Poetic Conventions as Opposed to Conventional Poetry?

A Place for *kavisamaya-ādi* in Comparative Kāvya/Kakawin Studies

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The relation of Old Javanese Kakawin to the Sanskrit Kāvya 'poem, imaginative work, poetry in general' and specifically its long form 'court epic' (*mahākāvya*) has not received a great deal of attention.[1] What studies there are have usually, and quite correctly, taken as a point of departure Sanskrit literary theory, especially in the form more or less contemporaneous with the composition of the *Bhaṭṭikāvya* (BK) and its adaptation the KR. This early phase of Sanskrit poetics primarily focuses on formal aspects such as figures of speech (*alaṃkāra*), of such central concern that the discourse of literary theory as a whole was thereafter known literally as the 'science of figures' (*alaṃkāra-śāstra*). Hermeneutically this is sound procedure, in that modern inquiry thus reflects the concerns of the original readers and writers of the cosmopolitan language of South and Southeast Asia, Sanskrit, and the cosmopolitan vernaculars which arose in response to it.[2] But this approach tends by nature to have the effect of emphasizing the similarity of the vernacular to the cosmopolitan rather than differences

1. The ongoing research of Thomas Hunter is an important exception. I generally use the term Kāvya rather than Mahākāvya; though the latter is in terms of genre the direct counterpart to Kakawin, Sanskrit theory addresses 'imaginative literature' in broad terms, even if it is in practice oriented toward the long form.
All translations from Sanskrit are my own. Being an inexpert reader of Old Javanese, I have as a rule quoted others' translations, though with the help of OJED I have at times modified them.

2. Sheldon Pollock uses the term 'Sanskrit cosmopolis' for 'the transregional culture-power sphere of Sanskrit' as spread 'across all of South and much of Southeast Asia' and defines 'cosmopolitan vernacular' as a 'synthetic register of an emergent regional literary language that localizes the full spectrum of expressive qualities of the superposed cosmopolitan code' (Pollock 2006:13, 12, 322). I use phrases like 'cosmopolitan-vernacular comparison' to mean comparison of cosmopolitan literature (Sanskrit) to literature produced in a cosmopolitan vernacular (in this case, Old Javanese).

between the two. This paper proposes another approach as a complement to the formal analysis of Kakawin in Kāvya terms, namely the comparative study of literary conventions divided into specific categories. For this I look to a little discussed conceptual field in certain treatises of poetics in Sanskrit before trying to show, briefly and tentatively, how it can help get at what is specifically Old Javanese about the Kakawin texts.

One reason the juxtaposition of Sanskrit theory and Kakawin practice is so rare is a certain defensiveness on the part of contemporary Old Javanese studies, perhaps a reaction to the legacy of antiquated notions like 'Greater India'. Take the assertion by the authors of a recent text edition and translation that 'while Kakawin may share the metrical system of the Sanskrit Kāvya, and much else, they are nevertheless authentic, autonomous products of Javanese culture' (Teeuw and Robson 2005:36). This claim to autonomy is most clearly belied by Kakawin adherence to the poetic requirements, if not quite ironclad laws (*nomoi*), of Sanskrit Mahākāvya form and content. But even when scholars freely acknowledge instances in Kakawin of the prescribed battle scenes, dalliances in water, and the like, the vast corpus of Sanskrit literary theory is treated as if extending little beyond the two terse, albeit oldest and famous, descriptions of the Mahākāvya genre by the theorists Daṇḍin and Bhāmaha (Supomo 1977 1:42–8; Creese 1998:50–3). As I will show with reference to later treatises, which describe conventional content in greater detail, these foundational theoretical texts need not be considered the *non plus ultra* for comparative analysis.

