwer spranc von stahele, als ez wæte der wint,' (456.4).

I indicated earlier that one instance of simile marks the end of an episode in *Nibelungenlied* battle narratives. The lion is used again here as agent of comparison, this time to intensify Etzel's cry of grief on hearing of Rüdiger's death: 'Der Etzelen jâmer der wart alsô grôz, / als eines lewen stimme der rîche künec erdôz / mit herzen leidem wuofe,' (2234.1-3). There is also a sense in which the simile represents, indeed sums up, the communal suffering, described in the previous strophe, which the loss of Rüdiger occasions; furthermore, it occurs in the closing strophe of a long *âventiure*, and indeed at the end of the episode of Rüdiger's fatal combat with the Burgundians. I do not think, however, that one example of an episode-closing simile indicates narratological patterning as demonstrated by the *Iliad* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, especially as I have not found any similar instances elsewhere in the text. I prefer to regard it as a battle-linked simile which happens to occur at the end of an episode.

Of course, it could also be argued that the use of figuration in the few opening contexts I have instanced is merely coincidental and therefore unremarkable, but in view of the practice of simile episode-openers in both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Iliad* and the fact that similes also mark the beginning of certain episodes elsewhere in the *Nibelungenlied*, as I shall shortly show, the evidence points on balance to the distinct possibility that a remnant of the ancient epic use of simile in episode construction survives in the medieval work. This could be a totally independent phenomenon, another characteristic of oral narrative poetry to add to those discussed in chapter two, since, while it would be possible to argue that there could in theory have been Homeric influence on *Nibelungen* poets through contact with the work of Latin epic poets[17] conversant with Homer, there can be no feasible speculation that the *Iliad* in any way influenced *Rāmāyaṇa* poets, or vice versa, for that matter. On the other hand, the phenomenon might be attributable to an inherited Proto-Indo-European poetics of oral narrative, although I am less comfortable with the suggestion because it is so speculative.[18]

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16 To the modern reader, the comparison might have comic overtones in that it seems to imply that Brünhild is ridiculously over-armed for the contest, but I am convinced that this was not the original poet's intention, rather that he expresses through the figure the fearsomeness of her appearance and the grimness of her determinaton to defend her kingdom against all-comers. A lesser warrior than Siegfried might well have been deterred by the sight. Cf. Siegfried's challenge to Gunther for his kingdom in 109.4 and 113.3-4.

17 I have already dismissed this sort of hypothesis as put forward by Fechter. See Ch.2, n.4.

18 N.J. Allen explores a number of parallel motifs concerning the journeys of Odysseus and Arjuna in Greek epic and the *Mahābhārata* and suggests that they are remnants of an ancient Indo-European proto-narrative. ('The Hero's Five Relationships: A Proto-Indo-European Story', *Myth and Mythmaking : Continuous Evolution in Indian Tradition (SOAS Collected Papers on South Asia* Vol 12) 1995, 1-20.

Parallels in simile content, however, such as those we are about to consider, might well be due to a common Indo-European store of similes appropriate to battle episodes which are, after all, the main focus of epic poetry, rather than being due to like, independent, near-universal aesthetic responses to the task of depicting armed combat; but, as I have already stated in general terms, only the examination of figuration in epics belonging to disparate language groups could establish whether or not this is so.

Now we turn to the few stock similes (and *utprekṣās*) which occur in mid-episodic position in *Nibelungenlied* battle scenes and serve to draw attention to the particular action depicted. Siegfried's victorious struggle with Alberich that earns him both *hort* and *tarnkappe* is highlighted by a variation of the Wolfhart lion simile which we noted earlier: 'alsam die lewen wilde si liefen an den berc,' (97.2).[19] The high point of the contest at Isenstein, Siegfried's overpowering return of Brünhild's spear, reversed in order not to kill her, is marked by a variation of the formulaic wind *utprekṣās* of which I have already instanced two functioning as episode-openers, this time: 'Daz fiwer stoup ûz ringen, alsam ez tribe der wint,' (460.1). Variations of this formulaic fire metaphor are used passim in *Nibelungenlied* combat episodes to denote the sparking of weapons against chain-mail and other armour, steel on steel. The same notion is expressed in the imagery of the simile which highlights Siegfried's attack on Liudegast: 'dô stoup ûz dem helme sam von brenden grôz / die viwerrôten vanken' (186.2-3a). Further, in a simile remarkably resonant of one found in the *Iliad*, as we shall see in a moment, Dancwart is compared to a boar at bay attacking the hounds which surround it: 'Ze beiden sînen sîten sprungen si im zuo. [...] dô gie er vor den vîenden als ein eberswîn / ze walde tuot vor hunden,' (1946.1,3-4a), a simile which brings to life Dancwart's lone stand against the Huns after the massacre of the squires. Lastly, an image of aural dimension, similar in function to the fairly standard one intensifying Etzel's lamentation, completes our survey of *Nibelungenlied* battle similes. It is the striking mid-episodic battle simile used to describe Dietrich's shouting, powerful enough to attract Gunther's attention above the din of fighting in the great hall, 'alsam ein wisentes horn', (1987.2a).

'Why did Odysseus become a horse?', *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* Vol. XXVI No.2, 1995, 143-54. 'Homer's Simile, Vyasa's Story', *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* Vol.6 No.2, 1996, 206-18. 'Les Crocodiles Qui se Transforment en Nymphes', *Ollodagos* Vol.13, 1999, 151-67). Such narratological and socio-religious parallels may perhaps be significant from an anthropological standpoint and could theoretically in a certain sense be considered constituents of a hypothetical Proto-Indo-European poetics: if they were based on a common ancient repository of narrative poetic formulas they would presumably be acceptable motifs for epic. However, I am referring here to a hypothetical orally-transmitted poetics which prescribed suitable rhythms, formulaic figures and mnemonic and affective devices in general for the composition of oral narrative. It is this notion, specifically in relation to the content of formulaic figures, which I find so speculative in that, as far as I am aware, there is no evidence whatsoever to support it.

19 Cf. the rhythmically and thematically parallel formulaic simile 'sam zwei wildiu panthel sie liefen durch den klê' (976.3) to which I shall shortly refer in another context.

Extending the survey to other narrative contexts, it is clear that similes in the rest of the *Nibelungenlied* are far less common than those typically found in *Rāmāyaṇa* battle episodes, but in any case similes, generally stock similes again, occur overall less frequently in the *Rāmāyaṇa* outside combat narratives. It is true that the longer verses added later to the end of certain *sargas* for summarising and affective purposes fairly regularly exhibit the use of simile to mark the close of the episode, as for example in 2.9.47 and 2.10.41, where first Kaikeyī's dramatic reaction to Daśaratha's plan to install Rāma as his heir and then Daśaratha's reaction to Kaikeyī's behaviour are depicted. Episode-opening similes also occur, but usually quite randomly and by no means necessarily in *sargas* which contain episode-closing instances of the figure, e.g. 2.7.1, 2.52.2, 3.61.1, 3.17.25, 4.20.1-3 (a simile in each verse) and 5.4.1. Thus there is evidence in non-battle narrative of a notion of structural patterning, albeit much looser than that which tends to obtain in combat scenes. Mid-episodic similes, here also used apparently randomly, draw attention to certain mid-episodic high peaks in non-combat narrative, as we find for example in 5.55.7-9 (again a simile marks each *śloka*), part of the account of Hanumān's aerial journey back from Lankā. The same type of random opening and mid-episodic patterning occurs in non-martial *Nibelungenlied* episodes, but, as I have indicated, the simile is typically not an episode-closing feature in the work. These extra-battle similes, like those already instanced in both poems, are also almost exclusively of a stereotyped nature. I do not intend to dwell on the mid-episodic, narrative-intensifying similes in this category, since by now it is clear that the use of similes for this purpose is a characteristic of epic; rather, it is the episode-opening similes that I shall discuss. As in the *Iliad* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* these are the scene-setters, the pointers to key action to come, in all possibility the oral poet's aid to organising the material which he is about to perform, and I believe their occasional use in the *Nibelungenlied* shows that traces of the ancient patterning persist.

We have already examined four instances of episode-opening similes in battle episodes. Two thematically linked non-battle similes mark the beginning of the fateful episode in which Kriemhild meets Siegfried, a narrative peak towards which the whole of the previous story-telling has been leading and one which will influence the course of events to the last strophe of the epic. The similes emphasise in like terms the superior beauty, and therefore desirability, of Kriemhild as compared with the comely maidens who attend her, and the inevitability of Siegfried's heightened passion for her once he has come face to face with his unseen ideal. Kriemhild enters the great hall 'alsô der morgenrôt / tuot ûz den trüeben wolken' and 'Sam der liehte mâne vor den sternen stât, / des scîn sô luterlîche ab den wolken gât,' (281.1b-2a and 283.1-2), more stock similes on which I shall comment in due course. Another great hall, Brünhild's, is the setting for another fateful event which will have dark repercussions throughout the rest of the narrative, the meeting of Gunther's martial wooing party with the sovereign virgin queen. The episode is marked by an opening simile

intensifying the mysterious, fairy-tale-like quality of the adventure to follow: the room in which she holds court has marble walls, 'grüene alsam ein gras,' (404.3b, echoed by the mid-episodic use of the same comparison, this time in a description of the stones set in Brünhild's shield, at 436.2b). Siegfried's single-handed boat journey to Nibelungenlant begins with yet another instance of the formulaic wind *utprekṣā* : 'er fuort' ez balde dannen, alsam ez wæte der wint,' (482.4).

Two semantically related *utprekṣās* using the imagery of fire and smoke to express the idea of dust thrown up by horses' hooves in great numbers, figures that 'sound' the same in the sense that I argued earlier, perform parallel episode-opening functions: the first marks the beginning of the joust held to welcome Brünhild to Worms at 596.3-4a ('daz velt begonde stieben, sam ob al daz lant / mit louge wære erbrunnen,') and the second the arrival of Etzel's vassals in Traisenmauer to welcome Kriemhild at 1336.1-2 ('diu molte ûf der strâze die wîle nie gelac, / sine stübe, alsam ez brünne, allenthalben dan,'). Finally, a simile highlights the opening of another narratologically significant episode which ultimately leads to the conflict of loyalties to be played out during the battle at Etzelnburg: the Burgundians' stay in Bechlarn. The simile marks the beginning of their journey to Rüdiger's castle and points to the qualities of this upright warrior which will be the cause of that conflict of loyalty experienced by both parties. Eckewart introduces him as 'der beste wirt' and praises his virtues in a conventional simile lifted from *Minnesang* : 'sîn herze tugende birt, / alsam der süeze meie daz gras mit bluomen tuot,' (1639.1b, 2b-3). To the purist, incidentally, this sort of borrowing from lyric is not properly the stuff of heroic epic, but to me this is an example of the incorporation of new material into traditional narrative to suit contemporary audiences, a characteristic practice of the oral poet.

3. The Rhythmic Function of Stock Simile in the Rāmāyaṇa and the Nibelungenlied

We see that formulaic similes perform functions in the *Nibelungenlied* which are broadly parallel with those of similes observed in the *Rāmāyaṇa.* Thematically, these semantically similar images present and help to perpetuate in both poems a traditional view of exemplary heroism which legitimates the status quo of two ruling dynasties descended from the warrior class. Narratologically, they not only intensify by affective means the emotional peaks of the action but they also quite frequently act as episode demarcators. In addition it seems to me that stereotyped simile operates in my chosen epics on yet another level. Martin emphasises the strong rhythmic aspect of these simile demarcators in the *Iliad* while at the same time drawing back from 'suggesting that the similes came first and that Greek epic poets built a narrative around them, although techniques of this kind are not unheard of in oral art', (147). It is certainly hard to imagine narrative composed around the developed Homeric similes stretching over several lines. Whether the *Iliad* could have been patterned rhythmically on

the basis of the core similes contained within these developed images[20] I am not competent to consider, but in any case Parry's theory of the compositional importance of the formulaic epithet in the hexameter line does not appear to have been challenged.

Kahane speaks in rhythmic terms of the ubiquitous Homeric phenomenon of the 'sameness'-inducing epithets *'po-lu-mē-tis-O-dus-seus, po-das-ō-kus-A-chil-leus*, chanted ever in a fixed position within a short, repetitive pattern we call the hexameter', (137), though it must be said that he uses these examples to illustrate the quality of sameness which characterises Greek epic: he does not go so far as to suggest a causal link between formula and metre in Homer. Nagy, however, building on conclusions from his comparative research on metre in Vedic and Greek texts, where he found 'cognate phrases containing identically shaped rhythms'[21] (1974), maintains unequivocally that 'meter is diachronically generated by formula rather than vice versa,' (1976, 251). The Vedic line is shorter than the more complex early Greek hexameter and easily accommodates a single formula, whereas Homeric formulas by no means always fill the line. Nagy's study applying observation of the Vedic formula-metre nexus to Greek epic confirms that the three regular cola of the hexameter line are each formula-length.

> [In early Indic poetry] there are traceable tendencies of preferring phrases with one kind of rhythm over phrases with other kinds of rhythm. Predictable patterns of rhythm emerge from favorite traditional phrases with favorite rhythms; the eventual regulation of these patterns, combined with regulation of the syllable-count in the traditional phrases, constitutes the essentials of what we know as *meter* . Granted, meter can develop a synchronic system of its own, regulating any new incoming phraseology; nevertheless its origins are from traditional phraseology. (Ibid, 251).

For Nagy, this is no chicken and egg situation: it is traditional theme, not metre, which principally determines formula. In fact metre does not in the first instance determine formula at all. Later, once formula-generated metre is firmly established, it can be viewed synchronically as 'containing' or 'framing' formulas, (ibid, 244, 252).

Nagy's theory of formula as the basis of Homeric and Vedic metre, could well be applied to our two epics. I have long suspected that formula must have been responsible for dictating metre in these poems. Nagy does not hazard a suggestion as to whether a specific formula type could have been the original regulator, whereas I have given considerable thought to the possibility in relation to my chosen texts. Could formulaic epithet or patronymic or metaphor or simile perhaps have contributed more than any other possible influence to the enigmatic, gradual, oral-aural process of determining the aesthetically optimum rhythm and syllable count, in the case of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, or stress count, in the case of the *Nibelungenlied* ? A figure seems a more likely agent, since epithets and patronymics are most often associated with particular protagonists, that is, name-specific, hardly generic

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20 See n. 6.

21 *Kleos aphthiton* and *śravas akṣitam* , 'undying fame', 1974.

enough for their *pāda-* and *An/Abzeile*-filling capacity to be responsible for metre. I suppose it is possible to argue notwithstanding that epic metres could have been patterned on stereotyped expressions like *rāmasyākliṣṭakarmaṇaḥ* and *der Sigemundes sun* which occur frequently in the respective epics, but narratologically and structurally these types of formula play a less significant rôle in the epics as compared with the functions of simile which I discussed earlier. In any case, we have already seen for instance how the obvious patronymic for Sītā, *sītā janakātmajā*, cannot be used because it does not fit the established metrical pattern. However there is stronger evidence against the argument in the fact that the *Mahābhārata*, with a very different story-line from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and its own set of protagonist names, principally shares the same *śloka* metre. Metre must therefore logically pre-date stereotyped epithets and patronymics associated with particular narratives, which leaves us with stereotyped metaphor and simile to consider. However, it is clear that stock metaphor rarely fills a half-line in our epics, whereas stock simile regularly does. Besides, simile, constituting as it does an overt comparison, is a more immediate and more primitive figure than metaphor. I use this last attribute in the sense of 'basic', 'not sophisticated', without implying crudeness or imperfection. It must be the older figure of the two. Simile, then, seems the most likely candidate of my four suggested ones.

Support for my hypothesis that stereotyped simile may have played an early rôle in establishing metrical patterns in the *Rāmāyaṇa* (as far as the second and fourth *pādas* are concerned)[22], lies in the fact that, apart from its narratological and structural importance, it is by far the commonest figure in the work. The obvious argument against this hypothesis is that the *śloka* metre in which the poem is composed is generally believed to be a development of the Vedic *anuṣṭubh* metre, and Vedic verse, largely dependent on metaphor by way of figuration, clearly lacks formulaic simile. However, there is no certainty that epic did in fact grow out of the strongly ritualistic hymns of the *Ṛgveda*: instead it is entirely possible that early non-cultic poetry with a *kṣatriya* rather than priestly origin developed independently of Vedic verse and in the process established its own metrical form. Scholars have tended to look for embryonic traces of epic poetry in the narrative hymns of the *Ṛgveda*, more often than not, one assumes, simply because these are the only possible extant sources, but it seems more likely to me that there would have been a significant body of early secular praise poetry and heroic lays, possibly metrically based on formulaic simile, never recorded in writing and long since lost. The case for metre-regulating simile in the *Nibelungenlied* appears, to begin with, rather different, since it is clearly by no means the

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22 The first and third *pādas* , where similes tend not to occur, have their own, different, metrical pattern. The formulaic material contained in them generally marks the end of speeches. See Brockington 2000a, 194. *Utprekṣā* , considered a separate type of figure of direct comparison, tends to occur in these *pādas*. I am not prepared to speculate on whether favourite *utprekṣās* might originally have influenced metre in these *pādas*.

ubiquitous figure that it is in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but we are soon confronted with a similar, though even more impenetrable, problematic of metre origin, because here there is no obvious possible candidate for epic metrical comparison as there is in the case of the Ṛgvedic narrative hymns. The *Nibelungen* strophe is a much younger metre than the *śloka*, far removed from the old Germanic alliterative verse with which it is thematically linked, as I remarked in my introductory discussion of genre. Neverthless, in common with Sanskrit epic, it does exhibit the phenomenon of the complete half-line stereotyped simile and it does seem to show traces of the characteristic oral poetic use of simile as episode-opener.

Now we are faced with the question of whether those not especially numerous similes found in the *Nibelungenlied* (as compared with their ubiquity in the *Rāmāyaṇa*) could have influenced the structure of the relatively late *Nibelungenvers* to such a degree, especially in view of its uncertain origin and possible links with the Kürenberg lyric model. In my opinion this is not unfeasible given the rôle of simple simile as a norm, a basic unit, of ordinary as well as poetic discourse. It is human nature to use simile, to describe something in terms of something else, and this is essentially how poetry in general operates: by describing a whole range of emotions, actions, reactions in terms of other things. This is certainly true of epic with its socio-political agenda. I am not arguing that simile is the basis of all metrical patterning, only that it possibly influenced a process of rhythmic standardisation in the case of my chosen epics.[23] Of course I am aware that the opposite has been and doubtless will continue to be put forward,[24] but I am suggesting that certain preferred theme-bearing stock similes (Nagy's 'favorite traditional phrases with favorite

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[23] This could not possibly be the case in *Beowulf*, for instance, where the figure is used only four times, each instance albeit with telling effect, perhaps partly because of the rarity with which it occurs. However, contemporary scholarly consensus tends towards the belief that the author of *Beowulf*, while steeped in the vernacular oral epic tradition, was a writing poet, probably a cleric, quite possibly with a knowledge of Latin epic. As we saw earlier, these are suggestions made with regard to a hypothetical single author of the *Nibelungenlied*, but in the Old English case there is considerably more evidence in favour, most obviously in the poet's attempts to rehabilitate the traditional pagan hero within the Christian world view, that is, under the auspices of a benevolent divine providence rather than the arbitrary workings of an implacable Germanic fate such as we find in the Middle High German epic. With these differences in mind, the clear ruling out of hypothetical simile-based metre in *Beowulf* is not problematic. It is worth noting in passing that the poet apparently did not need the narratological device of the episode-marking simile which we have observed in the *Iliad, Rāmāyaṇa* and *Nibelungenlied.* Perhaps this is further evidence to support the theory that *Beowulf* is secondary epic. That said, I have no hesitation in adducing comparative thematic examples from the poem in this study since the author is so clearly familiar and at ease with oral heroic expressions and the ancient Germanic world view.

[24] Nagy himself has met considerable critical resistance in respect of his theory. Jaan Puhvel is one sceptic who defends the opposite view of rhythm as generating language, suggesting that 'the origins of metre are to be sought rather in extra-linguistic rhythmic material [melody and song], to which the words are strictly lyrics in the modern sense, as in musical comedy for example. [...] Maybe there was rather a rhythm pulsating in [the Indo-European singer-poet's] head, with lyrics merely appropriate to the occasion - the occasion being most often a meal-ticket before a gathering of nobles' (Response to Nagy's paper 'Formula and Meter', Stolz and Shannon 1976, 261-3).

rhythms' giving rise to 'predictable patterns of rhythm') originally helped set metric patterns in the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, or perhaps more accurately in their forebears, much briefer heroic lays, rather than that these preferred similes were made to fit already fixed metrical patterns. I believe it is possible that certain core half-line stock similes in these epics, to paraphrase Martin, did indeed in a sense 'come first'. Not that the narratives were built around the content of the similes, although these are surely so ancient as to have originated in early tribal discourse and narrative, but that their rythmic patterns formed the basis of the metres in which the epics were composed.

As long ago as 1949 Gonda not only questioned the traditional "scholiastic" view that *alaṃkāras* are exclusively ornaments, that they include 'everything that makes poetry attractive, that adds charm to it and embellishes it'. (We have found that similes in our epics function in more ways than this). Just as importantly, he argued that 'we must [...] take the simile for what it is in the first place, viz. a linguistic phenomenon', (Intro., 8), that the figure is not a late development of sophisticated literary art but has been since the earliest times of human existence a concrete means of expressing the abstract in familiar terms. To illustrate his point he quotes a Malay measure of time meaning 'as long as it takes rice to boil' (para. 1). As I have recently indicated, simile is a basic component of early discourse. Certainly very old stock English similes like 'ugly as sin', 'heavy as lead', 'bald as a coot' are an extraordinarily persistent feature of normal language in a postmodernist age when the Judeo-Christian concept of sin has been so eroded as to be meaningless to many and when few people have actually handled lead or know what a coot is. Yet these are part of an acquired subliminal store of rhythmic, economical, ready-made expressions to be used as required. Folk tales abound with stereotyped similes: in Europe for instance we are familiar with such obligatory formulas as 'beautiful as the day', 'black as (the) night', 'green as (the) grass' and so on, held by the story-teller in readiness for insertion as the narrative situation demands.

I suggest that the strong rhythms were there, in ordinary and traditional discourse, and that the particular rhythms associated with core formulaic similes carrying the culturally most acceptable themes were transferred into poetry, influencing the shape of the metrical patterning which prevails in our epics. Whatever the origin of the *Nibelungenvers* may have been - and this of course is likely to remain a literary critical enigma - formulaic similes are so widespread and persistent a feature of language that it does not seem to me wholly unreasonable to infer that two rhythmic types of stereotyped similes ultimately provided the patterns for masculine and feminine half-line metres in the *Nibelungenlied* such as we find for instance in 'sam der liehte mâne' (283.1a, fem. *Anzeile*) and 'grüene alsam ein gras' (404.3b, masc. *Abzeile*), rather than the other way round. In our Sanskrit epic, the rhythms of stock similes such as 'gatārciṣa(m) ivānala(m)' ('like an extinguished fire', 4.17.9b), and 'pataṅga iva pāvakam' ('like a moth to a flame', 3.27.13d) demand to leave the page and be spoken, and again it does not seem to me fanciful to suggest that similes such as these

shaped the metres of the second and fourth *pādas*. It would however be outrageously reductive to speculate on which particular similes in each work might have been aural templates.

As I suggested earlier in this argument, it is quite possible that the respective metres were inherited from those in which shorter heroic lays preceding the epics were composed. Brockington points to a sizeable store of ready-made similes shared by *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* poets: no less than one fifth of all similes in *kāṇḍas* 2, 3 and 4 are found in the *Mahābhārata* (1997).[25] I noted earlier, with reference to the narratological importance of simile in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, his observation on the presence of common stock similes in the Northern and Southern Recensions as being frequently the only shared feature of variant readings. This is a concrete example of how widespread and accessible a phenomenon formulaic simile is. It is what appears to hold together subsequent re-tellings of our two traditional narratives, not only as far as the content and world view of the story itself are concerned (narratological structure), but also, I believe, in respect of the acoustic measure of the story-telling act - the metre - which might well have grown out of the simple stock simile (aural structure). The traditional rhythmic expressions that are simile are so much part of the human subconscious that some of them quite possibly began to function in our epics or in their forebears not merely as line-fillers but as line-makers. In other words, we find not *pāda-* and *An/Abzeile*-length stereotyped similes but stock simile-length and simile-rhythmic *pādas* and *An/Abzeilen.*

4. The Stock Simile as Shared Indo-European Epic Image

I have already indicated that lion imagery commonly figures in heroic narrative. Warriors are compared to lions in their various aspects of strength, speed, aggressiveness, fearlessness, invincibility, deadliness. Parallel to those instances cited in our two epics there are numerous *Iliad* lion similes, principally *leōn/lis hōs* (sg.) and *leiousin eoikotes* (pl.), as for example in the simple similes 'ho d'enantion ōrto leōn hōs / 'Atreidēs' ('then Atreus' son [Agamemnon] faced them like a lion', XI.120-30); 'Pēleidēs d'oikoio leōn hōs alto thuraze' ('bounding to the door like a lion, Peleus' son [Achilles] left the lodge', XXIV.572; 'memaōs hōs te lis' ([Agamemnon,] 'raging like a lion', XI. 239); 'Trōes de leiousin eoikotes ōmophagoisi / nēusin epesseuonto' ('then, like flesh-eating lions, the Trojans threw themselves at the ships', XV.592-3. Extended and developed similes involving lions occur passim, typically in the context of hunting prey, e.g. at VII.256-7, XI. 113 ff and XV. 275ff. We noted earlier an aural *Nibelungenlied* simile comparing Etzel's lament to the roaring of a

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25 Cited from Brockington 2000b, 161.

lion, and we find a broadly parallel use in the *Rāmāyaṇa* at 3.23.20a: 'siṃhanādaṃ visṛjatām' ('like roaring lions', 3.23.20a, referring to *Rākṣasa* battle cries).

Although snakes are not typically a lion's prey, the *Rāmāyaṇa* simile depicting Sugrīva's attack on Khumba by means of a comparison to a lioness pouncing on a snake moving about a rock is resonant of several developed *Iliad* similes which associate lions with rocky places. In the *Nibelungenlied* and a *Mahābhārata* reference they are linked with mountains. 'Alsam die lewen wilde si liefen an den berg' we already know, and the following can usefully be brought into the Indo-European comparison: 'vivišus te mahāraṅgaṃ nṛpāḥ siṃhā ivācalam' ('the kings entered the arena like lions a mountain', *Mbh.* 3.54.3cd. Like the *Iliad*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* associates lions with caves. Ayodhyā and its warriors are compared to a cave of lions in 'guhā kesarīṇām iva' (1.6.19d); the same city after Rāma's departure is like a cave bereft of a lion, 'siṃhahīnāṃ guhām iva' (2.106.24d); Rāma's forest hut, packed with formidable weapons, is described as being as impregnable as a lion's cave is to deer, 'mṛgaiḥ siṃhaguhām iva' (2.93.22d); and Daśaratha enters his palace like a lion its cave, 'siṃho giriguhām iva' (2.5.23d). The same standard comparison is found in the *Mahābhārata* at 3.36.12d and 3.251.8b.

Now, the obvious question is how the lion-warrior image came to be used in the *Nibelungenlied*. There is no problem as far as the *Iliad* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* are concerned, since the animal was once common throughout southern Europe and northern and central India. According to my source,[26] it was not extinct in Europe until the end of the first century CE, time enough for Homeric poets (and indeed the Roman epic writers) to have composed their work while the animal was still a known danger, although, as I shall argue shortly, this image could well be much older than Greek epic. Incidentally, the male-orientated image of the epic lion-warrior is a misconception in that the female of the species normally kills prey[27], a fact apparently recognised by the author of our *Yuddhakāṇḍa* passage who has a fearless lioness (*kesarī*) attack a snake, thus comparing Sugrīva to the fiercer female. But there were no real-life lions in medieval Germany: they existed only in Biblical references and religious texts based on these, in heraldry, in bestiaries and in a legacy of such stock comparisons as 'bold as a lion' and epithets like 'Coeur de Lion'. As to the derivation of *lewe* (OHG *lewo*) it is widely accepted that it must be a loan from the Latin *leo*, itself borrowed in turn from the Greek *leōn*, although it seems certain that the word must have had a pre-history stretching back much further than the ancient Greek era. Nonetheless, whatever the pedigree of the lexical signifier, the idea of lion - the signified - must certainly have been a semantic import, on a

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26 *Purnell's Encyclopedia of Animal Life* Vol.3, London 1969, 1321.

27 Ibid.

par with the imaginary unicorn which features alongside it in heraldry and bestiaries and with other exotic though real animals such as the panthers mentioned in the *Nibelungenlied* at 953.1a and 976.3a. Biblical allusions to lions, originating from Old Testament sayings coming out of a region which these beasts once inhabited, seem likely to have been the most pervasive influence, both lexical and semantic, in the oral culture of medieval Germany. Or does this necessarily follow?

Consulting an atlas reveals that the lion's original habitat apparently extended into the southern area of the territory believed to have been the Proto-Indo-European homeland. According to Friedrich, part of this homeland probably stretched between the West Caspian area and the Carpathians, (1970, 1). If this was indeed the case, it is possible that migrating Proto-Indo-European tribes took the semantic concept of the lion, enshrined in sayings and tales, to areas which the animal never inhabited. But could they have been responsible for lexical influence as well? The hypothesis appears somewhat Dumézilian. Gamkrelidze and Ivanov put forward a reconstructed PIE form **leu* by reference to the Hittite *walwa-*, a suggestion which Penney 1998 regards as suspect.[28] I am not competent to assess either the reconstruction or Penney's judgement. However, even if a hypothesised protoform were provable, there can be no certainty that OHG *lewo* was an independent coining on a par with Gk. *leōn* rather than an indirect descendant of the latter. Be this as it may: as I stated in my defence of methodology, it is the semantic rather than the lexical link that interests the comparatist. After all, the fact that the Sanskrit words for lion, *siṃha* and *kesarin*, are totally unrelated to *leōn* does not invalidate comparison of the shared theme.

