
By

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University of Toronto

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Corporeal Configurations of the Heroic and Monstrous: 
A Comparative Study of ‘Beowulf’, ‘The Shahnameh’ and ‘Tristan’

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Doctor of Philosophy, 2010
Centre for Comparative Literature
University of Toronto

Abstract
This dissertation explores various characteristics that define the monstrous and the heroic — both on their own and in conjunction with each other — in three representative texts of the Middle Ages, the Old English Beowulf (manuscript c.1000), the Persian epic, The Shahnameh (c.1010) and Gottfried von Strassburg’s Middle-High German poem, Tristan (c.1210), as it delves into the cataclysmic aftermath of their corporeal confrontation. At the core of this study of three linguistically and geographically different, yet thematically contiguous texts, lies the significance of corporeality in terms of its articulation of the heroic self and identification of the monstrous other. Far from being diametrically opposed, the heroic and monstrous bodies bear enough resemblance to justify René Girard’s use of the phrase ‘monstrous doubles’ in reference to the host of similarities they manifest in the course of their confrontations. However, as shall be demonstrated, heroic and monstrous bodies need not be engaged in a single battle to manifest signs of similitude. Particular properties, such as ‘gigantism’, could be read as tokens of heroism and monstrosity, depending on the context. Both Beowulf and Grendel in Beowulf, for example, stand out on account of their massive bulk, yet the former is marked as heroic; the latter, as monstrous. Significantly, the hero’s monstrosity not only endows him with an advantage over his fellow-humans, but also facilitates his mastery of monstrous bodies.

The conquest of monstrous bodies overlaps with other paradigms of power including mastery over land and women. Gigantomachia and dragon-slaying tend to be coterminous with territorial
claims. It is no coincidence that colonized lands are marked by their so-called ‘monstrous’ inhabitants, for as such, their conquest is rendered as both an act of heroism and a means of purification. Indeed, the purging of lands is a primordial priority of the heroic mission. Paradoxically, however, the hero has to be stained by elements of monstrosity in the first place to succeed at monstrous confrontations and goes on to acquire even more monstrous characteristics in a process which leads to ‘sublation’, the incorporation of an entity by a subsequent one in a way that leads to the manifestation of features of both.

A third zone of possibilities comes to the fore in the midst of the entanglement of heroic and monstrous bodies. The clash between the heroic and the monstrous bodies could be read as a fusion, a marriage, which gives birth to a third party, in this case, a ‘Third Space’, a zone of discursivity and hybridity arising from the confrontation of an ‘I’ and a ‘Thou’. Significantly, the ‘Third Space’, in being unstable and fluid, is both susceptible to and a harbinger of change. In light of the fluidity of this space, the dismemberment and incorporation of bodies marking monstrous encounters take on added significance.

One of the primary consequences of monstrous conflicts is ‘incorporation’, a freighted term, as shall be argued in the final chapter. While ‘incorporation’ can take place at the simple corporeal level, including the acts of cannibalism interspersed in Beowulf and The Shahnameh, it can constitute a mental challenge, a fusion of two different horizons of understanding. After all, in being both mixta and mira, monsters not only pose as obstacles to the heroic body, but also to the intellectual mind. Reflective of the mutability of times and the incertitude of man’s life during what has come to be known as the monstrous Middle Ages, monsters continue to charm us with their composite and enigmatic essence.
Acknowledgements:

I have been fortunate enough to have had the support of a group of exceptional people without whom this dissertation would never have come to fruition. I owe great thanks to my supervisor, Professor Jill Ross, for introducing me to many invaluable reference materials and offering me immense support in the course of my revisions. I owe her so much more, for it was upon taking her course ‘Body and Medieval Texts’ that I came to develop a passion for the monumental literature of the Middle Ages. I am immensely grateful to Professor Andy Orchard, without whose genius and unfailing acumen, this study would be lacking its indispensable annotations and contextual details. My sincere gratitude goes to Professor Amir Hassanpour who kindly accepted to assist me with the completion of this study under circumstances when Persianists of his calibre and depth were so hard to come by. I also wish to thank him for his meticulous editing of my text. This study would have never borne fruit were it not for the timely arrival of Professor Markus Stock at the University of Toronto’s academic scene. I have greatly benefited from Professor Stock’s guidance and discipline and am tremendously indebted to him for his constructive comments and criticism. I also wish to express my gratitude to Shahnameh-expert, Dr. Mahmoud Omidsalar, whose emails were crucial to my current study of Ferdowsi’s magnum opus. Without ever having had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Omidsalar, I have great respect for his true passion for Iran and Ferdowsi. My special thanks go to my external examiner, Professor Dean Miller, whose many suggestions proved to be of unparalleled value in the course of my subsequent revisions. In addition, I wish to thank Professor Reza Baraheni, who greatly helped me with structuring my thesis in its earlier stages. I am also grateful to Professor George Rigg and Dr. Rob Getz of the Centre for Medieval Studies for instilling in me a passion for Latin, this very much alive language of the academic world. There are so many more professors from
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Table of Contents:

Abstract.................................................................................................................. ii

Acknowledgements............................................................................................... iv

Abbreviations......................................................................................................... viii

Glossary of Zoroastrian Terminology................................................................. x

A Note on Transliteration...................................................................................... xi

Introduction............................................................................................................. 1

Chapter One  Heroic Bodies.................................................................................. 19

1.1. *The Shahnameh*: Guardianship of the *Farr*............................................. 28

1.2. *Tristan*: The Artist-Warrior................................................................. 41

1.3. *Beowulf*: Singularity of Strength............................................................. 64

Chapter Two  Monstrous Bodies......................................................................... 78

2.1. *Beowulf*: Dirt of Darkness................................................................. 89

2.2. *The Shahnameh*: Personified Plagues of Land...................................... 114

2.3. *Tristan*: Land-scourges and Demonic Forces...................................... 131

Chapter Three  Clashing Bodies.......................................................................... 146

3.1. *Tristan*: *Ars Venandi* and *Ars Veneris*............................................ 156

3.2. *Beowulf*: *Fah from feondum*............................................................. 168

3.3. *The Shahnameh*: Div-Binding and Heroic Initiation......................... 188

Chapter Four  Incorporation............................................................................... 206

4.1. *Beowulf*: Maw of the Monster............................................................ 214

4.2. *The Shahnameh*: *Razm u Bazm*.......................................................... 224

4.3. *Tristan*: *Ruminatio*............................................................................ 236
Epilogue……………………………………………………………………………………. 249
Bibliography……………………………………………………………………………….. 257
An Appendix to The Shahnameh…………………………………………………………... 285
**Abbreviations:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABäG</td>
<td>Amsterdamer Beitrage zur Alten Germanistik</td>
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<td>Alr</td>
<td>Acta Iranica</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASE</td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon England</td>
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<tr>
<td>BT</td>
<td>Bosworth, Toller, <em>An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>DCD</td>
<td>De Civitate Dei</td>
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<td>Dk</td>
<td>Denkard</td>
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<td>DOE</td>
<td>Dictionary of Old English</td>
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<td>Elr</td>
<td>Encyclopaedia Iranica</td>
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<td>ELH</td>
<td>English Literary History</td>
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<td>GBd</td>
<td>The Greater Bundahishn</td>
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<td>GrM</td>
<td>Germanisch-romantische Monatsschrift</td>
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<tr>
<td>JRAS</td>
<td>Journal of Royal Asiatic Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSAI</td>
<td>Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam</td>
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<td>JWCI</td>
<td>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</td>
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<td>LS</td>
<td>Lewis and Short Latin-English Lexicon</td>
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<td>MÆ</td>
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<td>MHG</td>
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<td>Pahl.</td>
<td>Pahlavi Language</td>
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<td>PBB</td>
<td>Pauls und Braunes Beiträge = Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur</td>
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<td>PIMS</td>
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<td>ZCP</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie</td>
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<td>ZfdA</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum</td>
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Glossary of Zoroastrian Terminology:

Ahrīman: supreme force of evil, the anti-thesis of Ohrmazd/Ahura Mazda

Ahura Mazda: Ohrmazd, supreme force of good

Amesha Spenta: literally ‘bounteous immortal’; one of six emanations of

Ashā: ‘righteousness’ as opposed to Drug

Avesta: the corpus of sacred texts of the Zoroastrians

Bundahish(n): or ‘The Greater Bundahishn’, is a part of The Avesta dealing with cosmogony

Denkard: ‘Acts of worship’, refers to a tenth-century encyclopedia of Zoroastrianism

(Dinā-i) Menog-i Khirad: literally ‘(Opinions) of the Spirit of Wisdom’, a secondary Zoroastrian text

Druj: ‘falsehood’, a principle opposed to ‘righteousness’ (ashā)

Frashegird: ‘renovation’, referred to the Last Day

Gāthās: hymns believed to have been composed by Zoroaster himself

Getig: ‘physical, corporeal’ as opposed to ‘menog’

Haoma: sacred plant crushed for its juice during Zoroastrian acts of worship

Khrafstra: ‘noxious creature’

Menog: ‘spiritual, intangible’

Ohrmazd: supreme force of good

Pahlavi: the language of Zoroastrian books


Wizarishn: the phase of separation of good from evil

Yasht: literally ‘hymn to the deity’, the yashts form part of The Avesta

Yasna: literally ‘acts of worship’, also name of the primary liturgical texts of the Zoroastrians
Note on Transliteration:

I have based my transliteration, primarily, on the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* with some minor modifications including those related to the Arabic letters ث and ص which are pronounced as /s/ as well as ذ and ض pronounced as /z/ in Persian. There are, however, instances throughout my dissertation where the transliteration does not necessarily match the following system, especially, with regard to proper names, commonly, known in the spelling I have used rather than their transliterated versions (e.g. Iran and not Irān) as well as quotations from other sources.

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xi
Introduction

This study probes the manifestations of the ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ appearing in the guises of hero and monster and the ultimate realm of becoming that is created in the wake of their encounter in three representative texts of the so-called Middle Ages: Beowulf (manuscript c.1000), The Shahnameh (c. 1010) and Gottfried von Strassburg’s Tristan (c.1210).1 The examination of the heroic Self and the monstrous Other, their entanglement and ultimate assimilation are investigated through the prism of the ‘body’, without which the self would lack an essential medium to express itself. The Self enjoys a sense of groundedness only by virtue of the body and comes to know itself and demarcate an identity by means of the differentiations it observes between itself and the Other.2 Throughout this study, the interdependence of the Self and the Other will be further highlighted in their concretized manifestations of heroes and monsters.

The alterity of the monstrous, in addition to its extra-ordinary corporeality, manifests itself in the otherworldliness of its spaces. However, it does not take long to realize that hero and monster hail as they might from different ends of the spectrum, yet, in being ex-centric, the monstrous and the heroic, ultimately, to use René Girard’s phrase, turn out to be ‘monstrous doubles’.3 In general, I would contend that the ‘monstrous’ is the other side of the Self, one which the ‘heroic’ self would rather

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1 Throughout this study I will be using the term ‘Middle Ages’, as a historiographical entity, in reference to the time-frame pertaining to all three texts. However, it is important to note two issues when speaking of the Middle Ages: Firstly, that the ambiguities surrounding the dates marking the ‘Middle Ages’ [see, for example: Fred C. Robinson, “Medieval, the Middle Ages”, Speculum 59 (1984): 745–56]; secondly, the fact that the “Middle Ages” in its true designation of an in-between period and its hint at a tripartite temporal division is European. For one thing, literacy was experienced on a greater scale in the Muslim societies of those days. Medieval libraries were smaller and primarily devotional. See, for example: Thomas Kelly, Early Public Libraries: A History of Public Libraries in Great Britain before 1850 (London: Library Association, 1966) for further details on the contrast of literacy and culture in Islamic countries, including Iran and European countries, and the West. The following article, for example, is also of note within this respect: Mahmoud Omidsalar, “Orality, Mouvance, and Editorial Theory in Shahnameh Studies”, JSAI 27 (2002): 245–82.


keep hidden, but, ontologically, cannot do without. The textual examples of the confrontation of the heroic and the monstrous that appear in these works showcase attempts made at grasping the ‘Unknown’ through the externalization of interior fears enfleshed in the figures of monstrous others, who ultimately incorporate the heroic self and/or are incorporated by it. Evidently, the poets had not yet tapped into the workings of the human brain, nor into the phenomenology of existence to see in the ‘monstrous’ merely another aspect of the self. Their portrayal of the monstrous takes place at the primary level of the body, which happens to have gained currency in the humanities in the past couple of decades.

Various are the theories that have been raised surrounding the function of the body including those that view it as a text, a cultural construct, a microcosmic representation of the universe and a biological machine. The fact that the body constitutes an aggregate of characteristics, however, along with its immediacy to the self, renders elusive, any comprehensive attempt at its figurative dissection.\(^4\) We have had no choice but to live an embodied existence and the body has always been our only medium of articulation. The body is thus so closely interwoven with the self that at times the two have been considered one and the same. Since the 1970s, there has been a surge of interest in body studies in a multiplicity of discourses.\(^5\) Anthropology, psychology, gender theories are only a

\(^4\) I have found the phrase ‘being-in-the-world,’ inspired by Heidegger’s concept of *Dasein* taken up by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who sees in the body “[an] anchorage in the world” (167) to be one of the most comprehensive interpretations of the ‘body,’ in its non-dualistic approach. Based on this perspective, the body far from being a passive object of study, becomes an agent actively involved in the formation of the self and synonymous with an incarnated subjectivity.

\(^5\) This does not imply that body studies sprang into existence at that time. In fact, within the context of this study, mention can be made of earlier body studies, including Mikhail Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and his World* (1941, in Russian), which exerted a major influence in the understanding of the concept of *joie de vivre* associated with corporeality and Mary Douglas’s *Purity and Danger* (1966), which demonstrated the human patterns of order formed around the concept of dirt, to be synonymous, to a large extent, with the ‘abject’, explored later on, by Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror* (1980, in French). Other examples include Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (1975, in French) which has been highly influential in association with ‘inscriptive bodies’ and spectacle. Also relevant to this study is Elaine Scarry’s *The Body in Pain* (1985), which investigates the inscriptive role of torture on the human body as well as the close association of artifacts with the anatomy of the human body. Last but certainly not least, mention can be made of Caroline Walker Bynum’s *Fragmentation and Redemption* (1992) which highlights the importance of the body as the locus of personhood.
few of many disciplines that have further problematized our conception of the body in recent years. The present study focuses on the ‘body’ as a locus of interaction between the Self and the Other in their corporealized representations as heroes and monsters.\(^6\)

The hero is portrayed in larger-than-life terms as he expands beyond his bodily confines. The heroic body can exceed its corporeal boundaries to represent the collective body of a nation, especially true of epic literature, and its extraordinariness comes to the fore only upon juxtaposition with the monstrous. For all their unique qualities, heroes can only be defined when juxtaposed with monsters, who, true to their etymology, ‘show’ (monstro) and/or ‘warn’ or ‘teach’ (moneo) (cf. Cohen, Of Giants xiv). On the one hand, monsters in all their hideousness can point to a reality beyond; on the other, being so closely tied up with materiality, they serve as signs where the signifié and signifiant conflate.\(^7\) One could also argue that the heroic and the monstrous converge in being both larger than life and representing a reality beyond their corporeal confines. This does not negate the immense significance of their physicality, for in an age where physical appearance was read as a sign for the contents of the soul, it is no surprise that exterior grotesqueness was interpreted as an interior deficiency, a manque; vice versa, physical beauty was read as a token of inner grandeur. Monstrous

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\(^6\) Corporeality in Beowulf tends to be expressed in the form of kennings, which “may loosely be defined as the poetic interpretation or description of a thing or thought by means of a condensed simile” (Gardner 109). Of the twenty kennings that appear in the poem, six are words for the ‘body’: bancofa (‘bone-chamber’), banfæt (‘bone-vessel’), banhus (‘bone-house’), banloca (‘bone-lock’), bengeat (‘wound-gate’) and breosthord (‘breast-hoard’) (111). Tan, the ancient and modern word for ‘body’ in Persian finds various manifestations throughout The Avesta and consequently The Shahnameh. The hero of heroes of The Shahnameh, Rustam is known as the ‘elephant-bodied one’, (pīl tan) and Isfandiyār, a hero, almost on an equal footing with the former, is nicknamed ‘ruīn tan’, literally the ‘brass-bodied one’, figuratively, ‘the invincible one’. Later, in the ‘Seven Trials’ of Isfandiyār, mention is made of Peshutan (V, 226:74)] reminiscent of the son of Zoroaster’s patron, Vishtasp, who bore the same name and was known as the undying one (Boyce, The History 281). Moreover, of the three elements comprising Zoroaster’s being, one was ‘tan-guhr’ (‘physical body’) (277). For further details on the role of body in Zoroastrianism, see, for example: Alan Williams, “Zoroastrianism and the Body”, Religion and the Body, Ed. Sarah Coakley (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 155–66. In Gottfried’s Tristan, the multivalent term lip is predominantly used for the ‘body’, which later develops into Modern German Leib. As noted by Thomas Ots, Leib bears a non-coincidental resemblance to the English term ‘life’: “In the original sense, this term referred to “life”, “person”, and “self”, namely, a person-self as constituted by the quality of being-a-life (being-a-Leib)” (117).

\(^7\) This first aspect of the monstrous has been analyzed at great lengths by David E. Williams, who sees in the monstrous a via negationis, a way of interpretation in light of what ‘is not’. For further reference, see: Deformed Discourse (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996): 23–60, where the author offers a third way of thought synthesizing rational and mystical knowledge.
bodies are indispensable to the development of heroic bodies, for, only when brought face to face with physical embodiments of lack in the form of monsters, are heroes truly challenged. While this might all be within well-trodden territories, my study involves various shadings of the monstrous and the heroic in three representative medieval texts hardly ever studied in conjunction and highlights the polysemy of the zone of becoming that arises in the midst of the clash betwixt the two, in the wake of which, the heroic subsumes part of the monstrous. My choice of medieval texts takes note of not only their ubiquitous portrayal of monstrous combats, but also their differences in terms of literary provenance, linguistic elements, genre and social factors. I have deemed these variances as a positive aspect in the studies at hand in that they allow for the emergence of a sense of universality in monstrous encounters by highlighting the similitude in dissimilitude, at the same time, pinpointing the uniqueness of each work.

Irrespective of the degree of similitude observed in the corporeality and function of hero and monster in these three works, the cultural divergences manifest within the framework of these texts have been taken into account. In fact, Stephen Jaeger’s formulation of three societal phases provides a useful paradigm in separating the three primary poems of this study.\(^8\) The initial state is one of chaos, which is followed by that of culture or cultivation of all kinds including the tilling of soil and *artes fabricae* and is finalized in the establishment of civic virtues that bind the members of the community together.\(^9\) Relying on this tripartite model, I believe *The Shahnameh* to represent, in part, the stage of inchoate chaos that reigns supreme in the early stages of creation, which is not surprising, given that the poem traces its origins to the collective scriptures of Zoroastrianism known as *The Avesta*.

*Beowulf*, on the other hand, portrays a society in which civic principles have not been fully

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\(^8\) Jaeger bases his argument on an excerpt from Baldassare Castiglione’s *Libro del Cortegiano* (1528), which explicates how men, despite having been offered the gifts of Minerva and Vulcan by Prometheus, did not yet know how to congregate in cities and live by a moral law as they lacked ‘civic virtues’ (cf. *The Origins* 9–10).

established. The fact that Heorot, the heart of the Danish *communitas*, so easily falls prey to the emblem of anti-civilization in the figure of Grendel, is indication enough of the shakiness of the foundations of a civic society. The existence of a monster reluctant to pay compensation for the men he kills (see lines 154b–58) reinforces the fragility of civic rule. In addition, in *Beowulf*, not many generations have gone by since the establishment of a system of order by Scyld Scefing and his son after a long period of lordlessness, in other words, lawlessness. In *Tristan*, however, the foundations of civilization are firmly in place enabling the promotion of civilization in the form of education manifest in Tristan’s musical and linguistic abilities. The presence of seneschals (*truhsaeze*) in both Cornish and Irish courts alone, respectively, in the figures of Marjodoc and the seneschal who falsely claims to be the dragon-slayer, is indication of the existence of a civilized society in the sense that it was structured enough to divide duties and assign civic duties to different members of the community. Based on this model, there is hardly any mystery as to why in *The Shahnameh*, the emergence of monsters coincides with creation; in *Beowulf*, monsters make their appearance simultaneous with a microcosmic form of creation and in *Tristan*, monsters have existed for so long that they no longer evoke wonder.

In the same vein, it is not surprising to see the entire world, in its pristine stage, being affected by the monsters’ onslaught in Ferdowsi’s poem. Monsters, primarily the dīvs, are modeled on the minions of the Zoroastrian incarnation of evil, Ahrīman, who, being dark and evil, act in opposition to the source of light and good, Ahura Mazda. The Zororastrian aspect of the dīvs in *The Shahnameh* is not to be ignored as it lends them an ontological import absent in the other two texts. There is a demonization of the dīvs at work, as their cognate term *deus* indicates, making it clear that though

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10 Jaeger lists *senescalus* as one of the main secular offices of the medieval court, the other three being that of the ‘chamberlain’ (*camerarius*), butler or steward (*buticularius*) and marshall and constable (*marescalcus, comes stabuli*) (*The Origins* 20).
once considered divine, they fell out of favour only later.\textsuperscript{11} In being so closely intertwined with creation, Being itself and ultimately religion, which constitutes the predominant Weltanschauung of an entire nation, the dīvs acquire a myth-driven multi-dimensionality. Meanwhile, the multiplicity of dīvs calls for the emergence of multiple heroes.

In \textit{Beowulf}, the scope of action is limited to the Nordic lands and takes place, primarily, in Denmark. Monsters, far from providing a religious explanation to cosmology, mark a turning-point in the trend of events and thus take on a legendary rather than mythological function. Here, the plot is more linear than cyclical calling for far fewer heroes than in \textit{The Shahnameh}.\textsuperscript{12} We follow the heroes Scyld Scefing and Beowulf from their youth to old age whose lives, though extraordinary, unlike Zāl and Rustam in \textit{The Shahnameh}, cover a normal life-span.\textsuperscript{13} On the other hand, when speaking of parallels existing in \textit{The Shahnameh} and \textit{Beowulf}, one can assert that the emergence of the monstrous, one way or another, is bound up with the bodying forth of a form of Being. While the advent of monsters coincides with the genesis of the world in the Persian epic, the Anglo-Saxon \textit{Beowulf}, has them emerge in the wake of a microcosmic form of creation: the construction of Heorot. Another parallel in both works is in the \textit{différance} of the monsters, which in Derridean terms implies both a sense of ‘deferral’ and ‘difference’. Monsters are grasped in the course of time; hence, deferred, and comprehended on the basis of factors that differentiate them from us. Associated with the monstrous in \textit{Beowulf} and \textit{The Shahnameh} is the marvelous, which entails a temporary freeze in time, a suspension of disbelief, as the self grasps an otherness materialized in the monsters. In Lacanian

\begin{footnotes}
\item[11] Ethno-geographical reasons have also been cited for the demonization of the dīvs. A useful reference for this argument is, for example, T. Burrow, “The Proto-Indoaryans”, \textit{JRAS} 2 (1973): 123–40.
\item[12] By ‘cyclical’, I mean the repetition of similar life-patterns with regard to a considerable number of heroes which include, for example, the expansion of civilization in different forms, victory over the dīvs and death at an assigned time.
\item[13] The Methuselan life-span of Zāl and Rustam in \textit{The Shahnameh} qualifies them, according to Northrop Frye’s argument, as heroes of ‘myth’ in that they are superior to other men ‘in kind’, while the heroes of both \textit{Beowulf} and \textit{Tristan}, being superior to other men ‘in degree’, fall into the category of heroes of ‘romance’ (cf. \textit{Anatomy} 33–34).
\end{footnotes}
terms, in both works, man finds himself on the margins of the ‘symbolic’, a realm of subjectivity, where the self and the other become distinguished through the introduction of language.14

In Tristan, the ‘symbolic’ has already been established and the monstrous is not so much a source of marvel as it is in the two other texts. Gottfried’s poem is also legendary in that instead of recounting the tale of an entire nation, the focus is shifted to the life of a heroic individual and the factors leading up to his maturation. Monstrous bodies, undoubtedly, play a primordial part in heroic maturation and the heroes’ bodily inscription upon these bodies serves as an emblem of manhood. This function of the monsters, though also observed in the other two works, is especially prominent in Tristan.15 The prevailing humanism of Tristan, reflected in Tristan’s linguistic and musical abilities, gives an artistic slant to the hero absent in the two other works of discussion. Given the air of individualism dominating the twelfth century it is no surprise that it led to the flourishing of romance, a genre much invested in the heroic development of the protagonist.16 In fact, epic, described by C.M. Bowra, as a poem “deal[ing] with events which have a certain grandeur and importance and come

14 The ‘symbolic’ order is invested in the priority of ‘symbols’, “not icons, stylized figurations, but signifiers, in the sense developed by Saussure and Jakobson, extended into a generalized definition: differential elements, in themselves without meaning, which acquire value only in their mutual relations, and forming a closed order” (ix, Sheridan). Based on the Lacanian paradigm, the ‘symbolic’ is the determining order of the subject and is frequently contrasted with the ‘imaginary’, which is based on the relation of the ego with its images. Moreover, David Williams’s interpretation of the monstrous in linguistic terms is one example of the interrelationship between monsters and language. For further reference, see: Deformed Discourse (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996): 248–67.

15 C.H. Haskins’s book offers a more dynamic aspect to the Middle Ages, generally considered as static and stagnant. The twelfth century marks a watershed as “the century begins with the flourishing age of cathedral schools and closes with the earliest universities already well established at Salerno, Bologna, Paris, Montpellier, and Oxford” (6). Haskins goes on to write: A library of ca. 1100 would have little beyond the Bible and the Latin Fathers […]. About 1200 […] we should expect to find not only more and better copies of these older works, but also the Corpus Juris Civilis […] ; the canonical collections of Gratian and the recent Popes; the theology of Anselm and Peter Lombard […] ; the writings of St. Bernard […] ; the philosophy, mathematics and astronomy unknown to the earlier medieval tradition and recovered from the Greeks and Arabs in the course of the twelfth-century” (7). Peter Abélard (1079–1142) has been marked out as one of the more notable figures of the century on the basis of his fostering of individualism in the form of autobiographical notes appearing in Historia calamitatum and free philosophical thinking as espoused in Sic et Non (cf. Haskins, 257–260; 351–55).

16 John Stevens’s analysis of the romance genre is particularly enlightening as he lists ‘sense of vocation’, ‘presentation of the heroine’, ‘essential isolation of the hero and his experience’ and ‘sense of a baffled involvement in a mystery’ as its major motifs, all of which, contribute to the hero’s integrity and individuation (cf. 15–28).
from a life of action, especially of violent action such as war” (*From Virgil*) later on develops into romance so as to give precedence to the agent of action over action itself.

The term ‘genre’, in its inherently reductionist nature, gives rise to a problematic concept, since rarely does a single work fit into the category prescribed by a single genre. An example of how complicated genres can be appears in W.T. H Jackson’s definition of ‘romance’:

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The word ‘romance’ has been so much abused that it must first be made clear how the term will be employed. In speaking of the literature of classical antiquity the term is usually used of prose tales of fiction embodying romantic and unreal adventures. [...] English writers usually use the term to describe the body of works in prose or, more usually, in verse, which present fictional themes, such as those of the Arthurian knights, the Trojan cycle, and some English traditional material [...] in an idealized setting. Although the verse forms of the romance have much in common with epic poetry, they are distinguished from it by the fact that their themes were regarded by the author as either nonhistorical or so remote as to be capable of fictional treatment. (*The Literature* 67–68)

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I find that focus on the concept of genre could fail to take into account, the subtleties that render each work of art, unique and distinguishable from the rest and wish to only discuss it in my introduction given some question marks which I faced upon my choice of three works that evince slight generic differences. Here, I am raising certain aspects regarding the generic categorizations of the three primary works in question with the primary intention of diminishing the significance of such compartmentalizations in the overall gist of my study.
The fact that even *Beowulf*-scholars have not been able to reach a consensus on the genre of this great Anglo-Saxon poem is testimony, in itself, to the slipperiness of genre-based argumentations.\(^{17}\) *The Shahnameh*, however, has generally been agreed to represent a national epic given its length and breadth, its embeddedness in territoriality and focus on action.\(^{18}\) As far as historiography goes, as much as epics might have been subsumed by history they are mostly ahistorical in terms of chronology; hence, they can rarely be used as a point of reference for historical arguments unless one were to conduct anthropological or sociological research of ancient times.\(^{19}\) Even in *The Shahnameh*, the closest to epic of the three texts, historiography is sidetracked by mythology.\(^{20}\) An admixture of historiography and mythology appears in *Tristan* in the Arthurian undercurrent of the ‘Cave of

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\(^{17}\) Reference can be made of Michael Lapidge’s article “*Beowulf and the ‘Psychology of Terror’*”, *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period* (1993), where the author questions whether *Beowulf*’s categorization as ‘heroic poetry’, especially given the intensity of its focus on words and not sole action and Stanley Greenfield’s “*Beowulf* and Epic Tragedy”, *Studies in Old English Literature* (1963) disputes the various genre-based designations attributed to the poem (92, n.6) and is particularly informative for a broader view towards the issue of genre in *Beowulf*. An amalgam of genres has been deemed as apt for the designation of the poem including ‘romance’ and ‘mirror for princes’, although “*epos* remains a useful term for the study of *Beowulf*’s form” (Klaeber clxxxvii). For more on the diversity of genres attributed to *Beowulf*, see, for example: Klaeber, *Beowulf ed.* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2008): clxxxvi–clxxxviii.

\(^{18}\) Being an Iranian epic, *The Shahnameh* is not altogether devoid of so-called ‘western’ characteristics. For example, according to Dick Davis, the conflict between the king and the chief martial hero, which he refers to as ‘a staple theme of Western epic’ (“*Introduction*” xiii) present, for instance, in *The Iliad* in the conflict of Achilles and Agamemnon, is also a dominant theme in *The Shahnameh*, especially with regard to Rustam and Kay Kavīs. For more on this particular feature, reference can be made to: W.T.H. Jackson, *The Hero and The King: An Epic Theme*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

\(^{19}\) J.R.R. Tolkien, in perhaps the most influential critical essay written on *Beowulf*, has warned against reading the poem as a historical text, stressing that it should be looked upon qua poetry: “The illusion of historical truth and perspective, that has made *Beowulf* seem such an attractive quarry, is largely a product of art. The author has used an instinctive historical sense — a part indeed of the ancient English temper [...], of which *Beowulf* is a supreme expression; but he has used it with a poetical and not an historical object. The lovers of poetry can safely study the art, but the seekers after history must beware lest the glamour of Poesis overcome them” (85). As far as historiography is concerned, only Hygelac’s attack on the Frisians has been recorded qua history. In Gregory of Tours *Libri historiarum X* (d.594), a certain Danish figure named Chlochilaichus, identified with Hygelac, is said to have been killed in a disastrous Frankish raid that must have taken place during the period A.D. 516–531. For more details, refer to, for example: “*Introduction*”, Klaeber, *Beowulf ed.* (2008): li.

\(^{20}\) Arthur Christensen has commented on the historiography of *The Shahnameh* and its rootedness in *The Avesta* as follows: “In *The Shahnameh* there is history and myth. There is history, especially in the part of the epic which deals with the Sasanian period. The mythological history which constitutes the first part and a bigger half of the work, interests us from a different perspective. The Avestan books and the religious literature available to us, allow us to follow the development and progress of mythological history throughout the centuries up to the point where it finds its definitive form in the epic of Ferdowsi” (20). It has also been shown by other scholars, including Mahmoud Omidsalar, that Ferdowsi closely followed the sources entrusted to him regarding Sasanian history. For further references and information, see, for example: Parvaneh Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008): 14–15.
Lovers’ (minnegrotte) episode evident in place names such as Arthur’s palace, Tintagel and Cornwall and the figure of Isolde’s maternal uncle Gurman, allegedly based on the Vandal king, Geiseric (c. 389–477), to name a few. Regarding the ‘Arthurian’ elements observed in romance, Gottfried’s Tristan (unlike Béroul’s version) is Arthurian only in ‘milieu’, as Jackson has argued, and has only become “attached to the Arthurian cycle because it was told by the same Breton conteurs who popularized Arthurian material in France” (The Literature 137). Historiography, in and of itself, therefore, cannot serve as a major factor in distinguishing between epic and romance. As for ‘unreal adventures’, despite the added significance of the concept of aventiure in Tristan, as shall be explained in the following chapter, most works considered to be epic poetry, including Vergil’s Aeneid (c. 29–19 BCE) and The Shahnameh, are replete with examples of ‘unreal’ adventures as well. Regardless, one could argue that Tristan shares with heroic poetry the feature of being so heavily rooted in ‘action’, a defining factor in ‘heroic poetry’ (Bowra, Heroic 48). 21

Gottfried’s Tristan, however, comes closer to ‘courtly romance’ than ‘heroic poetry’ in its ultimate investment in the love of a male hero for a beautiful princess and constitutes only one of many versions of the story of Tristan and Isolde. Both Marie de France in Lai du Chèvrefeuille (1160–1180) (lines 5–6) one of the earliest records of the Tristan story and Béroul in his version (c. 1180) mention a so-called Ur-Tristan, explicitly referred to as l’estorie by Béroul (line 1 268; l. 1 790). Not much else is known about this text. However, a number of other Tristan-poems have survived the ravages of time, which though similar in certain aspects of the legend, differ in many areas include tone, style and plot. 22 Elaborating on the differences that set the surviving Tristan-texts apart exceeds the scope

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21 One of the most enlightening arguments made on the difficulties confronting us in the separation of the two genres of ‘epic’ and ‘romance’ has been made by Dean Miller who goes to far lengths to provide us with a list of scholarly attempts made at distinguishing one from the other concludes that “the two genres are continually mixed, if not confused” (cf. 42–52).

22 Some of the surviving versions are incomplete including Gottfried’s which ends at a point in the story where Thomas’s version survives. In addition, while Eilhart’s version has made it through the ages, of the Thomas version, approximately 3300 lines have survived and of Béroul’s, 4500 lines. In addition to Gottfried, Thomas’s version of
of this study and only occasional mention will be made of versions other than Gottfried’s, with the exception of Thomas’s version, which has explicitly inspired Gottfried. What is obvious, however, is that originality was not so much an issue in the Middle Ages, although, since each version of Tristan is the product of a different mind, given the complexities of the workings of the human brain, each, is bound to manifest a degree of originality nonetheless. It is, however, worth noting that the versions of Béroul and Eilhart represent the version commune or spielmännische Version, where the courtly and humanistic aspects are not as pronounced as they are in the version courtoise or höfische Version of the text represented in the works of Thomas d’Angleterre and Gottfried von Strassburg.

Gertrude Schoepperle’s Tristan and Isolt: A Study of the Sources of the Romance (1913) is, for example, particularly useful for a better understanding of the Tristan versions as well as Christoph Huber’s introduction to his Gottfried von Strassburg >Tristan und Isolde<: Eine Einführung (München und Zürich: Artemis Verlag 1986):7–19. As an un-source to the Tristan stories, reference has been made to the Celtic legend of “Diarmaid and Grainne”, where Grainne, the daughter of the Irish king, Cormac Mac Airt, who is forced to marry an old king by the name of Finn in an attempt to liberate herself from this unwanted marriage, casts a spell on all but two young men of the Finn tribe, one being Diarmaid, with whom she escapes the royal surroundings. Joan M. Ferrante’s The Conflict of Love and Honor: The Medieval Tristan Legend in France, Germany and Italy (1973) and Maria Schausten’s Erzählwelten der Tristangeschichte: Untersuchungen zu den deutschsprachigen Tristanfassungen des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts (1999) are also worthy of note in the field of Tristan studies.

One of the most original aspects of Gottfried’s Tristan appears in the ‘Cave of Lovers’ (minnegrotte) episode where, the poet describes the architecture of the Cave, which in its exoticism comes close to the sense of wonder encapsulated in the OE phrase enta geweorc (‘work of giants’), especially since ‘giants’ are mentioned as the primary architects of the site. Gottfried transforms Béroul’s forest of Morois, where the lovers experience a difficult existence (line1364) into a paradisiacal spot where pastimes of various sorts (e.g. strolling and relating classical literary works) are practised. See, for example: Christoph Huber, Gottfried von Strassburg >Tristan und Isolde<: Eine Einführung (München und Zürich: Artemis Verlag, 1986): 93–110. The discovery of the Carlisle fragment of Thomas’s version in the 1990s which includes the ‘love-potion’ scene goes on to highlight a certain degree of originality on Gottfried’s part especially given his psychoanalytic portrayal of Tristan and Isolda. The lack of originality is also admitted in the course of The Shahnameh (cf. V. 175–76: 1037–43), Jules Mohl in his introduction to the French translation of Ferdowsi’s poème, mentions other examples of ‘Books of Kings’ including the Pahlavi Khodāi-nāmeh (‘Book of Kings’) written by a certain ‘cultivated man’ (diḥqān) which encompasses Persian history from Kīyūmars up to Khosrow Parviz’s reign. For further information, see: J. Mohl, ‘Préface’, Le Livre des Rois (Paris: Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient, 1976): ix–xii. For more on the concept of originality in the Middle Ages, refer to, for example: Douglas Kelly, Conspiracy of Allusion: Description, Rewriting, and Authorship from Macrobius to Medieval Romance (Leiden ; Boston : Brill, 1999).

The love between Tristan and Isolde takes a backstage to Tristan’s heroic aspects in Eilhart’s version and to the pomp and ceremony in Béroul’s, however, the distinction between the version courtoise and version commune, elaborated, for example, by Will Hasty in his article “Introduction: The Challenge of Gottfried’s Tristan”, A Companion to Gottfried von Strassburg’s Tristan (N.Y.: Campden House, 2003): 1–21, can be disputed given the blurred boundaries dividing the two.
I would also like to touch upon the East/West dichotomy which marks my choice of primary texts. The inclusion of Ferdowski’s *Shahnameh*, one of the greatest epics of the East, was particularly my intention, especially, given the paucity of research carried out in the field of literary studies that take note of the perspectives of the Eastern ‘other’. As recent research has demonstrated, it so happens that eastern literary works are more similar to their western counterparts than some scholars might assume. The primary texts of this dissertation simply by virtue of belonging to the Middle Ages constitute a realm of alterity, which, with its air of mystery, fantasy and ‘adventuresomeness’, as has been extensively argued by H. R. Jauss, has the capacity to afford us aesthetic pleasure (184–86). Ferdowski’s *Shahnameh*, in addition to its medieval aspect, by virtue of hailing from the East can be viewed as a literary example of the otherized other, yet not quite so, when it is noted how its heroes, for instance, are as much affected by hubris, peripeteia and hamartia as western epic heroes. This is not to deny the aspects that distinguish *The Shahnameh* from the other two works including its length, diversity of monsters and heroes, and its commingling of actual history, legend and religion.

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26 Generally speaking, Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) was a breakthrough in offering a cultural and literary perspective of the Other. More specifically within the sphere of epic studies, *Heroic Epic and Saga*, Ed. Felix Oinas (1978) and more recently *A Companion to Ancient Epic*, Ed. John Miles Foley (2005) are examples which take into consideration the Iranian epic, although they fall short of synthesizing their research on eastern and western epics. Connell Monette’s dissertation, *A Comparative Study of the Hero in Ireland, Persia and England* (University of Toronto, 2008), provides a notable exception in that it concentrates on Eastern and Western epic heroes in a single study.

27 Julie S. Meisami’s research into the underpinnings of Eastern and Western medieval poetry in *Structure and Meaning in Medieval Arabic and Persian Poetry* (2003), for example, has been a useful source of information further questioning the divides that separate the two canons. Based on various comparative studies, many of the same concepts prevailed over the structuralization of both eastern and western poetry in pre-modern times (cf. pp.16–54).


29 Rahim Shayegan, for example, probes how history generates epic literature and vice versa, in his examination of the analogues in the coronation of Achaemenid monarch Darius I (c.549–486 BCE) and Sasanian king Narseh (293–302) alongside Firaidūn’s ascension to the throne in *The Shahnameh* (PhD Diss., Harvard University, 2001). Oktor Skjaervo has noted: “We are faced with a situation of reciprocal influence. While the records of the kings were strongly influenced by the formulas of the oral literature, the kings too were themselves influenced by this literature and acted in conformity with it, thus turning what would otherwise be literary invention into historical events” (104). Worthy of mention are also Theodor Nöldeke’s observation of the existing parallels between Herodotus’s chronicle of the early days of Cyrus, who was supposed to be slain at the orders of his grandfather King Astyages and the
However, the extent to which these differences can be attributed to the poem’s provenance is open to question.

Ferdowsi, who started composing his *magnum opus* in his mid-thirties, spent thirty-five years on an epic in which he casts his version of the world’s *historia* covering the four dynasties of Pishdadians, Keyanians, Askhanians and Sasanians, as he starts from the reign of the originary man and king, Kīyūmars to the last of the Sasanian shahs, Yazdgird (632–651 CE). The ups and downs the poet was experiencing in his position as a *dihqān*, a well-to-do landowner, a class whose influence was fading away during the Samanid era, finds an echo in a work so much invested in mutability primarily manifest in the shape-shiftings and metamorphoses that run through *The Shahnameh*. William Hanaway sees the origins of the diversities observed throughout Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh* in the history of the nomads who entered the Iranian plateau from various parts of the world bringing in their own traditions and customs. However, while Hanaway traces the opposition between the Turanians and Iranians, which constitutes a major portion of *The Shahnameh*, back to the ancient conflicts between the pastoralists and the agriculturalists, I believe that one can also take note of Ferdowsi’s times and the unrest prevailing between the Turkic Ghaznavids and the Persian leaders of the Samanid dynasty (819–999) to catch a glimpse of historical parallels.

Historical transformations leading to mass migrations can also be behind the composition of *Beowulf*. In fact, as observed by J.J. Cohen:

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30 As Dick Davis highlights the importance of the length of the poem, he posits that “Its physical vastness is not a negligible factor in one’s apprehension of the poem (it is some 50,000 lines long), and they are very long lines at that, each approximately equivalent in length to two lines of standard English iambic pentameter verse; compare this with, for example, the c.15,500 lines of hexameter verse of *The Iliad*” (xv).

England in the centuries before the Norman Conquest was a heterogeneous collection of peoples who were constantly forced to examine who they were in relation to a shifting array of alterities. “Anglo-Saxon England” is a blanket term that hides more than it reveals. In a real sense, there were no Anglo-Saxons, only scattered groups of varied ancestry in growing alliances who were slowly building larger political units. “England” existed as an ambiguous region of a large island and was very much in the process of being invented as a unifying geography, as a nation capable of transcending the differences among those bodies it collects beneath its name. *(Of Giants 4)*

The hybrid narrative of Iranian and Anglo-Saxon history could have been a crucial factor in the composition of epics which are essentially marked by their composite nature. One can make the argument that the composition of epics, as it seems to have been the case with *Beowulf* and *The Shahnameh*, was aimed at bringing about a sense of unity amongst the disparate sectors of a single nation. The so-called ‘influences’ on the poem, range from Scandinavian, Celtic and classical, reinforcing the idea that the poem was meant as a medium for the solidification of the Anglo-Saxons.32 One can read the poem as a reflection of the volatility of the circumstances governing the poet’s life-times and along with it, the need to aspire towards a monolithic identity.33 Herein lies the significance of monsters who offer the scattered masses a materialized form of otherness in the face of

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32 Concerning Scandinavian analogues, the killing of Herebeald by his brother, Hæthcyn in *Beowulf* has especially been paralleled with the ON myth of Baldr’s slaying at the hand of Hoðr, as related in *Snorra Edda*. Within the sphere of Celtic parallels, mention can be made of the motif of ‘The Hand of the Child,’ based on which a monstrous arm penetrates a home to carry off humans only to be overcome by a hero. With regard to classical sources, comparisons have particularly been made between *Beowulf* and *The Aeneid*. For further elaboration of these parallels/influences, see, for example, Klaeber, ed., *Beowulf* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2008): clxxxiii–clxxxvi and Andy Orchard, *A Critical Companion* (Rochester, New York: 2003): 98–168.

33 Nicholas Howe suggests the possibility that the poem was a celebration of ancestral migration of Anglo-Saxons to England. There is no mention of *Englalond in Beowulf* and its Scandinavian setting appears to be an attempt at making use of geography with the aim of assimilating the diverse Nordic people who had migrated to England. For further reference, see: *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven and London: 1989): 143–80.
which solid identities can be constructed. *Tristan* might not so much be aimed at national integrity, rather, being composed around the twelfth century, known as the period of medieval renaissance, it reflects on the concomitant challenges of individualism, here, concretized as monsters.

The advent of heroes, likewise, hinges on an overriding climate of tension and tribulation that accompanies the twilight of the gods. Heroes in *The Shahnameh* are present on the scene while deities known as ‘daivas’, later as dīvs, are being demonized. There is a possibility of a parallel in *Beowulf* where upon the condemnation of the worship of pagan deities equated with devils, Beowulf makes his appearance.\(^{34}\) The opposition of the divine and the demonic is also at work in the fashioning of the hero in *Tristan* as he goes on to face Morold.\(^{35}\) However, it should be noted that just as the difference between the divine and demonic is but a thin line, the same can be argued for the hero/monster dichotomy. In fact, if one were to take the monster as the outsider without, the hero, could easily be termed, the outsider within.

Chapter 1 will delve further into the characteristics of a ‘hero’ and his larger-than-life aspects in the three primary texts. The extra-ordinary qualities of the hero, including those that approximate him with the monstrous, constitute a major portion of my discussion. Heroes are not made out of thin air, and are fashioned in *medias res*, mostly in the midst of monster-slaying. As shall be further discussed, other criteria including the possession of fertile lands and/or beautiful women also play a major role in defining the heroic. Terms such as ‘glory’ and ‘honour’ play a primordial function in the designation of man as hero. Evidently, there are factors that distinguish the heroic in the three poems. While in *Beowulf*, the hero is defined in terms of the ‘glory’ (*lof*) associated with his exceptional physical

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\(^{34}\) Lines 177–185 have been a matter of much controversy (cf. Klaeber, ed. *Beowulf* (Toronto: University of Toronto: 2008): lxx, n. 2); however, what is more or less clear is that *gastbona* (line 177a) refers to the ‘slayer of souls’ and equates pagan deities with devils (cf. Klaeber, ed. *Beowulf* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2008): 128, n. 177.

\(^{35}\) If anything, Morold is aligned with satanic forces in being termed *tiuvel* (line 6853) and *vâlant* (line 6906), an association which becomes all the more intensive in Gottfried’s version of the story in which a certain degree of ‘piety’ (*Frömmigkeit*) has been attributed to Tristan (cf. Combridge 50–53).
strength and subjugation of the Other — true of both Beowulf and Scyld Scefing, in *The Shahnameh*, the hero is either a king-hero or the guardian of the king who embodies *farr*, an element of glory ensuring the prosperity of the Iranian nation. The hero in Gottfried’s *Tristan* stands out as a multi-dimensional character who is not only a great warrior, but also an extraordinary artist and lover. It should be noted that ‘war’ and ‘love’ are complementary in *Tristan* and do not rule each other out.Heroes, despite their loyalty to the ruling king, in their unique individuality, constitute a force that stands in opposition to the reigning order. Regardless, the hero is the heralder of a new world order which is reinforced only as result of his opposition to exterior threats which find a manifestation in the monstrous other.

Chapter 2 probes various aspects of the monstrous including its accompanying sense of marvel which conjures up the ‘abject’, both a source of attraction and repulsion. The abjection of the monstrous is demonstrated not only in its physicality, but also in its topography. In *Beowulf*, Grendel and his mother reside in an infernal mere; similarly, the White Dīv of *The Shahnameh* lives in ‘a bottomless pit’ likened to ‘hell’ and the habitat of the dragon in *Tristan* is marked by its many twists and turns. In terms of their physicality, monsters body forth an otherness which justifies the heroic exploits undertaken with the aim of using them as *materia* for the sculpting of new *mappae mundi*. Yet, once the heroic and the monstrous become entangled, they form a matrix in which they become ‘monstrous doubles’.

Chapter 3 explores the dynamics of the clashes between the heroic and the monstrous in which the confrontation between the Self and the Other can be traced. The space created in the wake of the single combats between the heroic and the monstrous brims with a sense of becoming, clearing the way for the hero’s new state of existence. It is also closely associated with language (e.g. the hunting

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scene in *Tristan*) and maturation as shall come to the fore in my discussion of Beowulf’s early monster fights, Rustam’s ‘Seven Trials’ and the ‘hunting’ scene in *Tristan*. The energy that is released in the course of the monstrous battles is played out in scenes of dismemberment. By bringing to the fore examples of dismemberment in mythology, I attempt to highlight the significance of dismemberment in the enhancement of the creation process. Creation can occur at artistic and linguistic levels, as is the case in *Tristan*; it can take place at a more cosmogonic level as witnessed in the origins of *The Shahnameh* and sociogonic level as delineated in *Beowulf*.

Chapter 4 explores different aspects of incorporation in the course of or following dismemberment scenes. Once the monstrous body undergoes dismemberment, part of it is absorbed by the heroic in a process that is best portrayed by the Hegelian term, *Aufhebung*, rendered as ‘sublation’ in English, which signifies “the incorporation of a prior stage or concept by a subsequent one” (Hermann 55). Incorporation encompasses other facets as well, including scenes of feasting, examples of which take place in both *Beowulf* and *The Shahnameh* and the drinking of the ‘love-potion’ in *Tristan*. Incorporation of the Other by the Self, leading to the emergence of another side of the self, represents a degree of finality in the single combats between monsters and heroes, bringing to the fore a sense of re-membering in the wake of dis-membering. *Tristan* takes incorporation to a new level as Gottfried calls upon his audience to partake of his text as if it were bread in the hopes that they will thus be transformed.

It is hoped that this study will shed light on the significance of heroic and monstrous bodies and their interaction, in which the origins of the concepts of Self and Other can be sought. The hero is marked out in his deviation from the norm, a trait which happens to define the monstrous. Yet, in an attempt to transcend his original similitude with the monstrous, he ends up dis-membering the monstrous only to re-member its *disiecta membra* in himself. By incorporating the monstrous, he
emerges as an othered version of himself in a process of sublation, images of which are concretized in various modes of incorporation, primarily eating.

For the translation of *The Shahnameh*, I have taken into account Dick Davis’s English and J. Moles’ French translations, although the rendition is ultimately my own. I have primarily based my arguments on the relatively recent Khaleghi-Motlagh edition and only in rare instances refer to the E. Bertels’, otherwise known as the ‘Moscow-edition’, to make note of sections not included in Khaleghi-Motlagh’s edition of *The Shahnameh*. For *Beowulf*, I had initially based my translations on the Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson edition until the publication in 2008 of *Klaeber’s Fourth Edition of Beowulf* altered my course. In my translations of *Tristan*, I have relied on A.T. Hatto’s English translation and applied only minor changes at times. The edition which I use is Rüdiger Krohn’s publication based on Friedrich Ranke’s edition. For the Latin texts included in this study, I have had recourse to bilingual Loeb editions to which I have applied my own modifications. The Biblical citations have been taken from the Vulgate and the Douay Rheims translation.

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37 Dick Davis claims to have ‘inevitably’ omitted some passages in his translation and to have had a ‘popular audience’ in mind (cf. *Shahnameh* xxxiv) making it not particularly suitable for the scholarly use of an academic, especially one whose mother-tongue happens to be Persian.
Chapter 1: Heroic Bodies

This chapter, which engages in both an intertextual and intratextual analysis of heroism in Beowulf, The Shahnameh and Gottfried’s Tristan, brings to light a multiplicity of factors which define the ‘heroic’. Studies of the heroic enjoy a long history and a large degree of diversity with most of them concurring on the hero’s significant role in the history of the human race in terms of bringing about new patterns of power and major social changes. The characteristics that define the ‘heroic’ in a figure are not only diverse, but also differ from one hero to the next. For example, while Hercules evinces signs of ‘immense precocity’ by killing the two snakes Hera had sent to kill him, other heroes, like Beowulf, fail to evince signs of heroism until well past their childhood. It is also to be noted that as heroes are objective correlatives of realities greater than themselves, they cannot be studied in a vacuum, nor without taking into account the other bodies and spaces surrounding them. For heroic bodies to prove their superiority to the average male body, they tend to be in need of monstrous bodies, which serve as foils that help bring into relief their magnificence as well as their immense physical prowess before the collective body of the nation they represent. Meanwhile, female bodies can offer an added dimension to the heroic on two different levels: firstly, they become aligned with the ‘monstrous’, mastery over which falls into the ‘heroic’ paradigm; secondly, the hero, by manifesting certain characteristics, such as physical prowess and military superiority, makes himself

38 As early as 1841, Thomas Carlyle compiles On Heroes and Hero-Worship on the basis of the dictum that the history of the world is the “biography of great men” (12); however, his list of heroes is marked by extreme diversity ranging from Mahomet to Odin. In The Heroic Age (1912), H.M. Chadwick grounds the heroic in the historic, stressing the importance of ‘mars and muses’, on the basis that without ‘poetry’, stories would not have been preserved and without ‘war’, there would not have been a chance for heroes to emerge (440). Otto Rank’s Der Mythus von der Geburt des Helden (1909) and Joseph Campbell’s The Hero with a Thousand Faces (1949) put forth an array of heroic figures under the influence of C.G. Jung and Sigmund Freud. Mention is to be made of Lord Raglan’s The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth, and Drama (1936) and his pattern of twenty-two “well-marked features and incidents” that describe a heroic biography (see 174–75). However, I find the list reductive given the hero’s larger-than-life attributes. More encompassing are the open-ended list of characteristics endorsed by C.M. Bowra in Heroic Poetry (1961), and, more recently, Dean A. Miller in The Epic Hero (2000), who, have, in fact, amongst other things, highlighted the corporeality of the hero, attributing to him “peculiar energy” (Heroic Bowra 99) and “prodigious physicality” (Miller 193).

39 On Beowulf’s ‘boorish beginnings’, see, for example, Adrian Bonjour, Twelve Beowulf Papers (Genève: 1962): 89–93.
worthy of the most desirable female — this being especially true of the romance-hero. Territoriality and the hero’s association with certain spaces is another significant factor in defining the ‘heroic’ as the hero becomes the corporealized emblem of an entire expanse of a particular territory, whose inhabitants, materialized in a collective body of nationhood, look up to him as their guardian and protector.

In being not only an essential part of the world’s historia, but also crucial to the consolidation of the idea of unity and nationhood, heroes appear in a multiplicity of discourses including the literary and the historical. Literature, epics and romances in particular, has led to the emergence of heroic figures, who can serve as role models as they imbue others with a zest for individuation. Drawing the borderlines between the two genres of epic and romance is no easy task. One could argue that while territoriality tends to take precedence in epic, it is the portrayal of an image of ‘hypermasculinity’ that becomes a focal point in romance. The boundaries separating the two, however, are, in many instances, far from clear-cut, as in both epic and romance heroes potentially manifest tokens of hypermasculinity and become associated with nationhood.40

The concept of territoriality gains particular significance in defining heroism once bodyscapes and landscapes become entwined as human beings use their bodies in their struggles to tame the land they wish to occupy. In fact, I suggest that the origins of heroic struggles can be sought in the attempts made at inscribing upon Mother Earth, harnessing her powers and eventually mastering her. Once expelled from paradise, man loses the garden of Eden, “a habitation that makes sense in human terms without human transformation” (Frye, The Great 142) and has to confront the hazards latent in the earth with the sweat of his face to earn his daily bread till he returns to the dust, which he is (cf. Gen. 3: 19). Man’s struggles to harness the treasures of the earth can be interpreted as a confrontation with a powerful female Other, especially given the fact that in the Genesis, there is mention of “the

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40 See the “Introduction” for more on the concept of genre in the three primary works of this study.
adamah or mother earth” (Frye, The Great 107). The first creatures on the planet were believed to have been born of Gaea or Mother Earth, bringing home, once more, the age-old association between the earth and the female body. In the Zoroastrian tradition, Spendarmath is Mother Earth who brought forth the prototypical man, Gayomard and later on, from Gayomard’s seed, the first human pair, Mashi and Mashyāneh (Dk. III: 80). An example of the correlation between a land mass and a feminine body is also evidenced in Book III of Vergil’s Aeneid where a voice calls upon the wandering Trojans to ‘seek out their ancient mother’ (antiquam exquirite matrem, line 96) in reference to the land of Italy. Vergil carries the image even further in the equivocal evocation of the image of the ‘fruitful bosom’ (ubere laeto, line 94), which, unsurprisingly, is read literally by Anchises as an actual maternal figure. The glory associated with the mastery of lands is a marker of heroism regardless of genre and enjoys a much longer history than all three primary texts of the study. In fact, as evidenced in the annals of the Roman Empire, an understanding of gloria, to which, St. Augustine refers in DCD (V, XII), is inextricably bound up with that of patria (homeland) as well as dominari (dominating):

They (the Romans) were eager for praise, generous with money, and sought unbounded glory, and riches honourably gained. This glory they most ardently loved. For its sake they chose to live and for its sake they did not hesitate to die. They suppressed all other desires in their boundless desire for this one thing. In short, since they held it shameful for their native land to be in servitude, and glorious for it to rule and command, their first passion to which they

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41 The Earth has been associated with the female since antiquity as is evident in the female deities Cybele, Gaia and Rhea, all of whom represent ‘Mother Earth’. Extensive research on examples portraying ‘Earth’, being clearly represented as feminine has been carried out by Page Dubois in Sowing the Body: Psychanalysis and Ancient Representations of Women (1988).
42 Anchises interprets ‘antiqua mater’ as the maternal lineage of Troy as he brings up mons Ideaus in reference to Ida (line 105), the mother of Teucer, believed to have been the founder of Troy, which, of course, proves to have been a misreading once the Penates signal that the ‘ancient mother’ was to be taken for the land of Italy. As C.S. Hardy clarifies: “mater had no literal referent: the word was purely a metaphorical expression designating land” (5).
devoted all their energy was to maintain their independence; the second was to win
dominion.\textsuperscript{43}

The conquest of lands has been looked upon as a watershed event in the course of the \textit{historiae} of
nations so much so that in \textit{Historia Regum Britanniae} (c.1138) Brutus and Corineus, regardless of the
mythical elements dominating their stories, have helped shape the collective identity of an entire
nation. The mastery over rugged terrains becomes concretized in harnessing the innate powers of
giants. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen posits: “As elemental, perhaps autochthonous beings, giants were
inextricable from the earth and stone they worked, so they gained an explanatory function as creators
of landscape, ancient ruins and mysterious architecture” (\textit{Of Giants} 6). That the term ‘giants’ is
considered to have taken its meaning from the Greek \textit{ge}, meaning ‘earth’ becomes relevant within this
context:

\begin{quote}
those who think (the giants) to be \textit{gegeneis} (that is, born of the earth, because of the earth
which, according to fable, brought them forth (is) of immense size and produced beings
resembling itself) believe them to be called \textit{gigantes} according to the etymology of the Greek
word. For \textit{ge} is explained as ‘earth,’ \textit{genus} as ‘race’ – though the people at large also call
those whose origin is uncertain ‘sons of earth.’ (Isidore, \textit{Etymologiae} XI. iii: 13)\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{43} laudis avidi, pecuniae liberales erant, gloriam ingentem, divitias honestas volebant.
hanc ardentissime dilexerunt, propter hanc vivere voluerunt, pro hac emori non dubitaverunt; ceteras cupiditates
huius unius ingenti cupiditate presserunt. Ipsam denique patriam suam, quoniam servire videbatur inglorium,
dominari vero atque imperare gloriosum, prius omni studio liberam, deinde dominam esse concupiverunt.
\textsuperscript{44} Gigantes dictos iuxta Graeci sermonis etymologiaem, qui eos γηγέυει, existimant, id est terrigenas, eo quod
fabulose parens terra immensa mole et similes sibi genuerit. Ψτ enim terra appellatur; γένος genus; licet et terrae
filos vulgus vocat; quorum genus incertum est.
In Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*, the formation of the British empire comes in the wake of Corineus’s mastery over the giant Gogmagog, who was ‘twelve cubits in height’ (*staturae xii cubitorum*) upon whose fragmented body-parts, a new empire is born. Likewise, in *The Shahnameh*, the Pishdādian dynasty thrives on its hero-kings’ ability to harness the hidden power of demonic creatures, known as dīvs. Overall, heroes become dependent upon the conquest of lands, which, in turn, harbour hazards materialized in giants, for the articulation of their heroic identity.

Linked with the concept of *imperium* from *imperare* (‘to command’) is that of *colonia*, ‘settlement’, from *colo*, which amongst other things, means to ‘till’, ‘cultivate’ and ‘take care of a field’ (cf. ‘colo’ in *LS*). History, to a large extent, is moulded as humans attempt to overcome the hurdles placed against them in mastering their environment and beyond. Human groundedness in our corporeality makes our need for space inevitable. Once space has been acquired, there is the need for the “house”, which, “thrusts aside contingencies, its councils of continuity are unceasing. Without it, man would be a dispersed being” (Bachelard 6–7). However, in most cases, once man has settled in the ‘house’, the drive for more persists as one’s attention becomes focused on building settlements and then expanding it to include an entire empire. The hero uses his body as a vehicle to push beyond the boundaries of his home and ultimately that of an entire community. Little wonder then that the early stages of (mytho-)historical accounts, a clear example of which appears in the early episodes of *The Shahnameh*, speak of hero-kings rather than mere kings. It is within this context that Isolde’s conclusion in Gottfried’s *Tristan* that “it would be right and proper for (Tristan) to have an

45 An example is that of the Trojans, who initially in want of a ‘scant home’ (*sedem exiguam*, *The Aeneid*, Bk. VII: 229), go on to build a vast empire.

46 Alain Stoclet’s article “From Baghdād to Beowulf: Eulogising ‘Imperial’ Capitals East and West in the Mid-Eighth Century”, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* (2005), in which he has highlighted the role of *conditor* and *conditor alter* in defining kings, heroes and hero-kings, is, for example, useful for a better understanding of the association of the heroic with construction of landmark foundations. Interestingly, the construction of colossal monuments and mastery over supernatural beings can become aligned.
empire at his service” (*im solte billich und wol eine riche dienen*, lines 10020–1), upon admiring Tristan’s hands, face, arms and legs, makes perfect sense. The *gloria* attached to marshalling kingdoms finds an objective correlative in bodies that exude health, strength and charisma. In fact, ‘charisma’ finds an equivalent in the Zoroastrian concept of *farr* or *khvarnah*, much referred to throughout *The Shahnameh*, which beyond its literal meaning of ‘glory’, signifies a divine power that projects power onto the appointed (king)-hero and prosperity onto the entire Iranian nation. It is quite reasonable to have the two primordial social functions of ‘hero’ and ‘king’ in one body, that of the hero-king, which serves as a bridge between two other registers of the body: that of the collective nation and the heavenly bodies. Ernst Kantorowicz highlights the significance of the king’s body in a different way, based on the concept of *persona geminata*, which proposes a perishable and natural body as well as an imperishable and extra-ordinary body for the king. It becomes incumbent upon the hero to protect the royal body.