Before we move on to a definition of literary conventions, though, a terminological note is in order. Certain terms that often appear in scholarship on the genre of court epic, whether Sanskrit or Old Javanese, reflect a significant critical misunderstanding when confronted with conventional material, a post-Romantic attitude revealed by epithets with negative connotations such as 'stereotyped', 'clichéd', 'hackneyed', or 'stock'. This position is as anachronistic as assuming the relation of Sanskrit and Old Javanese literary cultures is that of trunk and branch, original and derivative, or major and minor. Edwin Gerow (1971:72) describes a poetic sensibility, shared by Kāvya and Kakawin, that clearly demands a radically different critical outlook from that which the modern reader typically brings to it:

> Much that appears at first blameworthy in classical poetry is explicable in terms of the de-emphasis of the story. The story is never central; it is at best a pretext for stringing together admirable verses—really just a narrative theme. The story may at any time be interrupted by long descriptive irrelevancies on the sunrise, the mountains, the moonset, which appear extraneous by standards emphasizing the unity of the plot.

Hence, to preserve a more objective tone than 'cliché' and the like convey, albeit less elegantly than the cosmopolitan/vernacular distinction does in the case of Sanskrit and Old Javanese, and at the risk of monotony, I try to maintain the use of 'convention', a word both relatively neutral and a Latinism equivalent to the literal Sanskrit meaning of *samaya*, a 'coming together', in this case, of poets (*kavi*).

In any attempt to understand what this term *kavisamaya*, commonly translated as 'poetic convention', means to Sanskrit theory, chapters fourteen to sixteen of Rājaśekhara's *Kāvyamīmāṃsā*[3] must serve as the basis, as this first exposition of the concept would largely be followed by later writers. Overall, this text is iconoclastic, the earliest example of what would come to be called 'education of the poet' (*kavi-śikṣā*), a genre sometimes excluded from general poetics (*alaṃkāraśāstra*) due to its concern with literature's 'practical object which developed side by side with the theoretical consideration of general principles' (De 2006:585). Subjects addressed for the first time include the daily activities of the poet, types of literary borrowing, and matters of geography, all of which are important in a cosmopolitan-vernacular context but lie beyond the scope of this paper.[4]

In the section under consideration, Rājaśekhara gives us a definition: a *kavisamaya* is a signification which poets produce that is contrary to both received knowledge and worldly experience (*aśāstrīya*, *alaukika*), yet is passed on by tradition (*paramparāyāta*). Perhaps proceeding from the evocation of the three worlds (*triloka*) evoked by *alaukika*, he states that these expressions are of three kinds, earthly (*bhaumya*), celestial (*svargya*), and hellish (*pātālīya*). Under each of these headings are subdivisions of kind (*jāti*), thing (*dravya*), quality (*guṇa*), and behaviour (*kriyā*), under which in turn appear three more categories, at which most specific level of the scheme he provides examples.[5]

1. Description contrary to reality (*asato nibandhanam*), for example things invariably described a certain way though such is not necessarily the case in reality, like mountains always described as rich in gold and precious gems.

2. Description ignoring reality (*sato 'pi nibandhanam*), for example the fruit-bearing *aśoka* tree never being described as such.

3. Artificial restriction (*niyama*), for example of things to particular places, as pearls being produced only in the Tāmraparṇi river.

3. Written between the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth century AD.
4. For other contributions of Rājaśekhara, see Pollock 2006:200–4.
5. *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* pp. 198–9.

I have given only the examples under the heading of 'kind' rather than repeat the entire account.[6] The other categories are clear enough; one easily sees that certain members of the Kāvya bestiary such as the moonbeam-drinking *cakora* bird appear in statements about behaviour contrary to reality (*kriyāvad asato nibandhanam*), and the assigning of colours to emotions entails describing a quality contrary to reality (*guṇavad asato nibandhanam*).

However, this systematicity breaks down when Rājaśekhara leaves the realm of the earthly. The celestial *kavisamaya*s consist not of unrealistic imagery per se but rather of conflicting identifications—the moon has in it either a rabbit or a deer, Kāmadeva's emblem can be either a crocodile (*makara*) or a fish—and interchangeable names, such as Nārāyaṇa and Mādhava for Viṣṇu and/or Indra. Also, despite the Puranic assertion that there are twelve suns, poets speak of them as one. As regards the netherworld, the names of technically distinct classes of inhabitants—*daitya*s, *dānava*s, and *asura*s—are also used interchangeably.

