

CHAPTER 5

A NARRATOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE *BABYLONIAN GILGAMESH EPIC* ACCORDING TO THE MODEL OF G. GENETTE 1980

Introduction

Only Tablets I - XI of the *Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic* feature for the purpose of a *narratological analysis*. The reasons for this were put forward in chapter 2 of this thesis: Tablets I - XI narrate events that have a bearing on one another. Furthermore, these events begin and end on the same place, on the walls of Uruk. This chapter appropriates Genette's (1980) model for a *narratological analysis* to the *Standard Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*.

1. Narrative, story, narrating

According to Genette (1980:25-27) *narrative* (French *recit*) has *three different meanings*. The *first* obvious reference is to the *narrative statement*, also called the *narrative*. This denotes the discourse itself, oral or written, which recounts a series of events. *Narrative statement*, or plainly *narrative* pertains to the very words of the *text*, whether they are written down or whether they are recited aloud. These are the cuneiform signs on the broken tablets of the *Standard Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*.

Secondly there are events that succeed one another, also called the *story*. These events could be either real or fictitious, and have bearing on *what happened from the beginning to the end*. The way in which these events are recounted - whether they follow one another chronologically or whether the order is interrupted in some way or another - is not taken into account. The *story* of *Gilgamesh* (in the *Standard Babylonian Version*) starts with what he did in Uruk, continues successively with all the events that followed, and ends with

his return to his city. The *story* in this sense refers to the *history* outside of the text but which gave rise to the text: *what really happened and when?*

Thirdly someone is needed to *recount* the event, also called *narrating*. This implies the *action of telling*, and pertains to the *narrating instance*. Who is telling about *Gilgamesh* and how is it done?

Bal (1986:13-15) elaborates on similar distinctions which she calls *tekst* (*i.e. the narrative statement*), *geschiedenis* (*i.e. the story*), and *verhaal* (*i.e. narrating*). However, as far as the latter is concerned, she stresses more the *way* in which the events are recounted rather than the *action of telling* of the events. Thus, in a very basic sense a narrative analysis should bear in mind (i) *what is actually said or written*, (ii) *the actual sequence of the events that are recounted*, and (iii) *who is telling the story and in what way*.

An analysis of narrative discourse is constantly aware of the different aspects of *narrative*, *but* has to remember that they are intimately interrelated (Bal 1986:15; Genette 1980:27). Although the aspects are taken apart and examined individually for the purpose of analysis, they cannot be separated from one another.

2. Analysis of narrative discourse: tense, mood, and voice

Genette (1980:31) chooses three classes of determinations in which to organise the analysis of a *narrative discourse*. *Tense* deals with *temporal relations* between *narrative and story*. *Mood* deals with *forms and degrees* of *narrative representation*. *Voice* deals with the *way* in which the *narrating* is *connected to the narrative*. *Voice* thus has bearing on the interrelationships between both *narrating/narrative* and *narrating/story*. However, *voice* pertains not only to the *narrator* or to the *narrating instance*, but also to the addressees, real or implied. *Tense and mood* both come into play at the level of interrelationships between *story and narrative*. These rather confusing inter

relationships will become clearer in their appropriation to the narratological analysis of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

2.1. Tense: order, duration, and frequency

Under the heading of *Time* or *Tense* Genette (1980) discusses the following categories: *Order, Duration and Frequency*. Also these categories will be discussed and applied to the *Epic of Gilgamesh* where they are relevant.

2.1.1. Order

Genette (1980:35) explains as follows: *Order* determines the connections between the *succession of events in the story* and the *way in which they are arranged in the narrative (i.e. the pseudo-temporal arrangement)*. A story usually consists of significant events that follow one another successively. When the *succession of events in the story corresponds to the order* in which they are recounted in the *narrative*, it is simply a matter of *chronological time*. That is to say, the *order of the narrative discourse* indicates more or less clearly the *order of the story events*. However, this is seldom the case in narratives. A perfect temporal correspondence between *narrative* and *story* exists very rarely in *narrative discourse*.