The singularity of the hero lies in his audacity to put his life on the line as he exposes himself to the possibility of physical annihilation in fighting extraordinary forces. As C.M. Bowra has posited, heroes “realize their full nature, and display their surpassing gifts, in fighting” (*In General* 64). Bodies play a vital role in enhancing the heroic, especially, in a time and age when heroism was much

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47 For further explanation, see, for example: Gherado Gnoli, “Farr(ah)”, *Elr.*
48 Olga Davidson sees in the dichotomy between “book of kings” and “epic of heroes” which exist in *The Shahnameh*, more a “traditional combination of these distinct and sometimes conflicting elements” than “an innovative conflation of a “book of kings” and an “epic of heroes” (*Poet and Hero* 75).
49 Kantorowicz suggests that the king’s duplication of persons is found in theology and mirrors the duplication of the natures in Christ. “The king is the perfect impersonator of Christ on earth” (58). The king manifests both spiritual and secular natures, making him a *persona geminata* (59). A historical example appears in the figure of Queen Elizabeth I, one of the most powerful British monarchs of all times, who was well aware of the concept of ‘two bodies’. To quote historian Simon Schama: “At the beginning of her reign, she had told people that she had two bodies; one ‘naturally considered’, that of a woman, but the other, by God’s permission, ‘a body politic, to govern.’ And she had proceeded to subject her body natural to her body politic; inventing something quite new in the history of the monarchy: the androgynous virgin prince” (*A History* 333).
predicated on physical abilities. Since men are biologically stronger than women, there is little wonder as to why heroism has been primarily enfleshed in the male body.

While lands tend to be regarded as female, heroism tends to be associated with the male. The Latin term *virtus*, for example, whose exact translation has been open to question, incorporates a range of meanings including ‘manliness’, ‘courage’ and ‘virtue’ (cf. ‘virtus’ in *LS*). As noted by Myles McDonnell: “The Latin word for manliness is *virtus*, from *vir*, meaning man, and *virtus* designates the activity and quality associated with the noun from which it is derived; *virtus* characterizes the ideal behavior of a man” (2). A similar parallel is observed in the Persian terms *mardānegi* and *javānmardi* both of which connote heroism and share in the incorporation of the Persian word for ‘man’, *mard*.

Moreover, the term *pahlavān*, which refers to heroic figures such as Rustam in *The Shahnameh*, has its origins in *parthana*, referring to the Parthians, originally a warrior tribe from the northwest of Iran, who ruled the country for over four centuries (c. 200 BC–227 AD).

Aside from the feminized earth, gaining possession of the actual female Other can be as important in defining the hero as is the capacity to harness the untapped powers of monsters. In *The Shahnameh*, getting a hold over the two sisters Shahnāz and Arnavāz, who are described as “the fairest bodies amongst women, and the most beautiful creatures in the world” (Yt. 5: 34), becomes a marker of heroism. A similar situation is observed in the case of Isolde, the ‘sun of Ireland’, whose possession

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50 It would take centuries, for instance, for Herman Melville, in the course of his composition of *Moby Dick* (1851) to become fascinated with the monstrosity of the human mind versus the physical monstrosity of whales. Melville seems to have been inspired by the following passage in the preface of William Davenant’s *Gondibert* (1651): “God ordain’d not huge Empire as proportionable to the Bodies, but to the Mindes of Men; and the Mindes of Men are more monstrous, and require more space for agitation and the hunting of others, than the Bodies of Whales” (qtd. in Olsen-Smith and Marnon 86).


52 Although *javānmard* literally means ‘young man,’ the concept of *javānmardā* which originated by formations of young men has come to denote heroic deeds attributed to heroes. Especially useful for a better understanding of concepts such as *javānmardā* and *mardī*, reference can, for example, be made to: Arley Loewen, *The Concept of Jawānmardī in Persian Literature and Society*, Diss., University of Toronto, 2001.

53 For further details, see, for example: Gilbert Lazard, “Pahlavi/Pahlavān dans le Šāhnāme”, *Studia Iranica* 1 (1972): 26-41.
becomes bound up but, given the couple’s cultural and aesthetic affinities, not limited to heroism, making Tristan justified in his pursuit of her.

Heroes are fashioned in the course of trials and tribulations, potentially viewed as a series of rites de passage, “rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age” (Turner, The Ritual 94). At the heart of the ‘rites of passage’, which mark the initiation of heroes into the heroic realm, is the concept of ‘liminality’, calling for the hero to be in a state of ‘betwixt and between’. This elasticity in the existential and geographical modes of the hero, grants the hero further scope of mobility and room for transgressing established norms. As witnessed in the three works of this study, the hero hails from ‘afar’, (in OE feorran, which is used in association with Beowulf in line 825b of the poem).  

In Beowulf, Beowulf is referred to as the ‘stranger/guest’ (gæst or gist/gyst) (for example in lines 1522b and 1800b) and in line 2921 in Tristan, we read that Tristan is a ‘homeless stranger’ (ellende gast). Additionally, Rustam, in The Shahnameh, dwells in the outpost of Sīstān.

Being larger-than-life, heroes go beyond the grasp of any exhaustive analysis of all their potential attributes. What is clear is that the poet tends to paint heroic bodies in exaggerated terms in an attempt to guarantee their survival into posterity. The more impressive the image the body evokes in the mind, the deeper the traces it leaves on the memory and the greater the chances of its lingering in one’s mental inventio. Only a body capable of affecting the mind can leave mental vestigia behind which

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55 As indicated in the DOE, gist means ‘guest, stranger’ (cf. line 1799 of Beowulf) as well as ‘visitant, specifically referring to an alien, outlandish creature’ (cf. line 1437) and can be used in tandem with gæst ‘spirit, soul; demon’ to create wordplay. Interestingly, in Beowulf, the term ellengæst, a possible corruption of ellorgæst, means ‘alien spirit’ which emphasizes Grendel’s foreignness to the Danish Hall; likewise, Tristan is an outsider to the Cornish community.

56 The word inventio gave rise to two separate words in English: One is our word ‘invention’, meaning the ‘creation of something new,’ the other is ‘inventory’, referring to the ordered storage of many diverse materials (Carruthers, The Craft 11).
their recipient would care to retrace later. Such an impact could stem from the extraordinariness of the hero’s physicality, the exaggerated hideousness of the monster he masters or the extreme desirability of the land and women he conquers.\textsuperscript{57}

Despite the hero’s extra-ordinariness, in no way, is heroism synonymous with perfection. It is thus not at all surprising that our initial image of Aeneas should be one in which his limbs are weakened with fear (\textit{extemplo Aeneae solvuntur frigore membra}, Bk.I: 92), that Rustam should be prone to \textit{gourmandise} and drunkenness and Beowulf manifest indications of \textit{superbia}. Additionally, the heroic body tends to lack the ability to perform in its pure naked form and needs to be empowered by other means, including specific clothing, a horse and war-gear, examples of which shall be alluded to in the course of this chapter.

Seyld Scylding in \textit{Beowulf} distinguishes himself by conquering lands at a time when the nation was in desperate need of territorial integrity, while Beowulf stands out in terms of his mastery over monsters, during moments of crisis, when monstrous beings represent a threat to sustained human existence. A similar pattern separates Rivalin and his son Tristan in Gottfried’s poem, although, aside from his physical prowess, Tristan stands out on grounds of his multi-faceted artistic talents, which, as suggested by some scholars, including Walter Haug and Stephen Jaeger, is rooted in the new wave of humanism prevailing in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{58} In \textit{The Shahnameh}, the heroic qualities of heroes differ from one another depending on their ability to harness land masses and tackle monstrous creatures. However, once the heroic and kingship become incarnated in two distinct

\textsuperscript{57} Regardless of the affect of corporeal size on the \textit{memoria}, the heroes of old were generally believed to have been bigger and stronger. St. Augustine, for instance, referring to \textit{The Aeneid} (Bk. XII: 896–902) maintains that “[\textit{Vergil} is indicating that the earth normally produced larger bodies then. How much more, then, in the days when the world was newer, before that renowned and notorious flood!”) (\textit{significans maiora tunc corpora producere solere tellurem. Quanto magis igitur torpores recensioribus mundi ante illud nobile diffamatum diluvium!}, DCD XV: 9).

\textsuperscript{58} Jaeger bases most of his discussions surrounding Tristan on the humanistic trends which came to be known as ‘12\textsuperscript{th} century Renaissance’ (\textit{Medieval 3}) and Walter Haug has suggested the influence of the \textit{homo novus} concept brought forth in Allan de Lille’s \textit{Anticlaudianus} and the philosophy of love portrayed in \textit{Planctus Naturae} (\textquotedblleft Der \textit{Tristian}\textquotedblright 178).
bodies, the heroes define themselves by virtue of safeguarding the *farr*-bearing king, without whom, the Iranian nation is doomed.

1.1. *The Shahnameh*: Guardianship of *Farr*

What follows is based on my primary interest in the early parts of *The Shahnameh*, which deal with the history of the beliefs of ancient Iranians, rather than with history in the sense of events said to have actually taken place. So much is *The Shahnameh* based on popular belief that its rootedness in religious (in this case, ‘Zoroastrian’) traditions comes as no surprise.\(^{59}\) In fact, it so happens that the basis of the adventures of a number of the prominent heroes of the poem is present in ‘the hymns to ancient deities’ known as the *yashts*. As Arthur Christensen has postulated, “in these myths and legends arranged chronologically by the anonymous authors of the *yashts*, we have the core of the Iranian epic” (Ferdausi 20). Other influences, however, are said to be at work in the composition of *The Shahnameh*, though the end-result is an epic poem based on Ferdowsi’s own vision and creativity.\(^{60}\)

One other major difference between *The Shahnameh* and most western epics is its number of heroes. The multiplicity of its heroes has lent the work much colour and variety, although, it could be argued that, at times, this comes at the cost of character development. However, far from being an example of “the most luxurious forms of a tropical forest”, (99) an analogy which Jan de Vries applies to the Indian epic, the Iranian epic, despite the circularity of its heroes, in the sense that they go through similar cycles of life and death, follows a linearity in its mytho-historiographical accounts. It

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\(^{59}\) For a further explication on the significance of cosmology, refer to the “Epilogue”.  
\(^{60}\) Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh* is said to have been based on a Persian prose work which was compiled by the order of Abu Mansur ‘Abd al-Razzāq Tusi, a noble and contemporary of the poet. The work had been derived from Sasanian sources and incorporated the *Khwadāy-nāmag* (“Book of Lords”) which dealt with Iranian history from its beginnings to the end of Khosrow II’s reign (628 A.D.) and most likely compiled under Yazdgird III (631–651), the last Sasanian monarch (*The Cambridge History 3*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983): 359–60.
starts with the creation of the world and its originary man and king, Kīyūmars, and ends with the reign of the last Shah of the Sasanian empire. In the early stages, during which the earth is pristine and less hospitable, the heroic and the royal are embodied in the selfsame body and it is only later that the functions of kingship and heroism diverge into two different bodies.

*The Shahnameh* recounts the stories of fifty pre-Islamic kings, which accords with the translation of its title: ‘The Book of Kings’. The role of the kings is vital in Iranian society with regard to their embodiment of the concept of *farr (ah)/khvarnah* or ‘divine glory’, without which, they would lose their kingship and bring about misery to the Iranian nation. Given that Iran’s national history is intertwined with mythology and religion, it is not surprising that it should commence with the (hi)stories of a series of hero-kings. The differences between the etymological origins of the concept of kingship in the Iranian tradition and in Romance and Germanic cultures are also worth noting here. For, while in ancient Iranian lore, the king assumed absolute power and was directly linked to an empire, in Romance and Germanic traditions, the king was aligned with either being ‘straight’ [*rectus, hence ‘rex’*] or associated with his ‘sceptre’ [*contus, hence ‘cyning’/’könig’, etc.*]. The king’s pivotal role in *The Shahnameh* is quite comprehensible within this framework and so is the primary prerogative of the hero in the safeguarding of the ‘glory’ embodied in the figure of the king at the risk of his own life. Given the king’s association with the empire and his assumption of the same epithet, *vazraka* ['great’, *buzurg* in Modern Persian], which is applied to religious and warrior powers and the earth (cf. Benveniste 316–17), it is little wonder then that a discussion of the Ferdowsian hero, whose

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61 The fact that demonstrating military prowess in horsemanship, archery and using the spear were amongst the Achaemenid kings’ virtues (Brosius 34) hints at a conflation of heroic and royal qualities in the royal figure.

62 Emile Benveniste traces the roots of the Modern Persian *shāh* (‘king’) to the Old Persian *khshāy* (‘be master of, have at one’s disposal’), the Avestan *khshathra* (‘kingdom’) and also the Middle Iranian dialect of Sogdian, in which, *khwt‘w* corresponds to ‘he who is powerful by himself, he who holds power only from himself’, ultimately giving rise to the Modern Persian term *khodā* (‘God’). For more details regarding the differences distinguishing Iranian kingships from other forms of royalty, see, for example, Benveniste’s *Indo-European Language and Society*, Trans. Elizabeth Palmer (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1973): 305–77.
foremost task is the protection of the royal body, should be bound up with religiosity, bodily prowess and land. Yet, as shall be further discussed, the heroic body’s association with land goes beyond land per se to encompass plants and trees as well as animals, both those directly linked with the earth like cows and horses and more feral creatures such as wolves and leopards.

While in the early episodes of *The Shahnameh*, there exist hero-kings, rather than kings and heroes, in the ‘Firaidūn’ episode, during the reign of Firaidūn’s grandson, Manūchihr, heroic and royal bodies begin to split. The divergence of the royal and heroic can be traced back to the fratricide which leads to the death of Firaidūn’s son and Manūchihr’s grandfather, Iraj, whose sovereignty over Iran, had evoked the jealousy of his brothers. The struggle of the hero-kings to establish a foothold on a pristine planet and its concomitant battles with the demonic dīvs, who, in a way, enflesh land scourges, along with the contrasts separating worthy heroes from dastardly kings, help mark out the contours that define heroic ethos. Ultimately, despite the occasional blurriness of borderlines dividing the monstrous from the heroic, the heroic defines itself on the basis of contrasts and parallels as shall be demonstrated in the course of this study.

An example of the significance of contrasts comes to light right from the early sections of *The Shahnameh* in the episode of first hero-king, Kīyūmars, whose name is an altered form of the prototypical human in *The Avesta*, Gayo marətan/Gayomard (‘mortal life’). Here, Ferdowsi

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63 The ferocious feud between the Iranians and the Turanians, the descendents of Manūchihr’s great-uncle and Iraj’s jealous brother, Tur, starts during the reign of Manūchihr. For more details, see, for example: Ehsan Yarshater, “Iranian National History”, *Cambridge History of Iran: The Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian Periods 3* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983): 408–9.

64 For further details on the consequences of this fratricide, see, for example: Abbas Amanat, “Political Paradigms in the Story of Faridūn”, *Shahnama I*. Ed. Charles Melville (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, The Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, 2006): 49–70. Another watershed fratricide in *The Shahnameh* is Rustam’s death by his half-brother, Shaghād. Fratricide, though by means an exclusively eastern phenomenon, has been a rather common factor in changing the course of Persian dynasties, a prime example of which, is the murder of Barydia, son of Cyrus II (559–530 BCE.) at the hands of his real brother, Cambyses II (Brosius 12–7).

65 In *The Shahnameh*, in addition to being the first man, Kīyūmars, is depicted as the first king and is explicitly said to be bearing the royal farr (I. 22: 10). In *The Avesta*, Gayomard bears little resemblance to future humans in having equal height and breadth (*GBd*, II: 12). His death, along with that of the originary cow, Gāv aēvo dāto, leads to a cosmogenesis based on Zoroastrian scriptures.
contrasts Kīyūmars’s son, Sīyāmak with the dīv’s son. His use of the term bacheh (‘child’) highlights this contrast, for the fact that both are labelled as ‘children’ (bachcheh) directs our thoughts towards seeking out the differences that set the dīv bachcheh (‘dīv child’, I. 22: 22) and the shah bachcheh (‘king child’, I. 23: 29) apart. It is worth noting that even in The Avesta, the grandeur of the heroes is brought into relief by contrasting them with hideous monsters, an example of which, appears in the figures of the rain deity, Tishtrya, materialized in the figure of a ‘white horse with long hooves’ (GBd. VII: 6) and the demon, Apaosha, portrayed as a ‘black horse with clumsy hooves’ (GBd. VII: 8). As can be seen here, both are equine, which allows for a contrast in their colour and hooves. Strangely enough, while in heroic combats, it is usually the demon that is defeated, in Sīyāmak’s case, the ‘demon-child’ gains the upper hand leaving us wondering as to whether the ‘king-child’ was a hero after all. In any case, the task of taking vengeance is entrusted to the latter’s son, Hūshang.

One of the attributes marking Hūshang and his successor, Tahmūras, as heroes, is their ability to bring under their control, not only various animals, but also dīvs. While the former is likened to a ‘lion’ (I. 25:64), the latter becomes a man-horse in riding a dīv that has been transformed into a horse for thirty years. Significantly, drawing comparisons between heroes and animals is a recurring feature not only The Shahnameh, but also the other poems discussed in this study. In fact, C.M. Bowra has offered an explanation for this inherent characteristic of the epic hero in the following terms:

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66 I have identified the verses of Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh by specifying the volume, page number and verses of the Khaleghi-Motlagh edition. The rare instances where the Bertels’ edition has been used, I have indicated the volume and the page number.

67 Hūshang, according to The Avesta, is officially the first king of the mythical Pishdādian dynasty (cf. Dk. VII: 16) during which good has the upper hand over evil. The tenth-century compendium of Zoroastrian customs and beliefs, The Denkard, includes amongst his achievements, land cultivation, husbandry and destruction of ‘two-thirds of demons and seven ill-instructed ones of Aeshm [‘the dīv of wrath’]’ (VII: 16). The yashts confirm Hūshang’s sway over lands, dīvs and humans (Yt. 5: 20–23). In addition, Ferdowsi touches on Hūshang’s mastery over the animal kingdom, as he writes that he would use all creatures of suitable fur (cf. I. 31: 16).
Their peculiar drive and vigour explains why heroes are often compared to wild animals, as for instance, the Uzbek warriors are compared to lions, tigers, bears, leopards, wolves and hyenas, or Homeric warriors are compared to vultures, lions, boars, and the like, while Achilles himself is like some irresistible power of nature, compared in turn to a river in spate, a flaming star, a vulture swooping on its prey, a fire burning a wood or a city, an eagle dropping to seize a lamb or a kid. (*Heroic* 97)

*The Avesta*, an inspirational source in the composition of *The Shahnameh* also draws parallels between beasts and heroes. For example, the divinity associated with victory in Zoroastrianism, Verethragna, collaborates with the ‘lord’ (*ahura*) of covenants, Mithra, in the shape of a ‘boar’ (*varazahe*). In *The Avesta* we read that “Verethraghna, made by Ahura, runs opposing the foes in the shape of a boar, a sharp-toothed he-boar, a sharp-jawed boar, that kills at one stroke, pursuing, wrathful, with a dripping face; strong, with iron feet, iron fore-paws, iron weapons, an iron tail, and iron jaws” (*Yt.* 10: 70). It is to be noted that the *Beowulf*-poet has also drawn parallels between some minor heroic characters and a number of animals. However, in his case, the characters have taken on the name of the animals in mind, clear examples of which are two brothers, who are aptly named Eofor (‘boar’) and Wulf (‘wolf’) given that they ferociously slay the Swedish king, Ongentheow.68 In addition, as shall be shortly discussed, Tristan has been compared to a ‘boar’. While the bear and wolf are amongst animals with which heroes are compared in Western literature, in the East, heroes tend to be associated with tigers, lions and leopards.69 The significance of the cow, which can be sought in

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68 Anne Leslie Harris’s comment deserves mention, given the manner in which Ongentheow fell to Eofor when his helmet was split open: “When we remember that helmets are traditionally described as boar-decorated, that *eofor* is glossed not only as the animal itself but as the boar-decoration on the helmet and even as the helmet, then Eofor’s association not only with a warlike animal, like his brother Wulf, but with both military prowess and wargear is stressed” (419).

69 One source for images of beasts, especially dogs, as foster-parents and guardians in ancient Persian texts is Mahasti Ziai Afshar, *The Immortal Hound: The Genesis and Transformation of a Symbol in Indo-Iranian Traditions*
the originary cow of *The GBd*, is also not to be discounted, especially in the development of the first full-blown hero of *The Shahnameh*, Firaidūn.

As for Hūshang’s successor, Tahmūras, the parallels between man and animal become even more pronounced. *The Avesta* (Yt. 15.12; Yt. 19.29) and *The Denkard* (VII, 19) inform us that he rides the entire world on a dīv transformed into a horse for thirty years, in a way, creating a man-horse/dīv entity. Ferdowsi incorporates the aforementioned myth into his poem: ‘Making use of magic he went to bind the devil (*Ahrīman*) and sat on him as if he were a swift steed (*bāregi*)’ (I. 36: 27). The ‘thirty years’ is mentioned by Ferdowsi within the broader context of his overall supremacy over the dīvs in general (I. 37: 45). Spiegel has, however, suggested a possible etymology for ‘Tahmūras’, which links him to the ‘fox’ or ‘weasel’, in that the hero’s original name being *Takhmo urupa*, could mean ‘brave fox/weasel’ (I, 516).

In addition to their animalistic traits, Ferdowsi refers to both Tahmūras and Hūshang as *jahāndār* (*possessor of the world*, I. 29:1; I. 37:35), a term which hints at their ability to maintain order over a world yet in its infancy. The movement of the human body beyond its natural confines by bringing under control the surrounding flora and fauna could be read as marker of heroism. The use of animal skin by Hūshang and the harnessing of the latent knowledge of the dīvs by Tahmūras and later on, the dīvs’ immense energy by Jamshīd to construct monuments, are in line with replacing chaos with order, barbarism with civilization and can be interpreted as heroic undertakings. A similar gesture is evident in the ‘Hunting’ episode in Gottfried’s poem, where Tristan replaces the barbaric hunting style of the Cornish men with his own version which combines art with culture. In these cases, the

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70 Interestingly, the prefix *takhmō*, indicating ‘strength’ and ‘bravery’, later on, appears in other names in the poem including Rustam’s nickname, *Tahamtan* and the mother of his son Suhrab, *Tahmīneh*.

71 Jamshīd is modelled on the Avestan figure, Yima, who is said to have built a subterranean enclosure (cf. Vd. 2; Yt. 19:31–38) and *The Denkard* (VII: 20–24) to safeguard the chosen stock from a cataclysmic cold, the equivalent of the Deluge in Christianity. Monument construction, as demonstrated in *Beowulf*, is another indicator of heroism in of itself.
hero expands his reach over nature and, in a way, transcends mere bodily confines to make way for
civilization. This accords well with Elaine Scarry’s belief that “Every act of civilization is an act of
transcending the body in a way consonant with the body’s needs: in building a wall […] one
overcomes the body, projects oneself out beyond the body’s boundaries but in a way that expresses
and fulfills the body’s need for stable temperatures” (57).

Aligned with both territorial conquest and mastery over monsters is gaining possession of women
which can translate into hypermasculinity, power and heroism. It should be noted that the dominant
discourse of The Shahnameh is undoubtedly patriarchal, since, while women are absent from the early
episodes of the poem, when they do eventually make their appearance, they are associated with the
monstrous and tend to disappear from the scene as soon as they have brought forth a male heir. It is
only later when the monstrous Zahhāk captures Jamshīd’s throne that we learn of the presence of
women in the figure of the latter’s two beautiful sisters [according to some accounts, his two
daughters] (I. 55: 6–8). The two sisters, Shahnāz and Arnavāz, described in The Avesta as those who
are ‘of a very beautiful figure’, and those ‘who are the most wonderful in the world’ (Yt. 5: 34), turn
into objects of desire in The Shahnameh. The same quality of desirability is attached to Isolde in
Gottfried’s Tristan and renders her possession a sign of heroism, yet it leads to her idealization rather
than demonization. In the reign of the three-headed dragon-king, Zahhāk, whose millennial reign of
horror and cannibalism contrasts with Jamshīd’s lengthy golden-age rule, the conquest of the two
sisters clearly falls into the same power dynamics associated with territorial expansions. Once Zahhāk

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72 It is worth noting that misogynistic comments are interspersed throughout The Shahnameh. For example,
Rustam’s maternal grandfather, Mehrāb, who has his own misgivings towards his daughter’s marriage to the Iranian
hero Zāl, upon throwing his wife, Sindokht to the ground, says: “Unto me was said that once a daughter is born, she
ought to be beheaded upon birth/ Failing to slaughter her, I turned my back on the ancestral custom and now thus do
I reap the reward for it” (I. 217: 793–94). It could, however, be argued that by putting these words into an Arab’s
mouth, Ferdowsi is merely portraying a bleak picture of a non-Iranian and his customs, as happens to be the case
with the king of Yemen who is reluctant to allow his three daughters to marry the three sons of the Iranian hero-king
Firaidūn, who is quoted as saying: “He, who has no daughter, lives under auspicious stars should he have one, he
has no shining star” (I. 53 in the Bertels’ (Moscow-)edition).
is overpowered by Firaidūn, the latter’s heroic victory is marked by not only his mastery of lands, but also of the two sisters. This is crystallized in the fact that, upon the simultaneous liberation of land and women, the hitherto childless Shahhāz and Arnavāz, bear the hero, three sons. Yet, Firaidūn’s heroic qualities go beyond his possession and release of the two sisters as, like many other Shahnameh-heroes, animalistic features are attributed to him.

While Hūshang and Tāhmūras are likened to wild beasts, Firaidūn’s extraordinariness, which ultimately marks him out as a hero can be sought in elements of mirabilia, particularly since he is nursed by the multicoloured cow Bormāyeh (I. 63: 126) and not his biological mother, Farānak. In fact, Firaidūn continues to maintain his ties with the bovine species well into advanced age as he is said to ride a cow on hunting expeditions and use a bull-headed mace as his main weapon. There seems to have been a reason behind Ferdowsi’s choice of a cow as Firaidūn’s marvelous nurse versus another animal such as a wolf, as was the case of not only the founder of the Roman empire, Romulus, but also Zoroaster himself. Indeed, Bormāyeh is reminiscent of the originary cow, Gāv aēvo dāto, from whose dismemberment the entire animal species of the world are formed in The GBd (X) and also looks forward to the wondrous nurse of the hero Zāl, the legendary bird, Sīmurgh. The superhuman powers manifested later on by both heroes (though, in the case of Zāl, most are transposed onto his son, Rustam) could, in part, be attributed to their monstrous foster-mothers.

Firaidūn is doubly marvelous in view of his possession of farr as is clear in the following description: “He grew like an upright cypress from all around him emanated the royal glory/A world-explorer he was, with the glory of Jamshīd in his manner, similar to the shining sun” (I. 62: 110–11).

74 For further details on Firaidūn’s bovine associations, see, for example: Ahmad Taffazoli, ‘Feredun,’ Elr and Parvaneh Pourshariati, Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire (London: I.B. Tauris 2008): 373–74.
75 Given the daevic (evil) nature of wolves in Zoroastrianism, Boyce finds the association of Zoroaster with a she-wolf to be awkward and an ‘alien’ legend, possibly having “evolved in late Parthian or Sasanian times under the influence of the legend of Romulus and Remus” (A History, 279, n. 9).
In the twelfth-century historical work *Tārikh-i Tabaristān* ['History of Tabarestān’], Ibn-i Isfandiyār, also evokes the sun in reference to times when Firaidūn was riding a cow “one would think that from the reflection of the heavenly bodies on earth another sun is rising from Taurus” (57). It is worth mentioning that comparing the hero to the sun is not specific to Firaidūn or Jamshīd and occurs in Western literature as well. In Gottfried’s poem for instance, Tristan’s father, Rivalin and the heroine Isolde are likened to the sun. Moreover, such grand comparisons take place in line with endowing the heroes and heroines with larger-than-life aspects in an attempt to allow them to impress themselves upon the mind of the readers.

Firaidūn, the first somewhat round character of *The Shahnameh*, in addition to being associated with elements of *mirabilia*, heavenly bodies and dragon-slaying, is identified with land cultivation and territorial affairs, which makes perfect sense given the significance of land in Iranian mythology. Firaidūn, in being aligned with a tree (I. 76: 334; 78: 371) and a cloud (I. 78: 376), is clearly associated with fertility. In fact, what, Abbas Amanat refers to as a “naturalistic reading of the [Firaidūn] myth” (52), is highlighted in his release of the two sisters Shahnāz and Arnavāz, which allows these women, who had been barren at Zahhāk’s court to bear three sons. The following excerpt from *The Shahnameh* showcases an example of how Firaidūn circles around the world to restore areas that have been affected by destruction:

> Henceforth Firaidūn circled the world
> he wandered and saw what was manifest and hidden

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76 *Shahnameh*-researcher, Shahrukh Meskūb in his readings of the Jamshīd and Firaidūn episodes, has come to see in the former, the founder of time in Iranian mythology, and in the latter, the father of geography. For further details, refer to: “Zamān u Sarnivisht” [*Time and Fate*], *Iran Nameh* 20 (1981): 3–32.

77 *The Denkard* confirms Firaidūn’s attempts at washing away evil from Khvaniras, the central region of the known universe, which according to Zoroastrian sources, is as large as the six other existing ‘regions’ (*keshvars*) combined (Dk.VII: 26).
whatever injustice he witnessed
whatever region or land he saw uncultivated
he turned every evil into goodness
in a manner befitting the kings
he ornamented the world like paradise
in place of herbs, he planted cypresses and rose-bushes (I. 91–2: 40–43)\(^78\)

Firaidūn’s territorial powers also become evident when we hear of his division of lands amongst his three sons. It is land that lies at the root of the death of his youngest and most eligible son, Iraj, bringing about the disruption of the oneness of heroic and royal entities. With the murder of Iraj at the hands of his brothers Salm and Tur in their desire to own the choice territory Iran, allotted by their father to Iraj, a rift is formed between heroic and royal bodies. Meanwhile, during the reign of Iraj’s grandson and avenger, Manūchihr, himself a great cultivator of land (Dk. VII: 30), the historia of the Iranian nation undergoes a dramatic change in that kings take a backstage to heroes.

We hear of the champions of the ‘Sīstān Circle’ starting with Sām during Manūchihr’s reign. The fact that these champions hail from the remote outpost of Sīstān, formerly known as Sakastān, the land of the Sakas or Scythians, highlights the peripheral geography of the heroes. It becomes further clear that heroes, similar to their prototypical adversaries, the monsters, reside on the peripheries and tend to venture into the centre only at times of turmoil. The monstrosities of the heroes of the ‘Sīstān Circle’ articulate themselves beyond geography into biology. Sām’s son, Zāl, the father of The Shahnameh’s greatest hero, Rustam, for example, is born with white hair: ‘his face was as beautiful as

\(^78\) از آن پس فریدون به گرد جهان
هر آن چیز که راه بیداد دید
چنانک از ره پادشاهان سرد
به جای گیا سرو گلای بکشت
the sun though his hair was all white’ (I. 164: 47). His white hair, that one marker of difference, renders him monstrous in the eyes of his father, Sām, who likens him to ‘the Devil’s child’ (bachcheh-yi Ahrīman) (I. 166: 63) and decides to expose the infant lest he himself should fall into shame. Thus, the child, who, on grounds of his white hair is called Zāl (‘albino’), is taken to the highest peak of Mount Alborz and raised by the legendary bird, Sīmurgh.\(^79\) In his early youth, Zāl ventures on an expedition to the land of the Hindus (I. 182: 267) which takes him to Kabul (I.182: 270) where he meets, King Mihrāb, one of Zahhāk’s descendents. It is worth noting that Hindūstan (‘India’) and Kabul, similar to the India and Ethiopia of medieval Europe, more than cartographical entities, represent otherworldly territories. It is in Kabul that Zāl’s love for Mihrāb’s daughter, Rūdābeh, poses a dilemma indicated in the following line: ‘From this bird-nursling and dīv-born what say you, what kind of creature will be born?’ (I. 208: 665). As both Zāl and Rūdābeh bear seeds of monstrosities, there is fear for the outcome of their physical union, obviously not without reason, since their son, Rustam is described as being the product of the two elements of water and fire (I. 209: 671).\(^80\) The combination of water and fire, in being two disparate elements, spells disaster and invokes horror, a manifestation of which comes to the fore, for example, in the description of the mere in Grendel’s habitat in \textit{Beowulf}: “There each night can be seen a fearful wonder: fire on the flood’ (þær mæg nihta gehwæm niðwundor seon,/ fyr on flode, lines 1364–65b). David Williams makes an interesting observation within this context:

\(^79\) Again, Ferdowsi is drawing on ancient Persian lore by according ‘the great Saēna bird’ (maregho saeno) of The Avesta (Yt. 14:41) from which the Sīmurgh takes its name, a major role in the poem. The Saēna is conceived of as a huge falcon, ‘which has its perch on the Tree of All Seeds or of All Healing’ (Yt. 12:17) and which by its great weight and the beating of its wings breaks the twigs of this tree and scatters its seeds, which wind and rain then carry over the earth’ (Boyce, \textit{A History} 88–89). While in the yashts, the Saēna ensures the survival of all creatures on the earth, the Sīmurgh of The Shahnameh, guarantees the survival of the Iranian nation’s heroes, who in turn protect its kings. Moreover, it is also worth noting that Fariuddin Attar (c.1142– c.1220) in his masterpiece, \textit{The Conference of the Birds} (1177), plays on the pun associated with ‘Sīmurgh’, which in addition to referring to the legendary bird of Persian lore could literally mean sī (thirty) + morgh (bird[s]).

\(^80\) The association of Rustam with fire and water along with protection of the farr has led a number of scholars to draw parallels between him and the water deity, ‘Apām Napāt’, literally ‘Son of the Waters’, but linked to the fire-god Agni because according to ancient Indian thinkers water held fire within itself. See, for example: Mary Boyce, \textit{Apām Napāt}, 149; Davidson, \textit{Comparative Literature} 79).
In the system of the four elements, each element possessed a certain charge and existed in relation to the other elements in a dynamic of harmony and opposition. Fire and air existed in harmonious relation to each other, just as did earth and water, and so these elements, although separate, could share proximity; this harmony had its expression in the physical structure of the cosmos, in which air and fire were found together “above,” and earth and water were bound together “below.” Fire and water, however, being binary opposites, were forever divided: they were never to unite except in catastrophe. (*Deformed* 178)

Similarly, a union between Zāl and Rūdābeh presages a ‘catastrophe’ so much so that Sām consults astrologists to look into their future before he acquiesces to their marriage. The astrologists assure him that the two will turn into ‘two auspicious equals’ (*du farrukh hamāl*, I. 209: 677) and ‘a formidable lion’ (*shīri zhīān*, line 678) will be born. In fact, the most conspicuous marker of Rustam’s monstrosity figures in his gigantism, a feature evoking both awe and terror. He is so huge that Rūdābeh would not have been able to give birth to him without the surgery performed by the Sīmurgh. Even as an infant, Rustam evokes a sense of wonder in men and women who have never heard of such an elephant-bodied infant (line 1476).\(^{81}\) Paradoxically, however, his gigantism accompanied by gluttony, evocative of the monstrous, seems to enhance his heroic aspect.\(^{82}\) As Stephen Bandy has posited, “Gigantism is a sign of power; and although power usually corrupts, that is not necessarily the case. The question is, rather, how the power is used” (239).

Like most other heroes, Rustam, despite his immense physical powers, is associated, amongst other animals, with a horse. He and his horse Rakhsh forge an inextricable bond; hence, any heroic accomplishment on Rakhsh’s side could be interpreted as a success for Rustam himself. In fact, it is

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\(^{81}\) In some *Shahnameh* versions, Rustam is said to have conquered an elephant while still a mere child. However, Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh excludes this section from his edition of the poem considering it to be a later addition. For further information, refer to: *I Notes*, 323.

\(^{82}\) Rustam’s gluttony will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4.
as if their two bodies have been intertwined to form a new body, which Dean Miller labels as a ‘horse-man’ (74). Later on, Rustam himself admits to Rakhsh’s role in his success during the ‘Seven Trials’ (V, 353: 735). J.J. Cohen’s following assessment of the importance of the horse for the hero of romance holds true for Rustam: “The perfected manhood that chivalry represented was enabled only through the lovely dispersal of selfhood across and into the body of the horse. This assemblage, which commixes the animal and the human, the organic and the inorganic, illustrates well the limits of the body for the medieval and the postmodern period” (The Inhuman 167). In the course of the ‘Seven Trials’, during which, Rustam has to validate himself as the ‘world hero’ (jahān pahlavān) Rakhsh’s function clearly comes to the fore in the course of the ‘Seven Trials’, where it is he who conquers the lion in the ‘First Trial’ and it is he, who, in the ‘Third Trial’, signals the arrival of the dragon. A man-horse pattern is also observed in Tristan in the hero’s fights with both the dragon and the giant Urgan, in which, his horse becomes a prime target of the enemy with the aim of unmanning Tristan.

As mentioned earlier, the delineation of challenges facing heroes from the side of weak kings is another poetic means of highlighting heroic valour. The contrast between a worthy hero and incompetent king is nowhere as conspicuous as it is between Rustam and Kay Kāvūs, whose rash advance on Mazandarān brings about the necessity of the ‘Seven Trials’. The difference in valour of the hero and king becomes particularly marked in light of the fact that both Rustam and Kay Kāvūs are at a liminal stage in their lives when they set off to the tabooed territory of Mazandarān on starkly different grounds. While the newly-appointed king, Kay Kāvūs, falls for the dīv in disguise, who sings songs of praise of his homeland Mazandarān, the hero-to-be Rustam moves in the same direction, yet, on an expedition encapsulating a series of rites de passage aimed at his heroic

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83 The Aeneid highlights the importance of ‘horses’ in combat quite clearly. One of the many instances that appear in Vergil’s poem is Aeneas’s targeting Mezentius’s horse first, so that he can bring the opposing hero down, as he ‘throws a lance between the war-horse’s hollow temples’ (inter/ bellatoris equi cava tempora conicit hastam, Bk. X, lines 890–91). Celtic hero, Cuchulainn’s horse, Grey of Macha and El Cid’s horse, Babieca are two examples of heroic horses.
initiation, with the aim of saving the foolhardy king. Victor Turner maintains how these “rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age” (The Ritual 94) are centered on ‘liminality’ and lie at the heart of heroism.\(^{84}\) Despite the foolhardiness of the Iranian king, were it not for the ‘Seven Trials’, Rustam would not become worthy of the epithet ‘crown-bestower’ (\(tāj-bakhsh\)) (II. 28: 375), an office, potentially, worthier than kingship itself.\(^{85}\) Without Rustam, the king is powerless. Similar dynamics, as shall be seen below, are at play with regard to the relationship between King Mark and his heroic nephew, Tristan.

1.2. Tristan: The Artist-Warrior

Heroism, as observed in The Shahnameh, is defined on the basis of contrasts and parallels. In addition to contrasting heroes with monsters to bring out their grandeur, heroes are also juxtaposed against weak rulers whose legitimacy to reign is questioned in the face of their incapacity to take action. So is the case with Tristan, whose feats safeguard the Cornish nation, while the king of Cornwall, Mark looks on in fear and trepidation. The contrast between the hero and a weak king in Tristan takes on further dynamics given the avuncular bonds between the two figures forming a parallel with the avuncular bonds between Isolde and her uncle, the gigantic Morold, whose defeat at the hands of Tristan marks the latter’s entrance into manhood and ultimately his inextricable ties with the heroine, Isolde.

\(^{84}\) The stage of liminality in this episode of The Shahnameh, in which the new king and hero-to-be find themselves, is concretized in a ‘sturdy tree’ (metaphorically, ‘the old father’) and the ‘offshoots’ (metaphorically, ‘offspring’) that might either wither away or leave their place of origin to form a new branch (see II. 3: 1–10). The close association between ‘liminality’ and ‘rites of passage’, comes to the fore in Victor Turner’s renaming of the three phases of the rites of passage, namely: ‘separation’, ‘transition’ and ‘reincorporation’ as ‘preliminal, liminal and postliminal’ (On the Edge 159).

\(^{85}\) The Shahnameh goes on to further highlight the contrasts between the worthy hero, Rustam and the unworthy king, Kay Kavūs, an example of which appears in the wake of Rustam’s defeat of the lesser hero Tus, whom the king had assigned to seize the hero (see II. 147: 355–60). Here, by referring to himself as the ‘strong crown-bestowing lion’ (\(نشر آورن تاج بخش\)), Rustam reminds the weak king of the ‘Seven Trials’, in the course of which, he was initiated as a hero and became worthy of the epithet ‘crown-bestower’.
Tristan’s love for Isolde complicates the role of ‘honour’ (êre) in the poem. Not only does Tristan and Isolde’s love affair pose a barrier to the full enactment of êre, but also the incompatibility of their love with ‘marriage’ (ehe) marks a challenge to the Arthurian model (Haug, Eros 66) predicated on ‘honour’ itself. When investigating the concept of heroism in Tristan, it is essential to bear in mind that despite its Arthurian undertones, echoed in Gottfried’s minnegrotte episode (lines 16861; 16900) and existing parallels between Tristan and Arthur in the Thomas version, especially, manifest in both heroes fight giants who demand the beards of kings and heroes, Tristan is no typical Arthurian romance. While Arthurian literature emphasizes the conformity of the knights of the round-table, Tristan stresses the role of the individual versus society. Yet, despite the discrepancies existing between Tristan and the typical romance-hero, similar to the Arthurian knight, he does go on to confront a series of aventiure.

Etymologically, the MHG aventiure (OFr. avanture; Modern English ‘adventure’) comes from the Latin adventus, which indicates a ‘coming’ (ventus) ‘toward’ (ad) and takes on deeper semantic layers as it enters the realm of romance literature to turn into a touchstone of heroism. Jacques Le Goff posits that “the courtly hero is more in quest of an advent (beginning) than an event. Similar to the hero of (Vladimir) Propp’s Morphology of Folktales, similar to Christ, he leaves his family — that is the court of King Arthur — and goes on an adventure, not with the aim of getting lost, rather with the purpose of finding himself” (Préface xvi). The quest for the self constitutes a distinguishing
characteristic of the romance hero as he sets out to seek, what John Stevens calls “‘trouthe’, loyalty to the Ideal Self” (75). Chrétien de Troyes brilliantly puts forth the complexity of the term, when he has Calogrenant, a knight of the Round Table and Ivain’s cousin, tell the gigantic Herdsman, who he is:

Je sui, ce voiz, uns chevaliers
Qui quier ce, que trouver ne puis;
Assez ai quis et rien ne truis.’
‘Et que voldroies tu trover?’
‘Avantures por esprover
Ma proesce et mon hardemant’

[“I am, as you see, a knight who searches for what I cannot find; I have searched long and have found nothing.” “And what would you want to find?” “Avantures (adventures) to prove my prowess and my courage”] (II. 358–63)

His response, termed “a classic definition of chivalric romance” (Stevens 107), sheds light on the *raison d’être* behind the quests embarked upon by the hero of romance. In fact, the original meaning of the OHG term *rītan*, from which *ritter*, ‘knight’, takes its name, as Joachim Bumke maintains, is not so much ‘to sit on the horse’, but ‘to move oneself forward, to travel’ and only in a secondary sense, does it signify ‘to move oneself forward on a horse, to ride. Bumke notes that the English verb ‘ride’ has only an incidental connection with the horse and that the German verb *reiten*, meaning to ride is originally related to the terms ‘travel’ (*Reise*) and the English word ‘road’ (69). It is in ‘travel’ that Tristan and his father, Rivalin cross paths as they both get to experience the customs prevailing over another land and simultaneously the love of a woman. The importance of spatial movement is also aligned with hunting, an indispensable skill in which the prototypical hero excels. Significantly, in *Tristan*, heroic travels fall within the paradigm of the Celtic *imram*-motif, which calls for the hero’s ‘haphazard travel’ (*vart nach wâne*) or a sea-voyage into the unknown, which is not surprising in view of the Celtic origins of the *Tristan*-tale. However, as Rüdiger Krohn explains, Gottfried has

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89 Only with the introduction of agriculture which followed hunting by numerous centuries did the procurement of nourishment shift from being mobile to sedentary.
somewhat modified this ancient theme, making Tristan’s travel, planned and plausible, since it is explicitly the aid of Queen Isolde that he seeks (252).

What distinguishes Gottfried’s *Tristan* from the other two primary works of this study is that love, only vaguely present in *Beowulf* and *The Shahnameh*, becomes the driving-force for both of its main heroes: Rivalin and his son, Tristan, as it problematizes their knightly performance in similar ways. The story of Tristan’s parents Rivalin and Blanchefleur, prefigures the love of Tristan and Isolde. In both cases, the outstanding physical prowess displayed by the male hero evokes a strong sense of desire in the most coveted female of the realm, which leads to a transformation in the hero. The two heroes distinguish themselves in ways similar to those of the first hero of *Beowulf*, Scyld Scefing, who is defined by the lands he controls and Beowulf whose power lies in monster-slaying. Tristan faces off against a colorful array of mostly monstrous adversaries, whereas Rivalin’s one and only foe in the poem remains a Breton by the name of Morgan, who is, in hierarchical terms, his superior (lines 331-4). While for Rivalin heroism is closely bound to land-ownership and public displays of strength, for Tristan, it is linked with not only his ability to conquer monsters, but also his classical learning. He is more of a *chevalier-errant* than a full-fledged knight who thrives on jousts, bohorts and pageantry and as noted by McDonald, although the *ritterschefte* associated with Tristan (line 18442) “recalls his father’s feats of arms, the ancestral vision is too faint to make of Tristan a second Rivalin. […] There is no shaping of Tristan into an Arthurian hero” (264).

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90 For further details, see Danielle Buschinger, “Gottfried’s Adaptation of the Story of Rivalin & Blanchefleur” (New York: Campden House, 2003): 73–85. Buschinger highlights some interesting similarities and differences between the heroes and heroines of both love-affairs.

91 William C. McDonald also points out the “Arthurian” values possessed by Rivalin accounting for his lack of humility and wisdom: “[Rivalin’s] capacity for self-deception, borne of pride, creates a perspective by which to measure Tristan’s own system of values. As a type of romance hero, Rivalin is the parodic formal exemplar for his scion; Tristan’s progress will thus be measured by his distance from the conventional chivalric ideal. (Tristan’s career urges the view that the hero is a possessor of chivalry, but the dictates of chivalry that he applies show regard for individual rights in preference to a societal code.)” (244). Moreover, Danielle Buschinger calls Tristan’s ability to reflect upon his unexpected landing on Cornwall “uncommon in a fourteen-year-old boy”, and concludes that given Rivalin’s rashness and imprudence, he proves to be an ‘antitype’ to his son (81).
Despite their differentiations, there is no denying that both Rivalin and his son are specimens of masculine beauty. Yet, while with Rivalin heroism is more about the exterior and performative abilities, with Tristan the emphasis shifts as much, if not more, towards his inner talents than his physical aspects. Rivalin, through the lens of female gaze, is described in the following glowing terms:

«seht» sprâchen sî «der jungelinc
der ist ein saeliger man:
wie saeleclîche stêt im an
allez daz, daz er begât!
wie gâr sîn lip ze wunsche stât!
wie gânt im só gelîche in ein
diu sîniu keiserlichen bein!
wie rehte sîn schilt z’aller zît
an sîner stat gelîmet lît!
wie zimet der schaft in sîner hant!
wie wol stât allez sîn gewant!
wie stât sîn houbet und sîn hâr!
wie süeze ist aller sîn gebâr!
wie saeleclîche stât sîn lip!

[‘Look!’ they (the ladies) said, ‘what a heavenly young man that is! Everything he does, how divinely it becomes him! What a perfect body he has! How evenly those magnificent legs of his move together! How tightly his shield stays glued in its place! How well the spear-shaft graces his hand! How elegant all his robes! How noble his head and hair! How charming his whole bearing! What a divine figure he makes!’]

That shapely and sturdy legs were an indication of masculinity has been confirmed by recent research of the Middle Ages. As Elke Brüggen has remarked, women’s garments would reach the floor, whereas men’s extended part of the way down the leg, and as the leg coverings fit closely, men’s legs were clearly visible. Therefore, shapely legs came to be regarded as a

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92 As noted by my supervisor, Jill Ross, the description offered by Gottfried presents a reversal of the descriptio prescribed in rhetorical manuals where the poet takes his starting-point from the head of the character in mind and not the legs (cf. Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Poetria Nova III. 563). This could have to do with the significance of shapely legs in projecting a masculine image of the male character as discussed in further detail in the following footnote.
hallmark of masculine beauty (cf. pps. 104; 114). Interestingly, later on in the poem, Tristan is noted for the beauty of his legs when he first appears at Mark’s court:

\[
\text{sîne vüeze und sîniu bein,}
\text{dar an sîne schoene almeistic schein,}
\text{diu stuonden só ze prise wol,}
\text{als man’z an manne prisen sol.}
\]

[His feet and legs (in which his beauty most appeared) deserved such praise as a man may give a man] (lines 3341–4)

For Gottfried, the interior and exterior contribute to the making of the hero. Gottfried’s own reference to a contemporaneous poet, Hartmann von Aue, who is intent on ‘adorning his tales through and through with words and sense, both outside and within’ (lines 4622–25), brings home this point. In the ‘abduction’ scene, for example, it is only after Tristan has manifested his intellectual and linguistic skills (by playing chess and speaking to the merchants in their own tongue) that the merchants decide to abduct him. His good looks are acknowledged (cf. line 2241) after Gottfried remarks that Tristan spoke in their language which ‘next to none in those parts knew’ (\textit{die lützel ieman kunde dâ}, line 2237).

As Gottfried contrasts hand-made clothes, with clothes we are born in, it becomes clear that Tristan need not worry about ‘cultivating’ (\textit{werden}) his ‘appearance’ the way the likes of Mark would,

\footnote{I thank Professor Markus Stock for pointing out to me a similar image of masculinity delineated by Wolfram von Eschenbach in his presentation of Parzival’s father, Gahmuret:

\[
\text{Wir sollten hier nicht übersehen,}
\text{wie ihr Herr sich präsentierte,}
\text{berittne Fiedler neben ihm:}
\text{es hatte dieser Held ein Bein}
\text{vor seinem Sattel aufgelegt,}
\text{Stiefelchen an nackten Beinen.}
\]

[Let us not lose sight, now, of how their lord has made his entry! Fiddlers were riding at his side. Then the noble warrior cocked one leg in front of him on his horse, a pair of light summer boots drawn over his bare legs] (Bk II. 63).}
as it is an inner — not an outer — sense of nobility, ‘Noblesse’ (wolgemuot) that ‘dignifies’ (werdet) his life and living:


And so let them lead Tristan to court and to the jousting ring, in all his gear the replica of his companions, equally trim and fine – in the clothes, I mean that were sewn by the hand of man; not in those that we are born with, which come for the wardrobe of the heart, which go by the name of ‘Noblesse’, which make a man light-hearted and dignify life and living: such clothes were not given to the companions in the same measure as the lord.

Clothes are not a signifier to the real worth of human beings and despite all the variations on the theme of clothes, the inner qualities of man are Gottfried’s major concern. Clothes are mere tools in the hands of the hero, by means of which he enhances his inherent strengths. Unattractive the clothes may be, but not the body of the distinguished man. Gottfried valorizes both body and its integumenta, though as it becomes clear in the course of the narrative, the man within the clothes has the final say:

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94 James A. Schultz’s essay, “Clothing and Disclosing: Clothes, Class, and Gender in Gottfried’s Tristan”, Tristania 17 (1996): 111–23, for example, in which he negates Roland Barthes’s emphasis on the body’s dependence on clothes for signification, is an interesting take on the role of clothes in the poem.
It is especially significant for Tristan to be glorified at this point in the poem, where he is about to emerge as a man and a hero. His hand-to-hand combat against Morold lies at the heart of the *rites de passage*, the ‘transition,’ which comes in the wake of a phase of ‘separation’, only to be followed by ‘reincorporation’ (Turner, *The Ritual* 94). The mere fact that Morold, an incarnation of savage masculinity, agrees to take him on as an opponent going so far as to ensure his success by poisoning the tip of his sword, is in itself an indication of his entrance into manhood. Pierre Bourdieu’s observations on the dynamics of honour in the Kabyle society are applicable within this context:

To issue a challenge to someone is to acknowledge his manliness, an acknowledgement which is the prerequisite of any dialogue as well as of the challenge of honour as the prelude to the dialogue; it is to acknowledge in him also the dignity of a man of honour, since challenge, as such, requires a riposte and consequently is addressed to a man thought capable of playing the game of honour and of playing it well. (197)

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95 Another example appears in Gottfried’s comments on Rual’s impressive figure despite his threadbare clothes (lines 4028–50). Moreover, Isolde’s admiration for Tristan’s ‘person’ (*lîp*) (see lines 1009–32) takes place, while he is sitting naked in a bath.

96 In all versions, Tristan’s encounter with Morold marks the former’s emergence as a hero. However, while Eilhart treats it as the proving ground of a young hero, Thomas treats it mainly as a political combat between the representatives of two peoples and Gottfried as a battle between good and evil (cf. Ferrante, *The Conflict* 28).

97 As Claude Lecouteux suggests Morold is a form of giant indicated in the way he is described in line 5873: “Môrolt der sêre starke” (“Morold the very strong one”): “The nickname that (the giant) carries is usually ‘The Strong One’ and this feature remains even when the authors have all gigantism of the character disappear: Morold is named such; he has the power of four men…” (33).
It is in the wake of his fight against Morold that Tristan, described earlier as ‘untried’ (*unversuocht*, line 6190), emerges as a man and a hero. Gottfried elaborately sets the scene for his initiation in a sophisticated portrayal of Tristan’s donning of combat attire and description of weaponry. What follows, offers a glimpse of a fascinating sense of harmony between man and his armory, which lacks any parallel in the other two works of this study indicating the differences noted earlier in the stages of civilization, especially Rustam’s primitive combat attire:

[A shield was sent for, too, on which an accomplished hand lavished all its industry. It had a silver sheen all over, to match it with the helmet and the chain-mail. It had been burnished again and again and embellished with a luster like that of a new mirror! A Boar had been cut out over it most skillfully from coal-black sable. This weapon, too, his uncle hung round him, and it suited the splendid man and fitted his side as if had been glued there, then and on all occasions.]

In addition, all parts of the *integumenta* form an organic whole as the shield matches with the helmet and the chain-mail (*durch daz er einbaere/ helm unde ringen waere*, lines 6609–10), which projects an image of flawlessness in having ‘a luster like that of a new mirror’ (*mit lûtere gezieret/ reht also*...
Karina Kellermann describes the harmony in the scene, as follows:

Before the Morold-fight Gottfried gives rise to the knightly ideal in the figure of Tristan, whose exterior appearance, he harmonizes with the inner qualities. When Gottfried so minutely describes how Tristan makes his body as a whole into a radiant unit which reflects the inner value of a knight as he equips himself with chain-armour such as a helmet, shield, chain-mail, he is thereby constructing an artificial body of a knight. (150)

The heroic image is clearly based on some artificiality without which the hero would fall short of the standards of hypermasculinity that help establish his identity. The an-legen formulation, from which Stephen Jaeger deduces that the process is a kind of ‘statue trimming’ ceremony, can be viewed within a similar context of constructedness. As Jaeger points out, the shield is not handed over or given to Tristan, but rather draped or set in place. Moreover, he finds the shield’s blackness ‘an obvious antithesis to the whiteness of the ensemble’, taking note of the ‘well-known emblematic value’ of the boar’: ‘brutish sensuality’ (Medieval 119). A. T. Hatto sees in the emblem of the boar, a prefiguration of a dream that Isolde’s steward, Marjodoc, has of a boar raging through King Mark’s court, leaving a trail of havoc behind and ultimately befouling his bed linens (lines 13511–36) (356).99

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98 Also in the Thomas version of Tristan, the first image of Tristran the Dwarf, which is paradoxically positive, is marked by the sameness of the ‘tincture’ (teint) of his equipment including his lance, pennant and cognizance (Fin de Poème: ll. 919–920). Interestingly, the Yashts of The Avesta highlight the significance of the sameness of the colour of the white horses that are drawing the goddess Ardevira Anahita and the ‘ahura’ (lord) Mithra with the use of the term ‘hama-gaonāongho’ (of the same colour) (see Yt. 5: 13 ; Yt. 10: 125) indicating, perhaps, a sense of universality in the interconnection of uniformity of colours and the concept of perfection.

99 A.T. Hatto invokes other examples of the ‘boar’ being a symbol of ‘overbearing masculinity in love and war in the Middle Ages, with unmistakable and long-standing associations of nobility’ (355). The most interesting of which is perhaps Boccaccio’s Filostrato, where Troilus, in the grip of fear about the loyalty of his absent mistress, dreams that she is lying at the feet of a boar (356). I would surmise the influence of Arthurian literature as well, given the fact that Arthur was known as the “Boar of Cornwall” (Lupack 26). It is also worthy of note that in the Celtic legend
The boar described as ‘fearsome and dreadful’ (*vreislîch unde vreissam*, line 13515) is said to have run out from the forest and is ‘foaming at the mouth and whetting his tusks, and charging everything in his path’ (*schûmende unde wetzende/ und sich ze wîge setzende / ûf allez daz, daz er dâ vant*, lines 13517–19). There is little wonder that when Marjodoc wakes up, he is proven right in equating the ‘boar’ with ‘Tristan’ who is missing, while having left behind footprints leading to the queen’s chamber. His dream is an anticipation of Tristan’s actual smearing of the queen’s bed linens with his own blood after his vein breaks as he attempts to leap on her bed upon a session of bloodletting (cf. lines 15194–15204). The smearing of the queen’s bed can be read at a figurative level as well, for Tristan’s physical intimacy with the partner of the so-called head of the land is defiling the sanctity of no ordinary matrimony and is indeed an indication of his ‘brutish sensuality’. Regardless, comparing heroes with animals, given their extraordinary powers, has been common practice, as observed earlier.

Aside from his character flaws, what makes Tristan a well-rounded hero, as compared to the heroes of *Beowulf* and *The Shahnameh*, is not the mere parallel that is drawn between him and a boar, but his incarnation of both physical powers and artistic skills. For a better grasp of Tristan’s interior, Gottfried provides us with detailed information of his educational pursuits, which include the learning of foreign languages, the study of books and endless hours of playing stringed instruments of all kinds (cf. lines 2060–2103). The impact of his musical skills run throughout the poem as it enables him to win the further favour of the men in the Cornish court and to have Queen Isolde cure his wound in exchange for tutoring Princess Isolde. The *consonantia* inherent in music hearkens back to the ‘noble hearts’ (*edelen herzen*) motif of the prologue, which calls for a *coincidentia oppositorum* of certain

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_of The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráinne_, which deals with the adventures of Princess Gráinne, who has been forced into marriage with Fionn, leader of the Fianna band and one of his warriors, Diarmuid, with whose help she wishes to escape from her aged husband, Diarmuid is forbidden to kill any boar. The reasoning behind the ‘taboo’ (*geis*) is that Diarmuid’s foster brother has been transformed into a boar whose death signifies the death of Diarmuid himself, however, as there is no fighting destiny, he ultimately finds himself face to face with the boar of Ben Gulbain and thus meets his death. The story of Diarmuid and Gráinne is believed to have been the primary influence in the formation of future *Tristan* legends.
elements of this world including its ‘bitter-sweet’ (süeze sûr) and its ‘dear sorrow’ (liebe leit) (cf. lines 45–63). Attached to music lies, what Gottfried calls, moraliteit, which is hard to translate, but is in accord with the concept of consonantia. In equating moraliteit with moralitas, not in the sense of ‘morality’, “but the total ‘mores’ of man, his character is viewed as an abstraction” (370), Jackson points out the strong impact of music on bringing about changes in one’s character. Moraliteit is defined as a ‘wet-nurse’ (amme) for the ‘noble hearts’, “(whose) teaching is in harmony with God and the world” (si lêret uns in ir gebote / got unde der werlde gevallen, lines 8012–13). While the impact of music on Tristan has been to bring about the reconciliation of opposites, the effect of learning has been termed an end of the joy of youth and his freedom:

daz was sîn erstiu kêre
ûz sîner vrîheite
dô trat er in daz geleite
betwungenlicher sorgen,  
die ime då vor verborgen
und vor behalten wären.
in den ûf blüenden jären,
dô al sîn wunne solte enstân,
dô er mit vrôuden solte gân
in sînes lebenes begin,
dô was sîn beste leben hin.
dô er mit vrôuden blüen began,
dô viel der sorgen rîfe in an,
der maneger jugent schaden tuot,
und darte im sîner vrôuden bluot.
in sîner êrsten vrîheit
wart al sîn vrîheit hin geleit.
der buoche lêre und ir getwanc
was sîner sorgen anevanc

100 A.T. Hatto’s translates ‘moraliteit’ as ‘bienséance’, which is equally confusing in not only being French, but also meaning ‘propriety’, does not exactly fit the context (Hatto could have perhaps left the term in its original form). W.T. H. Jackson argues for ‘polite education’ (369), which does not seem to convey the essence of Gottfried’s use of the term, although the explication that he offers helps clarify what the poet might possibly have had in mind. 101 Jackson has suggested a Boethian influence on Gottfried’s use of ‘moraliteit’ quoting Boethius’s following passage: “Musica vero non modo speculationi verum etiam moralitati coninucta est”, meaning that “music is not only connected with observation but also with moralitas” (Tristan 370).
This was the first departure from his freedom; with it he joined company with enforced cares which had been hidden and withheld from him till then. In the blossoming of years, when the ecstasy of his springtime was about to unfold and he was just entering with joy into his prime, his best life was over: just when he was beginning to burgeon with delight the frost of care (which ravages many young people) descended on him and withered the blossoms of his gladness. With his first experience of freedom his whole freedom was cut short. The study of books and all its stern discipline were the beginning of his cares.

The term ‘care’ (sorge) has been mentioned three times in the above excerpt (lines 2071; 2080 and 2086) and it stands in contrast to the term ‘bliss’ (vröude) mentioned in the prologue in reference to the community that he describes in the following terms:

ine meine ir aller werlde niht
als die, von der ich hoere sagen,
diu keine swaere enmüge getragen
und niwan in vröuden welle sweben.

[I do not mean the world of the many who, as I hear, are unable to endure sorrow and wish only to revel in bliss.] (lines 50–53)

Once Tristan has plunged into a life of learning, ‘care’ becomes one of his defining characteristics, which is further strengthened by the fact that he has been named ‘Tristan’ on grounds of the sorrow with which his mother conceived and later on bore him (see lines 1990–2022). Conversely, Rivalin is said to have done what all young people do “who never think ahead, he shut his eyes to care and lived for the sake of living” (diu selten vorbesihtic sint/ er nam vür sich niht sorgen war, / wan lebete und lebete und lebete êt dar, lines 302–4). He is further described as ‘smiling on the world’ (line 307) and said to ‘revel in the sweets of living’ (line 310). Yet, allusion is made to his ‘noble heart’ (line 460), an image of coincidentia oppositorum of sorrow and joy and life and death, which Gottfried equates with perfection. Given his pleasure-seeking nature, it comes as no surprise that Mark’s court so characterized by
revelry becomes his destination, and King Mark, who, otherwise in the poem proves to be a roi-fainéant, his role-model.

Gottfried explicitly mentions his ‘arrogance’ (übermuote): ‘…his wanton youth, which blossomed in his heart with arrogance’ (... sin spilndiu kinheit,/ diu mit ir übermuote/ in sinem herzen bluote, lines 298–300). The term übermuote is the cognate of the OE ofermod, the one fault of Byrhtnoth, the leader of the Anglo-Saxons as related in The Battle of Maldon (cf. lines 89–90). J.R.R. Tolkien’s criticism of Byrhtnoth in that, instead of thinking of the good of his people, he has honour as ‘his sole motive’ (“Homecoming”, 24), is applicable to Rivalin, who, like Beowulf in his dragon-fight, endangers his life, while he had “responsibilities downwards”, towards his land and people (cf. Tolkien, “Homecoming”, 22–23). We are told that Rivalin had territories under his control, yet, his means of boosting his honour has more to do with gaining further land than caring for the people inhabiting his territory. Tied up with his superbia is Rivalin’s close association with landed property, which is interpreted as a sign of power and heroism. The word land is repeatedly mentioned from the beginning of the ‘Rivalin and Blancheflor’ episode, making it known that the ownership of land is one of Rivalin’s distinguishing characteristics as well as that which renders him ‘as great as princes’ (vürsten ebengröz):

Ein hêrre in Parmenîe was,
der jâre ein kint, als ich ez las.
der was, als uns diu wârheit
an sîner äventiure seit,
wol an gebürte kînege genôz,
an lande vürsten ebengrôz,
des líbes schoene und wunneclîch,
getriuwe, küene, milte, rîch;
und den er vröude solte tragen,
den was der hêrre in sînen tagen

250

255
There was a lord in Parmenie of tender years, as I read. In birth (so his story truly tells us) he was the peer of kings, in lands the equal of princes, in person fair and charming, loyal, brave, generous, noble: and to those whom it was his duty to make happy this lord all his days was a joy-giving sun. He was a delight to all, a paragon of chivalry, the glory of his kinsmen, the firm hope of his land.