Not surprisingly, the many later writers who take up Rājaśekhara's account of *kavisamaya* (and who generally give identical examples) discard altogether the non-earthly categories. After all, since lived experience as a human being, not to mention the composition and reading of texts, takes place only in one of the three worlds, by definition descriptions of the other two are contrary to observable reality (*alaukika*). What is left, namely, cosmological and terminological conventions, falls into the category of restriction (*niyama*) in what seems a broader sense of 'rules, usage'. So it is somewhat surprising to find the later theorist Viśvanātha cite as a *kavisamaya* the description of Kāma's bowstring as a row of bees, to the exclusion of other gods' supernatural attributes; presumably the suggestion stems from the frequent allusions to the god of love in Kāvya imagery.[7]

The only scholar to discuss *kavisamaya* at length in English, V.S. Kulkarni, in a brief but informative article lists a series of theorists who follow Rājaśekhara's account of *kavisamaya* and occasionally add a new example or two. In the course of this sketch, Kulkarni makes an interesting comment about the later theorist Keśavamiśra, whose treatment speaks to the issues I want to consider. This Keśavamiśra delineates 'the topics to be described', expanding the scope of *kavisamaya* far beyond the bounds of Rājaśekhara's original definition. Kulkarni protests, 'Keśavamiśra here confounds conventional poetry and poetic

6. A full summary is given by Kulkarni 1983:20–3. Note that his list confuses the examples for *guṇa* and *kriyā*.

7. *Sāhityadarpaṇa* 7.19; cited by Kulkarni 1983:24.

conventions. Poetry becomes conventional on account of set themes, phrases ready-at-hand, standards of comparison like the lotus in describing the hands […] stereotyped and hackneyed descriptions and use of poetic conventions' (Kulkarni 1983:25). Despite his unsympathetic choice of words and somewhat imprecise phrasing, I agree with Kulkarni's implicit point: *kavisamaya* is more useful as a descriptive category if limited to its most specific definition, that by Rājaśekhara which I will call '*kavisamaya* proper', description sanctioned by poetic tradition though specifically contrary to observable reality. Of course, Kulkarni's distinction between 'poetic conventions' and 'conventional poetry' is an arbitrary one, since nothing in the term *kavisamaya* inherently applies more to Rājaśekhara's notion than to a conventional description of scenery or a king, and any instantiation of a poetic convention would by definition be conventional poetry anyway. Yet beneath this semantic nicety lies an intimation of a more systematic approach.

A closer look at Keśavamiśra's treatment, toward the end of his little-remarked-upon *Alaṃkāraturyhara*, given its final form in the sixteenth century, turns out to reveal a useful catalogue of the constituent elements of Kāvya compositions. He goes into great detail on the conventional standards of comparison (*upamāna*) in similes of women and men, and notes some cases applicable to both. The *kavisamaya*s proper of Rājaśekhara are summarized in a brief section, after which comes a long list of the things to be described (*varṇya*) in Kāvya:

> A king, a queen, a region (*deśa*), a village, a palace, a river, a pond, the ocean, a forest, a garden, a mountain, a journey, a battle, a horse, an elephant, the sun, the moon, the seasons, marriage (*vivāha*), *svayaṃvara* (a princess' choosing from a gathering of suitors), drinking, the delights of flowers and water, separation (of lovers), a hunt, a hermitage, the arts, linkage of seasons or periods of life, metals, trees, and the *abhisārikā* [woman on a secret rendezvous].[8]

The conventional attributes of each of these objects or phenomena follow, one verse for each, with some additions to the list like love-play (*surata*). While no single topic could possibly receive exhaustive treatment in such a presentation, nonetheless this is an unusually detailed catalogue of the kinds of things Kāvya deals with besides narrative; anyone who has read even short excerpts of

8. *Alaṃkāraśekhara* p. 58.