Although the complete separateness of the *Iliad* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* rules out a borrowing of the image from one to the other, it is conceivable that the numerous Latin vulgate Biblical allusions to lions, both literal and figurative, could have produced our *Nibelungenlied* references. However, amongst a plethora of lion references in the Bible, many of them figurative, I have found only three which link lion-like qualities specifically with fighting men, Absalom's in *2 Samuel* 17.10, where the speaker warns Absalom that even the bravest, though he may have the heart of a lion, will lose his courage when it comes to battle; David's in *1 Chronicles* 12.8, a band of Gadites portrayed as skilled in battle and having the faces of lions; and the warrior-heroes Saul and Jonathan whose life and death David marks in his 'lament of the bow' and whom he describes, after praising their prowess on the battlefield, as stronger than lions (2. *Samuel* 1.23).[29] With their martial-dynastical ethos, these Old

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28 J.H.W. Penney, *BSOAS* Vol. 61, Pt. 1, 1998, 153-5. Review of Thomas V. Gamkrelidze and Vjaceslav V. Ivanov: *Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans : A Reconstruction and Historical Analysis of a Proto-Language and a Proto-Culture* , trans., Mouton, the Hague 1994. Originally published in Russian, Georgian SSR 1984.

29 Robert Young: *Analytical Concordance to the Bible* , twenty-second American edition, New York, 609. Edward W. Goodrick and John R. Kohlenberger: *The NIV Exhaustive Concordance* , London 1990, 669-70.

Testament books perhaps come nearest to Indo-European heroic epic, but generally one looks in vain in the Bible for figuration which refers to the lion-like action of named warriors in the context of battle, either during or before combat. Granted, the animal is frequently associated with destruction in the Bible, sometimes in the context of war,[30] but these images are of a different, much more general kind from those we have already met in Indo-European epic. Here the reference is to nations or their rulers attacking states or cities against a backdrop of political power struggles seen as the means of divine retribution against the ancient Jews, rather than the association of particular warriors with the courageous and fearsome behaviour that they are expected to display as the hallmark of their manhood. In other words, these allusions belong to prophecy, not to heroic narrative. But in any case, I am not convinced that any Biblical instances of the lion-at-war comparison, not even those isolated instances of the lion-warrior image found in *Samuel* and *Chronicles*, are directly responsible for the specific lion figuration that occurs in the *Nibelungenlied.* I am prepared to accept the likelihood of Biblical influence on secular written genres such as romance, but I would argue that the German epic retains enough of its pre-Christian ethos to have preserved my hypothetical ancient image of the lion-warrior, remaining staunchly unreceptive towards Christian teaching in general and Biblical imagery in particular.[31] I do not wish to imply that the lion-warrior image is exclusively Indo-European, only to suggest that its occurrence in medieval epic is by no means necessarily influenced by Biblical sources. Given the Old Testament references I have indicated, it may also be Semitic, a proposition which could be tested by others more competent to do so. Certainly it is not

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In the earliest Latin version available to me these appear as 'Et fortissimus quisque, cuius cor est quasi leonis, pavore solvetur' (*Samuel/Regum* II. XVII 10); 'viri robustissimi, & pugnatores optimi, tenentes clypeum & hastam: facies eorum quasi facies leonis' (*Paralipomenon* I. XII 8); and '[...] sagitta Ionathæ nunquam rediit retrorsum, & gladius Saul non est reversus inanis. [...] Saul & Ionathas [...] leonibus fortiores' (*Samuel/Regum* II. I. 22-23). All quotations from *Biblia Sacra,* Lyon 1568.

30 E.g. in *Ezekiel* , where a young lion (the king) destroys the surrounding nations: ' et factus est leo' and 'et civitates eorum in desertum adducere' (*Ezechiel* 19.6, quoted from the *Biblia Sacra Vulgatæ Editionis, Sixti V. et Clementis VIII* ., London 1977 because the relevant page is missing from the 1568 edition). Also in Isaiah, where nations coming to destroy Jerusalem are portrayed as roaring like a lion which seizes its prey: 'Rugitus eius ut leonis [...]. Et frandet, & tenebit prædam' (*Prof. Esaiæ* V 29-30), *Biblia Sacra* 1568).

31 *Beowulf* , with its presumed clerical allusions to providence and the divine ordering of nature, is theoretically a different proposition, but in fact lion imagery does not feature in the poem. The *Táin* shares the figurative lion-warrior theme, here as metaphor: 'Is hé in leó lond lámderg sain' ('He is the fierce lion with blood-red paws [lit. "hands"]', 4502-3, Fergus' description of the Ulster warrior-prince Eirrge Echbél) and 'At leómain londa sain' ('They are fierce lions', 4569-70, referring to Cú Chulainn's fighting men from Mag Muirtheimne, termed 'champions in battle' immediately after the metaphor). However, the likelihood of monastical authorship of this work too, as McCone 1990 argues, rules out extra-Biblical influence.

found in *Gilgamesh*, where both Gilgamesh and Enkidu kill lions[32] but are not compared to them; it is possible therefore that the image is neither Babylonian nor Sumerian.

I suggest that in the disparate texts of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Iliad* and the *Nibelungenlied* we may well have evidence of shared Indo-European lion-warrior figuration. Further, since the image in the medieval epic is not one taken from life as seems at first sight to be the case in the two ancient narratives, and since influence by Biblical references is not established for the *Nibelungenlied,* I believe that the image is possibly inherited from a very much older heroic tradition belonging to Proto-Indo-European tribes which originally inhabited territory where lions were common. It is hardly likely to be a universal or near universal image in epic poetry, as could be argued of some of the comparisons which I am about to discuss, because there were vast areas of the ancient and early medieval world such as the Americas and Australasia which never had immediate contact with the lion or possible inherited contact with the concept of the lion. Of course, it is conceivable that there might be traditional epic comparisons of warriors to pumas in the Americas, for instance, but it is with the lion that we are concerned in this study. If the lion-warrior figuration in the two medieval texts is a Proto-Indo-European one, then it must follow that the image pre-dates the apparent real-life comparisons contained in the *Iliad* and Sanskrit epic. The ancient poet-singers, like their medieval counterparts, must have drawn on an unbroken tradition of a warrior image known to their prehistoric forebears.

While on the subject of animal figuration, there are some striking examples of parallel similes comparing protagonists to hunted animals at bay facing hounds or wild beasts. Firstly two passive images of deer, one used of Sītā facing the hostile *rākṣasa* women, the other of Odysseus, who has become isolated from his compatriots during the fighting, and a group of Trojans. Sītā is surrounded by the *rākṣasī* like a deer by hounds, 'mṛgīṃ śvabhir ivavṛtām' (3.53.5b) and like a deer by female tigers, 'vyāghrīnām hariṇī yathā' (3.54.31d). The Trojans close in around Odysseus like jackals around a wounded stag, 'hōs [...] thōes [...] / amph' elaphon keraon beblēmen' (XI 474-5). The Trojans' quarry, as the poet calls him, is rescued by Aias. In both *Nibelungenlied* and *Iliad* we find the conversely aggressive image of a wild boar turning on the hounds which hunt it. Dancwart makes a lone stand against the Huns: 'dô gie er vor den vîenden als ein eberswîn / ze walde tuot vor hunden' (1946.3b-4a). The simile occurs again without the hounds in conjunction with a fiddle-bow/sword metaphor whereby the slashing sword is likened obliquely to a boar's tusks: 'dâ vihtet einer inne, der heizet Volkêr, / als ein eber wilde unde ist ein spileman' (2001.2-3). Enjambement and parenthesis in the first and second examples respectively are probably

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[32] *The Standard Version* Tablets IX.18 and II.111, of Gilgamesh and Enkidu respectively. The god-hero Gilgamesh is several times compared instead to a wild bull (Tablet I.30, 81, 212 and 219; also *Old Babylonian Nippur Tablet* 1.5). *The Epic of Gilgamesh : The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian* , trans. Andrew George, London 1999.

signs of the relative lateness of these strophes, but the image itself must be old. For reasons that I have already set out I consider it unlikely that the first of these two similes is indirectly influenced by *Iliad* references such as the following: '[...] hōs hote kaprō / en kusi thēreutēsi mega phroneonte pesēton' (XI 324-5), where Diomedes and Odysseus are compared to boars attacking the dogs hunting them; still less by elaborate similes like those found in XI 414ff and XIII 471ff. Boar similes are not a feature of *Rāmāyaṇa* battle narrative just as deer similes are absent from the *Nibelungenlied*: of the three epics only the *Iliad* has both. However, it would seem that the image of the hunted animal at bay is an Indo-European one.

Now we turn to the most frequently used comparisons enhancing descriptions of warriors in our two epics, those of fire and also, in the case of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, of blazing light as in lightning and the shining sun and planets, principally Lohitāṅga (Mars). We have already noticed several examples in the *Araṇya* and *Yuddhakāṇḍa* passages examined earlier.[33] The *Táin* has an oblique transferred reference to fiery light in an image of the bright (lit. 'clean') weapons of Cú Chulainn's enemies gleaming in (perhaps reflecting) the evening clouds at sunset: 'úad grístaitnem na n-arm ṅglanórda' [...] re fuiniud néll na nóna' (2127-8). In similar fashion *Beowulf* uses the, probably faded, metaphorical kennings for sword 'hildelēoma' (1143) and 'beadolēoma' (1523), literally 'battle-light', (cf *Finnsburg* fragment 'swurdlēoma' [35], 'sword-light'),[34] all denoting the flashing of the weapon in combat. *Beowulf* also alludes in one reference to the sword's destructive as well as gleaming aspect in the metaphor *brond*, literally 'fire', here carrying the contextual meaning of 'sword': 'brond nē beadomēcas', ('neither sword nor battle-blade', 1454). Cú Chulainn's battle anger which rises from him, expressed as fiery sparks in the clouds (possibly lightning) and the air above his head, 'atchessa [...] na haíble teined trichemrúaid i nnéllaib i n-áeraib úasa chind' (*Táin* 2283-5), is an extravagant poetic image more akin to those we have met in *Rāmāyaṇa* battle narrative than to the comparatively restrained *Nibelungenlied* representations.

As I explained earlier, I have delayed detailed mention of *Nibelungenlied* battle images of fire and light until this point because I was dealing at the time with simile function rather than content. Such images are not typically expressed in this epic by means of simile but by

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33 Formulaic similes of dazzling sunlight are found also in non-martial contexts in Sanskrit epic, as in 'pratapantam ivādityam' ('blazing like the sun', Bharata's idealised image of Rāma as king, 2.98.11c) and 'agastyaṃ sūryavarcasam' ('radiant as the sun', of the sage Agastya, 3.11.21b); cf. 'bhrājamāno 'mṣumān iva' (referring to Nala resplendent as king) and 'bhāskaropamavarcasam' (used of Jamadagni, both similes meaning 'blazing/shining like the sun', *Mbh.* 3.54.35b and 3.115.30d). In a similar image of resplendence, thematically rather than formally parallel in that there is no figure of comparison involved, Baldr in the *Prose Edda* is portrayed as so bright/fair ('bjartr') that light radiates from him ('svá at lýsir af honum'), and we are also told that there is one plant so white that it is named "Baldr's eyelash" after him 'ok eitt gras er svá hvítt at jafnat er til Baldrs brár,' (*Gylfaginning* 22 in Snorri Sturluson: *Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning* ed. Anthony Faulkes, Oxford, 1982, 23, ll. 15-17).

34 In *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg* , ed. Klaeber 1950.

language which ranges from the simple adjective through hyperbole to the most transferred device of all, metaphor. Now that we are considering parallel Indo-European themes, it is appropriate to bring them into the comparison. The *Nibelungenlied* images tend to be more naturalistic than those in parallel *Rāmāyaṇa* passages, (perhaps a more sober Germanic convention), depicting the sparks which actually fly from clashes of steel rather than imaginary flames, no less dramatic in narratological terms, which emanate from the arrows flying through the air or the fist blows that we have come across in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. We find for instance the hyperbolic image 'daz fiwer ûz den ringen er houwen im began' (2043.2) and again 'Des fiwers ûz den ringen hiuwen si genuoc' (2278.1). The image - an ancient one, I believe - is absorbed into courtly literature, as for example in the jousting match between Erec and Ider: 'daz viur in ûz den helmen vluoc' (Hartmann's *Erec* 836). I have already remarked in passing on *Nibelungenlied* fire metaphors which form part of the similes I was examining: 'Daz fiwer stoup ûz ringen' (460.1a) and 'dô stoup ûz dem helme [...] / die viwerrôten vanken' (186.2a,3a) where sparks are obliquely referred to as dust, echoed in 'dô sluog er Wolfharten, daz er stieben began' (2277.4). More transferred images of this kind are used of the Etzelnburg battle: 'Si sluogen durch die schilde, daz iz lougen began / von fiwerrôten winden' (2062.1-2) and 'von ir zweier swerten gie der fiwerrôter wint' (2275.4); similarly 'unt daz sich beschutte diu brünne fiwerrôt' (2072.4).

As in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Iliad,* images of brightness and flashing are conveyed in the *Nibelungenlied* in descriptions of armour, so that the warriors themselves implicitly shine. Again perhaps in more sober Germanic fashion, fighting men or their weapons are not compared to lightning, the sun or other heavenly bodies, whereas the *Iliad* is closer to Sanskrit epic in this respect, as we shall shortly see. The *Nibelungenlied* poets use instead more straightforward thematic and grammatical means to express the same basic idea: the adjective *lieht* occurs passim, the adjective *wîz*, the nouns *schîn* and *glanz* and the verb *lohen* much more rarely. Thus we have 'ein liehter scilt von golde' (183.2a); 'durch die liehten schilde' (212.3a); cf. 'durch die liehten ringe' (1968.3a) and 'der liehten schilde schîn (1602.2b)[35]; 'hei waz dâ liehter ringe [...]' (214.4a); 'mîn liehtez wîcgewant' (2317.3b); 'durch eine wîze brünne' (188.2a); also 'vil maneges helmes schîn' (201.2b); 'einen helm glanz' and 'ouch lohent im die ringe, sam daz fiwer tuot' (1841.1b and 3), this last also containing a rare example of fire figuration as simile rather than metaphor. *Beowulf* exhibits strikingly parallel expressions: 'beorhte randas' ('bright shields', 231); 'beorhtum byrnum'

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35 Here Hagen and his men glimpse the shields of their ambushers glinting through the darkness, either in twilight ('In was des tages zerunnen, des enheten si nicht mêr', 1600) or possibly in moonlight, though the moon is not mentioned. A similar image occurs at the beginning of the *Finnsburg* fragment which alludes obliquely during the course of several lines to a strange light outside the great hall which turns out to be moonlight shining on weapons, as we gather from the juxtaposed indicators 'gūđwudu [...] scyld scefte [...]. Nū scȳneđ þes mōna' ('spear [...] shield, spear. [...] Now the moon shines', 6-7. The situation is again one of ambush.

('bright coats of mail', 3140); 'beorhte frætwe' ('bright decorated armour', 214) and 'lēohtan sweorde' ('with a bright sword', 2492); also 'on him byrne scān' ('the chain-mail on him shone', 405) and 'gūđbyrne scān' ('the chain-mail shone', 321).

The *Iliad* exhibits parallel images, as found for instance in the simple simile of warriors fighting like a blazing fire: 'hōs hoi men marnanto demas puros aithomenoio' (XI 596); and in the following core simile, which the poet goes on to develop at length, depicting Agamemnon destroying Trojans like fire raging through woodland: 'hōs d'hote pur aidēlon en [...] hulei' (XI 155). As to images of blazing light, we have for instance a simile strongly reminiscent of the *Rāmāyaṇa* comparisons of weapons and blows to Indra's lightning-bolts in the description of Hektor's bronze armour flashing like father Zeus' lightning-bolts: 'lamph' hōs te steropē patros Dios [...]' ('flashing like father Zeus' lightning-bolts', XI 66). A parallel with Hektor's armour is Rāvaṇa's shield flashing like fire: 'tac cāgnisadṛśaṃ dīptaṃ rāvaṇasya śarāvaram' (*Rām.* 3.49.12). In a development of the brightness simile, Hektor (in his gleaming armour, we assume) is seen appearing between the ranks of his warriors like the lone shining dog star from behind clouds: 'oios d'ek nepheōn anaphainetai oulios aster / pamphainōn' (*Il.* XI 62-3). Similarly Akhilles, as he hurries across the plain to fight Hektor, shines out like the autumn star at twilight among the other (implied 'lesser') stars, based on the core simile 'pamphainonth' hōs t'aster [...] met' astrasi nuktos amolgōi' (XXII 26ff).

These last two references to celestial bodies bring me to two groups of similes with partly overlapping themes. The first concerns the sun, or occasionally the moon in the case of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, either emerging from or entering clouds and is used to mark dramatic, often fateful, entrances or exits of protagonists; we are clearly back with the concept of simile function as well as content, for these are all episode-framing similes. I have already instanced the 'dawn' simile which accompanies Kriemhild's appearance in the great hall: 'Nu gie diu minneclîche, also der morgenrôt / tuot ûz den trüeben wolken' at *Nib.* 281.1-2a. As I argued earlier in relation to a different *Nibelungenlied* simile, despite the enjambement which seems to indicate late composition here also, the image itself, measured against parallel similes from much older sources, must be an ancient one, as we shall see in a moment.[36] In the meantime let us note the similar 'fair as the dawn' image used in Saṃpāti's description of Sītā being abducted by the black-hued Rāvaṇa, again a smile highlighting a

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36 Rather like the transference of the stock Germanic fire battle image into Hartmann's *Erec* that I mentioned earlier, we find a parallel, though more developed, sunrise comparison in Gottfried's *Tristan* . Here, the more complex double image is expressed through metaphor: 'sus kam diu küniginne Isot / daz vroliche morgenrot, / und vuorte ir sunnen an ir hant, / daz wunder von Irlant' (10885-8, Gottfried von Strassburg: *Tristan und Isold* , ed. Gottfried Weber, Darmstadt, 1967.). As I noted in the previous chapter, metaphor was considered by Roman rhetoricians an aesthetically superior figure to simile, and the judgement was a key influence on post-oral medieval poeticians and poets. Thus it is no surprise to find this sophisticated version of the image in Gottfried while its more direct epic forebear is preserved in the *Nibelungenlied.*

momentous development in the action of the story, although here there is no mention of clouds: Sītā is radiant as sunrise, 'sūryodayasamaprabhām' (4.58.15b). Strongly reminiscent in content and function of the dawn/sun entrance image is 'mahābhrād iva candramaḥ' ('like the moon emerging from a great cloud', 2.14.21d) describing Rāma's emergence from his palace on his way to the fateful meeting with his father who is about to banish him. Similes based on the opposite phenomenon, that of the sun entering a cloud, occur for instance at 2.37.21d, 'gṛhaṃ sūrya ivāmbudam', depicting Daśaratha, after bidding farewell to Rāma as he left for exile, going back into his palace - ultimately to die of sorrow. Another example is used of Lakṣmaṇa entering Sugrīva's sumptuous abode like the sun a great cloud: 'mahābhram iva bhāskaraḥ' (4.32.18d), an action which sets in motion the search which will eventually end in Hanumān's locating Sītā in Laṅkā.

The second group of thematic similes which we are examining, that of the moon outshining the stars which surround it, expresses the notion of superiority in battle prowess, rank and/or beauty and is also frequently linked with key developments in the action. Again, we have already examined one of these similes in the *Nibelungenlied* in its rôle as episode-opener: 'sam der liehte mâne vor den sternen stât, / des scîn sô lûterlîche ab den wolken gât' (283.1-2). It expresses Kriemhild's beauty and status surpassing those of her companions. The same image is used with like connotations by Kriemhild herself when she compares Siegfried to his fellows, including Gunther, thus innocently inciting Brünhild's hostility: 'nu sihestu, wie er stât, / wie rehte hêrlîche er vor den recken gât, / alsam der liehte mâne vor den sternen tuot?' (818. 2b-4). The simile occurs quite often in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and is used in similar contexts, although here the idea of adornment (by the stars/companions) appears more important than that of contrast, as for instance of Sugrīva surrounded by his women: 'sugrīvaṃ gagane pūrṇaṃ candram tārāgaṇā iva' (4.33.4cd) and 'satāraṃ śaśinaṃ yathā' (4.33.6d) and Rāvaṇa likewise surrounded by his: 'tārābhir iva candramaḥ' (5.16.25b); also of Hanumān among his troops shining like the hare-marked moon amidst a host of stars 'śaśīva nakṣatragaṇopaśobhitaḥ' (4.43.15.d). We encountered a broadly parallel idea to this last one as used of Akhilles in *Il.* XXII 62ff, that of the evening star shining brightly among the other stars.

It is clear, therefore, that formulaic simile principally, and also thematically allied metaphor and non-tropic figurative language such as I have indicated in the *Nibelungenlied*, *Táin* and *Beowulf*, feature in Indo-European epic as means of expressing in poetical terms a broadly parallel world view associated with the related concepts of fire and/or flashing light as portrayed in battle contexts. However, by contrast with lion-warrior figuration, which may well be a Proto-Indo-European phenomenon, such imagery is unlikely to be other than universal or near-universal, given the agents of comparison employed. I believe it would be unreasonable to suggest that a few scattered Old Testament references were models for medieval European epic. There are certainly allusions to fiery shields and to chariots

gleaming like torches and flashing like lightning in a prophetic-poetic description of Nineveh being taken (*Nahum* 2.3,4), also to swords flashing in cities (*Hosea* 11.6) and, by means of a more oblique image, to sparks flying from war-horses' hooves, suggested by the comparison of the hooves to flint, that is, we infer, producing fire/sparks as they gallop (*Isaiah* 5. 28); and further in language reminiscent of some *Rāmāyaṇa* battle passages that I have cited, to (God's) flaming arrows (*Psalm* 7.13) and his arrows flashing like lightning (*Zechariah* 9.14).[37] These instances suggest that the image is also Semitic, and a comparison of other texts in this language group might establish this for certain. The hypothesis that stereotyped battle fire/light imagery is near-universal is certainly testable by comparison with heroic poetry from non-Indo-European groups.

Similarly, it is reasonable to conclude that comparisons in epic that we have examined which make reference to heavenly bodies, in particular the sun, moon and stars, are also near-universal. After all, these are natural phenomena to which enormous importance has been attached since early times: for measuring time and determining direction, for instance, and, historically and indeed still to a considerable extent today in many parts of the world, including our own, because of the influence they are believed to exert over human affairs. Two of these 'celestial body' images need special attention in the context of a *Nibelungenlied* study because, contrary to what I am suggesting, it is widely assumed that they constitute borrowed figuration commonly applied in the Middle Ages to the Virgin Mary traceable to one particular Old Testament verse, the *Song of Songs* comparison of the beautiful young female to the dawn, moon and sun and also possibly the stars. 'Quæ est ista, quæ progreditur quasi aurora consurgens, pulchra ut luna, electa ut sol, terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata?' (*Cantica Canticorum* 6.9, *Biblia Sacra,* 1568). The broadly parallel images occur of course in *Nib.* 281.1b-2a and 283.1-3 and reinforce, as we have seen, the narratological significance of Kriemhild's entrance. 'Nu gie diu minneclîche, also der morgenrôt / tuot aus den trüben wolken' ; and 'Sam der liehte mâne vor den sternen stât, / des scîn so lûterlîche ab den wolken gât, / dem stuont si nu gelîche vor maneger frouwen guot'. Fechter is an example of scholars who are convinced that the (lone, writing) *Nibelungenlied* poet was influenced by liturgy and sermon and by religious literature based on the verse from the *Song of Songs*. The quotation was, he says, incorporated very early into the liturgy concerning Mary and from the ninth century became the most commonly used text for sermons on the feast of the Assumption. He also adduces Latin references to Mary from various sources based on the verse, and in German the *Rheinisches Marienlob*

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[37] 'Clypeus fortium eius ignitus,[...] igneæ habenæ currus' and 'aspectus eorum quasi lampades, quasi fulgura' (*Proph. Nahum* II. 3 and 4). 'Coepit gladius in civitatibus eius' (*Proph. Osee* XI.6). 'Ungulæ equorum eius ut silex' (*Proph. Esaiæ* V.28). 'Et Dominus Deus [...] exibit ut fulgur iaculum eius', (*Proph. Zachariæ* IX.14). '[...] sagittas suas ardentibus effecit' (*Psalmorum* VII.14). All quotations from *Biblia Sacra* 1568. (The last reference is verse 13 in *Biblia Sacra* 1977 and in modern English translations).

allusion 'wand als de man di stern verwinnet / [...], / als üvergeit din heilicheit / al der heilgen werdicheit' (1964, 119).[38] He argues that the occurrence of religious imagery in secular German literature was not unusual, for instance in expressions normally reserved for the Trinity and Mary found in Middle High German romance and lyric passages celebrating the entry of a king and queen (ibid, 119-120). For Fechter, having put forward and rejected the possibility of classical Roman literary models, the 'heavenly body' imagery in *Nib.* 281 and 283 represents a conscious tranference of the idealised *Song of Songs*-Mary comparison to Kriemhild. 'Diese Erklärung hat vor anderen den Vorzug, daß sie nicht nur beide Bilder[39] aus einer gemeinsamen Quelle herleitet, sondern auch ihre Verbindung, sogar ihre Reihenfolge verständlich macht' (120).

For me, the juxtaposition and order of the two images are more probably coincidental. As I argued in an earlier chapter, we cannot assume that any of the *Nibelungenlied* poets had a knowledge of Latin; therefore the liturgy with its incorporation of the *Song of Songs* text is likely to have been meaningless to the author/s of the strophes containing the Kriemhild dawn/moon/stars allusions. More convincing is Fechter's suggestion that sermons (in the vernacular, one would have to suppose) preached on the feast of the Assumption might have inspired the *Nibelungenlied* allusions, but if one is to be consistently reductive, the obvious lack of a direct reference to the sun as there is in the *Song of Songs* verse has to be explained ('electa ut sol'), as the verse continues, as also the separate, ambiguous reference in that verse possibly to moving stars[40] which, especially in view of the epithet 'terribilis' indirectly attached to them, are clearly independent of, not subordinate to, the moon.[41] And Fechter's argument does not satisfactorily cope with the fact that Siegfried is later described by Kriemhild in the same formulaic image (which carries, according to Fechter, distinctly

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38 This is not a Biblical tradition, rather an ecclesiasical one based on a loose interpretation of the *Song of Songs* text, as I shall show in due course.

39 By which I assume he means first the image of the dawn and then that of the moon and stars.

40 The allusion in the original Hebrew reference is unclear. It means literally 'as-the-ones-proceeding majestic' (*NIV Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament*, 1987, 598) and has been construed in two very different ways: as an army in battle array or as the stars in their courses, two interpretations which survive in different modern English translations, the former for example in the *Revised Standard Version* and the latter in the *New International Version* and Bloch and Bloch 1998. The Latin Vulgate interprets the allusion in clearly military terms which are far removed from the Marian stellar view. The following passage from a 1521 commentary on the *Song of Songs* helps us understand how the second interpretation became the ecclesiastically accepted one. 'De his castris superius dictum est. Terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata. In ipsa quidem videntur chori castrorū [...]. Unde ipsa vas castrorum appellatur in Ecclesiast. ubi sub nomine lune de ipsa dicitur. Vas castrorum in excelsis: in firmamento coeli resplēdens: spēs coeli: stellarum gloria. THO'. (F. Thome, *Cantica Canticorum*, Fo. CXLIII). *Chorus* must mean here 'heavenly bodies moving in harmony' (Lewis and Short: *A Latin Dictionary*, Oxford, 1922, 328). Thus the Church assigned to the reference 'ut castrorum acies ordinata' the notion of celestial rather than human hosts.

41 Bloch and Bloch translate the Hebrew epithet as 'daunting' (1998, 95). This is certainly not the tone of *Nib.* 283, where the stars and Kriemhild's companions are portrayed as inferior.

Marian resonances) that one of the *Nibelungenlied* poets has already used of Kriemhild herself: 'wie rehte hêrlîche er vor den recken gât, / alsam der liehte mâne vor den sternen tuot' (817.2-3). As I have shown, figuration variously involving the sun and/or dawn, moon, stars to describe both sexes appears to be a widespread characteristic of Indo-European epic. We have the *Rāmāyaṇa* Sītā-dawn image, and also the sun or moon and the 'moon adorned by stars' comparisons, frequently applied to men, exclusively so in the last type of simile; we also have Homer's dog star and evening star comparisons, also used of men.

Such 'celestial body' imagery is taken up by post-epic poets, for instance by Sappho in her lyric use, within a lengthy developed simile, of the core image of a girl, the subject of the poem, conspicuous among the Lydian women like the moon surrounded by stars: 'Nun de ludaisin emprepetai gunai- / [..] hōs [...] selanna / panta perrekhois' astra' (Fr. 96). This core image (coincidentally, I believe, almost exactly parallel with the Kriemhild moon-stars comparison in relation to her companions) is, according to Damon, unmistakably reminiscent of Homeric simile.[42] By incorporating a simple image broadly resonant of epic and developing it by drawing on Homeric diction and themes, Sappho makes a deliberate reference to the earlier work (Damon 1973, 272). A variant of this process of adaptation of the comparison is the transformation of the epic image of dawn exemplified in our *Nibelungenlied* passage as it occurs in the *Tristan* description of Isolt's entrance that I quoted earlier. Here it is not a conscious evocation of the traditional simile within a more elaborate simile but a reworking by metaphorical means of the simple simile itself. It seems clear that epic images alluding to the morning and the night sky are widespread and persistent in later European poetry. However, I suggested earlier that sun/moon/stars imagery is likely to be much more far-reaching than the narrower Indo-European context. After all, these phenomena are universally visible, so that their use as agents of comparison appears such an obvious one.