More often than not, the chronological succession of events is interrupted in some way or another. *Anachrony* is the term Genette (1980:35&36) uses to indicate the *various types of discordance between the story and the narrative*. The most common way for interrupting a narrative is by means of inserting events that happened a long time ago, or by means of creating anticipation for what is to come. In this regard Genette (1980:40) chooses to avoid the traditional terms like *anticipation* or *retrospection* in order to describe the way in which the narrative is being interrupted, as these may be subjective phenomena. He uses *prolepsis* (for) “*any narrative manoeuvre that consists of narrating or evoking in advance any event that will take place later; analepsis*

(for) *any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at a given moment and ... anachronism to designate all forms of discordance between the two temporal orders of story and narrative...*" (Genette 1980:40). In other words, and drastically oversimplified, *prolepses* pertain to *what may happen*, *analepses* pertain to *what has happened*, and *anachrony* is a total mix up of all the tenses and times in both *story* and *narrative*.

So, *anachronies* are inserted into and disrupt the primary *narrative* (Genette 1980:48). In this way a second *narrative* is created. *First* and *second narratives* are Genette's way to distinguish different *temporal* levels of *narrative*. However, it is important to note that the denotations *first* and *second narratives* do not indicate that one is more important than the other (cf. Genette 1988:28&29); on the contrary, second *narratives* are extremely valuable for understanding the first one.

Furthermore, *anachronies* consist of a *reach* and of an *extent* (Genette 1980: 47&48). From the moment of interruption in the *narrative discourse*, an *anachrony* may *reach into the past* or *into the future*, that is, what did happen or what is going to happen. *Anachronies* also cover a *duration of story*, that is, how long did the event last, or how long is it going to last. This is called the *extent* of the *analepsis* or of the *prolepsis*.

In other words, *order* has to do with the interruption of the *primary narratives* by one or more *secondary narratives*. The latter has bearing on events that happened either a long time before or a long time after the former, or on events that are taking place simultaneously with those that are being narrated in the first instance. These *secondary narratives* have their own *narratological time span*, or *extent*, and they usually influence the *primary narrative* in some significant manner.

**A tense moment in the *Standard Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*:
*the opening line***

The opening line of the Epic poses a serious problem: the transliterations of Parpola and George differ significantly. As I have stated, these kinds of differences do not affect the narrative as such, however, this very first one has implications for a structural narratological analysis.

Parpola

Parpola (1997) reconstructs this first line as follows:

ša nagba īmuru lušēdi māti

According to this rendering the parsing of *lušēdi* is the s-stem of the verb *idû(m)*: to know. The preposing particle *lu* together with the preterite expresses a desired action. In Old Babylonian it occurs with the first person singular (*li-* in third person singular and plural when it unites with the initial vowel of the verbal form)(see Caplice 1988:40; Von Soden 1969:105-106).

Consequently the first line reads - according to Parpola's transliteration:

l:1 *ša nagba īmuru lušēdi māti* Of the Deep that he saw, I must tell the land

According to this transliteration, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (Standard Babylonian Version, from now abbreviated SBV) seems to be an *analepsis* and a *prolepsis* simultaneously from its very beginning. Although strictly speaking the *first narrative* is not interrupted, it also has not started yet. But the *story* that is about to be told, happened a long time ago. This *anachrony* reaches into the past and into the future, and is introduced by a *narrating instance*: *I*. Someone (I) is going to tell of events that occurred before his (my) time. (Denning-Bolle [1992:47] also translates the first line as *He who saw everything I want to make known to my land.*)

This *narrating instance* disappears from the scene immediately after I:1, and never does he utter the words *I remember...*, in fact, he plays no part in the *story* or in the *narrative* at all. The *analepsis* and *prolepsis* are both impersonal - in this sense Genette's categories are certainly more useful than *anticipation* or *retrospection*. This is not a personal remembrance: the person concerned is out of the events that occurred, he is only about to disclose them. He is also not disclosing an event that will take place later: what is going to happen is the *narrative* itself. The *narrative* is not a remembrance of past things: what is going to occur, is vivid in the present.

Past, present and future meet at the walls of Uruk. Genette (1980) does not have a separate category for *place*; he prefers to incorporate the significance of location into his analyses of *time*, *mood* and *voice*. Nevertheless, the city of Uruk, especially the walls are of major importance in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV). In the *prologue* the *narrator* who remains an anonymous *voice* for the rest of the *narrative*, invites a (anonymous) *narratee* to come and have a stroll on the top of these magnificent walls, to look down on the city and its surroundings, and to admire the beauty and splendour of everything (I: 16-21). In the closing lines of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) king Gilgamesh himself invites the boatman Urshanabi to do exactly the same (XI: 315-320).