Mahākāvya or Kakawin will recognize some elements.[9] That such a basic guide to embellishment is so rare indicates a certain inadequacy of Sanskrit theory when consulted for the purposes of cosmopolitan-vernacular comparison.[10] As a result, these three exceptional threads whose entanglement Kulkarni deplores, the unrealistic conventions (*kavisamaya*), conventional standards of comparison,[11] and conventional topics of description (*varṇanīya*), are worth considering in addition to formal components such as figures of speech and prosody.

Still, Kulkarni's point stands. Given free rein, the idea of poetic convention can indeed swell to include a huge range of literary techniques. What Kulkarni with mild derision calls 'conventional poetry' serves as the very basis, in a different context, for the monumental work of Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, first published in 1948. For Curtius, '[i]n the antique system of rhetoric topics is the stockroom [in which] are found ideas of the most general sort' and as such topics serve as a key for the continuity and independent development of both postclassical Latin and European vernacular literatures. These 'intellectual themes, suitable for development and modification', in Greek called *koinoi topoi* and in Latin *communes*, came to spread beyond the field of oratory in which they were first recorded, and this 'elaborately developed system became the common denominator of literature in general' (Curtius 1990:79, 70).

While Curtius, a giant in the field of Romance philology and an icon of comparative literature, then goes on to display a breathtaking range of scholarship in multiple vernacular languages, the system he relies on is conspicuously unsystematic.[12] The many topics he describes include attributing to a precocious young prince the wisdom of an old man (itself a *kavisamaya* proper), various personifications of Nature, the characteristics of epic landscape, standard ('mannered') metaphors, and even technical figures of sound and meaning akin to the Sanskrit *alaṃkāra*s. The overall result is a series of demonstrations of the unity in diversity of antiquity, late Latin, and the medieval European vernaculars.

The sheer volume and range of texts that Curtius brings to bear in present-

9. Although earlier theorists include similar lists, they do not specify conventional descriptions for each particular item. *Kāvyādarśa* 1.16–17 gives roughly two-thirds the number of items on Keśavamiśra's list. Hooykaas (1958:13) provides a translation, and helpfully shows where in BK such descriptions can be found, pp. 42–4.

10. In defense of the 'adequacy' of figure-based poetics is Gerow 1971:70–4.

11. I am hesitant to coin a Sanskrit word, but *upamānasamaya* may be appropriate here.

12. The bibliography on Curtius and his *magnum opus* is vast, and for present purposes I have not made recourse to it, since my point about his topics is a simple one.

ing the topics perhaps precludes a more specific categorization. Sanskrit literary theory, on the other hand, deals with a defined genre, Kāvya, generally emphasizing Mahākāvya in particular (Gerow 1971:71). Why, then, did the discourse of poetics disregard wholesale the conventions of Kāvya? And why, in those exceptional instances when they do appear, are they not subject to the ' "minute classification" and "subtle hair-splitting" [which] is the mainstay of Sanskrit literary theory throughout its history'? (McCrea 2008:6)

The answer perhaps can be related to the exceptional nature of one of the most important writers of *alaṃkāraśāstra*, Ānandavardhana. In his *Dhvanyāloka*, Sanskrit literary theory advances beyond the mere classification of 'discrete, isolatable elements of poetic language' in the form of the figures of speech to a 'teleological model of literary aesthetics' based on suggested meaning (*dhvani*), specifically aestheticized emotion (*rasa*). In other words, Ānandavardhana manages to account for the ends of poetry, the establishment and maintenance of a dominant emotion in a unified work, rather than the means, conceived as figures of speech and stylistic qualities confined to individual stanzas. Yet despite widespread acceptance of the *dhvani* theory, later writers moved away from this teleological aesthetic and toward detailed analyses of the cognitive and semantic processes producing poetic meaning. And even the earliest theorists of Kāvya, Daṇḍin and Bhāmaha, seem uncomfortable with the quartet of 'anomalous, content-based' figures of speech on their lists, uncharacteristically presenting examples of them without explanations (other than tautology).[13] This same epistemic resistance to considerations of the content of poetry, insofar as it reflects a fundamental critical orientation, may account for the lack of interest in conventional elements.