To return to the specifically feminised application of the image, the poetic linking of a nubile young woman with the dawn or Sirius, the morning or dog star, the brightest star in the sky, which rises just before sunrise in summer, is also Semitic. It occurs both in *Song of Songs* 6 and in a Egyptian *waṣf* or love poem, believed to be nearly a thousand years older, which is strikingly similar in genre and language to the *Song*. Here the girl is compared to

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42 The content, rather than diction, of Sappho's core simile is reminiscent of but not strictly parallel with Homeric use in the *Iliad* , where the image is of stars shining out around the bright moon rather than of the moon outshining the stars, as in 'hōs d'hot' [...] astra phaeinēn amphi selēnēn' (VIII 555) which describes the blazing of the Trojan watch-fires in the darkness, presumably around the implied moon of the city of Troy. This is very similar in emphasis to the *Rāmāyaṇa* stock similes of stars surrounding the moon which I cited earlier. Damon in fact thinks that Sappho's core image is suggestive of the *Iliad* simile quoted above.

Sothis (Sirius) rising (Bloch and Bloch 15, citing Fox[43]). In fact the authors translate the phrase in 6.10 containing the Hebrew *šaḥar* ('dawn' or 'morning star') as 'rising like the morning star' (Bloch and Bloch 95 and 191). Bearing in mind the *Rāmāyaṇa* comparison of Sītā to the dawn and the quite frequent occurrence of the 'moon adorned by stars' image in the poem and also the discrepancies between the Biblical and *Nibelungenlied* references, I think it is safer to suggest that the Kriemhild/Siegfried images in the *Nibelungenlied* are near universal ones rather than that their origin can be traced to the *Song of Songs* or even in part possibly back to an Egyptian *waṣf*.[44]

We have seen that formulaic similes play a broadly similar, not inconsiderable rôle in the compositional dynamics of the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Firstly their very repetition performs a key function in the intermeshed acoustic and thematic reception of the poems, providing the essential 'sameness' of sound and world view which is the hallmark of heroic epic and of the conservative societies which give rise to it. Secondly they act as narratological aids to the singer-poet, both in composition and transmission, marking episode boundaries and underscoring the dramatic and/or emotional high points within episodes. Thirdly the rhythmic intensity of certain preferred stock similes may have laid down the original patterns which began the process of metrical regulation. The poems also appear to draw on a repository of common Indo-European stock figuration consisting mainly of similes, but also of metaphors and other figurative language in some instances. Whether or not these images are also universal or nearly so, and this may be determined by a series of wider studies of heroic poetry, it is clear that they are of considerable antiquity. Thus it seems likely that certain stereotyped imagery in medieval epic which has been widely assumed to be of Biblical origin may on the contrary be part of a pre-Christian legacy.

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43 Michael V. Fox: *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs* , Madison 1985, 52.

44 Fox (ibid) argues that Egyptian love poetry may have been known in ancient Israel. Fechter does not, of course, mention a possible Egyptian source, neither does he suggest that the application of the comparison to Siegfried is a variation of the *Song of Songs* -Mary nexus, although this would seem to be a logical progression of his argument. Instead, he merely states in vague terms that the repetition of the image in the later scene '[...] zeigt [...], daß der Vergleich (wie alle im ‚Nibelungenlied') nicht aus einer individuellen Situation erwuchs und an sie gebunden ist' (117).

5

The Formulaic Image as Symbol: Sovereignty Imagery

1. The Formulaic Symbol as Shared Indo-European Epic Image

Having examined the functions of the formulaic image in heroic epic as figure of speech, we turn now to a consideration of the image as symbolic representation of a socio-cultural world view. As in the case of the former type of imagery, symbolic images serve in my chosen texts as legitimators and preservers of the status quo. We should remind ourselves at this point that symbol differs from simile or metaphor, both of the latter based on the element of comparison, explicit (in the case of simile) or implicit (in the case of metaphor), in that symbol represents or indicates something outside the sum of its parts. In other words, it does not 'look like' or behave like', rather it 'stands for'. We have here the element of association rather than analogy. A tear, for example, is a sign of deeply felt emotion, usually sadness, less often joy or relief, sometimes other types of human reaction such as humiliation, as in the case of Brünhild's tears. A tear does not in any sense resemble the felt emotion: instead it represents it. Epic symbols are pointers to archetypal concepts familiar to poet-singer and audience alike, allusions which conjure up a variety of shared conscious and subliminal associations, verbal short-cuts which need no elaboration. Unlike post-oral poetic symbols, they are not innovative, they do not make their audience work to decipher them: poet and listeners converse in the same sign-language. This type of phenomenon, as I have remarked more than once, is not a sign of aesthetic inferiority or lack of sophistication but simply a measure of different expectations.

Some Indo-European epic motif-symbols

At the end of the last chapter I discussed some stock similes and, to a lesser extent, broadly metaphorical language, common not only to my chosen texts but also to other Indo-European epics. A parallel situation seems to exist in respect of certain symbolic motifs, of which I shall cite two examples shortly. Exploring further my illustration of the tear symbol, the gesture of shedding tears is similarly a sign to be construed by means of association, and the gesture itself may in certain circumstances (as for instance in the case of Brünhild's

weeping) take on a narratologically symbolic significance. My two examples of symbolic motif are images resonant with dramatic intensity, instances of Kuhn's 'Gebärdenszenen'[1] and Hatto's parallel notion of 'epic moments', emotion-charged narrative set-pieces with a strong visual element to which the poet-singer has been directing his performance of the story, and they operate by a process of audience association with a received world picture. The first is an ancient symbol of grief, generally female grief at the death of a male, typically a husband. Holding his head, the widow laments her husband's untimely death. I have found three occurrences of this motif in the *Rāmāyaṇa* . Tārā, Vālin's wife, and an unnamed wife of Rāvaṇa hold the head in their lap ('āropyāṅke śiras tasya' and 'kācid aṅke śiraḥ kṛtvā' respectively). 'tatas tārā patiṃ dṛṣṭvā śibikātalaśāyinam / āropyāṅke śiras tasya vilalāpa suduḥkhitā' ('then Tārā, seeing her lord lying on the litter, placed his head on her lap, wailing most sorrowfully, 4.24.32); and 'kācid aṅke śiraḥ kṛtvā ruroda mukham īkṣatī /snāpayantī mukhaṃ bāṣpais tuṣārair iva paṅkajam' ('another [of the wives], placing his head on her lap, wept as she beheld his face, her tears bathing it as dew does a lotus', 6.98.10). Kausalyā in her grief clasps Daśaratha's head while confronting Kaikeyī whom she holds responsible for his death: 'kausalyā bāṣpapūrṇakṣī vividhaṃ śokakarśitā / upagṛhyā śiro rājñaḥ kaikeyīṃ pratyabhāṣata', 2.60.2, especially 2c 'upagṛhya śiro rājñaḥ', ('taking hold of the king's head'). Andromakhe and Kriemhild similarly hold the head in their hands: 'tēisin d' andromakhē leukōlenos ērkhe gooio, / hektoros androphonoio karē meta khersin ekhousa' ('white-armed Andromakhe, holding the head of Hektor, slayer of men, between her hands, initiated the mourning', *Il.* XXIV 723-4); and 'si huop sîn schoene houbet mit ir vil wîzen hant', 1011.12, repeated identically at 1069.2. This *Nibelungenlied* formula is used at Kriemhild's first and last encounter with Siegfried's corpse, when she discovers it lying outside her chamber and finally at his funeral before the coffin lid is replaced. The reference to 'head' (*houbet*) rather than 'face' (*antlütze*)[2] suggests the antiquity of the formula, cf. Kriemhild's request: 'Lât mir nâch mînem leide daz kleine liep geschehen, / daz ich sîn schoene houbet noch eines müeze sehen' (1068.1-2), after which she lifts his head (1069.2).

The action of holding the head of the beloved deceased appears to have had great symbolic resonance in ancient times, and it is significant that it survives in the *Nibelungenlied.* We find two more references in the *Iliad*, at XXIII. 136, where a sorrowing Akhilles holds the head of his dead companion Patroklus as he walks behind the bier being carried to the funeral rites, and at XXIV.712, in which Hektor's mother Hekabe performs a similar act by touching her son's head as the wagon bringing his body from the Greek lines passes by. A

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[1] See Ch. 2, n. 25.

[2] Cf. the use of this noun to describe Kriemhild's rush of colour at the messenger's mention of Siegfried in 241.1: 'Ir scoenez antlütze daz wart rôsenrôt'.

gesture recorded earlier in the *Iliad*, similar but not identical in context to this one and at first sight out of place among the other instances where the beloved is dead, I believe gives a clue to the meaning of the symbolic act of mourning: here Thetis, Akhilles' mother, comforts him as he weeps for Patroklus by holding his head in her hands. Taking the head of a dear one who has died by violent means may well be an ancient sign, possibly even Proto-Indo-European, of comforting the deceased, in the way one would a distressed child, for the hurts inflicted upon him. The gesture seems to symbolise comfort directed at the dead, rather than the means by which the bereaved finds comfort, an act of giving rather than receiving. Fechter, as one would expect, posits a classical origin for the *Nibelungenlied* references, but the occurrence of a parallel symbolic formula of mourning in the *Rāmāyaṇa* must surely rule this out. The formula persists into high medieval romance and beyond in an even more intense visual dimension. We find, for example, the strange tableau of Sigune and Schionatulander which Wolfram's Parzival comes across in the enchanted grail forest, Sigune sitting transfixed beside a lime-tree holding the embalmed corpse of her lover suspended imperishably in time, waiting for the rare passer-by to whom she can relate her sorrows: 'vor im ûf einer linden saz / ein magt.. [...] / ein gebalsemt ritter tôt / lent ir zwischenn armen' (5.249.14-17). And of course the same formulaic symbolism lies behind the pietà set-piece in painting and sculpture. The virgin-mother supporting the disfigured body of her dead son across her lap must be an Indo-European descendant of mothers such as Hekabe, a Christianised variant of an ancient formulaic symbol.

One further comment on the 'head-holding' image. The *Iliad* and the *Nibelungenlied* append to it the formulaic whiteness of Andromakhe's arms and of Kriemhild's hands. *Leukōlenos* ('white-armed') occurs passim in the Greek epic, all but twice as the epithet attached to the goddess Hera. In those two exceptions it is used of Andromakhe. I find it striking that a formulaic epithet normally reserved for a divinity is applied in the work to Andromakhe and to no other human. Hektor speaks of his 'white-armed wife Andromakhe' at 6.377, and the poet uses the epithet of her again in the passage I referred to above but in no other instance. Since it is applied to a goddess, one may infer that whiteness is considered a mark of physical perfection and that the formula is used expressly in this instance to imply the stark contrast between the beauty of Andromakhe's body and what must be the awful gruesomeness of Hektor's corpse. The anointing for burial would not have disguised the fatal neck-wound with its extensive surrounding bruising caused by Akhilles' spear (we know from a reference in *Il.* XXII that the wound is just beside the wind-pipe).[3] Since the epithet is not regularly attached to Andromakhe I would like to think

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[3] Although Akhilles has desecrated Hektor's dead body by dragging it behind horses attached to leather thongs through holes he has made in the feet, no sign of this savage treatment remains on the corpse because Aphrodite and Apollo, out of pity for Hektor, protect the flesh from physical damage during the dragging.

that the poet applied it affectively in this instance rather than because it happened to fit the metre.

It seems to me that the epithet *wîz* is similarly used as a consciously affective device in the first reference to Kriemhild's holding of Siegfried's head in death which I cited. Certainly the formula *wîziu hant* is ubiquitous in medieval literature, applied to men as well as women, and indeed in folktale; and it occurs twice more in the *Nibelungenlied* in non-tragic instances, set here in mildly erotically suggestive contexts which mirror and yet contrast strongly with each other. Both references concern Kriemhild, and the formula is not used of anyone else. The first occasion is during the double wedding feast when Kriemhild is depicted lovingly pressing Siegfried's hands just before he disappears to go to Gunther's aid in the royal bedchamber: 'si trûte sîne hende mit ir vil wîzen hant' (661.3). Much later, the formula is used as Kriemhild and Etzel are sitting together becoming familiar with each other on the day of Etzel's arrival in Zeizenmure to receive her. Whereas Kriemhild's action with Siegfried is an active one demonstrating her deep love for him, it is a passive one with Etzel whom she allows to take her hand in his right hand: 'in den sînen zeswen lac ir wîziu hant' (1358.2b). It is a gesture which tells us that she is enduring the advances of a man she does not love for the sake of revenge for the murder of the man whom she still adores. In both cases, and almost certainly in the second of the two 'head-holding' references 'si huop sîn schoene houbet mit ir vil wîsen hant' (1069.2), when she raises Siegfried's washed and, one assumes, embalmed head from its coffin, the addition of *wîz* is merely formulaic; but the word for word similar first instance of the latter is arresting (1011.2, part of the episode in which Kriemhild discovers his blood-stained corpse lying outside her chamber) and makes for a contrast between her body and his as stark as that between Andromakhe's and Hektor's. In this instance it is *schoen* that is merely formulaic, since Siegfried's head, although still handsome beneath the gore, must be anything but beautiful in the episode. We are told that the forest flowers were wet all around him with his blood when he fell (998.1) and that now a chamberlain has just found him so 'bluotes rôten' that he does not recognise him: 'daz ez sîn herre wære, niene wesse er daz' (1006 1a and 2). Of course Kriemhild, with a lover's premonition, knows whose body it is before she has seen it. As she raises the head encrusted with dried blood, her hands stand out white against it: whiteness, a sign of beauty, contrasting with the repulsiveness of the object she holds. We have the image in the *Iliad* and the *Nibelungenlied*, the juxtaposition of white arms or hands with the horrific-looking head, but not in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Could this be a formulaic variant of the ancient Indo-European 'head-holding' symbol of mourning or mere coincidence? Until such time as further evidence may perhaps be amassed, I must reserve judgement.

The second Indo-European formulaic motif which I intend to examine is the symbol of the city gate. Hanumān's lone stand at the gate of Laṅkā, a 'Gebärdenszene', to use Kuhn's term,

of such narratological possiblities that it has clearly been expanded by rhapsodists, is shot through with symbolic resonance. Again and again Hanumān returns to the gate after defeating wave after wave of defenders from the city during a narrative, interspersed with other episodes, spanning *sargas* 39 to 51. The story contains a number of additions, variations on the central gesture of the stand: two of the sargas in which these are found, 43 and 45, are considered by Brockington to be *kuśilāva* interpolations (1985, 342). Much has been made in affective terms by *Rāmāyaṇa* singer-poets of Hanumān's stand at the gate waiting impatiently (*kṛtakṣanaḥ*) for all-comers, spoiling for a fight (*yuddhakāṅkṣī*), principally, but not exclusively, in two sets of formulaic expressions. We find three variations of the *toraṇa* ('gate') *sthā* ('stand') combination: '[...] mārutātmajaḥ / yuddhakāṅkṣī punar vīras toraṇaṃ samupasthitaḥ' ('the hero, son of Māruti, desiring battle, took up his stand again at the gate', 5.40.34b-d) alongside the flexible formulas 'toraṇastham' ('standing at the gate', 44.18a) and 'toraṇastham avasthitam' ('standing firm at the gate', 40.26b). There are also three later long-verse *sarga* codas, repetitions of the formula 'tad eva vīro 'bhijagāma toraṇam / kṛtakṣaṇaḥ kāla iva prajākṣaye' ('then the hero returned to the gate, waiting impatiently like Time after the destruction of all creatures', 43.16cd and 45,39cd), with the slight variation 'tad eva vīraḥ parigṛhya toraṇam' at 44.39c. But besides its obvious dramatic potential, the motif also has a symbolic significance which would not have been lost on early audiences: on the superficial level, Hanumān stands for the ideal warrior, fearless and invincible, but on a deeper level, as Rāma's emissary, he represents royal power, a stronger force than any in Laṅkā and a threat to Rāvaṇa's authority. Hanumān is in effect taking on that royal power and by his gesture challenging Rāvaṇa for his kingdom, symbolised by the city gate, on Rāma's behalf.

Hagen and Dancwart take parallel stands in Etzelnburg. On the night of the Burgundians' arrival when, suspecting treachery, Hagen stands guard outside the door of the hall where the rest of them are sleeping ('ich wil noch hînte selbe der schiltwahte pflegen', 1828.2), in which he is assisted by Volker ('[si ...] giengen ûz dem hûse für die tür stân', 1832.3). Dancwart's stand is outside the door of the great hall during the fighting ('Dancwart der snelle stuont ûzerhalb der tür', 1987.1), aided by Volker on the inside, so that no Huns trapped there can escape from it and so that no more of them can get in to save their comrades. These are again not only magnificently dramatic set-pieces designed to captivate listeners and to stir fighting-men to deeds of heroism. Like Hanumān's stand, they are also gestures of defiance towards royal authority, for the warrior brothers, to whom Gunter appears to have ceded charge over the welfare of the Burgundians, are symbolically challenging Etzel within his kingdom by usurping his power to protect his guests (Hagen's stand outside the sleeping-hall) and by barring the entry of his men to his own great hall, the heart of a warrior-king's stronghold and the seat of his rule (Dancwart's stand).

We find an interesting variant of the epic hero's stand at the gate in the *Iliad*. Considering the Homeric poets' (or perhaps the last poet's, Homer's) ambivalent, more pragmatic attitude to heroism, we should not be surprised that it is a variant. Hektor is recognised throughout Troy as the guardian of the city gates. Indeed, his young son, Astyanax, although originally named otherwise by his father, is known by the name Asty-anax, literally 'Lord of the City', given him by the citizens of Troy because his father is its guardian. 'Gar sphin eruso pulas kai teichea', ('because you alone defended its gates and walls') Andromakhe reminds Hektor in her funeral lament over his corpse as she refers to the reason for Astyanax's name (*Il.* XXII 506-7). However, in his last fight Hektor does not defend the gate of Troy. He is standing at the gate when he sees grief-crazed Akhilles approaching him at great speed, spear in hand, bent on avenging Patroklus' death (XXII 136ff). Hektor reacts in a most unheroic manner by leaving the gate and running away from the city. Akhilles chases him three times around the walls and turns him back to prevent him escaping through the gate into the city so that eventually he is forced to turn and fight Akhilles. The significance of this 'non-stand' appears to be that in running away from Akhilles, Hektor, who fears not death but, if he should be defeated, the certain prospect of his body being left to the dogs instead of being returned to his family for burial, symbolically relinquishes his guardianship of the city. His fate, then, is sealed, even before Athene intervenes to give Akhilles unfair advantage.

Symbolic motifs found in one of my chosen works and in another Indo-European epic poem but not in the second of the texts in my study are automatically ruled out of the discussion, since this must be focussed on the two core epics of the comparison. An example of this last category of motif, though it does not lack comparative interest, is the bow-stringing task successfully completed by Rāma and Odysseus alone among the suitors for the hands of Sītā and Penelope respectively. Brünhild's *Brautwerbung* contest, though broadly linked thematically, contains no such task. However, there is a symbolic motif, that of the iron gate-bar, which surfaces in both my chosen epics but not to my knowledge in parallel Indo-European works. I consider it significant that it should be found in two such apparently disparate narratives and I am not prepared to accept that its use is coincidental. It appears to have an ancient ritualistic (in the secular sense) formularity about it, but whether it is an Indo-European epic motif I am not in a position to suggest with any certainty, since I have not found equivalents so far in other epics of this language group, but the possibility is there. From the fact that it does not occur in certain epics one might argue that it is not universal, but I would be surprised if these were the only epic occurrences of this motif.

Like the stand at the gate/door, the motif-symbol of the iron gate-bar, is, I believe, an ancient one. Hanumān fends off his attackers four times with an iron bar (*parigha*) which is twice specifically linked with the city gate: 'āsasādāyasaṃ bhīmaṃ parighaṃ toraṇaśritam'

('he took up a fearsome iron bar belonging to [lit. "leaning against" or "clinging to"] the gate', 5.40.31cd), and 'vīkṣamāṇaś ca dadṛśe parigham toraṇāśritam' ('looking around him, he saw the iron bar belonging to the gate', 5.51.37cd), which he proceeds to use against the guards, this time in order to escape from Laṅkā, his mission completed. This must be the bar which holds the gate fast against invaders. In using it as a weapon Hanumān reinforces his challenge on Rāma's behalf to Rāvaṇa's kingship, a symbolic gesture as insulting as Hagen's and Dancwart's acting as a human bar to the door of Etzel's halls. It must be said that fighting with iron bars in *Rāmāyaṇa* battles is not extraordinary: Rāma's *vānara* troops, who do not carry weapons,[4] use iron bars when they find them, for example Sugrīva picks up one he sees lying on the field of battle and attacks and immobilises Mahodara's horses (6.85.13), and similarly Aṅgada comes across another which has fallen during the course of conflict and sets about Mahāparṣva, striking him unconscious (6.86.6). However, the iron bar in Hanumān's case is unquestionably linked with the gate of Laṅkā.

These *Sundarakāṇḍa* references make clear a rather vague mention of *eine îsenstange* with which the gigantic gatekeeper of Nibelungenburg assails Siegfried when he returns alone to his kingdom to summon reinforcements to rescue the threatened Brünhild bride-winning party in Isenstein: 'dô schuof der portenære, daz sîn [Siegfried's] gespenge zebrast / Von einer îsenstangen' (490.4 - 91.1a). In his editorial note de Boor suggests: 'Die Eisenstange ist die übliche Waffe der Riesen in der Heldenepik' (87). This may well be so. An obvious parallel is the giant Kuperan in *Der hürnen Seyfrid* who comes out of his cave to attack Seyfrid with his steel bar (strophe 68ff), an episode almost certainly lifted from the *Nibelungenlied.* But not all giants are gatekeepers, and in any case de Boor was probably unaware of Hanumān's use of a gate-bar. I think that a very old motif has been preserved here and that the bar in question is the one used to bar the gate as indicated in 486.1: 'Dô kom er [Siegfried] für die porten: verslozzen im diu stuont'. The gatekeeper has to open the gate to come out armed against Siegfried ('daz tor er ûf dô swief', 489.3b) and he doubtless has the bar still in his hand in readiness for the encounter. The atypical inter-strophe

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[4] *Vānaras* usually fight with their fists, feet and claws and, like some *rākṣasas* , with rocks and uprooted *sāla* trees. Cf the rock throwing in the *Táin* which carries a cosmic resonance not unlike some *Rāmāyaṇa* battle passages: Amargin hurls huge stones and rocks ('chlochaib chorthib táthleccaib móra', 3942) for three days and nights at the men of Ireland, to which Cú Ruí responds in like manner (the formula used of Amargin's weapons is repeated) and the war-stones ('na bairendlecca bodba', 3961) shatter each other in the clouds and the air above the warriors. This second formula ('i nnéllaib i n-aéraib úasu', 3961) we have already met in the last chapter in connection with weapons which glitter red in the clouds and the air above (2285). The shattering of stones in the air is reminiscent of the rocks and trees in *Rāmāyaṇa* battles which shatter arrows and maces in mid-air and vice-versa. Compare also Seyfrid's uprooting of trees in the valley of dragons in order to crush the monsters with them: 'Da trug er zam die baumen, / Rys die aus uberal. / Die warff er auff die würme', (*Das Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid* , ed. Wofgang Golther, Halle 1911, str. 8.7-8 and 9.1). It seems to me that the ancient epic references to rocks and trees in battle, perhaps hyperbolic versions of primitive warfare with stones and tree-branches, persists for many centuries, witness their resurfacing in the*Táin* and *Seyfrid* .

enjambement of 490.4 to 491.1 probably indicates that these are relatively late strophes (unless, of course, a redactor has been at work here), and thus it is significant that the old motif is nevertheless preserved. Perhaps later singer-poets were unaware of its significance, which could be the reason why a hypothetical original reference 'von der îsenstangen' became in time an indeterminate 'von einer îsenstangen'. To my mind, the two gate-bars, like the symbolic stand at the gate/door which I discussed earlier, are sovereignty images. The gate represents the city, either closed and secure against attack, or open to invaders. Clearly the gatekeeper's rôle is a crucial one, for the safety of the city depends on his integrity. Whoever has authority over the one who holds the bar rules the city. Hanumān wields the bar in a symbolic gesture of taking over Laṅkā on behalf of Rāma: advance warning to Rāvaṇa of Rāma's intent. As to the *Nibelungenlied* reference, Siegfried ironically and dangerously finds himself at the mercy of the gatekeeper who is in fact subject to him. The man does not acknowledge his sovereign lord because Siegfried has come without his retinue, and Siegfried therefore has to overpower him in order to assert and reassume his authority.

2. Theme-Bearing Symbols in the Nibelungenlied and the Rāmāyaṇa

So far I have examined some symbolic motifs at work in the poems by way of introduction to the rôle of the formulaic image as symbol. I turn now to the main thrust of this chapter, namely a study of symbolic themes. The motif-symbol, linked as it is in epic with the 'Gebärdenszene', is narratologically speaking a transitory phenomenon, for relatively soon, as the story advances, it will be replaced by another. Themes, by contrast with motifs, underpin the entire work, giving it shape and texture and legitimising and preserving by transmission a given world view. The theme-bearing symbol, aided in this function by subsidiary motif-symbols, is a powerful agent in this process, acting on both conscious and subliminal levels as the listeners take in and endorse the message of the unfolding tale. I propose to examine here three interlinked groups of thematic sovereignty symbols found in my chosen texts, (sovereignty symbols as opposed to sovereignty motifs, of which I have instanced the stand at the gate and the iron gate-bar). Since the symbols I have chosen are commonly found in epic, and indeed in folktale, they are clearly formulaic. Parallels with the *Odyssey* and *Gilgamesh*, for instance, immediately spring to mind. I shall consider the symbols of the City, the City within the Forest and thirdly the Forest. Of these, the last mentioned is the most complex and far-reaching, with symbolic resonances and ramifications which suffuse and influence the entire narratives. As we shall see, the forest is the mystical validator of royal power.

The City

The founding of the City and the dynastic succession

The concept of the City is inextricably linked in epic with the office of hereditary kingship firstly because it owes its origin to a royal ancestor. The pre-historic rôle of the king's predecessors, the leaders and clan-chieftains of settled agriculture-practising tribes, as clearers of forest for the establishment of new settlements to support expanding populations, is exemplified in epic symbolic terms by the figure of Gilgamesh, the slayer of the cedar-forest guardian Humbaba. The taming of the forest enabled the growth of settlements, some of which became cities. This ancient activity of forest-clearing almost certainly survives in transmuted mythical form in a relatively late insertion in the Rāma story of Janaka's indirect allusion to an aetiological myth concerning the meaning of Sītā's name (literally 'furrow'). Janaka tells Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa that he found his daughter in the soil while he was ploughing, that is, during the course of his field-clearing duty (1.65.14) which we know from other sources to be a reference to the king's ritual ploughing of land to purify it for the performance of sacrifice.

The ancient notion of the guiding and protecting of the clan through a migratory state of existence became associated in later times with the office of kingship: it is interesting to note, for example, that Moses, leader of the people through the wilderness to the Promised Land, is given the title 'king' (*basileus*) in the 1st century CE imaginative Greek gloss of the story, a work ascribed to the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria.[5] (The Indo-European concept of forest-tamer does not, of course, apply to Moses, since he founded no settlement on behalf of his people, but led them instead to a situation where his successor Joshua enabled them to seize ready-built cities). The founding of new cities by conquest of alien peoples before the necessary forest-clearing is documented in ancient history, Alexander the Great being an obvious example of a royal founder of cities; and according to the relatively late *Uttarakāṇḍa* Rāma too followed the same practice as evidenced by the reference to his establishing of Aṅgadīyā for Lakṣmaṇa's son Aṅgada ('aṅgadīyā [...] niveśitā [...] rāmeṇa'), described as a delightful and well-guarded city: 'aṅgadīyā purī ramyā aṅgadasya niveśitā / rāmaṇīya suguptā ca rāmeṇākliṣṭakarmaṇā' (7.92.8). This *sarga* also contains the founding of a city for Lakṣmaṇa's other son. In the world picture that is epic the city needs a king not only in order to come into existence but, just as importantly, in order to survive: Bharata describes Ayodhyā, without the deceased Daśaratha and Rāma his heir apparent, as dark and silent, deprived of its beauty and joy 'nirākāra nirānandā' (2.105.24). When he refuses to

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[5] Philo: Vol.VI, *Moses I* , e.g. 334, p.448, ed. F. H. Colson, London/Cambridge, Mass., 1935.

rule as Rāma's regent in a city that is rightfully his brother's, withdrawing instead to Nandigrāma, all the citizens of Ayodhyā spontaneously follow him there (2.107.11).

Ayodhyā is ruled by the descendants of Ikṣvāku, the founder of the dynasty, to whom is attributed sonship of the legendary law-giver Manu in the genealogy recited to Janaka by Vasiṣṭha on Daśaratha's behalf (1.69). Indeed the action of the epic from the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* onwards hinges on the problematics of the hereditary succession, and once it is rightfully established by Rāma himself on his triumphant return from exile it is later assured when he divides his kingdom at the end of his long reign between his sons Kuśa and Lava and has them installed before embarking on his journey to heaven (7.97.17-19). Similarly there has been a ruling dynasty in Mithilā for many generations, as Janaka informs Daśaratha when reciting his genealogy in return as a descendant of Nimi, the founder of the royal house of the Videhas (1.70). The two genealogies serve as both internal and external legitimation: firstly of Rāma and Sitā as worthy consorts for each other, and, more importantly in the socio-religious context of the performance of the epic, legitimation of the institution of dynastical rule. Although we are not told the name of the dynasty in Worms, we learn from the first *âventiure* that the monarchy there is hereditary: 'ir [the three king-brothers'] vater der hiez Dancrât, der in diu erbe liez / sît nâch sîme lebene' (7.2-3a).

