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The Kavi contained all those works by which the religious ideas and the cherished mythology of the priests were communicated to the people (Friederich 1959:8).

[T]he kakawin [Kuñjarakarna Dharmakathana] represents the same religious system as, e.g., the Arjunawijaya and the Sutasoma [...]. This Majapahit Śiwa-Buddha religion, as is generally known, finds its direct continuation in present-day Bali. (Teeuw and Robson 1981:9-10.)

A problem

Since the end of the sixteenth century, 'religion' has figured as a prominent register in European (and later, Australian and American) accounts of Bali and the Balinese.1 In what James Boon (1977:22) referred to as 'the first definitive

1 Since 1597, when Bali was 'discovered' by the Dutch explorer Cornelis de Houtman, the Balinese have been variously described as 'heathen', 'Hindoo', 'Hindu-Buddhist', 'animistic' and so on (see Vickers 1989:12). Boon (1977:45) has discussed the manner in which, from the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, 'after caste, the second main rubric for characterizing Balinese life was religion', explaining that 'by religion is intended Hinduism as conveyed by Sanskrit and Kawi texts and activated in rites at the temples and shrines throughout the island'.

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study' of Bali, R. Friederich (1959:34), the distinguished German Sanskritist, noted that ‘the religion of Bali, as is well known, is the Hindu, and in fact the two great Indian creeds, the Brahmanical and the Buddhist, exist there’. For Friederich, writing in the mid-nineteenth century, ‘religious ideas’ in Bali were ‘communicated’ by ‘Kavi’ texts, and it is unlikely that his account of Balinese religion would have surprised his scholarly contemporaries. Writing over a century later, A. Tjeeuw and S.O. Robson associated the religion of ‘present-day Bali’ with that of ancient Java, characterizing their relationship as one of ‘direct continuation’. In a manner not entirely foreign to Friederich’s ‘Kavi texts’, they invoked a series of kakawin as mediating the temporal continuity of this ‘Śiwa-Buddha religion’. However, one of the questions I wish to consider in this article is to what extent, in so doing, they presupposed a state of religio-textual affairs similar to that implied by Friederich’s ‘communication’ of ‘religious ideas’. An analysis of the work of eminent scholars writing in the interim – including, for example, Kern (1916, 1922), Lévi (1933), Stutterheim (1935), Gonda (1973, 1975), and Hooykaas (1964, 1966, 1973, 1975, 1976, 1979) – suggests a certain regularity in the scholarly predilection for ancient texts as a privileged source of knowledge regarding ‘religion’. However, this regularity would not necessarily constitute scholarly evidence for ‘continuity’ in the ‘religion’ of Bali. The relationship between text and religion in scholarly discourse has undergone considerable changes since Friederich’s original study of Bali. So, I shall examine the conditions under which ‘the Old Javanese text’ has been taken as an object of knowledge in a more recent period of philological scholarship; and I shall consider some of the implications that follow for the study of religion in contemporary Bali.

In preparing this analysis, I have limited my inquiry to articles and books published between 1957 and 1983, partly on the basis of the recognition that there have been few kakawin text editions published since the early nineteen-eighties. In this paper I argue, through close readings of scholarly representations of ‘the Old Javanese text’, that a particular set of philological practices has contributed to an ongoing discursive exclusion of Balinese

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2 As A. Vickers (1989:81) noted, the ‘main reason Van Hoëvell’s Batavian society sent Friederich to Bali was that he knew Sanskrit, which they thought would enable him to understand the Kawi language of the ancient literature’ (compare Stutterheim 1935:1, note 1).

3 For a concise account of three main strands of textual scholarship relating to Bali (Indic-centric, Java-centric, ‘text’-centric), see Zurbuchen 1987:3-5.

4 I have started in 1957 with what amounted to a programmatic statement by P.J. Zoetmulder (see Zoetmulder 1957) and ended in 1983 with S.O. Robson’s retrospective evaluation of how scholarly work should proceed (Robson 1983).
knowledge from what counts as legitimate commentary on *kakawin*. I shall further suggest that, insofar as *kakawin* like the *Sutasoma* have been represented as an index of religion in ‘present-day Bali’, the vast majority of contemporary Balinese men, women and children are implicitly denied the ability to comment authoritatively on their own religiosity.

**Reading AIDS?**

One evening in August of 1996, I made an audio recording of a group of men and women singing and commenting on *kakawin* at a temple ceremony (*odalan*) in a southern Balinese village. The *kakawin* were read from printed books brought to the temple by various people from the village, and the readings were broadcast across the temple grounds using microphones and a karaoke machine in a style often called *mabasan* or *pepaosan*. Generally consistent with scholarly accounts of *mabasan*, each of these readings consisted of two parts, with the first reader singing a short passage in metrical Kawi, or Old Javanese, followed by a second reader’s rendering in Balinese. One such reading, from the seventh stanza of the fourth canto of the *Kakawin Sutasoma*, went as follows:

Reader 1 (Old Javanese): tistis tang daśadeśa duśṭa maliweṛ

Reader 2 (Balinese): désa-désané makejang sepi, sakéwala ané ramé-rámé sing ada pangijengé, dustané malingé pasliur, cening.

all the villages are quiet, but (in) those that are crowded there’s no guard, villains (and) thieves run wild, little one

In his scholarly study of the *Sutasoma*, Soewito Santoso (1975:150) rendered the same passage somewhat differently, with the shorter clause ‘the ten directions be in fear, crime break out everywhere’. In his translation, the phrase tistis tang daśadeśa duśṭa maliweṛ was taken in the context of a full stanza in which it need not syntactically stand alone (hence the rather

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5 Although I have reservations regarding Rubinstein’s use of the term ‘religion’ as a critical category, I believe my argument is not entirely unrelated to the general tenor of her observation that ‘kekawin phillology as practised to date undermines the religious beliefs and values upon which *kekawin* composition has been based’ (Rubinstein 2000:225). In his analysis of ‘Orientalist constructions of India’, Ronald Inden (1986) put forward a similar argument regarding the implications of philological knowledge, citing Foucault on the nature of local, ‘subjugated knowledges’, namely: ‘a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition and scientifičity’ (Foucault 1980:82, cited in Inden 1986:421).

6 See, for example, Robson 1972; Zurbuchen 1987; Rubinstein 2000.
awkward-sounding English when taken out of context). By way of contrast, in the Balinese readings I recorded, each portion of a verse was rendered as a syntactic whole – often requiring reference to previous or forthcoming passages. The apparently vocative *cening*, 'little one', was often appended to each Balinese rendering, seemingly directing the reading to a particular audience (or member of the audience). A further and perhaps more immediately relevant point of disjuncture emerges in relation to the Old Javanese term *daśadeśa*, on which Santoso (1975:150) and P.J. Zoetmulder (1982:376) concurred in reading a Sanskritic reference to the ten cardinal directions. In the *mabasan* reading, however, there was no explicit reference to the ten points. There was, perhaps in its place, *desa-desané makejang*; ‘all the villages’; but how does one account for the apparent divergence?

Considering the prominence of the *desa* as an institutional model deployed in the public articulation of Indonesian social life, it would not be difficult to imagine a Balinese villager reading *desa-desa* in place of *daśadeśa*, and the added *makejang* ('all') as little more than embellishment. But would this justify the assumption – following Zoetmulder (1974:24), for instance – that in Bali, Old Javanese is 'perhaps not always understood in all its peculiarities and intricacies'? The move from an archaic Sanskrit technical term *daśadeśa* to the contemporary and popular *desa-desané makejang* might be explained in terms of just such an intricacy, lost on a contemporary Balinese villager. But if, in fact, the Balinese do not fully understand their texts, and their texts are thought to 'communicate' or 'contain' their religion (recall, for example, Friederich, and compare Teeuw and Robson, above), would we then be justified in presuming, with Goris (1960:71), that 'the ordinary people of Bali do not know well enough the essential traits of their own religion'? Reading *daśadeśa* as *desa-desané* may appear to be a simple case of misunderstanding; but the rendering of the next passage from the same stanza poses more serious problems:

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7 The full passage reads as follows: ‘This resulted in unrest in the three worlds causing calamities and tumult. (Although) it is right, that a good pupil is a child to his teacher as to his father, yet there will be drought, rain will fall out of season, crops will fail, the ten directions be in fear, crime break out everywhere, and epidemics rage without end (if the teacher does evil).’ (Santoso 1975:150; bracketed additions in Santoso's original translation.)

8 Goris (1960:71) attributed this opinion to an unnamed Balinese commentator, to whom he referred as ‘one of the most knowledgeable scholars of his island's culture and religion'. For a recent literary parallel, see Schumacher's study of 'Musical concepts in oral performance of *kekawin* in Bali', in which he referred to 'the wider audience which has no detailed knowledge of Old Javanese' (Schumacher 1995:498). Strikingly contrary to my own experience in Bali, he went on to suggest that 'the wider audience, which rarely has any passive knowledge of Old Javanese, does not generally demonstrate any outward reactions' to the readings (Schumacher 1995:499).
The Balinese reader had chosen to sing from the *Kakawin Sutasoma*, a fourteenth-century composition attributed to the Javanese court poet, Mpu Tantular (see, for example, Zoetmulder 1974:342-9). As with the preceding passage, a single phrase in Old Javanese, *gring tan pakalangasut*, was rendered with several Balinese clauses – but this time with a considerable difference. Where Santoso (1975:150) read ‘epidemics rage without end’, this Balinese reader invoked AIDS. While Santoso’s reading was more or less compatible with the entries for each of the terms in Zoetmulder’s *Old Javanese-English dictionary*, the Balinese reading presents a more awkward problem than we encountered with dašadesa.

Santoso’s (1975:16) translation aimed to ‘follow […] the text as closely as possible without doing violence to the norms of English grammar and idiom’; but is there a similar criterion to account for the Balinese reader’s invocation of AIDS? Can the *mabasan* reading be said to ‘follow the text’? And, if not, is it to Santoso’s reading that we should look for the ‘religion’ that – recalling Teeuw and Robson – ‘finds its direct continuation in present-day Bali’?

*The Old Javanese text* as an object of knowledge

Insofar as Old Javanese texts – such as the *Sutasoma* – are thought to represent religion in Bali, one’s claim to comment authoritatively on that religion will defer to and depend on one’s claim to knowledge of those texts. Having noted the philological desire to ‘follow the text’, I shall examine critically in this section the various juxtapositions through which ‘the Old Javanese text’ has emerged as an object of scholarly knowledge.

Textual background

In the preface to his critical edition and translation of the *Sutasoma*, Santoso explained that his study of this *kakawin* arose from participation in a *mabasan* club, which he glossed in a footnote as ‘a kind of debating-club’. In the same

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9 Zoetmulder’s entries for each term are as follows: ‘*gring* – illness, affliction’; ‘*tan pakalā* (*kala*) – (w/o any fixed time period, i.e.) constantly, continuously’; ‘*angasut* (*kasut*) – to cover completely, overwhelm, overpower (attack etc.) in overwhelming numbers’. 
note, he went on to explain, 'there are hundreds of mabasan clubs in Singaradja and other places throughout Bali. Their activities are mainly the study, that is reading the kakawin and discussing the contents of it.' (Santoso 1975:9, note 1.) He described the manner in which the members of this mabasan club asked questions regarding the text that 'persistently pushed [him] to move forward to look for their solutions' (Santoso 1975:10). The discussion of some passages 'became a matter of prolix and heated discussion', but, 'because of the lack of insight in the background of the phrase concerned the discussions ended in an impasse, only to be repeated at another place and time when another mabasan is organized' (Santoso 1975:9). So what were the characteristic features of the mabasan club's repeated 'impasses'? And how might 'insight' into the text's 'background' have prevented them?