In the light of this tendency, perhaps the very absence of a tradition of Old Javanese literary theory contributes to the success of P.J. Zoetmulder's survey *Kalangwan*, in that the formalistic prejudices of Sanskrit theory do not discourage him from presenting an original conception of Kakawin aesthetic teleology (providing, as it did for Ānandavardhana, the title of the work) along with formal qualities of prosody and an attentiveness to historical and social context. The work is full of topics in the Curtian sense. Nonetheless, while continually alert to questions of Sanskrit sources, Zoetmulder's aim is not primarily comparative but rather descriptive of a literary culture as a self-contained whole. Now, post-*Kalangwan* advances in Old Javanese studies such as Zoetmulder's dictionary and a growing corpus of recent text editions have greatly facilitated

13. McCrea 2008:101; 441, 447 on post-Ānandavardhana theoretical concerns; 42–4 for treatment of the content-based figures.

the project of qualifying not only the much that is shared by Sanskrit Kāvya and Old Javanese Kakawin but also the 'palpable, if elusive, local character' that distinguishes the latter.[14] And despite the problematic nature of conventions, a content-based approach utilizing them in a reasonably systematic fashion should have its place alongside strictly formalist ones.

Given their extraordinary relationship, the BK and KR present an obvious starting point for any comparison of Kāvya and Kakawin. The KR, in its capacity as a free translation for roughly its first half of the first Sanskrit 'poem-textbook' (*kāvya-śāstra*), illustrates perfectly the cosmopolitan dictum, '[a]s for learning the *śāstra* itself, this is the necessary commencement of the tradition' (Pollock 1985a:507). Rājaśekhara and the BK make the same point, stating, respectively, 'because Kāvya has theory as its antecedent, one should first go into theory; surely unlit lamps in the dark do not make things visible as they are' and 'this poem is like a lamp for those who understand the qualities of words […] it should be read with a commentary'.[15] Continuing with the visual imagery, I wonder if such powerful exhortations to strictly *śāstra*-based analysis, coming even from the KR's source text, may even now encourage a critical blindness to important aspects of Kāvya (and Kakawin) aesthetics largely ignored by *alaṃkāraśāstra* itself.

In the instances that follow, since conventions are by definition generic (in the sense of manifest in works by different authors), the ones proposed as particularly Old Javanese are attributed this status only provisionally. Comparison focused only on two texts can produce only hypotheses with respect to genre. Hence a certain disproportion of theory to practice arises, this paper necessarily being more programmatic than positivistic in largely restricting itself to only one Old Javanese work, the KR, against not only the BK but Sanskrit Kāvya more generally.

Starting with the *kavisamaya* proper, the question arises: do these conventional non-narrative unrealistic descriptions translate, as it were, and does Kakawin language have similar expressions of its own? A simple example is afforded by the representation of the crying and dancing of peacocks (*mayūra*/*śikhin*) at the start of the monsoon to the exclusion of any other time at KR 7.18 as well as the corresponding BK 7.7, a behaviour which Rājaśekhara notes

14. Pollock 2006:131 is discussing Sanskrit inscriptions from Java, but the phrase is equally applicable to Kakawin.

15. *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* p. 5 (start of Chapter 2): *śāstrapūrvakatvāt kāvyānāṃ pūrvaṃ śāstreṣv abhiniviśeta. na hy apravarttitapradīpās tamasi tattvārthasārtham adhyakṣayanti*; BK 22.33–34: *dīpatulyaḥ prabandho 'yaṃ śabdalakṣaṇacakṣuṣām* […] *vyākhyāgamyam idaṃ kāvyam*.

occurs in other seasons as well (*grīṣmādau*).[16] In this case, a frequently occurring *kavisamaya* is linked to a conventional topic of description found on Keśavamiśra's list, the changing of seasons.