The City and the treasury

The city is not only the seat of government but also the location of the treasury, the ultimate symbol in wordly terms of royal power. We learn a good deal about the pragmatics of kingship in much, generally relatively late, material in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In return for the authority granted by his subjects and the taxes they pay, the king uses the resources of his treasury to protect the city and its inhabitants from invaders and to preserve order within, a trust explicitly referred to by the sages who seek out Rāma in his forest home to ask for his aid against the impious *rākṣasa* attacks (3.5.10). They remind him that it is the king's duty to protect his subjects as sons in return for tax. As Daśaratha advises his heir, a king performing his duty as 'pālapati' ('protector-ruler of the earth')[6] keeps his subjects contented and devoted, 'tuṣṭānuraktaprakṛtir yaḥ' (2.3.28a).[7] Daśaratha, we are told, is as prosperous as Śakra, the god of wealth, possessing vast quantities (literally 'heaps', 'cayaiḥ') of treasure ('dhanaiś ca saṃcayaiścānyaiḥ', *Rām.* 1.6.3c) and clearly has the means to reward the thousands of warriors ('sahasrais [...] mahārathaiḥ') he has caused to live throughout his city of Ayodhyā ('tādṛśanām sahasrais tām abhipūrṇāṃ mahārathaiḥ / purim āvāsayām āsa rājā

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[6] Cf. *pālayati* , 'he protects'.

[7] Lack of royal generosity towards his subjects is the downfall of King Bres in the early Irish *Cath Maige Tuired* . The cautionary tale depicts Bres losing his wealth through niggardliness which causes his subjects to withold tribute. (McCone 1990,130).

daśarathas tadā', 1.5.22). Since a king cannot rule a city without a treasury, Bharata's annexation of two rich cities 'dhanaratnaughasaṃpūrṇe', 'filled with treasure and jewels', (7.91.11) in the land of the Gandharvas is highly advantageous for the strengthening of Rāma's kingdom. Although such references give us invaluable insight into the early Indian view of kingship, the parallel rôle of the treasury in the *Nibelungenlied* is far more significant, narratologically speaking, since the fabulous treasure of the Nibelungs acquired by Siegfried is the source after his murder of a deadly power struggle beween Kriemhild and Hagen. Kriemhild has it brought from Xanten to Worms in order to buy loyalty and ultimately revenge against Hagen. 'Dô sie den hort nû hete, dô brâchtes' in daz lant / vil unkunder recken. jâ gap der vrouwen hant, / daz man sô grôzer milte mêre nie gesach' (1127.1-3). Hagen, fearing the power Kriemhild wields by means of this treasure, in turn schemes to deprive her of it, thus liquidating her influence in Worms so that she has to resort to external means, a marriage to Etzel, to gain revenge. '[...] dâ reite Hagene, ob si solde leben / noch deheine wîle, daz si sô manigen man / in ir dienst gewunne, daz ez in leide müez' ergân' (1128.2-4).

The City and the periphery

The city represents order, civilisation and culture which the king's protection maintains over against the civil and cultural disorder of the surrounding forest, a mysterious, threatening, anarchic region where his law holds no sway. It stands outside and in opposition to the 'other' that is the forest and its inhabitants. Davison 1991 sees the city as a 'myth-making center', the source of myths which 'demarcate the world, defining what is beyond the [...] center and also thereby ensuring that the center is indeed the center. [...] Myth uses exotic places and peoples as representations of what it is like to be "not us" as a way of clarifying by contrast and comparison who and what "we" are,' (49 and 50). Ancient grain-producers considered themselves infinitely superior to tribes who lived on the produce of the forest, and Ayodhyā is clearly rich in grain, this commodity being frequently linked with treasure, as in 'prabhūtadhanadhānyavān' ('with abundant wealth and grain', 1.5.5), a description of Kosala, the region in which Ayodhyā stands, and the compound 'dhānyakośaśca' ('the granary and the treasury', 2.32.6) which makes clear the equal importance of the two; in fact it suggests that wealth in the *Rāmāyaṇa* is counted to a great extent in grain, just as it was counted in cattle by the pastoralists of Vedic times. Thapar notes the importance of agriculture in the economy of Ayodhyā and the contrast between the cultivated land of Ayodhā and the gardens and woods, but no fields, of Laṅkā (1978, 16 and 19).

Water is of course essential for crops, but it is also necessary for the grazing required by a pastoral society and, as she observes, there is plenty of evidence from the *Ṛgveda* that 'the association of rain with benevolent rule was an established axiom in early Indian political

thought' (ibid.17). In the *Rāmāyaṇa* a good or bad harvest is a sign of good or bad kingship and therefore symbolises the king's authority (or lack of it) to govern.[8] The legend retold by Sumantra of King Romapāda whose land suffers drought because of his transgression makes this clear (1.8.11ff). Daśaratha dies with none of his four sons living in Ayodhyā to succeed him, and his advisers, in what is an undisguised legitimation of dynastical rule, urge Vasiṣṭha to consecrate one of the sons forthwith (2.61.25). A city without a king, they remind him, suffers many ills, first and foremost the lack of rain, grain and wealth, in that order (ibid. 8-10), for when there is no one to perform the office of separating right from wrong, chaos is the consequence (ibid. 23). Or, one may infer in the light of the story of King Romapāda, if the king is incapable of doing so, the result will be just as disastrous. Laṅkā, then, symbolises the 'not us' of the Aryan world picture on two levels: not only are its inhabitants not industrious cultivators but its ruler is depraved. Representing as it does a threat to the settled order of Ayodhyā it is therefore a City of the Forest and will be discussed separately together with the 'other', mythical cities of Nibelungenburg, Isenstein and Kiṣkindhā. Worms, Xanten, Etzelnburg[9] and Mithilā are on a par with Ayodhyā in their symbolic rôle as centres of organised social structuring; cities, for the epic poet-singer and his hearers, of established quasi-historical normality, and it is with these four cities that we shall be concerned for the present.

The royal feast

Feasting in Worms, Ayodhyā and Etzelnburg constitutes a series of magnificent set-pieces with a clear narratological function, namely to act as the backdrop against which are played out key dramatic events which inexorably influence the course of the action. In most cases, that course will lead to tragedy. I use the term 'feast' in the extended sense of a period of festivity rather than exclusively of the banquet, although episodes such as Brünhild's weeping,[10] Siegfried's death in the forest and Hagen's murder of Ortlieb take place during festive meals. The two great feasts of the *Rāmāyaṇa* are the *aśvamedhas* (royal horse-

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[8] McCone 1990 cites references from early Irish sagas enumerating the consequences to the cultivated land of an unfit king: crop failure and famine. These attended the reigns of the usurper Cairbre Cinn Chait and of Lugaid Mac Con who gave a false judgement and was therefore expelled for being a 'non-king' (129-30).

[9] One, perhaps more, of the singer-poets in the tradition is at pains to point out the 'normality' of Etzelnburg: Christian as well as heathen warriors attend Etzel's court (1334-5), and the Burgundians go to mass in the city's cathedral. Etzel, though a heathen, has sent for a Christian widow to become his second wife. He behaves honourably towards his guests and is anxious, even after Volker's killing of one of his warriors at the 'friendly' jousting-match, to show them every courtesy. Etzelnburg is therefore not a City in the Forest. I do not see in any of the above references clear indications, as might be argued, that the poem is the work of a cleric.

[10] Symbolic of her unease about Siegfried's rank and his rôle in her wooing which she later vents in the quarrel with Kriemhild during the celebratory jousting-match.

sacrifices) of Daśaratha and Rāma recounted respectively in the opening and closing *kāṇḍas,* thus giving narratological balance to the work. During Daśaratha's, held for the purpose of obtaining an heir, Rāma is conceived, and at Rāma's, Sītā is recalled from exile, gives public proof of her innocence and, just as Rāma anticipates a joyful reunion, promptly leaves him for ever. Three of the *Nibelungenlied* feasts take place at the summer solstice, a phenomenon of great portentous significance since time immemorial and normally marked by rejoicing, as is the case with Siegmund's feast to mark his son's initiation into knighthood, a narratologically neutral occasion much like Daśaratha's *aśvamedha* in that no hint of future tragedy is present. The great feasts held at this time of year by Gunther and Etzel, on the other hand, result directly in death: Siegfried's and the Burgundians'. The two marriage feasts of Gunther and Etzel each prefigure these last-mentioned tragedies in that they give rise to the circumstances which initiate the measured, inexorable progression towards disaster: the overpowering of Brünhild by Siegfried in Gunther's marriage bed and the capricious taking of the ring and girdle, and the formal acquisition by Kriemhild of wifely influence over Etzel and queenly power over his vassals which seals the eventual fate of the Burgundians.

Important as these considerations are, I believe that the feast in the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* carries more than narratological significance. Like the treasury, it is a sovereignty motif-symbol. Indeed, these two motifs are closely linked in that the contents of the treasury enable the king to display through lavish entertainment of his guests his rightful possession of the power invested in him which the treasury represents. Rāma, for instance, gives instructions before his *aśvamedha* for the release of vast quantities of rice (*taṇḍula*) and sesamum (*tila*), presumably from the royal store-house, and of gold (*suvarṇa*) and gold coin (*hiranya*), presumably from the treasury, for feeding, entertaining and bestowing gifts on the guests (7.82.15-16). And we are told that even at the end of a year, although the celebration is still going on, the treasury is not found lacking: 'saṃvatsaramatho sāgraṃ vartate na ca hīyate' (7.83.16cd). Gunther acts with similar open-handedness towards the retinues of his royal guests Siegfried, Kriemhild and Siegmund: 'der künec der was sô rîche, daz da niemen niht wart verseit' (801.4). Etzel too is prodigiously open-handed at his wedding feast: 'Ouch gap nie deheiner zuo sîn selbes hôhgezît / so manigen rîchen mantel, tief unde wît / noch sô guoter kleider, der si vil mohten hân' (1369.1-3).

No expense is spared in the preparations for the great feasts, the descriptions of which are used by the various narrators to heighten audience anticipation of the event. Siegmund and Gunther give orders for special seating arrangements for their noble invitees (31.3 and 775.4) and Etzel's servants busy themselves with the same task before the Burgundians' arrival ('Des küneges ambetliute die hiezen über al / mit gesidele rihten palas unde sal' 1505.1-2). Daśaratha commands the construction of palaces equipped with every amenity

for the visiting kings and hundreds of splendid dwellings for the brahmans: 'aupakāryāḥ kriyantāṃ ca rājñāṃ bahuguṇān ivatāḥ / brahmāṇāvasathāś caiva kartavyāḥ śataśaḥ śubhāḥ' (1.12.9). Not dissimilarly, the Burgundians find that Etzel has had a sumptuous sleeping hall made ready for them 'mit vil rîchen betten, lanc unde breit', decked with coverings of Arabian silk and costly furs, among them ermine, such that 'ein künec mit sînem gesinde nie sô hêrlich gelac' (1824-6). We have already noted the grand scale of catering anticipated for Rāma's feast; Gunther's, too, has a huge guest list as evidenced by references to the number of cauldrons, pots and pans that Rumolt uses to prepare the food (777) and to the size of Siegfried's retinue ('Wol zwelf hundert recken an dem ringe sîn / dâ ze tische sâzen', 803.1-2a).

The feast presents the sovereign with the opportunity to display not only awe-inspiring extravagance in his attentiveness towards his high-born guests but also his magnificent largesse towards the entertainers and the common folk at the periphery of the feasting from whom affectionate submission is expected in return. Both exercises are tangible signs of his power[11] and their portrayal serves to re-inforce the socio-religious status quo. Royal munificence extends to all the people on such occasions with the clear agenda of preventing dissatisfaction with the commoner's lot: Sieglind, for example, dispenses gold during the feasting in Xanten for the purpose of buying popularity for Siegfried, which will ensure an untroubled rule for him once he assumes power. 'Siglint diu rîche nâch alten siten pflac / durch ir sunes liebe teilen rôtez golt. / si kundez wol gedienen, daz im die liute wâren holt' (40.2-4).[12] Rāma's feast is marked by similar liberality towards his people, as verses 7.83.10ff demonstrate: 'nānyaḥ śabdo 'bhivat tatra hayamedha mahātmanaḥ / chandato dehi visrabdho yāvat tuṣyanti yācakāḥ' ('nothing was heard at the great horse sacrifice but "Give as much as the petitioners [or beggars] ask for so that they are satisfied" ', ibid. 10a-d). This is very like 1.13.10, another 'Give!' verse, in which Daśaratha's servants are ordered to distribute food and clothing on a lavish scale during his *aśvamedha*, and we are told that the recipients are brahmans, ascetics, beggars, the old and ill and women and children, ibid. 8-9); cf. 'die dâ gâbe gerten, die schieden vroelîchen dan' [from Gunther's feast] (687.4). Also 'na kaścin malinas tatra dīno vāpyathavā kṛśaḥ / tasmin yajñavare rājño hṛṣṭapuṣṭa

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11 In the case of visiting vassals and neighbouring kings this extravagance is likely to be deliberately intimidating rather than merely awe-inspiring.

12 Brünhild, in many ways a typical epic sovereign, shows equally prodigious liberality before leaving Isenstein. At her request, Dancwart distributes great quantities of treasure on her behalf, though it must be noted in context that he is deliberately over-generous, giving away more than she intended. His purpose is to deprive her of as much wealth, and therefore influence in Worms, as he can. 'swer einer marke gerte, dem wart sô vil gegeben, / daz die armen alle muosen vroelîche leben. / Wol bî hundert pfunden gap er âne zal' (515.3-4 and 516.1). She also orders gold and silk ('zweinzec leitschrîn / von golde unt von sîden') to be loaded for use as gifts when she arrives in Gunther's land (520).

janāvṛte' ('no-one was dirty, wretched or thin at that most excellent royal sacrifice, but instead was joyful and prosperous', 7.83.11). And 'rajatānām suvarnāṃ rathnānāmatha vāsasām / aniśaṃ dīyamānānāṃ nāntaḥ samupadṛṣyate' ('one could see enormous quantities of silver, gold, jewels and garments being constantly given away' 13.)

Entertainers such as the minstrels Kuśa and Lava are traditionally well provided for during epic feasting: the pair are offered eighteen thousand pieces of gold by Rāma after he has heard the first twenty *sargas* of the poem about himself (7.85.13), a reward which, as true forest-dwelling ascetics, they are bound to refuse (14-15). This hyperbolic royal response is reminiscent of Gunther's generous treatment of the travelling entertainers at his feast: 'Des edelen wirtes mâge, als ez der künic gebôt, / die gâben durch sîn' êre kleider unt golt vil rôt / ross unt dar zuo silber vil manigem vremden man' (687.1-3). Etzel's minstrels Werbel and Swemmel receive more than a thousand marks each for their services at Etzel's wedding (1374). And the summing up of Sieglind's munificence at Siegmund's feast ('ich wæn' ie ingesinde sô grôzer milte gepflac' [41.4]) parallels the inability of the oldest of the great sages present at Rāma's great feast to remember a sacrifice marked by such liberality ('ye ca tatra mahātmāno munayaścirajīvinaḥ / nā smarastādṛśaṃ yajñaṃ dānaighasamalaṃkṛtam' [7.83.12]).

Thus we see in the feast, couched in remarkably similar traditional hyperbolic terms, a further example of the legitimation of kingship and the warrior-nobility which epic poetry undertakes. That said, we must not lose sight of the practical aspect of performance, one which I touched on during my discussion of the oral epic tradition in Chapter 2 and one which would have been of considerable importance to the singer-poet and a particular reason for his dwelling on royal munificence towards wandering entertainers, namely his agenda to persuade the affluent among his listeners to respond generously to his tale.

The king and the women at court

The *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* are marked by descriptions of the ravishing physical charms and gorgeous attire of the women who attend the courts of Worms and Ayodhyā. Such descriptions are clearly considered a narratological necessity by singer-poets, but there must be more to them than mere scene-setting or mildly sensual titillation. More important than the traditional embellishing function of the descriptions of beautiful women is, I believe, the symbolic significance of such descriptions in relation to kingship. And, as I shall later show in my discussion of women at court in the City within the Forest, this sovereignty symbolism functions in part differently in the case of women in Kiṣkindhā and Laṅkā, cities which lie in this respect outside the bounds of accepted courtly attitudes to the female sex established in Worms and Ayodyhā. For the moment my study concerns these last two cities. The bevies of alluring females who grace these courts are, like the

contents of the treasury and the custom of the royal feast, visible signs of the monarch's power, not of his sexual power over these women but of his political power vis-à-vis his vassals and neighbouring kings. The status of women is here much as one would expect to find in earlier societies, for these beauties are indeed pawns in a royal power game, essential accessories to the palace. Formulaic epic hyperbole is once again at work on the symbolic level, excluding the plain and the downright ugly.[13] The king's unimaginable wealth enables him to afford and to defend with vast numbers of fighting men a court so magnificent that it attracts excellence in everything, including superlatively beautiful women to adorn it.

It is interesting to note that *Rāmāyaṇa* references to the women of the court of Ayodhyā, though not insignificant in content, are outnumbered many times over by parallel *Nibelungenlied* instances. I propose to begin with examples from the former. We find, for instance, that bejewelled young girls, considered bringers of good fortune, are essential to the ritual of royal consecration prepared for Rāma at Daśaratha's behest, in the company of all kinds of musicians, praise-singers and unspecified 'others' ('aṣṭau kanyāśca maṅgalyāḥ sarvābharaṇabhūṣitāḥ / vāditrāṇi ca sarvāni bandinaśca tathāpare', 2.13.11) along with a throne, a chariot, holy water, sacrificial foods and a ceremonial fan and white parasol, these last both early Indian symbols of kingship (4-9). There are more sensuous overtones to the passage in 7.41 which portrays the, apparently, private feast with which Rāma regales Sītā in his royal *aśoka* grove,[14] pressing her to take liquor made from fermented honey and a variety of meats and fruits (ibid. 13-14) and entertaining her and also himself with a performance by nubile young female singer-dancers animated by intoxicating drink: 'upanṛtyanti rājānaṃ nṛtyagītaviśāradāḥ / bālāś ca rūpavatyaś ca striyaḥ pānavaśaṃgatāḥ' (ibid. 15). This, we are informed, is the way the royal couple whiles away the summer months. Nevertheless, although the activities of the well-formed *(rūpavat)* young women entertainers in the heady atmosphere of the alcohol-laced feast heighten the senses of the small audience inside and the larger one outside the tale, these women are not deliberately provocative or flagrantly abandoned in the way we shall encounter in the City within the Forest. Rāma remains *śubhākāra* ('acting virtuously'). He experiences these delights together with his one wife, the chaste Sītā. The private feasting in the pleasure grove is a parallel of the more public *aśvamedha* feast: Rāma is the king enthroned, albeit on a seat

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13 Conversely, there are ugly as well as beautiful women in the court of Laṅkā, indicative of the ambivalent attitude of Aryans towards non-Aryans, the Others: hideous armed viragos guarding Rāvaṇa as he sleeps (5.5.27) contrast sharply with his voluptuous slumbering wives. For Aryans it is axiomatic that some *rākṣasīs* must be repulsive in appearance and unthinkable that any female inhabitant of the idealised city of Ayodhyā, except the morally reprehensible such as the scheming dwarf Mantharā, could possibly be ugly.

14 In Indian tradition the *aśoka* is the sacred tree of love, (Ethelbert Blatter and Walter Samuel Millard: *Some Beautiful Indian Trees* , Bombay Natural History Society, Bombay 1954, 132).

adorned with flowers rather than precious metals and stones (ibid. 12), and the voluptuous dancing-girls who grace the occasion are a sign of his royal authority.

However, Rāma is not only portrayed in this episode as the idealised temporal monarch. On another, peculiarly Indian level, he is also perceived as the god-king as he sits enthroned in the grove. In 7.41.16 he is likened to a god (*devavat*), but it is the dancers who underline his partly divine nature in their symbolic attendance on him. There is a mythological precedent for the presence of alluring young women at the royal feast as indicated in Bharadvāja's feast for Bharata, over which Rāma is the unseen celestial sovereign presider.[15] The gods are commonly believed to be attended by ravishing women, and the episode in question describes the sage's supernatural feast in a magic palace conjured up in his ashram for Bharata and his army who are waited on and entertained by entrancing, spendidly-bejewelled celestial women sent by Brahmā and Kubera, god of wealth, from their own female retinue (2.85.40-1). Brahmā's attendants are described as adorned with heavenly jewellery ('divyābharaṇabhūṣitāḥ', ibid.40b), and Kubera's as resplendent in gold, gems, pearls and coral ('suvarṇamaṇimuktena pravālena ca śobhitāḥ' ibid. 41.ab). In this *purāṇic*-style interlude Rāma is clearly the unseen god-king. Bharata modestly represents him at the feast, refusing to usurp his authority. A heavenly throne with the royal fan and parasol appears, and Bharata does obeisance to it as if his brother were sitting there (2.85.35). Rāma in the *aśoka* grove, surrounded by superlatively comely young women skilled in the arts of the song and the dance, mirrors his unseen presence as god-king at Bharadvāja's feast with its celestial entertainers. These are both late passages which illustrate the change in the perception of Rāma from human to divine monarch during the extended period in which the epic was composed.

It scarcely needs to be said that there is no such attribution of divine aspects to sovereignty in the, for the most part, overwhelmingly pagan Germanic *Nibelungenlied*, no hint even of the medieval Christian association of the monarch with the numinous. Mass is sung and attended by royalty in Xanten and Worms in much the same way as guests are welcomed, that is, in fulfillment of a customary social duty incumbent on the king and his subjects. The presence of beautiful females in this epic has therefore no symbolic religious overtones. As I have indicated, there are numerous allusions to the women and young girls, frequently differenciated as *wîp/vrouwen* and *meit*, who enhance the courts of Worms, Xanten and Etzelnburg. Even Isenstein, a City within the Forest, has its parallel female court adornment despite its virgin monarch and the savage bride contest outside the palace, and Brünhild's attendants here are described in much the same terms as Kriemhild's. The following

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15 This story, found in the interpolated *sarga* 2.85, appears strangely out of place in what must have been an earlier recounting of the tale.

formulaic descriptions, used of the women in Isenstein and Worms respectively, are in effect interchangeable: 'dô sah der künec stân / oben in den venstern vil manege scoene meit' (389.2b-3) and 'In diu venster sâzen diu hêrlichen wîp / und vil der scoenen mägede' (810.1-2a). This last reference adds 'gezieret was ir lîp' (ibid. 2b), and taking the two lines together we find here an expression, typical of both epics, combining physical charms with adornment of the person. Beauty is identified with costly raiment and jewellery and, by implication, wealth, that of the sovereign who, either directly or indirectly, funds such magnificence. Although Brünhild is a virgin warrior-queen she does not preside over a strange court of Amazon-like maidens. Within her palace she is much like any monarch, defended and attended by her noble fighting-men, 'degene dâ ûz Îslant, / die Prünhilde recken, die truogen swert enhant' (418.1). There are two brief mentions of the women at Siegfried's court in the shadowy Nibelungenburg, but here again we find the necessity to mention the finest clothes which are sought throughout the land for the women to take with them to Gunther's feast ('vrouwen kleider [...], diu besten, diu man vant' 765.3). When Gere is sent to deliver Gunther's invitation to the feast he finds Siegfried holding court in Nibelungenburg in the company of Kriemhild and his father. This is clearly a conventional court graced with *vrouwen* as well as *ritter* (766), but it operates in a mythical land protected by the giant-gatekeeper and the dwarf Alberich and as such is, like Brünhild's, much like courts depicted in folktale, a construct of fantasy with echoes of reality. For these reasons, a separate examination of the function of the women at court in the *Nibelungenlied* Cities within the Forest is unnecessary.

One reference in particular specifically links the beauty-adornment nexus with its symbolic function of enhancing the king's status. Strophes 573-7 describe in detail the prized physical attributes of fair hair and complexion ('valvahse' and 'vil liehtiu varwe'), and the costly dress (of 'sîden', 'pfelle ûz Arabî and 'zobel unt harme') and ornaments ('bougen') donned by the women of the court of Worms in preparation for the arrival of Gunther's bride. They wear these 'vor den vremden recken' (574.2a) with the express design of bringing honour to Gunther: 'des ê der künic gerte, daz wart mit vlîze getân' (573.4) And the singer-poet sums up the combined effect in the formulaic comment 'sô schoenes ingesindes nû nicht küniges künne hât' (577.4). The women of Rüdiger's family and their waiting-women similarly adorn themselves in readiness to receive the Burgundians in Bechlarn, and their decorative presence is a measure of Rüdiger's hospitality. More importantly, though, it is a sign of his sovereign lord's great wealth and power, for in entertaining the royal visitors in his castle and surrounding them with radiant women splendidly attired, he, as Etzel's vassal, is welcoming them to Etzel's land in the king's stead. We are led to the women's apartments in Bechlarn as we were in Worms to witness in part the ritual of medieval feminine titivation before the feast, and we are told for instance that the application of cosmetics is hardly necessary, the implication being that these women have

flawless complexions : 'Gevelschet frouwen varwe vil lützel man dâ vant' (1654.1). As elsewhere, the women are beautiful and decked with fine robes and jewels: 'die minneclîchen vrouwen und manige schoene meit, / die truogen vil der bouge und ouch hêrlîchiu kleit' (1662.4-3) and 'Daz edel gesteine lûhte verre dan / ûz ir vil rîchen wæte; si wâren wol getân' (1663.1-2).

The high-born status of the women at *Nibelungenlied* courts is implied wherever it is not stated explicitly, as in 'dâ kom ouch wol gezieret manic wætlîchiu meit, / Fünfzec unde viere von Burgonden lant. /ez wâren ouch die hoehsten, die man dâ inder vant' (572.4 - 573.1-2). However, it must be said that the absence of such indication of rank in the *Rāmāyaṇa* references I have cited does not necessarily imply that these women are low-born. On the contrary, it is probable that the eight virgins associated with the consecration ritual of the new king, especially as they are considered talismans of good fortune, would be of noble birth. And it seems unlikely that the female attendants of Brahmā and Kubera sent to Bharadvāja's magic feast would be of low rank in the popular Indian imagination. Similarly the impeccable singing dancers who entertain Rāma are probably well-born, since it is difficult to conceive of low-ranking women being allowed to approach the king at such close quarters. In the traditional Indian world view, one which persists widely to this day, the 'natural' rôle of a woman, however high her social class, is to serve men of like status. Thus there is nothing demeaning about the services performed by these women associated with the court of Ayodhyā. Indeed, the various poet-singers responsible for these episodes emphasise in formulaic terms the magnificent jewellery, a mark of privilege, which they wear.

It is interesting to compare this world view with a similar one obtaining in medieval Europe where again women were expected to serve and defer to men with the exception of one slight deviation, that of the custom in aristocratic circles of men in certain circumstances, principally the feast and the hunt, 'waiting on' women, 'schoenen vrouwen [...] dienen' (710.4), a practice referred to in the *Nibelungenlied.* It was of course a very limited and specialised interpretation of the verb *dienen.* This attendance was by no means subservience, and amounted to spending relatively short periods of time in the company of women when affairs of state or business or war permitted, conversing with them, paying them compliments, occasionally dallying amorously with them. These were times when medieval aristocratic females were permitted to enter publicly into the cut-and-thrust world of men; they had otherwise to content themselves with their needlework and their religion and, after marriage, the supervision of their children's upbringing. The custom of 'dienen schoenen wîben' (599.3a) is of course of supreme significance for the action of the epic, since it is during one such coming-together of the sexes that the meeting of Siegfried and Kriemhild takes place.

The people and the king

I have referred more than once to the function of epic as subliminal legitimator of the office of kingship, and it is clear that this particular message of heroic poetry is transmitted to the subjects of the realm, both high and low, in support of the monarch. There is, however, another side to the epic coin in that a second message in the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* is sent out to the king by the singer-poets on behalf of those same subjects. This message, a subliminal exhortation to honourable royal behaviour towards them, is effected by means of a stereotyped idealised portrayal of kingship in all dealings, especially those which concern the well-being of the people. The *Rāmāyaṇa* in particular devotes much attention in expanded passages in the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* to the practice of righteous state-craft, expansions for which brahman poets are almost certainly responsible. Although the *Nibelungenlied* contains no such theorising on the duties of kingship, it is interesting to note that Siegfried in fact demonstrates many of the qualities attributed to the ideal ruler by the early Indian singer-poets and that his failure in one key aspect leads directly to his death. This is a subject which I shall defer for the moment, reserving it for part of a summary in the next chapter on the respective treatment in the two works of Rāma and Siegfried as kings. To return to the *Rāmāyaṇa* on royal rule: self-indulgent, despotic kingship is not to be tolerated. The obvious representative of this style of government is the dissolute Rāvaṇa who must eventually be replaced by his far more responsible brother Vibhīṣaṇa, the sole member of the Laṅkan royal family able to bring the requisite gravitas to affairs of state. The story of Rāvaṇa is an object-lesson on how kings should not behave and what will happen to them if they persist in breaking the rules.

For the authors of both epics a king worthy of the office is a protector of the weak and a punisher of offenders against the established social code.[16] The relationship, clearly a paternalistic one, which such a king enjoys with his subjects is represented as an idealised bond of mutual affection. The monarch earns the love and respect of his people by ruling justly and dispensing benefits. In an earlier chapter I quoted the reference to Siegfried's able judgements: 'in disen grôzen êren lebt' er [...] / und rihte under krône' (715. 1-2a) and 'unt dar er rihten solde. daz wart also getân, / daz man sêre vorhte der schoenen Kriemhilden man' (714.3-4). And we have recently seen how Sieglind sets out to buy popularity with the people of Xanten on behalf of the heir to the kingdom. Siegfried therefore commands respect tempered with affection. I discussed earlier the Indo-European king's rôle as guardian of the city, and it is appropriate here to mention two specific references to Rāma's

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[16] The concept that only a (good) king is capable of effecting social cohesion through the upholding of law and order is not of course exclusive to our epics, being found in other sources, for example in Biblical narrative. In early Irish saga the breakdown of law and order in Conaire's kingdom is a result of the unjust favour he shows his fosterbrothers (McCone 1990, 130).

paternalistic fulfillment of this duty towards the people of Ayodhyā and their response. He is described as having protected the city like a father ('pitavat') before his exile, deciding what is proper and pleasing for its citizens and conducive to their happiness: 'kiṃ samarthaṃ janasyāsya kiṃ priyaṃ kiṃ sukhāvaham / iti rāmeṇa nagaraṃ pitavat paripālitam' (2.51.12). As a result, he became as dear to the inhabitants as the full moon: 'ayodhyānilayānām hi puruṣāṇāṃ [...] / babhūva [...] pūrnacandra iva priyaḥ' (2.40.3).