From the top of these walls an *analepsis* is triggered and is sustained - albeit unnoticed - throughout the whole *narrative* until it catches up with its own past: the present of king Gilgamesh. Thus, one ends up exactly where one started: on the walls of Uruk.

But the *prologue* is also a *prolepsis*, pertaining to events after the return of the king (I: 1- 45). It tells of Gilgamesh as a good king, one who is brave and wise, and it refers to a wisdom acquired only after he had seen the Deep. On the other hand, the *Epic* itself tells of a young and arrogant king who abuses his power brutally, who acts unwisely and immature, who becomes confused and frightened after the death of his friend, and who goes in search for something

which every reader instinctively knows, is a futile quest. Only after he accepts that he had lost, only after failing miserably every test for acquiring life eternal, he returns to his city as the mature and sober ruler to whom the *prologue* refers. Thus, also the *prolepsis* is continued and sustained throughout the *narrative*. Gilgamesh is back in Uruk, he has learnt a hard lesson, but now he is ready to reign as king in a more mature way.

True enough, in a technical sense the *prologue* is neither a *true analepsis* nor a *true prolepsis*. Both *analepses* and *prolepses* are supposed to interrupt the *first narrative* with a *second* one (Genette 1980:48). But somehow past, present and future seem to merge on the walls of Uruk to create a kind of timelessness, already at the very beginning of the *Epic*.

George

George (2003:538) transliterates the first line of the *Epic* as follows:

ša nagba īmuru išdī māti he who saw the Deep, the foundation of the country

In this case *išdī* simply refers to the *foundation* of the country. George adheres to a conservative interpretation. He admits that the *basis of the country* (:445) may be interpreted metaphorically, that it may refer to the *Deep*, therefore agreeing with the abstract notion of wisdom. Furthermore, he also admits that *mātu* is not a synonym of *ereṭu*: the former signifies the land as a collection of people whereas the latter indicates the earth as a concrete object. Thus, the very first lines of the *Epic* could be read in an abstract, rather than in a literal way: a kind of wisdom that is indispensable to all human beings, is at stake.

George bases his transliteration on convention. Apparently the expression *išdī māti* was used to indicate the stability of the land or to keep the land stable (George 2003:778). According to this transliteration the opening lines simply form part of the summary of Gilgamesh's achievements. They have nothing to

do with the narrator's personal interests in the matter. Therefore, George's transliteration is sober, less impressive, but perhaps more reliable.

I have seen these opening lines, and it really is impossible to discern whether the second to last word should read *lušēdi* or *išdī māti*. Perhaps one should leave this debate to scholars versed in cuneiform. George (2003:778) states: *Much fantasy has indeed been brought to bear on the text's incipit, for the situation has changed only very recently, with the discovery of RM 956, a new piece of MS d. This fragment demonstrates that for the past century, ever since Haupt's copy identified the first line on MS B3 as SB I 1, readers of the epic have been telescoping into one couplet what is in fact two parallel couplets...Though some ideas put forward for these opening lines are more attractive than others, there is often little to choose between them. It also remains eminently possible in each case that none of them is right. The recovery of I.1 is a case in point, for none of the many suggestions had come close to išdī māti, and we are reminded how perilous it is to restore all but the most predictable lines of this poem. In many lines, here and elsewhere, I thus prefer to leave open to the question of restoration.*

Thus, it seems that one guess is as good as another. I would be inclined to agree with George's more conservative approach, however, Parpola's rendering certainly provides a much more romantic and imaginative reading of the *Epic*. But this section deals with a structural analysis and not with a reader-orientated one, therefore the validity of the two readings and the reliability of the different sources will not be discussed further.

Analepsis

Analepses can become quite complex. Genette (1980:49) distinguishes an *external*, an *internal* and a *mixed analepsis*. An *external analepsis* is one "whose entire extent remains external to the extent of the first narrative". Thus, the *external analepsis* reaches back before the starting point of the *narrative*

and also ends before that. An *internal analepsis* falls within the extent of the *first narrative*, reaching back later than the starting point and may or may not catch up with the point in the *narrative* where it originated. A *mixed analepsis* reaches back to a point earlier than the starting point of the *narrative* and its extent arrives at a point later than the beginning of the *first narrative*.