A more independent usage on the part of the KR is evident at 7.27, where the fragrance (*gandha*) wafting on the breeze from the Malaya mountain range reminds Rāma of Sītā's cheek (*pipi*). The anatomical reference indicates that sandalwood, used as a perfume and body ointment, is meant, though not named. This is another *kavisamaya* of restriction explicitly noted by Rājaśekhara: 'on the Malaya [mountains] alone are sandalwood trees found'.[17] At this particular point in the BK text no mention of Malaya is found, although it and its exclusive product are mentioned elsewhere, for example, 'covered with sandalwood trees [you will see] the foothills of the Malayas'.[18] Clearly, then, the KR text demonstrates an understanding of this special quality of the Malaya mountains, but without confirmation of their appearance in other Kakawin it remains doubtful whether this *kavisamaya* took hold.[19]

A *kavisamaya* that appears not to have found favour even with the KR pertains to the description of darkness as if it 'can be grasped in one's fist or pierced by a needle', in other words that it takes physical form.[20] At BK 12.10, the hulking body of Rāvaṇa 'has the shape of a heap of darkness' (*tamaḥsamūhākṛtim*), whereas KR 13.16 gives only a translation of the preceding BK verse (12.9), retaining the comparison of Rāvaṇa's body to smoke while clarifying that his body is black (*awak nirāhirĕñ*). In another place, the KR explicitly contradicts the idea of this *kavisamaya* when Rāma says 'darkness […] is tenuous, ungraspable, though I see it'.[21]

Another *kavisamaya* the KR leaves untranslated is not mentioned on the traditional lists but is familiar to readers of Kāvya. This is Lakṣmaṇa's description of Rāma's eyes as reaching to his ears (*aupakarṇikalocana*, BK 4.24), a mark of beauty in either a male or a female. By its physiological impossibility it fits the category of description of non-existent quality (*guṇavad asato nibandhanam*). Attesting to the traditional character of the image is the fifth verse of Bhānudatta's *Rasamañjarī*, where a girl at the start of adolescence thinks she

16. *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* p. 208 (end of Chapter 14).
17. *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* p. 205: *malaya eva candanasthānaṃ*.
18. BK 22.4: *candanadrumasaṃcchannā* […] *malayopatyakāḥ*.
19. The OJED entry for 'Malaya' yields references to the Malaya range only in KR and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*.
20. *Kāvyamīmāṃsā* p. 203: *muṣṭigrāhyatvaṃ sūcībhedyatvaṃ ca tamasaḥ*.
21. KR 7.11: *andhakāra* […] *sūkṣma tar pagamĕlan katon tuwi*. Translation modified, taking *tar pagamĕlan* as stating impossibility.

sees in her reflection a lotus petal caught at her ear only to realize it is the corner of her eye. Given the straightforward speech of Lakṣmaṇa, one wonders whether the image made sense in the world of the ubiquitous 'blossom worn at the ear' (*sumpiṅ*) such as that of Śūrpaṇakhā, the mention of whose floral ornaments (KR 4.32) says nothing of her eyes. While one omission in one text which itself is hardly a word-for-word translation may carry little probative weight, the discrepancy at least raises the possibility that this is another *kavisamaya* which Kakawin do not adopt.

Besides *kavisamaya*s that Kakawin may not take up, there are those apparently unique to it. One such convention featured in the KR which strikes me as foreign to Sanskrit Kāvya is the quotation of the explicit thoughts of everyday animals.[22] The simple attribution of emotion is common to both traditions, as in the *kavisamaya* of the *cakravāka* birds' agony at their nightly separation or the memorable image of the lion angered at his echoing roar (BK 2.9). But the KR goes further, offering animal thought as language. In its version, instead of an indistinct roar (*nādān*) the lion perceives a taunt: ' "Hey, dumb lion!" he thought he heard an enemy shout [in reply]'.[23] A similar example occurs earlier in the same nature description, where the BK's distracted hunter is replaced in the KR by a deer who, disturbed by the cries of geese, 'cursed in her heart, "A hunter!" as sleep slipped away'.[24] A more comical misapprehension is the reaction of an anteater fleeing the destruction of Laṅkā's pleasure garden: 'at the sight of a porcupine wanting to mate with his female [...] "Ah, how disgusting!" (*ḍöh ah o hīna ya*) said the anteater and penetrated into other undergrowths' (KR 9.57). This strong anthropomorphism, where a human-like reaction is represented not as just a state of mind but as actually verbalized, certainly distinguishes the style of the KR from that of the BK, and may possibly be an aspect

22. Other genres in Sanskrit make extensive use of talking animals, as in the gnomic *Pañcatantra*, written in a very different register. Of course, the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative has monkeys and giant birds talking, but these are characters of a qualitatively different nature from the fauna of poetic scenery.