This idealised tie of mutual duty and affection finds its fullest expression in the people's symbolic outpouring of inconsolable grief at the loss, either by death or exile, of their beloved king. Ritual public mourning as a mark of affection for an idealised popular ruler is by no means exclusive to Indo-European epic: we find for instance an account in the Biblical oral narrative of Joseph, the Egyptian pharaoh's regent hailed by the people as their saviour in time of famine. When his father Jacob dies, all the highest-ranking officials in his adopted country, together with their retinues, take part in the extended mass lamentations out of love for Joseph, even going to the extreme of following the funeral cortège to the burial place in distant Canaan which the local inhabitants re-name 'Egyptian Mourners' in memory of this remarkable event (Genesis 50.7-14). Nevertheless, since such demonstrations of public grief do not feature in all epics, it is of considerable comparative interest that they are found in both the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* and that they are portrayed in very similar ways.

The degree of lamentation, a spontaneous reaction as the singers describe it, symbolises the extreme affection in which Siegfried, Daśaratha and Rāma are held. This last example is contextually (though not thematically) somewhat different in that it concerns Rāma's departure into exile, not his decease, and for the moment I shall concentrate on the first two. Following the respective deaths of Daśaratha and Siegfried there is weeping within the palaces of Ayodhyā and Worms, spreading from the women's quarters to the whole of the royal household as the sound of wailing is heard first by one group of residents and then another. Kriemhild and the co-wives Kausalyā and Sumitrā discover the lifeless bodies of their respective husbands and, lying on the floor in a state of collapse (*Nib.* 1009.2 and *Rām.* 2.59.10-11) take up the lament along with female attandants (ibid. 1013.1-3 and 2.59.8-11). Soon Daśaratha's and Siegfried's kin and retinues join the mourning (*Rām.* 2.59.12 and *Nib.* 1026.4). And it is not long before the sound from the palace is heard by the citizens of Ayodhyā and Worms who give immediate vent to their sorrow at the loss of a beloved ruler (2.60.14ff and 1036), this last reference summarising the spread of communal grief from palace to street in the two cities: 'Iu enkunde niemen daz wunder volsagen / von rittern unt von vrouwen, wie man die hôrte klagen, / sô daz man des wuofes wart in der stat gewar. / die edelen burgære die kômen gâhende dar. / [...] dô weinten mit den vrouwen der guoten burgære wîp' (1036 and 1037.4). Interesting to note is the fact that Siegfried, far

from his own subjects, endeared himself so much to the people during his earlier stay in Worms that they mourn him at his funeral as they should their own king: 'si dienten im nâch tôde, alsô man lieben vriunden sol' (1062.4). Perhaps even more than their own king. After all, having assumed Gunther's office as protector of the city, he defended them against the invading Saxons virtually single-handed.

Unsurprisingly, the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* rhapsodists neglect no opportunity to exploit in elegant poetic terms the narratologically affective potential of the communal shock in which the citizens find themselves at the news of Daśaratha's death: the people in tears, the women wailing, the squares and houses empty ('bāṣpararyākulajanā hāhābhūtakulāṅganā / śūnyacatvaraveśmāntā' 2.60.17a-c). And in equally stylish lyrical terms one poet likens the kingless city of Ayodhyā to a night without stars ('niśa nakṣatrahīneva') or a woman deprived of her husband ('strīvā bhartuvivarjitā'): 'niśā nakṣatrahīneva strīva bhartuvivarjitā / purī nārājatāyodhyā hīnā rajñā mahātmanā' (2.60.16). The *Nibelungenlied* singers are not slow to take advantage of the pathos of the situation, but their language is characteristically less embellished, as for instance the almost understated 'dô was allen liuten harte trûrec der muot' (1038.4). Both sets of epic poets are expressing in their own culturally acceptable terms the grief of the masses as sign of the idealised affection and gratitude inspired by the exemplary behaviour of the two kings towards them.

It is time now to bring into the comparison descriptions of the people's reaction to the sight of Rāma leaving for the Forest. As the rhapsodes portray it, the loss of their beloved sovereign elect is one which they are scarcely able to bear. Ayodhyā is in communal distress ('tataḥ sabālavṛddhā sā purī paramapīḍitā', 2.35.17ab); young and old flock to him like thirsty men in summer rushing towards water ('rāmam evābhidudrāva gharmataḥ salilaṃ yathā', ibid 17cd). The citizens run after his chariot weeping, some even clinging to it in order to slow its progress so that they may look at him for the last time before he deserts them (2.35.18). Their mass grief-stricken following of the vehicle appears much like that of mourners processing after a corpse, albeit a considerably faster-paced procession. Indeed, it is very reminiscent of the communal cortège composed of both sexes and all ages which follows Siegfried's coffin in droves to the cathedral in Worms: '[dô] man in gesarket hête, dô huop sich grôz gedranc' (1052.2); 'zuo dem münster dan / giengen allenthalben wîp, man unt kint' (1048.2b-3) and also 'Vil lûte schrîende daz liut gie mit im dan' (1065.1). The people of Ayodhyā, unable to keep up with Rāma's speeding chariot, eventually return to the city as if from a funeral, so great is the force of their separation from him. 'Nyavartata jano rājño [...] / manasāpyaśravegaiśca na nyavartata mānuṣam' ('the people of the king turned back, but the flood of their tears did not, neither did their hearts', (2.35.36). Entering their homes again, men, women and children weep together (2.42.2), and the whole city resounds with the wailing of the womenfolk as though in fear of death itself: 'tās tathā vilapantyas tu

nagare nāgarastriyaḥ / [...] mṛtyor iva bhayāgame' (2.42.25). The similarity of expression between these last two *ślokas* and those depictions of communal grief following the deaths of Daśaratha and Siegfried which I have already instanced is unmistakable.

Thus royal audiences are left in no doubt that if a monarch keeps his subjects contented they will lovingly submit to his rule. We see the process of preservation of the status quo at work again in epic: potential social unrest is aborted through veiled public exhortation to kindly royal governance. The myth of the just concentration of power in a hereditary office not only remains intact but is enhanced through the efforts of the singer-poets. This fictional symbolism of the protective king-father and his affectionate, contented people-children, expressed principally in images of extreme grief suffered by the masses on the loss of their ruler, demonstrates the essential symbiotic relationship between performers and their patrons. In order to remain in office, rulers of the people need epic singers to maintain the fiction, and performers need patronage in order to make a livelihood.

The City in the Forest

The Forest is a generally accepted collective term for the territory lying beyond the bounds of the city inhabited by the epic poet and his audience. It may be dense woodland, but also any kind of remote terrain with hidden dangers such as wilderness, mountains, wide rivers, lakes, islands, the open sea. It represents the threatening unknown. Within such settings are found concentrations of mythical semi-human beings, foreigners, in cities outwardly on the whole much like those which belong to the xenophobic known world in which epic is performed. The Cities in the Forest in the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* are Isenstein, Nibelungenburg, Laṅkā and Kiṣkindhā. Of these, the first three appear to be situated on islands set in rivers or in the case of Laṅkā possibly in a lake or the sea just off the mainland coast. Laṅkā is built on a mountain top, and Nibelungenburg appears to be too. It is necessary for the respective protagonists to journey over water by ship to reach Isenstein and Nibelungenburg and by means of a specially constructed bridge to invade Laṅkā. The 'sea' referred to in our epics is not necessarily, and indeed probably not, the open sea but rather a stretch of water symbolising the boundary between the familiar and the fictionalised Other. By contrast Kiṣkindhā is set away from water in rugged mountainous territory.

From the outer perspective of a stranger or potential attacker from the City[17], all these Cities in the Forest are as well fortified as their 'real' counterparts. Ayodhyā is described as

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17 I use the capital letter to denote the 'real' city of the constructed world of epic, a world which reflects to a certain extent, and sometimes idealises, the milieu in which epic is composed.

an impregnable fortress with a moat which cannot be crossed, 'durgagambhīraparikhāṃ durgāmanyair durāsadām' (1.5.13ab), and Rājagṛha, the City in which Bharata is staying at the time of Daśaratha's death, is termed unassailable (2.64.1). Kiṣkindhā is portrayed in parallel terms: Lakṣmaṇa, approaching it as Rāma's envoy, sees the *vānara* king's well-defended, inaccessible mountain fortress ('tām apaśyad balākīrṇāṃ harirājamahāpurīm / durgām ikṣvākuśārdūlaḥ kiṣkindhāṃ girisaṃkaṭe', 4.30.16). Its ramparts too are surrounded by a moat (4.30.27). Its rugged, impregnable aspect symbolises its fearsome warrior-king Sugrīva whose help Rāma enlists in his battle against Rāvaṇa. As we should expect from the name of the *kāṇḍa* in which it is introduced (*sundara,* 'beautiful'), Laṅkā's fortifications are ostentatiously decorative, but they are just as unyielding as Sugrīva's citadel. Laṅkā has a splendid golden encircling wall ('kāñcanenāvṛtāṃ ramyāṃ prākāreṇa mahāpurīm', 5.2.16ab), heavenly golden gateways ('toraṇaiḥ kāñcanair divyai[ḥ]', 2.17a) and moats with pink and blue lotuses ('parikhābhiḥ sapadmābhiḥ sotpalābhir alaṃkṛtāṃ', 2.14cd). There is opulence and decadence here, but these fortifications are fiercely guarded (2.15). The city of Laṅkā is therefore an outward sign of the self-indulgent but far from effete ruler within, for the handsome, pleasure-loving Rāvaṇa is indomitable in battle until challenged by Rāma.

By contrast with such characteristically elaborate descriptions, mentions of Nibelungenburg's and Isenstein's fortifications are sketchy in the extreme, but they are there. Moreover, however little we learn about the location and appearance of these two Cities in the Forest, it is more than the *Nibelungenlied's* poet-singers disclose about Worms, Etzelnburg or Xanten.[18] The MHG *burc* means either a walled city or a fortress. Interesting is the fact that Worms is not referred to by this term, being called 'diu stat ze Wormse' (1025.3). Etzelnburg is only indirectly designated a *burc* in a reference to the lamentation that fills the whole city as a result of the battle in the great hall (2093.1-2). Xanten is baldly described as a *rîche burc* (20.3a). It is as if the narrators of the story take it for granted that their audiences know perfectly well what a fortified city looks like; far more important for them is to conjure up in economical terms the two strange Cities of the Forest with which Siegfried is familiar.

Nibelungenland, like Island, has a number of *bürge*, and according to the author of this reference (for this is probably later material than the folktale-like episode describing

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18 Unlike the *Rāmāyaṇa* rhapsodes who are fond of elaborate depiction of houses and palaces and their sumptuous interior decor, their *Nibelungenlied* counterparts concentrate instead in the famous *Schneiderstrophen* on detailed descriptions of costly attire, a subject which the Indian singer-poets find of far less importance judging by their cursory references to dress. For example, we are given a lengthy description of the rich clothes worn by Gunther and his wooing party and the jewelled accoutrements of their horses (strophes 399-403) followed by a scant four lines about Brünhild's city (strophe 404). It would appear that for early Indian audiences wealth is signified more in terms of architecture and artefacts than in apparel and vice-versa in German-speaking medieval circles.

Siegfried's visit to fetch his fighting-men) the territory is in 'Norwæge' (739). The main fortress, or possibly fortified city, of the Nibelungs stands on mountainous terrain ('er [Siegfried] gie zuo einem berge, dar ûf ein burc stuont', 485.3) and it is guarded, as we have already noted, by a monstrous gatekeeper who keeps his weapons constantly by him. There is also a reference at 492.2b to the great hall of the Nibelungs in which the sound of Siegfried's fight with the gatekeeper outside can be heard, but otherwise we are given no more information about the appearance of the stronghold. The maiden warrior Brünhild's realm of Island and its capital are described in more detail than any other land in the *Nibelungenlied*, possibly in order to convey the extraordinariness, the Otherness of the region, bristling with fortifications, as hostile to outsiders as its queen armed to the teeth in contest. We learn that Isenstein ('diu veste', 384.3a, significantly enough the only use of this term in the epic) is one of many fortified cities ('bürge') set in extensive territory ('wîte[...] marke', 383. 1b-2a). It has battlements (508.1a) and eighty-six towers (404.1a). Indeed, Isenstein, a fortified city equal to its name, is one to rival Laṅkā and Kiṣkindhā at their most forbidding.

Isenstein is also a city of beautiful buildings: three vast royal dwellings and a great hall inlaid with green marble ('drî palas wîte unt einen sal wol getan / von edelem marmelsteine, grüene alsam ein gras', 404.2-3). In these few lines and those cited above we are told more about the appearance of Isenstein than all the other cities of the *Nibelungenlied* put together. Just as the cities of Kiṣkindhā and Laṅkā symbolise the nature of their rulers, so Isenstein with its ramparts and lovely buildings is the outward manifestation of Brünhild's invincibility in martial contest and her icy beauty which lures many kings and princes to their death. It is a beauty indicated by the coldness of the green marble of her great hall. Within its rugged exterior Kiṣkindhā too is an attractive city: Sugrîva is depicted entering the delightful (*ramya)* city ('praviveśa purîṃ ramyāṃ kiṣkindhāṃ [...]', 4.25.16cd). Its buildings are as splendid and opulent as those of Ayodhyā: Lakṣmaṇa observes the beautiful houses of the warrior aristocrats abounding in wealth and grain and resplendent with beautiful [lit. 'jewels of', i.e. 'jewel-like'] women ('prabhūtadhanadhānyāni strîratnaiḥ śobitāni ca', ibid. 32.13cd). This reference to the women of Kiṣkindhā is a phrase which might easily have been used to describe Ayodhyā.[19] Entering the sumptuously appointed women's quarters in Sugrîva's palace Lakṣmaṇa finds them decorated with gold and silver (ibid. 32.20), much as palace buildings would be in Ayodhyā. By contrast, Laṅkā is more ostentatiously splendid than this 'real' City. The *Sundarakāṇḍa* authors allow their

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[19] Indeed, it is also very similar to Siegfried's formulaic introduction of Isenstein to Gunther as they near the island: 'dâ muget ir noch hiute vil scoener frouwen gesehen' (384.4). Cf. the formulaic reference to the beautiful women of Laṅkā, semantically parallel with the one used of the women of Kiṣkindhā quoted above: 'mukhayābhiś ca varastrîbhiḥ paripūrṇaṃ samantataḥ' (5.5.9cd).

imaginations free reign within the parameters of traditional formulaic language to depict inside Laṇkā's mythical golden walls and gateways a city to match its exterior. It is set in parks and gardens filled with beautiful birds and animals (5.5.8). Rāvaṇa's palace is full of never-ending piles of gems and treasure ('anantaratnanicayaṃ nidhijālaṃ samantataḥ', ibid. 5.37) and has couches, seats and vessels of gold ('jāmbūnadamayānyeva śayanāyāsanāni ca / bhājanāni ca śubrāṇi', 5.39a-c). His women's quarters, with their staircases and columns set with jewels, golden lattices, floors inlaid with crystal and ivory-decorated panels (7.19-20) and his great gem-encrusted crystal bed (8.1, 3-4) are a measure of decadent extravagance.

The king in the Forest and the women at court

I have already shown that the women of Brünhild's court function in much the same way as those of Worms and Ayodhyā, that is, they enhance it by their physical charms and rich apparel and in so doing display the wealth and thus power of their sovereign. For this reason, I am excluding the women of Isenstein from the present discussion. The women who feature at the courts of Kiṣkindhā and Laṅkā are the numerous wives of Sugrīva (formerly Vālin's) and Rāvaṇa. Even more than by the descriptions of the magical outward appearance of the two cities, the Other is symbolised by these women and their relationship with their king. The Kiṣkindhans and the Laṅkans are naturally given over to sensual pleasures, encouraged by their sexually uninhibited women, and their promiscuous excesses offend against the idealised moral uprightness of Ayodhyā which reflects the received world view of the singers and their audience. Rāma's envoys Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān, representatives of this prescriptive world view, enter the women's quarters of Sugrīva and Rāvaṇa and witness evidence of their scandalous depravity. The poets' intention seems to be paradoxically two-fold, much like that of many modern tabloid newspaper journalists: entertainment with overtly sexual allusions coupled with implied self-righteous condemnation of the erotic excesses described which purports to justify the inclusion of such material. Sugrīva's (and also Vālin's, in retrospect) and Rāvaṇa's sexual debauchery receives oblique prurient denunciation.

In his righteous indignation at Sugrīva's delay in coming to the promised aid of Rāma against Rāvaṇa, Lakṣmaṇa strides into the *vānara* king's women's quarters - an unpardonable intrusion into royal privacy - in order to speak to him. There he finds Sugrīva seated on a golden throne clasping one of his chief wives, Rumā, and surrounded by pleasure-loving women wearing ornaments and garlands ('divyābharaṇamālyabhiḥ pramadābhiḥ samāvṛtam'. 4.32.26ef).[20] Like the women at Bharadvāja's feast sent by the

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[20] As in Ayodhyā and Worms, the peerless women of the court in the Forest in both Kiṣkindhā and Laṅkā are decked with fine jewellery.

gods to serve the revellers in the unseen presence of Rāma on the empty throne, they are bedecked with heavenly finery. There are echoes too of Rāma's feast in the *aśoka* grove where he sits enthroned chastely surrounded by nubile young women, but in Sugrīva's case the image represents a very different relationship of the king towards his encircling women. Sugrīva's wives are sexually frank in the extreme. When Lakṣmaṇa upbraids him for failing to keep his promise, the other chief wife, Tārā, tells him Rāma must wait until the king's prodigious sexual needs are satisfied, which is not at present by any means the case ('dehadharmaṃ gatasyāsya pariśrāntasya lakṣmaṇa / avitṛptasya kāmaṣu rāmaḥ kṣantumihārhati', 4.34.9). Clearly Sugrīva has descended to bodily animal pleasures instead of attending to affairs of state as would befit an Aryan king. His brother Vālin was similarly given over to sensual depravity. As Vālin's widow at his funeral, Tārā has recently lamented the loss of this king's sexual attentions in a fantasised depiction of intoxicated female seduction which leads to mass sex in the woods between himself and all his wives ('tataḥ krīdāmahe sarvā vaneṣu madirotkatāḥ', 4.24.38). The contrast between this and Kausalyā's chaste lament for Daśaratha could scarcely be greater.

However, even the lascivious Sugrīva is not beyond redemption, and this is the essential difference between himself and Rāvaṇa. Stung by Lakṣmana's harsh denunciation of his unkingly behaviour, he manages to shake off his addiction to base pleasures and to renounce them for the self-denying duties of kingship. This he achieves in the symbolic gesture of tearing off the enchanted garland which has kept him enslaved to his bodily desires: 'tataḥ kaṇṭhagataṃ mālyaṃ citraṃ bahuguṇaṃ mahat / ciccheda vimadaś cāśīt sugrīvo vānareśvaraḥ' (4.35.3). It is the occupation of some of Sugrīva's bejewelled women to make beautiful garlands, as Lakṣmaṇa observes as he enters the outer area of the women's quarters (ibid. 32.23). The implication seems to be that these garlands are all enchanted, keeping their wearers trapped in their baser natures. Sugrīva's wives wear them, and by giving one to their king they have kept him ensnared until now in their own addiction to the pleasures of the flesh.

Making his nocturnal tour of Laṅkā, Hanumān is permitted an even more intimate glimpse than Lakṣmaṇa's into the private life of a King in the Forest. There is admittedly a narratological excuse for this visit to Rāvaṇa's womens' quarters since he is, after all, searching for a woman: Sītā. Nevertheless, the *Sundarakāṇḍa* rhapsodes take full advantage of this excuse in order to indulge in the sensual titillation that will please their audiences, but with the requisite oblique moral opprobrium of such licentious goings-on among foreigners. The much expanded descriptions of Rāvaṇa's sleeping wives after love-making with their lord show these women to be even more abandoned than Sugrīva's. Lakṣmaṇa has witnessed the formulaic tableau of the enthroned king surrounded by his women, whereas here the king is seen asleep on his gem-encrusted bed encircled by his exquisitely beautiful

jewelled women lying on the carpeted floor, all sunk in the exhaustion of sexual satiation. At 5.7.38 we find the by now familiar formulaic simile of the moon among stars, already used to describe Sugrīva surrounded by his women during Lakṣmaṇa's visit (4.33.4cd and 6d), quoted here in a more frankly erotic setting. I draw attention to two *ślokas* among a plethora of descriptions of the women's appearance and various attitudes in sleep. Fabulously rich as this king clearly is in order to afford to keep such treasures of female perfection, it is the total, uninhibited surrender of these women and their monarch to sensual pleasures that strikes uppermost. The women are portrayed lying semi-naked with the imprint of jewellery, now awry after love-making, visible on delicate limbs and nipples and looking like the jewellery itself: 'mṛduṣv aṅgeṣu kāsāṃcit kucāgreṣu ca saṃsthitāḥ / bahūvurbhūṣaṇānīva śubhā bhūṣaṇarājayaḥ' (5.7.49). Verses 5.7.57-9 contain an extraordinarily erotic portrayal of a group of the women lying together bodies interlinked, a tangle of arms, thighs and buttocks, all taking mutual pleasure from the sensual contact. Still in a state of passionate intoxication they lie touching one another: 'parasparaniviṣṭāṅgyo madasnehavaśānugāḥ' (ibid. 58cd). Although their delight in embellishing such material is apparent, the *Rāmāyaṇa* poets are simultaneously sending out the message that such royal depravity cannot be tolerated, neither in the context of the story nor that of the performance. Righteous Rāma's forthcoming attack on Laṅkā to recover his wife is now doubly justified.

Kiṣkindhā, Laṅkā and the Aryan world view

For over a century *Rāmāyaṇa* scholars have attempted to reconstruct a prehistory of India from the pages of the text. While it unarguably reveals many details about, for example, the features of day-to-day life, the agriculture, commerce, architecture and socio-political and religious structures and customs which probably developed over a number of centuries in ancient North-Eastern India[21], and while archeological excavations have to a considerable degree corroborated such evidence, we should bear in mind that the world of epic, while necessarily making reference to the 'real' surroundings of its composers, is an idealised construct that does not reflect those surroundings with camera-lens precision. Indeed, that is neither its aim nor its function. This caveat applies equally to all heroic epics, including the *Nibelungenlied.* While the excavations I referred to have shown in general the reliability of much of the *Rāmāyaṇa* portrayal of ancient Indian Aryan city life, they do not demonstrate the actuality of the narrative recounted in the work. Thapar maintains that the subject-matter of the poem was possibly based on a conflict between the ruling house of Ayodhyā and its southern neighbours and that the epic is a merging of 'perfectly feasible stories' and elements

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21 As Brockington shows in an exhaustive study 1985, 62-218.

of 'stereotyped folklore', but that 'archeology cannot prove the historicity of the events'.[22] As I argued in the introduction to my study, epic does not relate history (or more properly prehistory) in the sense of objective recording of events in so far as such a method has ever been humanly possible. Some scholars are happy to speak of 'pseudo-history' to describe narrative loosely based on actual events as opposed to myth which is not, but McCone objects to the term in relation to the early Irish sagas because of the implied dichotomy between the two. He prefers to use Mac Neill's term 'synthetic history' (narrative derived from a synthesis of myth and history) or 'mytho-history' (1990, 54ff). Certainly both these terms are much more helpful than 'pseudo-history' with reference to our two epics. Rāma's dealings with Sugrīva and Rāvaṇa have been viewed by a number of scholars as a fictionalised reference to the gradual subjection of the indigenous Dravidian population by the Aryan invaders from the north. While the suggestion is attractive and could well be correct, I believe there is a danger of trying to read too much 'reality' into a genre whose brief is, as it entertains, to inculcate a perceived view of the world which by no means corresponds exactly with the world as it is. Mytho-history the *Rāmāyaṇa* most certainly is. Prehistory it is not.

It is particularly dangerous to disregard this axiom when considering the narrators' treatment of Kiṣkindhā and Laṅkā. There has been a tendency, especially in India, to view them as actual prehistoric settlements, and much energy has been channelled into identifying their geographical location, an exercise which establishes nothing and leads only to heated academic exchange. This type of reductive investigation is by no means a nineteenth and twentieth century activity, for it has been applied to the *Odyssey* since ancient times. Heubeck and Hoeckstra term it 'a quite pointless undertaking' in view of Odysseus' voyage solely among islands from far east to far west 'without having to cross any intervening continent. [...] Its pointlessness is clearly demonstrated by the lack of agreement as to the reconstruction of the route as a whole, or even as to the identification of individual sites'.[23] A number of *Rāmāyaṇa* scholars have entered a similar critical cul de sac, not infrequently assuming that the *rākṣasas* were modelled on a cannibalistic tribe living in central India (e.g. Vaidya,[24] Shastri,[25] Ghosh,[26]). Laṅkā itself has been variously located in the Vindyā

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22 Romila Thapar in an interview with the Indian weekly magazine *Sunday* , 27 March - 2 April 1988, 59-65. Cited by Ananda Guruge: *The Society of the Rāmāyaṇa* , Delhi 1991,VII.

23 Alfred Heubeck and Arie Hoekstra: *A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey* Vol.II, Oxford 1989, 4-5.

24 C.V. Vaidya: *The Riddle of the Rāmāyaṇa* , Delhi, 1906/72, 80.

25 K.S. Ramaswamy Sastri: 'The Aryan Colonies of Kiṣkindhā and Laṅkā', *Indian Culture (Journal of the Indian Research Institute)*, Vol. V (July 1938-April 1939), 193-7.

26 J.C. Ghosh: 'Note on Rāvaṇa's Laṅkā located in Central India', *ABORI* Vol.XIX 1938-9, 84-7

mountains of central India (Kibe, Ramadas, Iyer[27]); Ceylon or nearby (John, Guruge[28]); and, more idiosyncratically, in Sumatra (Adhikari) and the Maldives (Vader[29]). Such a task is, I would counter, not only impossible but irrelevant, and undertaking it only betrays a lack of understanding of the nature and function of epic. As I have frequently argued, epic reflects a received knowledge of the world, based more on perception and interpretation of reality than on reality itself. Of course epic poets cannot help mirroring to a certain extent what they see around them, and neighbouring peoples are likely to figure in that view, but the tales these performers sing hark back to an idealised, mythicised golden age of heroism in which opponents are representatives of the Other who necessarily behave monstrously because they are foreign and who sometimes look monstrous too. Searching for geographical locations and named real-life human models is barking up the wrong academic tree altogether.

However, although there is indeed Otherness in all the mythical Cities in the Forest in my chosen epics, there is also much that resembles the City and is therefore familiar to the original audiences. As Pollock points out with reference to the inhabitants of Laṅkā, it is the likeness which makes the deviations all the more threatening to early audiences (1991, 75). This applies equally to Brünhild whom I shall discuss in due course. Although Pollock believes like myself that there is nothing to be gained from the attempted reconstruction of specific historicity such as I have outlined, he rightly maintains that there is indeed a degree of historicity about the portrayal of the *rākṣasas*: 'the historicity of a mentality', the symbol-laden response of the poems' composers and their listeners to the problematic notion of difference (ibid.) Again, this statement holds true for the depiction of the various above-mentioned inhabitants of the City in the Forest in the two epics.

Architecturally and socio-politically, Kiṣkindhā and Laṅkā are modelled on Ayodhyā, athough there are minor variations with regard to Laṅkā in that it may be ruled by a tribal oligarchy as Thapar suggests rather than by a hereditary dynasty, because there is scant mention of kingship (1978, 19), and its economy perhaps based on the export of raw commodities of forest and mines rather than agriculture (ibid. 20), the former a suspect and inferior economy as far as industrious tillers of the land are concerned. Certainly it appears to be richer than Ayodhyā in precious metals and stones, presumably a sign of the formidability of this enemy in that its ruler can afford countless well-trained defenders, but,

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[27] M.V. Kibe: 'Rāvaṇa's Laṅkā located in Central India', *IHQ* Vol.IV 1928, 694-702, a view supported by G. Ramadas: 'Rāvaṇa's Laṅkā', ibid. 339-46. T. Paramasiva Iyer: *Rāmāyaṇa and Laṅkā*, Bangalore, 1940.

[28] Daniel John: 'Rāvaṇa's Laṅkā', *ABORI* Vol.XXI, 1938-9, 270-79. For Guruge see earlier n.22.

[29] N.S. Adhikari: 'Lanka of Ravana', *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol.XXV 1922, 498-503. V.H. Vader: 'Situation of Rāvaṇa's Laṅkā: On the Equator', *IHQ*, Vol.II 1926, 345-50.

as I showed earlier, the ostentatious display of extreme wealth is also a measure of its decadence.[30] Furthermore, the citizens of Kiṣkindhā and Laṅkā even follow Hindu rites. Vālin's funeral is conducted with the pomp and circumstance of an earthly king's (*bhuvi*, 'earthly') with the implication that these are the same rites as accorded to an Aryan king, in other words, the ceremony was correctly performed): 'rājñamṛddhiviśeṣā hi dṛśyante bhuvi yādṛśāh' (4.24.26ab). Aṅgada lights the funeral pyre as any Hindu first son is bound to do (ibid. 40-1). Sugrīva is consecrated king by the same brahmanical rites and offerings (4.25.12-33) as were prepared for Rāma's aborted consecration (2.3-11). Hanumān in Laṅkā hears the sound of the dawn recitation of the Vedas by *rākṣasa* brahmans (*brahmarākṣasām*): 'suśrava brahmaghoṣāmś ca viratre brahmarākṣasām' (5.16.2cd). The artefacts and apparel, including jewellery, are the same in Ayodhyā and the two Cities in the Forest, and the weapons used in Laṅkā resemble Aryan ones. *Vānaras*, however, use their fists, teeth, rocks and trees (clubs), as I observed earlier. The Otherness of the *vānaras* and *rākṣasas* lies in their ability to change form at will and in their sexual excesses. In addition, as Pollock points out, the *rākṣasas*' diet also distinguishes them from the Aryan inhabitants of Ayodhyā in that in addition to consuming food much like the latter they are also cannibals, not only preying on the defenceless ascetics of the Forest to satisfy their craving for human flesh but thereby endangering the cosmic order by preventing the sacrifices essential for its maintenance (1991, 75).