In the opening lines of his preface, Santoso (1975:9) invoked the oft-cited Indonesian state motto, bhinneka tunggal ika\textsuperscript{10} – itself taken from the Sutasoma (cxxxix.5.d) – remarking that 'those who know the origin of those words will not be surprised when I say that they have filled my heart with indescribable feelings [and have] given me a sincere desire to attempt to convey their full significance to my people'. It seems that the relationship between the 'origin of those words' and 'their full significance' might offer some clues as to the nature of textual 'background'. In Santoso's (1975:9) preface, 'background' emerged as a sort of originary moment, 'which becomes very obscure in the course of time'. Further, it appeared that knowledge of this 'background' was what would render the Sutasoma's 'full significance' accessible to his mabasan club, thereby bringing their questions and confusion to an end.\textsuperscript{11} As Santoso (1975:10) explained in his preface, the study was 'particularly addressed to [his] fellow participants in the mabasan club', and to this end he provided 135 pages of historical, text-critical and ethnographic analysis, which precede the edited text and translation.\textsuperscript{12} But Santoso's analysis of the Sutasoma's 'background' was not the first of its kind. The Sutasoma made its first major appearance on the academic scene with Kern's early study in 1888 (see Kern 1916), in which he 'dealt with it especially

\textsuperscript{10} Bhinneka tunggal ika is generally rendered 'Unity in diversity' (see, for example, Echols and Shadily 1997:77).

\textsuperscript{11} Compare Zoetmulder's description (1974:55) of the scholar's task as being 'to put order into this confusion'.

\textsuperscript{12} The devotion of this study to ending 'the confusion' of mabasan readers is premised on two rather curious assumptions: firstly, the assumption that scholarly English is a medium accessible to a North Balinese mabasan club (something, one expects, Santoso was not suggesting in any seriousness), and secondly, the assumption that philological and mabasan-related practices proceed on similar models of the Sutasoma as 'a text'. It is the latter assumption to which my argument is opposed.
as a document of the blending of Šaivism and Buddhism in Java'. As such, the text emerged, in a manner consonant with my opening quotations from Friederich (1959) and Teeuw and Robson (1981), as evidence of a religious state of affairs at a particular point in history. In a more recent address to the University of Indonesia's Faculty of Literature, Teeuw (1975:60), speaking along similar lines – albeit more generally – cited as the first of seven reasons for studying Old Javanese language and literature, its importance for understanding 'pre-modern Indonesian culture'. He explained,

Old Javanese is the most important language of transmission from the Indonesian pre-modern culture, at least according to the traces that have survived until now. This language was used by the people who created artistic monuments like Borobudur, Prambanan, Panataran, and many others besides. Thanks to this language, we are able to know and comprehend that culture better and in a deeper way.

On Teeuw's account, Old Javanese comprised a channel for the 'transmission' of ancient 'culture'. As such, it was held responsible for both the presence of and scholarly access to the 'traces that have survived until now'. Not unlike the mass media in popular theories of globalization, Old Javanese texts seem to transmit a rather fuzzily defined cultural essence, either across time (see Teeuw and Robson's 'Siwa-Buddha religion', for instance), or from one person or place to another (Friederich's notion of the text as 'communicating religious ideas'). So how was this process of 'transmission' thought to work?

In an early article, Zoetmulder (1957:59) was characteristically cautious with regard to the use of *kakawin* for the study of 'the environment from...
which these poems have come'. Yet, seventeen years later he published the voluminous *Kalangwan* (1974), in which, to cite one of his reviewers, he provided 'a survey of all known *kakawins*, with pertinent notes as to date, authorship, relationship to Indian literature etc.', as well as an account of 'the world of the poet and poetry', with 'technical details as to both' (Brakel 1976:138). It seems that, despite his earlier caution, in taking this 'first step in the direction of a history of Old Javanese literature' (Robson 1983:291), Zoetmulder may have gone some way toward producing an account of 'the environment from which these poems have come'. As another of his reviewers remarked:

I find Zoetmulder's book a most valuable addition to Javanology, and we cannot be grateful enough to him that when charged with a considerable teaching task, and the making of his dictionary, in Yogyakarta's not always enviable physical and psychical climate, he has found the idealism and perseverance to testify to the cult of beauty (Hooykaas 1975:484).

Leaving aside the 'cult of beauty' as an issue to which I shall return, we find the same scholar explaining a year later, in another review, that 'though desiderata still exist, this is a most meticulous and valuable piece of work, to be welcomed by all those who are interested in Java's and Indonesia's past'. Recalling Santoso's comments on the 'background of the text', it is important to note the recurrent prevalence of 'Java's and Indonesia's past' as a guiding factor in the study of Kawi texts. Evidence of this general orientation is also found in a later remark on Zoetmulder's *Kalangwan* by Robson (1983:291):

[Zoetmulder provides] the framework needed for viewing each work against its proper background, the underlying thought here being that a literary work is not something floating free in time and space, but rather something created at a particular point of time and in a certain place, as this may have important consequences for our appreciation of that work.

In many important respects, Robson's 'reconsideration' seems to reiterate a familiar orientation vis-à-vis *kakawin*. Insofar as an 'appreciation' of a

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17 I take it that Zoetmulder was referring to the debate about the potential of *kakawin* as a source of historical knowledge. That is, whether, following Pigeaud we can extrapolate reliable facts about the economy, polity and society of ancient Java from them or whether, following Berg, it is impossible for us to understand what constitutes descriptions, or indeed facts, until we understand the world in which they were articulated (see Soedjatmoko et al. 1965). To put it very briefly, the debate reflects a disjuncture between textual realism and historical hermeneutics.

18 Hooykaas 1976:179. Compare Weatherbee's remark (1976:539): 'Professor Zoetmulder's book is the first systematic and comprehensive survey (as opposed to catalogue) of any substantial portion of Old Javanese literature, introducing us in a significant way to the importance and complexity of the Old Javanese genres that prove to be primary sources for knowledge of Old Javanese society'.
kakawin – as a ‘work’ – is articulated in terms of ‘its proper background’ (recall Santoso), are we not still within the bounds of an already familiar ‘Javanology’? To what extent, for instance, is the need for the ‘proper background’ of a text a permutation of the interest in traces of ‘Java’s and Indonesia’s past’? As they have been found in the ‘not always enviable physical and psychological climate’ of contemporary Java (a situation not unlike Santoso’s account of the contemporary mabasan club in Bali), we must ask how these textual ‘traces’ – as evidence of what ultimately amounts to an absent object – are thought to have arrived on the contemporary scene.

Transmission: the text and its manuscripts

Kawi texts have, in large part, been held responsible for the transmission – or ‘communication’ – of the ‘Siwa-Buddha religion’ from its glorious Javanese past to a somewhat less splendid Balinese present. It seems that even if the texts themselves, as the primary medium for conveying ‘religious ideas’, are not accessible to those who currently possess them (that is to say, the Balinese), it has been thought that the ‘religion’ with which these texts were originally invested might be extracted through scholarly endeavour.

According to Zoetmulder (1974:21), ‘it is to Bali that we owe the survival of Old Javanese literature to the present day’. In Java, ‘the religion that had inspired a number of writings [...] had disappeared’, but in Bali, the royal courts or ‘kratons continued to exist as faithful guardians of the heritage of Hindu-Javanese culture and literature’ (Zoetmulder 1974:24). Philological work has been facilitated by the fact that ‘this situation has remained virtually unchanged until our own times. We owe to it the preservation of Old Javanese literature.’ (Zoetmulder 1974:24.) But what are the conditions under which such ‘survival’ and ‘preservation’ have been possible?

A key element in the articulation of literary ‘preservation’ has been ‘the manuscript’ – together with its ‘loss’, ‘survival’ and ‘discovery’ (see, for example, Zoetmulder 1974:4-5, 17, 21-4, 42-4, 46). The process of ‘preservation’ has been discussed, either directly or indirectly, in almost every scholarly

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19 A question of circularity arises when one considers the relationship between ‘the texts’ and this ‘background’ against which they are to be interpreted. In a similar connection Zoetmulder (1974:60) observed, perhaps more cautiously than his acolytes: ‘Anyone attempting to edit an Old Javanese text in accordance with high standards of scholarship is caught in a vicious circle. He must have a thorough knowledge of Old Javanese in order to be able to edit the text; but at the same time he needs well edited texts to acquire that knowledge.’ To make the interpretive leap into this hermeneutic circle, one must make certain pre-observational assumptions regarding the nature of critical inquiry and its object. These assumptions constitute the object of my analysis.

20 Consider, for instance, Santoso’s following remark (1975:10): ‘for a long time I [continued] to feel gloomy, the more so when my eyes ached from gazing into a dark letter or a corrupt phrase full of dirt and sometimes holes in the manuscript. But this cheerlessness vanished and turned into a desperate determination when I returned from a wearisome mabasan.’
treatment of Old Javanese literature that I have encountered. With regard to transmission, both ‘preservation’ and ‘survival’ seem to imply the continued presence of a certain self-identical entity – a perpetuation beyond its proper point of origin (for instance, Robson’s ‘particular point of time’ and ‘certain place’). This does not, however, answer the question of what that entity is.

‘Preservation’ has tended to figure most prominently in descriptions of manuscripts employed in the preparation of ‘edited’ texts (see, for instance, Santos 1975:11-6; Ensink 1974:209-10), or in implicit references to collections of manuscripts (for example, Zoetmulder 1974:4-5, 17, 21-4; Robson 1983: 291, 304). In addition to such incidental treatment, ‘preservation’ has been addressed in its own right as the subject of Hooykaas’ aptly titled ‘Preservation and cataloguing of manuscripts in Bali’ (1979) and at greater length in a section of Zoetmulder’s *Kalangwana* entitled ‘The preservation of Old Javanese literature’ (1974:36-60), where we read:

> Old Javanese literature has come to us from the very remote past. Only part of it has survived the perils of its journey through the centuries. [...]

In this case it would appear that transmission occurs across a spatialized time: Old Javanese ‘texts’ eventually ‘reach us’, but only upon the completion of a ‘journey through the centuries’ that began in ‘the very remote past’. We are told that, in a ‘process of transmission of this kind’, there are various ‘changes which are wont to occur’; and these changes both have impinged on the ‘preservation’ of the text and – at least in part – have been thought to determine the nature of philological work.

According to Zoetmulder (1974:61), despite these various ‘changes’, ‘by a judicious choice out of the variants offered by the surviving manuscripts the editor tries to reconstruct their prototype, that is, the form to which they all go back’. Pigeaud (1960-63, I:xv) pointed out in the introduction to his study of the *Nāgarakrtagama*, for example, that ‘Kern and Krom have tried to reconstruct the original text [...] as written by the author’. And Brakel (1976: 141) referred to Zoetmulder’s survey as ‘a very solid base [...] on which the

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21 Zoetmulder 1974:36-7. Compare the statement ‘The texts we now possess have survived the multifarious risks involved in that long journey through the ages, but not without suffering changes and losing something of their original form’ (Zoetmulder 1974:43).

22 Compare: ‘to restore that [original] form as far as possible is one of the major tasks of Old Javanese philology’ (Zoetmulder 1974:43). According to Zoetmulder (1974:51), ‘the perfect edition would ideally be identical with the autograph’. I shall return to address the notion of ‘the autograph’ below.
candi of this literature may one day yet be restored to its pristine glory'. Zoetmulder (1974:51, 53, 55, 60-7) frequently referred to this originary 'form to which they all go back' as 'the autograph' – the text as it came, quite literally, from the author's own hand. But what is the nature of the object – the 'candi' or 'autograph' – that is to be 'reconstructed'? In what sense do the surviving manuscripts 'go back' to it? And what is the relationship between 'reconstruction' and the 'process of transmission'?