Later on, we are informed that Rivalin had ‘a separate land’ (ein sunderez land, line 330) and had to be a subordinate to Duke Morgan (lines 331–4). Land becomes a prominent marker of Rivalin’s character since as far as social and family relations are concerned, he is situated in a vacuum, making his ties with his geographical territory all the more significant. Rosemary Combridge is quite justified in her claim that while Gottfried’s characters seem to be hanging in a limbo in terms of their genealogy, geographically speaking, they are on terra firma (13). However, with respect to Rivalin, the land is so much a part of him that he is introduced within its frame and loses his life for its sake. It is also bound up with the concept of êre (‘honor’), a driving-force that propels the first hero of the poem to amass more lands as he launches an attack on Morgan’s territory.

er kam geriten in sîn lant
mit alsô creftiger hant,
daz er im mit gewalte
genuoge bürge valte;
die stete muosen sich ergeben
und loesen ir guot unde ir leben,

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102 After much research into the phrase sunderez land, which she equates with sunderlant in line 5619, Rosemary Combridge concludes that it could mean that Rivalin had a land bordered off from the mainland belonging to Morgan (174).

103 The context surrounding Rivalin’s attack on Morgan remains ambiguous and one cannot infer whether the hero had any justification in his assault or not. However, Combridge tells us that there have been cases in which ‘the owner of a fief’ (Lehnsinhaber) has been entitled to launch a feud against ‘the lord of a fief’ (Lehnsherr) and that Gottfried’s use of the term not in line 342 (involving some sort of compulsion) falls within that category (26).
[He came riding into his land in such strength as to raze not a few of his fortresses. Towns were forced to yield and, dear as they held them, ransom their lives and goods till he had amassed the means so to increase his troops that he could impose his will, be it on town or fortress.]

It is in boosting his êre that Rivalin wishes to articulate his heroic self. Êre has been used to describe him throughout the episode (lines 258; 336; 405 and 415) and ownership of land appears to be one of its major components. As has been noted already, êre was initially tied up with guot (wealth) and only later with the notion of tugent (virtue) (Ehrisman, 65–66). The correlation between the ‘wealth’ (guot) and the ‘lives’ (leben) people ransom (line 352) and an increase in the hero’s ‘means’ or literally ‘value and abundance of wealth’ (gülte unde guotes die craft, line 355) is quite clear in the above passage. The ‘honour-aspiring’ (êrengire, line 415) Rivalin heads towards Cornwall to learn from the ‘honourable’ (êrbaere) King Mark, whose ‘honour’ (êre) is bound to the vast expanse of lands, including Cornwall and England, to observe how he exerts his command over his territories (cf. lines 420–25). As can be observed, there happens to exist a direct correlation between êre and one’s territorial domain.

The problem, however, lies with the semantic slipperiness of the term êre, which defies a clearcut definition. Julian Pitt-Rivers’s explication of the inherent duality of ‘honour’, adds another layer of complication to this already problematic concept:

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104 The change, according to Ehrisman, came about as a result of the prevalence of Thomas of Aquinas’s maxim of ‘honor is the demonstration of respect in testimony of virtue” (honor est exhibitio reverentiae in testimonium virtutis) (66).
Honour is the value of a person in his own eyes, but also in the eyes of his society [...]. Honour, therefore, provides a nexus between the ideals of society and their reproduction in the individual through his aspiration to personify them. As such, it implies not merely a habitual preference for a given mode of conduct, but the entitlement to a certain treatment in return. (21–22)

Pitt-Rivers’s explanation is applicable to Gottfried’s Tristan in that it brings out the complexity involved in the clash of individual interpretations of êre with that of society as well as the dissonance of definitions which Rivalin and Tristan seem to be applying to the term. While Rivalin lays emphasis on his public image as is evident in his public muscle-flexing, Tristan is more in tune with his inner needs and less dependent on an urge to boost his public image. As soon as Rivalin gained the upper-hand, in the wake of a series of ‘gains and losses’ (verliesen unde gewinnen, line 369), ‘he often held tournaments (close to the gates) and splendid displays of chivalry’ (ouch haete er dicke då vor/ turneie und rîche ritterschaft, lines 390–91). The lands of both parties are an extension of their corporeal confines and Rivalin’s attack on Duke Morgan three years’ into his knighthood (line 337) looks like an attempt at bolstering his manhood and along with it, his honour as he seeks to expand his territorial domain. The holding of tournaments by Rivalin could be read as attempts at expanding both corporeal and territorial boundaries. In fact, another perspective of êre offered by Gottfried binds it closely with the ‘body’. Kathleen Meyer, referring to the interconnectedness of êre (‘honour’) and lîp (‘body;’ ‘life;’ ‘person’) especially in the phrase êre und lîp verliesen (‘to lose honour and life/body), highlights how Rivalin who returns wounded from a battlefield is described “as a man who

105 Even at times when Tristan seems to be fighting for a popular need (e.g. his single combat against Morold), it is not a need to boost his image that propels him forward, but an inner need for challenge and rectifying an inflicted wrong. As suggested by my professor, Markus Stock, contrary to modern conceptions, Tristan’s outlook on êre could have been regarded as a negative trait.

106 In the classical period, one of the synonyms for the phrase ritter werden (‘to become a knight’), according to Joachim Bumke, was ze man werden (‘to become a man’).
has lost his life” (271). Gottfried further complicates the sense of êre, when he equates it with both ‘person’ (lîp) and his ‘wealth’ (guot) (lines 5697–99) which are indispensable in the making of a man (cf. lines 5695–96). The combination of the two elements proves to be problematic in the figure of Tristan who all of a sudden has come to possess two fathers, his uncle, King Mark, as surrogate-father and Rual li Foitenant, as foster-father, neither of whom are his biological father, but personify the two aspects of êre. If Tristan were to embody them both, he would have to remain in Parmenie and Cornwall simultaneously, which is impossible. Paradoxically, according to Gottfried, he succeeds in dividing himself in two between the two fathers:

\[
\text{sich selben teilet er inzwei} \\
geliche und ebene alse ein ei} \\
und gab ir ietwederem daz, \\
daz er wiste, daz im baz} \\
an allen sînen dingen kam. \]

[He divided himself as neatly and equally as one divides an egg and gave to either man what he knew would go best with his circumstances.]

The image of the egg is to be taken ironically, since such a division as described above is not possible, unless as Meyer comments, “the egg is hardboiled!” (272). It so happens that he decides to walk in the footsteps of his biological father, Rivalin, and earn some knightly honour, though just for a while. Regardless of his pursuit of chivalric êre, father and son articulate their heroism in their mobility. To enforce more control over his own land, for example, Rivalin heads to King Mark’s kingdom in Cornwall (cf. lines 460–64).

While chivalry defines Rivalin as a hero, whom Gottfried describes as ‘a paragon of chivalry’ (der ritterschêfte ein lêre, line 257), it is essentially minne that moulds Tristan. Despite being termed ‘honour-aspiring’ (êregire, line 5001), Tristan is representative of a parody of the term êregire which was used earlier in line 415 in reference to Rivalin. Shortly upon being termed êregire in the wake of
his knighthood, his uncle gives his own version of ‘glory of knighthood’ (*ritterlichen pris*), which includes the following: “Cultivate your appearance. Honour and love all women” (*ziere unde werde dînen lip./ ère unde minne elliu wîp*, lines 5033–34). The knighting ceremony is glossed over in a series of abstractions and when it comes to the culminating ‘jousting’, Gottfried merely states that “I am no herald to cry all their jousting” (*ine mag ir buhurdieren/ niht allez becrôieren*, lines 5061–62).

Regarding Gottfried’s abrupt evasiveness towards the ‘jousting’ that forms one of the major components of the knighting ceremony, Hugo Bekker has made the following remark: “The narrator makes a show of his agony now that he is about to turn Tristan into a knight, hence, into a full-fledged member of society, with the rights as well as the duties commensurate with that position. Toward the end it is clear that the narrator himself is not much interested in Tristan’s knighthood as understood in the common sense of that term” (89). Gottfried’s disinterest in the details of knighthood is evident, accordingly, it is not surprising that Tristan never turns into a “full-fledged member of society” and always remains on the margins. His ‘liminality’ has much to do with characteristics that set him apart from the rest of the community as reasons that have their roots in the circumstances surrounding his birth. We are also reminded of Tristan’s formative years, during which, while much attention is given to his classical education (cf. lines 2056–2102), much less focus is granted to his chivalric activities (cf. lines 2103–22).

The turning-point in Tristan’s life occurs with the wound suffered at the hands of the monstrous Morold which initiates Tristan both into manhood and the realm of love. Christoph Huber’s description of the wound on his thigh as a *symbolische Kastration*, which only a certain love-partner can remove, reinforces the above argument. The wound, according to Huber constitutes a motif which is known to us from the Grail literature (*Gottfried* 61). Simultaneously, the wound symbolizes a

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107 W.T.H Jackson sees in Gottfried’s literary digression, the poet’s clear preference for Tristan’s artistic over his martial side (*Tristan* 365).
reinstatement of the lost masculinity of the Cornish *communitas* which was losing its potential fathers to Morold, who, each year, was to take away thirty of their worthy young males as an annual tribute.

In their weakness to preserve their sons, the Cornish fathers attribute the root-cause of their problems to ‘fortune’ (*saelde*, line 6201). However, Tristan, in pursuit of the heroic ethos, takes fate and fortune into his own hands in the process of which his own corpus and that of the Cornwall are re-shaped.¹⁰⁸

The role of women in heroic enhancement is not to be discounted in Gottfried’s *Tristan*, where “the agency and intelligent resolve shown by all the female figures stand in contrast to the dominant medieval clerical ideology of feminine passivity and weakness” (Rasmussen 137). Earlier in the poem, we see how as ladies of Mark’s court lay eyes on Rivalin, heap praises on his body and clothes, they remark: “O happy, lucky woman, she that will enjoy him!” (*ô wol si saelige wîp, /der vröude an ime belîben sol!*, lines 718–19). The women in *Tristan* endow the hero with power; unlike what we saw in *The Shahnameh*, they actively choose their own men and their choice is more predicated upon the performative manifestations of heroism than aesthetic qualities. The woman is the one who decides whom she wishes to be with upon an intensive examination, which tends to include an ‘ocular’ appraisal of her potential male partner.¹⁰⁹ It is the most powerful hero, who proves to be deserving of the best, usually also the most beautiful, woman. Female beauty, besides being a matter

¹⁰⁸ I find St. Augustine’s interpretation of ‘fate’ appropriate within this context: “if I saw fit to apply the word fate to anything, I would rather say that the fate of the weaker is the will of the stronger, who has the other in his power, than to admit that the order of causes which the Stoics call fate in their own, but not the common usage of the word, does away with our free will” (“*si mihi fati nomen alicui rei adhibendum placeret, magis dicerem fatum esse infirmioris potentioris voluntatem, qui eum habet in potestate, quam illo causarum ordine, quem non usitato, sed suo more Stoici fatum appellant, arbitrium nostrae voluntatis auferri. DCD V: 9*). Also of note is Seneca’s now famous dictum: “Fortune fears the strong ones, crushes the cowards” (*Fortuna fortes metuit, ignavos premit*) (*Medea* 160–63). For more on ‘fortune’ and its implications in the Middle Ages, see, for example: Walter Haug, *O Fortuna: Eine historisch-semantische Skizze zur Einführung* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1995): 1–22.

¹⁰⁹ In *L’Être et Néant* (1943), Jean-Paul Sartre argues that when engrossed in the act of seeing, the voyeur is so absorbed that his very being escapes him: “there is nothing there but a pure nothingness encircling a certain objective ensemble and throwing it into relief outline upon the world” (259–60). The women of *Tristan*, far from being thrown into ‘nothingness’, take matters into their own hands. One prime example of the gazing woman occurs when Isolde glances Tristan’s whole body as he is sitting in a bath (lines 9992–1007). Meanwhile, the female gaze also plays an important role in *Das Nibelungenlied* as is indicated in (396: 3; 398: 4), where the women of Brunhild’s court appraise and evaluate Siegfried’s appearance.
of biology, becomes closely associated with clothes and manners, which in the following lines is exemplified in Isolde’s gliding gait:

sus kam diu küniginne Ísôt, 10885
daz vrôliche morgenrôt, 10885
und vuorte ir sunnen an ir hant, 10885
daz wunder von Írlant, 10885
die liehten maget Ísôte. 10885
diu sleich ir morgenrôte 10890
lîse unde staetelfiche mite 10890
in einem spor, in einem trite, 10890
suoze gebildet über al, 10890
lanc, üf gewollen unde smal, 10890
gestellet in der waete, 10890
als si diu Minne draete 10895
ir selber z’einem vederspil, 10895
dem wunsche z’einem endezil, 10895
dâ vûr er niemer komen kan.

[And so Queen Isolde, the glad Dawn, came leading by the hand her Sun, the wonder of Ireland, the resplendent maiden Isolde. The girl glided gently forward, keeping even pace with her Dawn, on the same path, with the same step, exquisitely formed in every part, tall, well-moulded, and slender, and shaped in her attire as if Love had formed her to be her own falcon, an ultimate unsurpassable perfection!] 110

Labeling the two Isoldes as sun and aurora reinforces their prominence in the course of the poem, especially the younger of the two. 111 Both Isoldes are healers, and not just of the body, but also of the psyche. Given that Tristan overcomes the dragon, it is he who is rightfully entitled to a union with Isolde and not Mark. As Adrian Stevens has argued, there is direct correlation between the Isolde who is sitting in her chamber thinking of Tristan unaware of his marriage to Isolde of the White Hands, and his daring gigantomachia (Killing 410–5) in the Thomas version.

110 Reference can also be made of lines 8277–89 of Gottfried’s poem as well, in which the dazzling beauty of the two Isoldes, mother and daughter, are linked to the glory of Ireland.

111 In ancient times, there was a common belief in the existence of an inextricable link between heavenly and earthly bodies. Michael Camille explains: “The stars were tangible bodies which, floating high above, had direct ‘line’ to specific parts of one’s anatomy and ruled, as did the moon the tides, the waves of humoral fluids within one’s body” (68).
Once Tristan re-emerges from the dragon-fight and his body is rehabilitated, the ‘proof’ (währzeichen) of the accomplishment of his feat is more his own magnificent body than the missing tongue of the dragon, which he happens to hold in hand. The Steward has presented the entire body of the dead dragon as an alleged ‘proof’ for his act of heroism. However, he fails to embody the required heroic ethos in any possible way, be it in the body, the mind and the tongue. The missing tongue of the dragon’s corpus becomes a reflection of the Steward’s inefficient tongue; conversely, of Tristan’s ability to ‘prove’ his heroism without needing to use his own tongue.

ich weiz ez wol, daz in dem sale
ûz maneges mannes munde
lobebrunnen vil begunde
ûf wallen unde enspringen
von allen sînen dingen.
sî sageten ime lob unde prés
maneger hande und manege wîs
ir genuoge sprâchen daz:
«wâ geschuof ie got figiure baz
ze ritterlîchem rehte?
hî, wie ist er ze vehte
und ze kampfweise
gestellet sô ze prise!
wie sint diu cleider, diu er treit,
sô rîlichen ûf geleit!
ezn gesach nie man in Îrlant
sus rehte keiserlîch gewant.
sîn massenê diust gecleit
mit kûniclîcher rîcheit.
und waerliche, swer er sî
erst muotes unde quotes vrî.»
alsohler rede was dâ genuoc.
der truhsaeze der truoc
den ezzich in den ougen.
diu rede ist âne lougen

[I know for sure that in this hall many founts of praise began to well up and overflow concerning his every particular. They lauded and extolled him in many styles and manners. Said many: ‘Wherever did God shape a figure more apt for the order to chivalry? Look how splendidly built he is for battle and all warfare! How lavishly
designed are those clothes that he is wearing! You never saw such clothes here in Ireland, so truly fit for an emperor. His followers, too, are dressed with kingly splendour. And, indeed, whoever he is, so far as wealth and wishes go, he is free to do as he pleases!’ There was much talk and it was undeniable that the Steward made a very sour face over it.]

Tristan is not wearing clothes that are fit for an emperor, but deserves to be one. Neither is the Steward the only person who tries to take advantage of Tristan’s valour. King Mark for one thing, allows Tristan to engage in daunting feats and reaps the benefits for himself. He belongs to a race of unheroic kings, who, unlike Arthur, no longer fight their own fights. In fact, Isolde’s admiration of Tristan’s radiant qualities in the bath-scene, contemplates the ways governing the world in a manner that implicitly questions Mark’s merits as king:

diu werlt stât wunderliche,  
sô vil manic kûnicrîche  
besetzet ist mit swacher art,  
daz ime der einez niht enwart

[It is an odd world, where so very many thrones are filled by men of inferior race and not one has fallen to his (Tristan’s) lot.]

It so happens that Mark is one of those men of ‘inferior race,’ (mit swacher art), yet, he has Tristan fight Morold on his behalf — as reluctant as he, as Tristan’s uncle, may have been — and it is for him that Tristan slays the dragon. Isolde rightfully belongs to the actual dragon-slayer and Mark. King Mark might have control over vast lands, but the êre that has come to be associated with him on grounds of his expansive domain has been the result of chance and not any inherent merit. Tristan also becomes a holder of land, yet on account of interior merits opts to remain lantlôs. Similarly, as shall be discussed, Beowulf’s heroism rests primarily on his singular strengths rather than his possession of land. His heroism, similar to that of the heroes of The Shahnameh and Tristan, is defined based not
only on his own innate abilities, but also its contrasts to the shortcomings of the kings in the poem, especially his own uncle, Hygelac, who relies on him for relief.

1.3. *Beowulf*: Singularity of Strength

The avuncular relationship of both Beowulf and Tristan allows for a comparison between the maternal uncle, who is king and the nephew, who is the hero. In both cases, the nephew outshines the uncle, since it is he who performs the great deeds which one would expect of the highest *auctoritas*, the king, to engage in for the security of the nation. In fact, while the epithet ‘good king’ (*god cyning*) is used, for example, for Scyld Scefing (line 11b) and Hrothgar (line 863b), Beowulf’s uncle, Hygelac, is never mentioned in those terms. Moreover, the fact that Hygelac’s name seems to convey a rashness which is reflected in his deeds (e.g. his fatal expedition into Frisia in lines 2914b–21b), highlights his nephew’s heroism and eligibility for kingship even more. As Kaske has noted, the single speech allotted to him in the entire poem (lines 1987–98) brims with “platitudes of cautious anxiety” (*Hygelac* 205) as it resonates with a sense of fear far from the heroic realm. In his remarks, Hygelac brings to mind King Marke in *Tristan* who is likened to a ‘timid woman’ (*herzelôsez wîp*, line 6524) as he prepares his nephew to fight a fight that he, as king and guardian of nation, had ought to undertake. As Hygelac recalls how he had fretted over Beowulf’s fate on the expedition to Denmark, one has the feeling that his concerns were chiefly rooted in selfishness:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ic ðæs modceare} & \\
\text{sorhwylmum seãð, } & \text{siðe ne truwode } \\
\text{loefes mannes;} & \text{ ic ðe lange bæd}
\end{align*}
\]

112 Rolf H. Bremmer, drawing on a number of avuncular relations existing in several Germanic poems, including *Beowulf*, sees a the importance of the mother’s brother to lie in his being “an outsider in the paternal family and not hindered by the *patria potestas*” (*The Importance* 22).

What is fascinating about the above passage, as noted to me by my professor, Andy Orchard, is the pervasiveness of the word ‘I’ (ic) versus ‘you’ (both in its subjective and objective forms, du and de respectively). ‘I’ has been used four times and ‘you’ only three times.

As much as comparisons between a weak king and a hero helps bring out the qualities the distinguishing qualities of the latter, drawing parallels between two heroic characters both highlights their common features and distinguishes the set of attributes that sets their brands of heroism apart.114

In *Beowulf*, for example, disparate as the bodies of the two heroes, Scyld Seefing and Beowulf, might be, they are brought together in their embodiment of the OE term lof, meaning ‘fame’ or ‘glory’. That both bodies are marked by the heroic ethos of lof is demonstrated by the terms lofdeald (‘praiseworthy deed’) and lofgeornost (‘most eager for fame’) which, respectively, appear towards the beginning (line 24) and end of the poem (line 3182).115 As George Clark has remarked: “The last word, lofgeornost in Beowulf reaches back to the poem’s opening and the sole means, lofdealdum by which one prospers, in all nations, at all times” (15–30). It is by means of lof that the earthly body seeks to

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114 See, for example: W.T.H. Jackson, *The Hero and the King: An Epic Theme* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) for further details on the dynamics of the relationship between a strong youthful hero and an old weak king.

115 According to Orchard, of the twelve times that the world lofgeorn and its morphological variants appear in the extant Old English corpus, it “carries unreservedly negative connotations” (Pride 54–55). For further references, see, for example: *Klaeber’s Beowulf. 4th Ed* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2008): 271–72.
transcend its destined mortality. Yet being grounded in the world and framed in the body, the hero has no alternative but to deploy worldly means in his attempts to surpass his bodily confines.

Scyld Scefing, whose place of origin and final destination remain shrouded in mystery, identifies himself on the basis of the lands he subjugates and in so doing, leaves behind a memorable legacy. By subduing the surrounding lands, he succeeds in inscribing himself on the spatio-temporal continuum of the history of the Danes, as the ‘good king’ (god cyning):

Oft Scyld Scefing sceâþena þreatum monegum mægþum meodsetla ofteah, 5
egsode eorlas syððan ærest wearð feasceaft funden. He ðæs frofre gebad weox under wolcnum, weorðmyndum þah, oð þæt him æghwylc þara ymbsitten ofer hronrade hyran scolde, 10
gomban gyldan. ðæt wæs god cyning.

[Often Scyld Scefing took away mead-benches from the troops of warriors, from many peoples, terrified the warriors. Since he was first found destitute — he received consolation for that — he waxed under the clouds and thrived in worldly honors until everyone of the neighboring peoples across the sea had to obey him, pay tribute. That was a good king.] By modern standards, Scyld Scefing’s acts would be tantamount to a violation of human rights, yet, as his measures serve to spread his name across the lands and enable him to increase the welfare of his own nation, he is worthy of the epithet god cyning.117 The concept of ‘honour’, interspersed across Scyld Scefing’s textual entity in a variety of phrases, including ‘(worldly) glory’ (weorðmyndum, line 8b), ‘worldly honour’ (woroldare, line 17), ‘praiseworthy deeds’ (lofdædum, line 24b), parallels with

116 See lines 7 and 50b–52.
117 Territorial conquests were a major source of empire-building and consequently glory. For example, even Bede falls short of an outright condemnation of Hengest’s expansionist moves in Britannia only to refer to him as a ‘godless victor’ (impius victor) (cf. Hist. eccl. I: XV) and related how “the Britons slaughtered no small number of their foes about forty-four years after their arrival in Britain” (non minimas eisdem hostibus strages dabant, quadragesimo circiter quarto anno adventus eorum in Britanniam I: XVI).
the Germanic notion of êre which was initially tied up with guot (wealth) and only later with the notion of tugent (virtue) (Ehrisman 65–66).

The influence of ‘honor’ over the heroic body is reinforced across the poem. Wiglaf, a kin and successor of Beowulf who appears towards the end of the poem to help kill the dragon, faults Beowulf’s retainers for abandoning the scene of combat, maintains: “For any nobleman death is better than a life of shame” (Deað bið sella/ eorla gehwylcum þonne edwitlif, lines 2890b–91). His comment echoes a boastful Beowulf, who, prior to plunging into the mere to fight Grendel’s mother, says: “I will gain glory with Hrunting, or death shall take me” (ic mid Hruntinge/ dom gewyrce oðde mec deað nimeð, lines 1490b–1491). In addition, Beowulf consoles Hrothgar who is mourning the death of his beloved retainer Æschere, with the following words:

ure æghwylc sceal ende gebidan
worolde lifes; wyrce se þe mote
domes ær deaþe þæt bið drihtguman,
unlifgendum æfter selest (lines 1386–89)

[Each of us must await an end of life in the world; let him who may gain glory before death; that is the best thing for the noble warrior who has passed away]

The precedence of glory over life resonates throughout the poem. Once Beowulf resorts to his own ‘handgrip of might’ (mundgripe mægenes) upon the failure of his weapon in the face of the dragon, we are told: “So should a man do when he thinks to gain long-lasting fame in battle: he will not care about his life” (Swa sceal man don,/ þonne he æt guðe gehæt þæt ðæt longsumne lof, na ymb his life ceardæ, lines 1534b–36).

The heroic bodies in Beowulf are closely identified with ‘honour’, which lies at the heart of the heroic ethos. The acquisition of land is closely bound up with honour and it is with this mentality in mind that Scyld Seafing embarks on the subjugation of the people in neighbouring lands. Upon his
death, Scyld is referred to as ‘the beloved leader of the land’ (*leof landfruma*, line 31a) as treasures from distant lands lie on his ‘bosom’. His ‘bosom’ turns into a locus in which lands, near and far, find a centrality. What is also significant about his ‘bosom’ (*bearm*) is that it comes to form the centre of a *mise en abyme* of bodies whose outermost frame is the vault of the heavens:

The three registers of the body are manifest in this part of the poem, as the individual body of the hero-king, whose bosom represents the larger corporeal entity of the *communitas*, is consigned to the seas which constitute part of that broader universal frame of bodies. The repetition of *bearm* in the
space of six lines also introduces a pervasive ‘theme of microcosmic-macrocosmic correspondence’, which is reinforced by the “weaving together notions of the living, dying bodies of the individual, the inanimate object, society itself and the world at large” (Jagger 16). His dead body is glorified for having been able to establish a centrality which the ‘lordless’ Danes had desperately been in need of. Scyld has thus turned into a *persona geminata*, a two-natured figure, with human and superhuman aspects. His human aspects allow his subjects to identify with him and his alleged superhuman qualities facilitate his apotheosis.  

Also Beowulf, as king and hero of the Geats becomes another instance of a *persona geminata*, as Wiglaf recounts how he had turned into the central figure of *comitatus*, as those around him would drink mead and promise loyalty to him in exchange for rings (lines 2633–39a). The concept of land, though not as dominant as the case of Scyld Seefing, is also of some relevance to Beowulf. He is said to have come into the ownership of land (lines 2196b–7a) and seeks revenge on the dragon (lines 2335b–2336) once his home is destroyed in the beast’s onslaught (lines 2335–39), though, nowhere is it as prominent as in the case of the monument he has the nation build in his memory (lines 3094b–3100).

Scyld and Beowulf, as Bonjour has noted, share in the fact that their childhood, though different, stood in sharp contrast to their future glory: “Neither showed the slightest promise of a brilliant future: Scyld was found a wretched and abandoned child (*feasceaft*), and Beowulf is conspicuous for

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118 Ernst H. Kantorowicz suggests that the king’s duplication of persons is founded in theology and mirrors the duplication of the natures in Christ. “The king is the perfect impersonator of Christ on earth” (58). The king manifests both spiritual and secular natures, making him a *persona geminata* (59).

119 The famous quotation from *Le Roi Soleil*, Louis XIV (1638–1715): ‘l’état c’est moi’, though perhaps apocryphal, has a ring of truth to it as the body of the king, figuratively, expands to represent the collective corpus of an entire nation. In Edmund Powden’s *Reports*, collected and written under Queen Elizabeth, the king is said to have two bodies: a ‘Body natural’ and a ‘Body politic’: “His Body natural, is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of Infancy or old Age, and to the like Defects that happen to natural Bodies of other People. But his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, […] utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and imbecilities”. (Kantorowicz 7).
his inglorious youth” (5). There are, however, a number of differences between the two. For instance, while Scyld Scefing leaves a son behind, ‘whom god sent to be a comfort to people’ (*bone god sende/folce to frofre*, lines 13b–14a), Beowulf’s failure to reproduce, can account for part of the uncertainty facing the Geats following his death. It is also by means of conquering monstrous bodies and not through the conquest of lands that Beowulf facilitates a ‘reversal’ (*edwenden*), marking himself as a hero.

[because they knew the power of my strength, they themselves had looked upon when, stained with the blood of foes, I came back from the struggle in which I destroyed a race of giants, bound five of them, and killed water-monsters in the waves by night; I suffered dire straits, avenged the Weders’ wrong, utterly crushed those fierce creatures – they asked for trouble. And now I alone shall settle matters with that monster, with the giant, with the fierce assailant, Grendel.]

The above lines are significant in bringing out some of the elements that render Beowulf a hero, one of which is his mastery over monsters and its subsequent mark indicated in the term *fah* (stained) in line 420a. That the blood of beasts slain by the hero endows him with a mark of heroism, if not invincibility, has been observed in other heroic poems as is the case with Siegfried in *Das Nibelungenlied* and Isfandiyār in *The Shahnameh*.\(^\text{120}\) The term ‘alone’ (*ana*, line 425b) which repeats itself throughout the text characterizes the hero who single-handedly risks life and limb to save the

\(\text{120}\) Regarding the Isfandiyār’s ‘*rūīn tanī*’ (literally ‘brass-bodiedness’, figuratively, ‘invincibility’), one could refer to, for example, Mahmoud Omidsalar, “*Rāz-i Rūīn Tanī-yi Isfandiyār*” [‘The Secret of Isfandiyār’s Brass-bodiedness’] *Iran Nameh* 2 (1983): 245–84.
collective corpus of nationhood. The inscription on the heroic body signals his coming into manhood upon a series of *rites de passage*, in the wake of which the isolated hero is reintegrated into society; notwithstanding an aura of uniqueness, a similar instance of which was observed in Rustam’s ‘Seven Trials’. Not only do others single Beowulf out, as does the Danish coastguard who catches sight of him and the fourteen other warriors in his band (247b–251a), but also the hero sets himself apart from the rest of men. For one thing, he is the only one awake as Grendel sets out to attack Heorot: “The warriors who had to guard that gabled building were all asleep, but one” (*Sceotend swæfon*/pa āt hornreced healdan scoldon/ ealle buton anum, lines 703b–5a). Another example of the hero’s unique aspect comes to the fore prior to his fight against the dragon:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Nis āt eower sið,} \\
\text{ne gemet mannes nefne min anes,} \\
\text{āt he wið aglæcean eofðo dæle,} \\
\text{eorlsype efne. Ic mid elne sceall} \quad 2535 \\
\text{gold gegangan, oððe guð nimeð,} \\
\text{feorhbealu frecne, frean eowerne.}
\end{align*}
\]

[it is not your expedition, nor is it any man’s measure of power but mine alone to match strength against a hostile assailant, display heroic deeds. I shall win the gold with courage or else war, fierce deadly battle, will take your lord.]^{122}

The fact that Beowulf sees himself capable of being beyond the ‘measure of man’ (*gemet mannes*) is an indication of *superbia*.^{123} A similar terminology is used in the OE poem *Genesis A*, where men ‘in pride’ (*for wlenco*) and ‘eager for glory, in strength raised a stone-wall beyond the measure of men’

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^{121} A parallel can be found in *Tristan* where Gottfried relates that “(Tristan) had brought to an end the shame and suffering of all of them” (*ir aller laster unde ir leiw/ daz haete er eine hin geleit*, lines 7243–44). The *Nibelungenlied*-poet also portrays Siegfried riding to the foot of the mountain ‘alone’ (*al eine*), where he conquers an array of monstrous beings.

^{122} For *āt he wið aglæcean eofðo dæle* I have used Andy Orchard’s translation of the phrase as ‘to match the strength against a hostile assailant’ (*A Companion* 233).

^{123} It is worth noting that John Block Friedman in a chapter of his book, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), entitled “A Measure of Man”, proves how observers would alienate the Other’s culture, physiognomy and topography, while rendering their own characteristics as the norm.
The association of tall buildings and pride is not specific to this poem, as the following quote from St. Augustine’s *The City of God* indicates: “[…] by men’s arrogance in building a tower to reach the sky, a symbol of impious self-exaltation, the city or community of the ungodly was revealed” (*DCD* XVI: 10). In *Beowulf*, more than the inscription of land, it is the carving of monstrous bodies that is ‘beyond the measure of men’, marking he who engages in this act, with pride. Neither is it the first time that Beowulf is singling himself out from the larger body of the community. In fact, earlier in his youth, he had done so, more emphatically and in terms more promising than the above. As Andy Orchard has noted, Beowulf states twice in the space of six lines that ‘he alone can bring the Danes relief (ana, line 425b; ana, line 431a)’ (*A Companion* 262). However, his words were accompanied by further action and less fear in his youth, so much so, that he was able to make light of the possibility of his gruesome death. He maintains that his possible defeat at the hands of Grendel will be accompanied by a positive aspect since ‘you will not need to worry yourself for long about the sustenance of my body’ (*no ðu ymb mines ne þearft/ lices feorme leng sorgian*, lines 450b–1). His use of the term *feorm*, which, in addition to meaning ‘sustenance’ also means ‘disposal of a corpse’, can be contrasted with the later use of the word that suggests being devoured by monstrous beings (Orchard, *A Companion* 213). Additionally, in his youth, “Beowulf”, as E.B. Irving has pointed out: “hears of Grendel’s deeds and he acts, instantly, even before he speaks. He first orders the boat to be prepared for the voyage and only then voices his intention of going to Denmark” (*A Reading* 47). His speed of action stands in stark contrast to his hesititation in fighting the dragon in the last part of the poem.

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124 [*[…] ab illa superbia aedificandae turris usque in caelum, qua impia significatur elatio, apparuit civitas, hoc est societas, impiorum.*

125 The later usage of *feorm*, is within a gory description of cannibalism and yet Beowulf is able to use it in such a nonchalant way to describe what could have happened, had the outcome of his battle against Grendel been reversed. Once Grendel enters Heorot at a time when Beowulf and the rest of his band are sleeping, he snatches one of the warriors and does away with him entirely (see lines 739–45a).
Moreover, as heroic as Beowulf’s will for a hand-to-hand fight with the dragon might sound, it appears to be tainted with superbia distinguishing itself from for wlenco in line 338b, which, unlike its usage as noted above in Genesis A, does not convey a negative attribute given that the speaker himself is wlonc (line 331b). There is a hint at Beowulf’s pride in the the speech of his kin and successor, Wiglaf upon his death, in which there is a sense of criticism of the hero for incurring pain on an entire nation for his own will:

“Oft sceall eorl monig anes willan
wræc adreogan, swa us geworden is.
Ne meathon we gelærän leofne þeoden,
rices hyrde, ræd ænigne,
þæt he ne grette goldweard þone,
lete hyne licegan þær he longe wæs,
wicum wunian oð woruldende;
heold on heahgesceap. Hord ys gesceawod,
grimme gegongen; wæs þæt gifeðe to swið
þæt he on þeodcyning þyder ontyhte.”

[“Often many a warrior has to endure misery for the sake of the will of one man, as has happened to us. We were not able to advise the beloved prince, guardian of the kingdom, by any counsel, that he not approach the guardian of the gold, let him lie where he had long been, stay in his dwelling until the world’s end; he held onto a high destiny. The hoard is revealed, grimly won, the fate was strong that impelled the nation’s king here.”]

There is a clear note of criticism lying latent in Wiglaf’s position towards a single-mindedness which borders on self-centredness, if not selfishness. Despite the fact that ‘he held onto a high destiny’ (heold on heahgesceap, line 3084a), his heroism has come at the price of the misery of an entire nation.

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126 Also based on the commentary to for wlenco, in the Fourth Edition of Klaeber’s Beowulf, “the noun wlencu by itself could imply arrogance, as at 508 and perhaps 1206” (139). L.L. Schücking assesses the quality of being ‘wlonc’ in positive terms; ‘‘Loyalty’ (Treue), a concept, which is quite often used identically to ‘honour’ (Ehre), since it is the essence of the ‘system of duty’ (Pflichtensystem): activity, determinism, reliability in keeping one’s promise […], shrewdness, superiority, generosity as well as mastery over the social norm” (n.20).
nation for the sake of ‘the will of one person’ (*anes willan*, line 3077b). After all, *ana* could indicate both a positive and negative sense of uniqueness: the singularity of Beowulf is commended by the Danish coastguard in the phrase ‘unique appearance’ (*ænlic ansyn*, line 251a). On the other hand, the cruel king Heremod in *Beowulf*, despite all his gifts ‘swollen in spirit he killed his table-companions, his shoulder companions, until he turned *alone*, the famous prince, from the joys of men’ (*Deniga leodum;/ breet bolgenmod beodgeneatas/ eaxlgesteallan, oppæt he *ana* hwearf;/ mære þeoden*, lines 1712b–15a) (emphasis added). Interestingly, Beowulf is the only other character in the poem to be described as ‘swollen in spirit’ (*bolgenmod*, line 709), which as, Manish Sharma has explicated in great length, could be traced back to the instability of bodily borderlines of the hero resulting from a *furor heroicus* (252). In a careful study of the term *bolgen* and its variations in the extant corpus of OE literature, Sharma has reached the conclusion that of the nineteen occurrences of the term, eight describe God and in the others, but two, (*ge*)*bolgen* describes either demons or demonic figures. He concludes that “the connotative range of *ge(bolgen)* and its compounds is extremely broad — encompassing God and the demonic and describing both the awesome and the monstrous” (251). Based on this premise, Beowulf is imbued with a quality which touches on the demonic and/or divine, depending on our perspective.

Beowulf’s corporeal singularity seems to be rooted in his gigantism, hinted at in the description of his immense performative powers, examples of which are interspersed throughout the text. An instance is indicated in his possession of the strength of thirty men in his handgrip (*…pritiges/ manna mægenæþæft on his mundgripe*, lines 379b–80) and another, in the fact that he manages to carry the battle-gear of thirty warriors in the war against the Frisians (*hæfde him on earme (eorla) pritig/

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127 Orchard explains how attempts to read *anes* as referring to the dragon or thief are ‘unconvincing’ “given the poet’s consistent characterisation of Beowulf (and indeed Beowulf’s own characterisation of himself) as ‘unique’ (*ana*)” (Pride 263, n. 83).

128 P.L Henry defines *furor heroicus* as follows: ‘possession of the warrior by a martial fury so intense as to change his whole form’ (235).
hildegeatwa, lines 2361–62a). His gigantism, though awe-inspiring, according to a number of scholars is evocative of an evil aspect as well. As Stephen Bandy has observed: “The single physical trait most generally characteristic of Cain’s heredity was of course gigantism. As Cain’s great sin was his pride, the radix malorum, it follows that we should depict the prideful man as literally ‘puffed up’ by his evil” (238). Gigantism has been looked upon as a signifier to superbia by other scholars as well including R.E. Kaske, who extends the interpretation of ‘giant’ to all ten occurrences of eoten in Beowulf, and Andy Orchard, who has brought forth various instances of the relationship between ‘pride’ and ‘prodigy’. However, the idea can be traced back to ancient times as is attested by Gregory’s Moralia: “Nothing hinders giants […] from being understood as whatever proud men” (Gigantes […] superbos quosque homines, nil obstat intellegi, Pat. Lat., LXXVI: 25). Nevertheless, it takes a giant to fight a giant and that is why gigantism, can be viewed as a pharmakon, both a ‘remedy’ and a ‘poison’, depending on who possesses it. In the case of Grendel, who is clearly a ‘kin of Cain’ (Caines cynne) as mentioned in line 107a, it is a poisonous attribute, but in the case of Beowulf, a remedial characteristic. In The Shahnameh, the primary hero, Rustam, is marked by gigantism accompanied by instances of gluttony.

Regardless of Beowulf’s extraordinary physicality, his body still requires certain accoutrements to protect itself against monstrous onslaughts. A clear example is provided in one of the hero’s exploits at sea, in which the ‘coat of mail’ (licsyrce) is explicitly said to have afforded him comfort against his monstrous enemies:

hreo wæron yþa.
Wæs merefixa         mod onhrered;


130 The idea has been suggested by R.E. Kaske (The Eotenas 297) who references Moralia in Iob XVII: xxi. 30–31, in Pat. Lat., LXXVI: 25.
“the waves were fierce. The mind of the sea-fish was aroused. There, my coat of mail, hard with hand-forged links, afforded me help against the enemies; the battle-garment woven, decked with gold, lay on my breast.”

Consequently, Beowulf learns to trust in his armour and war-trappings as he fights off monstrous creatures including Grendel’s mother:

Heroes are grounded in humanity and thus heir to frailties of the human flesh. Even, Aeneas, son of the goddess Venus, is in need of the Vulcan-forged shield to protect him from the likes of the enormous aide of Turnus, Mezentius, who despite being ‘steadfast in his bulk’ (mole sua stat, The Aeneid, Bk. X: 771) has his whistling spear fly at Aeneas only to ‘bounce back from the shield’ (clipeo est excussa proculque, line 777). In the other two primary texts of this study, Tristan’s armoury and Rustam’s leopard-skin serve similar purposes, though they both have their own limits as does Beowulf’s sword in the fight against the dragon.

The hero’s vulnerability in the face of certain enemies, the dragon in Beowulf’s case, the stratagems of an evil half-brother in the case of Rustam and Morold in Tristan’s case, highlights
the ultimate groundedness of the hero in the human race. That is why their combat against monstrous inhuman creatures makes them all the more glorified as we shall see in the following chapter.
Chapter 2: Monstrous Bodies

It is the aim of this chapter to explicate the importance of ‘monsters’ in general and their function in the three primary texts in particular. The association of the ‘monstrous body’ with the ‘marvelous’ lends it an otherness which both attracts and repels. On the other hand, however much one subjects monsters to ‘abjection’ and demonizes them, they prove to be an indispensable part of creation. In their projected otherness, they ultimately help challenge and bring into relief the distinguishing attributes of the self. In the medieval texts of this study, a reflection of the concepts of ‘self’ and ‘other’ is seen in heroic and monstrous figures respectively. It will be shown how monsters help mould the heroic self as heroes simultaneously subsume monstrous characteristics and use them as materia prima to enforce their own world order. Despite explicit claims on the part of the hero to ‘cleanse’ the earth of the dirt embodied in the monstrous, he himself is bound to enflesh the very impurities he wishes to efface. In the end, the ex-centricity of the hero renders him more of a double than an opposite to the monstrous other.

The extensive studies carried out on the ‘monstrous’ betoken man’s fascination with the extra-ordinary.\textsuperscript{131} True to their etymologies, monsters, both ‘show’ and ‘warn’. Both Isidore and St. Augustine, who have suggested the above etymologies, regarded monstrosities as a part of

\textsuperscript{131} As early as 1941, Mikhail Bakhtin, who sighted in the ‘giant’ the site of forbidden jouissance, composed Rabelais and his World (1941 in the original Russian), which has proven to be quite influential in appreciating the ‘carnivalesque’ that leads to the formation of the collective body formed in the midst of orgiastic feasting showcased in the bodily boundlessness of the giant. Around the same time, a monumental article on the geography of the monsters was written by Rudolf Wittkower entitled “Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters” (1942) delineating the many details surrounding ‘ethnographical monsters’, which came to inspire many succeeding scholars delving into tetralogy, including John Block Friedman. Friedman’s own The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought (1981) has blazed a trail in bringing to the fore a variety of issues including the diversity of monsters, their topography and etymology. More recently, however, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen in Monster Theory: Reading Culture (1997) adopting a more analytic approach towards the subject, has put forth seven different modes of defining the monstrous. Cohen’s theory has broadened our perspective of the monstrous and instead of viewing the monster as the fearsome ‘Other’, we have begun to appreciate its various utilities including its embodiment of tabooed desires. Last but definitely not least, Julia Kristeva’s Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection (1982) in which she has elaborated on the concept of the ‘abject’, has proven to be useful in the study of monsters. Kristeva’s explications on the ‘abject’ (coming from the Latin abicere meaning ‘to throw away’) has helped shed light on our reading of the monster as the abjected ‘Other’.
creation and not contra naturam. It is also worth noting that the Latin term monstrum, from which ‘monster’ takes its origin, does not always signify ‘monsters’ in the sense of demonic creatures and could also refer to signs and portents. R.D. Williams points out that the term monstrum in The Aeneid has been used to convey ‘a vast and supernatural agent of evil’ only five other times in the course of The Aeneid including the wooden horse (Bk. II: 245), the Harpies (III: 214), Polyphemus (III:658), Fama (IV:181) and Cacus (8.198). As these examples demonstrate, the ‘monstrous’ in the sense of ‘demonic’ can take on a variety of forms including an embodiment of Mischwesen. For example, mention can be made of the half-female Harpies and half-human Cacus, a being of extra-ordinary size and features, as evidenced in the one-eyed giant, Polyphemus and a portent of great hazards ahead, the Trojan Horse. In fact, being along the margins, in the grey zone of neither here nor there, and ultimately, in the terra incognita, is a defining characteristic of the monstrous.

Given their ex-centric nature, monsters are a great source of marvel as they endow our world with further colours and nuances and become a sight of wonder on grounds of their rarity. As St. Augustine has posited: “Yet there is a clear distinction between what has by nature persisted in the majority, and what is marvelous by its very rarity” (DCD XVI: 8). In the first encounters with the monstrous Other, we are stricken with a sense of wonder that accentuates their

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132 In Etymologiae (XI: 3), Isidore writes that “monstrosities, as Varro says, are creatures born which seem to be against nature, yet they are not against nature, because they have come about as a result of divine will…” (“Portenta esse ait Varro quae contra naturam nata videntur; sed non sunt contra naturam, quia divina voluntate fiunt…”). Speaking about a man with feet that are crescent-shaped, with only two toes on each and hands, which are like his feet, St. Augustine rhetorically asks: “Surely, then we shall not on this account deny, shall we, that this man is descended from that one man who was first created?” (Num igitur istum propter hoc negabimus ex illo uno, qui primus creatus est, esse propagatum?, DCD XVI: 8).

133 See R.D. Williams’s explanation on V. I: 455.

134 Categorizing Fama poses some difficulties, as Vergil focuses on a number of her organs individually (tongues, mouths, ears, feathers) to create a mythic creature that would represent the hazards embodied in ‘Rumour’, what is; however, significant is its enormous size (monstrum horrendum, ingens in line 181) and hybridity in having feathers and more human organs such as ears. For further information, refer to, for example: Robert Rutherford Dyer, “Vergil’s Fama: A New Interpretation of Aeneid 4.173ff.”, Greece & Rome 36 (1989): 28–32.

135 Apparet tamen quid in pluribus natura obtinuerit et quid sit ipsa raritate mirabile.
différence, an apt term in indicating not only the monsters’ ‘difference’, but also a form of ‘deferral’ in terms of their construction of meaning. Wonder, beyond any other particular emotion, creates a blockage that disables any identification. As Stephen Greenblatt ascertains: “[…] unlike the other passions that have good or evil as their objects and hence involve the heart, wonder has only knowledge as its object and thus occurs strictly in the brain. […] The object that arouses wonder is so new that for a moment at least it is alone, unsystematized, an utterly detached object of rapt attention” (19–20).

There are diverse sides to the marvelous including a feeling of immobilization as well as that of “delicious variety and loveliness” (Greenblatt, Marvelous 76). In Beowulf, the sense of wonder attached to the monsters becomes palatable only after the monstrous body has undergone dismemberment, an example of which bodies forth in Grendel’s decapitated head being described as ‘a wondrous spectacle’ (wrætlic whîteseon, line 1650a) and the dead dragon described as an ‘extremely remarkable creature’ (syllicran wiht, line 3038b). Similarly, in The Aeneid, once the monstrous Cacus is turned into a carcass (cadaver, Bk. VIII: 264), “men cannot sate their hearts with gazing on the terrible eyes, the face, the shaggy bristling chest of the fierce half-wild creature and the quenched fires of his throat” (lines 265–67).136 Cohen attributes this ocular fascination with the severed head of the monster to what Slavoj Žižek terms “an excess of sticky enjoyment”, a part of a signifying chain which “although saturated with meaning, paradoxically repels signification” (Of Giants 66). The decapitated head of the monster is also a spectacle of empowerment in the sense that the once mighty object and/or subject of the gaze,

136 Nequent expleri corda tuendo/ terribilis oculos, vultum villosaque saetis pectora semiferi atque extinctos faucibus ignis.
having been brought under full control, does not have the means to look back and is frozen into nothingness.¹³⁷

Monsters, in addition to being sources of marvel, can be incarnations of topographical wonders, an example of which appears in The Shahnameh, in the monster-ridden path Rustam undertakes to reach the tabooed territory of the dīvs over the longer but safer way.¹³⁸ As he is told: “Choose the shorter way, but experience ‘marvel’” (shīgifī, II. 19: 251) and as is imparted to the reader, the hero will experience a diverse spectrum of monsters ranging from the dīvs to a personification of impenetrable darkness. Later on, the White Dīv’s domain is explicitly compared to an ‘inferno’ (dūzakh, II. 42: 565) and in its impenetrable darkness bears a resemblance to the den of Cacus as described in The Aeneid: “Here used to be a cave, in a vast remote retreat, where the horrible shape of the semi-human Cacus dwelt, inaccessible to the rays of sun” (Bk. VIII: 193–95).¹³⁹ The similarity between the habitats of the two monsters is crystallized in the phrase ‘bottomless cave’, which constitutes the White Dīv’s habitat (II. 42: 552) — most likely given the latter’s aversion to the sun (implied in line 555). Similar attributes define the habitat of Grendel and his mother in Beowulf. In its otherness, the mere housing the two monsters, resembles an infernal otherworld. Meanwhile, the habitat of the dragon in Tristan is in the ‘wilderness’ (wilde, line 9065) the shagginess of which befits such a mysterious monster as the dragon. The *double-entendre* evoked by the term ‘territory’ is worth noting here, for etymologically the term derives from both *terra* (‘earth’) and *terrere* (‘to frighten’), therefore, *territorium* is ‘a place from which people are frightened off’ (Bhabha 99–100).

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¹³⁷ As the Beowulf-poet informs us: ‘from Grendel’s eyes’, in are said to ‘gleam very much light fire, an ugly light’ (*him of eagum stod ligge gelicost leoht unfæger*, lines 726b–7).

¹³⁸ Dīvs, unlike monstra, always convey an element of evil and their demonization is greatly believed to have been associated with geographical factors. See, for example, T. Burrow, “The Proto-Indoaryans”, JRAS 2 (1973): 123–140.

¹³⁹ *Hic spelunca fuit, vasto summota recessu,/ semihominis Cact facies quam dira tenebat,/ solis inaccessam radiis.*
The intensity of the experience associated with the marvelous gives way to an exploration of alterity, as one begins to identify elements of dissimilitude setting the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ apart. Since monsters are believed to enflesh ‘Otherness’, any study of them, inevitably, gives rise to a wide-ranging spectrum of discourses dealing, in different forms and shapes, with the concept of alterity including (post)colonialism, geography and gender studies. Yet, in the study of monsters, we are ultimately dealing with the otherness of the Self.\textsuperscript{140} The sense of otherness is redoubled when dealing with the Middle Ages, imbued with an alterity of its own, during which man’s constant struggle against natural scourges was translated into combats between heroes and monsters.\textsuperscript{141} At any rate, monsters are our own creation, a projection of our own imagination and were especially prevalent during the Middle Ages, when the disenchantment of the world had not fully set in. It could be argued, however, that the omnipresence of monsters hints at a lingering sense of enchantment with the world as in adding the world with a touch of the mysterious, they succeed in preventing our lives from stagnating in a prosaic realm of existence.

Othering and monsterization have constantly been coupled with an emphasis on topographical idiosyncrasies, instances of which abound throughout colonial history including the monsterization of the ‘Saracens’, at one point, merely a general designation for ‘desert-dwellers’ in the Syrian desert (Retso 464). The twelfth-century epic poem of \textit{Chanson de Roland} provides us with examples of early monsterization techniques which fall within the context of colonialism.\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{140} According to Charles Dahlberg, by overcoming ‘imponderable forces’, the warrior also discovers his own self, and a cosmos is established out of chaos, in which ‘the Other’ had held absolute reign (53). A more esoteric perspective of the ‘Other’ is offered by Albrecht Classen, “Monsters, Devils, Giants, and other Creatures: ‘The Other’ in Medieval Narratives and Epics, with Special Emphasis on Middle High German Literature”, \textit{Canon and Canon Transgression in Medieval German Literature}. Ed. Albrecht Classen (Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1993): 83–121.

\textsuperscript{141} For a better understanding of the alterity of the Middle Ages, refer to, for example: H.R. Jauss, “The Alterity and Modernity of Medieval Literature”, \textit{N LH} 10(1979): 181–229.

\textsuperscript{142} ‘Saracens’, whose etymology has been disputed between those claiming it to be a corrupted form of the Arabic \textit{sharqiyyin} (شَرَقُّيَنَّ) meaning ‘Easterners’, and others, believing it to mean ‘without Sarah’, (given the Muslims’ association with Ishmael, son of Abraham’s handsmaid, Hagar and not Sarah’s son, Isaac) gained currency during
grounds of their anatomical and geographical differences, the Saracens are rendered into monsters. The text speaks of “Ethiopia, a cursed land, the black men […] had big noses and winnowing ears” (E Ethiope, une tere maldite. La neire gent […]; Granz unt les nes e lees les oreilles, lines 1916–18). Additionally, Roland comments on the Saracens as follows: “[… ] a cursed people, blacker than ink; their only whiteness is their teeth” (… la contredite gent / ki plus sunt neirs que nen est arrement, / Ne n'unt de blanc ne mais que sul les denz , lines 1931–34). Ethiopia and India, more than an actual topographical entity, were believed to be a representation of an otherworld, a site waiting to be explored and colonized by the powerful agents of the Occident.143

As man struggled to conquer the earth and render the environment more hospitable, the many hazards encountered on his way were potentially interpreted as monsters and demons. Claude Lecouteux asserts that the earlier inhabitants of the Earth were believed to have been giants (though, according to some accounts, angels preceded them) and that the planet was peopled with non-human creatures under a diversity of appellations such as “dragons, gods, spirits, demons or fallen angel” (Démens 36). Thus, the whole world would turn into a univers hanté as each of these creatures became associated with a particular topographical zone, in a way, transforming into genii loci. Drawing on Hebraic and later on, Islamic accounts, Lecouteux concludes that demons haunted desolate, remote or unclean areas such as ruins, deserts and latrines (Démens 36) which gives added meaning to the hero’s task of ‘cleansing’, a theme

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143 In medieval mappae mundi as well, monstrous races used to be represented on the peripheries including in the southernmost part of Africa as well as India. For more details on medieval cartography in general and the topographical portrayal of monstrous races refer to Alfred Hiatt, “Mapping the ends of the Empire”, Postcolonial Approaches to the European Middle Ages. Ed. Ananya Jahnara Kabir and Deanne Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2005): 48–76. Also useful is John Block Friedman’s elaboration on the topography of the monstrous races as depicted in a number of medieval maps, see: “At the Found Earth’s Imagined Corners”, The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981): 37–58.
particularly prominent in the feats of Rustam and Beowulf, as shall be discussed shortly in this chapter.

At the core of cleansing lies the strategy of othering those who do not belong to the familiar group of ‘us’, hence, it is not unreasonable to suggest a discourse of proto-colonialism at work in a large number of ancient texts dealing with monstrous races. As Andrea Rossi-Reder has argued, works such as Ctesias’s *Indika* and the Anglo-Saxon *Wonders of the East* “show clearly that European prejudice toward non-Westerners was documented as early as the classical and medieval periods and that an early relative of what now is termed colonial discourse was already the literary method used to create difference between West and East” (53). An inherent component of colonialism, given its original meaning of (land) ‘cultivation’ (*colo*, amongst other things, means ‘to cultivate’), is inherently bound up with geography, including its ancillary branches of topography and climate geography, both of which have been important for cartographers drawing up *mappae mundi* to determine the location of monstrous races.\(^\text{144}\)

Conquest of new territories and consequent construction of monuments, as shall be demonstrated in this chapter, constitute epistemological or existential beginnings and as such are prone to harbour the monstrous just as the creation of the universe is to have had, in both its microcosmic and macrocosmic scales.\(^\text{145}\) At the very heart of *creatio*, lies the *serpens* who sows the seeds of destruction. Both creation and the serpent can appear in a variety of forms. In *Beowulf*, the humanoid Grendel becomes a destructive force plaguing the Danish mead-hall,

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144 John Block Friedman identifies two kinds of maps that contain the monstrous races of the Orient: T-O maps and Macrobian zone maps. The former is based on a tripartite division of the world amongst the three sons of Noah, with Ham’s part, Africa, containing the monstrous races on its outmost edge. On the other hand, Macrobian maps which are based on a passage in Macrobius’s *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* on the climatic zones of the earth (regions of excessive cold or heat, with two temperate zones between the hot and cold regions) seek to inform us of where monstrous races are likely to be. Also of interest within this context is, for example: Asa Simon Mitman, *Maps and Monsters in Medieval England*. New York; London: Routledge, 2006.

145 That monsters are part and parcel of creation is also noted, for example, by Vergil in the conversation Anchises has with his son Aeneas in the Underworld. *Monstra* are mentioned alongside humans, beasts and flying creatures as the early products of creation (cf. *The Aeneid* Bk. VI: 724–29).
Heorot, a microcosmic example of creation. In *The Shahnameh*, Ferdowsi, heavily influenced by *The Avesta*, explicates the process of creation in detail, but instead of the Biblical serpent, the early human beings see themselves confronted with a host of dīvs. Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*, which set the foundation for Western romances, is not the only work where founders of a great empire such as ‘Magna Britannia’ have to contend with monsters to gain mastery over the earth. A similar situation, though not as explicit, occurs in *The Shahnameh*, where Kīyūmars, the originary man and first hero-king of the world, finds himself faced with the monstrous dīvs as he sets to establish a foothold on earth. In *The Denkard*, one of the sources that influenced Ferdowsi’s composition, Gayomard (who turns into ‘Kīyūmars’ in *The Shahnameh*) is expressly linked with the earth as his epithet *gelshah* (‘king of clay’) manifests. Furthermore, the survival of his race depends on Spendarmad or Mother Earth, who is both mother and wife to him (cf. Dk. III: 80). That the dīvs drive a wedge between man and Mother Nature is mentioned in *The Denkard* where Gayomard’s direct descendants, Mashi and Mashyāneh, are told that the dīvs can disturb the growth of crops (Bk.VII:13). As Mashi and Mashyāneh and later on, their descendants expand their control over the earth and animals, the dīvs manifest themselves as counter-forces. Little wonder then that there is a correlation between prosperity and domination over the dīvs. Jamshīd’s reign, for the most part, constitutes the golden age on the basis of his ability to harness the dīvs’ innate powers as he sets to expand his control over the earth. Yet, surprisingly, the dīvs, as noted by Zabihullah Safa, are not that much different from humans upon closer circumspection (601). In fact, as noted by Safa, the concept of

146 For a better understanding of the microcosmic and macrocosmic imagery in *Beowulf*, reference, can, for example, be made of Holly Jagger, *Body, Text and Self in Old English Verse: A Study of “Beowulfian” and “Cynemwulfian” Rhetoric*, PhD. Diss. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2002): 16–78.

147 This appellation seems to have been an accidental (maybe an erroneous) replacement of ‘gar-shah’, meaning ‘king of the mountain’, as suggested by *The Cambridge History of Iran* 3 (1) ‘possibly under the influence of Biblical myths of creation and a misreading of Pahlavi *r* for *l*, both of which have the same shape in cursive writing’ (420).
the divs, seems to have originated from the Iranian tribes’ early enemies who were of a robust stature and a belligerent disposition (603).

The demonization of the Other, far from being limited to colonial and cartographical discourses, carries over to the area of gender studies as women and the male Other are monsterized by, respectively, being ascribed monstrous origins or predilections and tarnished with images of overmasculinity. The giant of the Mountain of St. Michel in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae* is virtually ungendered as his boundless lust drives him to repeatedly rape the old nurse of Helena, the niece of Duke Hoel, whom he had kidnapped along with Helena herself. The same applies to the Arab dragon-king Zahhāk in *The Shahnameh* who has a massive harem full of women. Meanwhile, some of the women in Ferdowsi’s poem are further demonized in being attributed monstrous origins. Rustam’s mother, Rūdābeh, for example, is said to be a descendent of Zahhāk and the two sisters Shahnāz and Arnavāz learn the art of sorcery from Zahhāk. Demonization of women also occurs in *Beowulf*, where Grendel’s mother is doubly monsterized as her adventures “are framed by descriptions of other women for iconic contrast” (Chance 251). Within the context of the works studied in this dissertation, *Tristan* proves to have a different outlook on the female other, since the demonization of women, at times, gives way to their idealization. For example, Princess Isolde, the loveliest woman in the kingdom, turns into a coveted prize for any man who should be able to slay the dragon that has brought so much pain on the inhabitants of Ireland. There is, however, a yet a different perspective on the association of the female figures with the monstrous, especially, since the two ladies at the helm of Ireland are imbued with the African

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148 The old nurse recounts how once Helena dies under the pressure of fear, “the giant inflamed with accursed desire, against my will bears upon me (let God and old age) violence and force” (Bk.X: iii).

exoticism associated with the brother/ uncle figure: Gurman. One could easily argue that the arcane aura surrounding the two Isoldes, which, particularly, manifests itself in their extraordinary remedial powers, borders on the monstrous.

Alongside their negativity, one can hardly deny the monsters’ vital role in enhancing the process of male maturation and the coming of age of heroic figures. In posing as obstacles, they not only bring out the best in the heroes, but also serve as hideous foils to them. In The Shahnameh, the domination of Rustam over a multiplicity of monsters in the ‘Seven Trials’ (Haft Khān) marks his coming of age. In a similar vein, Beowulf’s ‘transformation’ (edwenden) possibly occurred upon becoming ‘stained’ (fah, line 420a) with the blood of the monsters he conquered. In anthropological terms, it is the encounter with ‘dirt’, which, as Mary Douglas explicates, encompasses the broader realm of ‘disorder’ (2), that exposes the hero to the realm of the ‘Unknown’ and leads to extraordinary insight and powers. Similarly, the onset of Tristan’s heroic individuation is marked by his victory over Morold, who, though biologically more man than monster, hails from the ‘unknown’ realm of Africa and is delineated in monstrous terms. In fact, the function of monsters as agents of male maturation is the most prominent in Tristan which is more invested in the initiation of the hero into manhood than anything elses.

Significantly, upon closer investigation, the monster proves more of a double than an opponent to the heroic figure. As soon as monster and hero get entangled in a heated hand-to-hand combat, as is clearly the case in Beowulf’s combat against Grendel in Heorot, differences between the two parties dissipate to the extent that they become each others’ Doppelgänger. In order to highlight the blurred boundaries between the monstrous and the heroic, it is important to note that it would be impossible for the heroic to be devoid of the monstrous element, given the

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150 Here, a parallel can be drawn in the invincibility of Isfandiyār which occurs after he bathes in the blood of a demonic Simurgh (cf. VI. 297: 1279).
postulate that in any oppositional struggle, one is bound to incorporate the Other and thereby reinstate its powers. Opposed as the hero is to his monstrous adversary, he ends up re-encoding part of the enemy’s monstrosity, an example of which appears in Firaidūn’s transformation into a dragon in *The Shahnameh* when he approaches his sons in the figure of the dragon, the very creature he has overpowered (I. 103–6). One becomes witness to a form of ‘sublation’ which is the English rendition of the Hegelian concept of *Aufhebung*, “literally meaning ‘lifting up’, ‘negating’, and ‘conserving’ — roughly speaking, the incorporation of a prior stage or concept by a subsequent one” (Hermann 55).