I referred just now to the unrestrained sexuality of the *Vānaras* and the *Rākṣasas*, a characteristic which we have already noted in relation to their women. This portrayal of licentiousness both arises from and evokes in the Aryan audience a mixture of envy and scandalised revulsion at the sexual freedom which non-Aryans enjoy. Sugrīva manages to turn against the nature of his race and to contain his prodigious sexual proclivities, at least for the duration of the campaign against Rāvaṇa, becoming a reformed king under Aryan influence as we have seen. Rāvaṇa does not, neither does his sister Śūrpaṇakhā change her *rākṣasī* way of taking the sexual initiative in the stern presence of the Aryan royal brothers: her lascivious approach to Rāma earns her the prescribed woman's punishment for fornication and adultery, the cutting off of her nose and ears. Pollock adduces evidence from early Sanskrit texts which state not only this punishment but that it is the king's duty to punish sexual offenders (79).[31] *Rākṣasas* and *vānaras*, totally given over to the pleasures

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[30] Thapar adds: 'One wonders [...] whether the description of the fabulous city of Laṅkā was in any way a vague folk memory of the rich cities of the Bronze Age past' (1978, 20). This seems a more productive hypothesis than one based on geographical and ethnic searches, however I think it downplays the imaginative powers of the earliest epic singers.

[31] Such a view is not of course exclusive to early Indian society. The Bible records tales of extreme sexual lawlessness which are set by their narrators in a mytho-historical time before the establishment of

of the flesh, signify the monster without. As Pollock argues in respect of the *rākṣasas*, they represent the Aryans' fear of losing their wives and daughters to their sexually rapacious foreign neighbours (82). But they also signify the monster within - their own repressed violent and libidinous tendencies - against which looms the authority figure of the king (ibid.) He alone stands between the order of a strict monogamous society and the chaos of unlimited sexual freedom. Without fear of royal punishment Aryans would sink to the moral depravity of their non-Aryan neighbours. In the idealised worlds of Ayodhyā and the performance location of the epic, extra-marital sexual freedom is taboo: we are informed that all men and women in Ayodhyā are self-controlled (1.6.9), and Śūrpaṇakhā's fate is therefore an object-lesson to early Indian audiences. Hence the rhapsodists' inclination and ability to manipulate audience reaction to their depictions of the sexual depravity of the Others in order to engender an extended communal frisson of arousal, envy and fear. There is no doubt but their listeners would hang on their every word.

Isenstein and the medieval world view

Just as a number of *Odyssey* and *Rāmāyaṇa* scholars have fallen prey to the same basic misconception about the imaginary lands and peoples which feature in these works, so too have some of their *Nibelungenlied* counterparts with regard to Island/Isenstein and Nibelungenland/burg. To my mind, Island is much like Irland(e) in medieval poetry, an exotic country of vague geographical location inspired by hearsay and possibly much exaggerated seafarers' tales, a land of extraordinary inhabitants where extranatural events are the order of the day. Island is therefore most unlikely to be the nordic Iceland. Van der Lee argues that it refers to the region along the river Ysel in Holland, certainly an enticing suggestion from a linguistic point of view, and that its proximity to Xanten 'in Niderlanden' (20.1a) would explain why Siegfried already knew it (Ehrismann 123).[32] Nibelungenland has been subjected to the same sort of reductive treatment, based principally on the reference which locates it 'ze Norwæge in der marke' (739.3a) where Siegfried is holding court. 'Man braucht nicht zwingend an das westliche Skandinavien zu denken' counters Ehrismann (130), to which I would reply 'Man braucht überhaupt nicht an Skandinavien zu denken'. 'Norwæge' is almost certainly a name redolent of exotic strangeness picked up at great remove from mariners or perhaps the descendants of Vikings. Nevertheless, in spite of Ehrismann's reservations, a map accompanying his commentary bearing all the identifiable place-names mentioned in the epic, with Denmark and the German coast depicted in vague medieval cartographical fashion, suggests that both Island and Nibelungenland lie

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inherited kingship in Israel, for instance in Judges 21. In those days each man acted independently according to his own judgement (ibid. v. 25).

[32] Anthony van der Lee: 'Geographie, Toponymie und Chronologie im ersten Teil des Nibelungenliedes', *Neophilologus* 67, 1983, 228-241.

somewhere in the North Sea west of Denmark. The map preceding Mowatt and Sacker's commentary is more fanciful, showing outlines of Island and Nibelungenland and setting the two countries roughly in the geographical position of Sweden and Finland respectively.[33] But again, the inclusion of these mythical place-names on a map of known locations, as Iyer superimposes their *Rāmāyaṇa* counterparts in red on the 1939 colonial British ordnance survey map of two districts of Madya Pradesh, is a misinterpretation of the epic construct. The exercise detracts from the notion of distant Otherness which the poems seek to convey. In a sense, Adhikari and Vader, with their imaginatively quirky suggestions of Sumatra and the Maldives as actual locations for Laṅkā were nearer the mark: all the depictions of Cities in the Forest are shot through with a magical folktale-like quality which places them unmistakably in the realm of the imagination, which is why they have resisted all attempts to root them indisputably in any real-life realm.

In my discussion of the rôle of the inhabitants of Laṅkā and Kiṣkindhā in representing Aryan fears of and fascination with the non-Aryan peoples around them, I touched on the element of the known and familiar which characterises such portrayal and makes the monstrous element alongside it all the more immediate and threatening. I also indicated that the figure of Brünhild is one which similarly combines these two opposing elements. In this sense she is a medieval (and possibly much older) European equivalent of the non-Aryan of ancient India. I noted earlier the air of normality which in part characterises her court: the well-armed warriors who defend her (418.1-2), the 'vil minneclîchiu wîp' who grace it and to please whom Siegfried insists his Nibelungen fighting-men don fine clothes (507.3-4), her generosity as befits a sovereign (513.1-3 and 520.2-4). She herself is ravishingly beautiful, (as desirable to the oppposite sex as the human-flesh-eating but outrageously handsome Rāvaṇa adored by his myriad wives), a young woman whom Gunther desires at first glimpse as she stands in the window far surpassing her enchanting female retinue: 'Sô sihe ich ir eine [...] / in snêwizer wæte, diu ist sô wolgetân; / die welent mîniu ougen durch ir scoenen lîp' (392.1-2). Yet at the same time, as I have shown, her city bristles with dour fortifications, she holds court in a magnificent but strange, cold great hall, she is a virgin warrior-monarch endowed with supernatural strength, unbeaten in the athletic contests against countless suitors held outside her palace, resisting all male attempts to dominate her and thus rob her of her sovereignty and her mysterious physical power. Brünhild in Isenstein and before her taming by Siegfried in Gunther's bed[34] symbolises the medieval fascination, one could even say obsession, with and fear of the monstrous, that which is

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[33] D.G. Mowatt and Hugh Sacker: *The Nibelungenlied. An Interpretative Commentary.* Toronto 1967.

[34] Even though the marriage-bed contest takes place in Worms, Brünhild is still of the Forest at this stage in that she retains her unearthly physical powers.

contra naturam: whatever does not fit the perceived divinely-ordained natural order. Hagen calls her 'des tiuveles wîp' in Isenstein (438.4b). She is as much an abomination in the medieval European world view as the cannibalistic Rāvaṇa and his sexually abandoned women are in the ancient Indian one. The feared Other.

Brünhild represents that medieval Other in that she wields sovereign power as a woman over her male subjects and she kills all her opponents in the exclusively male preserve of the athletic contest. To the medieval mind-set this is clearly an outrage against nature which Siegfried, as the only man capable of doing so, must end. Her defeat is a variant among a number of myths now commonly believed to commemorate the ousting of gynocracy and the establishment of male rule, to be viewed against the background of the shift from the worship of the primal fertility principle symbolised in the consort-less mother goddess to that of male agricultural and other deities.[35] Greek myth abounds with the ancient symbol-pattern of successful male battles with female monsters such as the Hydra and Medusa, beheaded by Heracles and Perseus respectively, and the conquering of the 'unnatural' Amazons by Heracles and by Theseus in two versions of the tale.[36] Another of Heracles' labours was to fetch the girdle of the Amazon queen Hippolyte, an obvious - perhaps Indo-European, perhaps near-universal - mythic parallel with the Sigurd-Brynhild/Siegfried-Brünhild girdle motif.

Once Brünhild loses to Siegfried in the contest she becomes vassal queen to Gunther instead of all-powerful sovereign. Once she is overpowered by Siegfried in Gunther's bed she becomes a submissive woman. Though there are arguably elements of comedy in the bedroom wrestling match with Siegfried, possibly borrowed from the *Spielmann* tradition, there is no doubt about Brünhild's ruthless attempt to kill rather than humiliate (as she has dealt with Gunther the night before) once she senses Siegfried's like supernatural strength. As far as she is concerned it is a grim fight to the death, and she almost succeeds in crushing the life out of him in ancient Germanic fashion.[37] At *Nib.* 673 Siegfried is beginning to

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[35] Thapar suggests that the banishment of Sītā may be read on one level as 'the symbolical expulsion of the primitive goddess of fertility' (1978, 40). (Sītā, meaning 'furrow', is the name of a Vedic agricultural goddess). Thapar notes the corresponding rise in the importance of Viṣṇu in his agricultural aspect (ibid.). If this interpretation of Sītā's exile is one intended by the later Vaiṣṇavite authors of the *Uttarakāṇḍa* , her disappearance from the story altogether when she returns to the earth instead of resuming her rightful place as queen in Ayodhyā is more significant than her banishment.

[36] In this context we should not forget Rāma's initiatory killing of the monstrous Tāṭakā in 1.25. (this 'first kill' is female) and also Hanumān's outwitting and despatching of the sea-*rākṣasī* Siṃhikā in 5.1.

[37] The Berserkers are said to have crushed their victims to death, possibly bear-like, a conclusion which leads to one suggested derivation of their name. Beowulf, who kills the Frankish champion Dæghrefn and the monstrous Grendel and his mother without a weapon, is known by the kenning *hand-bona* , 'slayer with the hand'.

think his life is in danger, and at 675.2-3a she squeezes his hands in an almost overpowering grip: 'sie druht' im sîne hende, daz ûz den nageln spranc / das bluot im von ir krefte', an action reminiscent of Beowulf's fight with Grendel, when he grips the monster's hand so tightly that the arm above it, as Grendel tries to pull it away from Beowulf's grasp, is torn at the shoulder, causing him to bleed to death: 'fingras burston' ('his [Grendel's] fingers were bursting/cracking') and 'wiste his fingra geweald / on grames grāpum' ('he knew his fingers' strength was in the grip of a furious man'. *Beo.* 760b and 764b-5a).[38] Mayer 1966 and Wailes 1971 see Brünhild's wrestling with Siegfried as a depiction of the archetypal marital struggle for dominance.[39] The argument is of course based on 673. 1b-4a: 'sol ich nu mînen lîp / von einer magt verliesen, sô mugen elliu wîp / her nâch immer mêre tragen gelpfen muot / gegen ir manne'. Siegfried's line of reasoning (and, we may assume, the poet's also) is strongly reminiscent of the representation made by the husbands of Ayodhyā to Rāma: continue to keep with you a wife who has been in contact with another man, and our wives will think they have licence to be unfaithful. As in the *Nibelungenlied* reference, there is the threat of an intolerable crossing of boundaries. But there is more to it than husband-wife relations. Brünhild's mythic strength and her determination to subdue Siegfried at the cost of his life show that the fight is not just about wifely power but also about female socio-political dominance. After all, she has lost her sovereign kingdom through this man. The underlying resonances of archaic Germanic combat suggest that this marital power struggle is of a very different order from the one conventionally portrayed in medieval poetry: it is the poem's ancient roots which make it so. Two contests are required in order to destroy Brünhild's unnatural supremacy over, and thus humiliation of, men. Since she retains her monstrous supernatural virginal strength after her defeat on the field of contest she must also be subdued in the marriage-bed. Only then will culturally acceptable male supremacy be fully established.

On the psycho-social level too, more than private male-female relations within marriage are at stake. Siegfried's taming of Brünhild on Gunther's behalf symbolises not only the defeat of gynocracy but the idealised taming of the feared mysterious female psyche, the curbing of women's monstrous power to wound and humiliate in sexual relationships, even to make cuckolds of them. There are psycho-sexual overtones in both Gunther's and Siegfried's bedchamber encounters with Brünhild and in the strange, unequal relationship between the impotent Gunter and the vigorous mock-vassal who serves him, overtones reflected later in the outrage expressed by Hagen about these secret events when the ring and girdle appear as

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[38] Similarly 'ac hine se mōdega mæg Hygelāces / hæfde be honda' ('Hygelac's brave kinsman had him gripped by the hand', *Beo.* 813- 14a).

[39] Hartwig Mayer: *Humor im Nibelungenlied.*. Diss. Phil. Tübingen, Ulm1966, cited by Wailes 1971.

evidence of Siegfried's intervention in the royal marriage bed. Cuckoldry, the public exposure and ridiculing of private male sexual inadequacies, a dominant male fear throughout the ages and no less common in medieval times, is actually named in Hagen's angry retort to Gieselher: 'Suln wir gouche ziehen?' (867.1a), a reference to Siegfried as cuckoo/cuckolder. This naming of an act which has not taken place is not only part of the sanitisation of the starker Nordic version of the tale but also the manipulation of the narrative in order to achieve maximum audience attentiveness. The audience knows what Hagen does not. Even so, the scene in Brünhild's chamber is still an extraordinarily brutal one. Gunther's (indeed any man's) sexual advances are unwelcome to Brünhild, and in overpowering her Siegfried is preparing her for what is in effect, to modern sensibilities, rape by Gunther. Of course, viewed within a much earlier sociological context, indeed until very recently, the notion of rape within marriage is incomprehensible. As far as medieval poet-performers and audiences are concerned, Brünhild gets her just deserts. The listeners are reassured to learn that Gunther is not cuckolded, that the defeat of Brünhild ensures the submission of the monstrous in the female. As in the case of *Rāmāyaṇa* audiences, male fears of losing their women to other more sexually potent men have been manipulated by skilful narrators, being first stirred and then symbolically put to rest. And what is more, the respective women listening also to the narratives will have absorbed this reinforcement of the code of acceptable female behaviour.

The Forest

As part of my introduction to the discussion of the Cities in the Forest I outlined the fairly standard definition of the Forest in epic: an area outside the world of the performance location of the poems, the world represented principally (but with certain culturally-imposed variations) by the City and also to a certain degree (but with major exceptions) by the City in the Forest. These variations and exceptions we have seen. Now it is time to examine the symbolism of the Forest itself, that is, the territory of the imagination lying beyond even the quasi-normal City in the Forest which is the exotic variant of the xenophobic City. This terrain differs from the City in the Forest in that it bears not the slightest resemblance to the characteristics of the City known to the composers of epic and their listeners. It always denotes the wild, the remote and the threatening. The Forest in the *Odyssey* consists of forested islands and coastal mainlands and the sea between them. In the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* it is mainly dense forest, often mountainous and intersected by rivers in which lie forested mountain islands. Like the sea that Odysseus must traverse between islands, these mountains, rivers and river islands are also Forest symbols in their own right but subsidiary to the symbol of the thickly wooded terrain lying on or close by them. Apart from the *Rāmāyaṇa* ascetics living in their ashrams, renouncers of the pleasures and

distractions of the City and devotees of a way of life in accordance with divine cosmic, not royal laws, the Forest is inhabited by anarchic, malevolent supernatural beings. Ashrams are isolated pockets of non-violence in vast tracts where, until Rāma's intervention, brute force reigns unchallenged by the order-establishing jurisdiction of the king in his City. The same fearsome regime pertains in Nibelungenland until Siegfried's arrival, although, probably due to the inclusion of two parallel story-traditions, he has to restore order twice there, since Alberich, having been spared by him on the first occasion, challenges him a second time, as is the custom in traditional folktale encounters of heroes with perfidious dwarves.

I originally intended dealing separately with the various symbols of the Forest set out above - forest, mountains, water, islands as also the monstrous extra-worldly creatures that inhabit them - but I have found the task not only difficult but inappropriate because the symbols are so intermeshed. This is particularly so in the *Nibelungenlied.* Even if one were prepared to risk the pedantry and repetitiousness which would inevitably be the result, the attempt would display a lack of understanding of the inter-related function of symbols in the depiction of the Other in epic (and folklore too, for that matter).[40] After all, the present study is concerned with textual analysis rather than an encyclopaedic overview of epic symbolism. I shall therefore begin with the complex of *Nibelungenlied* Forest symbols as a basis for the discussion, bringing in parallel, though not identical, examples from the *Rāmāyaṇa* as and when appropriate.

It is well established that trees, mountains and water all have a mytho-religious significance in both European and Indian cultures reaching far back into antiquity and that many shrines associated with them are still frequented mainly for their traditionally perceived healing and good fortune-bringing properties not only in India but in rural Ireland and southern European countries such as Spain, France, Italy and Greece. The sacred symbolism of the tree, the mountain and water is not difficult to apprehend: trees and mountains reach up from the earth into the sky,[41] thus bridging the space between mortal and immortal existence, and water, on which all life depends, springs out of the rock from deep within the earth. The concepts of the mountain as a place on which the gods dwell and the Tree of Life which supports the universe are logical extensions of these symbols.[42] The Indian cosmic tree is the Aśvattha, the sacred fig-tree, with its roots in heaven and its branches spreading down to the world. Conversely, Nordic mythology has a cosmic tree

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40 It will be remembered that I have more than once referred to the folktale-like resonances of the narrative concerning the Forest and the City within it.

41 One of the Sanskrit words for 'mountain', *naga,* also means 'tree', a measure of their interlinked symbolic significance.

42 In Indian tradition many types of tree are inhabited by gods and goddesses.

with branches reaching to the sky and covering the world and roots spreading deep into the earth, the Yggdrasil or sacred ash, watered by the three Norns. Beside one of its three roots is the wisdom-granting spring of Mimir; another of its roots reaches to the realm of the dead. A dragon is constantly gnawing at the roots. Since time immemorial, therefore, trees, mountains and springs/rivers and islands within rivers or lakes have been regarded as mysterious locations, interstices of the natural and the supernatural, and it is hardly surprising that they figure in epic as well as the folktales that preceded it and the romance that followed it in medieval Europe. In these genres such locations are where strange, even horrifying, events are the order of the day, possibly a legacy in vague popular memory of the human sacrifices which may once have taken place there.

The Forest in the *Nibelungenlied* lies exclusively in mountainous territory. This holds equally true for Nibelungenland, whatever terrain is guarded by the dragon[43] and the setting of the fatal hunt. According to Hagen's narrative, Siegfried comes upon the dividing up of Nibelung's treasure 'vor eime berge' (88.2a) and, as Kriemhild later tells Hagen, he despatches the dragon 'an dem berge' (899.2b). Alberich also lives on a mountain, for he hears the sound of Siegfried's struggle with the giant gatekeeper 'verre durch den berg' (493.1b) and arms himself against the intruder. Gunther's hunt takes place in a mountain forest which resounds with the cries of the participants and the barking of their dogs: 'daz in da von antwurte der berc und ouch der tan' (941.3).[44] In this last reference, trees are also brought into the equation, perhaps unsurprisingly considering that this is a hunt, but one tree in this forest will shortly figure prominently at the time of Siegfried's death, a key symbol to which I shall return. The dragon is killed in a forest on a mountain: a leaf which falls from the lime-tree under which it lies bleeding settles on Siegfried's back as he bathes in its blood, a disastrous accident as in time becomes clear ('dô viel im zwischen die herte ein lindenblat vil breit', 902.3).

In medieval German narrative poetry portentous events not infrequently take place under lime-trees, particularly when these are associated with the exposed rock-face of the mountain and even more so when a stream is issuing from the rock.[45] It is normally assumed that the popularity of the *Nibelungenlied* spawned inferior written variations in the later *Heldenlied* tradition such as *Das Lied vom hürnen Seyfrid* and *Ortnit.* Since I believe it is just as likely

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43 The poem does not make this clear.

44 Similarly 961.4b ('daz gebirge allez erdôz').

45 The conjunction of well/spring (which rises from the rock below) and lime-tree occurs passim in folksong and medieval poetry, though these symbols are often associated outside the *Heldenlied* with the amorous rather than the ominous. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm cite among examples of *linde* lines from Gottfried's *Tristan* and Walther von der Vogelweide which also feature a well or spring, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* VI, Leipzig 1885, 1031.

that a variety of oral narratives on the dragon-slayer theme on which these were based were circulating independently at the time around which the *Nibelungenlied* came to be written down, I put forward parallel evidence from *Ortnit* of the lime-tree/rock-face nexus in popular superstition. Ortnit's mother tells him that if he insists on finding adventures he must journey 'hin zü der steines want / vnd wart wa an eim ende / ein grüne linde stee/ vnd auß der selben wende / ein kieler brunne gee' (13a. 2-6). The young adventurer comes upon the dwarf Alberich (whom he discovers to be his father) under a lime-tree (13d.30-1 and 36-7) and finally, after many adventures, is killed by a dragon who finds him asleep under a lime-tree and smashes his head against a rock-face: 'da lieff er [der wurm] under die linde' (111a.15) and 'er lieff gen einer wende / und stieß sein haubt daran' (111b.33-4).[46] All three symbols converge in the setting of Siegfried's murder: mountain, water and tree, here the ubiquitous lime-tree ('er [Siegfried] wolde für die berge zuo dem brunnen gân' (970.3) and 'den starken gêr er leinte an der linden ast', 977.3). Thus with the mention of this tree the tale has turned narratologically and symbolically full circle since the falling of the lime-leaf that originally sealed his fate. Why is the lime-tree mentioned in connection with Siegfried's killing of the dragon and his own violent death? Friedrich allows us to deduce a possible explanation. 'The linden had important ritual and supernatural meanings among the early Germans and other Indo-Europeans', he states, referring to 'the linden complex of inter-connected magical and supernatural symbolism' ranging from artefacts made from lime-bast and wood to 'linden bark and branches dripping with the blood of sacrificial animals; linden groves, categorical taboos against harming lindens, and finally, linden sacrifice trees, to which the oak and birch were distant seconds', (1970, 89). Such ancient resonances are quite possibly buried in the story of Siegfried.

The *Araṇya-* ('forest') and *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍas* make frequent mention of trees, rivers, lakes and mountains, all of which have sacred and mythological associations in Indian tradition, but these are not normally juxtaposed in the symbolic manner I have examined above. One rare instance of this conjunction occurs in the tamed *rākṣasa* monster Kabandha's description of Sugrīva's mountain cave where he lives in exile outside Kiṣkindhā, the entrance to which is almost completely blocked by a gigantic boulder (3.69.30). Outside the cave entrance is a lake of cool water surrounded by trees: 'tasyā guhāyāḥ pragdvāro

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46 *Das Deutsche Heldenbuch* ed. Adelbert von Keller, Stuttgart 1846. Amelung's *Ortnit* ms. has the hero threatening to cut off the dwarf's head under the tree: 'ich slah dir under der linden / abe daz houbet dîn' (*Deutsches Heldenbuch* III, *Ortnit* II, ed. Arthur Amelung, 1873, repr. Dublin/Zürich 1968, 118.3), whereas Keller's simply has ' [...] ich nym dir dein leben' (14c. 19). I quote principally from Keller because Amelung's ms. does not contain the lime-tree/rock-face link with Ortnit's death, referring in vaguer terms to the hero asleep 'under einem grüenen boume' (566) and the cave in the rock-face where the dragon has its lair.

mahāñśītodako hradaḥ / [...] nānānagasamāvṛtaḥ' (3.69.31ab and d).[47] This is the abode of the *vānara* warrior-prince with the potential to order a massive search for Sītā, indeed to send his magical minister-warrior Hanumān who actually locates her, once Rāma has helped him assume the kingship by killing Vālin. It is not quite the portentous lime-tree setting of Ortnit's meeting with Alberich who will help him obtain the Saracen princess, but nevertheless a symbolic convergence of the three Forest symbols resonant with a foreshadowing of the supernatural ramifications of the future meeting of Rāma and Sugrīva. On the other hand, taken in context, Rāma's similar description in the *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* of the surroundings of the cave in which he intends to camp for a while pending Sugrīva's installation as king appears more likely to be of a practical nature.[48] He is explaining to Sugrīva that, apart from his vow not to enter a city for the duration of his exile, it is unneccessary for him to accept the king-elect's offer of accommodation in Kiṣkindhā: here he has all he needs, shelter in the form of a pleasant mountain cave and abundant water close by ('iyaṃ giriguhā ramyā viśālā yuktamārutā / prabhūtasalilā [...]', 4.25.14a-c). However, the conjunction of rock and water implies at the very least the auspicious nature of the quarters, and since his stay here will be a time of preparation for the battle in Laṅkā against the monstrous Rāvaṇa during the course of which divine powers will come to his aid, the accommodation is certainly fitting. Another reference juxtaposes water and tree: having crossed the Ganges, the royal couple spend the first night of their forest exile under a tree on the foreign bank after performing evening worship beneath it (2.47.1 and 48.1). It is an auspicious start to their exile which, after many vicissitudes, will end in a triumphal return.

The Forest as threshold and harbourer of the deceiver

I have just referred to the momentous crossing over of a stretch of water which separates the known 'real' world from the mysterious, threatening Forest and is itself part of the Forest. As I indicated at the outset, the Crossing is a staple theme in epic.[49] For Sītā this crossing is resonant with a symbolic leaving of the familiar and a journeying into the unknown. Exactly at the halfway point between the two, in the middle of the Ganges (also called the Bhāgīrathī), she offers prayers to the goddess of the river for Rāma's protection during the time of his banishment: 'madhyaṃ tu samanuprāpya bhāgīrathyās tv aninditā'

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47 Cf. the forest dwellings of the enchantresses Kalypso and Kirke in the *Odyssey*. Kalypso lives in a cave in dense woodland with four springs nearby (5.78-9); Kirke has a house of stone in a clearing (10.277-8) and is waited on by four maidens born of springs, groves and rivers (ibid. 388-9).

48 It is not clear whether this is Sugrīva's cave which he is vacating in order to assume kingship in the City in the Forest, or another one, but this is immaterial.

49 We should not overlook the *Bālakāṇḍa* crossing of Viśvāmitra and the young initiates Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa over the Sarayū river into Tāṭakā's forest, modelled no doubt to some extent on this earlier one (1.23.4 and 11).

(2.46.67ab). It is a crossing within known parameters of time, fourteen prescribed years away from the City, and to a certain extent Sītā is able to curb within that knowledge her apprehension as to the dangers that will confront them, imagining the return crossing along with Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa: 'caturdaśa hi varṣāni samagrāṇy uṣya kānane / bhrātrā saha mayā caiva punaḥ pratyāgamiṣyati' (ibid. 69). Yet, as the exiles soon discover, the Forest is not only a fearsome habitat of predatory wild animals such as tigers and wolves ('śardūlavṛkasevitam', 3.2.2b) and monsters in search of human flesh but also one of extraordinary beauty.[50] For instance they come upon vistas of places and regions delighting the mind ('manoramān') that they have never witnessed before ('te bhūmibhāgān vividhān deśāṃs cāpi manoramān / adṛṣtapurvān', 2.48.3b-d), and in an extended lyrical passage contributed no doubt by *kuśīlava* poets Rāma remarks to Lakṣmaṇa on the splendours of the forest surrounding Lake Pampā ('saumitre paśya pampāyāḥ kānanaṃ śubhadarśanam', 4.1.3) describing the trees, blossoms, mountains, insects and birds to be seen there (ibid. 5-11) Furthermore, in addition to hiding ravenous animals and monsters which lurk among them and the magical jewelled deer that deceives Rāma and Sītā, the trees offer shelter and protection to the wayfarers as on their first night, and there are the welcoming ashrams which they come upon during their wanderings.

As we have come to expect of the far less exuberantly lyrical medieval German poet-singers, the Forest in the *Nibelungenlied*, on the other hand, is starkly unadorned with natural beauty, apart from one exception which I shall shortly discuss, and overwhelmingly hostile, harbouring the dragon, volatile Nibelung kings, Alberich, the boar, bison and bear which Siegfried hunts down and Hagen the treacherous murderer. Like the exiles, Siegfried crosses over water to reach Island, Nibelungenland and the venue for the hunt, these last two being situated on river islands: the formula 'ûf einen wert vil breit' is used in both instances (485.1b and 928.3b). Vālmīki's hermitage, standing near the bank of the Ganges, similarly requires a river crossing to reach it, but instead of hostility and treachery this stretch of Forest offers refuge and inner healing to the grief-stricken, pregnant Sītā whom Lakṣmaṇa escorts across and then abandons. Once she crosses this river, she has reached the point of no return to her former life of happiness with Rāma. Siegfried and later the Burgundians in very different circumstances, similarly make their river crossings of no return: Siegfried's over the Rhine to the island of the hunt and the Burgundians over the Danube on their

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50 A chance finding of an old photograph not long after I had completed this chapter brought forgotten personal memories flooding back of camping on several occasions in the strip of forest beside the same stretch of the Cauvery river in Karnataka. It occured to me then that the singer-poets capture exactly the mix of fear and delight which the forest engenders in its human occupants. Sleeping on the ground in a clearing which was an elephant path through the trees and undergrowth to the herd's drinking spot in the river was never undertaken without some measure of apprehension, and yet seeing young elephants and their mothers by daylight in procession along the opposite bank gave untold pleasure.

journey to Etzel's feast, in both cases to their deaths, the Burgundians' crossing being a direct consequence of Siegfried's. Strophe 927 with its depiction of the provisions for the hunt being sent on packhorses in advance of the hunting party is evidence that a crossing of the Rhine is involved ('geladen vil der rosse kom vor in über den Rîn', ibid. 1). We are further told that the party makes the return crossing out of the Forest and back into the City ('[si] fuoren über Rîn' (1002.1b). The island therefore is surrounded by the Rhine which emphasises the remoteness of the location, both island and river forming the Forest context of the *âventiure*. The ominously high-flowing Danube crossed by the Burgundians is the edge of the threatening liminal space of the Forest through which they must travel in hostile Bavarian territory to the City of Etzelnburg. Hagen's symbolic breaking of the ferryboat after the crossing highlights in dramatic fashion but does not alter the course of events to come, for the survival of the chaplain who cannot swim has already proved the truth of the water-sprites' prophecy that none but he will make the return crossing to the City of Worms.