In addressing editorial strategies for dealing with Sanskrit orthography in Old Javanese texts, Zoetmulder (1974:55) suggested that, despite their absence from the manuscripts themselves, by 'using the characters specially designed to represent the sounds proper to Sanskrit [...] the sense of the text comes across much more clearly'. He explained that the use of such conventions would help to avoid the homographic ambiguities that can arise in relation to such words as sura ('hero') and sura ('god'), which, in some manuscripts, might both 'be written sura, whatever the meaning may be' (Zoetmulder 1974:55). On this account it would appear that, despite its absence in 'the manuscript', such a graphic distinction – as the guarantor of 'meaning' – somehow properly inheres in 'the text'. But, as 'the text' itself is, strictly speaking, absent from the scene of inquiry – re-presented, as it were, by its manuscripts – we are left with the task of establishing the criteria for deducing the 'form to which they all go back'.

This 'form to which they all go back' surfaces most distinctly in representations of 'the manuscript' as a vehicle for 'the text' – or, alternatively, its 'sense' and 'meaning' – as it passes from one place, space or time to another. In Zoetmulder's survey, for example, we read of 'the texts of our manuscripts' and 'a text which is found uniformly in all of [the manuscripts]' (Zoetmulder 1974:64), and of the Nāgarakṛtāgama being 'preserved in one manuscript only' (Zoetmulder 1974:44). In these and other turns of phrase, we may discern a mode of 'transmission' that, in addition to coinciding with its etymology – literally, a 'sending across' (Latin trans + mittère)
seems to require a unifying principle to underwrite the association of the contemporary trace with its alleged originary moment. It would appear that 'the text', as a theoretical entity, precedes the occasions on which it has been observed, while historical events (that is, moments in its 'transmission') are construed as extrinsic to its true nature as an object of knowledge.

Commenting on Greco-Roman historiography, the Oxford philosopher and historian R.G. Collingwood (1993:42) referred to such modes of thought as substantialist, explaining that, in this connection, 'substance does not mean matter or physical substance', but rather, it is the a priori theoretical entity (in our case, 'the text') that the substantialist thinker posits to unify the occasions of what s/he assumes to be its various historical transformations (its manuscripts, for instance). In addition to the various permutations of 'the text', this epistemic function of substance can be seen to be at work in phrases such as Friederich's 'religious ideas', Teeuw and Robson's 'Śiwa-Buddha religion', or Kern's 'Śaivism and Buddhism in Java'. The religio-textual substance comprises the proper object of knowledge, while the historical particularity of the moments in which it may be imperfectly or partially discerned is neutralized through scholarly endeavour. But if the aim of scholarly endeavour is to recover the unadulterated substance, what is the nature of its unfortunate transformation?

Substantial degeneration
With the various 'changes that are wont to occur', transmission seems to foster a certain progressive degeneration. This process of substantial degeneration has not only been detected by scholars in the movement across spatialized time, but has also been mapped onto the related movement across 'spatial' space or, perhaps more precisely, onto the movement of the textual substance from one place to another. In particular, the ongoing decay of an originary moment may be discerned in the movement east from India to Java and, ultimately, to Bali, where, for example, the language is no longer understood

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27 An illustrative example may be found in Ensink's remarks (1974:201) about the tale of Bubhuksa: 'This tale has been preserved in Javanese-Balinese verses and has been illustrated in reliefs on the Panataran temple [...] . It has been made accessible in Dutch by Poerbatjaraka. Poerbatjaraka's rendering was quoted in extenso by Rassers (1926) and through a translation of Rassers' paper is now available in English.' The 'tale of Bubhuksa' emerges as the unifying principle underwriting the articulation of otherwise separate moments as its occasions of appearance: its preservation in Javanese verses, its illustration on a temple wall in Java, its being made accessible in Dutch and its eventual English translation.

28 With regard to Greco-Roman historiography, Collingwood (1993:42) explained that 'a substantialistic metaphysics implies a theory of knowledge according to which only what is unchanging is knowable. But what is unchanging is not historical. What is historical is the transitory event. The substance to which an event happens, or from whose nature it proceeds, is nothing to the historian. Hence the attempt to think historically and the attempt to think in terms of substance were incompatible.'
As trained Indologists, the early scholars of *kakawin* recognized Indian motifs in the literature that they ‘discovered’ in Java, Bali and Lombok. As Mary Zurbuchen (1987:3) noted, a certain priority was given, in the study of Balinese language and literature, ‘to Indian-born theology, liturgy, epic themes, and Sanskritized language’. According to Vickers (1989:82-3), in the early years of Balinese studies, the ‘classical literature so prized by [...] European Orientalists [...] was not seen as intrinsically Balinese, but something Hindu which fate had preserved for posterity on this Island’. Along these lines, we find Ensink (1974) representing his analysis of ‘Sutasoma’s teaching to Gajavaktra’ in terms of its relation to Indic models of yoga. In a similar manner, Robson (1983:294) referred to the *Indism* of Kawi texts as ‘everything that was taken from India and subsequently took root in Java’. Further, Zoetmulder has written of ‘the dependence of Old Javanese literature on India for subject matter and form’ and of the manner in which ‘Indian elements found their way into Old Javanese’ (Zoetmulder 1974:8), and ‘how all pervading the influence of Indian literature was’ (Zoetmulder 1974:68). As such, manuscripts found in Bali were generally taken as the ‘vehicle’ for a ‘text’ composed in ancient Java containing elements of Indian extraction.

The trope of ‘influence’ was frequently deployed in representing this relationship between India, Java and Bali in scholarly studies of ‘literature’, ‘culture’ and ‘religion’. Zoetmulder wrote of the ‘influence of Sanskrit on Old Javanese’ (Zoetmulder 1974:16), ‘the Javano-Balinese world, where Indian influences retained their hold’ (Zoetmulder 1974:31), ‘Javanese cultural influence’ on Bali (Zoetmulder 1974:19), and the fact that ‘ever since the time of Erlangga Bali had been increasingly exposed to Javanese

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29 The invocation of loss and recovery raises the question of property: to whom does ‘the Old Javanese text’ properly belong? Taking this one step further, one might argue that ‘the text’ as imagined in philological discourse can only be recognized in the moment of its loss. Slavoj Žižek (1997:13) has remarked in a somewhat different connection that ‘the paradox to be fully accepted is that when a certain historical moment is (mis)perceived as the moment of loss of some quality, upon closer inspection it becomes clear that the lost quality emerged only at this very moment of its alleged loss [...]. This coincidence of emergence and loss, of course, designates the fundamental paradox of the Lacanian objet petit a which emerges as being-lost – narrativization occludes this paradox by describing the process in which the object is first given and then gets lost.’

30 According to Sweeney (1983:22-3), ‘in the Netherlands, the potential Indologist found that his classical education had some practical use: Latin and Greek were the stepping stones to the study of Sanskrit and Arabic, which were regarded by the Indologists as the “classical languages” of the Malay world, based on the model of the “classics” for Europe’. See also Vickers 1989:80, and compare Boon 1977:68.

31 I would suggest that the metaphor of germination is not entirely fortuitous, but rather may be closely related to the representation of ‘the Old Javanese text’ as a substantialized object of knowledge.

32 A classic example may be found in Stutterheim’s *Indian influences in Old-Balinese art* (1935).
influence’ (Zoetmulder 1974:20). Robson (1983:291), in reconsidering kakawin, continued ‘looking for influences of one author on another’ and Teeuw, in his 1975 address, remarked that ‘Old Javanese language and literature must be recognized as the principal door for foreign influences entering Indonesia in the pre-Islamic period, and also constituted an outlet for culture in the Majapahit era’. With ‘foreign influences’ entering Indonesia through the ‘door’ of Old Javanese language, the metaphor of flowing in – quite literally in-fluence – is made explicit.

More generally, it seems that kakawin poetry itself, as a literary genre, was represented as the product of just such a substantial influence. Hooykaas, in his review of Zoetmulder’s survey of Old Javanese literature, described its subject matter as ‘the kakawins, the court poems, in India called kāvyā’ (Hooykaas 1975:483), a move echoed in the introduction to his Balinese Bauddha Brahmins, in which he invoked the ‘kāvyā Sutasoma’ (Hooykaas 1973:10). But under what conditions might the Sutasoma be considered a kāvyā?

The word kakawin is simply an Old Javanese transposition of the Sanskrit kāvyā, and means ‘poetry’, in particular poetry of a special type, and also ‘poem’ written in a particular kind of metre. In most formal characteristics, and also to a certain extent in content, the Old Javanese kakawin correspond with the Indian kāvyā. However, the nature of ‘transposition’ and ‘correspondence’ was not made altogether explicit. Although we are told that ‘a formal correspondence implies that the requirements for Indian poetry are also in substance applicable to the Old Javanese kakawin’ (Teeuw et al. 1969:3), it is unclear how closely one should read this casual reference to ‘substance’. Do these two genres, for instance, proceed from accidents (in the Aristotelian sense) sustained by one and the same foundational substance? Hooykaas (1976:178), in a later review, defined kakawin as ‘the Old Javanese imitation and development of the Indian kāvyā’. But if kakawin poetry is derivative in relation to its Indian original, the question is merely deferred to what is involved in the process of ‘imitation’ and ‘development’. As in the case of literary transmission, can we expect a degree of substantial degeneration?


Latin influent-em (influere – ‘to flow in’). We find a rather telling variation on this metaphor in Gonda’s reference (1975:39) to ‘Old Javanese texts impregnated with Indian ideas’ (compare Zoetmulder 1974:166), but I shall return to that in a later section. It is worth noting that, in this transmission, the sender is most conspicuously active, while the receiver is implicitly (ideally?) passive. In the final section, I shall address the gendered nature of this distinction.

Compare the reference to the Nāgarakṛtāgama as ‘that kāvyā composed by a Buddhist Brahmin court poet, which dates from Majapahit’s heyday in 1365 A.D.’ (Hooykaas 1973:9).
In examining scholarly attributions of 'imitation', we encounter the related notion of 'artificiality'. Robson (1983:295) explained that *kāvya* poetry 'retells stories taken from the epics' and that it is this 'artificial' Indian genre 'which inspired the Old Javanese *kakawin*'. Drawing on Macdonell's history of Sanskrit literature (1905), he glossed the term *kāvya* as 'artificial court epic'. Though Robson did not comment explicitly on the nature of this 'artificiality', Macdonell's account of *kāvya* offers a rather interesting qualification. Commenting on the *Raghuvaṃśa*, for instance, he noted that it 'abounds with apt and striking similes and contains much genuine poetry, [...] though many passages are undoubtedly too artificial for the European taste' (Macdonell 1905:327). His attributions of 'artificiality' – and, in this instance, the offence to 'European taste' – were based on the poet's 'appealing to the head rather than the heart' (Macdonell 1905:326), a literary approach characterized by 'matter becoming [...] merely a means for the display of tricks of style' and 'the cleverness of [the poet's] conceits and the ingenuity of his diction' (Macdonell 1905:326), 'rhyme' and 'long descriptions and lyrical effusions' (Macdonell 1905:330), and 'irrelevant additions' and 'interminable speeches and long-winded descriptions', by which the poet 'greatly impedes the progress of the narrative' (Macdonell 1905:331). On Macdonell's account (1905:329), the degree of 'artificiality' in *kāvya* poetry increased through time, 'till at last nothing remains but bombast and verbal jugglery'. This 'artificiality' (perhaps not unlike 'imitation') indicated a certain lack of poetic authenticity – in this case an obstruction to, or absence of, the 'appeal' to 'the heart' that characterizes 'genuine poetry'. But can this notion of 'genuine poetry' be read back into the perception of *kakawin* as 'simply an Old Javanese transposition of the Sanskrit *kāvya*'? If the association may be sustained, *kakawin* – as a Javanese imitation of Indian artificiality – would land up doubly lacking in the quasi-Romantic ideal of poetic authenticity espoused by scholars of Old Javanese literature. The occurrence of 'imitation' in the composition and transmission of *kakawin*

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36 Note the invocation of 'inspiration' – another *substantial* metaphor (Latin inspirare 'to blow or breathe into'), particularly in its religious permutations (see *The Oxford English dictionary* 1994). Compare the following remark by Hooykaas (1976:179): 'These court poems must have been so inspiring for the Balinese, saturated with Javanese culture'.