Both hero and monster are embodiments of deviations from the norm; however, while the former is esteemed, the latter is denigrated. What is also intriguing about the monster-hero dichotomy is that even prior to their physical confrontation the monster does not represent the ‘Other’ in the absolute sense of the term as it evinces signs of humanity. In Homi Bhabha’s words: “what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different — a mutation, a hybrid” (111). Conversely, the monster is never totally monstrous. After all, Grendel, though described as ‘fiend from hell’ (*feond on helle*, line 101b) and ‘grim ghost’ (*grimma gæst*, line 102a), is also a ‘wretched man’ (*wonsæli wer*, line 105a) and ‘man/warrior’ (*rinc*, line 720). As such, Grendel is both man and beast, hence a hybrid. Neither does his possession of human characteristics come as a surprise, since he is a ‘kin of Cain’ (*Caines cynne*, line 107) and is associated with ‘giants’ (*eotenes*) and ‘elves’ (*ylfe*) in line 112, who “presumably refer to man-shaped monsters large and small” (*Pride* 69). In defying categories, Grendel, in a sense, is even more terrifying than the dragon who is classified as ‘Other’ in a more absolute sense. Similarly,

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151 In his analysis of the *Beowulf*-manuscript, Orchard has noted how “despite the clear antagonism between the worlds of monsters and men, there is, as in the Passion of Christopher and Judith in the same manuscript, something deeply human about the ‘monsters’. All are given human attributes at some stage, and the poet even goes so far as to evoke our sympathy for their plight” (*Pride* 29).
in *The Shahnameh*, the monster-king, Zahhāk is a prime example of a hybrid which comes about as a result of a metamorphosis. In *Tristan*, Morold is only a hybrid in essence, for morphologically he is a man, albeit much stronger and bigger than the average man, yet, he is explicitly a devil in disguise as is indicated by the term ‘devilish’ (*vâland*, line 6213), later on, used in reference to the dragon (line 9048).

In addition to discussing monstrous bodies, this chapter will further highlight their significance as *suppléments* in fostering the zone of becoming that transpires in the course of heroic combats.\(^{152}\) Without the role of monstrous beings as *suppléments*, heroic bodies would not be able to experience maturation, nor be entitled to enforce their new World Order. Monsters are embedded in creation and are bound to rise in Frankensteinian fashion as soon as an act of creation is consummated. Moreover, true as it is that monstrous bodies tend to be associated with dirt, in its broader sense of ‘disorder’, the hero himself has to be tainted with their impurities to be able to go through a series of *rites de passage*.

### 2.1. *Beowulf*: Dirt of Darkness

One such impurity is embodied in the figure of Grendel. In fact, upon his arrival in Denmark Beowulf claims his express mission to be the cleansing of Heorot. The OE verb *fælsian* will later on be used in reference to the Danish mead-hall (cf. lines 825a; 1176b) and also with regard to the mere housing Grendel and his mother (cf. line 1620b). Significantly, the use of *fælsian* in the passage below comes in the wake of the first instances where Beowulf mentions how he had been ‘stained with the blood of his opponents’ (*fah from feondum*, line 420a). It thus becomes obvious that one has to be contaminated with the very dirt one is intent on eliminating. Only

\(^{152}\) Here, I have taken Jacques Derrida’s interpretation of *supplément* as both “substitution” and “accretion” (*Of Grammatology* 200) into consideration.
upon being tainted and belonging to the zone of ‘dirt’, can the hero conquer ‘dirt’. The following
lines come at a point when the hero has already assumed a monstrous dimension as a result of his
former exploits and is requesting to ‘cleanse’ the Danish centre of communion:

Ic þe nuða,
brego Beorht-dena, biddan wille,
eodor Scyldinga, anre bene,
þæt ðu me ne forwyrne, wigendra hleo,
freowine folca, nu ic þus feorran com,
þæt ic mote ana, ond minra eorla gedryht,
ond þes hearda heap Heorot faelsian.

[At this point, lord of the Bright-Danes, the protector of the Scyldings, I wish to make
one request: that you do not refuse me, defence of the warriors, noble friend of the
people, now that I have come from afar, that I alone and my troop of retainers and the
band of hardy fighters may cleanse Heorot]

The singularity of Beowulf’s mission has been stressed by his repeated use of an (‘one’) in
reference to his ‘single’ request (line 428b), by his plan to practically cleanse the hall ‘alone’
(431a) and earlier, by his intent to settle matters with Grendel ‘alone’ (line 425b). Only he who
has already been tainted by monstrous impurities can overcome the monstrous, hence the
singularity of the heroic mission. The Beowulf-poet is not the only one invoking the hero as an
agent of ‘cleansing’, similar instances are related in other medieval texts. An example appears in
the fourteenth-century Grettis Saga, where the endeavours of its hero, Grettir, to rid the land of
evil forces are described as acts of ‘cleansing’ (cf. Ch. 67). Cleansing is also an express outcome
of a number of heroic exploits in The Shahnameh, one of which, for example, involves Zahhāk,
an embodiment of ‘dirt’, as is evident in his description as ‘impure’ (nā-pāk, I. 81: 430; 83: 456;
85: 492). It is Firaidūn who embarks upon the ‘cleansing’ (shustan, line 491); yet, as is the case
with Beowulf, the hero ends up subsuming the dirt of draconitas to a degree that he acquires the
ability to transform himself into a dragon at will. Elsewhere in Ferdowsi’s poem, the association of monsters with dirt is also expressly brought to the fore, for example, in ‘The Seven Trials’, where the witches of the ‘Fourth Trial’ are termed as ‘agents of dirt’ (rīman, II. 30: 408), who, on the basis of Zoroastrian doctrines, are obliged to undergo ‘thirty washings’ (Williams 161). Furthermore, Rustam evidently tainted by the spilt blood of the defeated dragon, engages in an act of ablation in the ‘Third Trial’ (II. 29: 383). Aside from representing disorder, dirt or defilement, can closely be linked to evil and social misfortunes, although, some of the arguments surrounding its categorization have become subjective to the extreme, so much so, that the leaping of a frog into fire, has been read by some people as a token of defilement. Whether regarded as a sign of disorder, evil or misfortune, there exists no definitive modus operandi to wash away monstrous stains, for once contaminated by monsters, the hero begins to incorporate monstrous attributes which he had attempted to eliminate in the first place. In most cases, incorporation of elements of the defeated monster is empowering, a prominent example of which appears in the invincibility of Siegfried in Das Nibelungenlied, and even in Tristan, where, initially, the literal incorporation of draconitas manifests itself in a weakening of Tristan’s state of being.

Grendel is not only associated with ‘dirt’ but also with ‘darkness’ as the Beowulf-poet relates: “he who abode in darkness, endured grievously for a time that he heard rejoicing each day, loud in the hall’ (earfōðlice/ þrage gehelode, se þe in þystrum bad,/þæt he dogora gehwam dream gehyrde/ hludne in healle, lines 86b–89a). In view of the fact that darkness was believed to have been an agency for evil deeds, given its association with the unknown during the literally ‘dark’

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153 Firaidūn has also been referred to as an afsūngar (‘enchanter’) in The Shahnameh (cf. Safa, 467).
Middle Ages, one could claim that Grendel is thus doubly demonized.\textsuperscript{155} His association with darkness endows him with an evil aspect, as is the case with the White Dīv of \textit{The Shahnameh} and other monsters in medieval literature, for example, Cacus in \textit{The Aeneid} whose cave was inaccessible to sun rays.\textsuperscript{156} Darkness and monsters are at times so inextricably linked that Bryan Palmer’s labeling of the monster as “the quintessential terror of the dark and its unknowns” (119), makes perfect sense. What is even more intriguing about Grendel is that he becomes a “concretion of the night — he \textit{is} the night gathered into shape” (Rosier, “Heafod” 137). This is obvious in the lines anticipating his invasion of Heorot once more, with the difference that Beowulf is lurking for him: ‘The walker of darkness came stalking through the dark night’ (\textit{Come wanre niht/ scriðan sceadugenga}, lines 702b–3a). Additionally, in being called a ‘walker of darkness’ (\textit{sceadugenga}, line 703a), ‘Grendel’s outcast state, as one deprived of God’s light’ (Greenfield, “Grendel’s” 280) is further highlighted. The binary opposition of the forces of light and darkness embodied, respectively, in the figures of Ormazd and Ahrīman in Zoroastrian lore, comes to light in \textit{The Shahnameh} as well. In Ferdowsi’s poem, darkness constitutes part of the ‘Seven Trials’ and follows Rustam’s mastery over the witches, when he has already taken on demonic powers as is evident in his monstrous treatment of a local farmer (II. 32: 433–35) which can be paralleled with Beowulf’s treatment of the Frankish champion, Dæghrefn (lines 2506b–8a).\textsuperscript{157} Furthermore, Ferdowsi personifies the Night as a \textit{zangī} (‘a black person’, II. 31: 419).

Also, the White Dīv operates best in darkness, hence, Olād’s recommendation that Rustam attack the monster at dawn (II. 41: 555).

\textsuperscript{155} For further information of the demonic aspects of night in the Middle Ages, see, for example: Deborah Youngs and Simon Harris, “Demonizing the Night”, \textit{The Monstrous Middle Ages} (Toronto and Buffalo, University of Toronto: 2003): 134–54.

\textsuperscript{156} That the agency of evil is bound up with darkness is clearly manifest in the overt association between Ahrīman and darkness in Zoroastrianism (cf. \textit{GBd}, I: 3–4).

\textsuperscript{157} In both cases, the hero, manifests monstrosity in dealing with human adversaries. For further details on Beowulf’s attack on Dæghrefn, see, for example: \textit{Pride and Prodigies} (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1995): 33.
In addition to being associated with dirt and darkness, Grendel’s monstrosities come to light in the topography he represents, the moors, marshes and fastness, places that are by nature, isolated and inhospitable to humankind. No wonder, since Grendel and the ‘monster race’ (fifelcynn) have actually been condemned to these unwelcome spaces:

Wæs se grimma gæst Grendel haten, 
märe mearcstapa, se þe moras heold, 
fen ond fæsten; fifelcynnes eard 
wonsæli wer weardode hwile, 
sibðan him scyppend forscrifn hæfde 
in Caines cynne

[The grim spirit was called Grendel, a notorious prowler of the outskirts, who held the moors, marshes and fastness. Unhappy man, he lived for a time in the home of the monster race after god had proscribed them as kin of Cain.]

As Andy Orchard has suggested Grendel’s dwelling-place, which is “described or implied by a bewildering number of terms (mearc, moras, fen fæsten, and fifelcynnes eard) have as their common feature, their remoteness from human habitation” (Pride 59). Later on, when Grendel’s habitat is delineated in further detail, it becomes clear that it bears certain aspects which render it a living image of hell on earth. This is not quite surprising given that based on popular belief there existed a connection between hell and morasses.\textsuperscript{158} Additionally, the correlation between the visual configuration of the habitat of Grendel and his mother and the apocryphal \textit{Visio S. Pauli} have already been investigated by various scholars.\textsuperscript{159} The most articulate image of the terror reigning over the mere is perhaps the hart, who when even

\textsuperscript{158} For further details, see, for example: S. Bugge, \textit{The Home of the Eddic Poems} (London: 1899): lxxiv. Similarly, the habitat of the White Dīv is referred to as ‘hell’ as noted earlier.

\textsuperscript{159} Richard Morris was the first to point out the parallel existing between Saint Paul’s vision of Hell according to Blickling Homily XVI. For further details regarding these parallels, refer to, for example: Andy Orchard, \textit{A Critical Companion to Beowulf} (Rochester, New York: 2003):155–58.
chased by a pack of hounds, would rather give up its life on the brink of the water than plunge within:

Hie dygel lond
warigeað, wulfhleoþu, windige næssas,
frecne fengelad, ðær fyrgenstream
under næssa genipu niþer gewiteð,
flod under foldan. Nis þæt feor heonon
milgemearces þæt se mere standeð;
ofer þæm hongiað hrinde bearwas,
wudu wyrtum fæst wæter oferhelmað.
Đær mæg nihta gehwæm niðwundor seon,
fyr on flode. No þæs frod leofað
gumena bearna, þæt ðone grund wite.
Đeah þe hæðstapa hundum geswenced,
heorot hornum trum, holtwudu sece,
feorran geflymed, ær he feorh seleð,
aldor on ofre, ær he in wille
hafelan [beorgan]; nis þæt heoru stow!  

[They inhabit a secret land, wolf-slopes, windswept headlands, dangerous fen-tracks, where the mountain-stream passes down the darkness of the headlands, the flood under the earth. It is not far from here, measured in miles, that the mere stands; over it hang frosty groves, trees firmly rooted overshadow the water. There one can each night see a dreadful wonder, fire on water. No one lives so wise of the sons of men that he may know the bottom. Though the hart, strong in the horns, is harassed by the hounds, may seek out the forest when driven from afar, he would rather give up life and spirit on the shore than hide his head there.]

The combination of fire and water, two incongruous elements as noted in Chapter 1, is a monstrous admixture in its own right. Burning water is a common feature of visions of hell.  

Rustam, a heroic monster, owes his marvelous characteristics to being affiliated with those two elements in The Shahnameh as is his presumed Avestan prototype, Apām Napāt. The image of

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160 Andy Orchard has used the verb *helan* (‘to hide’) instead of *beorgan* in line 1372 on grounds that it maintains both the double alliteration and assonance that is characteristic of the aural embellishment of the text at key moments (47–48, A Companion).

161 See, for example, E. Becker, The Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell (Johns Hopkins University, diss.,1899): 37.
the hart is significant in various ways including its ubiquity as prey in world literature which shall be discussed in the following chapter. Additionally, the ‘hart’ is evocative in many ways of the susceptibility of Heorot itself. For one thing, the OE term heorot, signifies ‘hart’, as pointed out by Joyce Tally Lionarons: “The name of the building, Heorot, or ‘hart’ suggests that we see the hall as analogous to the animal. In addition, it is quite literally a bansele or ‘bone-hall’ because it is banfag ‘adorned with bone’ (780), most likely a reference to its being decorated or marked with a stag’s antlers” (Bodies 44). In addition, Andy Orchard has highlighted the significance of the alliterative heorot hornum trum (‘hart strong in horns’) in line 1369a and the fact that it conjures “images of the imperiled Danish hall, Heorot, with its wide gables (horngeap, line 82a; hornreced, line 704a)” (A Companion 156). The ‘hart’ also conjures up Heorot’s image of community and conviviality noticeably absent from the mere. It is worth noting that the image of the reluctant hart is evocative of The Aeneid (Bk.VI: 233), though the hart is replaced by ‘flying creatures’ (volantes) who dare not approach Avernus: \[spelunca alta fuit vastoque immanis hiatu, scrupae, tuta, lacu nigro nemorumque tenebris, quam super haudd ullae poterant impune volantes tendere iter pinnis: talis sese halitus atris faucibus effundens super ad convexa ferebat unde locum Grai dixerunt nomine Averrnum.\]

\[A deep cave there was yawning wide and vast, rough with stones, safe by the black lake and the darkness of groves, over which no flying creature could safely fly their way: such a vapor from those dark jaws poured into the vault of heavens when the Greeks spoke of the name of Avernus\]

\[162\] For further elaboration and guide to references on the parallel between the two passages, see, for example: Andy Orchard, Pride and Prodigies (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1995): 44, n. 87. For further parallels between The Aeneid and Beowulf, see, for example: Klaeber, Friedrich. “Aeneis und Beowulf”, Archiv Für Das Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen 126 (1911): 337–59.
Topographical monstrosity is expressed in similar terms in the description of the den of the White Dīv in *The Shahnameh*, which, neither birds nor harts dare approach (cf. II. 36: 476; 482). Similarly, the topography of both the dragon and the giant Urgan li Vilus in *Tristan* articulates an otherness justifying their dismemberment at the hands of the hero, who, defying all odds and fearing none of the geographical oddities of the monstrous habitat, ventures within to cleanse the space, although he is bound to get tainted during the process. As Ranulf Higden, British chronicler of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, has posited: “Note that at the farthest reaches of the world often occur new marvels and wonders, as though Nature plays with greater freedom secretly at the edges of the world than she does openly and nearer to us in the middle of it” (361). The association between topographical extremities and extreme marvels has been depicted as early as Pliny’s *Naturalis Historia* (c. 77 A.D.) as is evident in the following: “Chiefly India and parts of Ethiopia teem with marvels. The biggest animals are born in India, for example, Indian dogs are bigger than any others. In fact, the trees are said to be of such height that they cannot be overtopped by arrows” (Bk. VII: 21).163 It is not, however, only the monster, but also the hero who lives on the edges of the world. In all three primary texts of this study, the heroes hail from afar. Indeed, it is their exilic quality and consequently their mobility that makes them capable of conquering the monstrous.

Grendel is clearly mobile in being depicted as venturing into the heart of the Danish community, snatching thirty Danes and going off ‘to seek his home’ (*wica neosan*, line 125b). Yet, the scope of his sway widens as he launches another attack the following night and begins to take hold over Heorot limiting Hrothgar’s space. Hrothgar remains king only in name as he sees himself doomed to seek refuge away from his established stronghold. The significance of

163 *Praecipue India Aethiopumque tractus miraculis scatent. Maxima in India gignuntur animalia: indicio sunt canes grandiores ceteris. Arbores quidem tantae proceritatis traduntur ut sagittis superiact nequeant*.
monsters is, however, as much space-bound as it is time-bound. Indeed, in being
contemporaneous with existence itself, they become an undeniable constituent of Being itself.

Grendel’s arrival on the scene, as is the case with the dīvs of The Shahnameh and the giants of
Historia Regum Britanniae, marks a milestone in coinciding with creation, albeit on a
microcosmic scale. His sudden presencing at the centre comes in the wake of the construction of
Heorot and its significance is intensified by the scop’s Cadmon-like celebration of creatio
mundi:

þær wæs hearpan sweg,
swutol sang scopes.         Sægde se þe cuþe 90
frumsceæft fira feorran reccan,
cwæð þæt se ælmihtiga eorðan worh(te),
whiteborhtne wang, swa wæter bebugeð,
gesette sigehræþig sunnan ond monan
leoman to leohte landbuendum 95
ond gefrætwede foldan sceatas
leomum ond leafum, lif eac gesceop
cynna gehwylcum þara ðe cwice hwyrfaþ.

[There was the sound of the harp, the clear song of the poet. He, who could recount the
creation of men from a distant past, spoke, said that the almighty made the earth, a
beautiful plain which the water encircles, triumphant, he established the sun and the
moon as luminaries to give light to the dwellers of the earth and adorned the corners of
the earth with branches and leaves. He also created life for each of the species that moves
about alive]

Only shortly after the praise of creation by a poet whose eloquence is highlighted by the use of
double alliterations does Grendel emerge onto the scene.\textsuperscript{164} Expressly indignant at tokens and

\textsuperscript{164} For a detailed analysis of the use of double alliteration in this passage refer to Andy Orchard, *A Critical

It is also not the first time that a particular sound has said to have upset a demonic creature. In the ancient
Mesopotamian myth of *Enuma Elish*, the monstrous embodiment of chaos, Tiamat gets upset over the loud noises
the gods were making and becomes intent on their destruction. Also, later in *Beowulf*, the dragon is angered over
hearing human speech (lines 2554–56a). As observed by Dean Miller, “what the [hero’s] cry ‘means’ rarely needs to
be glossed: the warrior’s fearsome sound becomes a weapon in itself” (230). The utterance of speech, on a
hermeneutical level, similar to an act of creation, gives rise to a new world. As the Bible attests, even God’s creation
is logocentric: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1: 1).
recollections of the act of creation and his subsequent exile he decides to attack the hall, the site of *communitas*. As David Williams has posited:

Indeed, the idea of exile requires the idea of the place from which this “going out” takes place, that counsel or community left behind, [...]. In general, the idea of community creates the definition and expresses the relative value assigned within the ideology to the individual and to the collective, and as its direct opposite, the idea of exile expresses the same thing but negatively. (“The Exile”, 1)

Grendel is expressly an exile and the wasteland that he has been condemned to, evokes an anti-hall, which instead of representing a locus of joy and togetherness, exudes an aura of gloominess and isolation. Indeed, the *Beowulf*-poet’s use of the term *niðsele* (‘hostile hall’, line 1513a) and *guðsele* (‘war-hall’, lines 443a; 2139a) in reference to the submarine residence of Grendel and his mother marks a contrast to the *winsele* (‘wine-hall’, line 695a) that Heorot was meant to be. In fact, the definition of the heroic and the monstrous hinges on such specular contrasts as both hero and monster are defined in light of each other.

As an exile, Grendel has no status assigned to him within the *communitas* which congregates at the mead-hall. It is thus not surprising to learn that no one knew his father, in a society where men are identified by their father’s name as is indicated by the use of phrases such as “son of Ecgtheow” (*bearn Ecgþeowes*) for Beowulf and “son of Ecglaf” (*Ecglafes bearns*, line 499b) for Hrothgar’s advisor, Unferth. The image of creation is one in which God has brought things

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165 The contrast is only evoked if one were to translate *winsele* as ‘wine-hall’, as I have done here, and not as ‘a hall of strife’, an alternative rendition of the word as suggested by my professor, Andy Orchard.

166 The phrase *bearn Ecgþeowes* occurs in the following lines: 529b, 631b, 957b, 1383b, 1473b, 1651b, 1817b, 1999b, 2177b and 2425b.
together as if in one body. As Williams has noted, “the word in Latin designating a people or group of families — *gens* — and that designating the joints of the body — *geniculum* — as well one might add, as the word for genitalia — *genitalis* — have a common root” (“The Exile”, 2). The monster’s attack is launched on the community and comes in reaction to having been abjected from its collective body.

Once Grendel departs from the peripheries to occupy the centre, one could argue that he becomes the anti-king of the Danish realm. Grendel, for one thing, is said to be ruling over all members of the Danish community: ‘Thus one ruled over all and strove against right until the best of houses stood empty’ (*Swa rixode ond wið rihte wan/ana wið eallum, oðþæt idel stod husa selest*, lines 144–46a). Although, as Jane Chance has argued, textual evidence supports labeling Grendel as a mock ‘hall-retainer’ (*healðegn*; *renward*, 770a) (252), I believe that he becomes more than a mock ‘hall-retainer’ in occupying the heart of the Danish community from where he exercises his reign of terror over all its members. The *Beowulf*-poet portrays Grendel, as occupying the centre, yet, in contradistinction to a *god cyning*, in that he is, in no way, has any bearings on the associations traditionally evoked by the throne as a site of communion and gift-giving for the king and his people. Therefore, it comes as no surprise to see Grendel being denied the love of the creator:

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Heorot eardode,
sincfae sel swærtum nihtum;
no he þone gifstol gretan moste,
maþðum for metode, ne his myne wisse.
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167 *Geniculum* takes its origins from *genu* (‘knee’ in Latin). For further details, see, for example: David Williams, *The Exile as Uncreator* (Mosaic 8.3, 1975): 2, n.6.
[He occupied Heorot, the richly decorated hall, through dark nights; he was not allowed by the creator to show respect for the gift-throne, the precious thing, nor did he feel love for it.] (lines 166a–69)\textsuperscript{168}

In certain ways, Grendel in being an outsider and anti-king to the Danish realm, resembles Zahhāk in \textit{The Shahnameh}, who as an Arab king depopulates the Iranian nation of its presumed working force, the male population. Zahhāk differs from Grendel in being the acknowledged ruler of Iran and an agent of the Creator for the punishment of the \textit{superbia} of his predecessor Jamshīd. Yet, they both engage in cannibalism, the details of which shall be discussed in Chapter 4, to rid the nation of its able-bodied members. There also exists a similarity between Grendel and Morold in \textit{Tristan}, an Irishman who strips the people of Cornwall of thirty of their sons each year. Grendel moves to the centre in reaction to the song of creation, which evokes memories of the abjection of his race from the collective body of the \textit{communitas}, to launch a counter-offensive against humankind.

When Grendel approaches Heorot, he comes with the intent of ‘ensnaring someone of human kind in the lofty hall’ (lines 712–13), although he himself belongs to mankind, at least, in part. His hybridization as a humanoid monster comes to the fore in the \textit{Beowulf}-poet’s use of terms such as \textit{rinc}, meaning ‘man’ or ‘warrior’ in line 720b or \textit{wer}, again, meaning ‘man’, versus terms such as ‘walker in darkness’ (\textit{sceadugenga}, line 703) and ‘giant’ (\textit{þyrs}, line 426). Grendel floats on the boundary of human and beast in form and appearance since his human attributes have never been fully disavowed.

Significantly, ‘Grendel’ also has a name, itself an indication of familiarity non-existent in the other monsters of the poem. As noted by Jacques Derrida “a monster is a species for which

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{168}]I have used Orchard’s translation of these lines (\textit{Pride} 62), whose interpretation has been a conundrum for centuries. For further details regarding the perplexity of this passage, refer to: \textit{Klaeber’s Beowulf: Fourth Edition} (Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 2008): 126–27.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
we do not have a name, [...] As soon as one perceives a monster in a monster, one begins to domesticate it” (Positions 386). However, the fact that Grendel has a name does not make him tame, although he does prove to be the easiest of the three primary monsters to be overcome at the hands of Beowulf. Moreover, his affinity with the human race is heightened as he moves from the peripheral mere to the central hall of communion: “for, as the poet brings Grendel from the moor, he brings him as well across the threshold of humanity” (O’Keeffe 487). It is this movement that lends him a name and turns him into a criminal assailant’ (mansceæða) (lines 712; 737) which as Orchard posits could imply man in double sense of ‘man’ (man) and ‘crime’ (mān) (Pride 31).

In dealing with monsters, it is significant to bear in mind that despite all the othering techniques used in their portrayal, they are made up of known elements, for after all, they are “a composition or hybridization of already known species” (Derrida, Positions 386). The marvel they incite is partially due to the fact that we recognize ourselves in them, even if in part and not in toto. The heroic Self and the monstrous Other are more like each others’ doubles than adversaries and this is concretely manifest in Beowulf’s hand-to-hand fight with Grendel in Heorot. Significantly, the setting of Beowulf’s first major monster-fight is subject to drastic changes as, it turns into a ‘third space’ of discursivity and transformability which is created in the wake of the confrontation between the ‘self’ and ‘other’. Little wonder then as to why Heorot literally moans and groans in the midst of the single combat, itself representative of the Danish community’s embryonic attempts at building a civitas. The distinction between Beowulf’s confrontation with Grendel in Heorot and Kīyūmars’s passive reaction to the onslaught of the ‘dīv-child’ in The Shahnameh is that in the former case, the hero is aware of the monster’s existence and fights him, albeit within the collapsible confines of Heorot, while in the latter, the hero-king is barely aware of the other’s
existence. Kīyūmars’s reaction is one of grief and retreat and quite natural given the early stages of man on earth, during which, man is only beginning to discover himself in light of his surroundings and has no clue as to how to cope with elements of otherness. Monsters, in constituting that Other against which the Self can be measured, prove to be essential in identity-formation and self-knowledge. Monsters are so indispensable to the understanding of the self that they can never be destroyed, always leaving traces in their wake.\(^\text{169}\)

In fact, the trail the monster leaves behind is crucial in guiding us to the source of otherness, the habitat of the monster. In *Beowulf*, Grendel’s footprints are mentioned twice, once in line 132a, shortly after he attacks Heorot the first time, and a second time, twelve years later, when the blood-stained tracks become both sites/sights of marvel competing with Grendel’s chopped off arm for attention:

\[\begin{array}{l}
\text{Da wæs on morgen} & \text{mine gefræge} \\
\text{ymb ŋa gifhealle} & \text{guôrinc monig;} \\
\text{ferdon folctogan} & \text{feorran ond nean} \\
\text{geond widwegas} & \text{wundor sceawian,} \\
\text{læpes lastas.} & \text{No his lifgedal} \\
\text{sarlic þuhte} & \text{secga ænegum} \\
\text{þara þe tirleases} & \text{trode sceawode,} \\
\text{hu he werigmod} & \text{on weg þanon,} \\
\text{niða ofercumen,} & \text{on nicera mere} \\
\text{fæge ond geflymed} & \text{feorhlastas bær.}
\end{array}\]

[Then in the morning, I have heard, there were many warriors around the gift-hall; leaders of the people traveled from far and near, through distant regions; to examine that

\(^{169}\) The indelibility of the traces of giants are, for example, evident in the accounts of the Deluge. According to the Bible, God, upon the birth of giants following the miscegenation of the ‘sons of God’ and the ‘daughters of men’ (cf. Gen. 1–4), ‘seeing that the wickedness of men was great on earth, and that all the thought of their heart was bent upon evil at all times, it repented him that he had made man on earth’ (Gen. 6.5), He thus decides to ‘bring the waters of a great flood upon the earth, to destroy all flesh’ (Gen. 6.17). The Almighty commands Noah to build an ark that will keep him, his family and a pair of every living creature safe (Gen. 18–19). However, within several generations from Ham, Nimrod, the ‘giant hunter’ (*gigans venator*) (Gen. 10: 9) whose kingdom had its beginning in Babylon (Gen. 10.10) is mentioned, whence, Augustine concludes that he must have been the founder of Babylon which the Bishop of Hippo equates with ‘Babel’ (cf. DCD 16.4). No matter how powerful its force, the Deluge ultimately fails to erase monstrous traces.
marvel. The tracks of the hateful creature. His parting from life was not painful to anyone who examined the footprints of the inglorious creature; how weary at heart, overcome in assault, doomed and put to flight, on the way to the mere of water-monsters, he left behind bloody tracks.]

The importance of footprints functions at different levels. Firstly, it is a sight/site of marvel, secondly, it guides the onlookers to the monsters’ den and last but not least, it further elucidates the concept of trace, the “part played by the radically other within the structure of difference that is the sign” (Spivak xvii), in literally demonstrating how the monster never leaves without a trace. A similar function is observed in Tristan where the footprints of the giant Urgan guide Tristan through the thicket towards his castle (lines 16090–94). As such, footprints play a major role in the combat between the hero and the monster, since mastery over monstrous bodies is closely tied in with mastery over monstrous spaces, which once conquered are no longer the tabooed territories they used to be. Given the importance of the footprints, they are most often ‘examined’ (sceawian) in Beowulf (lines 132b; 840b; 1391b) as the onlookers attempt to decode their mysteries. The footprints are a source of admiratio in hinting at a mysterious being of eccentric provenance. True to the presumed etymological roots of the ‘monster’, the monstrous traces, and later on, dismembered body-parts, engage in ‘showing’ (monstrare) and ‘warning’ (monere), and are thus meant to be deciphered.

Each part of the ‘monstrous’ gives rise to wonder as the human onlookers find themselves overwhelmed by an immobilizing feeling that lies beyond words. Yet Grendel’s decapitated head gives way to a pleasant frisson:

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170 Tracks are so crucial in the discovery of the monster that Cacus grabs the four bulls and four heifers he has stolen by the tail lest they leave footprints in their wake: “And these, that there might be no tracks pointing forward, he dragged by the tail into his cave, and, with the signs of their tracks turned thus backwards, he hid them in rocky darkness” (atque hos, ne qua forent pedibus vestigia rectis/ cauda in speluncam tractos versisque viarum/ indicitis raptos saxo occultat opaco, The Aeneid VIII: 209–11). Moreover, regarding sceawian, Andy Orchard has noted no fewer than nineteen occurrences of this term in Beowulf and has remarked on its close association with wundor (‘wonder’, ‘marvel’) in both Beowulf and Letter of Alexander to Aristotle another of the four texts extant in the Beowulf–manuscript (A Companion 27).
[The head of Grendel was carried onto the hall-floor where men were drinking, terrible to the warriors and the woman with them; a wondrous spectacle, men looked at it]

Part of the attraction of the monster lies in its *Un-heimlichkeit* (uncanniness), the uncovering of its hidden, yet, homey character, otherwise referred to as *exitimité*, meaning “external intimacy” or “intimate alterity” (cf. Cohen, *Of Giants* 180). As the onlookers’ gaze becomes glued to the beheaded monster, it is the commingling of otherness and sameness that gives rise to an overpowering admixture of terror and pleasure. The *Unheimliche* hints at what should have remained hidden but is brought home, which is exactly what the construction of Heorot has done in leading Grendel to abandon his peripheral territory and encroach on the central mead-hall.

Similarly, as Sigmund Freud probed the term *Unheimlichkeit*, the distinction between *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, in other words, the inside and the outside, became blurred, as *heimlich* “in the sense of “withdrawn from knowledge […] also has the meaning of that which is obscure, inaccessible to knowledge,” so that *heimlich* “comes to have the meaning usually ascribed to *unheimlich*” (226). The same holds true of the race of giants, who, though *unheimlich*, literally ‘un-homey’, have affinities with the human race in sharing the same organs, if not quite, the same carnal predilections. Part of the magnetic pull exerted by Grendel’s decapitated head is on grounds of the manifestations of similitude in dissimilitude, the fact that despite its distance from familiar grounds, it exudes an air of familiarity, of having an affinity with mankind.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ As noted to me by my external examiner, Prof. Dean Miller, amongst other wondrous decapitated heads, mention can be made of Mimir’s which the ON chief god, Odin consulted on matters of importance and that of the Celtic giant and king of Britain, Bran the Blessed, which spoke for years after it had been buried in London.
The *disiectum membrum*, in serving as concrete proof that the monstrous body has been conquered, fosters a spirit of conviviality and communion in Heorot amongst the members of the Danish community, who, as a token of solidarity, engage in dining, one of the primary pillars of most social gatherings. However, there is the lurking fear that Beowulf himself might have reincorporated traces of the monstrous, and consequently potentially might become disruptive to the collective body of the *communitas*. It is with such thoughts in mind that Hrothgar, shortly upon the presentation of Grendel’s head as a trophy in combat, holds a speech concerning Heremod, the Danish king, who lost all the support and power he once enjoyed owing to pride. It is also worth noting that Hrothgar’s speech (lines 1724b–68) evokes the theme of psychomachia invoked by St. Paul in *The Ephesians* in that it illustrates how ‘a portion of pride’ lurking within, paves the way for an attack on the slumberous spirit.\(^\text{172}\) In fact, Beowulf’s presentation of his trophy actually draws parallels with the conquest of *Superbia* by *Mens Humilis* (Humility) in Prudentius’s *Psychomachia*, a theme incorporated in Hrothgar’s sermon:

> Ille cruentatum correptis crinibus hostem  
> Protrahit et faciem laeva revocante supinat.  
> Tunc caput orantis flexa cervice resectum  
> Eripit ac madido suspendit colla capillo. (280–3)

[Holding her bloodied enemy by the hair that she has seized, she drags her forward, then turns her face upward with her left hand. Although [the vice] is begging for mercy, she severs the bowed neck, then lifts up the head, holding it by the hair that is dripping with gore]\(^\text{173}\)

\(^{172}\) For further explication regarding the influence of Prudentius’s *Psychomachia* on the composition of Hrothgar’s speech, see, for example: Andy Orchard, *A Critical Companion to ‘Beowulf’*, (Cambridge, D.S. Brewer: 2003): 159–62.

\(^{173}\) For a better understanding of the influence of *Psychomachia* on Anglo-Latin literature, refer to, for example: Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600–899* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996); 3; 6; 9; 473 n.
Beowull’s pulling of the hair becomes even more symbolic in his mastery over the monstrous if we were to assume that he had also committed ‘hair-pulling’ (feax gefeng), described as “the most common of forms of insult punished by law in Friesland in the Middle Ages” (Stanley 339) as he sought to conquer the queen of the mere, Grendel’s mother.

If Grendel’s role is similar to that of an anti-king, Grendel’s mother, resembles an anti-queen, yet, there are significant differences in the reign of mother and son. For one thing, while Grendel invades and ultimately comes to hold sway over the territory of others with no obvious motive other than envy, Grendel’s mother rules within the confines of the mere and acts upon more human motives: the love of a mother for her lost son. Unlike Grendel who has a name, she lacks one and is known only in relation to her son. Moreover, in inverting the prevailing concepts of femininity, instead of being a regular ides (‘woman’), she becomes an ides aglæcwif (warrior-woman, line 1259a). She is described in demonic terms including ‘sea-wolf’ (brymwylf) in lines 1506a and 1599a, an apt epithet given that her tabooed territory is marked by the ‘wolf-slopes’ (wulfhleoþu, line 1358a). Overpowering her becomes synonymous with conquering the infernal landscape which she represents with its plethora of monsters.

As mentioned earlier, the female body is more closely aligned with the earth and territoriality. Just as the witch of Rustam’s ‘Fourth Trial’, embodies the barrenness of Mazandarān and ultimately the mundane aspect of the world, Grendel’s mother is an objective correlative for the infernal landscape around her. Moreover, similar to the witch in Ferdowsi’s poem, Grendel’s mother is an emblem of ‘dirt’ in both its literal and anthropological sense of ‘disorder’ (Douglas 2), an indication of which comes to the fore in the verb følsian (‘to cleanse’) used to describe her death at the hands of Beowulf (line 1620b). The differences between the cleansing of the witch in The Shahnameh and Grendel’s mother manifest themselves in the topographical consequences
of the act, for, while the killing of the former leads to the further darkening of Mazandarān, that
of the latter, clears up the waves and wide expanse which she used to represent:

sweord ðær gemealt,
forbarn brodenmæl; wæs þæt blod to þæs hat,
aettren ellorgæst se þær inne swealt.
Sona wæs on sunde se þe ær æt sæcce gebad
wighryre wraðra, wæter up þurhdeaf;
wæron yðgebland eal gefælsod,
eacne eardas, þa se ellorgast
oflet lifdagas ond þas lænan gesceaf.

[The sword had previously melted, the patterned blade burnt, the blood was too hot for it, the alien spirit that had died there, poisonous. He, who in strife, had survived the battle-death of the evil ones, straightaway took to sea, swam upwards through the water. The surging waters, the vast lands, were all cleansed when the alien spirit gave up life and transitory fate.]

Grendel’s mother occupies a particular place in the poem, both structurally and thematically in
lying at the centre of the poem, in-between Beowulf’s fights against Grendel and the dragon. In
addition to her central position in the text, she targets Æschere, who in being Hrothgar’s
‘shoulder companion’ (eaxelgestealla, line 1326a) represents the focal space of the Danish
community. Meanwhile, she is doubly monstrous in being female, yet, inverting the functions
attributed to other women in the poem, those of a ‘cup-bearer’ and ‘peace-weaver’, for instance.
Also, in being a she-monster, Grendel’s mother is doubly otherized as she upsets power
equations which tend to be male-dominated. This is especially evident in the fact that instead of
resorting to mere words and mourning, which constitute passive forms of resistance, as is
respectively the case with Hrothgar’s wife, Wealhtheow and Hildeburh, a Danish princess acting
as ‘peace-weaver’, she opts for agency in avenging her son. In fact, Jane Chance compares her
with these two maternal characters who figure prior to her invasion of Heorot:
The past helplessness of the first mother, Hildeburh, to requite the death of her son counterpoints the anxiously maternal Wealhtheow’s attempts to weave the ties of kinship and obligation, thereby forestalling future danger to her sons. Later that night, Grendel’s Mother, intent on avenging the loss of her son in the present, attacks Heorot, her masculine aggressions contrasting with the feminine passivity of both Hildeburh and Wealhtheow. (256)

It is despite, or maybe, on grounds of these ‘masculine aggressions’ that she is discredited by the Beowulf-poet, who is quick to point out that her strength is much less than that of a male:

‘The terror was the less dreadful by just as much as the war-horror of a female, is that of a weaponed man’ (Wæs se gryre læssa/ efne swa micle swa bið mægða cræft,/ wiggryre wifes, be wæpnedmen, lines 1282b–84). The term wæpnedmen (‘weaponed man’, line 1284b) as asserted by Paul Acker can be read on two levels: “It may connote the standard legal formula wæpnedman and wifman, ‘male and female’. And since wæpen is also a word for the phallus, the poet says in effect that Grendel’s mother was the less horrible simply by virtue (so to speak) of lacking a phallus” (705). Without becoming too Freudian, it could have been on grounds of the identifiable lack in the female body which translates into lesser strength that the hero, though beheading both mother and son, views mastery over Grendel and not his mother, as a token of triumph. Beowulf decides to bring her son’s head as a ‘token of success’ (tires to tacne, line 1654a), whereas only a short while ago, it had also been Grendel’s ‘hand, arm and shoulder’ which had been put on display as a ‘clear token’ (tacne sweotol, line 833b) of Beowulf’s dismemberment of the monster. Beowulf’s choice of Grendel’s head over that of his mother is also intriguing in view of the fact that conquering the mother-monster has proven to be much more difficult. It is, in fact, only by means of a deus ex machine, the ‘patterned blade’
(brodenmæl, line 1616a), also an ‘ancient work of the giants’ (enta ærgeweorc, line 1679a), that he beheads her.  

Another aspect worth noting with regard to Grendel’s mother is that in inverting gender roles and taking vengeance into her own hands, she aligns herself with satanic forces. An example from the thirteenth-century MHG epic poem, Das Nibelungenlied is also worth noting here, for the female protagonist Kriemhild is labeled as ‘she-devil’ (vâlendinne, 2371) mostly for the overtly masculine manifestations of her acts of revenge, in that, in addition to having incited the flames of fighting, she enters the fray sword in hand. The association of gender with monstrosity is particularly prominent in The Shahnameh, where instances of monstrosities, even when evidenced in heroes, are attributed to their maternal heritage. Both the three-headed dragon-king, Zahhâk and the hero Rustam, are monstrous primarily on account of their maternal side. Aside from the monstrous feminine, Beowulf and The Shahnameh share in having a dragon as a personification of a land-scourge, a feature also present in Tristan.

The dragon in Beowulf occupies a special place as it is well into old age that Beowulf finds himself facing this monster, an encounter which will prove to be his undoing. The dragon distinguishes itself from Grendel and his mother in a variety of ways, especially, in its distantiation from human form. Dragons have enjoyed a certain appeal in many cultures of the world in terms of not only their polyvalence, but also the cognitive challenge they pose in combining a multiplicity of characteristics that defy nature. The dragon is simultaneously a being of water, earth, air, and fire, a sign of plentitude and potency of being, since it comes to

175 As suggested in Klaeber’s Beowulf: Fourth Edition, the dragon calls for a variety of interpretations and “because of the almost endlessly evocative nature of the dragon, the poem’s third episode is probably best regarded as simultaneously calling to mind a number of narrative ideas about cataclysm and death and courage in the face of overwhelming odds” (see pp. xlivi–xlvii).
inhabit the four primary elements of the universe in transgressing all limits and boundaries. Like most other dragons in world literature, the *Beowulf*-dragon is nameless, but referred to in a diversity of ways including the ‘fire dragon’ (*ligdraca*, lines 2333a, ; 3040b), ‘earth dragon’ (*eorðraca*, lines 2712a; 2825a), ‘air flier’ (*lyftfloga*, line 2315a) and once dead, it is consigned to the waters. Claude Lecouteux’s suggestion that the *Beowulf*-dragon is more of an earth dragon than anything else (*Der Drache* 22–23) is quite plausible given that it takes to the skies only at times of distress as is the case when he is initially looking for a home (lines 2270b–27) and when he finds his territory encroached upon (lines 2314b–23).

The territory the dragon inhabits is a projection of its uncanny nature, indicated in the term *uncuð* (‘unknown’, line 2214a) used to characterize the passage underneath his lofty dwelling:

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Oð ðæt an ongan       2210
deorcum nihtum       draca ricsian,    
se ðe on heaum hofe hord beweotode,  
stanbeorh ste(a)cne;  stig under læg 
eldum *uncuð*.
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[until there began to rule in the dark nights, a dragon, who lived in the high dwelling, a towering stone-barrow, kept watch over a hoard, an unknown passage underneath.]

The term *uncuð* (‘unknown’), similar to *dygel* (‘secretive’) used in line 1357b, enhances the uncanny air surrounding the dragon-lair, which is characteristic of monstrous spaces. In fact, part of the hero’s endeavors are aimed at the taming of the monstrous by rendering the unfamiliar, familiar. The first step towards domestication of monstrous bodies is mastery over monstrous spaces. Grendel himself has been characterized as an *uncuð* (line 960a), as is his habitat, the mere:

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Then the son of princes traversed steep stone-slopes, narrow paths, narrow passages, an unfamiliar treacherous route, precipitous headlands, many lairs of water-monsters.

Though, initially, like most other dragons, confined to an enclosure — in this case, a ‘barrow’ (beorh) — it later becomes a scourge to Geatland as is indicated in his description as *þeodsceaða* (line 2278a; 2688a) meaning ‘ravager of the people’, which aligns him with Grendel, who is described as *leodsceaða* (also meaning ‘ravager of the people’ line 2093b). While Grendel had been a scourge to the Danes by literally devouring them, the dragon lays waste to Geatland by scorching vast expanses of it.

When Beowulf’s home is destroyed in the dragon’s onslaught, he is distressed: “the wise man supposed that he had bitterly offended the ruler, the eternal lord, by breaking some ancient law",

( Brenda se wisa þæt he wealdende/ ofer ealde riht, ecean dryhtne,/ bitre gebulge , lines 2329–31a). The fact that such thoughts are said to be unusual for him (lines 2331b–32), hint at the possibility that he could have been indirectly responsible for the incitement of the dragon, brought on by the theft from the barrow of a golden cup of a man attempting to appease his master (see lines 2221–26a). The ‘ancient law’ (*ealde riht*) could be in reference to any set of ancient taboos, of which the dragon being rooted in ancient times, can be evocative. That the *Beowulf*-dragon is ‘wise with winters’ (*wintrum frod*, line 2777a), has been guarding the golden hoard for ‘three hundred years’ (*þreo hund wintra*, line 2278b) and is an ‘ancient night-flier’ (*ealdes uhtflogan*, line 2760a) attest to its long life expectancy and rootedness in history.

Moreover, according to *Maxims II*: “A dragon belongs in a mound, really experienced, proud in
his treasure” (Draca sceall on hlæwe, / frōd, freatwum wlanc, lines 26b–27a) (ed. Dobbie, The Anglo-Saxon, 55–57), which reinforces dragons’ rootedness in time within the extant corpus of OE texts.

Dragons in their multitudinous forms, have been an inevitable part of the creation process. In the ancient Babylonian creation epic of Enuma Elish, the dismembered limbs of the female goddess Tiamat, an embodiment of draconitas, help create the world. The word tehom (‘deep’), which figures in the following in the Book of Genesis: “In the beginning God created the heaven, and the earth. And the earth was void and empty (tohu wa bohu), and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of God moved over the waters” (Gen. 1: 1–2), is a cognate of Tiamat (Frye, Biblical 34). Aside from the Bible, dragons figure dominantly in hagiographical literature. Ample analogues have been offered by Christine Rauer, yet, no definite source can be attributed to the third episode of Beowulf. Significantly noteworthy amongst the analogues is the defeat of a dragon by St. Samson, who similar to Beowulf, is suffering from the infirmities of old age and fights the demon himself as his companions look on (see Rauer 114).

In being the most inhuman of Beowulf’s foes, the dragon endows the poem with a cosmic and universal aspect that would have been absent, had it been replaced by an actual rival Swedish prince instead. As J.R.R. Tolkien has argued:

It is just because the main foes in Beowulf are inhuman that the story is larger and more significant than this imaginary poem of a great king’s fall. It glimpses the cosmic and moves with the thought of all men concerning the fate of human life and efforts; it stands amid but above the petty wars of princes, and surpasses the dates and limits of historical periods, however important. (Beowulf 145)
As inhuman as the dragon might be, it does share a certain degree of affinity with the hero. The dragon is not only linked to the giants of the poem as is indicated in Grendel’s pouch ‘all adorned, with ingenuity, the skill of the devil, and dragon-skins’ (*eall gegyrwed/deofles crafium ond dracan fellum*, lines 2087–88), but also to Beowulf himself in various ways. Both are aligned with the ‘hoard’, albeit of diverse natures: As Beowulf is said to ‘seek out the soul’s hoard’ (*secean sawle hord*, line 2422a), it is said to be natural for the dragon to ‘seek out a hoard on the earth’ (*gesecean sceall/hord on hrusan*, line 2275b–76a). In addition, Beowulf “aligns himself through the use of the dual form three times (lines 2525b; 2522a; 2523b)” (Orchard, *A Companion* 233). The parallel between the hero and the dragon also comes to the fore on a numerical level. The *Beowulf*-poet recounts how as ‘the dragon is measured fifty feet long as it lay’ (*Se wæs fiftiges fotgemearces/lang on legere*, lines 3042–23a), Beowulf has ‘held the kingdom well for fifty winters’ (*he geheold tela/fiftig wintra*, lines 2208b–23a) before the dragon bursts onto the scene. Another point of convergence between the hero and the dragon is that both are capable of becoming *gebolgen*, literally ‘swollen with anger’ indications of which appear in lines 2550b for Beowulf and lines 220b and 2304a for the dragon. Similarly, the term *gefysed*, which implies ‘eager’ or ‘impelled’ is used of Beowulf and the dragon — not to mention the ship in line 217. In line 630b, Beowulf is described as being *guþe gefysed* (eager for war) and in line 2309a, the dragon is *fyre gefysed* (impelled with fire) and in line 2561b, it is *heorte gefysed* (ready with its heart) ‘to seek battle’ (*sæcce to seceanne*, line 2561a). In all three instances, *gefysed* complements *gebolgen*, which accompanies an expansion of corporeal contours, in lending the fighter the necessary rush of adrenalin. It is the loss of a single gold-cup that makes the dragon *gebolgen* (‘swollen with rage’, lines 2220b; 2304a) and it *abealch* (‘enraged’, line 2280b) on the same grounds.

177 For further details on the significance of ‘gebolgen’, see Chapter 1.
Most significantly, there is the ‘sublation’ (Aufhebung) which comes to the fore in the hero’s subsuming of part of the draconitas. Sublation in Beowulf is concretized in the territorial shifts of the dragon and Beowulf: While the barrow the dragon was guarding — indicated in his epithet of ‘guardian of the barrow’ (beorges weard) in line 2580b — turns into ‘Beowulf’s Barrow’ (Biowulfes biorh, line 2807a), the dragon is thrown into the waters, where Beowulf felt most at ease. As the bodies of hero and monster shift places, a more essential change takes place which presages negative transformations of the geo-political landscape.

The association of the monstrous with territoriality and the earth, in general, is even more pronounced in The Shahnameh, where the dīvs, are both a bane to human existence and a scourge to land masses.

2.2. The Shahnameh: Personified Plagues of Land

Bound up with the demonization of the dīvs are the discourses of proto-colonialism and land-ownership. Corporeality is tied up with territoriality as earthly creatures seek land to provide shelter for their bodies and natural resources of the earth for nourishment. It only makes sense to tarnish the other’s body with the aim of valorizing one’s own and thus justify the usurpation of land for the self. The better body deserves the fertile land, hence, the primary objective behind the othering of the dīv becomes access to the most fertile terra firma with the largest amount of natural resources.\(^\text{178}\) Iran happens to be the choicest of lands on the planet in The Avesta and

\(^{178}\) It so happens that the fertility of the land in question, in being an object of desire, is usually exaggerated. The land of Britannia which, later on in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britanniae becomes the object of desire for proto-imperialists, Brutus and Corineus, for example, is described in aggrandized terms. It is said to be “supply(ing) in unfailing abundance, whatever is useful for each of its mortals” (quicquid mortalium genere congruit indeficienti fertilitate minstrat, Bk. I: 2). Also, in Bk. III of Vergil’s Aeneid, Crete, which Anchises assumes to be the next site of the Trojan expedition, is termed a ‘realm most fertile’ (uberrima regna, line106).
accordingly *The Shahnameh*. Given that *The Shahnameh* is the closest of the three texts of this study to epic, the importance of territoriality comes as no surprise. As epics are ‘triumphalist narratives of empire’, to borrow David Quint’s phrase (34), they are naturally founded on territorial expansionism enhanced by the conquest of ‘monstrous’ others.

Indeed, mastery over the dīvs has been stressed in one of the components of *The Avesta*, *Vendidād*, literally ‘The Law Against the Dīvs’. *Vendidād* comprises twenty-two fargards or ‘chapters’ which deal with diverse topics including purity laws, particularly those concerning the dead, the origins and remedies against disease and the reign of Yima, who later inspires Jamshīd’s character in *The Shahnameh*. It is the lands and the plagues caused by the dīvs that set the tone of *Vendidād*, which lists a number of lands, starting with Airyana Vaeja, the original name of Iran, followed by the plagues stirred up by the dīvs to destroy each particular land (e.g. ‘winter’ in the case of Iran in Vd. 1: 1–2).

A prominent example of the association of monstrosity and territoriality comes to the fore in the figure of the pairikās, who are known as female figures endowed with magical powers. The pairikā is believed to have originated from Pariknaioi, “a people who were close neighbours of the historical Persians and seemed to have played a special part in their military organization” (Bivar 26). These tribes-people are believed to have occupied the city of Parikāne, whose localization has been a matter of conjecture. Regardless of the demarcations of the territory of

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179 *Shahnameh*-scholar, Zabihullah Safa sees the dīvs as having their historical origins in the powerful people who fought against Iranians over the possession of homes and properties (604).
180 Francesca Leoni convincingly argues how the advent of Zoroastrianism and its bifurcation of the world into ‘good’ and ‘evil’ led to the demonization of the dīv, which similar to the Greek *daimon*, had once been a ‘neutral’ spirit (cf. pp. 62–70).
181 According to C. Batholomae, *pairikā* could be translated into German as *Zauberin* (‘sorceress’) and *Hexe* (‘witch’) (see ‘pairikā’, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*).
182 While Ernst Herzfeld has suggested Central Asian Farghana, a site in Badakhshān or a village near Tārum in Pārs) as possible candidates, J.H. Kramers, has argued for a site in Kirmān. See, for example: D. H.Bivar, “A Persian Fairyland”, *Papers in Honour of Mary Boyce*. Leiden: [Alr 10]: 25–42.
the pairikās, their association with different geographical sites has been attested in a number of sources.183

The term ‘pairikā’ is a cognate of parī, which is closer to ‘fairy’ in translation than to ‘witch/sorceress’. Associated with parīs, are the words parr (‘wing’) and paridan (‘to fly’) and being a parī-rū or a parī-chehreh (‘pari-faced’) signifies one who enjoys (enchanting) beauty (cf. Bivar 26). In Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh, the term parī, depending on the context, could signal either sorcery or a (fairy-like) form of beauty/entity. As early as the Kīyūmars-episode, ‘parī’ is used in the positive sense of ‘fairy’: ‘[Kīyūmars] gathered parīs and leopards and lions, from the wild animals, brave wolves and tigers’ (I. 24: 58). However, in most cases, inherent in parīs, lie the demonic element of pairikās. For example, the parī-chehreh (‘fairy-faced’, V. 237: 204; V. 238: 214) Isfandiyār is longing for in his ‘Fourth Trial’, happens to be a pairikā whom he slits in half after she reveals herself in her true colours upon hearing the name of the Creator in a scene that makes her association with the devil all the more apparent. The twin-association of pairikās and yātū, Modern Persian jādū (in reference to a concretization of black magic), becomes clear in the course of The Avesta in which they appear in conjunction (see Yt. 4.4).

Friedrich Spiegel sees the origins of the pairikās in Jahī (II: 138), the female instigator of Ahrīman in The GBd (see GBd IV: 4–5), and enumerates with certitude at least three examples of pairikās in The Avesta. One major example is Duzyairya, an enemy of the rain-bringing divinity Tishtrya, who keeps her bound “with two-fold bonds, with three-fold bonds that cannot be overcome, with bonds all over the body, it is as if there were three thousand men keeping one man in bonds, a thousand of those who are the strongest in strength” (Yt. VIII: 55). Another pairikā mentioned in The Avesta (Ys. XLVII: 23) is mūsh, who, as its signification of ‘mouse’ suggests and as Mary Boyce accords, “probably conceived herself in rodent form” (A History, 183 A.D. H. Bivar provides a list of these sources in his article (n.166).
Significantly, mice, as is the case even today, were blamed for plagues and devastation of fertile lands. Khnanthaiti, the third pairikā mentioned by name in *The Avesta*, figures as a plague to Vaekerata, the “seventh of the good lands” mentioned in *The Vendidād* (I: 9). In all three instances, the pairikā has been depicted as one form or another of land-scourge.

In addition to being a land-plague, pairikās were also regarded as sources of ‘defilement’. The following example taken from Vd.11:9, brings home the association of the pairikās with ‘dirt’: “I drive away the pairikā that comes upon the fire, upon the water, upon the earth, upon the cow, upon the tree. I drive away the uncleanness that comes upon the fire, upon the water, upon the earth, upon the cow, upon the tree.” The pairikā is more than anything else a scourge to the land as she threatens harvest by opposing Tishtrya, polluting the vital elements of the planet such as water, earth, the tree and the cow, in whom, based on Zoroastrian cosmology, all species trace their origins as *The GBd* testifies. Her role as a pollutant of landscapes further comes to the fore in Isfandiyār’s ‘Fourth Trial’, in which she is clearly identified with sorcery in being called ‘woman of (black) magic’ (*zan-i jādū*, V. 237: 207; 238: 221). Additionally, her dismemberment in this episode of *The Shahnameh*, stirs up a black whirlwind that blocks visibility to the extent that the sun and the moon become fully invisible (V. 239: 227). In fact, Mahmoud Omidsalar suggests that given the sorceress’s supernatural aspect, it is only natural to interpret the black whirlwind as her spattered blood, which along with the spilt blood of the rest of the otherworldly creatures encountered by Isfandiyār, endow him with invincibility, hence, his epithet of ‘brass-bodied’ (*ru’in tan*) (*rāz-i* 271). Similarly, in the ‘Fourth Trial’ of Rustam, the sorceress is termed ‘an agent of pollution’ (*riman*, II. 30: 408), who like Kriemhild in *Das Nibelungenlied*, is disposed of, by being split in half (II. 31: 416). Ferdowsi refers to her as the ‘woman of (black) magic’ (*zan-i jādū*, II. 30: 403). *Jādū* incorporating a category broader than the pairikās, has
preserved its meaning as ‘(black) magic’ in Modern Persian. It is also worth noting that similar to the White Dīv of Rustam’s ‘Seventh Trial’ and the Beowulfian monsters, the pairikās thrive during the dark hours of the night (Boyce, *A History* 86), hence, their opposition to the star Tishtrya.

As was the case with Grendel’s mother, the female is demonized on various levels in *The Shahnameh* as is indicated in the number of monsters that are clearly female including the pairikās. Aside from the conspicuously monstrous female monsters in *The Shahnameh*, a large number of female human beings have been demonized. The two sisters of Jamshīd’s household, Shahnāz and Arnavāz, whose mastery seals Zahhāk’s conquest over Iran, are portrayed as being so malleable that once in Zahhāk’s hands, they are introduced into the ways of jādū (‘black magic’) (cf. I. 55: 6–9) and in Firaidūn’s possession, first their heads and then their souls are ‘cleansed’ of all evil (I. 76: 329). Later on, Rūdābeh, though the mother of the hero of heroes of the Iranian nation, Rustam, is said to be a descendent of Zahhāk. Tahmīneh, who courts Rustam so that she may bear his seed, is also believed to be an example of a pairikā whose primary goal, as manifest in the ‘Fourth Trial’ of both Rustam and Isfandiyār, is the seduction of men. Tahmīneh, who similar to Grendel’s mother, breaks the stereotype of a passive woman by taking matters into her own hands, ends up being demonized. In general, in *The Shahnameh* as sons give rise to empires, (potential) mothers are demonized and harnessed as part of a power paradigm in which they produce male heirs only to take a back seat to territorial conquests which could not have come about without them. The demonization of women can be traced back to *The

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184 The significance of ‘cleansing’ in *The Shahnameh* can be traced back to Zoroastrian texts. For further details, see, for example: Mary Boyce, “cleansing”, *EIr.* New York: 1996–2008.

where Ahriman is awakened from his deep slumber by Jahī, a wicked woman, who becomes subject to menstruation as soon as she is kissed by the Devil (GBd. IV: 4–5).

Jahī in The GBd could have been a source of inspiration for Zahhāk’s story in The Shahnameh, for he too, undergoes major transformation in the wake of kisses from a dīv. In order for him to become the dragon par excellence of Iranian folklore, he has to undergo metamorphosis, a process inherently embedded in narrative. Zahhāk’s metamorphosis takes place as a result of a change in his dietary habits brought about by his chef, who happens to be the devil (Iblīs) in disguise. It is ultimately the incorporation of flesh into his body that fuels Zahhāk’s bestial ferocity facilitating his transformation into the three-headed monster that literally depletes Iran of its human resources.

Once Zahhāk gets accustomed to the taste of meat, he commends his chef, who, in turn, requests to kiss him on both shoulders from which two snakes spring up, transforming him into a three-headed dragon (I. 50: 155–56). Seeking cure for his malady, he finds himself unwittingly confronted once more with the dīv who prescribes human brains for the snakes. Complying with the prescription, Zahhāk begins to deplete Iran of its brains. In hydra-like fashion, they resist being chopped off and the dīv, disguised this time as a physician, suggests that Zahhāk has to feed the snakes with human brains (line 164).

The snakes are, initially, a source of ‘wonder’ (cf. 50: 157) as people are not sure what to make of them. The term shigiftī (‘wonder’) and its variants recur in The Shahnameh, especially in association with the ‘monstrous’. Wonders evoke the sense of sight, being linked with the Latin verb (ad)mirari, with its inherent element of ‘gaze’ still present in ‘mirror’ and the Spanish verb mirar (‘to look’). They also temporarily freeze one’s mental faculties as they take over the

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186 The devil and the dīv tend to get mixed up as evidenced in Tabari’s translation which renders the Arabic Iblīs (‘Satan’) as ‘dīv’.
187 The details regarding the interrelationship between Zahhāk’s metamorphosis and food shall be dealt with in Chapter 4.
onlooker’s entire being. It is only natural for a hybrid being to pose a challenge to one’s mental capacities, for in showcasing two different natures in one body, they present a paradox. In an investigation of hybridity, Caroline Walker Bynum argues a “dialogic” in hybridity, “because [it is] inherently two. Its contraries are simultaneous and in conversation with each other. […] Hybrids both destabilize and reveal the world” (Metamorphosis 160). Zahhāk is a prime example of a hybrid in destabilizing the boundaries of man and beast and yet enlightening in terms of bringing to the fore a synthesis of king and cannibal. What is also intriguing about Zahhāk as well as many other Shahnameh-monsters is the metamorphosis that brings about their transformation.

The prevalence of metamorphoses is what distinguishes The Shahnameh from Beowulf and Tristan. Significantly, a metamorphosis differs from mere hybridity in its association with a narrative, for the change from one form to another requires time and accompanies a historia absent from mere hybridity (cf. Bynum, Metamorphosis 28–33). The monster-king, Zahhāk begins to metamorphose into a dragon only when he falls into the pitfall of temptation and allows the dīvs to murder his father. Interestingly, Firaidūn who conquers Zahhāk, himself gains the ability to metamorphose into a dragon as he re-encodes his predecessor’s monstrosity. Once Firaidūn decides to test the mettle of his three sons, having incorporated Zahhāk’s draconitas, he metamorphoses into a dragon to gauge the reaction of his three sons, based on which he goes on to name them and assign them territories (see I: 103–6). Having been suckled by the wondrous multi-coloured cow, Bormāyeh and conquered the dragon-king, Firaidūn has incorporated the element of draconitas in ways that allow him to transform himself into a dragon at will. Shape-shifting is a source of marvel in that it questions the solidity of the self; hence, there is little wonder as to why only monsters are capable of metamorphosis.
Significantly, the heroic embraces the monstrous to the extent that the two become interdependent. The monstrous Other helps fashion not only the heroic Self, but also the entire universe. As most stories of creation testify, the monstrous has been a part of the universe all along. Based on the Zoroastrians’ story of creation described in detail in The GBd, the light associated with Ohrmazd, existed alongside darkness associated with Ahriman, as its spirit with a void betwixt them (I: 2–5). The process of creation takes place in the wake of animosity between the two entities as each gives rise to his own creatures to combat the other. Ahriman ‘miscreates’ many dīvs or ‘destroyers of the creatures’ (I: 15) who appear to Ohrmazd as ‘defiled’ and ‘wicked’ (I: 18), while, even Ahriman takes pleasure in the creatures of his enemy whom he deems ‘worthy of inquiry’ (I: 19). It is to be noted that for the first three millennia, Ahriman, owing to his innate ignorance and his being unaware of the presence of Ohrmazd, was stuck in his abyss and ‘creatures were in their spiritual state’ (I: 14). Corporeality comes about with the start of the second phase, known as gomezishn, three millennia during which corporeality and spirituality commingle as the world becomes a stage to constant confrontations of Ohrmazdian and Ahrimanic displays. It is Ahriman’s attack that inaugurates this second phase, which comes after ‘creation’, “the first of three times into which the drama of cosmic history is divided” (Boyce, Zoroastrians 25). Each phase lasts three millennia and ends with wizarishn, the phase of separation of good from evil. The heroic battles portrayed in The Avesta are evidently set in the second phase. Although The Shahnameh unfolds during the phase of gomezishn, Ferdowsi’s story of creation somewhat differs from that of The GBd. Here, first, the four elements of fire, earth, water and wind come into existence ex nihilo (I. 6: 35–40) upon which the sky, twelve signs of the zodiac and seven planets are formed (lines 42–44). Humans enter the stage as a finale to the act of creation; little wonder then, that they should find
themselves embroiled in strife to survive on the planet as they are vying with other species for survival.