23. KR 2.17: *ā siṅha mūḍa winaliṅnya musuhnya monī*. Translation modified, mostly for punctuation, though it appears this could also be interpreted as the poet interjecting.

24. BK 2.7; KR 2.9: *caṇḍāla yekana manahnya luput pwa denya*. Translation modified. That *caṇḍāla* may mean 'hunter' in Old Javanese is pointed out by Lokesh Chandra 1997:202; I am grateful to Arlo Griffiths for this information. Note that *caṇḍāla* can also mean 'of lowest caste, despised,' a strong term of abuse in Sanskrit, making this a *śleṣa* 'pun', in that the deer could be understood either as misinterpreting the sound of geese as the sound made by a hunter or as simply annoyed at the geese for having woken it. Given Kāvya poets' fondness for figures of speech (*alaṃkāra*), the presence of the *śleṣa* supports the reading of *caṇḍāla* as direct 'speech' of the deer; with the translation 'the deer thought it was a hunter', the pun is lost.

peculiar to Kakawin in general. Indeed, in a later text we find the passage: 'The red patches of rust on the water were like blood on a *kain*, still fluid, [a]nd the peacocks kept looking down (as if to say), "What's that thing we can see?" '[25] Once again, the animal 'extras' in the background are given a one-line speaking role, which in Sanskrit would require an *iti* clause to mark quotation. As the editor-translator comments, these are 'all too human peacocks' (Supomo 1977 II:171).[26]

Whereas the animal thoughts in the examples above may seem generally to add an element of humor to nature descriptions, the last convention I want to consider here lends a touch of sorrow. Although absent from the KR itself, the image of a ruined temple occurs often enough in Kakawin that it can be called a conventional subject to be described.[27] I am not prepared to assess how its frequency may relate to Javanese society or history, rather to point out that this appears to be another instance of the characteristically Kakawin as opposed to Kāvya. Such scenes can arise in the midst of a charming and pleasant tour of the countryside ('[The temple-complex's] roofs were broken and had fallen in, and beyond repair their pillars stood askew, swaying back and forth'), a peaceful riverbank setting suitable for a scholar's meditation ('A temple of stone had collapsed, and its Kāla-head ornament seemed about to weep, its eyes filled with tears'), or a journey through a countryside ravaged by an enemy army ('A sanctuary had disappeared from sight, completely overgrown, its walls scattered without trace').[28] Again, the KR features no such site of deterioration, but does state that one of the duties of a ruler is to keep temples in good condition, a precept followed in a later Kakawin, as 'the king continued on his journey, devoting himself to the restoration of dilapidated temple-complexes'.[29] The image

25. *Kuñjarakarṇadharmakathana* 4.5: *sawaṅ rāh niṅ siñjaṅ drawa mara tahi-hyaṅ nika mabāṅ / tumuṅkul-tuṅkul mrak nika mapa tikaṅ wastu dinĕlö*.

26. Here 'we [also] have a cliché, found many times in scenes of the defloration of a virgin: the red blood-stains on the *kain*' (Supomo 1977, II:171). Though this is surely the unique Kakawin convention par excellence, due to its frequent and varied usage and obvious social and psychological interest it deserves more thorough investigation than the present paper can afford. See Creese 2004a.

27. Zoetmulder (1974:205–6) mentions the frequency of the image but does not speculate on its aesthetic effect.

28. *Śiwarātrikalpa* 3.2: *bwat-dhantĕn ri natarnya śīrṇa makihū waṅunan ika gigal waneh awuk*; *Arjunawiwāha* 15.13: *caṇḍi śilananāṅ cawiri piṇḍa manaṅisa maṅĕmbi-hĕmbiha*; *Bhomāntaka* 7.6: *dharma hilaṅ tĕlas kaḍĕḍĕtan kabubak i lalayanya tan kahuniṅa*.