38 The notion of 'artificiality' as employed in this connection combines an association with the products of art or skill (compare *artifice, artefact*) with a sense of unnatural or contrived origin. As Charles Taylor (1983:378-9) observed, 'it is in the eighteenth century that the distinction arises between the merely reproductive imagination, which simply brings back to mind what we have already experienced, [...] and the creative imagination which can reproduce something new and unprecedented'. So it is perhaps not without consequence that, as Sweeney (1983:18) suggested, 'the scholars who performed the great pioneering work in the field of Malay studies were largely the product of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – the age of Romanticism'. 
Richard Fox

suggested the derivative character of this poetry, while its authors' exaltation of literary convention was thought to be an indication of artificiality. The former seemed to imply the inadequacy of the indigenous genius, while the latter suggested an absence of genuine creativity (or, if one may use Macdonell's phrase, 'genuine poetry').

Considering the 'dependence of Old Javanese literature on India for subject matter and form', if we were to associate this literature with its place of origin, we would be in a position to chart the progressive degeneration of a literary substance from kāvya/India to kakawin/Java. But this raises the question of where Bali fits into the chain of derivation and degeneration.

Recalling Santoso's despair at the Balinese lack of 'insight' into 'the background of the text', we might be tempted to tack the mabasan club – as a synecdoche for 'the Balinese' – onto the end of the analogy. But is kakawin poetry really their literature? Following Zoetmulder and his acolytes, the role of the Balinese was believed to be primarily 'to do the work of literary preservation'. And as preservation appears to be a conservative affair (a matter of imitation?), kakawin would not seem to be properly 'Balinese'. Echoing the antiquarian bias discussed above, Weatherbee (1976:540) has suggested that it is the quintessential "Javaneseness" of the [kakawin] literature that makes it such a valuable source for ancient Javanese cultural history. It would appear that the Balinese could 'imitate' Javanese kakawin-writing, while Zoetmulder (1974:50) has referred to mabasan reading as 'typically and uniquely Balinese'. On this basis one might argue that perhaps the Balinese specialize in performing a literature and, in a sense, have thereby made it their own. But we find Robson (1983:316) suggesting elsewhere that this 'typically and uniquely Balinese' activity might reflect 'a technique of oral performance in early Java'. So, recalling the paired associations of kāvya/India and kakawin/Java, are the Balinese left without a literature of their own? Might their role as an inert medium of transmission characterize them in full?

Scholars have long noted that, in addition to kakawin, Balinese have composed and 'transmitted' a genre of metrical poetry known as kidung, which is characterized by an 'indigenous' prosody and 'Middle Javanese' language. In a manner not entirely unlike that in which he cast kakawin as 'a repository of data on Indianized Java' (Weatherbee 1976:541), he wrote

39 We find imitation invoked even in the history of kakawin itself. Zoetmulder (1974:27), for example, explained that, as 'kakawin literature was traditional in the highest degree', the older models were 'imitated as faithfully as possible' in the composition of new poems.

40 Compare Zoetmulder's statement (1974:28; emphasis added): 'So the period over which kakawin literature extends is little short of a thousand years. It is Old Javanese in its entirety. And where poems of undeniably Balinese origin are concerned, it is remarkable to notice how seldom we come across an unmistakable Balinism'.
that ‘the kidungs merit further investigation as social documentation of the Javanized Balinese kratons [royal courts]’ (Weatherbee 1976:540). Hooykaas (1975:484), in commenting on how these kidung measure up when compared with kakawin, concurred with Zoetmulder:

Z. is right in stressing the difficulty in studying kidung, in deploiring the scarcity of pioneering work done in this field, and in pointing to the ‘literary and poetic value’, in which ‘the kidungs are, on the whole, inferior to the kakawin’.

From the assertion of the inferiority of kidung to kakawin, together with the ‘quintessential Javaneseness’ of kakawin and the importance of kidung for an understanding of Balinese court society, a hierarchical relationship is emerging. We have seen how the kakawin fared in relation to the Indian kāvyā, and how the kidung rates when juxtaposed with the kakawin. This seems to take the eastward-progressing degeneration one step further. Through an examination of literary ‘imitation’ and ‘artificiality’, it appears that Java does not measure up to India, nor does Bali to Java. As both the preservers of a doubly derivative literature and the proper owners (authors?) of a poetically inferior genre, things do not look good for the Balinese. However, if the Balinese have been represented as falling short of a literary ideal, the nature of that ideal deserves closer examination.

Authorizing the text
With regard to ‘the Old Javanese text’, the genuinely authored composition is cast consistently in opposition to its artificial imitation. The ‘author’, as a unifying principle for ordering ‘manuscripts and their texts’, is one of the most pervasive and powerful figures in the scholarly description of kakawin. Ensink (1974), for example, included beneath the main title of his article the parenthetical sub-title ‘(Tantular, Sutasoma Kakavin 38.1-42.4)’. As the ‘work’ of ‘Tantular’, the Sutasoma surfaces as an authored text - a fact presupposed in the first sentence of Ensink’s article (1974:195), where we read of ‘Tantular’s Sutasoma kakavin’. In a similar vein, the first part of Zoetmulder’s survey contains a chapter on ‘Poets, poems and poetry’, while six of the ten chapters into which the second part (a ‘survey of all known kakawins, with pertinent notes as to date, authorship, relationship to Indian literature etc.’) is organized incorporate the name of an author of an Old Javanese ‘work’ or ‘works’ treated therein (for example, VII, ‘Mpu Kaňwa’s Arjunawiwaha’, xi, ‘Mpu Tantular’, and so on).

Compare the manner in which interlinear Balinese renderings of kakawin have been treated as ‘expressions of Balinese tradition’ (Zoetmulder 1974:48-50).

On the theme of ‘measuring up’, Hooykaas (1975:484) remarked, ‘Length, methinks, is not a yardstick’.

It is interesting to note that Weatherbee (1976:540) cited precisely the same passage from Zoetmulder (1974:408) in his review.
The discursive prominence of the author may further be discerned in the questions posed by scholars in describing their work. Ensink (1974:208) asked ‘can we point out the sources Tantular drew upon?’. And Zoetmulder (1957:53) remarked, ‘We are very much inclined to accept the idea that the poet of Arjunawiwita indeed did see Airlangga in his “hero”. But what did he really want to say about him?’. We may recall Robson’s reminder (after Zoetmulder) that ‘a literary work is not something floating free in time and space, but rather something created at a particular point of time and in a certain place’.

In this connection, if the ‘literary work’ – the kakawin – is the product, or trace, of a spatially and temporally located authorial act, what is the nature of the relationship that ties ‘the author’ to her or his ‘work’?

The notion of the ‘authored text’ may, at first, seem unproblematic. Philology aside, something akin to ‘the text’, as the outcome of a particular sort of human action, underpins any scholarly debate in which an argument or statement is attributed to a ‘Nietzsche’, ‘Freud’ or ‘Marx’. As Foucault (1981:58) remarked,

> The author is asked to account for the unity of the texts which are placed under his name. He is asked to reveal or at least carry authentification of the hidden meaning which traverses them. He is asked to connect them to his lived experiences, to the real history which saw their birth.

In scholarly discourse on kakawin, ‘the author’ is used to order the field of Old Javanese ‘texts’ which, in turn, are deployed to order the field of ‘manuscripts’). Yet, despite its apparent ubiquity, ‘the author’ is a concept with a history. According to Barthes (1977:142-3), ‘the author is a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English Empiricism, French Rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual, of, as it is more nobly put, the “human person”’. Taken together, the pervasiveness and the historical specificity of ‘the author’ should be cause for consideration.

Elsewhere Robson (1983:292) remarked, ‘if we may assume that a poem is something meant to be enjoyed, something meant to give pleasure to its audience, then we are obliged to ask how the poet set about the task and how he imagined he would achieve his aim’. The facile invocation of pleasure, in this connection, should give some cause for consideration. Roland Barthes (1973), for example, dedicated an entire essay to Le plaisir du texte. On what basis is one to assume the commensurability of contemporary western notions of ‘pleasure’ with those of ancient Java? Here, Robson’s caution (1983:292) regarding the imposition of ‘foreign standards and concepts’ in the study of Old Javanese literature seems less than apparent.

Here it would be appropriate to note – as many of those who read earlier drafts of this article already have – that my analysis required reference to the sort of authorial unities (such as ‘Ensink’, ‘Robson’, ‘Zoetmulder’, and so on) that I examined in philological representations of ‘the Old Javanese text’ as an object of knowledge. What is at issue is what Foucault referred to as the ‘author function’ (see, for instance, Foucault 1991 and, more broadly on issues of interpretation, 1990).
However, before examining more closely the implications of utilizing such ‘a product of our society’ in the study of kakawin, there are other questions that need to be answered. If the ‘full significance’ of the text is grounded in its ‘historical background’, and this ‘background’ is located at ‘a particular point of time and in a certain place’, what happened at that time and in that place? That is to say: what is the nature of the authorial moment?

Zoetmulder (1974:48) suggested that ‘every student of Old Javanese literature who applies himself to the material will find to his satisfaction that there is a considerable number of texts of which the original form can be approached closely enough to do the author’s creation justice’. But the invocation of ‘creation’ only defers the question of what happened at the scene of writing. The scribes responsible for copying manuscripts emerge from Zoetmulder’s account (1974:46) as the poet’s ‘unspectacular collaborators in the conservation of the treasure of culture that is literature’ – a remark that is very much in line with the articulation of ‘imitation’, ‘artificiality’ and ‘degeneration’. But how was the ‘author’s creation’ differentiated from the copyists’ ‘unspectacular’ work? And under what conditions can one ‘do justice’ to this ‘treasure of culture’?

With the ‘authorial moment’ of ‘creation’ we are confronted with a broader – if somewhat unsystematically deployed – notion of ‘art’ and the author’s ‘artistic act’. Ensink (1974:195) began his treatment of the Sutasoma by referring to it as ‘a work of art, which by every standard it is’; and Santoso (1975:31) mentioned ‘the Indonesian artist’, a phrase he parenthetically glossed with ‘writer, builder of temples or engraver of reliefs’. Zoetmulder (1957:64) referred to what is required of the poet ‘if he wants to make [his kakawin] a real work of art’, and Hooykaas (1975:484) cited Robson’s PhD thesis in which he set out ‘to go beyond considerations of form alone and to attempt an appreciation of [the War/ban Wideya] as a work of art’. So it seems that a dominant ideal for kakawin composition is its production as a work of ‘art’, and ‘art’ appears to be something other than ‘form’ (even if ‘form’ is the guarantor of ‘sense’). But the nature of ‘art’ itself remains somewhat elusive. More recently, Robson (1983:292) explained that ‘just like other forms of art, literature can tell us something of [the poets’] hopes, ideals, and even fears, providing we are able to interpret properly’. And with this, we are

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46 Hooykaas did not cite a page number for this passage from Robson’s thesis, which was submitted to the University of Leiden in 1971.
47 Here a content/form dichotomy would line up very neatly with the oppositions message/medium and art/imitation, the former member of each pair coinciding with the authentic substance.
48 Compare Zoetmulder’s remark (1974:151): ‘More important than the techniques of writing and the forms of poetry are the men who employed them, their ideas and aims, and their place in the society of their time’.
faced with another deferral: this time to the nature of ‘proper’ interpretation and, hopefully, what it can tell us about the ‘artistic act’.