The dīvs, etymologically-speaking, were meant to be ‘divine’, as is indicated in ‘daeva’, the term originally applied to them, which is a “cognate of deus” (Boyce, *A History* 23). The demonization of the daevas probably took place with the twin-aim of curbing their popularity as national deities and spreading Zoroastrianism. The fact that Zoroastrianism is based on binary oppositions, including light/darkness and good/evil, made the dīvs an essential component of creation. In fact, in a collection of the Zoroastrians’ liturgical texts, known as the yasnas, the good and evil spirits are conspicuously spoken of as twin brothers (Ys. 30). Little wonder then that for the six Amesha Spentas, literally ‘bounteous immortals’, generally used in reference to the divinities created by Ahura Mazda, there should be six arch-dīvs miscreated by Ahrīman. In contrast to the Amesha Spentas of Ahura Mazda, Vohuman (‘Good Thinking’), Ardwahisht (‘Best Righteousness’), Shahrewar (‘Desirable Rule’), Spandarmad (‘Holy Piety’), Hordād (‘Wholeness’) and Amurdād (‘Immortality’) (Gbd. III), The Avesta mentions the following six arch-dīvs: Akoman (‘Producer of Vile Thoughts’), Indra (‘the Freezer of Minds’), Sauvra (‘Evil Authority’), Naonhaithya (‘Producer of Discontent’), Tauvri (‘She who mingles poison with vegetable creations’) and Zairi (‘The Venom-maker’) (Gbd. XXVII). It seems that Ferdowsi was cognizant of such dichotomies when composing his masterpiece. His choice of the name Akvān for one of the main dīvs under the influence of the name of Akoman is proof to this claim. Significantly, even in his dual use of the legendary bird Sīmurgh, which is good-natured when fostering Zāl, yet, shown as an evil manifestation when confronting the hero Esfandiyār in his ‘Seven Trials’, Ferdowsi manifests a predilection for binaries so prevalent in *The Avesta*. As usual, when incorporating Avestan lore into his poem, Ferdowsi, ultimately, presents his own
version of the event or entity in mind. There is an evil avian counterpart to the Sīmurgh, as argued by Hans-Peter Schmidt, but it is Ferdowsi’s idea to present the same ‘monstrous’ creature in both good and evil versions. The same holds true of the ‘lion’, which is used as an epithet for a number of heroes including Hūshang and Rustam, but embodies evil when taking on Rakhsh in Rustam’s ‘First Trial’.

The demarcation of the boundaries of good and evil when traced back to The Avesta has much to do with ecological and geographical factors as can be seen in the differentiation between the Sīmurgh and its evil equivalent, Kāmak. While the Sīmurgh is a harbinger of fertility in spreading all sorts of seeds, Kāmak withholds rain from falling onto the earth. Similar dynamics are observed in the opposition of Apaosha, the demon withholding rain and Tishtrya. The significance of geographical issues is also present in The Shahnameh, albeit not always as evident as it is in The Avesta. For instance, after Kīyūmars makes his appearance onto this world, as the first human and king, he realizes that governing the earth is not without its inherent hazards, especially since there are evil forces contending with him for supremacy over space. His creation in The GBd signals the arrival of the second phase of creation, the gomezishn, in which what had been disembodied, menog, during the first three millennia of existence, takes on a cloak of materiality. As Ahrīman and his minions attack Gayomard upon the advent of corporeality, getig, the world undergoes tremendous change. For example, fire becomes polluted with smoke (GBd. III: 24), water is contaminated (VII: 1) and the mountains are created as the earth shakes in the wake of monstrous attacks (VIII: 1).

According to Hans-Peter Schmidt: “The Senmurw [original name of Sīmurgh] has an evil counterpart in the bird Kāmak, who is one of the monsters killed by Karshāsp (Menog-i Khirad 27.5). […] When Kāmak appeared he spread his wings over the whole world, all the rain fell on his wings and back into the sea, drought struck the earth, men died, springs, rivers, and wells dried up. Kamak devoured men and animals as a bird pecks grain” (“Saena”, Elr).

For further details on the Sīmurgh and Kāmak, see, for example: Hans-Peter Schmidt, “Saena”, Elr.
Ferdowsi does not specifically deal with the cosmogenesis, so dominant a theme in *The Avesta*. Yet, the attack launched by the dīvs on Kīyūmars himself, which leads to the creation of animal-life in the wake of his dismemberment as is related in *The GBd*, is transposed onto his son Sīyāmak in *The Shahnameh*. Here, the function of Sīyāmak’s dismemberment is to alert man to the dangers lurking in the four corners of the globe. Though brief in his description of the dīv, Ferdowsi enlightens us about some of the characteristics of these demonic creatures. That the dīv assaulting Sīyāmak has a name, Khazūrān, more than indicating a level of intimacy as was the case with ‘Grendel’, signifies a distortion of the name of the son of Ahrīman, Azrūr. According to one of the Zoroastrians’ secondary texts, (*Dina-i Menog-i Khirad* [literally ‘(Opinions of) the Spirit of Wisdom’]), Azrūr’s body was offered for sacrifice by Kīyūmars (27: 14). He is also called *varūna*, literally ‘topsy-turvy’, a term which conveys his abjected state of being, a counter-image to the self. *Varūna* is a term common in *The Shahnameh* in reference to the dīvs and is a particularly prominent feature in the ‘Akvān Dīv’ episode where Rustam struggles with the dīv metamorphosed into an onager. In response to the double-bind of being thrown into the seas or smashed against a mountain, Rustam, being cognizant of the *varūna* nature of the dīvs, opts for the latter, thus keeping himself alive by ending up in the water (III. 292–93: 63–74).

The other attribute ascribed to the dīvs is their blackness (I. 23: 33; 24: 61). In fact, even the so-called ‘White’ Dīv is black. Their blackness is supposed to be a reflection of the inherent darkness of Ahrīman: “The Evil Spirit, miscreated his creatures; out of his own Essence of Darkness, in the astral form of the blackness of charcoal, of the wicked worthy of darkness, like noxious creatures of very sinful blemish” (*GBd* I: 47). The blackness of the dīvs is also meant to be a signifier for their inner darkness. In some illustrations dating back to the Renaissance, the dīvs, in line with the image Iranians have of the *jinns*, another race of supernatural creatures, are
portrayed as having hooves. Dīvs, however, unlike the jinns, occupy space and as a result are in constant competition with humans. However, it seems that the image of many of the monsters, especially the dīvs, has become confused with that of the jinn (Massé 352–53), hence, unsurprisingly, most of the monsters of Iranian folklore have hooves, even the dragon of Rustam’s ‘Third Trial’.

In addition to the dīvs and the pairikās, Rustam and Isfandiyār find themselves confronted with a dragon during their ‘Seven Trials’. The dragon which appears to both of them in the ‘Third Trial’, is not as inhuman a being as it is in Tristan and Beowulf. In fact, in Rustam’s confrontation with the dragon, the tug of war is as much physical as verbal. Similar to the dīvs, we see the dragon being a part of the landscape the hero wishes to conquer, so much so, that in Rustam’s ‘Third Trial’, the dragon lays claim to the vast valley it is inhabiting and the skies above it (II. 28: 369) presumably being the most powerful of the genii loci. The dragon is so much part of the land it is inhabiting that with its death, the entire landscape undergoes tremendous change. Ferdowsi describes how the whole valley disappears under its flowing blood and venom (II. 29: 381). The change is so drastic that Rustam is overcome with a paralyzing sense of wonder: “He was frightened and overwhelmed with wonder; he uttered the name of the Lord many times” (II. 29: 382).

‘Wonder’ (shigiftī) is mentioned in both Rustam and Isfandiyār’s ‘Third Trial’ (see II. 27:359; V: 233: 155) and is closely linked to how overwhelmed both heroes were at the sight of the monster. In fact, in both instances, the heroes are so overwhelmed that they call upon ‘God’ (yazdān). The sense of ‘wonder’ is evoked on grounds of the alterity of the monstrous, which particularly comes to the fore in dragons. On an ontological level, the presencing of dragons can be interpreted as the manifestation of Being itself. From a linguistic perspective, the dragon can be
read as “an early expression of the creation of meaning through language: the dragon arises as a
signifier through the differentiation of Something from Nothing; its signified is the absence
created and concealed by language” (Lionarons, The Medieval 10). It so happens that while the
dragons in Tristan and Beowulf as well as the one Isfandiyār confronts in The Shahnameh itself,
are silent, this is not quite true of the dragon Rustam conquers as it engages in as much a physical
as a verbal tug of war with its opponent.

One of the distinguishing features of dragons is the polysemy and multi-dimensionality they
embody, which, to a large extent, is due to the fact that no one actually knows how a dragon looks
like. As Samantha Riches has remarked: “Dragons […], perhaps the most polyvalent and formable
embodiment of the concept of horror, occupied an important place in medieval consciousness,
lurking (usually but not exclusively malevolently) at the interface of theology, popular culture and
the natural world” (213). Yet, we do know, at least, one thing about the dragon which Rustam
confronts and that is that, similar to the common image of the dīvs, it is cloven-footed: “It raged
and simmered and dug deep into the ground from its hooves the whole earth became scarred” (II.
27: 361). A likely source of influence for the dragon in this episode could have been the
demonic Apaosha, literally “Non-Thriving” (Boyce, A History 74), which the rain-bearing deity
Tishlytra has to contend with. Tishlytra and Apaosha fight each other in the guise of horses, the
former “in the shape of a white, beautiful horse, with golden ears and golden caparison” (Yt. VIII,
6: 18) and the latter “in the shape of a dark horse, black with black ears, black with a black back,
black with a black tail, stamped with brands of terror” (Yt. VIII. 6: 21). The metaphor of ‘spring
cloud’ (abr-i bahār) filling the earth with the fire of warfare (II. 27: 365), is used to describe
Rustam, intensifying his possible association with Tishlytra, who is not only a harbinger of rain, but
also ‘shining and piercing and loud-snorting’ (Yt. VIII. 1: 2). The analogy is intensified in the
terminology used to evoke the imagery of flowing water associated with Tishtrya once the dragon is beheaded at the hands of Rustam. Ferdowsi speaks of a ‘river’ (rūd) of venom (II. 28: 378) and a ‘spring of blood’ (chishmih-yi khūn, line 379). Rustam, stained with the blood of the dragon, cleanses himself and seeks help from the Creator (see II. 29: 383) highlighting the association of draconitas with impurities. Yet, as is the case with Beowulf and Tristan, despite mastering the dragon, he ultimately subsumes traces of the draconitas within himself.

There is then no wonder that Zahhāk is ‘impure’ (nā-pāk), the very being, from whose name, the term ezhdihā, ‘dragon’, enters the Persian lexicon. The Avestan form of his name Azhi-Dhahhāk turns into ezhdihā and is still used in Modern Persian. Safa deconstructs Zahhāk as dah + āk (meaning ‘ten scourges’) in line with his introduction of ten scourges and unseemly customs into the Iranian community (460–61). In continuation of the discussion of the demonization of the female, it is worth noting that the origins to Zahhāk’s draconitas can be sought in The Avesta, which ascribes his impurities to his maternal ancestors. According to The GBd, “by his mother Zahhāk was of Udai, son of Bayak, son of Tambayak, son of Owokhm, son of Pairi-urvaesm, son of Gadhwithw, son of Drugās-kān, son of the evil spirit” (emphases added) (GBd. XXXI: 6). In The Shahnameh, Zahhāk’s father, Mardās, is portrayed as being a man of rectitude and righteousness (I. 45: 77) and it is even implied that he might have been an illegitimate child:191

He became an accomplice to the murder of his father
I heard this saying from the wise
that even if an evil son grows up to be a fierce lion

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191 According to oral tradition, Zahhāk was in love with his step-mother and killed his father to gain possession of her (Anjavi, 301–6).
he will not dare shed his father’s blood
save that there be a story behind his origins
the investigator will find the secret with the mother (I. 48: 116–18)\textsuperscript{192}

Etymologically, the name of Zahhāk’s father signifies ‘man-eater’, which suggests the transposition of the epithet of the son (Zahhāk being the actual cannibal) onto his father. It is also to be noted that Zahhāk is of Arab descent as is indicated in the origins of his father: “Once upon a time there was a man from the desert of the javelin-bearing riders (Arabia)” (I. 45: 75). Therefore, the othering of Zahhāk, who is, later, transformed into the three-headed dragon of Persian mythology, takes place on a number of levels including his Arab roots and his mother’s demonic lineage, though mention of the latter is only implicit in the poem itself. The Iranians, yet unaware of the dangers lurking in the background, being disgruntled with their vainglorious king, Jamshīd, in fact, opt for the dragon-man, whom they come to refer to as ‘the king of the land of Iranians’ (\textit{shāh-i irān zamīn}, I. 51: 175). One could argue that Zahhāk becomes an amalgamation of Grendel and the \textit{Beowulf}-dragon, as he engages in cannibalism, simultaneously, representing a land scourge in his slashing and burning of land and property (I. 55: 11–12).

The association of monsters with territoriality and man’s desire to hold sway over vast swathes of land has already been noted. Within this context, Jan Rypka’s attempt at explaining the \textit{Azhī-Dahāka} myth within the matrix of political oppression and territorial expansionism of a particular group over another is worth taking into consideration. As Rypka maintains: “It is probable that the fabulous monster of \textit{The Avesta}, the Dragon Azhi-Dahāka, was the symbol of oppression emanating from the Akkād and penetrating into the east beyond the Median Frontier”\textsuperscript{192}
(4). Similarly, E. Benveniste and later, A. Christensen believe Zahhāk’s name to have had its origins in Dāsa or Dayu, “names by which the Aryan Indians distinguished well-established aboriginals from the Indians” (Christensen, “Essai” 21 n.3). Attributing monstrous qualities to the invaders by the settlers of a particular region or vice versa has been common practice. In fact, according to T. Burrow, the demonization of the dīvs has its origins in times when later Iranians dominated the proto-Iranians living in eastern Iran (128).¹⁹³

Not only do the (proto-) colonizers demonize the settlers of the land they wish to conquer, but they also harness their bodies to build monuments on the mastered territories. Jamshīd, for example, after setting up a quadripartite class system (worshippers, warriors, farmers and artisans), makes the ‘impure dīv’ (dīv-i nāpāk) embark upon construction work:

He had the impure dīvs
mix earth with water
once familiar with all aspects of mud
they speedily brought bricks to life
the dīvs turned stone and plaster into walls
by cutting the bricks he built geometrical constructions (I. 43: 36–38)¹⁹⁴

Significantly, all three works of this study highlight the construction capacities of the monstrous Other which also tend to be mixed with an element of exoticism, though not so much in Ferdowsi’s poem. In The Shahnameh, exoticism is not so much an issue as exploitation of the

¹⁹³ The reverse dichotomy dividing the ‘dīvs’ and ‘āsuras’ exists to this day amongst Iranians and Indians, for while the former consider the dīvs as demonic, the latter, consider them as divine. The same opposition exists in their definition of the ‘āsuras’, whom Zoroastrian Iranians consider as divine, while Indians hold an opposing view of them. For further information, see, for example: T. Burrow, “The Proto-Indoaryans”, JRAS (1973): 123–40.
¹⁹⁴  بر در دادر آمیختن خاک را
هر آنچه از گل آماده شناخته
به خشت از پیرون دیوار کرد
به سدنگ و به گچ دیو دیوار کرد
بر در دادر آمیختن خاک را
هر آنچه از گل آماده شناخته
به خشت از پیرون دیوار کرد
به سدنگ و به گچ دیو دیوار کرد
Other for construction purposes. As soon as the society is divided into four groups, the difficult task of construction is imposed upon the dīvs. Meanwhile, as meticulously studied by J.P. Frankis, in all five instances where the phrase enta geweorc (‘work of the giants’) refers to a building in the corpus of OE works, Latin loan-words imbue the setting with a sense of otherworldliness. In both Beowulf and Tristan there is an allusion to the exoticism of the construction-works of giants which can be better understood in light of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britanniae and the shattered bodies of the giants in the text that give way to the British empire. The fragments of the monstrous body help construct identities both in time and place as they help form a historia that justifies the occupation of Britannia at the hands of Brutus and Corineus and constitute the materia out of which the empire is built. There are traces of the pre-historic past of Britannia in Gottfried’s description of la fossiure a la gent amant (‘The Cave of Lovers’). The otherworldliness of that construction is elaborately delineated by the German poet who has the monstrous others serve as the builders of an atmosphere suffused with aesthetic and temporal exoticism (lines 16700–16730). As much as the otherness of the builders of ‘The Cave of Lovers’ is due to their pre-historic roots, as we shall see, the monstrosity of Morold, one of the major gigantes that appears in Tristan, in addition to his size, is to be sought in his association with the ‘other’ continent, Africa.

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195 See: J.P. Frankis, “The Thematic Significance of ‘enta geweorc’ in ‘The Wanderer’,” ASE 2(1973): 253–69. In Andreas 1495a eald enta geweorc (‘old work of giants’) refers to prison, a carcern (1460a) where Andreas be wealle seah (‘saw by the wall’, 1492a). In Beowulf in line 2717 the ‘enta geweorc’ that Wiglaf ‘bi wealle … seah’ (‘saw by the wall’, 2716a, 2717b) is the dragon’s den. In Cotton Maxim the ordonc enta geweorc (‘skillful work of giants’) are ceustra (Maxims II 1b–2a), weallstana geweorc (‘work of building-stones) (3a). In The Ruin the depiction of the ‘enta geweorc’ (2b) include wealstan (‘stone used in building’) and torras (1a and 3b); and in The Wanderer the eald enta geweorc (87a) is also a wealstæl (‘foundation’) (88a) (cf. Anderson 69–70).

196 A concrete example appears in the fragmented body of the biggest giant conquered by Corineus, Gogmagog, the biggest of all giants in Geoffrey’s Historia. As J.J. Cohen posits: “Even if the giant’s gross body is destroyed, he himself is immortalized as geography, as earth: the place of his death is called Gogmagog’s Leap, in presentem diem” (Of Giants 35).

197 An origin to Africa’s otherness can be sought in Biblical commentaries on the three sons of Noah, Shem, Japheth and Ham. Ham, spelled ‘Cham’ in the Middle Ages, according to Gen. 9: 21–22, announced the nakedness of his father, who had been drunk at the time, and was cursed through his son, Chanaan (cf. Gen.9: 25–26). Based on some
2.3. Tristan: Land-scourges and Demonic Forces

One of the major monsters of Tristan happens to be a human being of monstrous characteristics. Claude Lecouteux has suggested that Morold is actually a giant as his description as Môrolt der sere starke (‘Morold the very strong one’, lines 5873; 5951) indicates (cf. Les Monstres 33). On the other hand, Christoph Huber in seeking Morold’s roots in the Celtic Fomorians, believes in the existence of a historical combat between land-based cultures and seafaring imperialism (Gottfried 59). The Fomorians are in the habit of demanding tribute from people and go on to cut off the noses of those who do not pay (see “Fomorians”, A Dictionary of Celtic Mythology). Morold, whose name links him to the ‘sea’, traverses the waters to reach surrounding lands from which he demands tribute, evokes the image of Scyld Scefing in Beowulf who eventually has ‘everyone of the neighbouring peoples’ (æghwylc para ymbsittendra, lines 9–11) obey him and pay him tribute.198 While Scyld takes credit for his actions which lead to the consolidation of a lordless people, Morold’s actions are viewed from the perspective of the divides they cause amongst the members of the Cornish community, who each year pray that their own sons will not be chosen to be recruited by the Irish Morold (lines 6037–45).

While some Celtic sources attribute African roots to the Fomorians, Gottfried focuses on the African origins of Morold’s brother-in-law, Gurman (line 5883). It is said that Gurman, who forsook his African origins to gain more power elsewhere, ‘added to his power and prestige in that he married Morold’s sister’ (und gab im craft und êre, /daz er Môroldes swester nam, lines 5932–33). Gurman parallels with “the only character in the entire poem based on a historical figure, Geiseric” (Krohn 82) portrayed by Geoffrey of Monmouth as an African king from whom

198 For more on Morold’s name, see, for example: Denomy, Alex J., “Tristan and the Morholt: David and Goliath”, MS 18(1956): 224–32

commentaries, there is a correlation between Ham’s gaining possession of Africa (Shem receives Europe and Japheth, Asia) and his curse. For more details, see, for example: John Block Friedman, The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981): 99–105.
the Saxons seek solace from King Careticus, ‘who as a lover of civil wars was detested by God and the Britons’ (*amator civilium bellorum, invisus Deo & Britonibus*, Bk. XI: 8). Though no mention is made of the appeal for aid on the part of the Saxons to Gurman, Gottfried, in concurrence with Geoffrey, portrays him as the conqueror of Ireland. The Gurman portrayed by Geoffrey has little appreciation for natural resources as he engages in scorched earth tactics ‘soon depopulating the fields, he set fire to neighbouring cities, burnt up the whole surface of the island from one sea to the other’.199 Meanwhile, in *Tristan* we read how Gurman exerts his power over breadths of land and sea as he uses the Irish under his command to ‘harry neighbours at all times with battles and assaults’ (*daz s'ime z'allen zîten/mit stürmen und mit strîten/ diu bilant hulfen twingen*, lines 5921–23) and thereby gain control over Cornwall and England.

Geoffrey of Monmouth and the poets influenced by his chronicles, in the figure of Gurman, invert the eastward advancements of the Vandal king, Geiseric (c.389–477), which took place from Hispania to Africa, as they have him hail from Africa and lay waste to the West. Whether the inverted advancements chronicled by Geoffrey and his literary successors is an attempt at further monsterizing the Orient, which represents a geographical expanse connoting the Other, is open to question. Gurman, however, who embodies the cruelties of the continent he hails from, makes the ‘illustrious Romans’ (*diu gewaltegen Rômaeren*) accomplices to his expansionist policies by gaining permission ‘that he should have possession of all he could subdue, yet concede them some right and title to it’ (lines 5906–11). This is also an interesting twist on the actual vandalization of the Romans at the hands of Geiseric, who ends up capturing a major share of Roman domains in the fifth century. There appear to be some proto-colonialist intentions behind Gottfried’s twisting of Gurman’s origins despite his curious claims of relying

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199 *…moxque depopulans agros, ignem cumulavit in finitimas quasque civitates, qui non quievit accensus donec cunctam pene superficiem insulae a mari usque ad mare exassit*.
on ‘the authentic story’ (rehte maere, line 5881). Africa, in general, and Ethiopia in particular, as heterotopias of monstrous races, serve as an origin for Gurman, who becomes associated with the monstrous character, Morold.

In Gottfried’s Tristan, Morold’s monstrosity also comes to the fore in the terminology applied to him. Morold, for one thing, is a ‘devilish man’ (vâlandes man, line 6213), ‘like one drawn by the devil’ (als den der tiuvel vüeret, line 6853) and ‘the cursed man of the Devil’ (der veige vâlandes man, line 6906).200 While in Geoffrey’s Historia, we are clearly informed of Gormand’s opposition towards Christianity which comes to the fore in the new Frankish king, Isembard’s renunciation of Christianity (christianitatem suam [...] deseruit, Bk. XI: 8) so as to gain Gormand’s assistance in removing his uncle, Gottfried portrays Morold, Gurman’s brother-in-law in Tristan, as an embodiment of anti-Christian sentiments. Beyond the lexical sphere, Morold’s satanic association comes to light in his opposition to Tristan, who has God on his side:

Môrolt, als uns diu wârheit
ie hât gesaget und hiute seit,
der haete vier manne craft,
diz was vier manne ritterschaft. 6880

daz was der strit in eine sît.
sô was anderhalp der strit:
daz eine got, daz ander reht,
daz dritte was ir zweier kneht
und ir gewaerer dienestman, 6885
der wol gewaere Tristan,
daz vierde was willegen muot,
der wunder in den noeten tuot.
die viere und jene viere
ðûz den gebilde ich schiere
zwô ganze rotte oder ahte man,
als übel als ich doch bilden kan.

6890

[Morold had the strength of four, making a force of four men. Such was the one side. On the other it comprised: first God; second Right, the third was their vassal and servitor,

200 As Ulrich Stöckle has argued the term ‘man’ in the phrase vâlandes man, hints at a servant-master relationship (cf. 21).
loyal Tristan; the fourth was Willing Heart, who works wonders in extremities. From the first four and the second, though I am no marshal, I quickly form two detachments, otherwise eight men.]

Aside from the differing associations of the two parties, there are other factors which distinguish Tristan from his monstrous adversary. For instance, while Morold is in possession of land and desires to acquire more (lines 5935–40), Tristan despite having gained territories under Morgan’s control, gives them away to his foster-father, Rual and his sons, preferring to remain lantlós (line 5868). Within the same context, while Morold primarily pursues his own interests, Tristan fights on behalf of all the fathers who have the lives of their sons at stake.

Another subject of fascination in the poem happens to be the mirroring of the avuncular relationship that Mark and Morold, respectively, hold in relation to Tristan and Isolde. In actuality, it is Mark the Uncle, who should be guarding his ground against Morold.\(^\text{201}\) Another point in mind is Christoph Huber’s argument that the uncle has to be removed from the scene to clear the path towards the future bridal quest (Gottfried 61). Huber backs up his claim by alluding to traces of an incestuous attraction of both Isoldes, mother and daughter, yet undifferentiated at this point, for the brother/uncle whose fragmented head and hands they fervently kiss and examine ‘closely and ruefully’ (ange unde jaemerliche, line 7183) despite the association between his body and wicked deeds (lines 7177–78). Given Morold’s extraordinary powers and his likely hold over his niece, he has to be eliminated if Tristan is to find his way to Isolde and ultimately bring her over to Cornwall on his future bridal quest. Yet, as proves to be the case, before he can lay any claim to Isolde on his second expedition to Ireland, Tristan has yet another monster to contend with: the dragon.

\(^\text{201}\) In Beowulf, however, Sigemund is able to slay the dragon in the absence of his nephew Fitela (see lines 874b–97). In Gottfried’s poem, there is a reversal in the avuncular power paradigm, as it is the nephew, Tristan, who fights his uncle’s fights for him.
The association between Morold and the dragon that Tristan later conquers does not only appear within a lexical context (the use of *tiuvel* and *vâland* for both), but also in that, similar to Morold, it too, brings the hero closer to Isolde. The other similarity between the two is that both are venomous. While venom courses through the blood of the dragon, Morold taints the sword he deploys against Tristan with poison. In fact, it is the effects of poison that prompt Tristan to embark upon a trip to Ireland to have himself cured by Queen Isolde who is possessed of exceptional healing powers (a gift which she seems to pass on to her daughter as the final episode of the Thomas version implies). It is also the incorporation of the venom of monstrosity by the hero that translates into a re-encoding of the monstrous characteristics of both his adversaries and his subsequent acquisition of further physical powers. The allegations of ‘sorcery’ (*zouberaerei*) voiced, according to Gottfried, out of ‘damned envy’ (*verwâzene nît*, line 8319) against Tristan (lines 8328–49) could be directly associated with the emerging powers of the transformed or ‘newborn man’ (*niuborn man*, line 8313). Whether the venom that enters Tristan’s system activates powers latent in the hero or endows him with fresh forces is beside the point, what is significant is that, in a process that could best be described as an instance of *Aufhebung*, he becomes a different person. As Horst Wenzel posits: “it is the deadly wound which destroys Tristan’s former life, yet, at the same time, signals a prelude to a new beginning” (252). Tristan’s singularity upon mastering the monstrous Morold is concretized in the stench of his wounds, which literally sets him apart from the rest of the community (lines 7300–10). One could interpret the stench as a marker of further uniqueness which the hero acquires upon his mastery over the monstrous Morold.

Morold may bear more similarities to the human race than, for example, Zahhāk in *The Shahnameh* who has two snakes growing from his shoulders, yet, he too, is a hunter of men.
Although not precisely in the literal sense of Zahhāk who feeds on human brains, or the dragon in *Tristan*, who leads to ‘the loss of life of thousands who came to do battle with it’ (*diu verluren tûsenden den lip./ die dar ze kampfe kâmen*, lines 8916–17) competing for the possession of Isolde, he hunts men. This is quite evident in the fact that he seizes thirty young men from Cornwall to Ireland each year, who are ‘capable of service and as handsome and acceptable in their appearance as courtly usage required’ (lines 5959–62). Thus, similar to Zahhāk, he is depleting the country of its male population as it is explicitly stated that ‘there were no girls, only boys’ (*niht megede, niuwan knebelîn*, line 5963). The targeting of the male population of another country leads to its long-term debilitation in bringing about demographic instabilities and a shortage of able-bodied men to administer affairs in the future, especially at a time and age, when bodily strength mattered immensely.