External and *internal analepses* function in different ways for the purpose of *narrative analysis*.

1) External analepsis

External analepses do not meddle with the *first narrative*. Their function is only to inform the reader about something that had happened before. Uta-napishtim's recount of the Deluge qualifies as an *external analepsis*: the whole cataclysm occurred long before Gilgamesh became king of Uruk. However, its function is not only to inform the reader about the flood. It also stresses the whole matter of Gilgamesh's futile search for immortality. The Deluge was a unique event that gave one human family - Uta-napishtim and his wife - the opportunity to live forever. The story of the flood is Uta-napishtim's, it has nothing to do with Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh cannot benefit from what happened long ago. He, like all other human beings are born to die someday. There is no way that this fate can be averted. Thus the informative function of this *second narrative* is loaded with meaning that extends beyond the scope of the whole *Epic*: it pertains to life itself.

2) Internal analepsis

Internal analepses are somewhat more problematical. These *second narratives* are embedded in the temporal field of the *first narrative*, therefore they might interfere with it by means of *collision* or *redundancy* (Genette 1980:50). Genette (1980:51&51), distinguishes between *internal heterodiegetic* and *internal homodiegetic analepses*.

i) Internal heterodiegetic analepsis

Internal heterodiegetic analepses are “*analepses dealing with a story line (and thus with a diegetic content) different from the content (or contents) of the first narrative*” (Genette 1980:50). This means that the *second narrative* differs from the *first* one, although they coincide temporally. These *internal heterodiegetic analepses* do not normally interfere with the *story line* of the *first narrative*, as their usual function is to shed light on the past of a character that has been introduced recently, or on one who has been out of sight for some time.

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* does have a few such *internal heterodiegetic analepses*. Enkidu becomes human after he and Shamhat made love for six days and seven nights, apparently without stop. Thereafter his earlier friends, the animals reject him and he returns to Shamhat to learn his purpose in life. She tells him that he is to go to Uruk to meet king Gilgamesh. Enkidu immediately wants to challenge the king and show him who is the stronger one, but Shamhat remembers the two dreams that Gilgamesh had. She recalls that Gilgamesh had these dreams before Enkidu came down from the hills, and when he woke up, he told his mother what he had dreamed (I:226-241; I:259-264): heavy objects fell from the heaven and he was unable to pick them up.

What is interesting in this case is that the distinction between *first* and *second narrative* becomes rather unclear. From the very beginning the *first narrative* proposed to record the *story* of king Gilgamesh of Uruk. But at some stage in the *narrative discourse* the Shamhat/Enkidu episode became quite spontaneously and without any abrupt interruptions part of a *first narrative*: the creation of Enkidu and his existence on the steppe until the prostitute came to change everything. The *internal heterodiegetic analepses* - the dreams - are occurring now as though they are interrupting a seemingly *primary narrative*. The contents are different from the present *story line*.

However, the events that are remembered have a bearing on what really is the *first narrative* - the *story* of Gilgamesh. In the nearby future the Shamhat/Enkidu episode will once again blend smoothly and unproblematically with the Gilgamesh-*narrative* and becomes so part of it, that one wonders whether this constitutes a *second narrative* at all.

These *heterodiegetic analepses* are inserted back into the *primary narrative* where they do actually belong when Gilgamesh and Enkidu meet and fight like young bulls. However, after this initial clash, they become firm friends. But at some stage during the friendship, Enkidu becomes depressed. At seeing his friend becoming depressed, Gilgamesh suggests that they go down to the Cedar Forest to slay Humbaba. Rather panic-stricken Enkidu remembers the earlier days when he had actually encountered the presence of the monster (II:170-174). This remembrance is also an *internal heterodiegetic analepsis*: Enkidu's early days, although they coincide temporally with the *story* line of Gilgamesh, play no significant part in the *Epic*, and they have a different content altogether. Very little detail is given about these days, except that Enkidu lived and grazed like an animal. Now, by means of a chiasmic structure this remembrance that is only Enkidu's, is repeated as an urgent warning (II:189-193): Humbaba is extremely dangerous. In this way the initial *internal heterodiegetic analepsis* is once again drawn into the *first narrative* and becomes part of the *story* line.