Art and the expression of beauty
Zoetmulder (1974:51) referred to ‘the autograph’ as ‘the finished product of the author’s imagination’. Ensink (1974:195) invoked ‘the poet’s special intention in composing the kakawin’, and Robson (1983:292), in reconsidering kakawin, set out to outline an approach that ‘does not fail to give credit to the innovative originality of an author’. While this ‘innovative originality’ may take us some way in identifying an opposition in which the notion of ‘artificiality’ has been employed (that is, with a privileged position for ‘originality’ as opposed to ‘imitation’), we are left to contend with the author’s ‘imagination’ and ‘intention’ – particularly as they relate to the nature of the ‘artistic act’. I have noted the substantial underpinnings of ‘influence’; but what are the epistemic implications of ‘imagination’ and ‘intention’? Commenting on the title of his survey, Zoetmulder (1974:v) explained in the preface that:

The art of writing poetry in ancient Java was given the name kalangwan or kalangon, that is, ‘beauty’. For it was the creation and enjoyment of the products of literary art which conveyed the ecstasy (langō) of losing oneself in the experience of beauty.

Recalling Robson’s ‘innovative originality’, this raises the question of whether this invocation of ‘experience’ is in any way related to ‘authenticity’ and ‘art’ in its opposition to ‘the artificial’. Is the ‘conveyance’ of ‘ecstasy’ in fact yet another sending across?49

Returning to Zoetmulder’s preface, we come across the ‘highly developed sense of beauty of the people of those far off days’, the ‘ways in which this aesthetic sense expressed itself’, and, with regard to kakawin in particular, ‘the way of thinking which found expression in it’ (Zoetmulder 1974:v). Elsewhere, he referred to ‘the aesthetic feeling’ and ‘anything with which the poet expresses that feeling: writing instrument, palm-leaf, word or letter’ (Zoetmulder 1957:65). In the ‘expression’ of this ‘aesthetic feeling’,

49 Convey (Latin con- + via ‘way’). ‘Percolation’ surfaces as another permutation of this movement of literary substance. Brakel (1976:140) remarked in his critique of Zoetmulder’s survey, ‘in a work which has taken as its title the Old Javanese term for “beauty”, so little of the beauty of Old Javanese literature percolates through to the reader’. Compare Gonda’s remark (1975:37) on religion in Bali: ‘Notwithstanding a certain percolation of these Hindu-Javanese elements the religion of the masses remained essentially Indonesian’. Noting the invocation of ‘essence’, we should not be surprised to find the following as the first Oxford English dictionary (1994) entry under the verb percolate: ‘To cause (a liquid) to pass through the interstices of a porous body or medium; to strain or filter (naturally or artificially)’. Here I should note that, following Quine (1994:24), I do not take such dictionary entries to be an indication of essence, but rather as a report on antecedent facts.
it seems that we find something akin to the poet’s ‘hopes, ideals, and even fears’, which Robson discovered where he ‘interpreted properly’. Noting the etymological association with pressing out – especially pressing a liquid from its vessel or container (Latin ex- + pressāre)\(^{50}\) – we may recall Santoso’s ‘sincere desire to attempt to convey [the] full significance to [his] people’ and note the various obstructions to that movement of the literary substance. The artistic work should ‘convey’ something – for instance, ‘aesthetic feeling’, ‘hopes, fears’, and so on – but time has thrown obstacles in its way (compare Zoetmulder 1974:v; Brakel 1976:141).\(^{51}\)

So, to summarize the steps in the emergence of ‘the Old Javanese text’ as a potential object of knowledge: the poet expressed his feeling, this expression was objectified in and conveyed by the text, the text has survived transmission in various manuscripts, and the Balinese have preserved these manuscripts. Yet, although the Balinese have written, read and studied kakawin themselves, it would appear that in most cases the poet’s original ‘expression’ of his ‘aesthetic feeling’ has been ‘not always understood in all its peculiarities and intricacies’. Despite their confusion, however, the Balinese have preserved the manuscripts that have allowed scholars to understand the poet’s expression, through a philological procedure of textual reconstruction that culminates in a ‘neoplatonic process of descent and reascent’.\(^{52}\) In this scholarly production of the ‘perfect edition’, Zoetmulder (1974:51) suggested ‘it is towards this objective that the philologist directs his learning and energies’, and further, that in so doing, ‘his ideal is to make himself expendable’. But what is the nature of a knowledge that, under ideal conditions, renders its subject ‘expendable’?

The mode of knowing

In the previous section, I analysed the scholarly deployment of a collection of key terms through which ‘the Old Javanese text’ surfaced as a classically substantialist object of knowledge. I traced a series of deferrals in its representation, landing up with an epistemological moment in which the knowing

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\(^{50}\) It is interesting to note that the first entries of the transitive verb ‘express’ in The Oxford English dictionary (1994) are: ‘To press, squeeze, or wring out; to press (juice, air, etc.) from, out of (anything), spec. to press or squeeze out (milk or other secretion) from the breast’.

\(^{51}\) It is also interesting to note the parallel here with a particular variety of theological hermeneutics associated with Bultmann and his pupils, Ebeling and Fuchs, in which ‘the goal of hermeneutics [was taken to be] the “removal of hindrances” to understanding’ (Ebeling 1963, cited in Palmer 1969:53).

\(^{52}\) It is noteworthy that the Balinese would emerge on the descending side of Zoetmulder’s neoplatonic schema (that is to say, at the point prior to the philological re-erection of the ‘candi of this literature’).
subject — the philological scholar — could, under ideal conditions, render her or himself expendable. However, the philological claim to potential expendability requires the production of an object that is fully and under all possible conditions present and self-identical — that is to say, without need of representation (in either sense). In this section, I shall examine more closely the epistemetic conditions under which such a mode of knowing could be assumed.

**Understanding literature**

The term ‘literature’ has figured frequently in the discussion thus far: we have encountered the oft-repeated pair Old Javanese ‘language and literature’. Hence Zoetmulder’s *Survey of Old Javanese language and literature*, with its section on ‘The preservation of Old Javanese literature’, and his ‘literary heritage’ and literature as a ‘cultural treasure’, and Weatherbee’s ‘candi of this literature’, ‘quintessential “Javaneness” of the literature’, and literature being ‘just like other forms of art’. In the first chapter of his survey, Zoetmulder quite appropriately asked ‘what do we mean by literature and what do we mean by Old Javanese?’. Having briefly answered the latter question, he explained, ‘we shall include in our survey all the writings in Javanese which display the linguistic characteristics of that earlier stage [that is, the stage deemed ‘Old Javanese’: from the ninth century forward], provided only that the quality of such writings entitles them to be judged as literature’ (Zoetmulder 1974:18). So what are the appropriate criteria for making this judgement?

Having raised the question of ‘literature’, Zoetmulder (1974:36) devoted the next eighteen pages to a summary of Javanese history before returning to ‘explain in a few words what we mean by the word “literature” in the title of this study’. He explained, ‘we shall concentrate [...] on the “belletristic” side, on the products of Old Javanese literary art, on the place that the cultivation of poetry and of what we may call the cult of beauty (Old Javanese kalangön) occupied in Hindu-Javanese culture’ (Zoetmulder 1974:36). However, what he referred to as the ‘mantric texts’ of the Balinese priests did not belong ‘to the kind of literature which forms the main subject-matter of our survey’, insofar as literature ‘in the more restricted sense is read first and foremost to be understood’. So it seems that kakawin poetry, as literature, is first and

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53 His explanation of the term ‘Old Javanese’ did not necessarily satisfy his reviewers – see, for example, Brakel 1976:140.

54 Zoetmulder 1974:48. According to Zoetmulder (1974:48), ‘much of the language of these [‘mantric’] writings has become obscure or completely unintelligible to those using them, and many of the concepts and trends of thought are unfamiliar without having become, for that reason, useless in the performance of ritual or private religious practice’. It is perhaps not irrelevant to note in this connection that the priestly use of these texts has been predominantly described in terms of ‘mumbling’ (Friederich 1959:63, 66, 68, 73), ‘murmuring’ (Stutterheim 1935:21), and ‘muttering’ (Goudriaan and Hooykaas 1971:5; Gonda 1975:50).
foremost ‘to be understood’; and this brings us back – by way of Robson’s notion of ‘interpreting properly’ – to the ‘artistic act’.

‘Art’, as we have noted, was represented as a matter of ‘expression’, and literature was taken to be ‘the finished product of the author’s imagination’. We have seen how the artist’s ‘aesthetic sense’, ‘feeling’ or ‘way of thinking’ was said to ‘express itself’, and how the *kakawin* ‘conveyed the ecstasy of losing oneself in the experience of beauty’ (Zoetmulder 1974:v). But what is the nature of ‘expression’? In a related connection, the Russian critic V.N. Volosinov (1973:84) suggested that ‘its simplest, rough definition is: something which, having in some way taken shape and definition in the psyche of an individual, is outwardly objectified for others with the help of external signs of some kind’. Can Volosinov’s expressed ‘something’ be reconciled with the Old Javanese ‘experience of Beauty’ or, perhaps, the poet’s ‘hopes, ideals, and even fears’ that we may discover in his text if only we ‘interpret properly’?

According to Volosinov’s critical account of expressionism (1973:85), interpretation ‘must traverse a route the reverse of that for expression’ – the scholar must somehow re-enact the authorial moment, but in reverse. While on such an account the author would have externalized an internal experience, the scholar must (re)produce that experience from what is left of its external trace. Literary ‘understanding’, on this account, appears to be a function of such a successful reproduction of the authorial experience, while the scholar’s aim would be to facilitate, through philological endeavour, the (re)production of that experience by others.\(^{55}\)

The philologically assisted reproduction of the authorial moment finds an interesting consonance with a rather curious set of passages by which scholars have associated their work with that of the Old Javanese poet. Santoso (1975:9-10), for example, remarked on undertaking his study of the *Sutasoma*, ‘in the beginning I felt most uncertain, probably not less doubtful than Mpu Tantular himself when he started to write the poem’. And Teeuw, in his 1975 address, said that in his studies, ‘like an Old Javanese poet, I wander in that garden searching for bliss, searching for solace from the difficulties of life, writing to express my various experiences’.\(^{56}\) In a similar manner, Zoetmulder (1974:156) reversed the association, suggesting that the Kawi poets ‘may have formed what one might anachronistically describe as the Department of Arts and Letters, the Majapahit parallel to the modern Indonesian Jawatan Kebudayaan dan Kesusastraan’. But, even if passages

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\(^{55}\) Rodney Needham (1972), drawing heavily on the later Wittgenstein, discussed the problems inherent in taking ‘inner states’, such as ‘belief’ and ‘experience’, as one’s object of study.

like this amount to little more than playful embellishment, what emerges recurrently in representations of scholarly work is the interpretive desire for a certain experiential immediacy. If the goal of philological endeavour was to re-experience the authorial moment, this brings us back, with increased urgency, to the question of how interpretive success might render the scholar 'expendable'. Not unlike philological representations of Balinese manuscript copyists, perhaps the scholarly ideal is to function as an inert medium for the transmission of the artistic or literary substance. Through an association with the author, might the philologist short-circuit the 'neoplatonic process of descent and reascent'?

_A knowing look_

Such 'intimate' knowledge sits uncomfortably alongside the dominance of visual metaphors for knowledge in scholarly representations of 'the Old Javanese text'. While the former seems to imply a certain desire for immediacy, the latter entails a degree of separation between the knowing subject and her or his ostensible object of knowledge.

With Zoetmulder (1974:170), we find the scholar represented as a 'spectator', and with Robson (1983:302), the text as a 'specimen'. Further, we find in Zoetmulder's work (1974:43, 25, 50) the related epistemological metaphor of 'the picture': 'our overall picture of Old Javanese literature', 'a true picture of what really happened', and 'a picture that is typically and uniquely Balinese'. Similarly, Robson (1983:293, 296) referred to inscriptions that 'give a picture of a complex, highly organized society' and to the need '[a]l[t] this point [...] to introduce more definition into the picture of the

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57 Except, of course, on those rare occasions when even the author may be corrected. Zoetmulder (1974:61-2) has remarked in this connection, 'How easily he may be tempted unconsciously to know better than the author himself and to "correct" the autograph! In an exceptional case he may be right. The author, human as he was, may have made a mistake in writing. But even then, by correcting such an error, the editor is in contravention of his supposed aim, which is to restore the text as faithfully as possible to its original form.'