29. KR 3.70 *pahayunta* […] *umah bhaṭārāmĕrĕn* 'you should preserve with care the houses of the gods' (my translation); *Arjunawijaya* 32.4: *nāhan hetunira titir mahas adoh lĕṅĕṅ amahayu dharma siṅ rusak*.

is attested in Sanskrit theory, in still another context: on a list of places appropriate for the furtive tryst of the woman going to meet her lover.[30] Despite this prescription, I have yet to encounter such a 'shattered house of gods' (*bhagnadevālaya*) in this or any other context in Sanskrit poetry, whether anthologized (as verses on this type of heroine, known as *abhisārikā*, often are) or in Mahākāvya. The Prakrit *Gāthā-Saptaśatī* mentions a temple which sighs with the voices of the pigeons resting on top of it, but the state of disrepair is not explicit.[31]

In the absence of a fully-formed classificatory scheme and a wider range of data, the multiplication of examples would be superfluous. But the selection of conventions above demonstrates, I hope, the promise such a system would hold for articulating the relation of Kāvya to Kakawin. I have not discussed conventional standards of comparison, though they form a category as important as the others; they include, for example, the use Old Javanese makes of the coconut in relation to women's bodies, and equally the use it does not make of the *bimba* fruit, which Sanskrit Kāvya regularly compares to the lips.[32] But it will at least be evident 'what a desideratum it is for Sanskrit literary studies to have a comprehensive catalogue or glossary of such poetic conventions' (Pollock 1985b:185), especially for comparative purposes. If folklore studies can construct the Aarne-Stith catalogue, facilitating the study of kinds of stories across the most varied cultures, is it not possible, in the relatively limited corpora of (Mahā)kāvya and Kakawin, to compile something similar? I am thinking along the lines not of that universal scheme but one adapted to a specific context, like Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty's chart (1973:22–3) for motifs in the mythology of Śiva.

Those mythemes are derived from narrative, of course, whereas conventions are precisely what is added to the narrative. Also, the role of tradition complicates the picture; per my disclaimers as to what may or may not be Kakawin conventions first appearing in the KR, the individual genius of the writer(s) is original (for lack of a better, less-valorized word) by default unless other instances are found in other texts, in which case genre-comparative statements become possible.

If, however, an adequate catalogue could be assembled, we would then have

30. *Sāhityadarpaṇa* 3.94.

31. Basak 1971:15 (verse 1.64). The *chāyā* runs: *upari daradṛṣṭasthāṇukanilīnapārāvatānāṃ virutaiḥ / nistanati jātavedanaṃ śūlabhinnam iva devakulam*. The editor must see in this 'as if pierced by a stake' (*śūlabhinnam iva*) a 'reference to temples in broken condition' (Basak 1971:22).

32. Zoetmulder provides a great deal of standard objects of comparison, though even this sensitive critic can grow weary of these 'endless clichés' (Zoetmulder 1974:202). OJED entries for '*bimba*, *wimba*' do not indicate any instances of these words denoting a fruit in Old Javanese.

not a checklist of the hackneyed, but a guide to comparison between cosmopolitan and vernacular texts or even between texts written in different cosmopolitan vernaculars, say, Kannada and Old Javanese. It would serve as a reference for what we might call formal content so we might better appreciate its variations. For it would seem that the poets and theorists of the Sanskrit cosmopolis, and not the Greek Sophists as Nietzsche supposed, 'laid the strongest emphasis upon form [and] created the most form-demanding audience that has ever existed'.[33] If wide-ranging aesthetic study of vernacular Kāvya along the lines of Curtius' project is ever to be possible, not only text editions but also the tools of traditional poetics will be necessary. A typology of conventions in the service of an aesthetic morphology of cosmopolitan-vernacular literary cultures, rudiments of which have been given here, would enable a clearer articulation of what makes Kāvya Kāvya, Kakawin Kāvya, and Kakawin Kakawin.

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33. Quoted with approval by Curtius 1990:68.