The dragon in *Tristan*, as becomes obvious from the beginning of the *aventiure*, despite Gottfried’s use of *tiuvel* and *vâlant*, is more of a land scourge than an emblem of the Devil. The repetition of the term *lant* brings home the association between the dragon and the rugged terrain. The dragon embodies forces combating civilization. Tristan’s victory over the dragon, similar to the imposition of his civilized manner of hunting on the barbaric methods implemented by the Cornish hunters, marks another reinstatement of the laws of *civilitas* versus the agent of destruction represented in the dragon:

```plaintext
daz maere saget unde giht von einem serpande, der was dô dâ ze lande. der selbe leide vårant der haete liute unde lant mit alsô schedelîchem schaden sô schedelîchen überladen daz der künec swuor einen eit```

8905
The territory of the dragon with all its ‘twists and turns’ (manege kêre und manege vart, line 8937) fits the monstrosity of the dragon. In other words, geography is correlated with biology. Gottfried recounts how Tristan initially rides through fields and open country which give way to a serpentine topography as he gets closer to the dragon:

ûf sînen wec reit er zehant
über velt und über gevilde.
er nam im in der wilde
manege kêre und manege vart.
und alse der tac stigende wart,
dô liez er vaste hine gân
wider daz tal z'Anferginân.
daz was des trachen heimwist,
alsô man an der geste list.

[He immediately rode on his path through fields and open country. He made many a twist and turn through the wilds, and, as the sun began to climb, he galloped towards the vale of Anferginan, where (as one reads in the French source) the dragon had his lair.]

Topographies help mould bodies, hence, it is not surprising that bodies in turn, embody the defining characteristics of the topographies they are most closely associated with. The OF name of the dragon’s habitat, Anferginân, as Rüdiger Krohn informs us can be decoded as l’enfer.

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202 In a comparison of the dragon episodes in various versions of the Tristan legend, it becomes clear that Gottfried has been more concerned with portraying an eeriness of the geography of the dragon than poets of other Tristan versions. See, for example: Danielle Buschinger, “Le dragon dans les romans de Tristan”, Le Dragon dans la Culture Médiévale. Colloque du Mont-Saint-Michel. 31 Octobre–1er November 1993 (Greifswald: Reineke-Verlag, 1994): 27–36, for a comparison of the dragon episodes in various versions of the poem including Eilhart’s Sir Tristrem, the ON Tristansaga and Gottfried’s verison.
guignant (‘Lurking Inferno’) (103). A similar paradigm is observed in the mere housing Grendel and his mother in Beowulf and the land of the dīvs, Mazandarān in The Shahnameh, whose pitch-black darkness brings about the blindness of King Kay Kāvus and his retinue. Just as Rustam finds himself bound to embark on an expedition to Mazandarān on account of a foolhardy king, it becomes incumbent upon Tristan to head for Ireland to fight in lieu of a coward ruler.

The dragon is, in fact, the second monstrous being to impel Tristan to embark on the arduous journey across the seas toward Ireland, *per se* a tabooed territory for any man from Cornwall since the death of Morold at the hands of Tristan, irrespective of the existence of the dragon. Hermann Henning is justified in stipulating that each departure leads Tristan into a ‘new territory’ (*Neuland*) and along with it, a resistance to a new ‘plane of identity’ (*Identitätsebene*, 193). The dragon, who is ‘an army in itself’ (*dō was sīn ouch ein michel her*, line 9016), for the first time ‘reduced him to such straits that he thought his end had come’ (*und brâhte in z’alsō grôzer nôt,/ daz er wânde wesen tôt*, line 9011–12). It is, however, not only the sight of the dragon that causes the protagonist distress, but also its sound, “as it seeks to cover the longest distance” (Unzeitig-Herzog 42). Yet, in being *lantlôs* (line 5868), Tristan has the advantage of ontologically belonging to the peripheries, therefore, enjoying a common trait with monsters which enables him to tackle them more easily.

As it was in the wake of mastering Morold, there is a sense of the doubling of the monstrous as Tristan sublates the powers of * draconitas*, concretized in his inhalation of the venom exuding from the dragon’s tongue which he is carrying as proof of conquest. As pointed out by Helmut Brall-Tuchel, “as the plagiarist [the steward who presents the body of the slain dragon] claims the rights of the dragon-slayer [the hand in marriage of Isolde], we witness a doubling of reality” (227). The doubling that took place during Tristan’s single combat with Morold comes to the
fore in light of the contamination of the hero, who shortly upon having been affected by the villain’s venom becomes his monstrous double (lines 7010–15). The slaying of the dragon, similarly, leads to the incorporation of *draconitas* by the hero, however, even more significantly, it brings about cataclysmic changes indicated in the falling apart of the distinctions between appearance and reality, the ordinary and the extra-ordinary (Brall-Tuchel 226–27). The appearance of two claimants for the hand of Isolde, the conjuring up of two proofs (one the body of the dragon, the other, its missing tongue), the divisions between those men from Cornwall who wished to learn more about Tristan’s fate and others who wished him to depart (lines 9662–98) represent some examples. Doubling, indicative of the chaos arising from monstrous combats, will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter. At any rate, the chaos, which the dragon, this very symbol of anti-civilization, embodies, is unleashed onto the world upon its dismemberment. Tristan’s every attempt at taming the chaos and incorporating savagery into civilization leaves a trace of the havoc behind.

The next monster whom Tristan tackles, Urgan li vilus, betrays his villainous nature in his appellation ‘li vilus’. The giant Urgan, similar to Morold and the dragon, is referred to as an ‘accursed’ (*vâland*, line 16065). He is defined by his gluttony, as is the case with most other specimens of his kind, which is reflected in his theft of cattle, sheep and pigs (cf. line 15932). The connection between giants and the apertures of the body, in particular the mouth and the genitalia, has been highlighted by Mikhail Bakhtin as he emphasized the potential for such corporeal sites to act as boundaries between the inside and outside of the body, hence, as possible sources of resistance between man and the outside world (*Rabelais* 26). The giant’s stronger connection to bodily orifices means that he is at his weakest around these spots, which, in their vulnerability, can potentially provide a *kairos* for the advancing hero, “a passing instant when an
opening appears which must be driven through with force if success is to be achieved” (White 13). Tristan, for instance, initiates an attack on Urgan by taking note of the giant’s gluttony.

Once Tristan notices that Urgan, who thrives on stolen cattle, is transporting his ‘booty’ (*roup*) over the bridge, he grasps the moment and blocks the giant’s passage. True that the giant’s exorbitant diet poses a threat to the land of Swales in whose vicinity he lives, but it also provides Tristan with an opportune moment to launch a decisive attack against the monster:

\[
\text{Als uns diu wâre istôrje seit} \\
\text{von Tristandes manheit,} \\
\text{sô was des selben mâles} \\
\text{dem lande ze Swâles} \\
\text{ein rise bî gesezzen,} \\
\text{hochvertic und vermezzen,} \\
\text{und haete ûf der rivâgen hûs} \\
\text{und hiez der Urgân li vilûs.} \\
\text{dem selben risen dem was Gilân} \\
\text{und sîn lant Swâles undertân} \\
\text{und solten ime den zins geben,} \\
\text{daz er daz lantliut lieze leven} \\
\text{âne nôt und âne leit.} \\
\text{15915} \\
\text{15920} \\
\text{15925}
\]

[As the authentic history of Tristan’s exploits tells us, there was at this time a giant who had settled near the land of Swales, a haughty and arrogant man who had his dwelling on the bank of a river, and who was called Urgan li vilus. Gilan and his land of Swales were subject to this giant and, in return for his allowing people to live free of molestation, were obliged to pay him tributes.]

The tributes that Urgan is demanding from Duke Gilan and his people are draining Swales of its resources. Once more, Tristan fights for a ruler who dares not protect his own realm; this time not for the defense of territory *per se*, but for *minne*, for the ulterior motive of securing the marvelous dog Petitcreiu for Isolde.²⁰³

²⁰³ Similar to Mark, Duke Gilan shows immense weakness which comes to the fore when, upon killing Urgan, Tristan demands possession of the dog Petitcreiu and his response clearly indicates that he would much rather part with his sister along with half of his possessions: “Leave me my little dog and take my handsome sister together
Urgan’s territory also marks the giant as monstrous, since he inhabits the peripheries, the bank of a river, from where he exerts authority over the land of Duke Gilan, Swales. As Tristan is guided into ‘the wildest of forests’ (in einen harte wilden walt, line 15965) which leads into the giant’s habitat on the river bank, we are reminded yet once more of the peripheral spaces that monsters tend to occupy. However, as in most cases, these tabooed territories, though faraway from the city, end up leaving a mark on the centralized realm of the civitas.

Topographically speaking, it is significant to note that most of the action takes place on the bridge on Urgan’s way home.²⁰⁴ It is with thoughts of life and death in mind that Tristan finds himself once more on the bridge, a reified image of liminality. Throughout the decisive moments of the combat between Tristan and the giant, the image of the bridge is evoked a number of other times, but primarily at one point, when Tristan is hovering between life and death as the giant strikes at him. However, luckily for Tristan, in having his massive physicality override his intellectual capacity, the giant misses the mark. Crossing the bridge is synonymous with putting oneself on the line in the face of the giant. This is precisely what renders Tristan more of a man once he emerges victorious: ‘Never in that land (Swales) was one man’s manhood held in higher esteem’ (der drier wart nie mere/ in dem lande geseit / von eines mannes manheit, lines 16208–10).²⁰⁵

Once he has thrown the blinded giant off the bridge, his act is looked upon as a ‘wonder’ (wunder, line 16200) and he is nicknamed ‘Tristan the wonder-worker’ (Tristan der wunderaere, line 16216). Urgan, as it turns out, is indispensable to Tristan’s heroic individuation. In fact, as

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²⁰⁴ The importance of the bridge is highlighted by the fact that the term brucke (‘bridge’) is dominant in this episode, being used in lines 15968; 15973; 16127; 16137; 16171 and 16196.
²⁰⁵ The actual translation is “never had a man’s manhood been more the subject of the three” (referring to ‘the praise, honour and glory’, pris unde lop und êre in the preceding line).
Cohen has argued, the giant is “foundational rather than antithetical to chivalric identity” (*Of Giants* 159). One cannot help drawing a parallel between Urgan’s fate and the shattering of the monstrous bulk of the giant against the rock evokes the image of Gogmagog, the biggest giant left in the land to be named Cornwall in honor of Corineus who defeated him as is related in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*. As Geoffrey relates in his *Historia*, when Corineus throws the giant he had been carrying on his shoulders over the rock into the sea: “he dashed into a thousand pieces and the waves were stained with his blood” (*in mille frusta dilaceratus est et fluctus sanguine maculavit*, Bk.I: xvi). Once the giant is shattered, his corporeal pieces become history and the city has a renewed chance to flourish. Although initially a hurdle to the formation of a *civitas*, in the wake of his fragmentation, the giant contributes to the construction of cities.206

Yet Urgan is not the only giant to make an appearance in the corpus of *Tristan*. In Thomas d’Angleterre’s version of the poem, the story of the victory of Tristan over the nephew of a giant named Orguillus (incorporating the vice of pride) whom Arthur defeated replicates the story of Arthur’s triumph over a giant named Ritho or Riton as recounted in both Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia* and Wace’s *Roman de Brut* (c.1155). In both cases, the giant was demanding the beard of a king to add to a fur he was making out of the beards of all kings he had conquered. However, the king of Spain whose beard was demanded by the nephew of the giant Orgillos conquered by Arthur, unlike the heroic Arthur, is unable to defend his own beard (emblem of masculinity) and has Tristan fight his battle for him. Once again Tristan’s body sustains injuries, but in the end he accomplishes the feat of gigantomachia (*E el cors blecé e grevé/ Dolent em furent si amis./ Mais il jaianz i fu ocis*, II: 956–58).

206 Geoffrey of Monmouth provides an example of how the fragmented body of the giant marks a spot to the extent that it assumes the name of the monster, ‘Gogmagog’s leap’ (*saltus goemagog*) and kindles a desire for city-construction in its wake (cf. *Historia* Bk. I: xvi).
Significantly, Isolde, though unaware of Tristan’s marriage, is fully informed of his victory over the giant in Spain as she is sitting alone in her chamber. Her solitude is a reflection of her lack of a complementary partner while in the company of Mark, a king as unheroic as the Spanish king in not fighting his own battles. Her thoughts are focused on Tristan in the solitude of her chamber because it is Tristan who has slain the dragon and the giants and accomplished heroic feats and who, therefore, truly deserves her. As Adrian Stevens argues, “In a literal sense, the effect of inserting the two giant-killing stories into the narrative at this point is to shift attention away from Ysolt; but at a symbolic level, the effect of the parallel established between Arthur and her lover is to validate Ysolt’s relationship with Tristan” (“Killing” 413). The outcome of the gigantomachia the second time round, similar to Tristan’s victory over Urgan, is a reassertion of his masculinity especially since he is fighting a giant so obsessed with emasculating kings in having a fur made of their sheared beards. One of the significant differences noted between the second and the first gigantomachia is to be sought in the severity of the injuries Tristan sustains in the second time which give rise to concern (see line 957). In any case, the bodily injuries sustained by Tristan throughout the poem seem to be associated with Isolde (earlier mother and later daughter, who are, initially, undifferentiated in name) and as Stevens points out “It is Tristan’s fate, and not Arthur’s, to be wounded in his encounters with giants, and the wounds he receives at the hands of giants are symbolically associated with love” (“Killing” 413–14). The injuries he suffers at the hands of Orguillus point backwards to the wounds at the hands of by Morold and later, the venom of the dragon’s tongue, which brought him to the brink of death, and look forward to the injuries he succumbs to for fighting the fight of a dwarfish namesake.207

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207 Where two figures appear in the same text, the second is in some sense the doom of the first. For more on the doubling of names in medieval texts, see, for example: Jane Bliss, Naming and Namelessness in Medieval Romance
Dwarves, though not monstrous in the true sense of the word, deserve mention in their embodiment of Otherness. Gottfried von Strassburg, for one thing, in having a dwarf incorporate the function of the spy of Mark’s court, is once again conflating an exterior aspect with the interior. His pettiness is inscribed in his name ‘Melôt petit von Aquitân’ (line 14240), a name which is only given to him in the Gottfried version of the poem (Krohn 140). Gottfried also touches on his ability to read the stars (lines 14241–44), though he does not get into any further details. J. Gombert has assumed the reason as to why Gottfried does not turn Melot into an astrologer-magician to be sought in the fact that he has already attributed those powers to Queen Isolde (107). However, with or without magical powers, Melot has enough intelligence and cunning to carry out his divisive plans against Tristan as “he laid his traps in word and gesture” (ez leite sîne vâre/ an rede und an gebâre, lines 14263–64). Generally, dwarves, similar to the dīvs, though detestable, enjoy special powers. In Nordic and Germanic mythology, they have been known as great craftsmen, an example of which appears in the figure of Regin in Norse mythology, who forges the sword Gram for the hero, Sigurd or Alberich in Das Nibelungenlied, who was endowed with the cloak of invisibility (3, 97).

In the end, dwarves, similar to monsters, serve as a supplément in the course of heroic development, initially looked upon as a source of marvel, eventually, they act as a foil to the heroic body. The defective body of the dwarf helps highlight the bodily beauty and valour of Tristan. The fact that Tristan’s namesake in Thomas’s version is a dwarf only in name and not in body is beside the point. What is important is that the other Tristan has earned the epithet of ‘Dwarf’ as a result of inner weaknesses, including his inability to fight for his honour on his

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208 Dwarves are also closely associated with elves, especially, the ‘dark elves’ of ON mythology. For further details, see, for example: “Dwarfs” in Andy Orchard’s Cassell’s Dictionary of Norse Myth and Legend (London: Cassell, 1997).
own. The oneness of the name of the hero with ‘Tristan the Dwarf’ enforces the parallelism between the two so much so that suggestions have been made that the second Tristan should be read as the alter ego of the first. Names, as we shall see in the next chapter, being inscribed on the personhood of characters, can become a prime target in the verbal sparring between the heroic and the monstrous.
Chapter 3: Clashing Bodies

This chapter aims to explore the function of clashes between the heroic and the monstrous in Beowulf, The Shahnameh and Tristan in bringing about a new zone of potentialities and dynamism, without which, there would be no thrust in narratives, no new mappae mundi, in short, no creativity. Having discussed heroic and monstrous bodies, I deem it apt at this point to delve into the complexities that surround the confrontation of the two. A particularly fascinating aftermath of clashes between the heroic and the monstrous is the zone of becoming which emerges as a result. Following Homi Bhabha’s lead, I wish to call this emerging space of potentialities, the ‘Third Space’, a zone, in which the ‘I’ and the ‘thou’ clash, creating “discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity” (37). The heroic ‘I’ and monstrous ‘thou’ that face each other in combat, as shall be seen in this chapter, face off over the supremacy of one name over the other, and, ultimately, over auctoritas of the same territorial space. As each body is marked at the hands of the other, the space in which they face each other, is bound to undergo change and can potentially give rise to new openings and understandings, an example of which, appears in the hand-to-hand battle between Beowulf and Grendel where Heorot becomes a concretized form of the ‘third space’. The emergence of this space of becoming, like many others, in which fundamental issues such as territoriality and authority are at stake, is moulded in the course of the bodily inscriptions that take place in single battles.

The ‘inscriptive body’, an inherent concomitant of corporeal clashes, takes on an agency of its own in being directly involved in charting the fate of a nation. This form of inscription plays a particularly major role in the unfolding of epic literature whose foundation lies in battles in “which the general object is not to gain a strategic advantage but to kill leaders” (Chadwick 340).
The concept of ‘inscriptive body can better be understood when contrasted to the ‘lived body,’ as Elisabeth Grosz’s following explication demonstrates:

One is derived from Nietzsche, Kafka, Foucault, and Deleuze, which I will call “inscriptive”; the other is more prevalent in psychology, especially psychoanalysis and phenomenology. I will refer to this second approach as the ‘lived body’. The first conceives the body as a surface on which social law, morality, and values are inscribed; the second refers largely to the lived experience of the body, the body’s internal or psychic inscription. Where the first analyzes a social, public body, the second takes the body—schema or imaginary anatomy as its object (s). (33)

The act of inscribing upon a particular body leads to a violation of bodily boundaries as becomes manifest in the gushing of blood, marking of scars and ultimately dismemberment. The wound(s) created as a result transgress dermal contours meant to have kept the self protected from the outside world. In a world where the physical, in the looming presence of so many incurable diseases, hygienic deficiencies and pervasive pestilences, takes precedence over the psychological, it is only natural that the ‘inscriptive body’ should gain more significance as compared to the ‘lived body’.

The inscriptive quality of the combat between the heroic and the monstrous tends to lead to the marking of one body by the other, potentially resulting in dismemberment. That dismemberment can be read as a new narratological space in the midst of the clash of an ‘I’ versus a ‘Thou’, comes to the fore in the Arabo-Persian terms for ‘dismemberment’, ‘mothleh’
a cognate of ‘tamthil’ (تَمْثِيل) ‘allegory’ and ‘qisseh’ (قصة) meaning ‘story’ which takes its original sense from ‘cutting’.  

Before probing ‘dismemberment’ scenes in the three primary texts of this study, the origins and manifestations of this phenomenon shall be brought under scrutiny. Evidently, an investigation into dismemberment calls for an analysis of the notion of woundedness which is very much a constitutive component of human existence. It is in wounds that the inside literally opens up to the outside world and makes itself known. Stephen Greenblatt’s remark on Tamburlaine resonates well with the theme of dismemberment and the ensuing woundedness of the body: “The body is affirmed only in wounding and destroying it” (Renaissance 211). Wounds speak without words by attracting the inquiring gaze to themselves which is but naturally drawn to the gaping hole that begs to be narrativized. The dismembered body overwhelms the observing I/eye with a desire to know more. The gaping wound tends to evoke many a question and overwhelm the spectator with wonder, “an instinctive recognition of difference, the sign of a heightened attention, a ‘sudden surprise of the soul’, as Descartes put it, in the face of the new” (Greenblatt, Marvelous 20). An example of an amputated limb that irresistibly pulls the gaze toward itself, as shall be observed shortly, is delineated in Beowulf, where people, from far and wide, come to examine the dismembered hand of Grendel.

Dismemberment can involve cutting, amputating, puncturing and crushing or a combination of all these. The fascination for dismemberment scenes in the Middle Ages can be sought in the fact that they took place in an age in which man was devoid of the sophisticated weaponry present in modern times. The power inherent in body muscles played a major importance in the

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209 Here, given the Arabic origin of ‘mothleh’ and ‘tamthil’, I have used ‘th’, instead of ‘s’, to transliterate ‘تَمْثِيل’. 
arena of battle, although the use of swords, shields and darts was also common practice. While puncturing is prevalent in the works of poets like Homer, Vergil and Lucan, it barely occurs in the three primary texts of this study. Puncturing and cutting are tantamount to a transgression of bodily borderlines leading to violation of the dermal limits demarcating the inside from the outside. Cutting resulting in amputation and ultimately death is, however, the most common in the three primary works of this study. Interestingly, in most examples of dismemberment discussed below, although body-parts are cut off from bodies, they maintain their physiological integrity, allowing for concomitant themes of cosmogony and sociogony to develop in the process.

The origins of dismemberment can be sought in acts of sacrifice, which, as pointed out by Victor Turner, cannot be seen as “a single act or event nor as an intellectual structure […], but as a process with several stages (one common sequence runs invocation-consecration-immolation-communion)” (Sacrifice 189). Frequently sacrifice leads to the provision of nourishment for a community and reimposition of order. On one level, sacrifice is a convenient vehicle for enacting a ceremony, which would grant legitimacy to the otherwise cruel act of slaying animals. Walter Burkert, in a comprehensive study of man in his function as a killing being, Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth (1983), aligns ‘bloodshed’,

Seneca in one of his letters (Letter 7), bemoans how men, who had earlier been mauled by lions and bears, are then forced to fight other men, only to be slaughtered in the end. The masses so taken in by such spectacles shout: “Kill him, beat him, burn him! Why does he run against the sword so timidly? Why does he kill with so little audacity? Why does he die so reluctantly? Let him be driven by blows towards wounds, let them receive blows from each other while their chests are naked and exposed”) (Occide, verbena, ure! Quare tam timide incurrit in ferrum? Quare parum audacter occidit? Quare parum libenter moritur? Plagis agatur in vulnera, mutuos ictus nudis et obvis pectoribus exsqueant.).

In Beowulf, prior to confronting Grendel’s mother, one of the Geatish men strikes one of the monsters swimming in the water with an arrow (lines 1432b–36); in The Shahnameh, reference can be made to Rustam’s puncturing of Isfandiyār’s eye with a tamarisk branch) (V. 412: 1382) and in Tristan, likewise, ‘cutting’ predominates, although Tristan is said to have ‘pierced’ Urgan’s eye (lines 16040–43) before cutting off his arm. Meanwhile, according to Glenn W. Most, “there are 13.5 puncture wounds for every amputation in Homer, 4.3 in Virgil, 5.4 in Silius Italicus, and 4.1 in Statius” (399).
‘slaughter’ with ‘eating’, based on examples appearing in ancient texts including Homer’s *Iliad* (1.40) and *The Odyssey* (1.66) (2).

Later studies, including René Girard’s research, explore psychological factors latent in acts of sacrifice. Central to Girardian research is the violence embedded in sacrifice which seeks appeasement in the slaying of a surrogate victim. Drawing upon his studies of Godfrey Lienhardt in *Divinity and Experience* (1967) and Victor Turner, especially in *The Drums of Affliction* (1968), Girard reinforces his interpretation of “sacrifice as an act of violence inflicted on a surrogate victim” (7) as it serves “to protect the entire community from its own violence” (8). Epic is full of instances of the breakdown of the established sacrificial order which calls for a third party to take the brunt of anger exuding from both parties to the fight. One instance appears in Bk. 12 of *The Aeneid* in the face-off between Aeneas and Turnus, where, as posited by Philip Hardie “In Aeneas’s final outburst of violence and anger the institutionally sanctioned sacrifice of animals is replaced with (substituted by) the more powerful sacrifice of man” (20). The term ‘sacrifice’ used by Aeneas as he plunges the sword into Turnus’s body reinforces the significance of sacrifice in single combats of such intense nature: ‘It is Pallas, Pallas, who with this wound sacrifices you and exacts penalty from your criminal blood’ (*Pallas te hoc volnere, Pallas immolat et poenam scelerato ex sanguine sumit*, Bk. XII: 948–49). Aeneas, like most other heroes in single combats, is potentially both the sacrificer and the sacrificed. Moreover, it is of importance that “Virgil is making Aeneas fight his own double, his enemy twin” (Bandera 233). The removal of distinctions between the two opposing sides leads to the emergence of, in Girardian terms, ‘monstrous doubles’ (cf. Girard, 158–66). This is clearly the case in the Beowulf-Grendel confrontation, Rustam’s dragon-fight and Tristan’s combat against the giant Urgan. Most often it is the enraged state of the adversaries, bordering on the Dionysian, that
renders them each others’ doubles.\textsuperscript{212} It is rage that provokes a fight between the doubles whose ultimate aim is, at times paradoxically, the restoration of calm and order.

Sacrifice and its ability to restore order play a dominant role in Zoroastrianism. Mary Boyce, in a study of the sacrificial rites of the Zoroastrians, has noted that there is always more than one aspect to sacrifice. She herself sees a four-fold intention behind sacrifice: the satisfaction of a divinity, material and spiritual gains for the one who enacts sacrifice, and benefit for all the world of \textit{ashā} (‘righteousness’) as well as food-offering to the gods (\textit{A History}, 152–53). Boyce also highlights how in Zoroastrianism, the spirits of the slain animals are to be absorbed into \textit{Gəuš Urvan}, the ‘Soul of the Bull’. The soul of \textit{Gəuš Urvan} is identified later as “the soul of the Uniquely-created Bull, from whom all animal life had come and so established a cycle and a unity with animals tracing their physical life from the Bull’s seed and their souls returning at death to be re-absorbed in his soul” (151). Here, Boyce touches on one of the most significant aspects of dismemberment, which is its role in the creation of new life-forms, a characteristic particularly prominent in Zoroastrianism.\textsuperscript{213}

In \textit{Myth, Cosmos, and Society: Indo-European Themes of Creation and Destruction} (1986), Lincoln includes various examples from ancient folklore in which dismemberment lies at the heart of \textit{creatio mundi}. In the ON \textit{Grímnismál}, for instance, the body of the giant Ymir is taken apart to construct the universe.\textsuperscript{214} What is to be noted is that there is always a certain consubstantiality between the body part and the corresponding part of the cosmos as well as a

\textsuperscript{212} As Girard has demonstrated, one of the prime examples of monstrous doubles is orchestrated by Dionysus himself in \textit{The Bacchae} (cf. 162–63).

\textsuperscript{213} This is not to negate other facets of sacrifice however, \textit{inter alia}, its attribute of serving as a gift to gods (E. B. Tylor, \textit{Primitive Culture}, 1871), the origins of totemism (William Robertson Smith, \textit{The Religion of the Semites}, 1889) and a means of bringing about ontological changes in both the victim and the sacrificer (Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert, \textit{Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice}, 1898).

\textsuperscript{214} From Ymir’s flesh the earth was shaped, and the mountains from his bones; the sky from the skull of the frost-cold giant, and the sea from his blood.’ (\textit{The Poetic Edda}, 43)
homology between the part and the social function that it receives. Lincoln refers to the element of consubstantiality as ‘alloforms’ and explains the example of flesh and earth as follows: “flesh and earth, to take one example, are seen as consisting of the same material stuff. […] To put it somewhat differently, flesh and earth are viewed as alternate moments in a continuous process, whereby one continually is transmuted into the other” (5).

While consubstantiality is a dominant theme in the dismemberment of the primal cow in The Avesta, the fragmentation of the body of the primal man, Gayomard is characterized by the metamorphosis it undergoes. The GBd relates how, upon the passing away of Gayomard, a portion of his seed is received by ‘Mother Earth’ (Spendarmad). According to The GBd (XV: 2): “And in forty years, with the shape of a one-stemmed Rivās-plant, and fifteen years of its fifteen leaves, Mashi and Mashyāneh grew up from the earth in such a manner that their arms rested behind on their shoulders and one joined to the other they were connected together and both alike”. The similarity in the primal man and cow lies in their self-sacrifice, with the aim of clearing the way for the emergence of, respectively, the human and animal race. A similar concept is present in Christianity in the self-immolation of Jesus for the salvation of mankind as posited in the Bible “So also Christ was offered once to exhaust the sins of many” (sic et Christus semel oblatus est ad multorum exhaurienda peccata, Hebrews 9: 28). Significantly, the body of Jesus, besides being a sacrificium, is, unlike Gayomard’s body, also a source of sociogonic interpretations, where the ranking of each social class is based on the centrality accorded to the organ it is associated with within the realm of body politic. As is indicated in a

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215 Upon the fragmentation of the body of the primal bull, Gouš Urvan, we read in The GBd that “There where the marrow came out grain grew up of fifty and five species, and twelve species of medicinal plants grew […]. From the horns arose peas, from the nose the leek, from the blood the grapevine from which they make wine — on this account wine abounds with blood…” (XIV: 1–2). Within the context of ‘alloforms’, another interesting example appears in The GBd’s account of resurrection: “Observe that when that which was not was produced, why is it not possible to produce again that which was? For at that time one will demand the bone from the spirit of the earth, the blood from the water, the hair from the plants, and the life from fire, since they were delivered to them in the original creation” (XXX: 6).
variety of medieval maps including the Psalter, Hereford and Erbstorf maps, each geographical sector receives a significance in accordance with the body-part it is associated with. Jerusalem, for example, considered the centre of the world, assumes the central position of the navel.\textsuperscript{216} It is worth noting that in the Ebstorf map (c.1235) which superimposes the map onto Christ’s body, microcosm and macrocosm coincide as Christ’s umbilicus becomes the omphalos of the world and the orb constituting the universe brings to mind the image of the Eucharist (cf. Edgerton 29).

Dismemberment is not only interrelated with cosmogony, but also associated with sociogony, as is demonstrated in the “Song of Purusa” in the \textit{Rig Veda} (10.90) in which in the dismemberment of ‘man’ (\textit{Purusa}): “The priest was his mouth, the warrior was made from his arms; his thighs were the commoner, and the servant was made from his feet”. The social class correlated with a particular body part tends to be an extension of its function. Another interesting example of the interrelationship of dismemberment and sociogony has been noted by Burkert as the totality Romulus’s body represented, was shattered as individual families assumed roles as limbs of the state, quite literally speaking.\textsuperscript{217} Sociogony accentuates the individual character of each organ based on the inherent principles of body politic.

John of Salisbury’s \textit{Policraticus} (1159) is particularly insightful for a better understanding of the complexities of ‘body politic’ as it compares the ‘state’ (\textit{res publica}) with the body, while attributing various social positions to each body part. The head represents the prince, the eyes, the ears and the tongue, the ‘judges and provincial governors’ (\textit{judices et praesides provinciarum}) and the feet represent the ‘peasants’ (\textit{agricolae}) (cf. 5.2). In a number of treatises

\textsuperscript{217} For further details, see, for example: Walter Burkert, “Caesar and Romulus-Quirinus”, \textit{Historia} 11(1962): 356–76.}
written around the late thirteenth, early fourteenth centuries, the role of the heart is literally given a ‘centrality’ that it lacked in the vertical hierarchy, in which the ‘head’ enjoys utmost significance (Le Goff, “Head” 21–23). That the ‘head’ and ‘heart’ operate in tandem has also been showcased in Shakespeare’s Coriolanus set in the final days of the Roman Empire, where we read: “The kingly, crowned head, the vigilant eye,/ The counselor heart, the arm our soldier, […]” (I.I., lines 112–13). 218 Body politic is also an issue in hunting, at the heart of which lies the dismemberment of the prey, as indicated in Walter Burkert’s emphasis on the centrality of thigh-bones in ancient sacrifices to the gods and later on, in hunting societies (cf. Homo 3;13). The link Tristan creates between sociogony and hunting, as we shall observe in this chapter, demonstrates great ingenuity on the part of the hero. Tristan then goes on to enforce a ritualistic procession in the aftermath of hunting endowing it with particular pomp and ceremony. Not only in Gottfried’s poem, but also throughout history, a link has been detected between hunting and ritual.

In a close examination of hunting, Burkert has observed paintings of hunting scenes of the ancient Sumerians in Çatal Hüyük, a Neolithic site in present-day Turkey to be “perhaps almost more suggestive of a dance than of hunting”(Homo 16) helping him conclude the existence of a ritual in the act of hunting. One could have recourse to literature and go back to Vergil to observe a subtle form of ritualization of hunting manifest in Bk. 1 of The Aeneid in which Aeneas, in quest of a permanent abode, lands on Libya. There upon eying three stags ‘he brings to the ground seven huge bodies equal in number to his ships’ (septem ingentia victor corpora fundat humi et numerum cum navibus aequet, lines 192–93). The connection Aeneas establishes between the number of targeted animals and the ships hints at the existence of a structure in hunting, not necessarily present in later centuries, during which hunting became a pastime for the

218 Claudius’s remark to Polonius in Shakespeare’s Hamlet is also another example of the association of the ‘head’ (the ‘king’) with the ‘heart’ (the ‘councillor’): “The head is not more native to the heart” (I.II: line 46).
aristocrats who indiscriminately killed as many animals as possible with the sole aim of boosting their ego.\footnote{Louis XV (1710–1774), for instance, who spent from three of five days a week in the saddle chasing deer, “has been credited with killing some 10,000 red deer in the course of his fifty-year career in the royal game parks” (Cartmill 66).}

Hunting tends to lead to a form of dismemberment performing the dual function of providing nourishment for man and training him for warfare. In *The Shahnameh*, hunting though hardly ritualized, foregrounds Rustam’s ‘Seven Trials’, an aggregate of self-sacrificial acts of the hero, upon which he is reintegrated into the Iranian community as a ‘crown-bestower’ (*tājbakhsh*). The ‘Seven Trials’ are, in fact, embedded in and interspersed with scenes of hunting. Rustam’s hunting takes place on two different levels, at the essential level, with nourishment and survival in mind, at the heroic level, with the aim of hunting down the various forms of monstrosities that appear on his path. It is hunting at its primal level which sets the tone of Rustam’s ‘Seven Trials’, manifest in the killing and subsequent eating of an onager once it has been rendered ‘lifeless’ (*bījān*) and ‘skinless’(*bīpust*, II. 21: 283). Once Rustam eats the onager and disposes of its bones we are told “thuṣ was the pot and thus was the *khān*” (22: 284) giving rise to a *double-entendre* referring to the hero’s ‘tablecloth’ and the ‘stations’ he is about to go through.\footnote{The ambiguity inherent in the Persian term ‘khān’ shall further be explored in Chapter 4.} Acts of dismemberment throughout the ‘Seven Trials’ are not confined to hunting, however, and go on to include the dismemberment of monstrous beings. The transformative qualities associated with dismemberment clearly come to the fore not only in the certain ontological changes brought about in the hero, but also in the drastic shifts in the surrounding landscape, tangible in the gushing of blood and consequent cleansing of scourges.

Of all the three primary works of this study, *Tristan* provides us with the most original example of hunting in literature, as Gottfried masterfully explores the topic beyond its major
function in highlighting its role as a stepping-stone to heroic initiation, a role enhanced through its association with linguistic mastery. As the adolescent Tristan manifests his hunting skills, he is not only himself entering, in Lacanian terms, ‘the Symbolic’ realm of maturity, but also manifesting his cultural supremacy over the Cornish men by means of language. Tristan, described as ‘the boy far from home’ (ellende knabe, line 2843) is initiated into the Cornish communitas as he emerges from his state of ‘betwixt and between’ with the aid of language. Tristan’s use of sophisticated hunting jargon earns him respect, enabling him to integrate into the society of Cornish hunters and ultimately the entire community of Cornwall as he slowly emerges from the state of liminality in the wake of his separation from his presumed homeland of Parmenie. True that Tristan is not involved in the act of killing in this particular scene of the poem; however, that, seems to me, to be only due to his late arrival onto the hunting scene. His in-depth knowledge over the consequent acts of hunting including flaying and dismemberment of the prey are suggestive of his expertise in all aspects of hunting.

3.1. Tristan: Ars Venandi and Ars Veneris

The hunting scene in Tristan that facilitates the abandoned Tristan’s integration into the Cornish communitas, proves to be a prelude to future hand-to-hand combats which pit the hero against formidable foes such as Morold, Morgan and the Giant Urgan li vilus. That the ‘Hunting’ episode leads to Tristan’s future success in single battles is no mere coincidence. There are parallels between hunting and warfare that make the comparison of the two, inevitable. As Matt Cartmill has pointed out:
Hunting and war require similar weapons, skills and inner qualities. A hunting spear doubles as a warring lance; the hunter’s ability to plan the strategy of the hunt, to train and set his dogs on the quarry, to aim, and kill the victim, corresponds in war to the plotting of military tactics, the training and arrangement of troops on the battlefield, and the successful capture or routing of enemy forces. (30)

Despite the fact that Tristan enters the scene only after the prey has been cornered and killed, his familiarity with the dismemberment procedure of the hunt is so evident and his skills so refined that he is deemed to be “an embodiment of the consummate aristocratic hunter” (Krohn 44). Krohn is justified in his use of the term ‘aristocratic’, as hunting, given its many references within the context of King Mark’s court, is perceived as a pastime of the upper echelons of the society. Tristan’s hunting skills thus mark him as a member of the aristocracy as do his bearing and apparel:221

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{sin gelâz und sin gebâren} \\
\text{daz nâmên s'alle in ir muot} \\
\text{und dühte sî daz also guot,} \\
\text{daz sî'z vil gerne sâhen} \\
\text{und in ir herzen jâhen,} \\
\text{sin dinc waere allez edelîch,} \\
\text{siniu cleider vremede unde rich,} \\
\text{sin lîp ze wunsche getân}
\end{align*}
\]

[They inwardly considered his bearing and behaviour, and it pleased them so much that they delighted to watch it. They confessed to themselves that everything about him was noble, his clothes rare and magnificent and his figure of perfect build.]

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221 Matt Cartmill writes on how the expansion of human settlements and the dwindling of wild places made hunting increasingly a privilege restricted to the nobility. For further details, see: A View to a Death in the Morning (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993): 60–62.
More important than his ‘clothes rare and magnificent’ (*cleider vremede unde rîch*) prove to be Tristan’s ability to incorporate words into the various stages of hunting to prove the superiority of the customs of his ‘foreign’ land to those of the Cornish men. His command of the hunting parlance demonstrated through his use of such terms as ‘excoriate’ (*enbesten*, line 2815), ‘fourchie’ (*furkîe*, line 2926), ‘quarry’ (*curie*, line 2961) evokes the curiosity of the Cornish hunting-men, and, at the same time, brings to the fore, their cultural ignorance. The hunters of King Mark’s court do not shy away from asking for the definition of terms, each time expressing their ignorance and surprise. The use of sophisticated hunting jargon is not only in line with Tristan’s linguistic skills, but also indicates his cultural superiority to the Cornish hunters.\(^{222}\) All of Tristan’s future attacks, to some extent, amount to the imposition of order over chaos, civilization over barbarism. Morold and the giant Urgan represent barbarism, while the dragon is more a symbol of chaos. A major part of Tristan’s heroism lies in his ability to counter these forces of chaos and ultimately enhance culture and civilization. Taking note of Tristan’s efforts in promoting *civilitas*, there is little wonder then as to the existence of parallels between the hunting scene and the pomp and ceremony surrounding contemporary royal events.\(^{223}\)

The attempt at order is clearly reflected in Tristan’s presentation of the prey in a mode which seeks to emulate nature, as the phrase ‘preserving the shape of a hart’ (*alse der hirz geschaffen sî*, line 3174) indicates. The dismemberment of the hart is carried out masterfully by the artist

\(^{222}\) Tristan’s ability to converse in countless foreign languages is particularly highlighted in an episode when he begins to play the harp and sing in different languages at Mark’s court. The entire episode called ‘The Young Musician’ (*Der junge Künstler*) focuses on Tristan’s multilingualism and musical talent (see particularly lines: 3690–3720).

\(^{223}\) Parallels have been drawn, for example, between the Gottfried’s depiction of the hunting scene and the procession of King Philip of Swabia and his wife, Irene on Christmas day 1199 in Magdeburg and the wooing party led by chancellor to the British King, Thomas Becket to France by Margaret Brown and C. Stephen Jaeger, as examples that lend themselves to comparison. Margaret Brown; C. Stephen Jaeger draw attention to the ‘slowness and solemnity’, the use of ‘loud noise’ and the ‘arrangement of the horsemen riding two by two’ in all these ceremonies. For further details, reference can be made to “Pageantry and Court Aesthetic in Tristan: The Procession of the Hunters”, *Arthurian Studies XXIII: Publications of the Institute of Germanic Studies Volume 44- Gottfried von Strassburg And the Medieval Tristan Legend* (Suffolk; Rochester N.Y.; London: D. S. Brewer, 1990): 34–38.
par excellence, Tristan, who has already demonstrated precision and order in various other areas including music and chess, which are both governed by their own inherent laws. The procedure Tristan embarks upon to present the hart to the court is in line with ritualizing an otherwise savage process of dismemberment generally practiced by the hunters in Cornwall and imposing an order, as artificial as it might be, on a chaotic mode of sparagmos. He is thus enacting not only his own heroic self-fashioning, but also re-creating a new mappa mundi, especially given that the hunted animal is a ‘deer’, the most malleable of all animals in the hunting world. The use of the sophisticated hunting jargon can also be read in line with attempts made on the part of Tristan at integrating himself into a new society, an idea that is enhanced by Gottfried’s earlier use of terms such as ‘stranger’ (gast, lines 2830; 2921) and ‘homeless/far from home’ (ellende, lines 2843; 2862; 2921; 3254). The hunting-scene itself serves as a ‘transition’, which is the second phase of the ‘rites of passage’ and the reassembled hart as the final phase: ‘reaggregation’ (cf. Turner, On the Edge 159). The dismemberment of the hart reflects Tristan’s state of being cut off from his larger body, the communitas in Parmenîe and its re-assemblage can be viewed as a reflection of the re-fashioning of the hero into the new social body of Cornwall. While Rustam’s hunting of the onager frames the ‘Seven Trials’, which concretizes his initiation into

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224 The malleability of the ‘deer’ is reinforced in a study of its etymology which demonstrated how it comes from the OE term ‘deor’ applying to all animals. D. Dalby in his monumental study of hunting jargons, notes a similar etymology in the Old German ‘wilt’ and ‘tier’ and Old Irish fiadh, whose meaning has been narrowed to ‘deer’ (tier in the hunting jargon of MHG and the fiadh in Irish) (239). An etymological analysis of the Persian term for ‘deer’ gavazn which contains the term ‘gav’, meaning ‘cow’ reveals a similar observation given the function of the ‘(primal) cow’ in cosmogenesis. For further details, see, for example: M. Schwartz, “The Old Eastern Iranian World View according to The Avesta”, The Cambridge History of Iran 2 Ed. Ilya Gershevitch, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 645–46.

225 The interrelationship between ‘hunting’ and ‘language’ was taken up four centuries later by Francis Bacon, who compares the ‘invention’ (a term, which within the context is more or less synonymous with recovering or rediscovering) of language with chasing a deer in an enclosed park […] (whose) scope and end is readiness and present use of our knowledge, and not addition or amplification thereof (Advancement XIII: 6). Tristan’s linguistic nuances are also more within the scope of inventio, which exceeds the boundaries of the English term ‘invention’ in signifying both ‘recovery’ and ‘rediscovery’ as noted above, in that he brings forth French words to use them in a context of his own making.
the Iranian community, hunting by itself in Gottfried’s poem, serves as a vehicle for both Tristan’s integration into the Cornish community and his initiation into the heroic realm.

The hunting scene enables the displaced Tristan to find a niche in which he can thrive and establish his superiority over others. The hart set apart from its herd also mirrors Tristan’s own displacement; just as the hart has to be cut apart and recast into a different form, the hero has to move beyond his exilic state by stitching the cuts and bruises that he has suffered from within to find acceptance into his newly found social body. His noble ‘bearing’ (sīn gelāz und sīn gebāren, line 2852), enhanced by his clothes which are ‘rare and magnificent’, mark him as superior and facilitate the domination of his ways over the backward habits entrenched within the Cornish community. The hunting scene provides him with an opportunity to demonstrate the magnificence of his customs and becomes a stepping-stone in enforcing order upon Cornwall and leaving his own imprint on its socio-political landscape. In fact, by presenting the hart in hierarchical order of its body parts (first the head, then the breast, the fore-quarters and the ribs as indicated in lines 3175–77), Tristan is artistically creating a new space for his own body: that of a knight. The body of the hart is the materia the hero works on in the preliminary stage of his development.\(^{226}\) As Hans Jürgen Scheuer writes: “By means of his ‘hunting’ (waidmännische) operations on the body of the hart, Tristan performs a kind of parallel (act) on his own body, making himself courtly” (430). This body will later, be replaced by monsters demanding more strength to be overcome.

A parallel can also be drawn between Gottfried’s description of hunting and literary composition: Just as Tristan cuts the hart apart only to piece it together based on his own

\(^{226}\) Matt Cartmill elaborates on the status of the deer as an ‘ideal object of the hunt’. This is indicated in the modern Spanish word for deer, venado, which means “the hunted”; in the modern Irish verb fiadhchaim (to hunt, meaning literally to ‘deer-atize’); and in the English venison, which originally meant “game, meat gotten by hunting” but now particularly means the flesh of deer (67).
acquired knowledge, the poet can use couplets like ‘knives’ (mezzer) as he cuts words to ‘glue’ (limen) them together:

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der selbe wortweise,
nemt war, wie der hier under
an dem umbehange wunder
mit spaehre rede entwirfet;
wie er diu mezzer wirfet
mit behendeclichen rimen!
wie kan er rime limen,
als ob si dâ gewahsen sin!
ez ist noch der geloube min,
daz er buoch unde buochstabe
vûr vedern an gebunden habe;
wan wellet ir sin nemen war,
ðiniu wort diu sweiment alse der ar.
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[See what marvels of verbal ingenuity this master of words traces meanwhile on his tapestry, how deftly he throws couplets like knives, or glues them together as if they had grown there. I even believe he has books and letters tied on for wings, for – if only you will look – his words ride the air like eagles!]

The poet’s creation cannot come about but through inscribing, which involves a certain degree of incision. Once the incision takes place, the poet, relying on his ‘verbal ingenuity’ (wortweise), can paste the dismembered parts together and breathe life into an entirely new being. The pieces of the sliced hart can be likened to the ‘letters’ (buochstabe) used by poets, just as they use their atomic elements to assemble a new world of their own making, so does Tristan put together the pieces of flesh to render a new presentation of the prey and ultimately himself. This also falls within the context of comparing poetry and hunting: Not only does Gottfried mention ‘inventors of wild tales and hired hunters after stories’ (vindaere wilder maere,/ der maere wildenaere, lines 4665–66) in the same breath, but also uses the term verprisen (‘to go astray while hunting’) in line 4927 to indicate the failed attempts of poets.
By deconstructing the hart and reconstructing it, both physically and linguistically (by his explication and use of loan terms such as the French words *furkîe* and *curîe*), Tristan lays the foundation for a new cultural system and thus manages to establish himself within his new community as a superior member. There is a clear correlation between a ‘skill’ (*list*) and having the linguistic command over the jargon associated with it. As Huber observes, Tristan makes use of the classical *modus operandi* in his introduction of new terminology by means of verbs such as *nennen* and *heizen* within contexts that are evocative of the Latin *apellatur*, *dicitur*, etc. In addition, his etymological explications (e.g. *durch daz*, *umbe daz*) are akin to the Latin *eo*... *quod*, *quia*, etc (*Wort* 277).\(^{227}\) Another intriguing linguistic aspect in Tristan’s diction is his use of polysemous terms like *bast*, which not only signifies ‘husk’, ‘bark’, ‘rind’, ‘shell’ (Latin *cortex*) (Sayers 4), but also ‘the act of breaking the deer’ (5).\(^{228}\)

For Tristan, culture and nature are clearly divided and as has been observed by William Sayers this is indicated in the protagonist’s insistence on “taking precautions not to soil his clothing or hair” (5) prior to embarking on the hart’s ‘dismemberment’ (*bast*). One could even go further and take the doffing of ‘his cloak’ (*sînen mantel*, line 2844) in the hunting episode as a prelude to his donning of the mantel of knighthood. For Gottfried, clothes, beyond a mere outfit, are representative of an individual’s *habitus* as is indicated in the ‘Literary Excursus’, where the clothes in which Tristan is to be knighted are made by ‘four different Splendours’ (*vierhande rîcheit*, line 4564): ‘Mettle’ (*höher muot*, line 4567), ‘Affluence’ (*vollez guot*, line 4568), ‘Discretion’ (*bescheidenheit*, line 4569) and ‘Courtesy’ (*höfscher sin*, line 4571). The ‘dressing’

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\(^{227}\) Examples are observed in lines 2953–58 and lines 3023–28.

\(^{228}\) Tristan’s sophisticated use of language goes beyond mere command over hunting parlance and leads to neologisms, an example of which comes to the fore in the polysemous *bast*. Tristan’s *ars venandi* is topped by his *ars inveniendi*. For further details, see, for example: Ernst S. Dick, “The Hunted Stag and the Renewal of Minne: *Bast* in Gottfried’s *Tristan*, *Tristania* 17 (1996): 1–25. Also useful for a further understanding of the terms used by Tristan in the hunting-scene and their polysemy is, for example, Elisabeth Schmid, “Natur und Kultur in der Jagdszene von Gottfrieds *Tristan*, Der *Tristan* Gottfried von Strassburg: Symposion Santiago de Compostela, 5. bis 8. April 2000 (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2002): 153–66.
of the deer becomes parallel to the ‘dressing’ of himself into a new figure; in doing so, Tristan makes use of words as much as he does of the knife. In *Sir Tristrem* (c. 1300), a sergeant invites Tristan to ‘atire’, an unflayed animal, ‘as thou wold’ (line 468). The ‘attiring’ takes place on various levels involving the animal, he himself as well as a change in social dressing. In dividing the hart into bits and pieces for the *furkīe* — a direct loan from French *forchié* with possible influence from the Latin *furca* (Sayers 8) — later, for the *curīe* (quarry), and then the courtly procession towards the king, Tristan is attempting to impose order on chaos and replace barbarism with civilization.

Tristan’s dismemberment of the hart is also sociogenic as he cuts up the pieces of the hart’s body, based on social divisions, while at the same time, carving a niche for himself within the heart of the Cornish *communitas*. What is also distinct in Gottfried’s version of the deer-dressing as compared to the Middle English *Sir Tristrem* and Friar Robert’s ON rendition, *Tristrams saga ok Isōndar* (c. 1226) is that, here, upon flaying the deer, he starts from the head and moves downwards — a mirroring of the top-to-bottom movement dominant in the rungs of the social hierarchical ladder.

Gottfried continues to embed a number of the crucial scenes within the context of hunting as is the case with Tristan’s encounter with his father’s arch-nemesis, Morgan. Morgan was riding ‘from forest to forest at the hunt’ (*Morgân der herzoge rite dâ jagen/ von walde ze walde*, lines 5312–13) when he, the hunter, becomes the hunted at the hands of Tristan. In addition, in a

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229 Gottfried, as noted, uses the term ‘knife’ (*mezzer*) in line 4714 with regard to the poets’ choice of words.
230 While in *Sir Tristrem*, Tristan first cuts the breast, setting the tongue next to the spleen (lines 474–75), in the ON *Tristrams saga ok Isōndar*, the protagonist flays the animal and “first cuts off the genitals and the hindquarters from the chine” (Sayers 36).
231 The reversal of the roles of hunter and the hunted is a familiar phenomenon in the other two primary texts of the study including the scene, in *Beowulf*, where Grendel, the hunter, turns into the hunted in his attack on Heorot upon Beowulf’s arrival in Denmark. In *The Shahnameh*, Rustam roams the fields with the aim of hunting down a prey only in the end to become the hunted after falling into a barbed pit. Other examples include Siegfried’s hunting venture in *Das Nibelungenlied*, in which, he turns out to be the ‘hunted’ and Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Titurel*,...
stratagem to test Tristan and Isolde, King Mark announces at the court that he would be out on a
hunt for twenty days (lines 14350–59). Tristan, his ‘hunting companion’ (weidgeselle), feigning
illness, finds the opportunity to go on his own hunt: ‘The sick huntsman, too, yearned to go out
to his hunting-ground’ (der sieche weidenaere/ wolt ouch an sîne weide, lines 14376–77). Thus,
Gottfried, like many others before his time, likens the ars Veneris to the ars venandi so far as to
add a further layer of signification to the hunting term bast in a context which implies Liebesunio
(Huber, “Wort-Ding-Entsprechungen” 278):\\(^{232}\\)

Diz weiz ich wol, wan ich was dâ.  
ich hân ouch in der wilde 
dem vogele unde dem wilde, 
dem hirze unde dem tiere 
über manege waltriviere 
gevolget unde nâch gezogen 
und aber die stunde alsô betrogen, 
daz ich den bast noch nie gesach. 
mîn arbeit und mîn ungemach 
daz was âne âventiure

[I know this well, for I have been there. I, too, have tracked and followed after wildfowl and game, after hart and hind in the wilderness over many a woodland stream and yet

where the hound in pursuit of a wounded beast intially becomes the object of a hunt for Schionatulander who, in
turn, becomes h(a)unted by the hound. Wolfram comes close to a mystical reversal of the hunter and the hunted
portrayed by thirteenth-century poet, Jalaledîn Mulânâ Balkhi (known as Rûmî in the West) in his Fî-hi Mā Fîh
(‘In It What is in It’) where a Sufi by the name of Ibrâhîm Adham on the hunt of a gazelle becomes h(a)unted by the
Almighty’s manifestation (cf. 228–29, n.79).

\(^{232}\) Vergil’s description of Dido in Book IV of The Aeneid, as a deer stricken by an unknowing shepherd in the
following passage, brings to the fore, both a prime example of the deer as a typical hunted animal and the correlation
existing between falling in love and being stricken by the arrows of Cupid:

Urîtur infelix Dido totaque vagatur  
Urbe furens, qualis coniecta cerva sagitta,  
Quam procul incautam nemora inter Cresia fixit  
Pastor agens telis liquitque volatile ferrum  
Nescius; illa fuga silvas saltusque peragrât  
Dictaeos; haeret lateri letalis harundo

[Unhappy Dido burns, and through the city wanders frantically, how as a hind stricken by an arrow, which,
unvary, amidst the Cretan woods, an unknowing shepherd hunting with darts pierced from afar, leaving in her
the swift iron, she, while fleeing, wanders through the Dictaean woods and forest, but the deadly shaft clings
to her side]
passed my time and not seen the end of the chase. My toils were not crowned with success.]\(^{233}\)

One could even go beyond a love embrace and argue that the term *bast* signifies a *unio mystica* that involves poetic creation. The fact that the cavern of the lovers was constructed ‘before Corineus’s day when the giants ruled there’ (*vor Corinêis jâren dô risen dâ hêrrren wâren*, lines 16691–92) hints at an otherworldliness associated with the setting that can hardly be captured by any human being. It is, however, not the first time that the ‘works of giants’ push the boundaries of human imagination. The corpus of Anglo-Saxon literature abounds in them and a prime example figures in the OE poem, *The Wanderer*, where for the ‘solitary figure’ (*anhaga*), the emptiness of the old ‘work of giants’ (*enta geweorc*) in line 87a stands for a *nostos* of plentitude that can no longer be captured in time and space. Gottfried then goes on to compare his (poetic) attempts to a hunt which leads to no ‘dismemberment’ (*bast*) and goes on to mention that his toils fail to produce an or *adventus* (a term which lies at the root of the German term *âventiure* mentioned in line 17109). *Ars amandi* and *ars venandi* approximate as the poet’s attempts leave ‘the true tracks of Love’ (*diu wâren spor der minne*, line 17124) behind. ‘The Cave of Lovers’ in its larger-than-life origins can hardly be captured by any set of signifiers.

Language plays a major role in commingling images of love and hunt. Once Tristan and Isolde drink from the love-potion, words are exchanged leading to the further tightening of their hunting-nets. As Gottfried has already remarked, the lovers turn into hunters as they ensnare the other party with words:

\(^{233}\) There have been debates surrounding this passage in which the poet has partially unveiled the person behind the *persona*. As Krohn points out, the passage, within its broader context, can be regarded as a ‘rhetorical adtestatio rei visae’ (167), rather than a personal unveiling of the author. Ulrich Stökle draws a parallel between this passage and Hartmann von Aue’s *Gregorius* (lines 1181–84) and concludes that Gottfried learnt about love through Ovid at the age of eleven without ever having gone to Cornwall (100).
der minnen wildenaere
leiten ein ander dicke
ir netze unde ir stricke,
ir warte unde ir läge
mit antwürte und mit vrâge  (11930–34)

[Love’s huntsmen as they were, again and again, with question and answer, they laid their
nets and their snares for one another, they set up their coverts and lurking-places.]

When Isolde refers to lameir as her source of discomfort, the polysemy of the term puzzles
Tristan as it means ‘love’, ‘bitter’ and the ‘sea’ at the same time. All definitions make sense one
way or another, as Mark remarks: “Surely, fair Isolde, the sharp smack of sea is the cause of your
distress? The tang of the sea is too strong for you? It is this you find so bitter?” (‹‹ich waene››
sprach er ‹‹schoene Îsôt,/ mer unde sûr sint iuwer nôt/ iu smecket mer unde wint./ ich waene, iu
diu zwei bitter sint?››, lines 1203–6). To which, Isolde, responds in the negative.

Language continues to assume a prominent role in the poem as becomes clear in the crucial
and ubiquitous role of the organ responsible for it: the tongue. The dragon’s tongue, from which
smoke and steam emanate (line 9018) coupled with the teeth that are sharper than razors (lines
9021–24) render it the organ most responsible for evoking such a terrifying image of the
monster. There is thus little wonder as to why Tristan decides to carve out the tongue once he is
done with the beast. In the dragon-fight which leads to Tristan’s eventual wooing of Isolde, it is
the chopped tongue of the dragon that proves his mastery over the monster and figuratively,
reflects his own gift of gab — demonstrated, for instance, in his massive linguistic abilities. The
dismembered tongue of the dragon evokes a set of other tongues that are mentioned in the course
of the poem. As Joan M. Ferrante explicates, “the symbolism of the dragon’s tongue in Tristan’s
bosom is related to the other ‘tongues’ in the poem. […] Zunge means both the physical organ,
which is connected with the expression of words and of music, and also language” (177). The
implications of the ‘tongue’ in the sense of language and music is clearly manifest in the figure of Tristan, who is well-versed in different ‘tongues’ and a variety of musical instruments. Moreover, the potential harm arising from the ‘tongue’ comes to the fore in Isolde’s fear that her cousin, Brangaene, who swapped places with her in the bridal bed, might use it to uncover the truth of the matter. She thus commands that Brangaene’s head be chopped off and the ‘tongue’ be brought back as proof:

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und slahet ir daz houbet abe.
und alle ir rede die merket ir,
und swaz si sage, daz saget mir.
ir zungen bringet mir her dan. 12735
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[and cut off her head. Take note of all she says and report it all to me. Bring me back the tongue…]

The ‘tongue’ is also of great significance in Tristan’s confrontation with the giant Urgan, as hero and monster get entangled in a heated war of words in which each attempts to cross out the name of the other and prove his own supremacy. Each opponent uses his ‘tongue’ to utter his name and its importance over the other’s (lines 15988–16011). As far as Tristan’s single combat with the giant is concerned, it is to be noted that the significance of the ‘tongue’ gives way to that of the ‘hands’ given Urgan’s heavy reliance on his hands. The importance of the hands is, for example, manifest in Urgan’s use of both hands to measure off ‘a mighty long swing’ to throw at Tristan (lines 16012–13). In Tristan’s confrontation with the dragon, it was the monster’s tongue that was cut off, given that it was the tongue that has the highest potential for evil as it gave off venomous fumes and fire. Here, on the other hand, the hands of the monster are targeted in view of their instrumental role. The same dynamics are observed in Beowulf’s confrontation with
Grendel where the ‘hands’ of the monster assume major significance, while the ‘head’ and the ‘heart’ take on a more central role in the hero’s two other combats.

What is also of note here is the emergence of a ‘third space’ in the midst of clashes unfolding between Tristan and the giant. As each attempts to get the better of the other, a new space of becoming emerges in the midst of the two fighters. Similar to Rustam’s ‘Third Trial’, here, the ‘third space’ is out in the open and leaves its marks on not only the bodies of the adversaries, but also their surrounding landscape. The ‘third space’ created in the midst of Tristan’s verbal and physical sparring with the Giant Urgan is evocative of the change in geography brought about in the wake of Gogmagog’s defeat at the hands of Corineus in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia*. That Urgan’s ‘monstrous bulk was shattered on the rock’ (*daz der ungehiure last/ an dem velse aller zebrast*, lines 16173–74) signals a drastic change in the landscape of Duke Gilan’s territory of Swales and also heralds prosperity for the land and its people. It is only in line with the association of the hero with Mother Earth and its hidden treasures as discussed in Chapter 1, and the dialogical opposition of heroes against monsters as embodiments of land-scourges as discussed in the previous chapter, that the naturalistic and geographic characteristics of the evolving ‘third space’, come to light. Although the ‘third space’ comes to the fore in an enclosed space in *Beowulf*, as shall be argued in the following segment, the fact that it signifies the cleansing of the pulsing heart of the Danish community, Heorot, appears to usher in a clearance in the darkened atmosphere prevailing over the land.

### 3.2. *Beowulf*: Fah from feondum

The hand which Grendel uses to perform his wicked deeds ranging from opening the door of Heorot to snatching the sleeping Handscio, becomes the dominant organ in the ‘hand-to-hand’

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234 The phrase is used in line 420a of *Beowulf* and means ‘stained with the (blood) of enemies’.
fight. Little wonder that this part of the poem is punctuated by the ‘hand’ imagery given that Grendel’s primary weapon is his hand. As James L. Rosier has noted, there is a density of the use of hand in the poem in general in a variety of forms, “including not only the simplices hond, folmu, mund, and their compounds, but also the metonymic words, clamm, grap, and gripe” (all three terms meaning ‘grip’) (“Hands” 10). Earlier, Beowulf being aware of the horror of Grendel’s hand, decides to solely use his own mighty hand-grip to confront the giant:

“No ic me an herewæsmun  hnagran talige
guþgeweorca  þonne Grendel hine;
forþan ic hine sweorde  swebban nellæ,
aldre beneotan,  þeah ic eal mæge. 680
Nat he þara goda  þæt he me ongean slea,
rand geheawe,  þeah de he rof sie
nǐþgeweorca;  ac wit on niht sculon
sege ofersittan  gif he gesecean dear
wig ofer wæpen,  ond siþðan witig God
on swa hwæþere hond,  halig dryhten
mærōo deme,  swa him gemet þince.”

[“I do not consider myself inferior in war-like deeds, than Grendel does himself; therefore I will not put him to sleep, deprive him of life with a sword, though I easily could. He knows nothing of such good deeds that he might strike against me, might cut through the shield, notorious though he may be for hostile deeds. But in the night we both have to forgo of the sword, if he dare seek a fight without weapons, and then may the wise God, the holy lord, grant glory to whichever hand, he deems appropriate.”]

Grendel’s hand, evidently, is his primary weapon and can only be countered by a more powerful grip. Unlike, the club-wielding giants of romance literature, who like Urgan in Tristan, rely on a club to conquer the enemy, Grendel is all the more frightening in having recourse to no means other than his own physical powers. The hand-to-hand combat between Grendel and Beowulf showcases the forces of primal nature in its absence of weaponry and the use of sheer corporeal force. Beowulf proves to surpass the boundaries of ordinary men in relying on mere bodily prowess to overcome a beast whose physicality has subdued an entire nation for the past twelve
years. In fact, Beowulf is best known for the power of his hand as is noted by the Danish King Hrothgar:

Đonne sægdon þæt sæliþende,  
þa ðe gifsceattas Geata fyredon  
þyder to þance, þæt he þritiges  
manna mægenercæft on his mundgripe  
heþrorof hæbbe.

[seafarers who have carried gifts thither as a token of our esteem, have said, he has the power of thirty men in the grip of his hand, the one brave in battle]

Just as the key to overcoming Grendel lies in targeting him in his most powerful body-part, Tristan’s pièce de résistance, as observed, is the cutting of the dragon’s tongue: the organ that had been the most destructive in that it gave off deadly fumes and fire. As the ‘tongue’ and its importance is not limited to the dragon-episode in Gottfried’s poem, in Beowulf, the ‘hand’, in view of its centrality, turns up in other contexts. Rosier has counted ‘sixty-six specific references to the hand’ in the entire poem (“Hands” 10) and has contrasted the ‘death-giving hand’ of Grendel to the ‘gift-giving hand’ of Æschere, Hrothgar’s primary advisor or figuratively-speaking, ‘right-hand’. The text not only aligns Æschere with the act of giving in terming him a ‘treasure-giver’ (sincgyfa, line 1342a), but also directly refers to him as ‘now the hand that lies low was willing to give you whatever you desired’ (nu seo hand ligeð,/ se þe eow welhwylcra wilna dohte, lines 1343b–44).

Once we reach the centre of the poem, the focus of which is allocated to Beowulf’s fight with Grendel’s mother, ‘hands’ give way to ‘heads’. The discovery of Æschere’s head close to the dreaded mere serves as a prelude to the beheading of Grendel’s mother and the corpse of her son:
Denum eallum wæs,
winum Scyldinga, weorce on mode
to geholianne, ðegne monegum,
oncyð eorla gehwæm, syðþan Æscheres
on þam holmclife hafelan metton.

[There was misery on the mind of all the Danes, for the Scylding’s friends, for many thanes to suffer, grief for each of the warriors, when on the sea-cliff, they came upon Æschere’s head.]

As Rosier has remarked: “The postponement of *hafelan* (‘head’) to the end in the second passage is even more striking because it involves the separation of the object from the genitive, Æscheres, by *on þam holmclife* (‘on the sea-cliff’) ” (“Heafod” 140) (definitions added). The topographical explanation that separates the decapitated head of Æschere’s body is evocative of death and the loss of the topmost, and perhaps, the most important part of the body. We are told that ‘trees held fast by their roots overshadow the water’ (*wudu wyrtum fæst wæter oferhelmað*, line 1364) in the area close to the mere. Focusing on the OE term *ofrerhelmað* versus its ME equivalent, ‘overshadow’, highlights the significance of the ‘head’ imagery latent in *helm* (‘helmet’) in the passage.235 In addition, *helm* has also been used in the figurative sense of ‘safety’ as Beowulf vows to get a hold of Grendel’s mother wherever she may end up and “she will never escape into safety” (*no he on helm losaþ*, line 1392b). Shortly afterwards, the *Beowulf*-poet takes the association further when he invokes the image of the roaming hart which is too afraid to put its head in the waters:

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235 Rosier has offered other examples of the dominance of the ‘head’ imagery surrounding Beowulf’s second major battle, his confrontation with Grendel’s mother, among which, mention can be made of *nihthelm* (‘the cover of the night’, line 1789b) and *helm* (‘helmet’) in line 1284b as well as *ofrerhelmað* (‘overshadow’, line 1364b) discussed above. For further details, see: Rosier “*Heafod and Helm*: Contextual Composition in *Beowulf*”, *MÆ* 37 (1968): 137–41.
Though the stag, strong in the horns, is harassed by the hounds, may seek out the forest when driven from afar, he would rather give up life and spirit on the shore than hide his head there.

David Williams sums up the supremacy of the head as follows: “The head is found above because it governs the whole body, just as intellect governs appetite, just as God is above in heaven, ruler of all Creation” (Deformed 127). It is noteworthy that the head of the animal in mind happens to be that of a hart, whose significance lies not only in being an objective correlative for other animals fearful of the habitat of the giants, but also of its namesake: Heorot. The choice of hart is significant given its status as the quintessential prey, particularly in the West, in various contexts ranging from the Bible (e.g. Psalm 41:1) to epic literature (e.g. Vergil’s depiction of Dido as a wounded hind in The Aeneid, Bk. IV: 68–73).236

Moving from the Danish mead-hall to the anti-hall of Grendel’s mother, Beowulf, despite being fully equipped, finds himself seriously challenged by the she-monster, who, earlier in the poem, has been described as being less powerful for being a woman. The combat between Beowulf and the she-monster lacks the primal element present in his fight against Grendel. While in the first round Beowulf fought Grendel as an equal relying on the sheer power of his hand-grip, in the second round, he has recourse to ‘warrior’s trappings’ (eorlgewædum, line 1442a) to protect his body and only thereupon is he said to ‘feel no anxiety for his life’ (nalles for ealdre mearn, line 1442b). Despite the greater difficulty which Beowulf faces in combating the she-giant, it is Grendel’s head that he takes back to Heorot as a trophy and not hers. One

236 For further representations of the deer in Christian and literary contexts, see, for example, Marcelle Thiébaux, The Stag of Love: The Chase in Medieval Literature (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974): 40–46.
explanation of this act would be that overcoming the male body, which beyond representing the
generic body symbolizes the superior body, is regarded as a manly conquest non-existent in the
domination over the female body, especially given the latter’s embodiment of a biological lack.

The *Beowulf*-poet demonstrates this lack in the less dreadful terror that Grendel’s mother evokes
in the protagonist as compared to that of her son:

\[ Wæs se gryre læssa \\
  efne swa micle     swa bið mægþa cræft, \\
  wiggryre wifes     be wæpnedmen, \\
  þonne heoru bunden, hamere geþruen, \\
  sweord swate fah    swin ofer helme \\
  ecgum dyhttig       andweard scireð. \]

[the terror was the less dreadful by just so much as the power of women, the war-terror of a female, is that of an armed man when the ornamented blade of a hammer-forged sword, stained with blood, mighty of edge, shears through the boar-image above opposing helmets]

The women in *Beowulf*, can easily be aligned with Freud’s figure of the ‘hysteric’, which as expanded by Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, form a category of the “abnormal ones”, including “madmen, deviants, neurotics, women, drifters, jugglers” (9), their voice “introduces dissension, but it doesn’t explode anything at all” (156). The image of Grendel’s mother conforms with that of “a resistant heroine: the one whom psychoanalytic treatment would never be able to reduce” (9). In the course of Beowulf’s combat against her, the challenge she poses for the hero in reducing her to nothingness, is quite clear. Similar to the ‘hysteric’, she remains on the margins, yet irreducible to the very end. Having kept a low-profile on the margins of existence, Grendel’s mother strikes at the Danes with the sole aim of avenging her son.

The *Beowulf*-poet invokes the ‘head’ imagery in anticipation of the gory find of Æschere’s decapitated head on the way to the mere and recounts how at the moment when terror hits the
hall without any premonition in the form of Grendel’s mother, none ‘thought of a helmet’ (*helm ne gemunde*, line 1290b). It is only natural to have Æschere, who, in his central role has been referred to as Hrothgar’s ‘shoulder companion’ (*eaxlgestealla*, line 1326a), be associated with one of the most, if not the most, central organ: the ‘head’. In *Beowulf*, there are a number of references to the ‘shoulder’ granting it an importance on par with that of the ‘head’. The association of a number of characters with particular body-parts throughout the poem including Unferth’s questionable position at the feet of his lord, Hrothgar (lines 500; 1165b–66a) hints at a form of sociogony discussed at the beginning of the chapter.

Another series of ‘head’ images are introduced towards the end of *Beowulf*, when two Geatish brothers fittingly named Wulf and Eofor (evoking both the image of the ‘boar’ as animal and the insignia decorating helmets in the Middle Ages) confront the Swedish king, Ongentheow in Ravenswood. The ‘white-haired’ (*blondenfexa*, line 2962a) is ‘struck with a weapon’ (*wæpne geræhte*, line 2965b) as a result of which ‘blood spurted forth from the veins beneath his hair’ (*swat ædrum sprong forð under fexe*, lines 2966b–67a). Once more, the highest-ranking member of the community in the figure of the king has been associated with the head. The head-imagery continues, as notwithstanding his oozing wound, Ongentheow manages to repay Wulf with a fiercer blow as he shears through Wulf’s helmet so that he sinks to the ground ‘stained with blood’ (*blode fah*, line 2974a). The sheared helmet of one opponent and the bloodstained hair of

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237 Other examples include that of Beowulf’s only surviving relative, Wiglaf’s position as being ‘near his lord’s shoulder’ (*frean eaxlum neah*, line 2853b) and Wulfgar’s manner of standing before his commander and king, Hrothgar’s shoulders to inform him of Beowulf’s arrival in Denmark: ‘the brave man went forward till he stood before the shoulders of the leader of the Danes’ (*eode elenrof þæt he for eaxlum gestod Deniga frean*, lines 358–59a). Furthermore, as noted by David Williams, “The Germanic Nations counted *geniculo*, using the head as the common ancestor, down through the shoulder, elbow, wrist, to the joints of the finger. A man’s children were reckoned as at the shoulder, the first degree of kinship; and his great grandchildren as at the wrist, the third” (*The Exile* 2, n.3).

238 Other instances of the association between certain characters and particular body-parts have been elucidated by, for example, Stanley B. Greenfield, in “The Extremities of Beowulfian Body Politic,” *Saints, Scholars, and Heroes: Studies in Medieval Culture in Honor of Charles W. Jones*. Ed. Margot H. King and Wesley M. Stevens. Collegeville (Minn.: Hill Monastic Library, Saint John’s Abbey and University, 1979): 1–14.
the other, especially given its whiteness, bring to the fore the goriness of a clash that involves the ‘head’, a body-part that tends to be clearly associated with the king. The *Beowulf*-poet then goes on to relate that Eofor came to the rescue of his brother as he used an ‘old sword made by giants’ (*eald sweord eotonisc*, line 2979a) and has the ‘giant-made helmet’ (*entiscne helm*, line 2979b) of Ongentheow crushed, leaving him dead. The ‘head-to-head’ combat fuels enmity between the Swedish and the Geatish nations and threatens to heighten in the wake of Beowulf’s death — especially given the slaying of the Swedish prince Eanmund at the hands of Wiglaf’s father, Weohstan.

In fact, territoriarity constitutes another crucial aspect of bodily clashes, regardless of the concept of nationhood. Once one’s circumscribed territory is invaded by the Other, preparations are made in line with hunting down and eventually inscribing the invader’s body. In *Beowulf*, the term ‘guest’ (*gyst*) is suggestive of a potential invader: “Hrothgar calls Grendel’s mother a ‘restless murderous guest’ (*wælgæst wæfre*, line 1331a) after her deadly intrusion on Heorot; Beowulf, likewise, is a murderous guest (*gist*, line 1522b) and a ‘hall-guest’ (*selegyst*, line 1545a) when he intrudes into her underwater home” (Lionarons, *The Medieval* 35). It is only natural for Grendel’s mother to view Beowulf’s arrival as an intrusion, since she has ‘held the water expanse ravenously fierce for a hundred years’ (*se ðe floda begong/ heorogifre beheold hund missera*, lines 1497b–98). A similar situation holds true of the dragon, who gets enraged only upon sensing an intrusion on his isolated territory. The man who unwittingly ‘broke into the dragon’s hoard’ (*wyrmhord abræc*, line 2221) is said to have been ‘in need of a dwelling’ (*ærnes þearfa*, line 2225a). It had lived in the barrow located close to the ocean-waves and concealed from sight ‘for three hundred winters’ (*preo hund wintra*, line 2778b) without doing anyone any harm ‘until a certain man enraged its heart’ (*oð ðæt hyne an abealch / mon on mode*, lines