58 As Lefebvre (1991:286) suggested in his study of spatial practices, 'the eye [...] tends to relegate objects to the distance, to render them passive'.

59 Compare, for example, Zoetmulder 1974:42 and Goudriaan and Hooykaas 1971:19. Both terms are derived from the Latin _spectare_, 'to look'. In a similar connection Johannes Fabian (1983:124-5) remarked, 'the symbolic anthropologist is inclined to "view" the Other as an object of aesthetic contemplation. "In the country of the blind," says C. Geertz, "the one-eyed is not king but spectator" (1979:228).'

60 Vincent Crapanzano (1986:58), in his analysis of an article by the nineteenth-century anthropologist George Catlin, remarked that 'Catlin's assertion of a fixed vantage point, of an assigned seat [...] must be understood rhetorically. It attests deictically to his presence. It gives him the authority of the painter before his easel. It enables him to lead his readers into the visualized scene and to convince them (and himself) of its truth.' Further, as Mark Hobart pointed out to me, the metaphor of the picture implies the almost cryogenic stillness of its object.
organization of society'. The subtitle of Zoetmulder’s *Kalangwan* itself invokes a classically visual trope, the ‘survey’, derived from Old French (*sorveir*) and Medieval Latin (*supervidere*), which are connected with sight – particularly sight from above (see *The Oxford English dictionary* 1994).

Another visual metaphor is found in the recurrent invocation of light as characterizing a state of knowledge. Zoetmulder (1957:52) suggested the possibility, for instance, that with an increased knowledge of Old Javanese, the texts ‘will become more transparent to us’. He then explained that ‘the conception of the *kekawin* as “historical records” in a highly specific sense is an idea that throws a new light on this part of the Old Javanese literature and on the environment from which these poems have come’ (Zoetmulder 1957:59). Later he noted that in the first third of the tenth century, ‘there falls over the history of Central Java a darkness lasting many centuries, on which neither documents nor relics of art or architecture throw any light’ (Zoetmulder 1974:19). We also read of ‘the darkness into which part of Old Javanese literature has disappeared’ and of a situation where ‘we find practically nothing that throws light on these questions’ (Zoetmulder 1974:45, 46).

Similarly, Ensink (1974:208) remarked that ‘the comparison of our passage with several other texts has brought to light some close correspondences with those texts’, while Robson (1983:301, 299) commented on the necessity ‘to throw more light on the term *palembang*’ and referred to the author of a *kakawin* as someone who will sometimes ‘give an explicit formulation of his message either at the beginning or at the end of the text’ so as not ‘to leave us all alone in the dark’. What are the critical implications of discovering a certain philological predilection for visual metaphors? Has knowledge of ‘the Old Javanese text’ been catachrestically determined by sight? Or is the epistemological play of light and darkness little more than a series of dead metaphors?

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61 Compare the arts of literature and architecture and ‘their visible remains’ (Robson 1983:296).

62 Lefebvre (1991:28), commenting on what he referred to as the modernist ‘illusion of transparency’, explained that ‘anything hidden or dissimulated – and hence dangerous – is antagonistic to transparency, under whose reign everything can be taken in by a single glance from that mental eye which illuminates whatever it contemplates. Comprehension is thus supposed, without meeting any insurmountable obstacles, to conduct what is perceived, i.e. its object, from the shadows into the light.’

63 Despite the appeal of this approach, Zoetmulder (1957:59; emphasis added) warned that ‘in the course of time it may become supposedly established truth, or at least that it may grow in probability in the eyes of those who deal with it without any new evidence coming forth’. Here the metaphor has shifted slightly, freezing the illuminated object under what would appear to be the perpetual scholarly gaze.

64 Concluding a later chapter, Zoetmulder (1974:135, 144) optimistically remarked, ‘further investigation may throw more light on this problem’, and nine pages later wondered whether there were any textual sources ‘which are able to shed light on this problem’.
One might argue that visually constituted modes of knowing imply a focus on spatially constituted objects. Fabian (1983:106), in his critical account of the function of time in the anthropological episteme, characterized the dominantly visualist orientation of the social sciences as: ‘a cultural ideological bias toward vision as the “noblest sense” and toward geometry qua graphic-spatial conceptualization as the most “exact” way of communicating knowledge’. ‘The Old Javanese text’ in this regard emerges as an ‘internally’ ordered – hence spatially bounded – whole. We are told, for example, that although ‘the copyist is never spoken of in the text, he himself speaks outside of it’ (Zoetmulder 1974:46), perhaps implying that the author’s ‘expression’ comprises, in full, the interior of the text (as ‘contained’ within its bounds), while the accidents of mediation – the copyist’s colophon, for instance – are deemed external to the text proper. Further, the dating of texts to a particular period has often been cast in terms of their ‘internal’ and ‘external’ evidence – that is, evidence from within the text or from without (other texts, archaeological remains, and so on). And the nature of this textual whole is determined by the particular arrangement of its constituent parts – an apparently universal and self-evident fact:

The structural analysis of poetical texts in Javanese (or any other language) has to take account of the organic unity of the text – an idea in fact as old as Aristotle. Nothing may be added, subtracted or moved, because every part has its role in relation to the others and cannot function without them.

Although to my knowledge Robson (1983:306, 315) was alone in his explicit, repeated use of the ‘organic’ metaphor for textual unity, the internal self-sufficiency of the text was a recurrent theme in articles published during the period I have examined (see first section). This self-sustaining unity that makes up the ‘interior’ of the text is seen to be located within the wider ‘field’ of other such textual unities, to comprise the ‘still largely unexplored field’ of Old Javanese language and literature (Zoetmulder 1974:v).

A similar spatialization occurs with respect to culture, or cultural knowledge, in which those privy to its ‘secrets’ and ‘meanings’ reside within, while others can only observe from the outside. Zoetmulder asked, for example, ‘are we, or can we become, insiders to such a degree as will enable us to read this “secret language”?’ (Zoetmulder 1957:52), and ‘contemporaries, especially insiders, could have known it; but, what about us?’ (Zoetmulder 1974:53). On such permutations of the visual metaphor for knowing, see Salmond 1982.

Vickers (1990) has pointed out the importance of such copyists’ notes for a critical account of Balinese textuality and the conditions under which certain ‘texts’ were grouped together.

Robson 1983:300. Robson (1983:300) went on to explain that ‘this has sometimes been forgotten by scholars who looked for the message of a kakawin in a particular passage, instead of asking what part that passage plays in the work as a whole’. Considering the prominent tendency in mabasansan-reading to select passages in no particular order from several different kakawins, are we to assume that the Balinese have not accessed ‘the message’? Here it is worth noting that the spatialization of transmission bears a striking resemblance to that implicit in dominant cultural and media studies accounts of ‘communication’ and ‘globalization’ (see Fox 2001).
It would appear that, in its natural condition, the spatial extension of ‘the Old Javanese text’ is not susceptible to the scholarly gaze. The self-evidence of inter-textual correspondence and concordance is obscured by the vast, dispersed nature of a ‘field’ that cannot be encompassed within the range of a single philological glance. The sheer breadth of this textual ‘field’ has required the production of a second epistemological plane onto which these inter-textual unities may be consolidated and mapped. Recalling Fabian’s reference to the visualist predilection for ‘graphic-spatial conceptualization as the most “exact” way of communicating knowledge’, we may note that Ensink (1974:199), in his treatment of the *Sutasoma*, explained that ‘the great variety in [yoga] traditions in India as well as in Java and Bali can best be shown in tabular form’. To this end, he produced a chart delineating ‘different traditions of śaḍ-aṅga-yoga and aṣṭāṅga-yoga’ (Ensink 1974:211), on which one may systematically contemplate, within a single glance, a series of unities that were previously, in their ‘natural’ condition, dispersed across various Indian, Javanese and Balinese textual fields.\(^{68}\)

It seems that such tabular representation emerges as the end-result of a double movement: the textual ‘data’ are concentrated from their diffuse and fortuitous state in the natural field of literary transmission (the ‘still largely unexplored field’ of Old Javanese language and literature), and are then redistributed onto the philologically ordered surface of tables and charts, thereby revealing their previously imperceptible unities (‘different traditions of śaḍ-aṅga-yoga and aṣṭāṅga-yoga’, for instance). So in the next section I shall address the position from which this knowledge of ‘the Old Javanese text’ was enunciated.

*Enunciating ‘the Old Javanese text’*

In the second section I problematized the substantial character of ‘the Old Javanese text’ as an object of knowledge. In the third section I addressed the scholar’s relationship to that object, examining the disjuncture between the intimacy of philological representations of the poet’s world and,\(^{69}\) the distance implied by a visualist epistemology.


\(^{69}\) According to Zoetmulder (1974:60), for the philologist, ‘accurate reading, scrupulous exactness and a consistent application of his chosen method are not enough. They must be combined with a thorough and intimate knowledge of the language and a delicate sense of its possibilities which, in the case of Old Javanese, is far from easy to acquire.’
Noting an analogous disjuncture in accounts of anthropological work, Fabian (1983:xii) remarked,

We constantly need to cover up for a fundamental contradiction: on the one hand we dogmatically insist that anthropology rests on ethnographic research involving personal, prolonged interaction with the Other. But then we pronounce upon the knowledge gained from such research a discourse which construes the Other in terms of distance, spatial and temporal.

The authority of anthropological knowledge, on Fabian's account, would rest on a contradiction between the immediacy (hence authenticity) of ethnographic detail and the distance (hence objectivity) of, for instance, a visualist epistemology. It seems that the occasion for that slippage would be the moment of writing, when the ethnographic 'interaction' is textualized. Here one might argue that, much as in the case of 'the Old Javanese text', we would be dealing with the representation of an author's 'experience'. But when the object of study is already a 'text' — particularly an 'artistic' text that has been cast in terms of its author's (timeless?) 'expression of beauty' — what are the implications of this apparent contradiction between immediacy and distance? Can Fabian's critique of anthropological authority be extended to philological representations of 'the Old Javanese text'? 

Scholarly judgement

In considering the relationship between 'the text' and 'its manuscripts', we encountered the following description of philological work: 'by a judicious choice out of the variants offered by the surviving manuscripts the editor tries to reconstruct their prototype, that is, the form to which they all go back' (Zoetmulder 1974:61). Metaphors of judgement have been connected with scholarly work since, at the very latest, the time of Sir Francis Bacon — himself a judge — who described scientific inquiry explicitly in terms of 'interrogation'. But here I am interested specifically in the kinds of judgement presupposed during a particular period of Old Javanese philology (see first section).

According to Zoetmulder (1974:18), textual 'reconstruction' required a 'judicious choice' on the part of the editor — a turn of phrase that is in

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70 Although Fabian (1983:105-41) addressed this visualist epistemology in some detail, he emphasized the use of time in distancing the anthropological other. He argued that ethnographic writing is predominantly allochonic — that is, it denies coevalness, or shared time, between the ethnographer and those with whom s/he has worked and about whom s/he then writes.

71 With regard to ethnographic work, one might argue that textualization has already occurred the moment field notes have been written (see Hobart 1996:2-5).

72 For a concise account of Bacon's model of scientific inquiry, see Losee 1993:63-73; for cursory remarks on its juridical associations, see Popper 1989:13-5.
consonance with his decision to include in his survey those writings that may 'be judged as literature'. The 'judgemental' character of this form of textual scholarship is also evident in Hooykaas' review of *Kalangwan* (1975: 484), in which he applauded Zoetmulder's distinguished 'judgement', as well as in Robson's later suggestion (1983:316) that Zoetmulder's omission of the fact that *kakawin* were intended for performance failed 'to do justice to the nature of poetry'.