ii) Internal homodiegetic analepses

Internal homodiegetic analepses are “*internal analepses that deal with the same line of action as the first narrative*” (Genette 1980:51). Genette (1980:51-54) distinguishes between *completing* and *iterative internal homodiegetic analepses*.

iii) Completing internal homodiegetic analepsis

Simple ellipsis

Completing analepses fill in “gaps” in the *narrative* by means of *simple ellipses*, or “breaks” in the temporal continuity (Genette 1980:51). Rephrased this means that certain events are left out and remembered later to fill in those missing “gaps” in time. If one - perhaps hypothetically - considers Gilgamesh’s dreams now for the time being as part of the same *narrative*, one would have a case of *internal homodiegetic analepses* which fill in the “gap” between Gilgamesh’s terrorisation of his people and the coming of Enkidu. Despite his arrogant attitude, Gilgamesh is rather lonesome and desperately longs for a friend. Although he was chosen by the gods for this task, being king is a lonely business.

In the end it must be said that, considering these dreams as *internal analepses* - whether they be *hetero-* or *homodiegetic* - is a hypothetical matter. The *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) is not very specific about time at all. For example, say the tyranny of the city started in 2356 BCE, perhaps sometime during August and Enkidu was created the following August in 2355 BCE. Sometime later Shamhat and Enkidu sat down and talked on a Sunday in June 2346 BCE. Suddenly Shamhat remembered a dream that Gilgamesh had on another Sunday night in June 2350 BCE that made her think. But nothing of the kind. One can merely assume that Gilgamesh dreamed of Enkidu after the latter had been created: one can merely assume that the creation of Enkidu took place after the starting point of the *Epic*.

However, one runs into trouble if one tries to work out their ages. Then one needs to assume otherwise, namely, that Gilgamesh, the very young child dreamed about Enkidu, before his reign of terror started in Uruk. Everything changes, and the dreams become pure *external analepses*, also fulfilling the function of a *prolepsis*.

Paralipsis

The second type of a *completing analepsis* Genette (1980:52) calls a *paralipsis*. Just like an *ellipsis*, a *paralipsis* also fills in “gaps”, however, in this case an event or a person is deliberately sidestepped or not mentioned at all. *Paralipses* usually pertain to traumatic events or to persons who caused these events from a character’s past, events and people he or she wishes to forget because the memories are too painful. It is very difficult to ascertain whether the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) contain any *paralipses*. There are certainly many gaps: perhaps the closest one can get to a *paralipses* is the many references Gilgamesh makes in Tablet VI to Ishtar’s misfortunate lovers. Obviously his words brought back memories that she would rather forget, she was hurt and insulted by what he had said. But, besides for the reference to Tammuz, the reader is kept in the dark with regards to the other painful events. Presumably the ancient recipients knew what they were.

Nevertheless, there do not appear to be deliberate repressions of other painful experiences. A trauma like Enkidu’s untimely death is openly lamented: in fact, Gilgamesh’s elegy is repeated time and again - as the next section will illustrate.

iv) Iterative internal homodiegetic analepsis

Iterative internal homodiegetic analepses are also called *repeating analepses* (Genette 1980: 54). These *ellipses* deal with several portions of elapsed time as if they were alike. In Genette’s discussion (cf. Genette 1980:53-61) it becomes obvious that the *nouveau roman* appropriates this device for different purposes than ancient literature did. However, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) does have significant repetitive recalls.

After the death of Enkidu, Gilgamesh roams the plains on his way to Uta-napishtim, in search of everlasting life. He passes through the tunnel of Shamash/the sun, and he reaches the seashore where Siduri the barmaid lives. She inquires after his mission, and he gives her a very long explanation: Enkidu, his friend whom he loved dearly, and with whom he did several remarkable heroic deeds, had died tragically (X:48-75). This is exactly the same explanation that he gives to Urshanabi, the boatman of Uta-napishtim (X:122-146 - lines 64,69 and 73 are omitted in the reply to Urshanabi). And this reply is repeated to Uta-napishtim (X:221-248).