Similarly, the dragon in *The Shahnameh* expresses its rage over the intrusion of his territorial space as he claims ownership of both land and the skies of the plain (II. 28: 369).

The verb *abelgan* (third-person singular of which is *abealch*) in line 2280b, not only denotes the state of being ‘enraged’, but also, as argued earlier, connotes a shift in bodily contours which tends to entail readiness for combat. An enhanced rush of adrenalin accompanies the state of rage which makes it an essential part of combat. A drastic change in the state of being is necessary to engage in such a heated combat that demands the risking of life and limbs. In *The Shahnameh*, Rustam is overcome by *khashm* (خشم) meaning ‘wrath’ in most of his combats. Significantly, *khashm* is one of the principal dīvs listed in *The Avesta* and the “only demon named in the *Gāthās* […] and his epithet of *khrvidru* (‘of bloody club’) suggests that he was pictured as a savage ruffian” (Boyce, *A History* 87). In Rustam’s fight against the dragon, both adversaries are obviously overcome by rage as is indicated in the way they roar at each other (II. 27: 357; 365). In *Beowulf*, the dragon, unlike the *Shahnameh*-dragon is non-verbal, yet, it is clearly affected in the *mod*, a term signifying ‘mind,’ ‘spirit’ or ‘heart’. The dominance of the ‘hands’ in Beowulf’s fight against Grendel and the ‘heads’ in the hero’s combat against Grendel’s mother aptly gives way to the prevalence of the ‘heart’ in his final combat.

Shortly upon being ‘enraged in the heart’, the dragon becomes *stearcheort* (‘stout-hearted’) in line 2288b as he finds the footprints of the man without a refuge, whom it deems as ‘enemy’

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239 The term *oððæt* (‘until’) used in line 2280a is significant in marking a U-turn in Beowulf’s fifty years of, apparently, calm reign over the kingdom. The use of *oððæt* also recalls Hrothgar’s experience of a change in fortunes: ‘until a fiend from helle began to commit crimes’ (*oððæt an ongan fyrene fremman feond on helle*, lines 100b–1).

240 One of the local aristocrats of Mazandarān, Olād, whom Rustam captures in the course of the ‘Seven Trials’ begs the hero to ‘cleanse (his) heart of khashm and open his eyes’ (II.35: 469).

241 The image of *Khashm* is similar to that of ‘impious Rage’ (*Furor impious*) depicted in Bk.I of *The Aeneid*, as “within, impious Rage is sitting on savage arms, his hands fast bound behind with a hundred brazen knots, will roar in the ghastliness of blood-stained lips” (“… *Furor impius intus /saeva sedens super arma et centum vinctus aeninis / post tergum nodis fremet horridus ore cruento*”, lines 294–96).
(indicated by the use of the term *feond* in line 2289a). It is not surprising to see the ‘hand’ dominate the hero’s first round of battles when the power of Beowulf’s handgrip and its vital role have already been emphasized. Similarly, the second monster-fight is framed by various images of the ‘head’, as already discussed, not to mention that Beowulf ultimately owes his victory over Grendel’s mother to the use of powers of the ‘head’ prompting him to use the ‘ancient sword made by giants’ (*ealdsweord eotenisc*, line 1558a) and behead the otherwise impenetrable she-monster. The third major monster-fight which brings Beowulf face to face with the dragon is dominated by images of the ‘heart’ including the description of Beowulf as ‘stout-hearted’ (*steorcheort*, line 2552a) once he becomes ‘enraged’ (*gebolgen*, line 2550b). The image of the ‘heart’ as the seat of emotions pervades the entire dragon-episode, as Beowulf moves back in time to recount the tale of his maternal grandfather, Hrethel and how he ‘carried the sorrow welling in his heart for Herebeald’, (*aefter Herebealde heortan sorge / weallende wæg*, lines 2463–64a), who was accidentally killed by his brother Hæthcyn. The suffocating sensation experienced by Hrethel in the wake of his irresoluble sorrow is graphically described by the poet in terms of a contraction of spaces as ‘the land and dwelling-place seemed all too roomy to him’ (*puhte him eall to rum /wongas ond wicstede*, lines 2461b–62a). The melancholy is heightened especially after he sees a reflection of his inner sorrow in the midst of the pervading gloom in what used to be his son’s room: ‘in his son’s chamber a deserted wine-hall, a windswept resting-place bereft of joy’ (*on his suna bure/ winsele westne, windge reste/ reot[g]e berofene*, lines 2455b–57a). It only makes sense to have the ‘heart’, the organ most frequently associated with emotions, dominate the final section of the poem as the hero finds himself helpless in the inevitability of doom concretized in the image of the dragon.

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242 Again, here, we witness the brilliance of narration on the part of the Beowulf-poet who also includes the point of view of monsters, including dragons.
Also interesting is that the victims of each of the monster-fights demonstrate a fatal weakness in that particular spot for which they have been distinguished, in other words, inscribed. The first victim, whose name becomes known only after Beowulf relates the story of his conquests as Hondscio (evoking the German term *Handschiuh*, meaning ‘glove’) rather than live up to his name, fails to protect his own hand as Grendel devours even the extremities of his body including his hands and feet. A similar situation is applicable in the case of Æschere, who, as Anne Leslie Harris has observed: “Just as Hondscio’s physical strength and arms fail to save him from Grendel, so Æschere’s skills as both warrior and counselor are no defense against Grendel’s mother” (416–17). Beowulf describes Æschere as a ‘wise counselor of old’ (*frodan fyrmwitan*, line 2123a), yet, he ‘did not think of the helmet’ (*helm ne gemunde*, line 1290b) to protect his own head, the seat of wisdom.

Indeed names and epithets in literature have proven to reflect the spot in which the character in mind is wounded the most. A prime example that comes to mind is Oedipus, the signification of whose name ‘swollen foot’ “is intimately associated with his wound” (Slattery 15). The monstrosity borne by Oedipus is initially reflected in his name and only later in his misshapen feet. In fact, the reason as to why Oedipus is successful at responding to the Sphinx’s riddle and gaining entrance to Thebes is that the riddle is closely associated with the wound he has suffered in the feet.  

In the third monster-fight, it is Beowulf this time, who manifests evident weakness in the organ best known as the seat of emotions: ‘the heart’. As he goes back in time, Beowulf relives how the Frankish champion, Dæghrefn’s body crumbled in his own hand-grip: ‘nor was a sword-edge his slayer, but a warlike grip broke his heart’s surging, his ‘bone-house’ (body)’ (*ne wes

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Reminiscing about his victory over the Frankish warrior functions on various levels, including an evocation of his glorious past as he finds himself faced by the formidable dragon as well as a parallel between the foreboding threats to his own ‘bone-house’ and the fate that befell Dæghrefn’s ‘body’. Moreover, once the dragon hears Beowulf’s voice and belches poisonous vapour in return, the ‘heart’ imagery is underscored anew as the Beowulf-poet relates that ‘then the heart of the coiled serpent was impelled to seek battle’ (ða wæs hringbogan heorte gefysed/ sæcce to seceanne, lines 2561–62a). Furthermore, once Beowulf’s sword fails to cut through the serpent, ‘the guardian of the hoard [‘the dragon’] got encouraged — its heart welled up with breath’ (Hyrte hyne hordweard hreðer æðme weoll, line 2593). It is also likely that when Beowulf eventually manages to cut through the serpent ‘in the middle’, the knife goes through the dragon’s heart, believed to be in the middle.

As hero and monster confront each other, both are enraged as they face each other as equals as ‘each of them, intent on affliction, felt horror at the other’ (æghwæðrum wæs/ bealohycgendra broga fram oðrum, lines 2564b–65), the poet invokes graphic images of the inscriptive body. Beowulf is said to have ‘struck the patterned horror’ (gryrefahne sloh, line 2576b); the sword ‘bit less fiercely than the king of the people had need’ (bat unswiðor/ þonne his ðiodcyning þearfe hæfde, lines 2578b–79). As Beowulf’s ‘weapon hardened with wounds’ (wæpen wundum heard, line 2687a) fails, it is an ‘ancient sword made by the giants’ (ealdsweord etonisc, line 2616a) passed on to Beowulf’s only surviving kinsman, Wiglaf that finishes off the monster within a context highly evocative of the ‘inscriptive body’:
Then the king himself, again in control of his wits, drew the battle-knife, keen and battle-sharp, that he bore on his mail; the protector of the Weders cut through the dragon in the middle.

The term ‘forwritan’, meaning ‘to cut through’, invokes ‘writan’, which signifies ‘to inscribe.’ Allen Frantzen sees an example of syllepsis in the usage of the two terms: “Both ‘writan’ and ‘forwritan’ mean ‘to cut’ or ‘to carve’; the words share an etymology — a genealogy, if not an origin — and this link is adequate to my purposes in seeing them as syleptical” (343). The use of ‘forwritan’ (line 2705), though a hapax legomenon, does not constitute the first time the Beowulf-poet has given an added layer of meaning to the act of inscription in making it also imply the marking of the body. Earlier in the poem, ‘…the Creator had condemned (the monstrous race) as the kin of Cain’ (… him scyppend forscrifon hæfde/ in Caines cynne, lines 106–7a) which in the OE original invokes a mode of inscription in the term forscrifon, a term, signifying ‘to condemn’ and at the same time evoking the Latin ‘proscribere.’ Additionally, Grendel in being called a mearcstapa, beyond evoking the sense of ‘prowler of the outskirts’, intimates the process of ‘marking’ in its component, mearc. It is worth noting that in Modern English ‘mark’, signifies ‘border’ and the OE verb mearcian, means “to mark, brand, seal, design […]”. The verb mearcian has been used explicitly within the context of ‘inscriptive
bodies’, in one of the most imaginative sections of the poem, where the young Beowulf draws a verbal image of what might become of his body, in the event he falls victim to Grendel:

Na þu minne þearft
hafalan hydan, ac he me habban wile
d[r]eore fahne, gif mec deað nimeð:
byrdeð blodig wæl, byrgean þenceð,
eteð angenga unrmurlice,
meacð morhopu — no ðu ymb mines ne þearft
lices feorme leng sorgian. 450

[You will have no need to cover my head if death takes me, for he will have me dripping with blood, if death takes me: he will bear my corpse, will resolve to taste it, the solitary one, will eat it without remorse, will mark his moor-retreat. You will no longer need to concern yourself over the disposal of my body.]

Here, Beowulf is dauntlessly visualizing how his death could reinforce Grendel’s hold over his territory with the giant using his blood to mark his expanding territory. True that Beowulf not only gains the upper hand in his hand-to-hand fight with Grendel, but also succeeds in cutting through the taboo territory of Grendel and his mother, yet, he himself does not, in the end, escape bodily inscription.246 As it is in most single combats, the act of inscription operates both ways, meaning that the victor emerges from the fight, not exactly unscathed, as he ends up being inscribed upon by the defeated party. In most such cases, the inscription is coupled with incorporation of a part of the loser on the part of the victor in the process of ‘sublation’.

Beowulf has already been inscribed upon as indicated in his having been ‘stained by the (monstrous) enemies’ (fah from feondum, line 420a) when he confronts Grendel. In being fah, the hero is aligned with the monster, who himself is fag (an alternative spelling of fah). In addition to being a mearcstapa, in being of ‘Cain’s race’ (Caines cynn, line 107a), Grendel, is also fag as is his criminal ancestor based on line 1263b. Being marked, singled out and set apart

246 In fact, as Frantzen has noted, both dragon and hero are ‘forwriten’ (348).
is a state shared by hero and monster, who engage in a battle that is bound to incur further inscriptions. This is not surprising given that transgressions, including a combat with the ‘monstrous’, have been associated with writing in some ancient texts. Aside from the hero and the monster, the text itself is interspersed with tokens of inscription as is indicated in the frequency of compound words ending with -fah or -fag. However, the appeal of the poem lies more in its tone of suspense than the actual acts of inscription.

Beowulf’s battle with Grendel is punctuated by the verb com (come), described as one of the “most exciting moments in Beowulf” (“Grendel’s”, Bremmer 121). While at the time of the first com (line 702b) Grendel is yet one with the ‘black night’ (wanre niht), with the second com (line 710a) we begin to make out the giant’s contours and say for certain that ‘Grendel was moving on’ (Grendel gongan, line 711a). It is with the third com (line 720a) that Grendel approximates humans in being called ‘man’ (rinc, line 720b) as he makes his way towards the hall, ‘bereft of joys’ (dreamum bedæled, line 721a). As the two adversaries face each other, a ‘third space’ is created, in which, not only the opponents undergo change, but also the space of combat, Heorot:

Dryhtsele dynedæ  Denum eallum wearð,
ceasterbuendum,  cenra gehwylcum,
eorlum ealucserwen.  Yrre wæron begen,
reþe renweardas.  Reced hlynnode.  770
Déa wæs wundor micel  þæt se wînsele
wiðhæfde heafodeorum,  þæt he on hrusan ne feol,
fæger foldbold

247 Mary Carruthers, for example, quotes a commentary on Isaiah 1:18, based on which “according to Jewish tradition, the sins of all men are preserved in writing on a shining white substance” (9).

248 For more on the significance of mearc in Beowulf and the compounds with -fag and -fah, see, for example, Manish Sharma, Movement and Space as Metaphor in Old English Poetry, Diss., (Cambridge University, 2003): 219–39.

249 Alain Renoir parallels this scene with medium and long cinemagraphic shots. For further information, see his “Point of View and design for terror in Beowulf”, NM 63 (1962): 154–67.
[The splendid hall resounded. It became for all the Danes, those living in the city, for each of the brave ones, for the warriors, an ‘ale-shower’ (implying terror). Both were enraged, the fierce hall-guardians. The hall resounded. It was a great miracle that the wine-hall withstood those brave in battle; that the beautiful building did not fall to the ground.]

The ‘third space’ unfolds in the enclosure of the hall and in a way becomes synonymous with the hall itself as is manifest in its clear agency as it moans and groans in the thick of the two adversaries’ confrontation. Nonetheless, given the vitality of the hall, which far from being an ordinary enclosure represents the artery of the Danish society, the new emerging space of possibilities is no less forceful as its impacts become manifest in the outside world. No sooner has Grendel’s arm been put on display to the public, than we hear of the implications of the ‘third space’ in the outside world:

Hwilum heáporofe hleapan leton,
on geflit faran fealwe mearas
ðær him foldwegas fægere þuhton,
cystum cuðe.

[At times, the brave in battle would let their fallow horses gallop, where, to them, the paths seemed beautiful and known to the best.]

The sense of joy accompanying defeat over the monstrous body projects onto the outside world in the form of horse-races transpiring along paths, which at this point in time, not only seem beautiful, but also have acquired an air of familiarity (indicated in ‘cuðe’) previously absent from the Danish territories.

Another significant implication of the emerging ‘third space’ in Heorot is that it challenges established dichotomies including the inside/outside and hero/monster. For one thing, the two

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250 Klaeber’s Beowulf: Fourth Edition suggests that the much controversial phrase ‘ealuscwerwen’ in line 796 suggests ‘terror, distress’ (368); however, various interpretations have been offered including ‘dispensation of good luck’ or ‘deprivation of good luck’ [ealu has been taken as an alternative form of alu (‘luck’)]. For further details, see, for example: Klaeber’s Beowulf: Fourth Edition, (Toronto: Univeristy of Toronto, 2008): 161–62.
opponents share a common state of being, which is one of ‘rage’ as expressed in line 769b above. Their similar emotional state of rage, along with their both being ‘fierce hall-guardians’ (reþe renweardas, line 770a) and ‘battle-brave’ (heapodeorum, line 772a), turns them into ‘monstrous doubles’. In the case of ‘monstrous doubles’, as René Girard explains: “From within the system, only differences are perceived; from without the antagonists all seem alike. From inside, sameness is not visible; from outside, differences cannot be seen” (159). A similar situation befalls the Danes who await the outcome of battle between Beowulf and Grendel, without being able to initially make out winner from loser. As they hear the soaring noises engulf Heorot, including ‘the song of defeat of the enemy of god, the prisoner of hell, bewailing his wound’ (godes ondsacan, sigeelasne sang, sar wanigean helle hæfton, lines 786b–88a), they are overwhelmed with terror. From within, Grendel and Beowulf are aware of the boundaries separating each from the other as each tries to eliminate the other; from without, they appear similar. The Beowulf-poet tells us how ‘as long as he was alive each was hateful to the other’ (wæs gehwæþer oðrum/ lifigende lað, lines 814b–15a) obfuscating even further the distinctions between the two beings from the outside, for we as the onlookers cannot distinguish between ‘each’ (gehwæþer) and ‘to the other’ (oðrum). The fact that the two parties manifest doubling qualities renders their confrontation a dynamic one, in the wake of which, we witness the emergence of a space of becoming leading to a new world order, concretized in the display of Grendel’s dismembered arm from Heorot. Neither is Grendel the monster he used to be following the single combat with Beowulf, nor are Beowulf and the clashing space the same as before. As Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe has observed: “The three principals in the combat, Beowulf, Grendel, and the hall, balanced so forebodingly in the first com segment, are balanced once again in lines 834–36 as Beowulf reaches up to fasten what is left of Grendel under the

Moreover, while Beowulf is bolgenmod (line 709a), Grendel is gebolgen (line 722b).
gabled roof of Heorot” (490). However, despite the reinstated balance, none of the ‘three principals’ is the same as before. Crucial to the drastic change is the opening in the form of a wound inflicted on Grendel’s formerly invincible body.

The wound on Grendel’s body is most visually described: ‘the terrible assailant suffered bodily pain; a clear lasting wound on his shoulder, sinews sprang apart, the bone-locks burst’ (Licsar gebad/atol æglæca; him on eaxle wearð/syndolh sweotol, seonowe onsprungon,/burston banlocan, lines 815b–18a). The Beowulf-poet presents a visual image of the wound by means of graphic details that engage the senses, including the auditory and in particular the visual. In fact, the term sweotol, meaning ‘clear’, which highlights the visual dimension associated with the wound is also used shortly afterwards, when Beowulf puts the entire arm of the defeated Grendel on display:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{þæt wæs tacen sweotol,} & \\
\text{hond alegde,} & \\
\text{þær wæs eal geador} & \\
\text{under geapne hrof.} & \\
\text{Grendles grape) & \\
\end{align*}
\]

[It was manifest proof when the brave in battle, as clear sign, sets the hand, arm and shoulder up under the broad roof, there was the whole of Grendel’s grasp complete.]

Dismemberment allows for Grendel’s gigantic body, hitherto hard to grasp, to become a ‘clear sign’ and ultimately translatable into a comprehensible language. Indeed, the dismembered limbs interspersed throughout the poem articulate a language of their own, which Gillian R. Overing refers to as ‘a literal order of signification’:

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Coexisting with the speech of the poem are literal signs: Grendel’s claw wrenched from its socket and nailed to the gables of Heorot; his head severed from his dead body by Beowulf and dragged by four men back to Hrothgar’s hall; Æschere’s head displayed on the path to Grendel’s mere; everywhere a pileup of bodies, nameless victims and famous heroes; funeral pyres consuming the dead. The poem embodies both literal and representational orders of signification. (89)

The cut off limbs showcased in Beowulf leave their greatest impact on the sense of sight. The placing aloft of the dismembered parts of the monster, brings them further into view, lending to these body parts, including the ‘hand’, the ‘arm’ and the ‘shoulder’ an extra ocular appeal. After Beowulf’s success at his expedition to the mere, Grendel’s decapitated head meets a similar fate as four men carry it on a ‘slaughter-pole’ (wælstenge, line 1638a) and Beowulf, later, pulls it by the hair for everyone to gaze at. As Bremmer has keenly observed, the head of the heathen Holofernes is put on display by the brave pious Judith, who has succeeded in beheading him, in a similar manner. Judith, in the OE poem Judith, also makes use of an elevated spot to present her trophy: ‘She then climbed up to a steep hill and showed the head to them all’ (Heo astah þa up to anum steapum beorge and ætywde þæt heafod him eallum, lines 317–18).253 Significantly, here, the poet also uses the term sweotole, the adverbial form of sweotol, used above in the sense of ‘clear’, to reinforce the appeal of the visual:

Her ge magon sweotole sigerofe hæleð,  
leoda ræswan, on ðæs laðestan  
hæðebes headðorinces heafod starian (Judith, 176–78)

253 As Bremmer has investigated, the Bible chooses an elevated spot for the display of Holofernes’s head, except that instead of the ‘steep hill’, in the OE Judith, mention is made of the ‘walls’ (muros) in Judith 14.
[Here, victorious heroes, leaders of the people, you can clearly gaze at the head of the most loathsome heathen warrior.]

Aligned with *sweotol*, meaning ‘clear’ is the term *tacen*, signifying ‘sign’, also closely connected with an appeal to the sense of sight before the dismembered body part. The decapitated head of Grendel is described not only as a ‘sea-booty’ (*sælac*, line 1652a), but also as a ‘sign of glory’ (*tires tacne*, 1654a,) which is directed at the significance of the monster’s decapitated head in appealing to the audience’s sense of sight with the aim of highlighting the hero’s exploit.

Medieval and early modern periods are notorious for having heavily thrived on spectacles and the *visual*, in general.\(^{254}\) It is quite understandable that given the absence of the sources of entertainment at the disposal of most of us today, people living centuries ago would rejoice in public events of the most gory nature (e.g. hangings, dissections and quarterings).

Prior to the exposure of the wound, the *Beowulf*-poet tells us that Grendel realized that ‘his body could not bear him’ (*þæt him se lichoma læstan nolde*, line 812). It is not surprising that terms evoking the mortal flesh such as ‘bodily pain’ (*licsar*, line 815a) and ‘body’ (*lichoma*, line 812a) dominate this part of the poem as they mingle with words signifying life to conjure up a physical presence that will soon be no more. For example, ‘separation from life’ (*aldorgedal*, line 805b), *lif* (‘life’, line 805b), *alder* (‘life’, line 822a) suffuse the episode of Grendel’s dismemberment. Once the corporeal enclosure — it so happens that the OE kenning ‘bone-

\(^{254}\) Public dissections were carried out in the wake of public hangings, an illustration of which appears in Andreas Vesalius’s *De humani corporis fabrica*, is one palpable example. For further details, see, for example, Katherine Park, *Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection* (New York: Zone Books, 2006): 207–60. Another example of the predominance of the visual in the Middle Ages, is offered in the public display of the decapitated head of Oswald on the stake, along with the hanging up of his hand and arm from his corpse at the orders of King Penda (For more information, refer to: Rolf H. Bremmer, “Grendel’s Arm and the Law”, *Studies in English Language and Literature: ‘Doubt Wisely’, Papers in Honour of E.G. Stanley*: 125–26). Furthermore, regarding the significance and definition of ‘spectacle’ in pre-industrial Europe, I have found Mitchell B. Merback following definition quite useful, “spectacle specially prepared or arranged display of a more or less public nature (especially one of a large scale) forming an impressive or interesting show or entertainment, in short, a *sight*, an event or performance which is set up and enacted mainly to be seen” (18).
house’ (*banhus*) reinforces the home/body analogy — is pierced, depending on the depth of the wound, it will no longer be able to sustain life. The wound inflicted on Grendel’s body is so deep that it leads to the loss of large quantities of blood and ultimately death.

One of the intriguing aspects of Grendel’s dismemberment is the poet’s evocation of the same terminology used in delineating the dismemberment of Handschio, one of the Geatish men accompanying Beowulf on the expedition to Denmark at the hands of Grendel. Just as Grendel ‘bit into the bone-locks’ (*bat banlocan*, line 742a), later on, he has his own ‘bone-locks,’ as already mentioned, ‘burst’ (*burston banlocan*, line 818a). While he considered that he would have ‘sundered’ (*gedælde*, line 731a) ‘life from the body’ (*lif wið lice*, line 733a), he himself experiences ‘separation of life from body’ (*aldorgedal*, line 805b). Additionally, while Grendel ‘drank the blood from the veins’ (*blod edrum dranc*, line 742b), he ends up leaving traces which also become full of his blood (lines 846–49). What ensues in the wake of Grendel’s solitary feasting in Heorot as he bites into Handschio is an undoing of that feasting. Feasting gives way to fighting as incorporation (in this case of Handschio’s body) ends in dismemberment (of Grendel’s body). Beowulf’s dismemberment of Grendel evokes an image of sacrifice, while his feasting recalls that of incorporation.

### 3.3. *The Shahnameh*: Dīv-Binding and Heroic Initiation

Sacrifice constitutes a major principle of Zoroastrianism and images suggestive of sacrifice run throughout *The Avesta*. For example, in *Abān Yasht*, where most *Shahnameh*-heroes can be traced, Ardōvi Sura Anahita, goddess of the waters, is depicted as a warrior ‘beautiful were her white arms, thick as a horse’s shoulder or still thicker’ demands sacrifice (Yt. 5: 7) to whom heroes offer sacrifice of ‘a hundred male horses, a thousand oxen, ten thousand lambs’ (Yt. 5,
passim). On the other hand, Mithra, the deity of covenants, described as the ‘strong-armed warrior’ (Yt. 10: 25) possesses a variety of weapons including ‘1000 bows’ (Yt. 10: 129), ‘1000 arrows’ (l. 130), ‘1000 spears’ (line 131), ‘1000 swords’ and most often known for the ‘mace’ (line 132).²⁵⁵ No wonder then that he is said to “cut all the limbs to pieces, and mingles, together with the earth, the bones, hair, brains, and the blood of the men who have lied unto Mithra” (Yt. 10: 72). As Mithra clashes with other bodies, he not only cuts the limbs of his opponents, but goes on to form a new world order using the dismembered body-parts as his materia prima.²⁵⁶

Small wonder then that images of sacrifice abound in The Shahnameh, in which the influence of the yashts is undeniable. The terminology used in the confrontation between Rustam and the dragon, for instance, provides a prime example of the underlying concept of sacrifice present in Ferdowsi’s mind. The fact that Rustam performs ablution (II. 29: 383) and praises ‘God’ (yazdān, line 384) upon slaughtering the dragon, associates his dragon-slaying with sacrifice. It is also to be noted that the hero, although generally being the sacrificer, has the potential to become the sacrificed. It is, indeed, his willingness to put himself on the line that lends him heroic qualities which distinguish him from the mundane masses.

Aside from sacrifice, the association between dismemberment and cosmogony is particularly prominent in The Avesta. Based on The GBd, it is the dismemberment of both the originary man, Gayo marōtan and the primal animal, the bull Gāv aēvo dāto that sets creation into motion. The destruction of the two originary creatures of the universe as they clash with the forces of Ahrīman is part of cosmogony as it leads to the emergence of all other species on the planet. The

²⁵⁵ Interestingly, while in the western tradition, clubs mark their owners (primarily giants) as primitive, in the Persian tradition, they are commonly used by great heroes and deities. For example, one of the greatest heroes of the Zoroastrian tradition, Garshāp has also been referred to, in The Avesta, as ‘club-bearing’ (gazavara, Y.9: 10) and Fīrādūn, as mentioned in Chapter 1, is known for his ‘cow-like club’ (gurzeh-yi gāv sar).

dismemberment of the primal man, *Gayo marətan*, leads to the creation of two plants of *rivās* which metamorphose into human beings only forty years later (*GBd*, XV: 5). The dismemberment of both the primal bull and originary man beyond leading to the creation of new forms of being, brings about a new world order.

In *The Shahnameh*, the cosmogonic aspect of dismemberment, so prominent in *The GBd*, is not so much an issue. Ferdowsi implicitly pits Kīyūmars, the king, against an evil anti-king: ‘When was Kīyūmars even aware that the royal throne could hold another king but him’ (I. 22: 25). In *The Shahnameh* the confrontation between Sīyāmak and the dīv Khazūrān, in other words, the ‘child-king’ (*shāh bachcheh*, I. 23: 29) and the ‘child-dīv’ (*dīv bachcheh*, I. 22: 22), can be traced back to the primal clash that broke out between Ahura Mazda and Ahrīman (*GBd* 1: 9). The clash which, in *The Avesta*, leads to the sacrifice of Gayomard, from whom, Ferdowsi takes the name of his first king-hero, Kīyūmars, is carried over to the son, Sīyāmak in *The Shahnameh* as the latter’s body is subjected to dismemberment in a battle, in which, the child-dīv uses his claws to inflict an opening around the child-king’s waist. The wound in Sīyāmak’s body represents a stain on a world, hitherto paradisiacal in appearance, and also a puncture in the untainted vision of the heroes unaware of the existence of the dīvs and the dangers they embody. The first round of battles between the king-heroes and the dīvs shatters the mood of innocence prevailing over the Kīyūmars’s oneness with the surrounding flora and fauna, triggering animosity and a relentless series of wars between heroes and the monsters.

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257 When compared with the first round of combat between Ahrīman and Ahura Mazda, one can say that this time it is the good king who is unaware of the existence of the evil anti-king. See: *The GBd* (I: 9).
258 The term used for the emerging wound is ‘chāk’ (*چاک*) which not only signifies an ‘opening’ in either the body or the clothes, but also is onomatopoetic in view of the initial affricate /ch/ which by definition is produced by ‘friction’ and the final stop in /k/ produced by stopping the air in the vocal tract.
259 Based on *The Avesta*, at resurrection, first the bones of Gayomard rise up and then those of the first human pair, Mashi and Mashyāneh, created out of the rivās-plants that resulted from Gayomard’s dismemberment at the hands of Ahrīman (*GBd*. XXX: 7).
Moreoever, in *The Shahnameh*, Gayomard’s dismemberment is transposed onto his son, Sīyāmak, although as Kazzazi has noted “he who is really overcome by Ahrīman is Kīyūmars not Sīyāmak” (*Nāmeh* I. 246). It becomes Hūshang’s responsibility to avenge his father Sīyāmak.

In the episode concerning Hūshang, Sīyāmak’s son in *The Shahnameh*, the dīv is overcome with fear at the sound of the loud call uttered by the hero (I. 25: 62) who has assembled animals of various species including lions, wolves, tigers, birds and also the supernatural *paris* (I. 24: 58–59). Incidentally, sound, as is the case in *Beowulf*, in its abilities to move beyond bodily boundaries, plays a major role as an instigator of corporeal confrontations. Hūshang succeeds in conquering the dīv upon binding him with a ‘(leather) belt’ (*dovāl*, line 65). For example in the case of Hūshang, once having bound the dīv, he is not content with the mere chopping off the dīv’s ‘singular head’ (*sar-i nāhamāl*, line 65) but goes on to excoriate him (line 66) as he peels off his ‘animal skin’ (*charm*, line 66).\(^{261}\) Given Hūshang’s reputation as the forger of weapons including a ‘shining sword’ (I. 29: 8) along with a number of others, ‘shovels, axes, saws and adzes’ (line 9), we are not surprised at his insistence at bodily inscription. Hūshang is known for separating iron from stone (line 7), which later on allows men, who, unlike most other animals, have been born naked and with little built-in defense equipment such as claws or sharp teeth, to overcome his enemies more effectively. Hūshang’s conquest of the dīvs is concurrent with his domestication of the animals as he learns to use them for both food and for clothing.

During the reign of Hūshang’s son and successor, Tahmūras, ‘binding’ gains particular significance as the hero-king instead of slaying the demons decides to keep their mental and corporeal capacities intact by binding them. The Tahmūras episode is particularly dominated by images of bodily binding as the poet makes use of verbs such as ‘to bind’ (*līstān* /‘bastan’, lines

\(^{261}\) The term *charm* is used later, to indicate the hero’s mastery over animals in general, as he begins to use their fur for clothing (I. 31:19)
its noun, ‘bond’ (‘بند’ / ‘band’, lines 7, 24; 41), as a noun of agency in the term ‘dīv-band’ (dīv-band, line 1). In fact, Tahmūras is known as the ‘dīv-band’ (dīv-band), an epithet which is reinforced once he rides on one of the dīvs he has captured (I. 36: 27). What is particular about the binding of the body is that it allows the body to remain intact and its powers be harnessed at will, which is why, as shall be discussed shortly, ‘binding’ becomes so essential in eschatological belief-systems such as the Zoroastrian concept of Frashegird (‘renovation’). The binding of bodies in the midst of clashes enables the victor to dominate the body of the defeated party without explicitly inscribing upon it. The inscription is hidden, though not quite, as it is performed in a way that allows for the wholeness of the defeated body to remain intact.

Binding is more difficult than the inflicting of sheer bodily inscriptions. Hercules, for example, is confronted with great difficulty while performing his ‘Third Labour’, since it involves the capturing alive of an animal — the Ceryneian hind sacred to Artemis. In most physical clashes, the victor aims for more palpable forms of bodily inscriptions. However, during Tahmūras’s reign, inscription manifests itself in more surreptitious forms. Once the hero-king binds the dīvs, we learn that they are willing to teach him ‘a new art’ (nu honar, I. 37: 39) which turns out to be ‘writing’, in exchange for their freedom. Thus, as one form of inscription (writing) replaces another (bodily inscription), Tahmūras triumphs over the race of the dīvs by putting them to great use for the enhancement of his already thriving civilization, which, amongst other aspects, comes to the fore in his ‘cutting’ of the fur of ewes and sheep for the purpose of clothing (I. 35: 8).

Another example of the binding of a demonic body is undertaken by Firaidūn as he is told by the divine messenger, Sorush, not to slay but to bind the three-headed king-dragon, Zahhāk (I. 82: 445–46 ; 83: 477–78), the reason for which is to be sought in Zoroastrian eschatology
Similar to Christian beliefs, based on which, the devil is bound only to be unfettered a millennium later, Zahrāk accounts for a major component of the overall pattern of creation and is to be disposed of at the end of time by a hero named Sām: ‘When Firaidūn captured him, it was not possible to kill him. He then imprisoned him in Mount Damavand. When he shall become unfettered, Sam will arise, will smite (with the mace), and kill him’ (GBd, 29:9). Moreover, according to one of the Zoroastrians’ yasnas (‘prayers’), Azhi Dāhāka, on whom Ferdowsi’s Zahrāk is modeled, has been explicitly made by the ‘Evil Spirit’, Angra Mainyu, ‘as the most mighty druj (against the corporeal world), and for the murder of our settlements and to slay the (homes) of Ashā’ (Y. 9: 8). The fact that Azhi Dāhāka has been equated with druj, the principle of deceit and disorder as opposed to ashā, the principle of righteousness and order, indicates the association of Azhi Dāhāka, in turn Zahrāk, with the cosmic ordering of the universe, in which good and evil co-exist.

The divine messenger, Sorush, tells the hero that he has to take Zahrāk in the form of a bundle as he (Firaidūn) whips him (Zahrāk) ceaselessly till he reaches Mount Alborz ‘without his company’ (bī-guruh, I. 84: 478) as is characteristic of a true hero. The monster and hero end up facing each other in a combat of cosmic proportions. The setting of the ‘third space’ created in the midst of the clash between the embodiments of good and evil figuring in Firaidūn and Zahrāk is the meaning-laden Mount Damavand whose influence is so bound up with Iranian mythology that it

\[262\] According to the Book of Revelation, an angel binds the devil with a great chain: ‘And he laid hold on the dragon the old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years’ (et adprehendit draconem serpentinum antiquum qui est diabolus et Satanas et ligavit eum per annos mille, 20: 2). The Bible goes on to say: ‘And when the thousand years shall be finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go forth, and seduce the nations, which are over the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, and shall gather them together to battle, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea’ (et cum consummari fuerint mille anni solvetur Satanas de carcere suo et exibet et seducet gentes quae sunt super quattuor angulos terrae Gog et Magog et congregabit eos in proelium quorum numerus est sicut harena maris, Rev.20: 7).

\[263\] Corporeal in nature as Zoroastrianism is, Zoroaster sees the personification of these two principles as twins in a vision: ‘Of the two spirits, the one who follows the Drug chose doing the worst things, the Most Bounteous Spirit who is clad in the hardest stones chose ashā, and (so do) they who will willingly come with true actions to meet Ahura Mazda’ (Y. 30: 5) (based on Boyce’s rendition of the Danish translation by Kaj Barr, A History, 193).
is deemed to have been Kīyūmars’s residence and the site of Zahhāk’s attack on Jamshīd (cf. Taffazoli). The emergence of the ‘third space’ negates the idea of ‘purity’ and presupposes that “symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew” (Bhabha 37). The Bhabhian paradigm, ‘appropriated’ and ‘read anew’, fits the heroic combats of this study, including Firaidūn’s dragon-fight. Firaidūn, himself suckled and raised by the marvelous cow, Bormāyeh, and Zahhāk, a humanoid dragon are clearly embodiments of hybridity as they fight it out at Mount Damavand, which being so significant in Iranian mythology, is a suitable setting for the emergence of a new space with the potential of being re-appropriated in multitudinous forms.  

What is particularly significant regarding the confrontation between the two is that the hero has been forbidden to dismember the monster (I. 84: 477) for reasons that are to be sought in Zoroastrian scriptures. The monster’s head has to remain intact for its future destruction by the eschatological hero, Sām. This is while Firaidūn had earlier threatened him with his ‘cow-like mace’ (gurz-i yeh gāv-sar, I. 82: 443), a weapon peculiar to Firaidūn himself, most likely traced back to the hero’s foster-mother, the multi-colored cow, Bormāyeh. A more detailed reason for Firaidūn’s decision has been offered by the Middle Persian Denkard:

About the smiting by Firaidūn, for the sake of killing Zahhāk; the striking of his club upon the nape of the neck, the heart, and even the skull; and Zahhāk’s not dying from the beating. Then smiting him with a sword, and the formation of noxious creatures of many kinds from the body of Zahhāk, at the first, second and third blow. The exclamation of the

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264 According to studies conducted by A. Taffazoli, Mount Damavand was the residence of Kīyūmars, the site from which Jamshīd took to the skies and the birth-place of Manūchihr. The influence of Damavand on popular culture has been so strong that as Henri Massé has recorded, people would celebrate Zahhāk’s demise and even had a horse-back riding competition commemorating the legendary event (163–64). For further details, see: “Damavand”, EIr.
creator Ahuramazd to Zahhāk because if thou shouldst cut him, Zahhāk would be making this earth full of serpents, toads, scorpions, lizards, tortoises and frogs. Punish him with the mode of binding him with awful fetters, in the most grievous punishment of confinement. (Bk. IX, 20: 8–10)

All the animals said to fill the earth in the event of the dismemberment of Zahhāk are collectively referred to as khrafstras or ‘noxious creatures’, whose destruction is imperative in Zoroastrianism.265 The dismemberment of Zahhāk is deferred on the grounds that more than a mere monster, he embodies the principle of evil which is a necessity to the universal system. Yet, although the binding does not lead to dismemberment, it does bring about drastic changes to the world order that had been prevailing for centuries. Zahhāk’s own grip on power was fortified upon one of the cruelest forms of dismemberment: the sawing into half of Jamshīd which is explicitly translated into a world-shattering move as it fills the entire world with fear (I. 52: 186). While mere binding leaves the door open for a resurrection, any act that leads to the mutilation and ultimate annihilation of the body leaves no chance for any possibility of a revival.

One cannot deal with dismemberment scenes in The Shahnameh without alluding to the ‘Seven Trials’, especially to Rustam’s ‘Seven Trials’, where the transformative aspect of dismemberment is reinforced as the body of the monstrous Other becomes a materia prima on which the hero operates to enforce groundbreaking changes to his own body and ultimately the collective body of a nation. In The Shahnameh, similar to Tristan, hunting serves as a preliminary stage in the hero’s coming of age as the cutting of limb from limb of the body of the hunted prey leads to heroic self-fashioning. The ‘onager’ (gūr) that Rustam targets with an arrow prior to the start of the ‘Seven Trials’, comes in anticipation of the dismemberment scenes ahead.

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265 For more on the khrafstras, see: GBd. XIX.
Interestingly, the onager in *The Shahnameh* becomes the equivalent of the deer in the Western canon in being the prototypical prey. In fact, ‘onager’ and ‘deer’ are occasionally mentioned in the same vein, the prime example of which appears in a scene leading to the dismemberment of Rustam himself on a vast plain, described as a ‘hunting-ground’ (*nakhjīrgāh*, V. 450: 143), where Rustam the hunter unwittingly becomes the hunted one. The King of Kabul who colludes with Rustam’s brother Shaghād to kill Rustam deceptively describes the plain as follows: “The entire valley is full of ewes, deer and onagers he who holds a swift steed will have in his grasp onagers and deer one ought not to pass up (the opportunity of hunting on) this merry meadow!” (V. 450: 145–46).²⁶⁶

Regardless of the nature of the prey, given that hunting takes place at “the boundary of between the human domain and the wilderness” (Cartmill 31) along liminal spaces, it has the capacity to provide the hero with fertile grounds for his coming-of-age experience. The landscapes which Rustam goes through in the course of “Seven Trials’, including the ‘thicket’ (*konām*) in the ‘First’ and ‘Second’ Trials (II. 22: 288; 25: 323), the ‘desert’ (*bīyābān*) of the ‘Third Trial’ (26: 346; 27: 351) and the ‘bottomless cave’ (*ghār-i bī-bon*, 41: 552) of the ‘Seventh Trial’, are liminal in nature. In order for the hero to undergo ontological change, the spatio-temporal aspects that he experiences, must be distinct from those prevailing in our quotidian existence, which is clearly the case throughout the ‘Seven Trials’. As Mahmoud Omidsalar has pointed out, the importance of ‘Seven Trials’ lies in its being more of a process than a deed (“Rustam’s” 262). The process that it involves constitutes a series of *rites de passage* which comprise the “rites of separation, the margin (*limen*) and re-aggregation” (Turner, *On the Edge* 158). The exploits fit within the paradigm of initiatory rites as detailed by Mircea Eliade in

²⁶⁶ The Gūr (‘onager’) used to be such a popular prey that Bahrām V, Yazdgird’s son and the fourteenth king of the Sasanian dynasty, becomes known as Bahrām-e Gūr, “inspired by a spectacular hunting feat where he killed a lion and an onager with one arrow, or in later accounts, by his love of hunting wild asses” (Klima, “Bahrām”, Elr).
symbolizing the death of Rustam as an inexperienced boy and his birth as a hero. At the beginning of the ‘Seven Trials’, both Rustam and King Kay Kāvūs find themselves at the threshold of a becoming. While Rustam is described as ‘yet unweaned’ (šīr nākhordeh sir, II. 7: 72), Kay Kāvūs has just taken the reins of power from his father. His transformation is crystallized in his new title, ‘crown-bestower’ (tājbakhsh, II. 28: 375).

Inscribing on the bodies of monsters throughout the ‘Seven Trials’, creates a ‘third space’ which allows Rustam to exercise his auctoritas as the hero-to-be on the Other and eventually translates into a restructuring of the prevailing mappa mundi. While the primary indicator of the imminent transformation that is about to occur is visible in the hero’s ‘dream-like’ state, Ferdowsi presents highly visual images of the geographical shifting that occurs as a result of the trials. The geographical shift in the ‘Third Trial’, is cataclysmic as the dragon once beheaded, covers the entire landscape. Moreover, blood and poison flowing from its body inundate the whole plain giving rise to the overwhelming sense of ‘wonder’ (shigifti, II. 29: 382). The shift in scenery is also quite pronounced in the ‘Seventh Trial’, where, upon the amputation of the White Dīv at the hands of Rustam, the earth turns into mud with the monster’s blood: “Each strained at the Other’s skin, this one at that one’s the entire earth turned to mud with blood” (II. 42: 575). The dénouement of the single combat takes place once Rustam targets the centre of the demonic body to extract the liver whose dripping blood will cure the blinded eyes of the Iranian king, Kay Kāvūs:

He plunged the dagger and carved out his heart
extracting the liver from that darkened body (tan)

267 For further details, refer, for example, to the following: Mircea Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1958): ix–xv.
268 همی‌پوست کد این از آن، آن ازین همه گل شد از خون سراسر زمین.
the entire cave became (covered with) the slain body (*tan*)

the entire world had become like a sea of blood (II. 43: 581–82)  

Going back to the interrelationship of sociogony and dismemberment, it is important to note that the centrality of the liver allows for its association, in terms of body politic, with the king, who also holds the central position in the community.\(^{270}\) In addition, both in Eastern and Western medicine of the Middle Ages, the liver was associated with the natural instincts, albeit in differing ways. For, while according to ninth-century Arab scholar, Hunayn ibn Ishāq, the liver was the seat of the natural spirit, the basest of the tripartite spiritual system also including vital and psychic spirits (cf. 2), Isidore believed that ‘the liver is the seat of voluptuousness and concupiscence’ (*in iecore autem consistit voluptas et concupiscentia*, Bk.11: 125). \(^{271}\)

While the function of dismemberment has been discussed in cosmogony and sociogony, the role of language is not to be neglected. As Rustam and the dragon battle it out, they not only roar at each other, but also challenge each other verbally as each asks the other’s name.\(^{272}\) The identity of the self hinges on the existence of the other and this is especially visible under circumstances when the Self is consolidating itself in a new form. The zone in which Rustam and the dragon engage in verbal saber-rattling proves to be one of fluidity as is identity itself, which far from being a totalizing, homogenizing entity, undergoes constant becoming.

\(^{269}\) Recently Werner Sundermann has drawn plausible parallels between the *Book of Tobit* in the Bible and Rustam’s ‘Seventh Trial’, as he compares the demon Asmodaios with the Avestan dīv of Wrath, Aeshma and points out the remedial powers of the liver of an assailant in curing the blindness of the two central figures in the *Book of Tobit* and *The Shahnameh*, the father and the king, respectively. For further details, see: “Zoroastrian Motifs in Non-Zoroastrian Traditions”, *JRAS* 18 (2008): 155–65.

\(^{270}\) Isidore goes on to highlight the instrumentality of the liver in our capacity to love: ‘For, we laugh with our spleen, get angry with our gall, know with our heart and love with our liver’ (*nam splene ridemus, felle irascimur, corde sapimus, iecore amamus*, Bk.11: 127).

\(^{271}\) Significantly, of the many titles attributed to the *pahlavān*, a considerable number are related to his association with a good-name including *nām-ju, nām-war, nām-bardār, nām-dār* and *nām-āwar*, the first of which signifies ‘the seeker of a good name’ and the rest, ‘possessor/carrier of a good name’ (Lowen 57).
claims that the entire plain belongs to it along with the sky above it (cf. II. 28: 369) realizes that its hold on that territory is far from inviolable as it succumbs to blows inflicted upon it by Rustam and his horse, Rakhsh. Likewise, Rustam realizes that his conquest of the monstrous body does not translate into absolute victory as the entire plain fills up with the dragon’s venomous blood. The space in which the ‘Third Trial’ transpires bears the hallmarks of the ‘third space’ of énonciation, which Homi K. Bhabha sees as “accompanying the ‘assimilation of contraries’ and creating that occult instability which presages powerful cultural changes” (38). The ‘assimilation of contraries’ becomes concretized in the stains of the dragon’s venomous blood on Rustam’s body. True that Rustam performs ablution as he plunges into water to wash head and body with the Creator in mind (line 383), yet, the monster leaves an indelible trace, an internalized stain that cannot be washed away. The coincidentia oppositorum that occurs in the ‘third space’, sheds light on the fluidity of énonciation and the pointlessness of attempts made at homogenizing the narrative of a nation. Though epics are aimed at freezing these narratives in time, the volatility of historiae manifests itself in the third spaces emerging in the midst of single combats and their aftermaths. Upon the dragon-fight, not only has the arena of combat undergone tremendous change, but so has Rustam himself.

Aside from a territorial shift, the combat between Rustam and the dragon is significant for its inscriptive quality embedded within language, as the two parties struggle to cross out the adversary’s name and replace it with their own. The erasure of the other party’s name is, however, never complete, as the other ends up being subsumed and ‘sublated’ by victor. The tug of war between Rustam and the dragon is much about names as it is about territoriality:

He (Rustam) roared in the manner of a vernal cloud
as he filled the earth with the fire of warfare

Thereupon the dragon said: Utter your name

Hence you shall not see the world to your liking

You ought not to find your soul

liberated from the dark body while nameless

Thus said the wild male dragon

no one is able to escape my clasp

The entire plain is my territory

its lofty firmament is unto me

The eagle dare not raise its head to fly

the star dreams not of its earth

Having said that, he asked: What is your name?

For she who gave birth to you, will be weeping

He responded thus, (saying): I am Rustam

From the stock of Dastān and Sām and Nayyer (II. 28: 366–72)²⁷³

It is interesting to note that in countering the dragon, Rustam mentions the name of his father and forefathers. It is as if by evoking the name of his ancestors, he is summoning them on the battlefield in his fight against the monster. Additionally, by naming his forefathers, Rustam is...
bringing home his rootedness in time and his incorporation of the powers lying latent in all those (hyper-)masculine names. Rustam’s articulation of a list of his patrilineal ancestors also takes place as a counterattack on the dragon who targets his mother in their verbal tug of war.

Rustam’s encroachment on the tabooed territory of the dragon is what instigates the hand-to-hand fight between the two in the first place. That the battle over supremacy of names is brought up in the midst of their combat comes as no surprise given the close association existing between names and places. History has it that emperors tended to name the lands conquered by them after themselves as the examples of Rome, which takes its name from its legendary founder, Romulus and Alexandria, which takes its name from Alexander III, testify. The rationale behind such namings lies in the longevity of name over body.  

The erasure of the other’s name is never complete, even in cases leading to the annihilation of the other’s body. In this particular episode in The Shahnameh, which constitutes the third of Rustam’s ‘Seven Trials’, the dismemberment of the dragon leads to a drastic change of landscape as the earth disappears underneath the monstrous corpus. As the surrounding landscape gives way to the massive bodyscape of draconitas, Rustam is overwhelmed by ‘wonder’ (shigiftī) once he sees the entire plain covered with the dragon’s venemous blood:

He (Rustam) used his blade to separate the dragon’s head from (his) body

Poison spurted out from (the dragon’s) side as if it were a river

The earth disappeared beneath its body

a river of blood sprung from his side

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274 The Aeneid, for example, offers an interesting example of the significance attached to the name as it relates how the helmsman Palinarus who is aimlessly wandering in the Afterworld when Aeneas meets him while on his catabasis, is comforted when he hears that a tomb will eventually be built in his honour in the wake of heavenly portents and ‘rejoices in the land bearing his name’ (gaudet cognomine terrae, Bk.VI: 383).
as Rustam looked upon that angry dragon
he gave out a loud cry
beneath him he saw entirely the whole plain
the blood and poison flowing from the dark earth
frightened and stood stricken with wonder
he repeated the Lord’s ‘name’ (nām) many times
He went towards the water and washed his head and body
he sought the world only within the worldholder’s power (II: 28–29, 378–83)\(^{275}\)

The *trace* of the Other’s name has been concretized in the flowing blood and change in
landscape and it only takes the most supreme name, the name of the Lord (line 382) to erase that
of the dragon. Rustam then goes on to wash himself so as to wipe off any tokens of that *trace*
(line 383). There is no full erasure of the traces and although Rustam succeeds in ridding himself
of exterior signs of the combat, he internalizes the *draconitas* in him as he goes on to fight off
the witch in disguise of the ‘Fourth Trial,’ where it is again the name of ‘God’ (yazdān) that
saves the hero from destruction (II.31: 412). Prior to his fatal encounter with Isfandiyār, Rustam
fears that his name will be tainted regardless of the outcome: whether he is killed at the hands of
a young man (V. 361: 824–25) or kills the young prince (828–30). The significance of the name
of God is stressed in *The Shahnameh* from the beginning, as Ferdowsi opens up his prologue, ‘in
the name of the god of wisdom and soul’.

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\(^{275}\) فروریخت چون رود زهر از برش
یکی چشمه ی خون ازو بردمید
نگه کرد، برزید یکی تزئم
روان خون و زهر از بر تیره خانک
و قراوان همی نامزدان بخواند
جهان جز به زور جهانیان نجست

بند بُنگ و انداخت از تن سرُن
زمین ند به زیر تنش نا پید
چو رسم بدان ازدهای دزم
بیابان همه زیر او اید یاک
بترسید و زان در شگفتی بماند
به آب اندر آمد سر و تن شست
The importance of *nām* (نام), as it becomes obvious, goes beyond being a vocal sign designating animate or inanimate objects to encompass their essence and being. Gottfried has a similar interplay between his protagonist, Tristan and the talking giant, Urgan, in which the two fight for the supremacy of their names.

Tristan’s confrontation is as much about name as Rustam’s combat against the dragon. Similarly, the verbal tug over name in the Petiticreiu episode between Tristan and the giant is more about standing one’s ground against the other:

«vriunt, ich bin Tristan genant. weistû's nu wol, nu vürhte ich dine stange unde dich niht eine halbe bône. von diu sô var vil schöne und wizze et waerliche daz: dîn roup enkumet niht vürbaz, als verre als ich'z erweren kan.»

«jâ» sprach der rise «hêr Tristan, ir waenet haben bestanden Môrolden von Irlanden, mit dem ir iuwer vehte mit grôzem unrehte umbe niht zesamene truoget und in durch hôhvart sluoget. ouch enist ez niht umbe mich gewant als umbe jenen von Irlant, den ir mit schalle an kâmet und ime die schoenen nâmet, die blüejenden Isolde, die er bereden wolde. nein nein, diu rivâge ist mîn hûs und heize ich Urgân li vilûs. wol balde von der strâzen!»

[‘My friend, my name is Tristan’, answered the man on the horse. ‘Believe me, I am not in the least bit afraid of you or your pole, so be off with you! And take my word for it that your plunder will not get any farther, so far as I can prevent it!’ — ‘Oh yes, lord Tristan’, rejoined the giant, ‘you plume yourself on having fought Morold of Ireland, with whom
you arranged a combat under no provocation at all, and whom you killed from overweening pride! But I am a different sort of person from the Irishman whose favour you gained with your strumming, and from whom you stole Isolde in the flower of her beauty, though he wished to fight a duel for her. No, no, this riverside is my home and my name is Urgan li vilus! Quick, get out of the way!’

Tristan is instantly identified by his name. The giant who has never laid eyes on him knows who he is dealing with as soon as he hears Tristan’s name. What is also interesting is that the actual story of the single-combat between Tristan and Morold has either got distorted by word of mouth or in the giant’s mind who associates the hero with ‘overweening pride’ (*hôhvart*, line 16002) an attribute that happens to be closely associated with the massive bulk of giants.

The superiority of one name over the other also translates into territorial control, since, as the giant makes it clear, he wants Tristan out of his territory. The association between names and territoriality is also quite clear in *The Shahnameh* where Firaidūn only divides his kingdom amongst his three sons after he figures out their true names by appearing before them disguised as a dragon. Moreover, in *Beowulf*, that the dragon’s barrow’ (*beorges weard*, line 2580b) comes to be named Beowulf’s Barrow (*Biowulfes biorh*, line 2807a), on a mere nominal level, marks Beowulf’s victory over the monster, since he comes to occupy the space that had belonged to the Other.

The interrelationship of words and wars has been stressed since antiquity. Pseudo-Cicero, for instance, compares the arrangement of topics to the arraying of soldiers (cf. *Rhetorica ad Herrenium* III. X: 18) and Abélard in *Historia calamitatum* speaks of exchanging the weapons of dialectics for the trophies of war (57–58). Reference can also be made to Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria* written in the second-century, where the author compares figures of speech to glaring swords (VIII. III: 5) and a parallel has been drawn between fencing and figures of thought (IX. I:

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276 Abélard is comparing the power of swords with that of words, so to speak and opts for the latter.
Of the three poets of the primary works of this study, Gottfried is more likely to have had some familiarity with these references. The logocentricity of the images of ‘incorporation’ in *Tristan*, to be discussed in the upcoming chapter, can be sought in Gottfried’s predilection for the ‘Word’.

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277 I owe knowledge of these references to my supervisor, Prof. Jill Ross.
Chapter 4: Incorporation

In the final chapter, I will explore the theme of incorporation in its various ramifications in the three poems of this study. It is my contention that the entanglement of heroic and monstrous bodies, which as demonstrated in the previous chapter, is potentially followed by the dismemberment of one body at the hands of another, ends in acts of incorporation and re-membering. Quite often, dismemberment is only a prelude to a re-membering, a bringing-together of dissected body parts, most often than not, in the form of incorporation. In fact, examples of the reassembling of dismembered bodies abounding in mythology, manifest how destruction gives way to construction and how the cycles of life and death are closely intertwined.278

Stemming from the Latin verb *incorporare*, ‘incorporation’ has come to signify the act of taking into the body an element from the outside which ends up becoming part of the self. Yet, the use of *incorporare* in Latin texts can semantically range from figurative assimilation to the state of being incarnate. For example, in the *Decretalium Compilatio* of Gregory IX, the Church has metaphorically been delineated as a body which has the potential of saving a heretic who has been ‘incorporated’ (*incorporatus*) and ‘readmitted’ (*redintegratus*) by it (Bk V. VII: 3).279 In a much earlier usage of *incorporare* by Prudentius, however, the term is simply synonymous with having a body.280 Significantly, Prudentius’s use of the past participle of the verb indicates the

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278 For example, the re-collection of dismembered limbs takes place upon the *sparagmos* of the hunter Actaeon and Dionysus Zagreus in Greek mythology as well as the Egyptian god, Osiris.
279 Firmissime tene et nullatenus dubites, omnem haereticum, vel schismaticum, cum diabo et angelis eius aeterni ignis incendio participandum, nisi ante finem vitae, catholicae fuerit incorporatus et redintegratus ecclesiae ("Most firmly believe and in no way doubt, that every heretic or schismatic will share in the conflagration of the eternal fire, with the devil and his messengers, unless before the end of his life, he be incorporated and readmitted into the Catholic church...")
280 O sola magnarum urbium maior Bethlem, cui contigit ducum salutis caelitus incorporatum gignere.
climactic moment of incarnation of the Word as flesh. Regardless of being situated within a sacred or mundane context, the term ‘incorporate’ continues to signal a major transformation despite the many semantic ambiguities surrounding it. Notwithstanding its many ramifications, ‘incorporation’ contains a sense of ‘admitting into the body’ an element from the outside, which is predicated upon both the ‘incarnate’ nature of the body and the fluidity of bodily boundaries, a characteristic especially dependent upon the existence of orifices.

In the course of this chapter, it will become clear that while *Beowulf* and *The Shahnameh* deal with bodily consumption, *Tristan’s* primary concern is more with *ruminatio*, in its double sense of consumption and contemplation. In both *Beowulf* and *The Shahnameh*, eating and drinking take on particular significance, especially within the context of the gluttony of some of the characters and the coincidence of feasting and fighting. However, in *Tristan*, the communal aspect of consumption is presented in a textual image evocative of the Eucharist, implying a subsequent inner transformation, also manifest in the effects of the love-potion. The interconnectedness of consumption and transformation is also evident in *The Shahnameh* where the gradual change in the dietary habits of Zahhāk leads to his metamorphosis into a three-headed dragon-king.

Also of significance is the interrelatedness of ‘fighting’ and ‘feasting’ in *Beowulf* and *The Shahnameh*. The convergence of *venationes*, shows where animals were hunted by *bestiarii* in the mornings before gladiatorial contests and the *visceratio*, the distribution of meat at a public sacrificial feast (cf. Most 402–3), is replicated in the coincidence of fighting and feasting. Just as images of incorporation during the *venationes* serve to intensify the severity of dismemberment, the communal nature of feasting provides a counter-image to fighting. It is in the course of

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[O Bethlehem, greatest are you of great cities, since to you it has fallen to you to bring forth incarnate, the heavenly leader of salvation] (*Cathemerinon*, XII: 77–80).
commensalities and communal meals that bonds are formed and ties consolidated. It can be argued that the dis-membering of a sacrificial animal leads to further *comitatus* once the members of a *communitas* begin to incorporate the same body as a means of nourishment and by doing so, in a way, become one. That fighting and feasting often go hand-in-hand is evidenced in the banquet that follows Beowulf’s tearing off of Grendel’s arm, or Rustam’s ‘Seven Trials’ (*Haft Khān*) in *The Shahnameh*, which is punctuated by constant feasting, an element which comes to the fore in the *double-entendre* of the term ‘khān’ (خوان) signifying both ‘station’ and ‘feast’. No wonder that when Beowulf, along with fourteen Geatish warriors, lands on Danish territory, he describes his team as ‘companions of Hygelac’s table’ *Higelaces beodgeneatas* (lines 342b–43a).  

The interconnection of fighting and feasting is also implicit in the OE poem *The Battle of Maldon*, where the warrior Ælfwine, in a bid to embolden his comrades, reminds them of times of feasting:

\[Ælfwine þa cwæð he on ellen spræc: \]
\[“Gemunað þa mæla þe we oft æt meodo spræcon, þonne we on bence beot ahofon, hæleð on healle, ymbe heard gewinn: nu mæg cunnian hwa cene sy.” \]

[Ælfwine, then spoke and courageously declared: “Let us remember those conversations that we often carried out over mead, when from our seat we heroes in the hall raised pledges regarding tough fighting: now it can be known who is brave.”]

In *Beowulf*, Wiglaf strikes a similar chord when upon Beowulf’s death, he remembers the promises that were made and the gifts that were given in the course of mead-drinking:

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281 The term *beodgeneat* is more or less synonymous with *heorðgeneatas* (*hearth-companions*) used by Beowulf once when he lands with his group of fourteen men to express their affiliation with Hygelac in saying that they are Hygelac’s ‘table-companions’ (line 343a) and a second time to highlight Heremod’s ill treatment of his people by calling them *beodgeneatas* (*table-companions*, line 1713b).
Ic ðæt mæl geman, þær we medu þegun, þonne we geheton ussum hlaforde in biorsele, ðe us ðas beagas geaf, þæt we him ða guðgetawa gyldan woldon gif him þyslicu þearf gelumpe, helmæs ond heard swæord.

[I remember the time when we drank mead, when in the beer-hall we promised our lord, who gave us these rings that we would repay him for the battle-gear, the helmets and the hard word if such need befell him.]

In *Beowulf*, Hrothgar speaking of the twelve years of affliction he has suffered at the hands of Grendel, tells Beowulf how warriors drunk on beer would gain the audacity to fight Grendel only to be gruesomely slain by him overnight (lines 480–87a). Likewise, in *The Shahnameh*, Rustam is depicted as being intoxicated during many of the combat scenes. What is characteristic of the feastings in *Beowulf* as the above indicates is their coincidence with the exchange of gifts. Gifts carry a weight which surpasses their objective value as they take on a subjective value in embodying the spirit of the giver.282 This characteristic attached to gifts, particularly dominant in traditional communities, enhances the importance of feasting, which usually accompanies gift-giving, since the participants are not only sharing the same meal, but also a part of themselves.283 It is the simultaneous incorporation of the same meal, especially if it happens to constitute the body of a hunted animal, along with the incorporation of an element of the gift-giver, which binds the members of a collective group together. Therefore, it is only natural that at times of

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282 A visible example delineating the value of gifts in *Beowulf*, appears in Beowulf’s depiction of the possible consequences of the marriage of Hrothgar’s daughter, Freawaru with Ingeld, leader of the Heathobards, a tribe which had been at war with the Danes (see lines 2024b–40). As ‘heirlooms of ancestors, hard and ring-adorned’ (*gomelega lafe, heard ond hringmæl*, lines 2036b–37a) now in the hands of the Danes, glisten in the eyes of the Heathobards at the wedding, there is the possibility of renewed animosities.

283 Marcel Mauss in his studies of gift exchanges reaches a similar conclusion in the case of Melanesian and Polynesian peoples, for whom, gifts are “never completely detached from those carrying the exchange. The mutual ties that (these peoples) establish are comparatively indissoluble” (42).
dissent, discord and war, the partakers of a feast should fall back on memories of these alliance-building gatherings.

There are also examples of feastings which fulfill several goals at the same time. One interesting example is the feasting that takes place by Evander and his men in Bk.VIII of *The Aeneid* which not only commemorates Hercules’s victory over the monster Cacus, but also serves as an occasion to build an alliance between the Trojans and the Arcadians in the face of the Rutulians:

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Haec ubi dicta, dapes iubet et sublata reponi 
pocula gramineoque viros locat ipse sedili 
praecipuumque toro et villosi pelle leonis 
accipit Aenean solique invitat acerno.
Tum lecti iuvenes certatim araeque sacerdos 
viscera tosta ferunt taurorum, onerantque canistris 
dona laboratae Cereris, Bacchumque ministrant. 
vescitur Aeneas simul et Troiana iuventus 
perpetui tergo bovis et lustralibus extis.
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[Where with these (words) having been said, he orders the meals and cups already removed to be replaced and he himself seats the men on their grassy seat and as the principal one of his guests, he welcomes Aeneas to the cushion of a shaggy lion’s hide and invites him to a throne of maple wood. Then chosen youths, and the priest of the altar, eagerly carry the roasted flesh of bulls, pile on baskets the fashioned gifts of Ceres, and serve the wine of Bacchus. Aeneas and, at the same time, the youth of Troy feast on the sirloin of an ox and the expiatory entrails.] (lines 175–83)

Evander, though the leader of the Arcadians, is directly involved in preparing for the feast and as Vergil has made clear the youths who carry the dishes are ‘chosen ones’ (*lecti*). In *Beowulf*, it is Weahltheow, the queen herself, who serves as a cup-bearer. Given wine’s association with Bacchus and the Dionysian essence that leads to the removal of inhibitions, its inclusion in festivities is not in the least surprising. Moreover, the distribution of ‘roasted flesh of bulls’ (*viscera tosta taurorum*) as mentioned in line 180 seems to have been a deliberate choice in view
of the bull’s association with masculinity and fertility. Bread, referred to as ‘the fashioned gifts of Ceres’ (dona laboratae Ceres) in line 181 is also distributed amongst the guests, hence, the two components of the Eucharist, one of the most communal acts of sacred feasting, are present at the Arcadians’ feast except that instead of Jesus, the world-redeemer, it is Hercules, the monster-slayer, who is being honoured.

The Mass brings together, in one body, the participants as they consume the same bread and wine representing the flesh and blood of Jesus. The Eucharist has been viewed as a means of bringing about ‘a universal language of religion’ and as a single ritual practice which would succeed in ‘bringing together disparate regions and peoples’. In fact, Gottfried von Strassburg having an image of commensality evocative of the Eucharist in mind, has called upon his readers to partake of his tale of the two lovers, Tristan and Isolde, as they would of bread. Although, here, bread is no longer the body of Jesus, rather the text of Gottfried’s tale, the act of ‘devouring’ the tale, on a figurative level, bears similarities with that of the Eucharist in uniting all partakers in one body/text. The transformative characteristics of the Eucharist have been recorded in a number of vitae and it is expected that the readers undergo inner transformation as

284 Reference can be made to the following Biblical verses: “This is my body which is given to you” (Hoc est corpus meum, quod pro vobis datur, Luke 22:19) as well as “And giving thanks broke and said: Take ye and eat: this is my body which will be delivered for you: this do for the commemoration of me. In like manner also the chalice, after he had supped, saying: This chalice is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of me” (et gratias agens fregit et dixit hoc est corpus meum pro vobis hoc facite in meam commemorationem/ similiter et calicem postquam cenavit dicens hic calix novum testamentum est in meo sanguine hoc facite quotienscumque bibitis in meam commemorationem, 1 Corinthians 11: 24). The concept of the Eucharist is perhaps the most evident in the following verses from the Gospel of Matthew: “And whilst they were at supper, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke: and gave to his disciples, and said: Take ye, and eat. This is my body. And taking his chalice, he gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins” (Caenatibus autem eis, accepit Jesus panem, et benedixit, ac fregit, deditaque discipulis suis, et ait: Accipite, et comedite: hoc est corpus meum. Et accipiens calicem, gratias egit: et dedit illis, dicens: Bibite ex hoc omnes. Hic est enim sanguis meus novi testamenti, qui pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum, 26: 26–28).

285 Miri Rubin has a detailed discussion on the different views surrounding the nature of the Eucharist and attempts made to create a consensus amongst sectors with different, at times, contradictory views on the topic. See: Rubin, Corpus Christi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991): 12–82.
The transformative aspect of incorporation is also present in *The Shahanmeh*, yet in a more concrete sense where the dietary changes of certain characters carry the potential of bringing about metamorphoses. The radical dietary changes enforced by the devil on Zahhāk, for example, render him into the dragon-king and the most notorious cannibal of Iranian folklore. Additionally, it is the replacement of milk by meat in Rustam’s diet, which enables him to grow into his awe-inspiring gigantic stature. However, with a gigantic body comes the problem of sustainability and quite often gluttony.

286 For further reference, read, for example: Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988): 150–86, to see the transformative powers of the Eucharist — regardless of their psychosomatic nature — on a number of women living in the Middle Ages.
Eating is in no way a unitary act and differences have been noted from one mode of incorporation to another, an instance of which appears in the distinctions, though not always quite clear-cut, separating the German verbs *fressen* and *essen* from one another. In contrast to *essen*, *fressen* tends to involve eating without tasting.\(^{287}\) Similarly, the existence of verbs such as *fretan* and *etan* in OE, are indications of the various shadings the act of incorporation can assume. We should however, beware of the blurred boundaries separating some of these terms.

For example, R.I. Page has asserted that *fretan* “implies behaviour that is bestial, unpleasant, evil or improper” (15). However, Hugh Magennis cites an example from the OE poem *Solomon and Saturn II* (*Anglo-Saxon* 75), where a wise man blesses some food that has fallen from his grip (lines 403–5) in which the verb *fretan* (*him sylf friteð: eats it himself*) is used, problematizing the distinction between the two verbs.

Both the mode of consumption and the food incorporated differ case by case. Horror particularly strikes when one man’s food happens to be another man’s body. In fact, both *Beowulf* and *The Shahnameh* feature cannibalism as a concretized form of terror right at the time when the Danish and Iranian nations, respectively, are experiencing prosperity. The Danish king, Hrothgar is celebrating his success in the newly-constructed Heorot, and the Iranian nation is still reaping the benefits of Jamshīd’s lengthy year long golden rule. Grendel and Zahhāk, who both body forth characteristics that render them human, represent the encroachment of peripheral perils at the centre of the community. Their cannibalism is more about disjoining the communities in mind than about satisfying bodily needs. As Peggy Reeves Sanday has observed: “Cannibalism is never just about eating but is primarily a medium for non-gustatory messages — messages having to do with the maintenance, regeneration, and, in some cases, the foundation of

\(^{287}\) See, for example, “*fressen*” in *Deutsche Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm*, which gives details on the semantic nuances of Germanic terms and posits a cruder aspect for the term, in that, while an animal *friszt*, a human *iszt* (‘eats’).
the cultural order” (3). Within a similar context, as I shall argue, Grendel’s cannibalism takes place upon the heels of feasting in *Beowulf*, as a token of revolt against a *communitas* that has failed to recognize him and grant him a status within its centre. The same idea, though not quite explicit in *The Shahnameh*, holds true for Zahhāk, who in being an Arab, is naturally excluded from the privileges that Iranians are entitled to, including the possession of the royal *farr*. In any case, my belief is that the delineation of cannibalism in these contexts hints at man’s innate fear of annihilation, highlighting the significance of building a walled off sphere that would protect humans from the dangers lurking outside, hence, the centrality of a hall.288

4.1. *Beowulf*: Maw of the Monster

In *Beowulf*, the world of the inside embodied in the hall, and that of the outside in which dangers of all sorts loom large, are initially clearly demarcated. Trouble starts when the boundaries of the hall become so permeable as to allow outside forces embodied in monstrous figures to invade it. As Mary Douglas has posited: “The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious” (66). In fact, humans fabricate most of their artifacts in forms that resemble the animate bodies, mostly their own, which operate as corporeal extensions.289 The parallels between ‘Heorot’, literally meaning a ‘hart’, and the body, have already been taken up by Joyce Tally Lionarons: “In his description of Heorot, the *Beowulf*-poet has therefore set up multiple metaphoric correspondences: as a

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288 St. Augustine, for instance, asserts that in cases of cannibalism, the body of the consumed will be resurrected in its original form: “Therefore, that flesh shall be returned to that man in whom it first became human flesh. Indeed, it must be considered as a loan, which like any debt should be returned to the party from whom it was taken” (*Reddetur ergo caro illa homini, in quo esse caro humana primitus coepit. Ab illo quippe altero tamquam mutuo sumpta deputanda est; quae sicut aes alienum e redhibenda est, unde sumpta est, DCD*. Bk. XX: 20). Moreover, the presence of *anthropophagi*, as part of the monstrous races in ancient legends (cf. Friedman 10) is an indication of man’s innate fear of total corporeal annihilation.

building, the hall is symbolic of the world of humanity; as a living being or body, it is symbolic of both the ‘hart’ (OE heorot) its name proclaims it to be and the ‘heart’ (OE heorte) the centre and life-blood of Danish civilization (Bodies 44)."

The notion of Heorot as an organic body is reinforced by its description as being ‘decorated with bones’ (banfæg, line 780a); it has also been assumed that horns (antlers) were fastened to the gables. Another element which enhances Heorot’s similarity to a body is the Beowulf-poet’s mention of the ‘mouth of the building’ (recedes muþan, line 724a). It appears that over the past twelve years since Grendel’s domination over the Danish mead-hall, the site has turned from being a venue of communion, where the Danes would engage in various modes of social exchanges, including gift-exchanges, conversations and drinking, into a digestive tract whose portal is the door to the hall which opens at Grendel’s slightest touch:

Com þa to recede         rinc siðian, 720
dreamum bedæled.         Duru sona onarn,
fyrbendum fæst,         syþðan he hire folmum æthran;
onbræd þa bealohydig,         ða he gebolgen wæs,
recedes muþan

[The man, bereft of joys, made his way to the hall. The door fixed with fire-forged bars quickly sprang open, once he touched it with his hands; intent on evil, swollen with rage, he tore open the mouth of the building.]

The resonant ‘joy’ (dream) during feasting is what had evoked Grendel’s attack on Heorot in the first place (line 88b) as it stands in stark contrast to his own joyless state reflected in the phrase ‘bereft of joy’ (dreamum bedæled, line 721a). The hall is supposed to be the site of feasting and merry-making embodying a state contrary to that of lonesome Grendel, the ‘unhappy man’

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290 For further details on various implications of the hall, see, for example: Klaeber’s Beowulf Fourth Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2008): 119–20, n. 78.
The ‘mouth of the building’ (recedes muþan, line 724a) as the liminal space between the inside world of the hall and the outside world of horror, opens up only to welcome another ‘mouth’: Grendel’s maw. The mouth, incidentally, is one of the bodily apertures, highlighted by Mikhail Bakhtin in his explication of the incomplete, grotesque body, which continues to “transgress its own limits” (Rabelais 26). Significantly, in a sense, given the fact that hardly any time has gone by since the birth of Heorot, one could argue that the Danish mead-hall, similar to Grendel’s body, constitutes the realm of the ‘grotesque’ in being in “transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming” (Bakhtin, Rabelais 24). While the hall is meant to boost the comitatus between the Danish people, once Grendel takes over, he disperses the community by turning the hall into a ‘food-bag’ and a feasting one (Handscio) into the feasted one. By doing so, Grendel forms a mise en abyme, in view of the fact that he uses a glove where he stuffs his human victims, which serves as a middle layer positioned between the larger ‘food-bag’, the hall and his human victim, whose name, Handscio, actually happens to signify ‘glove’.

Heorot is also a microcosm of creation representing a theme that highly resonates in the scop’s song, as he retells the events that took place in the early days of the world (lines 89b–98) accompanied by the banishment of Cain, who is explicitly associated with Grendel (104a–14).

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291 Additionally, the term angenga meaning ‘solitary walker’ is tellingly used to describe Grendel in lines 165a and 449a.

292 The phrase ‘mouth of the door’ (recedes muþan) appears elsewhere in the extant corpus of OE literature, Maxims II, where its significance, in terms of protecting the safety of the society, has been highlighted: ‘God must be in heaven. The judge of deeds. The door must be in the hall, the wide mouth of the building. The boss must be on the shield, firm the protection of the fingers’ (God sceal on heofenum, dæda demend. Duru sceal on healle, rum recedes muð. Rand sceal on scylde, fæst fingra gebeorh, lines 35–38). Furthermore, the fact that the word ‘mouth’ in line 724 is feminine, enhances the arguments made in the first chapter of this study in contrasting the dominance of the male hero/monster over the female ‘other’ in an extensive use of the term encompassing the earth and/or any obstacle in one’s surroundings.