The ideal of 'doing justice' was often invoked by Zoetmulder himself. In addressing the importance of the original form of the text, for example, he suggested that it often 'can be approached closely enough to do the author's creation justice' (Zoetmulder 1974:48). We are told that the editor should employ an orthography that 'does full justice' to that of the language from which the vocables were borrowed, as well as how the production of 'an easily readable text which as far as possible does justice to the original' is an important part of the editor's task (Zoetmulder 1974:55, 60). However, there are also cases, such as that of the *Krṣṇāyana*, where it 'will hardly be possible [...] to produce an edition which will do justice to [the author's] work' (Zoetmulder 1974:312). But what is the nature of this scholarly mode of judgement? So far it would appear to entail the production of an appropriate response to the authorial moment, as an appreciation of the expression of beauty.

A more forensic mode of judgement may be discerned, however, in the deployment of a series of metaphors that include 'evidence', 'clues', 'the burden of proof', 'testimony' and 'testifying'. We have noted Zoetmulder's apprehension (1974:59, 67) that ill-founded conclusions might be accepted 'without any new evidence coming forth', and how he later argued that, when questioning 'dubious passages' in a text, 'the burden of proof must lie on the scholar who questions their authenticity'. Robson (1983:293) explained that there is 'solid evidence to be found in inscriptions issued by early kings' and that, in searching for the unifying meaning of a text, we are to look for 'clues the author has given'. Elsewhere he suggested that a treatise on metre might help in our 'investigation into the nature of Old Javanese poetry' (Robson 1983:300). Ensink (1974:198, 199) concluded that 'Tantular's presenting this method [of yoga] as the Śaivait way is in accordance with the testimony of at least four *tuturs*' and went on to suggest that 'the composition of this canto testifies that Tantular conceives of "the six yogas" as stages in one way leading to deliverance' – a remark that is consonant with Hooykaas' previously cited gratitude (1975:484) for Zoetmulder's 'idealism and perseverance to testify to the cult of beauty'. But if these scholars' juridical inclinations remained largely implicit, Santoso (1975:40, note 1) was somewhat less subtle:
I like to regard the relationship between Śiwaism and Buddhism as a case in a court of law, in which the Buddhism of Java is the defendant, accused of an illicit association with Hinduism. The scholars who have studied this field are to be called as witnesses, and Javanese Buddhist texts constitute the evidence. We shall thus see whether the verdict is to be guilty or not guilty.

So it seems that scholarly 'judgement' may not always be a matter of pure aesthetics. But recognizing 'guilt' and 'illicit association' in the textual transmission of religion raises the question of who or what is to be judged, and by what criteria.

**Corrupting integrity**

Santoso's invocation of 'the illicit' suggests a certain impropriety. It appears that his 'verdict' was to be determined on the basis of the presence ('guilty') or absence ('not guilty') of 'Hindu' elements in the 'Javanese Buddhist texts', implying the substantial unity of 'the Buddhism of Java' as its condition of innocence. But can this criterion be extended to 'the Old Javanese text' itself?

I have examined the articulation of the originary moment in terms of its 'pristine glory', and traced its gradual degeneration through the various 'changes that are wont to occur' in the 'process of transmission'. 'The autograph' was, quite literally, created 'at the hands' of the author; but according to Zoetmulder (1974:64, 63) it was bound to suffer, in its subsequent transmission, the 'insertion' of 'additions and interpolations by other hands'. According to his principles of 'textual criticism', any such 'inserted piece' was to be 'branded as an interpolation' and disregarded as 'inauthentic' (Zoetmulder 1974:64, 65, 67). Not unlike Santoso's invocation of 'illicit association', Zoetmulder (1974:63) suggested that the 'problem may be briefly posed as follows: is everything we find in the manuscript texts to be regarded as part of the original work as the author wrote it; or have there been later additions and interpolations by other hands?'.

It may be recalled that textual 'transmission' was represented as an ideally conservative affair. Any changes to the text – from miscopied characters to deliberate 'additions and interpolations' – tended to be represented in terms of 'corruption' (see, for instance, Pigeaud 1960-3, I:xv; Zoetmulder 1974:41, 48-9). Interestingly, *The Oxford English dictionary* (1994) cites, in the first of three main entries under 'corruption', a 'physical' sense of the word that closely follows its etymology (Latin *corrumpère*), implying a disintegration or breaking apart of an organic unity. Zoetmulder's reference (1974:54) to 'additions' and 'inserted pieces' and his emphasis on the importance 'that the text is left intact' all suggest a certain textual integrity to which, recalling Robson (1983:300), 'nothing may be added, subtracted or moved, because

73 Compare 'the manner in which the Javanese handled the old texts' (Zoetmulder 1974:64).
every part has its role in relation to the others and cannot function without them'.

The complexity of this textual wholeness is evident from Ensink’s account (1974:208) of philological work in terms of ‘dissection’: ‘Wulff dissected what obviously is a homogeneous treatise from the Sañ ḫyan Kamahāyānīkān [...]. And Mrs. Soebadio showed that [the Jñānasiddhānta] contains many chapters that must be of different provenance.’ Although the integrity of the text remained the ideal, it would appear that, under the proper conditions, its constituent parts could be separated for both penetrative examination (Ensink 1974:199) and, as in this case, the excision of foreign elements. However, such an incisive mode of inquiry has not always produced the desired results, as indicated by Zoetmulder’s reference (1974:65) to Poerbatjaraka’s ‘surgical interventions’: ‘although the patient does not succumb under the operation, he comes out of it heavily mutilated’.

It seems that ‘the Old Javanese text’ was taken as a complex whole, the parts of which – though organically interconnected – were susceptible to disintegratory corruption (or, alternatively, surgical intervention at the hands of a qualified scholar). But, considering the sometimes juridical character of scholarly judgement, together with the moralistic and sexual associations of the term ‘corruption’, can one assume that such a ‘physical’ breaking apart characterizes in full the manner in which ‘the Old Javanese text’ may have been ‘corrupted’? Was this merely the disintegration of an organic unity? Or might there have been a degree of slippage between the various senses of ‘corruption’?

Just sex?

The invocation of ‘corruption’ brings us back to the original moment of textual purity: Brakel’s ‘pristine glory’. We may recall that ‘the Old Javanese text’ was the outcome of an authorial moment in which the poet expressed

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74 Ensink was referring here to Wulff 1935 and Soebadio 1971:58-62.
75 It should be noted that this constitutes a permutation of the ‘organic’ metaphor (compare Robson 1983:300, 306, 315). Zoetmulder (1974:65) continued, ‘Even the surgeon himself has to concede that this cannot be the form given to the patient by his creator; but he does not feel sufficiently qualified in plastic surgery to attempt a restoration’. In this connection we may also note references to the ‘mutilation’ of Sanskrit at the hands of the Balinese: ‘the Sanskrit of Balinese texts appears mutilated to varying degrees’ (Soebadio 1971:65); and ‘speaking of Sanskrit, in our days one can hardly recognize, or distinguish at all, the mutilated Sanskrit terms in the holy mantras murmured by the priests’ (Stutterheim 1935:22).
76 In addition to corruption in the ‘physical’ sense, The Oxford English dictionary (1994) also cites, in two separate main entries, a ‘moral’ mode of corruption and ‘the perversion of anything from an original state of purity’. Under the latter entry, particular reference is made to the ‘despoiling of virginity’ and the ‘violation of chastity’, as well as to the alteration of a text or word ‘from its correct or original condition to one of incorrectness, deterioration, etc.’.
an 'aesthetic feeling', and this 'expression' was represented in terms of the artistic act that 'conveyed the ecstasy of losing oneself in the experience of beauty' (Zoetmulder 1974:v). However, if 'proper' interpretation was imagined as a return to the authorial moment, what was the nature of that originary and ecstatic 'experience of beauty'? And under what conditions might it have been susceptible to 'corruption'?

According to Robson (1983:312), for the Old Javanese poet 'the best way to reach the state of being “carried away” was thought to be to expose oneself to “beautiful” things, and the ones considered most conducive are the beauties of nature' – a remark not unlike Zoetmulder’s description (1974:170, compare 130-1) of the poet ‘wandering amongst the beauties of nature’, where ‘he hopes to find inspiration for his poem’. But as Zoetmulder (1974:158) noted, this beauty was gendered: raised in a courtly environment, the poet would ‘have been fully acquainted with the ksatriya ideals of chivalry and gallantry and with the cult of beauty – particularly feminine beauty – reigning there’. In related connections, Teeuw et al. (1969:31) remarked on the ‘intimate link between natural beauty and eroticism’, Zoetmulder (1974:172) noted the manner in which ‘feminine beauty is no less a source of inspiration than the beauty of nature’, and Robson (1983:314) explained that, for the Old Javanese poet,

nature is thought not only to represent beauty in its purest form, but it also has the power of erotic suggestion, in that it reminds the observer of another form of beauty par excellence, woman. The aesthetic feelings aroused by scenery and by woman need not, in fact should not, be distinguished. Both lead to a state of ‘rapture’.78

It seems that in their endeavours to 'understand' the Old Javanese poet's 'expression of beauty', scholars discovered – in addition to the wonders of nature – a certain poetic interest in 'woman'. Teeuw et al. (1969:31) suggested, for example, that

Descriptions of love, feminine beauty and related subjects formed [a] favourite theme treated in a prescribed form in kakawin. Every poet worthy of the name

77 According to Robson (1983:311), for the poet '[b]eauty is present everywhere in the world in a subtle form. It becomes visible when it takes on the form of the written letters that make up the poem.'

78 One might compare Zoetmulder's reference (1974:185) to the poet's yogic union with his istadewata: 'This union is of a transitory nature, lasting no longer than the brief moment of ecstatic rapture experienced in surrendering oneself to the overwhelming power of the aesthetic experience'. The word 'rapture', in addition to its more general connotations of 'being carried away', was used to designate 'the act of carrying off a woman' and even 'rape' (see The Oxford English dictionary 1994). In view of what follows, I would suggest that these associations may not be entirely irrelevant.
devoted many cantos of his poem to this subject, either by taking a love-affair as
the main theme of his story or by including all kinds of erotic scenes which were
only distantly related to the main story, or by doing both. (Teeuw et al. 1969:31.)

Addressing such 'apparently obligatory elements', Robson (1983:315) explained that a 'bedroom scene is a regular feature of kakawin',
while Zoetmulder (for instance, 1957:61-3, 1974:161) dwelled in various
connections, and occasionally at some length, on the amorous adventures
of the poet. However, as Robson (1983:314) pointed out, these depictions
were not limited to 'the delights of lovemaking but include all the longings
and heartaches of lovers who are separated and must think of each other
from afar'.79 But in what way were these amorous passages related to the
poet's own artistically authenticating 'experience of beauty'? What was the
nature of his 'ecstasy'? And how might it have been 'understood' by the late
twentieth-century philologist?

It would appear on Zoetmulder's account (1957:61) that the Old Javanese
poet was himself primarily a lover: a 'lonely sufferer who in this way
expresses his sorrow. It is the lover who expresses his love in a kekawin [...] 
describing the beauty of his beloved and his own inextinguishable longing
for her.'80 However, despite the 'inextinguishable longing' expressed in his
poem, Zoetmulder (1974:161) later suggested that to 'be married to a Kawi [...] 
cannot have been an unmixed blessing. An often-recurrent motif in kakawins
is the unfaithfulness of the poet. Addicted to the cult of beauty, he was prone
to forget everything else, to the point of neglecting his wife or leaving her.'
So the Kawi poet had both wife and lover, and was often distracted from the
former by the latter. But can we expect the philological scholar to share such
an ecstatic (and possibly adulterous) experience of 'feminine beauty' in his
interpretive return to the authorial moment? Recalling Teeuw's comparison
(1975:58) of his own scholarly activities to those of the Kawi wandering

79 It is worth noting that the amorous inclinations of the Old Javanese poet were not always
considered part of the authentic authorial expression. Kern (cited by Zoetmulder 1974:64) sug-
gested in his analysis of the Bharatayuddha, for example, that 'In general we may assert that all
the parts of our poem in which amorous scenes, the sadness over the departure of a lover and the
like, are depicted, are spurious'. Further, according to Zoetmulder (1974:65, citing Poerbatjaraka
1932:199 and 1926:186), Poerbatjaraka regarded 'the fact that a fragment contains amorous
scenes (P. uses the word “obscene”) as being by itself sufficient proof that a passage is interpo-
lated. “With the aid of these norms,” he writes somewhat optimistically, “all spurious parts of
any Old Javanese poem can be easily recognized”’. Neither Zoetmulder nor Robson supported
this position, the latter explicitly stating, 'we cannot agree with those who found some passages
“obscene” and hence regarded them as spurious and refused to translate them' (Robson 1983:
315).