I touched just now on the symbolism of the Forest as a place of deception. The gloom within dense woodland reflects the dark deeds performed there, concealing the hunter not only from the hunted but also from the City where the king's law must be scrupulously observed, especially by the king himself. The murder of Siegfried in Worms would be unthinkable in view of the great affection in which he is held by its citizens, (we have observed how he is mourned by them), but the Forest provides the conniving Gunther, in need of a means of public exculpation, with a false explanation for his brother-in-law's untimely death, that is, that he was killed by robbers. Although Hagen hotly retorts that he is unconcerned about Kriemhild's discovery of the truth about her husband's death, he is nevertheless pragmatic enough to wait until nightfall to bring back the corpse. A deed performed in the gloomy depths of the Forest must be completed under cover of darkness.[51] The abduction of Sītā could similarly not have been accomplished in Ayodhyā, but within the Forest the regent Bhārata's rule holds no sway. Mārica's disguise as the jewelled deer decoy and Rāvaṇa's as a mendicant brahman allow Mārica to lure Rāma away from Sītā and Rāvaṇa to capture his trusting prize. Even the morally scrupulous Lakṣmaṇa deceives Sīta, on Rāma's instructions, into believing that she will spend only a short while in Vālmīki's ashram. The Forest aids and conceals this deception until it is time for him to abandon her within it.

The space of trial and the validator of power

The Forest is also the setting for the initiatory trial, both in the epic and folktale world of the imagination and in the actuality of the ritual custom of many primitive societies

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[51] Hagen presumably delays the return until night in view of the people's attachment to Siegfried.

throughout the world. Once the first crossing is made in the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* into the state of liminality between the known and the unknown, the Forest becomes the proving-ground of the kings which the young Siegfried and Rāma will become. Here, separated from their parents and their own kind in general, they undergo the rites of passage (van Gennep's term)[52] which initiate them into the privileges and duties of warrior-kings, and through the successful completion of the trials they acquire superhuman strength and weapons which signify their Forest-validated power to defeat the rulers of the City in the Forest and the authority to rule rightfully on their return to the City. The Forest is therefore a liminal space within which are played out trials in the form of battles with the total embodiment of the anarchic Other, the 'threshold guardians', as Campbell describes them.[53] Royal power can only be validated by vanquishing the Other, yet at the same time future hero-kings themselves acquire aspects of the Other through contact with it: their superhuman strength and invulnerability.[54] One example of such contact is Siegfried's bathing in the dragon's blood. He defeats not only the dragon but also Schilbung and Nibelung, Alberich and the gatekeeper who stands at the edge of the Forest which is Nibelungenland and the City in the Forest of Nibelungenburg. The Nibelung kings and Alberich are guardians not only of Nibelungenland but also of the fabulous hoard of treasure, the material symbol of royal power, as I demonstrated earlier. Thus Siegfried's slaying of the kings and his binding of Alberich gain him not only the kingdom but the authority to rule there. The dragon that he encounters is much like the *Rāmāyaṇa* monsters Tāṭakā, guardian of the forest which bears her name, and Virādha and Kabandha, guardians of the Daṇḍaka and Kraunčа Forests respectively,[55] the stuff of nightmare and the embodiment of all that threatens and horrifies on a personal and communal level.

These ravenous predatory creatures which roam the Forest in search of human flesh live alone, far removed from the communities of the quasi-normal yet mysterious Cities in the Forest. We are not given a description of the dragon in Hagen's brief mention of the episode, since presumably the mere naming of the mythical species is sufficient to provoke

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52 Arnold van Gennep: *The Rites of Passage* , repr. Chicago 1960.

53 Joseph Campbell: *The Hero with a Thousand Faces,* Princeton 1949/68.

54 Allen's association of kingship with the Other appears similar to my own, although I do not link it as he does with the Dumezilian Three Functions. For him the Other is a Fourth Function which exists outside yet alongside the Three ('un domaine d'altérité', 1999, 151) and comprises kings, slaves, monsters and the like. He identifies positive and negative aspects of the Other, classifying sovereignty and helpful monsters as belonging to the positive and unhelpful monsters such as Scylla and Charybdis as belonging to the negative ('la souveraineté [...] relève en fait de l'aspect positif de la quatrième fonction', ibid. 152). See also Allen 1995. I shall return to the subject of helpful monsters in due course.

55 The royal party are faced by these two monsters (3.2.4 and 65.14-15) almost immediately after entering the two forests (3.1.1 and 3.65.5).

fear in the singer-poet's audience, much like the mere mention of hell in medieval circles, coupled with admiration for Siegfried's courage, but the *Rāmāyaṇa* singers typically seize the opportunity to conjure up the appearance of the threshold monsters in considerable detail. The *rākṣasas* Virādha and Kabandha are not merely ugly as befits evil-doers like Mantharā but revoltingly misshapen, as Pollock points out, observing in their 'physical deformity [...] an index of their moral deformity' (1991, 72). Both are fallen celestial beings punished for moral transgressions by being trapped in loathsome bodies and dietary habits. Red with the blood of their victims which they stuff into their huge mouths, they are gigantic, grotesque mutants of the human form. Parkhill, following Campbell 1949, noting the common narratological paradigm of the aid given in defeat by the monstrous threshold guardian, instances Virādha's dying directions to Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to help them find their way in the forest (136). Kabandha too, similarly released in death from his punishment, follows his advice to them to seek Sugrīva's help in searching for Sītā with instructions as to how to find the *vānara* prince's mountain cave. The dragon in death yields up its blood which marvellously protects the victor Siegfried's skin against wounding. Alberich bound reluctantly offers to serve him and gives him the *Tarnkappe*. Having passed through the Forest tests and having thus acquired superhuman attributes which symbolise their authority to rule as warrior-kings, Rāma and Siegfried are equipped to display that power in the Cities in the Forest of Laṅkā and Isenstein where they will defeat the monstrously aberrant Rāvaṇa and Brünhild.

The Forest of the Burgundians' journey to Etzelnburg, though the naturalistic setting of ambushes by Bavarian warlords Gelpfrat and Else, is another liminal space of trial and the legitimation of royal power. The swollen Donau must be crossed over to gain entry into this space, and, since the river cannot be forded, the hostile mythical ferryman who guards the Forest is despatched in order to obtain a boat. This is Hagen's threshold guardian, and he passes the trial effortlessly, presumably with Siegfried's sword Balmung which he carries ostentatiously into Etzelnburg. There are other threshold guardians, the three *merwîp* in the Donau whom he has forced to reveal their knowledge of the events to come in return for the clothes he has stolen from them. In this instance too he shows himself equal to the test in his ability to outwit them and obtain invaluable advice on how to trick the unwilling ferryman into rowing his boat over to the near bank. From the moment Hagen reaches the Burgundians waiting to cross the river it is clear that he has now assumed authority over the entire party including the three kings. He is now the one with Forest-validated royal power to protect and lead, and the Burgundian kings, apprehensive about the journey through the Forest and later their fate in Etzelnburg, recognise and submit to his authority.

Thus the Forest is paradoxically both the representation of chaos and the validator of royal order-establishing and order-maintaining power, of disharmony and balance. Parkhill

rightly observes this mysterious contradiction, the 'dual modality' of the Forest in Sanskrit epic, seeing the Forest as 'the negation of structural forms of human culture' and at the same time 'the source of structural forms' as evidenced by its self-sufficient, paradisiacal nature (147 ff). It is against this negation of the ancient Indian and medieval European world views as epitomised in Rāvaṇa and Brünhild that Rāma and Siegfried fight. Of course there is nothing expressly paradisiacal about the Forest in the *Nibelungelied*, except perhaps - in appearance though not in fact - the setting of the forest spring, reminiscent of the *locus amoenus* of medieval lyric and romance with its thirst-quenching water, linden and carpet of flowers.[56] But as we have seen, the juxtaposition of water, rock-face and lime-tree are also resonant of suffering and death. The contrast between the wounded Siegfried swiftly bleeding to death and the forest flowers among which he lies is starkly arresting and highlights the double-exposed symbolism of the *locus amoenus* and the place of foreboding. There is a glimpse here of Parkhill's 'dual modality' of the Forest which was theoretically in operation when Siegfried killed the dragon under the lime-tree and received the Forest's validation as hero-king.

Parkhill goes on to argue that in defeating Rāvaṇa Rāma does not tame the Forest but only restores the tension provided by the opposites of negation and source (159). While this is a plausible structuralist reading of the poem - after all, the negation of socio-political order can never be defeated for all time, but is constantly threatening to revolt and cause a return to anarchy - I would argue that within the socio-political context of composition and performance this is not the unambivalent reading intended by authors whose purpose is to legitimise and preserve the status quo. Thapar views the historical theme of the *Rāmāyaṇa* among other themes encapsulated within it as 'that of the triumph of the kingdom over the forest or the condition of exile.[...] The symbolic confrontation of kingdom and exile was on occasion identified with the real bipolarity of kingdom and forest; [...] and at the base of all this the migration of peoples and the stabilising of settlements as nucleii of newly evolving cultures' (1978, 28). I believe that the *Nibelungenlied* too can be read on this level, among others, against the background of the Migration and the founding of settlements, transformed in received memory into the validation during the mythical age of heroism of city-based hereditary kingship which asserts its authority over the Forest by means of these settlements. In her study of the relationship between wilderness and kingship as demonstrated in a number of South Asian sources including the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Falk observes that the king, having subdued the chaos of the wilderness (the equivalent of my term Forest),

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56 Cf. the opening section of *Rāmāyaṇa* 3.1, with its idyllic description of the ashram, its encircling trees, water and in particular the forest flowers growing all around: 'puṣpair vanyaiḥ parikṣiptam' (3.1.6). This is a place of refuge, though its inherent calm is temporarily threatened by attack from marauding *rākṣasas* .

uses his special relationship with it as a basis for just and protective rule (1973, 14). Siegfried and Rāma are shown as taming the Forest in Brünhild and Rāvaṇa once and for all. Brünhild can never regain her lost superiority over the male sex and is therefore powerless to avenge herself against Siegfried's mistreatment of her in a further contest of strength: she must content herself with her preoccupation on a very human socio-political level with problems of rank, her husband's and Siegfried's. Rāvaṇa is killed and his realm given to his disciplined, order-enforcing brother, now Rāma's vassal. Under Vibhīṣana the *rākṣasas* will no longer threaten the cosmos-sustaining sacrifices of the ascetics in the Forest and the citizens of Ayodhyā will no longer live under the threat of having their women stolen by the virile men of Laṅkā. Falk also notes that the king in ancient South Asia can function properly, indeed remain king, only if he stays in the proper relationship with the source of his power (14).[57] The upright, self-controlled Rāma upholds this relationship with the Forest, and his reign is long and beneficial to his subjects. Once the relationship is broken, argues Falk, 'both kingship and community are lost' (ibid.) In rejecting the Queen in the Forest whom he has won according to the custom of the Forest and giving her to another, unworthy king, Siegfried, on the other hand, shows his disrespect for the Forest and finally loses not only the kingship but his life.

The differing use which Rāma and Siegfried make of their Forest-validated authority is a subject to which I shall return in my final chapter. In the present one I have tried to show the inter-linked relationship of the City with the Forest and with the City in the Forest, and the place and function of the sovereign within all three. Both Rāma and Siegfried, by their victories over the Forest guardians, acquire the validation of royal power, symbolised in the superhuman strength and invincibility (the latter almost but not quite total in Siegfried's case due to the intervention of the linden leaf), which enables them to perform the feats required of them in the City in the Forest: the liquidation of the feared anarchic, antisocial power of Rāvaṇa, the lecherous ruler and abductor of other men's wives, and of Brünhild, the proud humiliator of kings and princes. Having asserted their authority over the Forest and the City in the Forest they return at last to their thrones in the Cities of Ayodhyā and Xanten from which they originally set out, to their respective treasuries, great feasts and the beautiful women who adorn their courts, the formulaic City-based symbolic manifestations of their

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57 Parkhill and Falk see the Forest as source of royal power. I prefer to describe it as legitimator of this power, since true novice hero-kings bring with them into the Forest attributes which already mark them out as separate from non-hero-kings. Rāma is the fit recipient of divine weapons, and Siegfried has the requisite combat skills to despatch the two Nibelungen kings and thus acquire Balmung.

kingly power. Here they rule with equity until such time as the consequences of past events inexorably overtake them and tragedy strikes through the unwitting agency of their wives.

6

Moon and Stars, Throne and Forest: Conclusions

I began this study by expressing reservations about the widespread assessment of the *Nibelungenlied* as a work of written composition, and my subsequent exploration of the text has reflected these reservations, both in my approach to the work as a whole and my choice of terms[1] as a vehicle for my arguments. It was never my purpose to 'prove' that either of my chosen texts was orally composed, but I have examined the use of imagery in the light of the informed possibility that they were. Through a critical reassessment and reapplication of the now somewhat discredited Parry-Lord theory of oral composition it is possible nevertheless that I may have cast some doubt upon the opinion that the German epic is the work of a single, writing poet ('the last poet', as this hypothetical author is often tagged). In this I have been encouraged by Voorwinden's views, discovered at a stage when my own were already formed, on the likely multiple authorship and orality of the *Nibelungenlied* (22, 39). By comparing it with an epic composed out of a very different time and place, though a not infrequently similar socio-cultural world view, a comparison which has detected some remarkable homologies besides predictable differences, I hope to have shown that the *Nibelungenlied* as a composite poem is in essence a much older work than many would allow. If the analogies raise implications for this epic then they also do the same for the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and I shall elaborate on these in due course. I have kept in mind throughout, in presenting my exploration of image and formula in the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, imaginary audiences in front of whom the authors of each epic would have performed. By doing so I have been able to suggest similar strategies and techniques, based on examination of the texts, which the multiple poet-singers used in order to ensure the most favourable immediate reception possible to their performances: rapt attention and universal endorsement of the world view encapsulated and transmitted in the poems leading to generous financial reward.

Having demonstrated in my introductory chapter the link between epic and myth both in theory and practice as it appears in my chosen texts, I defended my comparison of the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* by adducing evidence that, although some generic ambiguity attaches to them, they are both essentially heroic epics. I drew attention to the

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[1] In as far as I have found it possible I have used terminology which does not refer specifically to written composition.

methodological importance of the notion of difference besides that of analogy, since difference tells us as much as analogy does about the genre that is epic. There is therefore no single exemplar of epic (such as the *Iliad* is often erroneously considered to be) but a number of works which, in varying combinations, draw upon a pool of traditional features. I also defended my choice of a method of comparison based on imagery by arguing for the existence of the 'semantically cognate' as well as the lexically cognate formulaic signifier within a given language group, citing as an example the symbol of the forest which is essential to both poems but which is expressed in lexically unconnected forms. Heroic poetry is however a near-universal phenomenon, and we should bear in mind the possibility that works of this genre outside the Indo-European language group contain formulaic tropic and symbolic images semantically cognate with those that I have explored. Although my study is typological, it may also be termed provisionally part genetic until such time as wider studies of epic outside the Indo-European language group perhaps show that the images under examination here are in fact typical of epic poetry world wide. In such a case, my typological conclusions will however remain valid. I ended this introduction to my study with a caveat regarding the methodologically unsound use of the much more extensive *Rāmāyaṇa* to fill lacunæ in our knowledge of the ancient Germanic world view with the purpose of constructing a hypothetical Proto-Indo-European one particularly in relation to perceptions of sovereignty. My study has been based on observations of overlapping images in the texts, and I have not therefore attributed to the *Nibelungenlied* any parallel with the *Rāmāyaṇa* as regards image or formula which cannot be defended from the Middle High German text.

There followed a discussion of the evidence, both in the texts and in other roughly contemporaneous sources, for regarding the *Nibelungenlied* and the entire *Rāmāyaṇa*, not only its five older *kāṇḍas*, as being in the main works of an orally composed and transmitted tradition, and the likelihood or otherwise of their having been recorded in approximately the written form in which we have them today. When undertaking an investigation of this nature it is essential to bear in mind certain significant considerations. Firstly, the process of composition even of works known to be of writing authors appears to have been very much an oral one in medieval Germany, with widespread use of scribes to record the spoken word. Furthermore, a strong oral culture is known to have existed at that time alongside and in many respects independent of a written one, indeed, the high medieval aristocracy was suspicious of priestly book-based learning. The textual grounds for assuming that the *Nibelungenlied* is the work of a cleric are scant and unsafe: in fact there is written evidence to show that heroic poetry was considered too worldly and much disapproved by the church

in medieval Germany.[2] Oral culture depends on acutely developed powers of memory for the transmission of gnomic and other material, and I have found no convincing reason why the traditional *Nibelungenlied* corpus, including the additions made by the last poet to transmit it before it was written down, could not have been performed from near verbatim memorisation. In relation to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the ancient brahman veneration of the spoken word and antipathy to writing, the exact reverse of clerical attitudes in medieval Europe, are undisputed. Evidence adduced by von Hinüber that not Sanskrit but its later Middle Indic form Pāli was the earlier of the two languages to be written down suggests to me the likely late textualisation of an already established oral *Rāmāyaṇa* corpus, including much of the two youngest *kāṇḍas*. Of course there must have been written redactorial intervention in both epics, but to concede this is not to cast doubts on the orality of the bulk of each work.

I examined the classic Parry-Lord theory of oral poetry centred on the formula as the central element in the transmission of epic by a process of extempore composition and I found the theory wanting in its incompleteness.[3] Taken in isolation, the presence of formula is an unreliable indication of orality. There is in fact a range of characteristics typical of oral narrative poetry in addition to formula. Other significant features are a sophisticated system of mnemonics; a style which is aggregative rather than analytical and conservative rather than innovative;[4] the deliberate preservation of archaisms; the piling up of lexical parallels; the agonistic nature of its poetic expression; and internal narratological inconsistencies and contradictions. I showed from textual references that both the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* display instances of all these characteristics in greater or lesser proportions.

Although the use of formula is not the single test of orality which Parry and Lord believed it to be, since it is found in works of known written origin, often in contrived, sterile excess, it nevertheless remains a key compositional element of oral traditional poetry. The *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* abound in examples of formulaic expression which appear to be used in a habitual, uncontrived manner, even in the probably late *âventiure* 29, widely presumed to be the work of the last *Nibelungen* poet, as I showed in a textual examination of formulaic diction in that narratologically vivid and seamlessly constructed passage. The apparently self-conscious use of stock figurative formulas exclusive to the two

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[2] I dealt with the question of maverick clergy with a predilection for epic and with the references to Bishop Pilgrim and the Christian warriors at Etzel's court, none of which should be taken as evidence of the written composition of the *Nibelungenlied,* in chapters two and five.

[3] This is not to underestimate the ground-breaking nature of Parry's research and the debt which present-day scholars owe him.

[4] I made a distinction between 'innovative' which it is not and 'inventive' which it can certainly be.

youngest *kāṇḍas* of the *Rāmāyaṇa* by the brahman poet-performers is not necessarily a sign of written composition. The rigidity of formulaic style may simply be an indication of the change in authorship which took place in the *Rāmāyaṇa* corpus, from uneducated professional story-tellers, the *sūtas* and *kuśīlavas*, who composed in a freer, intuitive manner, to formally (though orally) educated poet-priests making a conscious effort to imitate the style of the poem's former guardians. I concluded that, in view of the evidence I had put forward, both poems are more likely on balance to be the work of oral poet-singers.

It was then necessary to define the terms 'poetic image' and 'metaphorical language' in anticipation of the comparative investigations of the formulaic image as figure of speech and as symbol. My discussion began on the theoretical level with recourse to the theories of ancient and medieval Indian and European poeticians and of modern literary critics, linguists and philosophers, with illustrations drawn from my texts, in order to separate and clarify the concepts of figure of speech and symbol, both of which all too often of late have been loosely and incorrectly tagged 'metaphor'. A return to the traditional distinction made between simile and metaphor in its strictly grammatical sense is not a pedantic exercise; rather it enhances textual analysis by enabling a clear assessment of the ways in which different types of image function either in a given passage or a complete work.

Both simile and metaphor work by a process of analogy. Sanskrit poetics views simile (*upamā*) as the principal unit of comparison and metaphor, of which there are two types (*rūpaka* and *utprekṣā*) with different functions of expressing analogy, as a variant of simile. Conversely western poetics considers metaphor the more important unit, describing it as a closed simile and holding it to be the more complex and versatile and thus æsthetically the more pleasing. Since both traditions define metaphor in terms of simile they are not however in fact so very far apart. Citing examples, I argued that simile can be at least as expressive a figure of speech as metaphor and has the potential even to surpass it in the transferred phenomenon of metaphorical comparison, that is in the figure of metaphorical simile. Both simile and metaphor exhibit the 'être et n'être pas' (Ricoeur) or the 'Yes/No relationship' (Nowottny) of all figurative or metaphorical language. Bearing in mind the fact that my exploration of image as figure of speech in the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* would be concerned with the formulaic simile, I wished to give a more rounded account of imagery in these works by acknowledging in addition the presence of images of a different level of intensity. I therefore proceeded to analyse in context examples of the use of simile, metaphor and *utprekṣā* which were in most cases apparently inventive and exclusive to the particular singer-poet in question, with a view to describing the analogical process at work and assessing the ability of these images to heighten the narratological impact of the passage.

Symbols, on the other hand, are figures of association. They 'stand for' or 'point to' objects or concepts beyond themselves which they do not resemble in any way. I discussed two types of symbols at work in my texts, the one readily accessible because of the universally apprehended significance of the images classed within it, and the other, the culture-specific symbol, which requires specialist knowledge to interpret it, indeed to construe it as a symbol at all. As with the principal figures of analogy, I examined in context examples of symbol drawn from the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa.* These were instances whose meaning could be deduced in part on a universal level but which required some culture-specific knowledge in order to appreciate them fully. These examples reflected the formulaic symbols which I was to examine in Chapter 5, a mix of readily accessible images and those which can only be fully appreciated in the light of specialist knowledge.

Before making a representative survey of the theme-bearing stock similes in my two epics I considered again the formula as embodying a supremely acoustic compositional dynamic. Our appreciation of the oral dimension of these works is diminished by the over-emphasis of the Parry-Lord school on the distinction between fixed and flexible formulas and the proportion of each within particular epics. This approach led to fine-toothed combing, eventually computerised investigations of the printed text, which, although useful exercises, diverted attention from the formulas as sounded by the early performers of epic and as heard by their listeners. Formulas, especially figures of speech, are used for their capacity to fill lines, but the significance of their rhythmic aural dimension, that is, the way they sound rather than how they look on a page, cannot be underestimated because this was the method by which they were received by their early audiences. Perhaps even more importantly, formulaic figures of speech, often varied so slightly as to make the differences undetectable to the ear (though zealously noted by scholars), encapsulate a received thematic world view. Oral epic, which, in keeping with the society in which it originates, conserves tradition, is punctuated by figures of speech which preserve and perpetuate the common socio-cultural perception of singer and listeners alike. To a large extent, stock figures of speech are responsible for imbuing the poems with the characteristic quality of 'sameness' identified by Kahane. The variation of formulaic expression is not a 'literary' device, rather an unconscious adjunct to oral composition, since the poet's aim is to perpetuate tradition, to reinforce the sameness. As I suggested, the audience hears variant formulaic expressions as one and the same, because this is what they want and expect. Post-oral poets are required to eschew likeness in favour of variety and innovation. This change of style should not lead to the conclusion that written poetry is superior to oral poetry: it merely reflects the difference in expectations. What is tedious repetition to modern readers is required listening material for traditional epic audiences in the sense that it is demanded of the poet by his hearers.

Illustrating my arguments by textual references I argued that stock similes in both epics carry a threefold function. They are a medium for the essential socio-cultural message, as I have already observed, in fact their very sameness enables them to transmit it subliminally, both to the singer who uses them and the audience that hears them. They are also narratologically active as affective intensifiers of high points in the unfolding of the story and as markers which open and, in the case of the *Rāmāyaṇa,* similarly close individual episodes. In this last capacity they are structural aids to the singer-poet which allow him control over his material both as he composes and as he performs. I then considered the function of the stock simile in its rhythmic capacity as exemplified in the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa.* Rhythm is of course an essential contributor to the sameness of the epic construct: along with formulaic language it makes the poem sound homogenous. Starting from Nagy's theory of thematic formula as engendering Homeric and Vedic metre, I suggested, after eliminating certain other types of common formula found in my two epics which might qualify as fixers of rhythmic patterning, that stock simile, which characteristically fills a half-line in both epics, may have been responsible for the gradual oral-aural process of determining the optimum rhythm for each poem. It would have been those similes which carried the culturally most acceptable themes which became dominant and exercised a determining influence. Thus stock similes appear to be responsible not only for holding together subsequent retellings of the traditional stories (narratological structure) but also for establishing the acoustic measure of the act of transmission, the metre (aural structure).

I went on to survey a number of stock similes common to both poems and to other Indo-European epic narratives but which I consider likely to be in the main of universal or near-universal origin. These are the 'moon among stars' type of formulaic similes to which my thesis title refers. I prefaced my last chapter, a discussion of formulaic symbols in the two works as exemplified in images of sovereignty, with a follow-up exploration of some motif-symbols found in the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* and in two cases also in the *Iliad.* Contrary to my conclusion in respect of most of the stock similes, I believe that these are possibly Indo-European rather than near-universal. As with the former category of imagery, I examined the function of these motif-symbols in their respective contexts.

The final section of my study concerned the formulaic theme-bearing symbols of the City, the City in the Forest and the Forest as they are treated in my texts. Rāma and Siegfried are portrayed as kings in their relation to each of these spaces. They are all complex sovereignty images which serve to legitimise and perpetuate the office of hereditary kingship engendered by a warrior aristocracy. I viewed them from the standpoint both of the fictional world of the poems centred in the Cities of Ayodhyā and Worms and the actual world of the performance. The two worlds are one and the same to the extent that behaviour considered

exemplary in the actual world is predictably extolled in the world of the poems, and behaviour which is not tolerated in the first is censured in the second. I made it clear, however, that the idealised 'real' world of the cities of Ayodhyā and Worms as depicted in the poems is not in every respect a mirror image of the actual socio-political world of the performance. However (as I suggested in chapter three when applying to epic poetry Levin's theory based on his interpretation of English metaphysical poetry) for modern as well as contemporary recipients of the Sanskrit and German epics both the 'real' world of Ayodhyā and Worms and the deviant world of the foreign cities Laṅkā, Kiṣkindā, Isenstein and Nibelungenburg become the composite world of the poem which encompasses both the natural and the supernatural, the socio-political and the mythical. The first two symbols that I explored, the City and the deviant City in the Forest, are to be interpreted in the measure of their relationship to the third, the Forest. Thus we see the City as the total opposite or negation of the Forest (the mysterious, anarchic Other), and the City in the Forest as the synthesis of elements of both City and Forest. Indeed, it is the very characteristic of likeness to the City found in the City in the Forest which makes the cities of Isenstein, Nibelungenburg, Laṅkā and Kiṣkindhā more threatening, both to the principals within the poem and in the perception of the early audiences outside it. The symbol-motifs used of the City reflect the wealth and therefore power of the sovereign. Both poems make it clear that the one buys the other. The symbiotic relationship, equally symbolic, of the idealised warrior-king-protectors Rāma and Siegfried with the devoted people reflects the inferred symbiotic relationship of the respective singer-poets with their royal or aristocratic patrons who need the paid services of singers to perpetuate the status quo.

Attempts to identify the actual geographical location of the Cities in the Forest in each poem are, I believe, not only misguided in that such searches are arid and doomed to failure, but they also betray a lack of understanding of the nature of epic. The genre is not a historical record of a civilisation and its dealings with its foreign neighbours, rather it reveals 'the historicity of a mentality' as Pollock expresses it, the mythicised reaction to the notion of difference. The Cities in the Forest therefore belong to the realm of the imagination. As I have indicated, certain aspects of the City are clearly recognisable in the City in the Forest. What does not resemble the idealised world of the City is the fact that the cities of this type lie in wild terrain beyond the City bounds and they are under the sway of a ruler who symbolises the monstrous Other: Brünhild, Rāvaṇa and Sugrīva. All three are monstrous in the socio-sexual dimension. Sugrīva manages to break free of his sexual addiction and thus become of service to Rāma, but the powers of the socio-culturally aberrant Brünhild and Rāvaṇa must be liquidated and proper order restored as pertains in the City. There are, of course, implications here for the performance worlds of the two epics: female power of any

kind over the male of the species and sexual depravity and abduction, excesses which threaten the very fabric of the social order, are not to be tolerated.

The Forest lies beyond even the quasi-normal City in the Forest which is the exotic variant of the xenophobic City. It is a wild, anarchic region where the king's rule holds no sway. Its terrain is variously forest, mountains, springs and/or rivers, and, in the case of the *Nibelungenlied,* islands, all locations which carry ancient mytho-religious significance in European and Indian tradition. I remarked on the significance of the ancient mystical tree/rock/water nexus as portrayed in the poems, auspicious in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but negatively portentous in the *Nibelungenlied.* Stretches of water form the boundary in both works between the known 'real' world of the poems and the unknown, threatening Forest of which they are part. The Crossing into spaces where liminal events take place is a staple epic theme, and it is represented in my texts particularly by the journeys over the Ganges, Rhine and Danube. Sītā's first crossing of the Ganges with Rāma which leads ultimately to Laṅkā ends in happy reunion, her second in permanent separation from him. Siegfried and the Burgundians make their crossings to their deaths. The darkness and remoteness of the Forest also make it a space of deception in both epics and a harbourer of the deceivers Hagen, Gunther, Mārica, Rāvaṇa and Lakṣmaṇa.