293 Here, there is a parallel between the giant Skrýmir’s glove, part of which, formed a hall in ON mythology and Grendel’s glove, ‘wide and wonderful, made fast with cunning clasps, it was all fashioned with ingenuity, the craft of the devil and with the skins of dragons’ (sid ond syllic, searobendum fæst;/ sio was orðocum eall geygywed / deofles cæftum on dracan fellum, lines 2086–88). For further details, see, for example, Seth Lerer, “Grendel’s Glove”, ELH (1994): 728.
The root-causes to Grendel’s cannibalism can be sought in his explicit affiliation with Cain. Grendel is marked (indicated in his epithet of *mearcstapa*) out of the sphere of humanity and consequently seeks to undo the links that form the texture of the *communitas*. The Vulgate explicitly mentions Cain’s mark, “[…] And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, that whosoever found him should not kill him” ([…] *Posuitque Dominus Cain signum ut non eum interficeret omnis qui invenisset eum*, Gen. 4.15). Additionally, reference has been made to his exile, “And Cain went out from the face of the Lord, and dwelt as a fugitive on the earth, at the east side of Eden” (*egressusque Cain a facie Domini habitavit in terra profugus ad orientalem plagam Eden*, Gen.4.16). The setting of a *signum* and the state of being a *profugus* go hand-in-hand, as the mark sets the bearer apart from the collective body of the community leading to the exile and ultimate settlement in peripheral places of s/he who bears the mark. Once the exile becomes akin to a dismembered limb of the communal body, s/he is bound to rebel and engage in the dismemberment, or even further, in the incorporation of its members. The *Beowulf*-poet’s graphic description of Handscio’s victimization at the hands of Grendel in delineating how the monster bites into the victim’s bone-locks is a concretization of how he has already torn into the heart of the larger collective body of the Danes:

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Ne wæs þæt wyrd þa gen
þæt he ma moste manna cynnes
ðiegean ofer þa niht. Þryðswyð beheold
mæg Higelaces hu se manscæda
under færgripum gefaran wolde.
Ne þæt se aglæca yldan pohte,
ac he gefeng hraðe forman siðe
slæpendne rîc, slat unwearnum,
bat banlocan, blod edrum dranc,
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294 Cain’s state of exile has also been referred to in Gen. 4.12: “[…] a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be upon the earth” (*vagus et profugus eris super terram*).
[It was not his fate again that he might partake more of mankind that night. The mighty man, Hygelac’s relative, beheld how the wicked ravager wanted to proceed with his sudden attack. The fierce assailant did not think to delay it, but quickly grasped, at the first occasion, a sleeping man, tore him apart unrestrainedly, bit into the bone-locks and drank blood from the veins, swallowed sinful morsels. Soon he had eaten the entire lifeless man: feet and hands.]

The fact that Grendel devours every bit of the dead body leaving nothing behind is an indication of his extreme monstrosity. Here, we witness a similarity between Grendel’s appetite and the voracity of the giant of St. Michel in Historia Regnum Britanniae, who in his greed and impatience for food, cannot wait for his meat to be cooked before devouring it. Giants are embodiments of appetite as they see themselves confronted with the need to sustain the massive bulk of flesh that constitutes their body. Grendel’s boundless appetite comes further to light in a comparison of his gluttony with that of other monstrous creatures. As Orchard has noted, for instance, even the dogs which devour “the wicked Jezebel do not consume those extremities (IV, Reg. IX. 35)” (A Companion 141). Nor is he like other monsters who leave a part of their human prey behind, amongst whom, one could mention the donestre of the Wonders of the East, a text in the same codex as Beowulf. Indeed, Grendel leaves no trace of the devoured body behind whereby the victim might be identified. Once within the giant’s maw, it is as if the person had never existed. Grendel’s ravenous appetite, reflected in his gigantic size, knows no bounds as no sooner is he done with Hondscio’s body than he goes on to the next potential prey, who happens to be Beowulf.

295 For an insightful observation of the donestre including their multilinguism and hybridity, see, for example, J.J. Cohen, Of Giants (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999): 1–4.
One of the other significant aspects observed in the above passage (lines 734–45) is the use of the verb *drincan* in its third person singular. The observation made by Magennis sheds further light on its importance:

I referred to two grammatical observations about *drincan* in Old English poetry [...] about the *activity* as opposed to the *act* of drinking. One is that in finite forms *drincan* occurs only in the plural: the sole exception is in reference to Grendel drinking the blood of Handscio (*dranc*). What is important is not that the people in the poetry drink but that they drink together. The second observation is that in finite occurrences the verb is normally used intransitively in the poetry; again Grendel drinking the blood of Hondscio is an exception. (*Anglo-Saxon Appetites* 26)

Drinking is praised as a communal act and takes on monstrous undertones only when performed in isolation — not to mention, if the drink in mind happens to be blood. The consumption of blood has explicitly been banned in the Bible (cf. Lev. 3.17) and Grendel’s violation of this ban is not an isolated case in world literature. A prime example of blood consumption appears in the thirteenth-century German epic *Das Nibelungenlied*, in a scene in which, Hagen, the vassal of the Burgundian King Gunther and the murderer of the latter’s brother-in-law, Siegfried, calls upon the men trapped in a burning hall at the Hunnish court to drink blood to quench their thirst:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Dô sprach von Tronege Hagene:} & \quad \text{<<ir edelen ritter guot,} \\
\text{swen twinge durstes nôt,} & \quad \text{der trinke hie daz bluot.} \\
\text{daz ist in solher hitze} & \quad \text{noch bezzer danne wîn.} \\
\text{Ez enmác an disen ziten} & \quad \text{et nu niht bezzer gesîn (stanza 2114)} 
\end{align*}
\]
[‘You worthy knight,’ cried Hagen, ‘if any of you are plagued with thirst let them drink the 
blood here — in such heat it will be better than wine! In present circumstances it is the 
best that can be done.’]

The monstrosity of Hagen’s suggestion further comes to light when, based on reports, warriors 
actually gained renewed strength upon drinking blood: “their bodies were greatly strengthened 
by it” (dâ gewan vil kreftë ir etešliches lîp, 2117: 3). Blood is closely association with life and 
vitality and its consumption is believed to have brought about a boost of energy. However, blood 
is not only fluid in its essence, but also manifests fluidity in its very signification as becomes 
clear in Isidore’s explication:

It is sanguis while it is in the body, but it is called cruor when it has been poured out. For 
cruor is named from that which, being shed, runs down or from that which has spilled down 
by running. Others, however, interpret cruor as ‘corrupt sanguis’ (sanguinem corruptum), 
which is spilled. Others say sanguis is so named because it is ‘sweet’. But sanguis is not 
whole except in the young. (Bk. XI: I, 14–19) 296

A sense of the abject as well as the Unheimliche tends to be attached to any outpouring of blood, 
since that which was supposed to remain inside has streamed beyond the boundaries into outside 
view. Moreover, with regard to Grendel’s drinking of blood given his earlier association with 
Cain, one is bound to think of the first murder and fratricide in the world in which blood was 
shed for the first time on the earth. Cain had been associated with the earth from the beginning

296 Sanguis autem est dum in corpore est, effusus vero cruor dicitur. Nam cruor vocatus ab eo quod effusus decurrit, 
vel ab eo quod currendo curruat. Alii cruorem interpretantur sanguinem corruptum qui emittitur. Alii aiunt vocatum 
sanguinem quod suavis sit. Sanguis autem non est integer, nisi in iuvenibus.
The distinction between the two kinds of blood becomes blurred if we take into consideration the act of blood- 
letting, also mentioned in Tristan, which was believed to have been a means of boosting health. For further 
reference on the implications and reasons behind medical bloodletting in the Middle Ages, for example, see: Bettina 
through his profession as a farmer, however, upon his murdering of Abel, the earth grants him no peace, in that, it not only banishes him, but also refuses its fruits to him. Grendel, who is paying for the fratricide committed by Cain, is similarly banished from the earth, relegated to one of its infernal corners. As the earth and its human inhabitants continue to push him further along the peripheries, Grendel decides to exact revenge on the earth, by becoming a symbol of anti-creation. His literal incorporation of human life takes place through literal transgression of corporeal boundaries in the form of cannibalism.

Warriors in the hall would engage in beer-drinking, an act which granted them momentary courage to fight Grendel only to end up in the monster’s maw:

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Ful oft gebeotedon                beore druncne
ofer ealowæge                    oretmeegas
hæt hie in beorsele             bidan woldon
Grendes guƿe                    mid gryrum eça.
Đonne wæs þeos medoheal          on morgentid,
drihtsele dreorfaƿ              þonne dæg lɪxte,
eal bencƿelu                    blode bestymed,
heall heorudreøre
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[Very often warriors, drunk with beer, have vowed over an ale-cup, they would wait Grendel’s battle with horrors of the swords. Then in the morning when the day dawned, the mead-hall, the splendid hall, was blood-stained, all the bench-boards soaked with blood, the hall full of sword-gore]

The Danish warriors who had gained added courage by means of drinking, become food and drink to Grendel. The blood of the warriors spilt across the hall is a clear manifestation of the violation of their space of *communitas* and their corporeal boundaries. While it is evident that Grendel has drunk from the blood of his victims (though a more graphic description of this act is only provided in line 742b), it is not quite clear what the warriors had been drinking, as there is simultaneous mention of ‘beer’, ‘ale’ and ‘mead’ in the episode mentioned above. If we were to
accept C. Fell’s explanation of the ‘mead’ being more evocative of a solemn occasion than, for example, ‘ale’, it is only natural to have them drink in the ‘mead-hall’ (*medoheal*) in line 484a.297

As tempting as it is to accept a distinction between ‘mead’ and the other alcoholic drinks mentioned in the corpus of OE poetry, the boundaries separating the variety of alcoholic beverages are not all that clear-cut as is obvious from the lines cited above.298

More than the pure act of drinking however, it is the physical act of eating that tends to be absent in the corpus of OE poetry.299 Evidently, the Anglo-Saxons must have subsisted on food, but refrained from making explicit comments on this topic; perhaps, not only on grounds of religiosity which calls for abstinence, but also because of the violence that accompanies the rending and mastication of food.300 Given the fact that it was civilization that introduced tablemanners, Grendel epitomizes savagery as he rends and tears apart his food with such gusto.

Cannibalism, like eating in general, not only assumes different shadings, but also takes place for a variety of different reasons, protein-deficiency being only one of many.301 It can also be rooted in psychological states or predicated on rituals. Another factor behind cannibalism can be sought in sexuality and the desire (of usually the male) to literally become one with the (often

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297 Fell has the OE poem, *Battle of Maldon* in mind, when she claimed that “It is unthinkable that the men at Maldon should have been urged on to their duty by a reference to what they said over the ale-cups rather than what they *æt meodo spræcon* (line 212)” (80).

298 Another example of the lack distinction between alcoholic drinks in *Beowulf*, is observed in the scene that covers lines 617–24, where, while mention is made of ‘beer-drinking’ (*beorþege*) in line 617b, shortly afterwards, Wealtheow is said to be carrying the ‘mead-cup’ (*medoful*) to Beowulf in line 624b.

299 A major exception is to be observed in *Andreas* (lines 591b–94), where the followers of Christ are said to have received food from him ‘which was most pleasant to them’ (*swa him gemedost wæs*).

300 One can merely point out Ælfric’s *Colloquy* to argue that, if nothing else, bread used to be a staple commodity of the Anglo-Saxon meal: ‘without my skill every table seems empty and without bread every food turns into loathing. I strengthen the heart of men, I empower men and therfore, little children will not humiliate me’ (*buton cræfte minon ælc beod æmtig byþ gesewen, ond buton hlafe ælc mete to wætten byþ gehwyrfed. Ic heortan mannes gestrangie, ic mægen wera ond furþon litlingas nellap forbigean me*) (36–37). The importance of ‘bread’ is such that the title *hlaford* meaning ‘Lord’ is said to have derived from the OE term *hlaef* meaning ‘loaf/bread’ (Hagen, 19). For more on the importance of ‘bread’ amongst the Anglo-Saxons, see, for example: Ann Hagen, *A Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Food Processing and Consumption*. Pinner, England: Anglo-Saxon Books, 1992): 18–20.

female) Other, as is manifest in the Dracula legend. Grendel’s cannibalism, however, is neither sex-driven, as he excludes females from his meals, nor is it rooted in protein-deficiency as it occurs only after he rebels against the human race upon the construction of the hall. The fact that Grendel shows total disrespect for the concept of *wergild* (‘compensation for a man’s life’) along with his aversion to using weapons in combats, is yet another token of his uncivilized and outcast state. As such, it is natural to see him rebel against any sign of conviviality, communality and civilization. Moreover, the communal life, primarily confined to the hall, is “overwhelmingly patriarchal, the role and function of women being defined by reference to the male goals of wariorship and kingship” (Magennis, *Images* 36), hence, Grendel’s preference for men.

It is the *Männerbund*, the congregation of men who form a close bond of *comitatus* that is the prime target of Grendel’s ravenous attacks, although the argument can be made that it is because of their situatedness in the Hall that men, and not women, fall prey to the giant’s attacks. Hrothgar, for example, who is expressly said to have moved his headquarters away from Heorot (see lines 138–43) remains immune to the monster’s repeated onslaughts. Regardless of the *raison d’être* behind the onslaughts on the Danish *Männerbund*, it is worth noting that cannibalism may take place with the aim of consuming “characteristics or the ‘fertile force’ of the other’, or, consumption may break down and destroy characteristics of the other in the self” (Sanday 36). Grendel’s cannibalism is of the second kind as his maw becomes a means of mass destruction aimed at annihilating the other within the self. When drawing a parallel with *Tristan*, we observe a similar, yet, less gruesome, function in the figure of Morold, who robs the

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302 The idea of *Männerbund* was first introduced by ethnologist Heinrich Schurtz in *Alterklassen und Männerbunden* (Berlin, 1902) with regard to initiation rituals in East Africa. The concept has been applied to wider circles to connote a male brotherhood or closed male circle excluding any association with the female population. It is within this broader context that I am using the term.

303 The reason as to why Hrothgar remains unscathed in the course of Grendel’s attack could also be sought in his decision to move away from the heart of the onslaughts in Heorot (see lines 138–43).
Cornish community of thirty noble and able-bodied men — which happens to be the exact number of men consumed by Grendel during his first onslaught on Heorot — each year. Morold’s act, though not literally tantamount to cannibalism, comes very close to it, as he violates the collective body of Cornwall, strips it of a number of essential members, whom he goes on to incorporate into the Irish system. Additionally, it so happens that Zahhāk in *The Shahnameh*, similar to Grendel, targets only male members of the Iranian community, although he devours only their brains, which, dissimilar to the humanoid monster of *Beowulf*, he consumes only after having them cooked. Despite evident differences, in all three examples, the assailant’s body incorporates the body of the Other — either literally or figuratively — with the aim of tearing apart the texture of a communal society, whose primary representatives are embodied in its male members, so is the case with the dragon-king, Zahhāk as we shall see.

4.1. *The Shahnameh: Razm u Bazm*[^304]

As much as the corpus of extant OE literature remains silent about eating, the scenes of feasting that have come down to us from ancient Iran, which Ferdowsi makes use of, make clear mention of eating, although drinking continues to take precedence. Records from Ancient Persia passed down to us indicate that Persians would hold sumptuous feasts in which lots of meat and wine were served.[^305] A well-known example is the manner in which they would celebrate their birthdays, which, Herodotus claims, they distinguished from other days of the year:

[^304]: *Razm u Bazm*, is more or less the Persian equivalent of ‘fighting and feasting’, although, as posited by A.S. Melikian-Chirvani, *bazm* “defies translation into Western languages because the reality it refers to has no equivalent in Western societies. The word describes the hours and even days which were spent drinking wine to the sound of music immediately after meals in the long drawn out affairs that royal receptions were in late Sasanian and early Islamic Iran” (95).

[^305]: Nöldeke has noted the contemporaneity of ancient and Sasanian (226–651) elements in *The Shahnameh*: “The poem does not make any difference between the mythical pre-historic times and the circumstances of the Sasanian period. Ardashir and his family are represented as the legal successors of the first king of the earth, Gayomart” (77, n.32).
A rich Persian on his birthday will have an ox or a horse or a camel or a donkey baked whole in the oven and served up at table, and the poor the some smaller beast. The main dishes at their meals are few, but they have many sorts of dessert, the various courses being served separately. It is this custom that has made them say that the Greeks leave the table hungry, because we never have anything worth mentioning after the first course: they think that if we did, we should go on eating. They are very fond of wine, and no one is allowed to vomit or relieve himself in the presence of another person. (I. 133)

The surviving records on ancient Iranians have to be taken with a grain of salt given that they were registered through the lens of their traditional enemies: the Greeks. However, the overall depiction could hold a degree of accuracy given the wealth and power of the Persian Empire, which must have called for sumptuous celebrations amongst the upper class. Nöldeke has wisely noted how Islam failed to curb the Iranians’ ‘drinking-bouts’, and believes that the existence of incidents of ‘pledging and drinking’ in Persian poetry is an indication that such practices were observed up to Ferdowsi’s time (78–79, n.32). 306 Although Ferdowsi appears to advocate the consumption of ‘wine’ in moderation, Rustam takes eating and drinking overboard and is marked by his drinking habits. 307

Unlike Beowulf, the safety of the hall is not an indispensable element of feasting in The Shahnameh. The grandeur of a large number of feasts largely comes to the fore when they are

306 Nöldeke has also disapprovingly noted the depiction of lengthy periods of drinking in Asad Gorgani’s eleventh-century love-story, Vīs va Ramīn. Moreover, the drinking of ‘date wine’ (nabīd) by Iranians mentioned by Ferdowsi repeatedly throughout The Shahnameh, for example, can be traced back to centuries ago, as Xenophon mentions it as part of his experiences in 401–400 BC: “[...] and their provisions, both wine made from the date tree and bread made of millet” (Anabasis I: 5). Mention of ‘date wine’ comes elsewhere in Xenophon’s Anabasis (See, for example, II: 3).

307 For example In the episode of Bahram Gur, Ferdowsi elaborates on the good and bad aspects of drinking only to conclude that each person should drink as much wine that will allow him to look at his origins and his destination/should wine lead you towards happiness, make sure that your body should suffer no harm” (VI. 445: 353–54).
held outdoors where the participants can roam around with their horses and have an entire plain filled with their troops. Even in a grand ceremony held to celebrate the return of Sām, Rustam’s grandfather, to whom he is said to bear a striking resemblance (I. 271: 1520), most of the pomp unfolds outside the palace, which the participants enter only after Rustam dismounts his elephant and is kissed by his grandfather:

Once informed, Zāl strapped drums (onto elephants)

the entire earth turned ebony-coloured beneath the cavalry’s hooves

He and the Mihrāb, the brave governor of Kabul

set out as the welcoming parties

a pebble was thrown into a cup and a loud call was sounded out

from each of the parties, a great cry went out

The valley was filled with troops from mount to mount

the earth grew pitch-black and the air dark (with dust)

The neighing of the horses and cries of the elephants

all that sound could be heard for five miles   (I. 271: 1526–30)\(^{308}\)

Nature, as we can see above, plays a much more prominent role in enhancing the pomp and pageantry of the Ferdowsian feasts. In fact, the majority of the feasts described in *The Shahnameh* have as their setting, Mother Nature, who sets the tone and frames the scene. The celebrants go on to leave their marks on the earth as they dig the hooves of the cavalry’s horses

\(^{308}\) زشکر زمین گشت چون ایتوب
بپرهش شدن را نهادن را
برامز هز دو سیس دار و رو
زمین فیگور و هوی او لازورد
خروشیدن نازی اسبان و پیل
جو زال اگهی یافت برست کوس
خود استور ماوراد و کاول خداو
بزد مره در جام و برعشت خو
پیکشکر کوهنا کوه مرد
همی رفت اورز تا پنج میل
into the ground, and give rise to lots of din and dust. It is as if nature were itself an active participant in these festivities. What is also conspicuous in most of the feasts is the abundance of auditory stimulants, ranging from the neighing of the horses to the beating of drums. Drinking is an indispensable part of the feasts, though, unlike what was observed in Anglo-Saxon poetry, food is also present on most festive occasions.\(^\text{309}\) Also intriguing is the dominance of the non-hierarchical ‘carnivalesque’, reinforced by the presence of Mihrāb, who, before being Zāl’s father-in-law, in being an Afghan and a descendent of Zahhāk, is a clear embodiment of the Other.

In any case, the feasts of *The Shahnameh* are more about reinforcing the status quo than creating a ‘second life’ as the ‘feast of the fools’ (*festa stultorum*) was known for (cf. Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 5–6). There are rare moments of suspension of social hierarchies such as Mihrāb’s inclusion in the festivities. The feasts showcased throughout the poem, are mostly aimed at celebrating particular events, for example, Zāl and Rūdābeh’s wedding or the strengthening of bonds amongst members of the *communitas*. However, at times they mark the beginning of fighting as is the case with the three-day feast held prior to the war launched for the liberation of Iranian hero, Bīzhan (III. 355–56: 697–700).

A distinctive feature of feasting in *The Shahnameh* is its frequent juxtaposition with fighting.\(^\text{310}\) The relationship between ‘fighting’ (*razm*) and ‘feasting’ (*bazm*) in Ferdowsi’s poem as compared to that of *Beowulf* is that in the former they virtually co-exist, while, in the latter, one gives way to the other despite the tangible tension sensed at the heart of feasting.\(^\text{311}\) Also

\(^{309}\) Wine-consumption is said to be a substitution for blood-consumption during an early Iranian ritual, presumably later banned by Zoroaster, where a bull was sacrificed and its blood consumed (cf. Melikian, 101, n.16).

\(^{310}\) In the Western canon, a prominent example of the juxtaposition of fighting and feasting is clearly manifest in *Das Nibelungenlied* where the festivities in the Hunnish Hall turn into a carnivalesque of carnage once men in the hall start drinking blood instead of wine.

\(^{311}\) Before *Beowulf*’s groundbreaking encounter with Grendel, the Danes and the Geatish men commune in a feast (lines 491–98). Later, to celebrate *Beowulf*’s victory over the giant they hold the most elaborate feast of the poem
present in Ferdowsian feasts, is a pronounced tone of pageantry, not so palpably felt in the heroic poems of the West. Moreover, as observed in the above example, the pageantry has the tendency of taking on military overtones. Another example of the elaborate pomp and ceremony of feasting bordering on military rehearsal in The Shahnameh comes to the fore in the course of the preparations for Zāl and Rūdābeh’s wedding:

He [Sām] ordered that bells and Indian chimes be sounded out and tents opened up

He sent out a horse and a brave warrior to head out for the lion-like Mihrāb Announce the arrival of the general the super-brave Zāl, the elephants and the troops.

Mihrāb sounded the windpipes and the drums arranged his army so that it glittered like a rooster’s eye.

With the much lively elephants and musicians it seemed as if the whole earth were paradise from coast to coast.

Various were the colours of the banners: how red, how white, how yellow and purple.

What a melody came out of the windpipe and the harp; the loud sound of bugles and ringing of bells.

Methought it was the final day

(lines 1010–1168) which includes an interlude on the motifs of gift-giving and a commemoration of Danish princess, Hildeburh, who acts as peace-pledge between the Danes and the Frisian enemies, but fails. Lines 1017b–19 of Beowulf clearly indicate the lurking dangers of the hall: “Heorot innan wæs/ freondum afylled; nalles facenstafas/ þeodscyldingas þenden fremedon” (Within, Heorot was filled with friends; not at all did the nation of Scyldings at that time practice treachery).
the Day of Judgment despite the music (I. 260–61: 1385–92)\textsuperscript{312}

The purpose behind such muscle-flexing military displays is to ward off any possible danger from the side of their enemies, especially the dīvs and the Turks. It is, therefore, only natural to sense an element of hyperbole in these examples. Poetic overstatement reaches a climax in his comparison of that day to the ‘Day of Judgment’ (\textit{rūz-i rastākhīz}). The pomp and ceremony of the day is, figuratively-speaking, so earth-shattering that even the dead come back to life. The outside world serves the poet’s purpose better than the interior of the hall as it facilitates the display of the accoutrement so necessary for the muscle-flexing of the Iranian army before Mihrāb. In fact, the term \textit{rastākhīz} evokes a significant concept in Zoroastrianism where it is believed that the body will be resurrected in a form referred to as ‘future body’ (Pahl. \textit{tan- i pasīn}).\textsuperscript{313} By evoking ‘Judgment Day’, Ferdowsi is playing up the capacity of the Iranian troops and heroes in depicting their mustering of troops and holding of massive ceremonies.

Framing feasts within natural surroundings is not peculiar to Ferdowsi as Gottfried’s \textit{Tristan}, for example, testifies. Indeed, Gottfried has King Mark’s festivity framed by Mother Nature as he juxtaposes the regulated interior of the court with its uncultivated natural surroundings. Having drawn attention to Arthur’s association with May, the poet has Mark celebrate the

\textsuperscript{312} For further information on the concept of resurrection in Zoroastrianism, see, for example: Mary Boyce, \textit{A History of Zoroastrianism} 234; 327. The concept of ‘\textit{tan- i pasīn}’ is particularly intriguing given the Zoroastrians’ belief in the exposure of dead bodies in open tombs, called \textit{dakhmas}, to birds and rain-water, with the aim that the flesh should be disposed of more quickly (See: Boyce, \textit{A History}, 325–30).
beginning of summer over the month of May. Horst Wenzel sees ‘an artificial restoration of the prelapsarian world’ as man and nature live in harmony (405):

Charming, gentle spring had busied itself with a sweet assiduousness. Of little wood-birds — which have to delight the ears — flowers, grasses, leaves, and blossoms and all that soothes the eye and gladdens noble hearts, that summer-meadow was full. Of all that May should bring, one found whatever one wishes there: shade together with sunshine, lime-trees by the fountain, tender, gentle breezes regaling Mark’s company each according to its nature. The bright flowers smiled up from the dewy grass. May’s friend the greensward had donned a summer smock of flowers so lovely that they shone again from the dear guests’ eyes.

Feasting does not necessarily have to be communal in The Shahnameh as the ‘Seven Trials’ of both Rustam and Isfandiyār (Haft Khān) indicate. Both of the episodes are foregrounded in scenes of eating as Ferdowsi plays on the Persian term khān connoting both a ‘table-cloth’ and a

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314 One clear reference to Arthur’s association with May, appears in Wolfram von Eschenbach’s Parzival, where Arthur is referred to as ‘der meienbaere man’ (281, 16).
‘stage’ or ‘station’ (of life), depending on its orthography. The ambiguity of ‘khān’ seems to have been deliberate given the embeddedness of feasting within episodes of fighting. While Rustam embarks upon his ‘Seven Trials’ after hunting an onager, which he shortly roasts its entire body on the fire, the poet interjects by saying: ‘He ate and threw the bones away: This was the pot and this, the ‘table-cloth’ (خوان) (II. 22: 284). Isfandiyār’s ‘Seven Trials’ start on a similar note, although this time it is the ‘story-teller’ who is the one to set the table-cloth: “Once the informed story-teller set his ‘table-cloth’ (khān), he began to relate the story of the ‘Seven Trials’ (haust khān)” (V. 221:21). The fourth khān of both of the Haft Khān is also marked by feasting as both heroes, Rustam and Isfandiyār, wish to celebrate their victory over the dragons of the previous trial as they dismount from their steeds to enjoy a cup of wine. Their desire for feasting is further fueled when a witch in the guise of a beautiful maiden makes her appearance in the ‘Fourth Trial’. Interestingly in Rustam’s case, he, unknowingly, ends up disrupting a feast held by the witches themselves. The ‘feast’ is juxtaposed against the ‘anti-feast’, just as Heorot the ‘beer-hall’ (beorsele, lines 482a; 492a), has been contrasted with the infernal mere housing Grendel and his mother, referred to as ‘the hostile hall’ (niðsele, line 1513a) in Beowulf. All the elements of a common feast are present at the ‘anti-feast’ of the witches, as Rustam catches sight of a golden cup filled with wine, a roasted chicken, bread, a saltcellar, candied fruit as well as a lute near the glittering stream (II. 29: 391–96). Rustam even goes on to liken the scene to a ‘banquet hall’ (khāneh-yi sur) in line 396. However, Ferdowsi’s use of the term razm (رزم) (‘combat’; ‘fight’) in line 400 is a reminder that this bazm (بازم) (‘feast’) will not last forever: “All this fight (razm) with the lion and with the dragon; there is no freedom from the dīvs nor the

315 While خان generally means ‘station’ or ‘home’, خوان means ‘table-cloth’. However, according to the Dehkhoda Dictionary، خوان خان can also mean خوان خان. See, "خان، Dehkhoda Dictionary. 316 For a comparison of the ‘Seven Trials’ of Rustam and Isfandiyār، see، for example: Olga Davidson، “Haft Khān”， Elr.
desert”.

Sure enough, the bazm does not last long once the witch makes her appearance allowing the razm to continue as Rustam fights her with (s)words.

Although the meal of the witches seems absolutely benign, in *The Shahnameh*, food does, occasionally, have the capacity to corrupt. The importance Ferdowsi attaches to food was documented in the works of scientists of antiquity such as Aristotle, whose influence on the Islamic world has been attested. Philip Reynolds in his study of food and the body in the Middle Ages, clarifies Aristotelian beliefs on this matter:

Prior to its digestion and assimilation as flesh, food is potentially flesh […]. Food in growth becomes a certain quantity of flesh […]. The conversion of food is not strictly generation because the process does not result in a new being but rather in the enlargement of an existing being. If food became flesh on its own, this change would indeed be generation […]. But in growth, food is assimilated to an existing member. There is transformation but not generation (coming-to-be) since no new form is educed from matter; rather, the existing form claims fresh matter. (78–79)

According to Aristotle, in the process of growth, while matter is in constant flux in the course of egress and ingress, additions are made to the “form”: “It is in this way that the matter of the flesh

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317 In Aremenian, *bazmoc’k’* to ‘recline,’ meant a banqueting-couch which the nobility and the king used during the court feasting. The courtiers would recline on cushions (*barj*), whose number signified their importance in the court (Daryaee, *Sasanian* 34).

318 Aristotle has been especially influential on a Persian scholar of the eleventh century, Abu Rayhān Muhammad al-Biruni and later on, on twelfth-century thinker Ibn Roshd, known to the West, as Averroes.

319 The commentaries of the eleventh-century Persian physician, Avicenna and twelfth-century Arab-Andalusian scholar Averroes on the works of Aristotle, most likely by recourse to Arabic translations of the Greek philosopher of antiquity, are an indication that the Islamic world was exposed to the thoughts of ancient thinkers of the West.
grows; something flows out and something flows in, but there is not an addition made to every particle of it, but to every part of its figure and ‘form’” (De generatione 321b28).\textsuperscript{320} The Avesta, however, goes even further in that food becomes capable of inducing transformation in the partaker and this, as shall be discussed shortly, finds an echo in The Shahnameh.

One of the most prominent examples of the transformative impacts of incorporation is to be sought in the ecstasy brought on by the use of haoma, a plant which when crushed, produced a substance that when mixed with water or milk, became a powerful stimulant. The nature of the original plant has been much disputed, though not its great powers. The Avesta stipulates how this plant endowed its recipient with triumph: “Haoma grows while he is praised, and the man who praises him is therewith more victorious. The lightest pressure of thee, Haoma, thy feeblest praise, the slightest tasting of thy juice, avails to the thousand-smiting of the Daevas” (Y. 1.6).\textsuperscript{321} Moreover, the effects of the haoma were believed to carry to the next generation, so much so that Y. 9 (known as Hom Yasht) has listed the names of the first men who squeezed its juice and the names of the distinguished sons they have had as a result.\textsuperscript{322} There are also instances where food can be a means of contamination of the body at the hands of the dīvs in The Avesta. An example appears in The GBd where the demon Uda is said to strike at anyone who eats at meals making him ‘evacuate’ and ‘make water,’ thereby failing to ‘attain the best existence’ (XXVIII: 19).

Additionally, the power of the demons is enhanced when the first human pair, Mashi and Mashyāneh consume the milk of a white-haired goat (GBd XV: 10–12) and even further when they eat the meat of a roasted sheep (XV: 13–18). Later on, in reference to the first human

\textsuperscript{320} For further details, see, for example: Philip Lyndon Reynolds, Food and the Body: Some Peculiar Questions in High Medieval Theology. Leiden: Brill, 1999: 69–104.
\textsuperscript{321} According to The Avesta, the haoma was also believed to grant its recipient immortality (GBd. XXVII: 4). It is to be noted that hom becomes a descendent of Firaidūn and a character in The Shahnameh who helps capture Iran’s arch-enemy, Afrā Siyāb (cf. IV. 316 –21, 2272 –347).
\textsuperscript{322} The first was Vivanghvant whose son was Yima; the second was Athwy, the father of Thraetona (Firaidūn in The Shahnameh); the third was Thrita, who sired the dragon-slaying Keresapa and the fourth was Pourushaspa, Zoroaster’s father.
couple, appetite is attributed to the demon Āz (XXX: 2) and it is said that while Mashi and Mashyāneh first fed upon water, then plants, then milk and then meat, this dietary gradation shall be reversed as they proceed towards their death (XXX: 1; 3).

One of the most intriguing metamorphoses in *The Shahnameh* is brought about in the figure of Zahhāk, who becomes fully corrupt when a dīv in the guise of the cook begins to feed him with meat. His trend of corruption gains full meaning within the context of the Avestan allusions, mentioned above, to the negative impacts of meat-consumption. As Omidsalar has noted, Zahhāk’s transformation is aligned with the gradual change in his dietary habits, as he moves from egg-yolks to game hens then chicken and lamb, later on, veal and finally human brains (*Oedipus* 180). His leap from *humanitas* to *draconitas* is finalized when he allows a dīv disguised as a cook to kiss both his shoulders from which two man-eating snakes spring. What is particularly intriguing is that the snakes sustain themselves on human ‘brains’, leading us to believe that Zahhāk’s change of diet has more to do with colonialist than with culinary aspects. Just as in *Tristan*, Morold’s forced annual transfer of thirty able-bodied Cornish young men is a threat to Cornwall’s *communitas*, Zahhāk’s dietary habitss, target the fabric of Iranian nationhood, traditionally, embodied in its male figures.

Likewise, Rustam’s transformation from the realm of *humanitas* to that of the *gigantes* involves a change of diet from milk to meat: “Ten wet nurses provided Rustam with milk, as a man’s strength comes from milk. Once he was weaned from milk, he began to have edibles and grew in size owing to meat and fillets. It took five carcasses to make him food, people were

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323 The demon Āz has earlier been described as he who swallows everything and “when through destitution, nothing has come, he eats himself” (*GBd*. XXVIII: 27). Āz means ‘greediness’ both in Pahl. and Modern Persian.

324 Omidsalar also makes a convincing point that Zahhāk’s father, bears the name, Mardās (literally, ‘man-eater’), which was originally meant for Zahhāk and only got transposed to his father after the son began to acquire more and more human characteristics in the course of generations. See: Mahmoud Omidsalar, “Zahhāk pesar-i mardās yā Zahhāk-i ādamkhār?” [*Zahhāk Son of Mardās or Zahhāk the Cannibal?*] *Iran Nameh* 2 (1984): 329–39.
stunned by such nourishment” (I. 270: 1515–18). Given Rustam’s size even as an infant and the size he has to reach to acquire the body worthy of carrying the weight of an entire nation, it is only natural for him to consume so much food. In fact, at one point he rebukes Isfandiyār’s son, Bahman for not eating enough food.

Rustam laughed and said unto him:

O king, it is for food that the seats have been held
now that you are having food in such manner at the tablecloth (khān)

how are you to go off to perform anything close to the ‘Seven Trials’ (haft khān)?

O prince, how are you to throw javelins on the battleground

if this is the way you decide to eat? (V. 322: 364–67)

Rustam’s remarks are to the point since as C.M. Bowra has posited: “Heroes have healthy appetites as befit their ebullient vitality and their life of action” (Heroic 197). This is especially true of Rustam who is depicted as eating a whole onager in at least two instances: once at the beginning of his ‘Seven Trials’, another time upon Bahman’s arrival at his outpost of Sīstān. Marcia E. Maguire, building upon the contrast of appetite observed in Isfandiyār’s son and Rustam, concludes that the latter represents a new heroic ethos, “the more refined and subtle Zoroastrian pattern of heroic behavior (which) demands temperance in both words and, in this
instance, appetite” (208). However, I believe that more than a contrast in religious beliefs, Rustam’s superhuman nature is being stressed. As much as it is food that marks Rustam and endows him with greater strength for combat, it is this lust for food, as evidenced in Rustam that can also lead to the hero’s downfall.

As observed by Dick Davis, “almost every disaster in which he is involved is preceded by drunkenness — include the killing of both Suhrāb and Esfanidyār and […] the siring of Suhrāb” (Epic 57); however, it is the lust for food that leads to his death. His love for hunting, which can potentially translate into subsequent incorporation of the prey, gets the better of him as he accepts the Afghan king’s invitation to hunt on hunting-grounds, where, at his brother’s initiative, deep spiked pits have been dug aimed at trapping him.

In Tristan, on the other hand, as shall be observed below, incorporation, rather than featuring in the form of gluttony and feasts, takes on a logocentric tone as it intends to elevate both the characters and the readers beyond the bodily borders into the sphere of love and transcendence.

4.3. Tristan: Ruminatio

Incorporation in Gottfried’s poem, more than on a purely concrete plane, takes place on a logocentric level. ‘Love’ embodied in the ‘Logos’ enables the ultimate experiencing of a supreme form of incorporation that only love can potentially offer. The poet himself admits that given the actual inaccessibility of love, one has only the ‘word’ to grasp onto: ‘Love is hounded to the ends of the earth. All that we have is the bare word’ («Minne ist getrieben unde gejaget in den endelesten ort.» wirn haben an ir niwan daz wort, lines 12280–83).

The act of loving, by nature, entails some sort of incorporation of one body by another. In Tristan, the incorporation of the two bodies into one is explicitly mentioned in the following:
“They who were two and divided now became one and united. (si wurden ein und einvalt, die zwei und zwîvalt wâren ê, lines 11716–17). Heteropathic and idiopathic tendencies are inherently at work as one party looks for an Other to make him/her the same (representing the heteropath) and is overwhelmed by the desire to become part of an Other (the idiopath).\(^{327}\) It is also only natural for the most powerful man to desire the most beautiful and this is why one would expect Tristan and Isolde to fall in love regardless of the love-potion. In fact, prior to the discovery scene, where Isolde, upon examining Tristan’s sword, realizes that she has the splinter which fits the missing part of his sword (as it had been recovered in Morold’s body), she appraises Tristan’s body, showing an interest that could be interpreted as a prelude to love (lines 9992–10032).\(^{328}\) The ‘love-potion’ (minnetrank) can be interpreted as a catalyst to the inevitable, though, as Christopher Young has neatly put it, “the question of the status and the symbolic potential of the love-potion is over 800 years and after two centuries of medieval research wide open” (Minnetrank 258).\(^{329}\) Nonetheless, what is yet interesting is that despite circumstantial differences, Gottfried and his predecessors chose the drinking of a ‘love-potion’, as a means of driving home the intensity of love between the two protagonists.\(^{330}\) It is thus through the incorporation of a drink that each one is so transformed as to wish to incorporate the other.

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\(^{327}\) Kaja Silverman offering an indepth explanation of ‘heteropathic’ and ‘idiopathic’ tendencies, relies on her readings of Max Scheler (cf. 21–22). The final embrace of Tristan and Isolde, where Gottfried describes them as having “been so closely locked together that, had they been a piece cast in bronze or gold, it could not have been joined more perfectly” (cf. lines 18204–11) is a prime example of the manifestation of these tendencies in love.\(^{328}\) Young by directly referring to the text and lines which bespeak ‘a clear hardening of the protagonists’ fronts’ towards one another, believes that the love between the two arises after drinking the love-potion (Minnetrank 260–61). However, one could, perhaps, argue that Isolde’s mere words of hatred towards Tristan are a façade to her real sentiments. As, at one point, she even surprisingly goes on to tell Tristan that “I would rather have married the Steward than set out on this voyage with you” (daz mir noch lieber waere/der truhsæze ze man genomen/ dan ich mit iu waere ûz komen, lines 11624–26), which, is, in no way, true.\(^{329}\) Haug refers to the ‘love-potion’ as an ‘irritation’ (Ärgernis) of Tristan-interpreters (Strukturen 607).\(^{330}\) Contrary to Eilhart and Béroul’s version of Tristan, which are both considered as the version commune, in the so-called version courtoise represented by Thomas and Gottfried, the effect of the love-potion is indefinite and not limited to a couple of years.
Once the ‘love-potion’ has taken effect, it is the ‘word’ in the form of a riddle that reigns supreme. As Isolde expresses her source of anguish in the polysemous term *lameir*, she gives rise to a host of possibilities: ‘love,’ ‘bitter’ and the ‘sea’ (cf. lines 11994–95). After ‘love’ (*minne*) has affected the body of the two — graphically expressed in the tangible changes in Isolde’s eyes, heart, lips and head — it is the lovers’ tongues that break the emotional pain experienced by both. The tongue has already played a pivotal role in the poem, and in the ‘love-potion’, its importance exceeds its involvement in the consumption of the transformative drink. Worthy of note are also the impacts of love on the heart such as the ‘pleasant malady’ (*daz senftende smerzet*) in line 11887 and its ability to enhance a *coincidentia oppositorum*, which takes us back to the image of the ‘noble hearts’ (*edelen herzen*) in the prologue. There, he had described the concept of ‘noble hearts’ as the capacity to endure both sorrow and happiness (see lines 50–55). It is to people with this ability that Gottfried has addressed his poem, bidding them to partake of the bread which is the life-story of Tristan and Isolde:

Deist aller edelen herzen brôt.  
|hie mite sô lebet ir beider tôt.|
wir lesen ir leben, wir lesen ir tôt  
|und ist uns daz süeze alsı brôt.|
Ir leben, ir tôt sint unser brôt.  
sus lebet ir leben, sus lebet ir tôt.  
sus lebent si noch und sint doch tôt  
|und ist ir tôt der lebenden brôt.|
Und swer nu ger, daz man im sage  
|ir leben, ir tôt, ir vröüde, ir clage,|
der biete herze und ören her:  
er vindet alle sîne ger

[This is bread to all noble hearts. With this their death lives on. We read their life, we read their death, and to us it is sweet as bread. Their life, their death are our bread. Thus lives their life, thus lives their death. Thus they live still and yet are dead, and their death is the bread of the living. And whoever now desires to be told of their life, their joy, their sorrow, let him lend me his heart and ears – he shall find all that he desires!]
The image of the ‘bread’ instead of finding its referent in an actual body, leads us to a textual
corpus: Gottfried’s poem itself. Given the poet’s obsession with the ‘word,’ it is no surprise that
instances of incorporation should be encapsulated primarily in the logos.\textsuperscript{331} Similarly, Gottfried is
more concerned with the food of the soul than with the nourishment of the body, so much so that
in the ‘cave of lovers’ (\textit{minnegrotte}) episode, neither of his protagonists is interested in food. In
that paradisiacal atmosphere they both feel at peace with their natural surroundings; amongst their
‘royal servitors’ (\textit{staetez ingesinde}), Gottfried has included ‘the green lime, the shade and the
sunshine, the brook and the well’ (\textit{daz was diu grüene linde, der schate und diu sunne,/diu riviere
unde der brunne}, lines 16882–84).\textsuperscript{332} The ‘feast’ (\textit{hôh(ge)zît}) of the two lovers in the ‘minnegrotte’
episode is the antithesis of the feasts which took place in the safety of Heorot in \textit{Beowulf}. Out in
the open, the lovers are so in tune with Mother Nature that they require no food, but ‘love’: ‘Their
high feast was Love’ (\textit{ir hôhzît was diu minne}, line 16896), for, ‘What better food could they have
for body or soul?’ (\textit{waz solte in bezzer lîpnar/ ze muote oder ze lîbe?}, lines 16902–3). It is also
different from the representations of nature in Ferdowsi’s images of feasting in which nature, far
from evoking paradise, added to the pomp and ceremony. The hall, so common in Germanic
poetry, is meant as a communal site of protection against the hazards lurking outside and feasting
enhances the formation of a unified corpus comprising various individuals who are expected to
fend off the potential perils of the unknown world out there, should the need arise. However,
Tristan and Isolde in becoming one in \textit{Minne}, while incorporated by their natural surroundings,
harbour no fear for the outside world, neither do they require the company of others:

\begin{quote}
\textit{ir zweier geselleschaft}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{331} See, for example: Friedrich Ohly, “Wirkungen von Dichtung”, \textit{Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift} 67 (1993): 26–76.
\textsuperscript{332} The Eilhart version of \textit{Tristan} differs from Gottfried’s in that the ‘the queen had to eat whatever they could lay
their hands on’ (\textit{dô muste die koningîn/ ezzen swaz sie mochte hân}, lines 4696–97).
Their company of two was so ample a crowd for this pair that good King Arthur never held a feast in any of his palaces that gave keener pleasure or delight.

The need to consume implies a lack that does not exist in a paradisiacal world. However, there is no paradise on earth and, as Gottfried demonstrates, the minnegrotte existence cannot last for long on this earthly planet and as it so happens both lovers find themselves bound to return to the enclosed atmosphere of the court where communal activities are seriously practiced.

In addition to spaces, communality can manifest itself in not only commensality, but also food per se. In fact, the ‘bread-metaphor’, Gottfried could have had the communion prevailing over the Eucharist in mind in drawing us into his textus with his use of ‘we’ (wir), twice in line 235, and ‘our bread’ (unser bröt, line 237).³³³ His use of the Eucharist imagery however, constitutes a new outlook on a commonly-practiced aspect of Christian religiosity.³³⁴ G. Macy’s study of the Eucharist, indicates three distinct approaches towards this phenomenon including the ‘Paschasian’, which believes in the true bodily presence of Christ in the sacrament; the ‘mystical’ approach, which emphasizes a spiritual bond between Christ and the communicant, and, the ‘ecclesiastical’ approach, which insists on the power of the Eucharist in gathering

³³³ Not all scholars believe that Gottfried had the Eucharist in mind. Eva Willms, for example, argues against the textual presence of the Eucharist based on what she believes to be the meagre presence of the Eucharist around 1200 (44); however, Christopher Young takes her to task in referring to G. Macy’s The Theologies of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period (pp.118–21) as backup (cf. Literaturtheorie 209, n. 29).

believers together in church, through love and faith. While Christopher Young seems to be highlighting the third approach to be the most applicable to the Eucharist image in Gottfried’s prologue (Literaturtheorie 205–10), one could also argue for the importance of physical and mystical bond. The poet calls on his audience to treat the historia of Tristan and Isolde, despite their death, as bread that will reinvigorate us, and, at the same time, allow their story to live on. His is an image of ruminatio, which as Jean Leclerc observes, was conspicuously physical in the Middle Ages, as the mediator invoked a mode of synesthesia: “in order to understand a language or a text, one would pronounce its words. More than a ‘visual memory’ (mémoire visuelle) of the written words, this would result in a ‘muscular memory’ (mémoire musculaire) of pronounced words, an ‘auditive memory’ (mémoire auditive) of the heard words” (72). Gottfried explicitly summons the ‘muscular’, as he bids his readers to engage with his text:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ein senelîchez maere} \\
\text{daz òibe ein senedaere} \\
\text{mit herzen und mit munde} \\
\text{und senfte sô die stunde} \\
\end{align*}
\]

[Let a lover ply a love-tale with his heart and lips and so while away the hour]

It is only later on that instead of evoking the ‘heart and the lips’ (line 99), he highlights the significance of the ‘auditive’ in this reception of his tale, as he summons the ‘heart and ears’ (line 243). Inherent in Gottfried’s call to partake of the bread is the concept of inventio, in its

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336 In bringing to the fore the interrelationship of the Eucharist image and reader’s reception, Christopher Young posits that edeliu-herzen is more of a process than a state of being (Literaturtheorie 207). He likens this process to the Christian mass in which priest and the communicant come together to experience the transformation of the sacrament into the body of Christ and bread (206).
dual sense (‘inventory’, and ‘invention’) discussed earlier. It so happens that the first word of the prologue gedaehte is directed at ‘remembering’:

Gedaehte mans ze guote niht,
von dem der werlde guot geschiht,
sô waere ez allez alse niht,
swaz guotes in der werlde geschiht

[If we failed to remember those who confer benefit on the world, then it would all be as if no such good occurred in the world]

Eating from the ‘bread’ that constitutes Gottfried’s text requires inventio, in that the readers/listeners not only store the text in their memory, but also lend new life to it, as they re-create it in their own lives.\textsuperscript{337} A comparison could be made between Gottfried’s use of the phrase ‘bread of the living’ (\textit{der lebenden brôt}) in line 240 and Bernard of Clairvaux’s likening of Christ to ‘the living bread and food of the mind’, whose Word should not merely be stored in the memory, but also be eaten and transferred into the ‘bowels of their souls’ so as to engage their emotions and thus transform their ways of life.\textsuperscript{338} The act of dismemberment, as is evident in the above example, takes place in the course of consumption and is followed by an incorporation in the form of re-membering.

Re-membering takes place, as observed in the previous chapter, upon the dis-membering of the hart, whereby Tristan succeeds in incorporating himself within the Cornish \textit{communitas}. Remembering also constitutes part of the after-effects of the ‘love-potion,’ in that Isolde begins to reconstruct the images of the past in her mind, imparting them to Tristan (lines 11938–55). In

\textsuperscript{337} Referring to the use of the verb ‘gedenken’ elsewhere in the poem (lines 12204–05), Stevens suggests that the term has “connotations both of remembering and of cogitating” and goes on to draw parallels from Augustine’s observations of Ambrose’s reading habits in \textit{The Confessions} (327). See, for example: Adrian Stevens, “Memory, Reading and the Renewal of Love: “On the Poetics of Invention in Gottfried’s \textit{Tristan},” \textit{German Narrative Literature in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries} (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994): 319–35.

stitching the events of the past together she is able to construct a whole which will encompass both herself and Tristan. Re-membering is also significant in Thomas’s version of *Tristan*, where Tristan upon conquering a giant orders him and his minions to fashion statues of Queen Isolde and her cousin, Brengvein:

E les deliz des granz amors  
E lor travaus e lor dolurs  
E lor paignes e lor ahans  
Recorde a l'himage Tristrans

[by means of the image Tristran recalls the delights of their great loves, their troubles and their griefs, their pains and their torments.] (*La Salle aux image et l’eau hardie*, lines 1-4)

Re-membering involves recalling images from the *inventio* and calls for creativity. The potion concocted by Isolde’s mother has such transformative powers that the two people who drink it are bound together forever. The process of preparing the powerful drink involves an artistry that only a ‘wise’ Queen Isolde enjoys. In fact, particularly, the use of the term *betihten* implies an artistic composition as its three other uses in the text clarify:

Die wîle und sich ouch Tristan  
mit sînen lantgesellen dan  
brêite unde berihtete,  
die wîle sô betihtete  
Îsôt diu wise kûnîgîn  
in ein glasevezzefîn  
einen tranc von minnen,  
mit alsô cîlen sînen  
ûf geleit und vor bedâht,  
mit solher crefte vollebrâht:  
mit sweme sîn iemand getranc,  
den muose er âne sînen danc  
vor allen dingen meinen  
und er dâ wider in einen.  
in was ein tôt unde ein leben,  
ein triure, ein vröude samet gegeben
[While Tristan and his compatriots were getting ready and prepared, Isolde, the prudent queen was concocting in a vial a love-drink arranged and foreseen with such subtlety and brought to completion with such power that with whomsoever anyone drank it that person he had to love despite himself and above all others and the other person had to love him alone. They would share one death and one life, one sorrow and one joy.]

Here, the use of betihten is significant and given its occurrence in other contexts in the poem, indicates Gottfried’s emphasis on extraordinary artistry. These other instances include the forging of Tristan’s helmet at the hands of the ‘the good artificer’ (der guote listmachaere, line 4943); the description of Tristan’s beautifully-crafted interior as compared to the refined war equipment he has donned prior to the hero’s fight against Morold (lines 6642–48) and the construction of minnegrotte inside a rock (lines 16922–27). One striking aspect of two of the above instances is their association with supernatural agency. The term is applied to Vulcan, a deity whose supernatural powers have most exquisitely been portrayed in Bk. VIII of The Aeneid. There, he is portrayed as crafting a shield that not only protects Aeneas from every harm, but also weaves together a tapestry of future generations and hearkens back to the giants whose magnificent stone-works, for one thing, have been objects of fascination in the corpus of OE poetry where they are referred to as enta geweorc. The use of betihten in the poet’s juxtaposition of the beauty incarnated by Tristan against the elaborate war-gear highlights the inherent artistry that radiates from the hero’s own body:

ich weiz ez wârez also den tac:
swie sò der úzer waere,
der innere bildaere
der was baz betihtet,
bemeistert unde berihtet
ze ritters figiure
dan diu üzer e faitiure.
daz were daz was dar inne
This section of the poem is reminiscent of the ‘literary excursus’ (lines 4621–25) which problematizes the contrast between the interior and exterior (Young, Minnetrank 271). In all these three cases, betihten is used to add a touch of extraordinary artistry to the craftsmanship in question. The concoction of the minnetrank is no exception, being a concretized form of artistry, which has the utmost capacity to instigate inner transformation. Given the two Isoldes’ magical touch within the context of medicinal herbs and their singular healing powers, their ability for such transformative artistry becomes easily fathomable.

Inventio, in its both senses, is at work in the minnetrank episode as Queen Isolde uses her mental inventory, memoria, to invent a drink so potent, and, on a different level, as her daughter, brings to mind events of the past to invent a better future. Her attempts however, run counter to her mother’s plans which had been in line with intensifying the love of Isolde and her future husband, Mark. The love-potion is a concretized form of attempt on the part of Queen Isolde to ensure friendship between the two potentially hostile lands of Ireland and Cornwall represented respectively in the bodies of Isolde and Mark. As Peter Czerwinski has posited: “[…] the journey of such a noble woman to a very remote and absolutely foreign court which has hitherto been openly hostile to her people, will not protect her life in a time, in which, there were no institutional guarantees, nothing but the personal affects will ensure her a respectable and safe life” (274). Yet, although King Mark falls short of drinking the love-potion, Isolde’s status as queen is secured as she was highly respected by Mark and held in high esteem by her
subordinates and the kingdom (cf. lines 12675–79).\textsuperscript{339} Tristan’s partaking of the minnetrank however, endangers the legitimacy of Mark’s royal body and the chances of procreation that would lead to an heir in whose figure both kingdoms would be united.

The major factor that stops Tristan from snatching Isolde away once the love-potion has clearly taken effect is the inner conflict between êre and minne, although the Dionysian impact of the love-potion allows the latter to win the upper-hand for most of the story. The failure of the minnetrank in binding the hearts of Isolde and Mark, on a concrete level, is indicative of a deeper level of inconsistency between the most coveted female beauty embodied in Isolde and a king, who by allowing his nephew, Tristan to fight his fights is not deserving of her hand in marriage in the first place.\textsuperscript{340}

The Dionysian element inherent in the love-potion is made clear in that ‘both (Tristan and Isolde) thought that it was wine’ (und wànden beide, ez waere wîn, line 11685). Moreover, Isolde, the mother, asks her niece, Brangane to make it her strict concern to “pour out this liquor as wine for them (Isolde and Mark)” (sô schenke in disen tranc vûr wîn, line 11462). Queen Isolde stresses that Brangane should ‘beware lest anyone share with them. This stands to reason’ (bewar daz, daz sîn mit in zwein/ieman enbîze. daz ist sin, lines 11464–65). Unlike the bread of the prologue which is to be shared amongst all the partakers of Gottfried’s story, the love-potion is meant for two only. What connects the bread and the wine of the poem is the lofty mode of art

\textsuperscript{339} What Mark drinks at his wedding-night has the opposite impact of the elevating minnetrank drunk by Tristan and Isolde. The impact of the former is ‘mystifying’ (benebelnd), as Nichola Zotz puts it, since King Mark becomes so blind as to not be able to tell the difference between Isolde and her cousin, Brangene, who, unlike Isolde, being still a virgin, accepts to sleep with him on Isolde’s wedding night. Given the proximity of Tristram’s Saga, the ON version of the poem to Thomas’s version, it had been expected that the Saga’s assertion that the wine consumed by Mark on his wedding-night was the minnetrank, existed in the OF version; however, discovery in 1990s of the episode containing the scene in Thomas’s Tristan, in what has become known as the Carlisle-Fragment, contradicts this earlier assumption (Zotz7, n.17).

\textsuperscript{340} A similar function can be attributed to the ‘cloak of invisiblity’ (tarnkappe) in Das Nibelungenlied which allows the valiant Siegfried to subdue Brunhild for King Gunther, who is undeserving of the maiden; therefore, has to resort to deceit.
invested in the manufacture of both. Incorporation in Gottfried’s *Tristan* is more about the internalization of art than about actual consumption. The poet hopes that his text will impact his audience in a way similar to the potent *minnetrank* whose effects transform those who have partaken of it beyond the lust for unison of the bodies to the oneness of minds.

In the end, whether in a literal or a more figurative sense, incorporation brings about the ultimate knowledge of the Other. The actual entanglement of bodies and consequent oneness which occurs in the course of ‘incorporation’, in its various textual and semantic shadings, diminishes the divides initially separating the heroic ‘I’ and the monstrous ‘thou’, bringing about a more profound appreciation for the occult aspects of the Self and Other. While in *Beowulf* and *The Shahnameh* incorporation takes place at a more physical level than *Tristan* leading to a more tangible transformation in the body, in Gottfried’s poem, transformation occurs mostly on a mental plane. In both cases, the process of incorporation goes on to constitute the acquisition of new powers and/or insight. Whether incorporation becomes synonymous with commensality and the forging or cementing of new ties, an *Aufhebung*, or the gaining of further mental and physical powers, it can potentially signify a quantum leap as has been showcased, for instance, in the myth of Glaucus who by eating an herb is transformed into a sea-god (cf. Dante, *Paradiso* Bk. I: 70–72).

In any case, the transformation which transpires within the Self as a result of bodily inscription and incorporation, at various levels, goes on to affect the collectivity of nations. Yet, there is a teleological difference between bodily inscription, possibly climaxing in dismemberment, and incorporation. For, while dismemberment involves an outward movement leading to the exposure of the interior of the body to the outside world, incorporation, implies an

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341 The role of ‘blood’ in Crucifixion however, became prominent much later. As Bynum notes, “of the early accounts of a shared meal after the resurrection, two (Luke 24.35 and Acts 2.42) mention only bread” (*Wonderful* 1) and only in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries do the visions of Crucifixion become “increasingly bloody” (3).
inward movement in enabling the body to make part of the outside world one with itself. In both cases, the Self so closely associated with the body, is transformed and so are its surrounding spaces. Both incorporation and dismemberment come to pass as a result of bodily movements in time and space; in fact, it is in movement that emplotment occurs, especially with regard to works whose primary focus is on the exterior of the body rather than the interior of the mind.
Epilogue:

No single study can lay claim to being able to offer an exhaustive analysis of corporeal configurations of the heroic and the monstrous and this dissertation is no exception. My primary focus has been on the corporeal characteristics defining the ‘heroic’ and the ‘monstrous’ as well as the dynamics involved in the entanglement of these two types of bodies including bodily inscriptions and incorporation. My analysis of heroic and monstrous bodies has been based as much on contrasts as on parallels. Despite their many differences, what facilitates the interaction between the heroic and the monstrous is their similitude in dissimilitude; had they been so far apart, no commerce could take place between the two. Far from being diametrically opposed, heroic and monstrous bodies, in evincing extra-ordinary properties, prove to be more contiguous than contradictory. The congenitally grey-haired Zāl of The Shahnameh, the Blemmyae-shaped Gayomard of The Avesta, the gigantism of Rustam and Beowulf are only a handful of examples showcasing how monster and hero can be more each others’ Doppelgänger than outright enemies.\(^{342}\) It is also on grounds of contiguity that the differentiations separating the two become even more pronounced, allowing for the heroic and the monstrous to articulate their identities against each other. However, in addition to corporeal contexts, identities are formulated within the spaces bodies settle or navigate through.

The groundedness of bodies in territories renders spaces and landscapes an undeniable factor in identity-construction. Monstrous encounters take place within treacherous territories, and the contours of the heroic figure cannot be outlined unless challenged against the backdrop of insidious terrains. In many cases, monstrous combats are only an aftermath of challenging

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\(^{342}\) The way Gayomard is described in The Avesta “bright as the sun, and his height was four measured poles, and his breadth just as much as his height” (Gbd II: 12), could be read both as a token of perfection — being literally a *homo quadratus* — and as resembling the monstrous race of the *blemmyae*, who in being headless become square-shaped.
tabooed territories, which, inherently, harbour monstrous beings. As demonstrated in the course of this study, the fights against the dragons in all three primary works, the giant Urgan in *Tristan*, the witch in *The Shahnameh* and Grendel’s mother in *Beowulf*, just to name some examples, are closely intertwined with taming seemingly indomitable territories. Moreover, heroes are bound up with the spaces they navigate through as has been made manifest in the example of Beowulf’s voyage to the mere and Rustam’s ‘Seven Trials’ across Mazandarān. The indispensability of spaces in identity-formation manifests itself especially in the figure of the hero, who is essentially dependent on moving across wide expanses of land to prove his worth. In the course of his movements, the hero defines himself by virtue of impressing his stamp on the land which, potentially, becomes identifiable with the *materia prima* of the monstrous bodies he cuts and thrusts through to sculpt his own image of the world. At the heart of heroic combats one detects vestigial signs of the struggle of the primitive man in taming the environment around him in his endeavours to establish himself on planet earth. Indeed, man is the only creature capable of consciously tapping into the powers of the earth with the aim of domesticating land and making it yield fruit. Though in no way engaged in reaping harvest in a literal sense, heroes are marked by their simultaneous capacity to conquer both land masses and monsters. That the dominance of monstrous bodies runs parallel to mastery over lands comes to the fore, for example, in Jamshīd’s harnessing of the latent powers of the dīvs so closely aligned with the earth granting them extra powers in the construction of monuments (cf. *The Shahnameh* I. 43: 35–38). Also, once Grendel’s mother is overcome, the path described as *uncup* (‘unknown’, line 1410b) gives way to *cup* (‘familiar’, line 1634a) streets. Furthermore, the association of monstrous bodies with land scourges, as discussed in Chapter 2, in justifying the hero’s dominance over these inferior

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343 Also in *The Denkard* Gayomard’s direct descendants, Mashi and Mashyāneh are told that the dīvs can disturb the growth of crops (Bk.VII: 13).
manifestations of corporeality, conflates monster-slaying with colonialism. Land inscriptions coupled with monster-slayings, as demonstrated in the conquest of England by Brutus and Corineus in the Historia Regum Britanniae, enables the hero to simultaneously build cities and construct history.

The intersection of history and geography has been a point of departure for colonialist literature. In De Monarchia, for example, Dante, upon placing the Roman empire within a historical context, justifies its righteousness on the basis of its ability to subject the world (cf. Bk. II: 6). Moreover, in The Aeneid, to which Dante has ample recourse for his arguments, the Roman race, looked upon from the perspective of ‘messianic time’ governing the Afterworld, is held above others on the premise of its martial supremacy within a context that suggests the primacy of bodily inscriptions over artistic etchings (cf. Bk. VI: 847–53). Yet, the conjunction of history and geography also leads to the emergence of cosmologies, both in the form of meta-narratives seeking to explain, megacosmos, the world at large and microcosmos, also referred to as mundus minor, which sees man, as a world unto himself. Cosmology, though closely associated, need not coincide with, cosmogony as it does in The Shahnameh and can present “the universe as a systematic totality and, correspondingly, [with the aim of] construct[ing] a comprehensive image of its structure and evolution” (Herzfeld 193).

‘Structure’ is a key-word in cosmologies including those governing the emplotment of the primary poems of this study. This is true of not only The Shahnameh where structure is imposed on an inchoate world, but also of Beowulf and Tristan. In the former, the importance of order manifests itself in the explicit desire of the lordless Danish community for a centripetal and

344 The association of domination with the identification of lands runs so deep that some of the terms we use for the designation of the properties of particular lands masses go so far as to indicate this. For example, region stems from regere (‘to rule’) and province from vincere (‘to conquer’) (cf. Foucault, Power/Knowledge 69).
345 I am referring to Walter Benjamin’s definition of ‘messianic time’ as “a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present” (24).
organizing character in the figure of a lord, in the latter, in the self-trimmings imposed on the protagonist, Tristan. In terms of the imposition of order, there is a sense of the same tripartite differentiations in the three poems alluded to in the introduction.

The overarching significance of order pervading certain cosmologies helps explain the indispensability of cleansing in the fashioning of the hero and the world around him. The purging of the landscape of agents of pollution embodied in the figures of witches and dragons by Rustam and Isfandiyār in the course of their ‘Seven Trials’ in The Shahnameh, for example, can be explained from the perspective of a Zoroastrian cosmology so influential in the composition of Ferdowsi’s magnum opus. Overall, the cleansing of the universe is called for within the ideological confines of cosmologies, which can, unsurprisingly, become entangled with religious considerations. What, in the purely mythological aspect of a certain cosmology, is referred to as gigantomachia, becomes a form of sacrifice, once it is examined through the lens of religion, itself a form of cosmology. Indeed, in its various shadings, cosmologies go on to include physics, astronomy and religion. Texts, however, need not be dominated by religious cosmologies to advocate the removal of embodiments of dirt or disorder, even in The Shahnameh, which distinguishes itself from the other primary works of this study in being explicitly inspired by a religious cosmology, the driving ideology is more heroic and individualistic than religious and nationalistic.

In heroic literature, order over the microcosmos of man is as important as, if not more so than it is with regard to the megacosmos. Emphasis on an enforcement of order on man himself is

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346 Here, I am not denying the presence of religion in the other two works, but religion does not play such a determining role as it does in The Shahnameh. For possible religious associations in Beowulf, see, for example: Friedrich Klaeber, “Die christlichen Elemente im Beowulf”, Anglia 35 (1912): 169–99. For a further investigation into the influence of religion on Gottfried’s poem, see, for example: Nigel Harris, “God, Religion, and Ambiguity in Tristan”, A Companion to Gottfried von Strassburg’s “TRISTAN” (Rochester, N.Y.: Campden House, 2003): 113–58.
particularly dominant in *Tristan*, which, of the three primary texts of this study, is the most invested in individualism as befits the prevailing paradigms of humanistic teachings of the twelfth-century. In general, self-realization, which is predicated upon discipline of the hero, is a leading trope in most heroic portrayals including even *The Shahnahmeh* where the dominance of ‘messianic time’ and the glory attached to *Iranzamin* (‘the land of Iran’) call for an emphasis on nationalism rather than heroism. The individuation of the hero is accompanied by a sense of isolation and necessitated by liminality which calls for the hero’s temporary separation from the populus. In order for the hero to emerge transformed and reborn it is essential that he be separated from the masses, during which, he can develop and exercise his own *imago mundi*.

Central to the theme of individuation is also the juxtaposition of a strong hero against a weak king as highlighted in the examples of Rustam and Kay Kāvūs, Tristan and Mark as well as Beowulf and Hygelac. While the kings distinguish themselves by possessing power, heroes are the true bearers of authority. It is ‘authority’ and not ‘power’ that entitles one to righteous governance: “*Power* is the force by means of which you can oblige others to obey you. *Authority* is the right to direct and command, to be listened to or obeyed by others” (Maritain 126). Yet the dichotomy between heroes and kings is not so clear-cut as to suggest one of good versus evil, for as the hero fights the battles of an undeserving king, his mammoth undertakings help channel his boundless energies, which, in being generally marked by *superbia*, would not necessarily serve the common good were he to be king. The self-fashioning of the hero would never be complete without monsters who serve a major function in taking the heroic body to task and

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347 It so happens that the twelfth-century experienced the burgeoning of cosmographical literature, including Bernardus Silvestris’s *Cosmographia*, Alain de Lille’s *De planctu naturae* and *Anticlaudianus*, which focus as much, if not more, on the creation of *microcosmus*, man himself, than on *megacosmus*, the world at large.

348 Reference can be made, for example, to: John Leyerle, “Beowulf the Hero and the King”, *M.E* 34 (1965): 89–102.
posing as formidable obstacles without which the hero would never be able to realize his full potential.

The focus of this study has been on corporeality of the heroic self and monstrous other, yet, as much as the monstrous body provides a counterpoint to the heroic body in its corporeal delineation, the monster, as embodying both *mixta* and *mira*, can also prove to be an intellectual challenge for the heroic self. The monster can serve as a ‘horizon’ enabling us to look beyond what is close at hand, “not in order to look away from it, but to see it better within a larger whole and a truer proportion” (Gadamer 272). In fact, a parallel can be detected between the intellectual and physical confrontation with the monstrous, in that, the dis-membering of the monstrous, whether at physical or mental level, becomes tantamount to the discovery of the Self in the Other. Within a corporeal context, the Self and Other become one in the act of re-membering or incorporation, while, within the confines of Hans Georg Gadamer’s hermeneutical paradigm, intellectual re-membering becomes aligned with what he has referred to as *Horizontverschmelzung* (‘fusion of horizons’), involving “the attainment of a higher universality that overcomes, not only our own particularity, but also that of the other” (272). The clash between the heroic and the monstrous, as discussed in Chapter 3, in unleashing tremendous energy brings about a zone of potentialities, a ‘Third Space’, which, akin to a ‘fusion of horizons’ accompanies ‘sublation’. Significantly enough, the monster’s composite nature allows for the emergence of various modes of ‘understanding’, a concept at the heart of the ‘fusion of horizons’. 349 A hermeneutic reading of these texts, in addition to opening up new vistas to the ‘monstrous’, might prove to be a successful attempt at responding to the perpetual question of “why one should read such monstrous medieval texts in the first place?”

The inscriptions imposed on monstrous bodies that are so crucial in defining the ‘heroic’, in a way, mirror our own, no less heroic, attempts at dissecting the ‘text’, which in its broad sense means “any coherent complex of signs” (Bakhtin, *Speech* 103). A text, regarded from this Bakhtinian perspective, thus becomes akin to cosmology, “a rich source of imagery and argumentation that individuals and groups can creatively mine as they search for explanations and justifications of their activities” (Herzfeld 193). Although not quite ‘writerly’ in a Barthesian sense, these texts were a source of pleasure for their original audiences in offering them an opportunity to exercise *conspiratio* rather than being a chance at *inspiratio* (cf. Kelly xi–xii). To us, their main appeal lies in the pleasure we extract from being exposed to possible worlds different from our own. Their alterity is manifest not only at a linguistic level (of the three texts, only *The Shahnameh* is comprehensible to the average modern native-speaker of the poet’s language), but also in their embodiment of the fantastic, a hesitation between “a natural and supernatural explanation of the events described” (Todorov 33). The stronger appeal for fantasy in these texts stems from their composite nature. Fictional texts are performative acts (cf. Doložel 146), yet, many medieval texts, including the primary texts of this study, distinguish themselves by being particularly palimpsestic in their performative aspect in that they combine a diversity of cosmologies to give rise to their own. These include earlier versions of the same story (e.g. Thomas’s version of *Tristan*), religious ideologies (e.g. the influence of Zoroastrianism in *The Shahnameh*) and a third voice of *uctoritas* (e.g. indicated in the frequent use of *gefrignan*-variations in *Beowulf*). One could even go so far as to argue that in being

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350 *Writerly* (*scriptible*) is a notion suggested by Roland Barthes versus ‘readerly’ (*lisible*) as an attempt at rendering a text into a perpetual present where we ourselves are writing “before the infinite play of the world […] is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticized by some singular system […] which reduces the plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, the infinity of languages” (5).
textual embodiments of *mixta*, the texts themselves become akin to the *monstra* they harbour within.

Medieval as the texts of this study might be, the ‘monstrous/heroic’ appeal they hold, is not relegated to the past. For instance, in the new box-office hit of renowned filmmaker, Peter Jackson, *District 9* (2009), one is witness as to how the appeal of the alterity of the monstrous, monstrous metamorphoses and the fusion of the Self and Other leads to a new mode of understanding. In this movie, the association of the monstrous with the concept of colonialism and ownership of land continues to be ominously relevant as humans fall at odds with an alien/monstrous race in having to share their resources with them. If this example is not enough, one need only take note of the soaring popularity of J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* (1954–1956) and J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series (1997–2007), with their medieval portrayals of heroic and monstrous bodyscapes and landscapes to realize that the ‘Monstrous Middle Ages’ is more alive than ever before and has no intention of fading away.
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An Appendix to *The Shahnameh*-characters:

**Arnavāz:** along with her sister Shahnāz, is the object of masculine desire

**Firaidūn:** liberates Iranians from Zahhāk’s millennial rule; divides kingdom among his three sons

**Hūshang:** Kīyūmars’s grandson and Sīyāmak’s son

**Jamshīd:** Tahmūras’s successor who ruled over a golden-age, but lost his *farr* because of hubris

**Kay Kāvus:** An unruly king who is repeatedly aided by Rustam for his survival

**Kīyūmars:** prototypical human according to *The Avesta* and first hero-king in *The Shahnameh*

**Mihrāb:** Ruler of Kabul, Rūdābeh’s father and a descendent of Zahhāk

**Rakhsh:** Rustam’s horse who along with Rustam performs the ‘Seven Trials’

**Rustam:** the hero of heroes; marked by his gigantic size and known as the ‘crown-bestower’

**Rūdābeh:** a descendant of Zahhāk; Rustam’s mother and Zāl’s wife

**Sām:** first mentioned hero of the Sīstān circle; Rustam’s grandfather and Zāl’s father

**Shahnāz:** along with her sister Arnavāz, is captured by Zahhāk and then liberated by Firaidūn

**Sīyāmak:** Kīyūmars’s son and first victim of the divs

**Tahmūras:** known as ‘binder of divs’; Hūshang’s son

**Zahhāk:** three-headed Arab cannibal dragon-king who tyrannized Iran for a millennium

**Zāl:** white-haired son of Sām who married Rūdābeh and fathered Rustam