80 I have followed the articles under consideration in the exclusive use of the male personal
pronoun. Despite, for example, Zoetmulder's explicit mention (1974:61) of female Kawi, to my
knowledge he only ever used the pronouns 'he', 'him' and 'his'.
‘in that garden searching for bliss’, it is interesting to note the tenor of the following excerpt from his 1975 address in which, having stressed his interest in ‘all aspects of language and literature’, he remarked:

In the end, I rarely stay long in the one place, with the result that my scholarly attention is also less than constant. Indeed, a wanderer often has an egoistic nature, enjoying whatever is there to be enjoyed, without much concern for other responsibilities or affairs; furthermore, he will soon leave those areas again whose delights he has already tasted in search of new pleasures. In short, I am like an unfaithful lover.\(^81\)

Consonant with Zoetmulder’s description, Teeuw seemed to be suggesting that he shared the kawi’s tendency toward infidelity. But to what extent is contemporary northern European philology commensurable with ancient Javanese sexual relations? We were told on more than one occasion – and by more than one scholar – that the Kawi poet was drawn to a particular kind of ‘feminine beauty’; but what relationship did this ‘feminine beauty’ bear to the object of Teeuw’s unfaithful love? Should this admission of infidelity be taken as little more than a literary conceit? Or might Teeuw’s remark, like Santoso’s ‘case in a court of law’, be indicative of more general – if often less explicitly formulated – tendencies in philological inquiry?

Not unlike the relationship between ‘aesthetic feelings aroused by scenery’ and those aroused ‘by woman’, the amorous character of Teeuw’s ‘search for new pleasures’ seems to extend this ‘aesthetic feeling’ to encompass the object of philological inquiry – that is to say, ‘the text’ itself.\(^82\) We are often reminded that such proclivities are not uncommon in Old Javanese. Zoetmulder cited a passage from the Sumanasántaka, for instance, in which an unfaithful lover was said to have probably ‘gone away to sleep with tanah and karas’ – that is to say, his writing implements\(^83\) – while he explained in an endnote that ‘the text says that he has tanah and karas as his jamahan. Jamahan means: a

\(^81\) My translation. Teeuw’s Indonesian (1975:58) reads: Akibatnya, saya jarang tinggal lama di satu tempat, sehingga pemusatan ilmiah juga kurang tetap. Kelana memang seringkali bersifat egois, menikmati apa saja yang dapat dinikmati, tanpa banyak memperhatikan keperluan atau kepentingan lain; lagi pula cepatlah dia meninggalkan lagi kawasan yang sudah dicicipi kelezatannya untuk mencari kesenangan baru. Singkatnya saya berlaku sebagai seorang pencinta yang tidak setia.

\(^82\) On this account, ‘the Old Javanese text’ appears to fit the classical Freudian articulation of the fetish, in which ‘the normal sexual object is replaced by another which bears some relation to it, but is entirely unsuited to serve the normal sexual aim’ (Freud 1971:153). It is perhaps not irrelevant to mention that Freud (1971:155) went on to suggest that ‘the replacement of the object by a fetish is determined by a symbolic connection of thought, of which the person concerned is usually not conscious’.

\(^83\) Zoetmulder 1974:131. The transposition also went in the opposite direction – that is, sex was transposed to the sphere of the text – as ‘in a description of love-making, [in which] the lover is playing with the fingers of his beloved and uses his nails on them as if the fingers were tanahs [writing instruments]’ (Zoetmulder 1974:131).
woman one has intercourse with, who is not one's lawful wife.' (Zoetmulder
1974:520, note 16.) Thus 'the text' was party to an act of infidelity, not unlike
the 'feminine beauty which causes him to be unfaithful and lures him away
from his lawful spouse' (Zoetmulder 1974:161). But where this transgression
of fidelity was represented in terms of a 'lawful wife' or 'lawful spouse', we
seem to have a rather interesting convergence of registers.

It would appear that 'the law' is not only an important criterion for
philological judgement, but also what binds one to a wife or spouse. If
the scholar's relationship to 'the Old Javanese text' has certain amorous
connotations (as, for instance, in the case of Teeuw's unfaithful love), this
may have implications for an account of scholarly judgement. Are we to
assume, for example, that a quasi-marital fidelity to the text falls within the
scholar's jurisdiction? And if so, how might this affect the nature of textual
'corruption'?

Earlier I examined the manner in which scholars represented the
movement of a religio-literary substance eastward from India, through
Java, and ultimately on to Bali, where it came to rest in a state of gently
degenerating obscurity (see section on "The Old Javanese text" as an
object of knowledge). One finds the ideals of 'faith' and 'fidelity' frequently
invoked in scholarly comments on the degree to which this 'organic unity'
was preserved in its transmission. So we were told how the text, having
undergone those 'changes that are wont to occur' in this process, must be
restored to its original form 'as faithfully as possible' (Zoetmulder 1974:62).
In earlier years in Bali the royal courts, or kraton, were the 'faithful guardians
of the heritage of Hindu-Javanese culture and literature' (Zoetmulder 1974:
24, compare 49). However, in 1928 the Dutch set up a foundation for the
preservation of this literature, the Gedong Kirtya, where the texts were
'copied as faithfully as possible by a team of copyists' (Zoetmulder 1974:
42). We find that Soebadio (1971:1, 2), in preparing her critical edition and
translation of the JMnasiddhanta, employed a recent manuscript in which
'the copying was as faithfully done as could be', as well as another in which
the copyist had 'romanized the characters faithfully, but pointed out errors
by suggesting better readings in various notes'. Similarly Pigeaud, when
confronted with 'offences against Indian metrics' and the various other
'mistakes' of a 'corrupt manuscript', preferred 'to transcribe faithfully the
only text of the Nāgara-Kértagama that has been handed down to us'.

So the integrity of the literary substance calls for fidelity: the avoidance of
corruption through the faithful preservation of its organic unity. It was only
through the scholar's 'intimate knowledge of' and 'feeling for' (Zoetmulder

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Pigeaud 1960-63, I:xv, xvi, compare xii, xiii. In a slightly different connection, Hooykaas
(1976:178) referred to a Sanskrit text that 'survives in the shape of a poem rather faithfully mod-
etted in modern Balinese metres'.
1974:60, 62) the language in which the text was written that a corrupted text could be restored to its originary state of purity. In a variation on the metaphor of fidelity, when those responsible for the faithful preservation of kakawin texts (read: 'the Balinese') condoned – and even took part in – their corruption, it was apparently left to the philologist to restore (and thereby do justice to) their pristine glory. The question is whether one is justified, so to speak, in producing a gendered reading of this philological mode of fidelity.

In this connection it is relevant to note that, in producing such a gender-sensitive reading, Old Javanese scholarship would be anything but unique. As Genevieve Lloyd (1984:17) has argued, for instance, the Baconian pursuit of scientific knowledge was not only represented in terms of forensic examination, but it was also oriented toward a ‘feminine’ object:

The intellectual virtues involved in being a good Baconian scientist are articulated in terms of the right male attitude to the feminine: chastity, respect and restraint. The good scientist is a gallant suitor. Nature is supposed to be treated with the respect appropriate to a femininity overlaid with long-standing associations with mystery – an awe, however, which is strictly contained. Nature is mysterious, aloof – but, for all that, eminently knowable and controllable.

This is not to suggest a specifically Baconian genealogy for Old Javanese scholarship. Rather, I would draw the reader’s attention to a significant congruence between philological representations of ‘the Old Javanese text’ and Lloyd’s more general appraisal (1984:2) of the gendered character of knowledge in the history of western critical thought:

Rational knowledge has been construed as transcending, transformation or control of natural forces; and the feminine has been associated with what rational knowledge transcends, dominates or simply leaves behind.

I would argue that it is within this more general framework of epistemological domination that ‘the Old Javanese text’ emerged as an object of scholarly knowledge. The character of the philological subject, as a knower of texts, is in part determined by long-standing, more broadly prevalent assumptions regarding knowledge and gender.85 From an examination of its dominant

85 As Lloyd (1984:110) remarked with regard to her own study, ‘I have tried to bring out how these views of Reason have been connected with the male-female distinction. In doing so, I have of course often highlighted points which were not salient in the philosophers’ own perceptions of what they were about. Bringing the male-female distinction to the centre of consideration of texts in this way may seem to misrepresent the History of Philosophy. But philosophers, when they tell the story of Philosophy’s past, have always done so from the perspective of their own preoccupations, shared with their non-philosopher contemporaries – pressing questions which were not central to the philosophers they were explicating.’
metaphors, the text itself has emerged as a rather strangely ambivalent articulation of the feminine: she demands faithful attention and yet simultaneously seems to act as an accomplice to infidelity. The corruption of her purity is the necessary condition for a knowledge that aims to restore it through a paradoxically penetrative intervention. One might argue that drawing attention to this juxtaposition of legality, fidelity and femininity is a case of over-interpretation. However, Genevieve Lloyd’s study (1984) would suggest that, on the contrary, such an articulation of its object would put Old Javanese scholarship well within the dominant norms of western critical thought.

The Balinese question

From an analysis of books and articles published between 1957 and 1983, ‘the Old Javanese text’ has surfaced as a site of conflicting qualities: poetic authenticity and artificiality, creation and imitation, purity and corruption. These diametrically opposed tropes have been deployed in the philological evaluation of textual transmission, and the arbiter of value has emerged in the guise of the scholar as judge. The Balinese were praised as guardians of the text when they functioned as an inert medium for its transmission, and they were judged unfaithful to this ‘treasure of culture that is literature’ when their knowledge was considered inadequate to its ‘pristine glory’. Balinese ‘religious ideas’ were thought to be ‘contained in’ or ‘communicated by’ these texts, but as the Balinese themselves were thought generally failed to understand the Old Javanese language ‘in all its peculiarities and intricacies’, their religion was deemed to be only accessible to them through the judicious intervention of the philological scholar. As Zoetmulder (1974:42) remarked with regard to the foundation of the Kirtya, the library’s ‘main object was [...] first and foremost a practical one, that is, to give the Balinese themselves easier access to the treasure of their own culture’ – an objective not unlike that set out by Goudriaan and Hooykaas (1971:5) in the introduction to their Stuti and stava, namely ‘to provide the Balinese with the correct shape of their religious materials’.

On what appears to be the dominant philological account, the mabasan reader’s invocation of AIDS and his movement from one clause in Old Javanese to several in Balinese, as discussed in the first section, would comprise acts of textual infidelity. If the Sutasoma were taken as an index of the ‘Majapahit Śiwa-Buddha religion [which], as is generally known, finds its direct continuation in present-day Bali’, one might be inclined to accept Goris’ suggestion (1960:71) that ‘the ordinary people of Bali do not know well enough the essential traits of their own religion’. However, if philological presuppositions regarding ‘religion’ are as problematic as the various textual substances I have examined in this article, it may be the case
that scholarly accounts of 'the Old Javanese text' can tell us more about philological idiosyncrasies than about anything 'the Balinese' might or might not have been doing.

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