Perhaps most importantly, the Forest is the space of trial, the proving-ground of future warrior-kings. Rāma and Siegfried successfully pass testing by struggles with monstrous beings who guard the Forest, and they thereby receive Forest-granted validation of their fitness and right to rule on their return to the City as heirs-apparent. The Forest is therefore paradoxically not only the representation of chaos, the negation of the king's rule of law and order as exemplified in and symbolised by the City, but the validator of royal power which is able to tame and transform the Forest by conquest. That Forest-legitimated power symbolised by their superhuman strength in battle, acquired by means of the defeat of the Forest guardians, enables Siegfried and Rāma to perform socio-culturally saving acts in Isenstein and Laṅkā. Returning to their respective Cities, they rule unchallenged until eventually faced with the consequences of past events. This is where we left them at the close of my last chapter.

I suggested that a king's Forest-validated authority to rule holds good provided he stays in the proper relationship with the Forest. Rāma, the upholder of *dharma*, does so, and his reign is long and his subjects prosper, but Siegfried does not and his reign is cut short. Falk argues that the breaking of this relationship results in the loss of kingship and community in ancient South Asia. This is, in fact, exactly the consequence of Siegfried's rejection of Brünhild whose husband he should have been according to the custom of the Forest: by failing to respect the Forest he loses the kingship of Xanten and Nibelungenland through

death. One may assume that his death leads to the loss of community in Xanten under a mourning, ageing King Sigmund who has long since abdicated in favour of his son, and an heir who, it would seem, is still a child. Xanten now lies open to its enemies within and without. Once again, we see the intermeshing of the mytho-symbolic and the socio-political, the composite mytho-political, represented in our poems by the Forest and the City, which lies at the heart of epic. By contrast with Siegfried's death, Rāma's idealised self-immolation has very different socio-political consequences: as a result of his proper dealings with the Forest he leaves two adult heirs and an enlarged kingdom with strengthened socio-political structures. Does Siegfried's cavalier treatment of the Forest make him an atypical hero-king, a bringer rather than a defeater of chaos as he is often viewed?

To read the *Nibelungenlied* exclusively in its political dimension (or indeed exclusively in its mythical dimension, a theoretical possibility) is I think to miss the significance of the work and the figures of Siegfried and of epic warrior-kings in general. Siegfried is king of the City in the Forest of Nibelungenburg as well as of the City of Xanten, just as Rāma is king of Laṅkā, through his installed vassal Vibhīṣaṇa, as well as of Ayodhyā. There are many gradations of epic hero, as Murdoch rightly observes (1996, 4). By no means all are like Akhilles whose ruthless search for personal glory and revenge on the battlefield is conducted without reference to community, that is, to socio-political considerations. Murdoch, who discusses the *Nibelungenlied* exclusively on the political level, argues that the Germanic hero is typically one who acts for the communal political good against the powers of chaos which threaten to destabilise society; Siegfried in his opinion is quite the reverse, 'a disruptive force within an established society, [...] Grendel invited to Hroðgar's table' (ibid. 4 and 174). For Tally he becomes the monster he has killed when he bathes in the dragon's blood.[5] I do not consider him to be monstrous either in his behaviour at Worms or in his rejection of Brünhild, rather as a variant of the ancient warrior-king, proud and invincible in battle, who makes sound judgements in Xanten, abolishes gynocracy and puts women in their rightful psycho-sexual place. These last two acts, accomplished symbolically by the defeat of Brünhild in the twin contests of the athletic field and the marriage-bed, are socio-political ones in that they counteract the threat of instability which Brünhild poses.

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[5] Tally's opinion in her dissertation cited by John Flood in McConnell 1998, 47 (Joyce Ann Tally: *The Dragon's Progress: The Significance of the Dragon in Beowulf', 'Volsunga Saga', 'Das Nibelungenlied' and 'Der Ring des Nibelungen'*, diss. University of Denver 1983, 143. As I argued earlier, the episode is a variant of the traditional narrative paradigm of the defeated monster who aids the victor. I consider it vital to our understanding of the notion of epic kingship. To me the dragon's granting of the *Hornhaut* is a sovereignty image symbolising the Forest's validation of Siegfried's royal authority. It bestows (almost total) invulnerability in battle, that is, the dragon's outer characteristics, not its inner ones. I do not believe that Siegfried becomes the embodiment of the Forest's chaos unleashed on the 'real' world of Worms. It is a traditional hero-king's duty to defeat chaos, but contact with it brings added responsibilities and dangers, a subject to which I shall return.

Siegfried is generally viewed on the socio-political level as a figure tolerated in the court of Worms as long as his potentially dangerous superhuman powers may safely be exploited. Once he becomes a liability instead of an asset, he has to be despatched. There is indeed a sense in which Siegfried is used by Gunther on Hagen's advice to perform what I have termed the culturally saving acts of defeating the Saxons and Brünhild by virtue of the invulnerability that contact with the Forest has symbolically bestowed on him. However, I believe this is only part of the action. On the mytho-political level, because Siegfried has transgressed against the law of the Forest in rejecting Brünhild, that very domain in time colludes with Hagen by facilitating his death under a linden tree, the parallel location of his youthful acquisition of magic invulnerability.

Müller's reading of the poem, on the other hand, is the diametrical opposite of mine. He does not accept a view of Siegfried as the traditional Outsider warrior-hero, arguing that the account of his chivalric origins in Xanten make it plain that he is not this type of hero at all. 'In der Fassung des ‚Nibelungenliedes' ist Sifrit eben nicht der vagabundierende Heros, der ‚von draußen' kommt, allen in der bekannten Welt überlegen ist, doch wegen seiner Herkunft nie voll akzeptiert wird; der die bestehende Ordnung rettet, dann aber selbst zur Gefahr für sie wird und folglich beseitigt werden muß. Bei diesem Sagentypus handelt es sich um einen Kulturmythos, in dem sich eine entwickeltere Zivilisation mit dem auseinandersetzt, was jenseits der Grenzen liegt, dessen sie einerseits bedarf und das sie andererseits fürchtet. Das ‚Nibelungenlied' erzählt diesen Kulturmythos nicht' (81). Müller in fact plays down Siegfried's association with the Forest, stating merely that he has an 'affinity' with it, a situation sufficient for the internal narrative logic of the poem. It is an assessment entirely in keeping with his view of the poem as a post-oral construct: indeed he cites the above arguments as evidence of the work's composition in written form. For me, Siegfried is strongly identified with Forest as well as City and moves precariously between the two, on which more in a moment.

'Siegfried is, simply, not suitable for kingship. [... His] acts [...] are often questionable', argues Murdoch. This seems a harsh judgement of Siegfried in view of the kingly behaviour that I have just cited. Siegfried's acts are far from 'often questionable', but Murdoch is right in one respect, one which he disregards. Siegfried, compared with Rāma, is not suitable kingship material in that he allows his love for a woman to cloud his judgement, thereby making two fatal mistakes which ultimately lead not only to tragedy but to disaster. In this sense he is a very different hero-king from Rāma who sacrifices personal happiness with the woman he loves for the good of society. Heeding the fears of the husbands of Ayodhyā, he avoids threatened disintegration of the moral order by not permitting the socially dangerous precedent of keeping as his consort a woman who, however unwillingly, has been in contact with another man. He brings tragedy upon himself

and Sītā by exiling her, but thereby averts a socio-cultural disaster of the type which Siegfried brings on himself and others. The text makes it clear that sending her away brings him much grief (7.44): it is a reaction very different from his dispassionate acceptance, for the upholding of *dharma,* of his own forest exile and the inevitable parting from his parents.

The first of Siegfried's fatal mistakes I have already touched on. Out of love for Kriemhild he engages in a royal bride-winning contest on behalf of a lesser, unworthy, king who, like those before him should by rights have failed the test and perished. Brünhild should have been his bride, and the victor's trophies he takes from her in Gunther's marriage-bed should have been deserved instead of stolen from another man. He has broken faith with the Forest which granted him supernatural strength, thereby symbolising his fitness to rule as king. Siegfried's second fatal mistake is one against which kings are warned in the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s advice on the practice of royal statecraft: a king does not tell secrets to women (2.94.42). The reasoning behind this advice is presumably the perception that women cannot be trusted to keep them. Unfortunately for Siegfried, his beloved Kriemhild proves the wisdom of such advice. He reveals to her the secrets of his hidden vulnerability and the taming of Brünhild and in time, ironically out of love for him, she passes them on. The ring and girdle, tokens of the queen's lost virginity, may be for him 'war booty' but for all who see them when Kriemhild defiantly displays them they are 'sexual trophies', as McConnell correctly points out (1998, 187, n.22). Siegfried loves not wisely but too well in confiding to his wife mysteries which he should have kept to himself. It was his all-consuming infatuation with the unseen ideal of Kriemhild and Gunther's promise of her hand in marriage in return for the prize of Brünhild earlier in the story which induced him to win the Queen in the Forest by bride contest and subsequently humiliate her by rejection. Thus his two fatal mistakes spring from his passion for the Burgundian princess, a weakness for which he must pay with his life. That different epics reflect the differing socio-cultural view which produced them is axiomatic. A comparison with Odysseus' relationship with women other than his wife shows that he is permitted to dally with the enchantress Kirke for more than a year and still regain his kingdom as well as his wife by successfully completing Penelope's bride-trial. It is unthinkable, on the other hand, that Rāma would do such a thing while waiting to be restored to Sītā, or even after her exile. Siegfried remains faithful to Kriemhild both before and after marriage. There is no question of sexual relations with Brünhild: because there are none, but rightfully should be in marriage according to the law of the Forest, he loses not only his kingdom but also his life.

I return now to the view of Siegfried as bringer rather than defeater of chaos following his taming of the Forest, by virtue of his very transaction with it. McConnell sees him as an unleasher of chaos in the courtly world, chaos of which he has become symbolically part by

bathing in the dragon's blood.[6] For Murdoch he seems to show himself as an irresponsible prankster, a type of royal Til Eulenspiegel figure, at the hunt when he sets free the captive bear to cause havoc in the camp. I disagree. To me the binding and releasing of the bear as also the apparently wanton, excessive slaughter of animals which Siegfried perpetrates are symbolic of his power over the Forest and the creatures within it, power validated by his youthful taming of this realm of the Other. It is a power not only to protect but also to destroy if he so wishes. Pollock takes a similar view of Rāma as king when discussing the strange episode of his descent into madness. Dangerously distraught at Sītā's disappearance during the hunt for the jewelled deer, Rāma threatens to destroy the universe if she is not restored to him. Citing extracts from the treatises on kingship in *Mahābhārata* 12, Pollock shows that the ancient Indian king, being regarded as omnipotent, has the power, if angered, to destroy as well as protect the world (64-7). Cú Chulainn is another warrior-king with the potential to change from protector to destroyer, even of his own people, as McCone observes. Following his last 'boyhood deed' in the *Táin*, his battle-anger is still so intense that he challenges them to fight and has to be cooled down in three vats of water (171-2). This destructive tendency threatens to 'boil over' at provocation, much like Rāma's. Siegfried's display of the same tendency during the hunt is the last kingly act that he performs and intensely symbolic of his association with the Otherness of the Forest. The act is not in itself a threat to the socio-political stability of Worms but it typifies this very Otherness in him which Hagen and Gunther, having exploited it against the Saxons and in Isenstein, must now nullify. McCone notes the attribute of liminality attaching to the hero and the risks inherent in the state of moving between various sets of opposing worlds (which I would summarise in the terms City and Forest) and not properly belonging to either of them, a state in which a single failure can destroy him (188). Since the secret of Siegfried's Forest-validated power is known in the City and because he has violated its law, the Forest no longer protects him and he falls prey to Hagen's cunning.

Leaving now specific observations about the kingship of Siegfried and Rāma as portrayed in the respective epics, I turn to wider questions arising from this study. As to whether the works demonstrate widely accepted characteristics of oral narrative poetry, I believe I have shown that they do. I believe also that the study adds to our knowledge of epic and Indo-European epic in particular. Hindus, understandably proud of their socio-cultural heritage, have generally regarded the *Rāmāyaṇa* as being uniquely Indian. It is a poem which present-day Hindu supremacist groups have used for doctrinaire purposes. Certainly much of its ethos is indisputably Indian, even in those parts of the core *kāṇḍas* which appear to belong to the earliest stage of composition; as the poem develops over the course of several

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[6] Cited by Flood 1998 referring to McConnell c. 1999. Flood appears to endorse this view of Siegfried.

centuries the strictly brahmanical ethos becomes increasingly apparent. And yet there is much also, both narratologically and in particular imagistically, which it shares with epics of European origin. Through my examination of the texts which has revealed some perhaps unexpected parallels I have demonstrated that the *Rāmāyaṇa* is firmly rooted in the Indo-European epic tradition. The choice, therefore, of a medieval German work against which to compare and contrast the *Rāmāyaṇa* has proved, I believe, extremely productive.

My investigation of the simile in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Nibelungenlied* has led me to conclude that its use as episodic delineator in Indo-European epic may possibly be a further sign of orality in addition to those already noted. In my chosen texts it is the stereotyped simile which acts as narratological marker, that is, as episode-opener in both and as also as episode- closer in the *Rāmāyaṇa,* and it seems to me entirely possible that the use of stock simile at these points in the story is one of the traditional oral poet's strategies for organising and retaining the material for performance. By comparison with my texts *Beowulf*, for example, makes use of simile hardly at all, and those rare instances where it does appear are by no means stereotypical. The possibility of a link between stock simile as narratological marker and orality is one which could be explored further in other epic texts.

There remains the question of possible Proto-Indo-European epic motifs. I embarked on this comparison open to the theoretical notion of their existence and the possibility that a study of imagery in my chosen texts might help to confirm this notion. During the course of my exploration of formulaic similes and symbols the likelihood of common motifs traceable to Proto-Indo-European origin became increasingly remote, and I became more and more convinced that the commonality of these motifs within the two poems is probably due to the near-universality of such images and their near-universal function within epic poetry as reinforcers of a conservative received heroic world view. A comparison of the *Rāmāyaṇa* with other Indo-European epics and also of the Indian and German epics with epics of non-Indo-European origin might well help to establish this probability and therefore constitutes an area of further study. Such tasks I leave to others working on epics from other language groups equipped to build on the parallels that I have described here. Returning to the notion of the Indo-European rather than the hypothetical Proto-Indo-European motif, I find McCone's caveat on the subject a salutary one. Too many scholars, he says, have considered the labelling of a motif as 'Indo-European' an explanation in itself which obviates the need for textual analysis of the motif in question (59). It is surely textual anaysis of the kind that I have carried out which will lead to the conclusion that certain motifs are or are not Indo-European.

Epic is a much broader genre than is sometimes allowed. Thus, for all the similarities to be found in our two examples, there are clear differences in ethos and expression, but these are

just as significant and revealing as the homologies. Indeed, it is the disparities which make clearer the significance of the similarities and make the whole area of comparative studies so rewarding. Reading the poems on a level which happily accepts both analogy and difference and with an openness towards their aural dimension gives voice once again to the singer-authors who composed them.

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Appendix 1. Pre-battle Exchanges: An Epic Motif

Agonistic taunting exchanges between warriors about to meet in single combat are common in epic, including the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but sometimes a variant is found, that of self-eulogising speeches by a warrior to his men before entering the fray. The object of both is to prepare the hero for combat by producing battle anger. In other words, the ritual verbal posturing releases the adrenalin necessary for the fight. Hatto terms this a verbal heroic cult, (1989, 224). The solemn ritual is not confined to Indo-European communities but is also found, for instance, in parts of the African continent; it does not consist of flamboyant hyperbole, says Hatto, and is not taken lightly. '[...] words have the status of deeds. [...] Promises, especially of performance in battle, must be kept. Boasting of past deeds is free. Forward boasts, unrealized, destroy a name and a man', (ibid). The heroic poet, of course, exploits the tradition in order to arouse his audience's anticipation of and subsequent relish of the battle narrative which follows.

In order to place examples of agonistic martial posturing in the *Rāmāyaṇa* within an Indo-European epic context let us first consider parallel examples in other works. The heroic confrontation occurs typically as follows: the warrior declares his paternity and obtains reciprocal information from his adversary (in order to avoid unwitting battle with a kinsman) [a], mocks him [b], and states his intention to kill him [c], not necessarily in that order. In the *Iliad* we have, for example, the pre-battle exchange between Heracles' son Tlepolemus and Sarpedon, son of Zeus at 5.632-54. Tlepolemus first taunts Sarpedon with cowardice and lack of fighting prowess [b], then casts doubt on his paternity [also b], comparing him with his own father, Heracles (also born of Zeus) [a], who once sacked Troy, [b]. Lastly he vows to kill him, [c]. Sarpedon gallantly responds by acknowledging Heracles' greatness and blaming Laomedon, a former king of Troy, for Troy's defeat and then promises Tlepolemus' death instead of his own [c]. I have begun with an example from the *Iliad,* but the *Hildebrandslied* fragment would have served equally well to illustrate the archetypal warrior confrontation formula. Hildebrand, having ascertained Hadubrand's lineage after ritualistic questioning [a], hints at but declines to reveal his own outright, (an omission which the poet exploits to poignant effect).

Hiltibrant gimahalta (Heribrantes sunu) [...]

[...] her frâgên gistuont

fôhêm uuortum, *h*wer sîn fater wâri

.....

..... 'eddo *h*weſihhes cnuosles dû sîs'. (*HL* 7a, 8b, 11b)

('Hildebrand, son of Herebrand, began to ask in few words who his father was [.....] 'and of what lineage you are').

Hadubra*n*t gimahalta, Hiltibrantes sunu:

'dat sagêtun mî ûsere liuti,

[...]

dat Hiltibrant hætti mîn fater: ih heittu Hadubrant'. (*HL* 14, 15 and 17)

('Hadubrand, son of Hildebrand, said, "It was told me by our people [...] that my father's name was Hildebrand: my name is Hadubrand" ').

Realising that Hadubrand is his unknown son, Hildebrand offers him gold arm bands. Hadubrand insults Hildebrand by rejecting the gift, and the taunting begins [b], Hadubrand mocking Hildebrand's age (lines 39-40), Hildebrand his opponent's youthful lack of battle experience (55-6); he has already addressed him as 'chind' in line 13.

'du bist dir alter Hun, ummet spaher,

spenis mih mit dinem *w*ortun, wili mih dinu speru werpan'. (*HL* 39-40)

('You are excessively cunning, old Hun. You try to entice me with words so that you can cast your spear at me'.)

'doh maht du nu aodlihho, ibu dir din ellen taoc,

in sus heremo man hrusti giwinnan'. (*HL* 55-6)

('However, you may easily - if your strength is sufficient - win an older man's armour in this way'.)

There is here no boasting declaration of intent to kill [c], merely an acceptance of the inevitablility that battle must take place - since they serve warring masters - and that at least one will die.

Beowulf features a one-sided variant of the challenge. In view of the sub-human nature of his opponents there are no exchanges as preface to the fight, but his publicly delivered speeches at 407-55, 1383-96 and 2425-37, before facing Grendel, then Grendel's mother and finally the dragon, follow a similar bragging agonistic pattern, in effect the declaration to kill [c]: the declaring of his past exploits and his unique suitability to undertake successfully the forthcoming contests. To instance just a few lines among many: since he has already

demonstrated his mighty prowess (419-22a) he vows to Hrothgar to deal with Grendel single handed (424b-426a).

'selfe ofersāwon đā ic of searwum cwōm,

fāh from fēondum, þǣr ic fife geband,

ȳđde eotena cyn, ond on ȳđum slōg

niceras nihtes', (*Beo.* 419-22a)

('They [the elders of his people] themselves witnessed me coming from battle, stained with the blood of my enemies, when I bound five, a family of giants, and on the waves I slew water monsters by night').

And before going out against the dragon he declares to his men:

'Nis þæt ēower sīđ

nē gemet mannes, nef*ne* mīn ānes

þæet hē wiđ āglǣcean eofođo dǣle,

eorlscype efne.' (*Beo.* 2532-7)

('This is no undertaking for you, nor does any man have the power except myself alone to deal out strength [i.e. fight] against monsters, to perform mighty deeds').

The challenge to name one's father and the response [b] which we have already noted at the beginning of the *Hildebrandslied* features in *Beowulf*, not, as already stated, as a prelude to battle, but in the watchman's challenge (albeit a non-hostile one)[1] to strangers Beowulf and his men to state their lineage and mission in Hrothgar's kingdom (236-57) and in Beowulf's reply, a confirmation of credentials which will permit entry into Denmark in order to despatch the terrorising Grendel.

'Wē synt gumcynnes Gēata lēode

ond Higelāces heorđgenēatas.

Wæs mīn fæder folcum gecȳþed,

æþele ordfruma, Ecgþēow hāten'; (*Beo.* 260-3)

'We are people of the race of Geats, and Hygelac's hearth-companions. My father was renowned among the nations, a noble leader in battle called Ecgtheow'.

---

[1] Though merely eliciting information rather than inciting retaliation, it is relevant to the comparison because of its formulaic nature.

The Danish sentry's challenge is reminiscent of Gunther's equally non-hostile formulaic eliciting of information from Siegfried [a] on his arrival in Worms. Beowulf's non-reactive stock answer to the challenge is, however, markedly different from Siegfried's surprise counter-challenge [c]. Gunther is taken aback when his guest states his intention to fight him for his kingdom.

‚Mich wundert dirre mære', sprach der künec zehant,

‚von wannen ir, edel Sîvrit, sît komen in ditze lant,

oder waz ir wellet werben ze Wormez an den Rîn'. (*NL* 106, 1-3)

‚Ich bin ouch ein recke und solde krône tragen.

[...]

sone ruoch ich, ist daz iemen lieb oder leit:

ich wil an iu ertwingen, swaz ir muget hân:

lant unde bürge, daz sol mir werden undertân'. (109, 1 and 110, 2-4)

(See also 113 and 114, 1-3)

The text is not explicit here, but Siegfried appears to have reverted to his original intention to win Kriemhild by force as told to Sigmund:

‚swaz ich friwentlîche nicht ab in erbit,

daz mac sus erwerben mit ellen dâ mîn hant.

ich trouwe an in ertwingen beide liute unde lant'. (55, 2-4)

That declaration of intent seemed however to have been successfully countered by his father before he left for Worms:

‚Mit gewalte niemen erwerben mac die maget'. (57, 1)

For many scholars Gunther's and Siegfried's differing reactions encapsulate the problematic collision between heroic and chivalric ethos which pervades much of the poem. Whatever the implications of Siegfried's reversal of heart for the political balance of power at Gunther's medieval court, to me the archetypal agonistic pattern of the exchange is clear. This applies as much to Gunther's opening challenge as to Siegfried's far more extreme one. After all, the king has to some degree put words into his guest's mouth by using the formulaic 'waz ir wellet werben' which echoes Siegfried's declaration to his father quoted above.

Now, we find paralleled in the *Rāmāyaṇa* all three aspects of the ritualistic heroic

confrontation formula. We have already noted that not all the passages examined contained the full three-part formula, but my example from the *Araṇyakāṇḍa* (3.19.7-10) does. It is the account of the speeches which precede Rāma's battle with the fourteen *rākṣasas* sent by Khara to avenge Rāma's mutilation of his sister Śūrpaṇakhā. Having declared to Lakṣmaṇa his intention to despatch them all, Rāma speaks first, announcing his lineage and his name [a]. Part of the following verse (8) is decidedly non-heroic and therefore at odds with the context in that Rāma describes himself and his brother as fruit- and root-eating ascetics who follow the path of *dharma,* which for holy men would include *ahiṃsa* (non-violence). His hunter's *kṣatriya* bow which he subsequently mentions has clearly been used not only for non-vegetarian purposes but also to kill *rākṣasas* at his warrior initiation, but we should let this rhapsodic aberration pass. In the same verse he appears at first sight to question the *rākṣasas* in similarly inappropriate terms, demanding to know the reason for their armed approach when it is clear that they have come to exact vengeance. The question is of course formulaic and provokes his adversaries to utter the by now familiar bragging statement of intent to kill [c] which will follow in verses 13 and 15. To end his speech Rāma makes his own declaration of intent [c].

putrau daśarathasyāvāṃ bhrātarau rāmalakṣmaṇau
praviṣṭau sītayā sārdhaṃ duścaraṃ daṇḍakāvanam

[...] kim artham upahiṃsatha
yuṣmān pāpātmakān hantuṃ viprakārān mahavane
ṛṣīṇāṃ tu niyogena prāpto ' ham saśarāsanaḥ
tiṣṭhataivātra saṃtuṣṭā nopasarpitum arhatha
yadi prāṇair ihārtho vo nivartadhvaṃ niśācarāḥ (*Rām.* 3.19.7, 8d, 9-10)

('We are sons of Daśaratha, the brothers Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, who, together with Sītā, have entered the dense Daṇḍaka forest. [...] What is the purpose of your violent approach? I have come at the behest of the sages to kill you impious creaures who have done wrong in the great forest. Be content to stay exactly where you are. Do not come any nearer. If indeed you set store by your lives turn back, night prowlers').

The *rākṣasas*' initial response carries resonances of Sarpedon's to Tlepolemus: they declare that, on the contrary, Rāma is the one who will die [c].[2] They also identify themselves as warriors of Khara [a]. Verse 14 contains the formulaic taunting [b] which belittles Rāma's fighting prowess and the final verse is an elaboration of [c]. As in the *Hildebrandslied* and the *Iliad*, the ending of the second speech is the signal to commence battle.

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[2] Cf. the similar pattern of the pre-battle exchange between the warring brothers Vālin and Sugrīva in which each vows to kill the other (4.14.18-19).

krodham utpādya no bhartuḥ kharasya sumahātmanaḥ

tvam eva hāsyase prāṇān adyāsmabhir hato yudhi

kā hi te śaktir ekasya bahūnāṃ raṇamūrdhani

asmākam agrataḥ sthātuṃ kiṃ punar yoddhum āhave

ebhir bāhuprayuktair naḥ parighaiḥ śulapaṭṭiśaiḥ

prāṇāṃs tyakṣyasi vīryaṃ ca dhanus'ca karapīḍitam (*Rām.* 3.19.13-15)

('Since you have roused the anger of our all-powerful lord Khara you will today forfeit your life instead, cut down by us in battle. You are only one against so many, not strong enough in battle to withstand our advance or keep fighting our mighty vanguard. With these maces, spears and pikes with which our arms are furnished we shall deprive you of your life, your strength and your bow').

This passage, then, typifies the heroic core of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and places the work unmistakably in the Indo-European epic tradition.

Appendix 2. Synopsis of the Rāmāyaṇa

King Daśaratha of Ayodhyā in north-east India holds an *aśvamedha* ('horse-sacrifice') in order to obtain an heir. Four sons are born to him. The eldest, Rāma, and his brother Lakṣmaṇa are later instructed as young princes by the sage Viśvāmitra. Rāma completes his initiation as heir by killing the female monster Tātakā and winning by bride contest Sītā, princess of Mithilā. Now in advanced years, Daśaratha decides to abdicate in favour of Rāma. Claiming two boons which the king once granted her, Kaikeyī, his favourite wife, extracts in the royal bedchamber a reluctant promise from her husband to appoint their son Bhārata regent instead and to exile Rāma to the forest for fourteen years.

Rāma leaves his sorrowing parents Daśaratha and Kausalyā and the city of Ayodhyā for the forest, accompanied by his ever-faithful wife Sītā and devoted brother Lakṣmaṇa. There he defeats two forest monsters. In due course he infuriates Rāvaṇa, ruler of a human-eating race of forest dwellers (*rākṣasas*) by mutilating the latter's sister Śūrpaṇakhā when she makes lustful advances to him, and then by killing Rāvaṇa's brothers when they provoke him in turn. Rāvaṇa determines to lure Rāma to Laṅkā, his capital, planning to punish him in battle. To do this he abducts Sītā by deception and takes her to Laṅkā where she steadfastly refuses his advances. Rāma obtains the help of the royal *vānara* Sugrīva whom he has installed as ruler of Kiṣkindhā by killing his brother Vālin. Sugrīva lends Rāma the services of his warrior-minister Hanumān and also his troops both in the search for Sītā and in the protracted battle which ensues. Rāma eventually kills Rāvaṇa and, after Sīta has proved her faithfulness to her husband by means of an ordeal by fire, returns in triumph with her to Ayodhyā and the throne, the fourteen years of exile now being up. The original narrative almost certainly ends here.

In the last part of the epic, of somewhat later date linguistically and socio-culturally, Rāma is persuaded by the outraged husbands of Ayodhyā that moral order will break down if he continues to keep with him a wife who has been at the mercy of an abductor. Reluctantly he sends Sītā into forest exile in Vālmīki's ashram where she gives birth to sons Kuśa and Lava who some years later learn from the sage-poet how to sing the tale of Rāma. They perform the poem before Rāma, and he sends for Sītā who returns to prove her wifely chastity. Calling on Mother Earth to receive her, she disappears from sight, leaving Rāma to his grief. After a long, just rule he is received in heaven in the form of the god Viṣṇu.

Appendix 3. Abbreviations

ABORI	*Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
G-RM	*Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*
IHQ	*Indian Historical Quarterly*
IT	*Indologica Taurinensia*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JAS	*Journal of Asian Studies*
JOIB	*Journal of the Oriental Institute of Baroda*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
MLN	*Modern Language Notes*
MLQ	*Modern Language Quarterly*
PMLA	*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*
ZfdPh	*Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*

Appendix 4. Glossary of Sanskrit Terms

ārya	Noble; conforming to the stringent Aryan code of socio-religious ethics (opp. *anārya*, base; not adhering to the code)
ashram	Ascetic's retreat
brahman	Belonging to the priestly class
dharma	Observation of one's socio-religious duty towards the gods and creation (opp. *adharma*: the ignoring of this duty)
kāṇḍa	One of the seven parts of the Rāmāyaṇa
kṣatriya	Belonging to the aristocratic warrior class
kuśilava	Itinerant singer-poet
pāda	Foot or quarter verse
Purāṇas	Traditional mythological tales
rākṣasa, fem. *-ī*	Cannibalistic inhabitant of Laṅkā; also lone forest-dwelling monster
sarga	Section within a *kāṇḍa*
śloka	Couplet
sūta	Court bard and king's charioteer
Vaiṣṇavite	Adj. used of a devotee of the god Viṣṇu
vānara	Forest-dweller; inhabitant of Kiṣkindhā
Vedas	Hymns and sacrificial spells