Gilgamesh's repetitive answer stresses his obsessive thoughts on death and dying, his obsession with everlasting life. To every question he has only one answer that actually becomes quite boring after a while. But he really has nothing else to say. In this regard Genette (1980:54) points out that these *repeating analepses* may become *redundant*. This is a valid question as one does become fed-up with Gilgamesh who is unable to snap out of it. Nevertheless, these repetitions do stress his pain over his deceased friend and also the obsessive-compulsive nature of his reasoning.

But another thing is brought to the foreground: his perspective has changed. Those heroic deeds - slaying Humbaba, the Bull of Heaven, hunting down lions - which he used to boast about, are now painful reminiscences. Life without Enkidu has no meaning at all. Driven by sorrow and his fear for death, the only way to continue for Gilgamesh is by means of conquering death itself. He needs to obtain everlasting life. But he fails to see the paradox: if it would become possible for him to live forever, he would have to do so without Enkidu anyway. Perhaps the fear would gradually diminish and eventually go away, but the sorrow would remain. Gilgamesh rejects the advice given him by the barmaid and Uta-napishtim, advice that boils down to: death is inevitable. *Gilgamesh, you are going to die, sooner or later.* But in the meanwhile, until that fateful event occurs, you are alive, you have a life that needs to be lived an even to be enjoyed whilst it lasts.

v) Mixed analepsis

A last question Genette (1980:61) asks with regard to *analepses* pertains to *mixed analepses*, to the way in which *analepses* interrupt and then rejoin the *first narrative*. A *partial analepsis* ends on an ellipsis without rejoining the *first narrative*. Thus, there is a “gap” between the end of the *analepsis* and the beginning of the *first narrative*. If one assumes that Gilgamesh dreamed about Enkidu whilst he was merely an infant - that is before the starting point of the *Epic* - there is a portion of his life about which nothing is known, therefore an *ellipsis*. The intervening period of his growing up, or the way in which he became king is seemingly not relevant to the *Epic* at all. (But this reasoning would not apply to the assumption that Gilgamesh dreamed about Enkidu after he became king of Uruk, because in this case the dream becomes an *internal homodiegetic analepsis*.)

A *complete analepsis* is an external one which rejoins the *first narrative* and becomes part of the *narrative discourse* without any “gap” between the ends of the *analepsis* and the beginning of the *narrative*. In other words, the *external analepsis* overlaps with the starting point of the *narrative*. This type of *analepsis* does not feature in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. However, if his growing up years had been recounted, perhaps explaining why his reign became one of terror in its early years, this might have been a case of *complete analepsis*. But the early years of Gilgamesh remain a mystery.

Prolepsis

Genette (1980:67) states that “*anticipation, or temporal prolepsis, is clearly less frequent than the inverse figure, at least in Western narrative tradition*”, but admits that “*each of the three great early epics, the Iliad, the Odyssey and the Aeneid begins with a sort of anticipatory summary that to a certain extent justifies the formula Todorov applied to the Homeric narrative: plot of*

predestination.” Obviously Genette has not heard of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV), furthermore this *narrative* is not really a *plot of predestination*, and the *prologue* (I:1-45) is not only an *anticipatory summary*. The narrator does propose to make known to all and everyone everything that Gilgamesh has learnt (Parpola, I:1-2), it is about to tell about his search into faraway regions, the difficult paths that he had trod, his discovery of what had been before the Deluge, the secrets of ancient times, and his heroic manner of conducting battle. It is even going to tell of his encounter with Uta-napishtim. Yet this is a tale of the past, what is to be disclosed is not going to take place, everything happened a long time ago. Therefore it should be noted once again that the *prologue* of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) is neither purely *proleptic* nor purely *analeptic*, but rather a unique mixture of both.

Prolepses hold the same distinctions as *analepses*. *Prolepses* are *internal*, *external* or *mixed* (Genette 1980:68)

1) External prolepsis

External prolepses reach beyond the scope of the *first narrative* - in other words, these would pertain to episodes that take place after the closing point of the *story*, and they do not interfere with the first narrative. Thus the *prologue* of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* - if one does not merely regard this as an *anticipatory summary* - qualifies as a type of *external prolepsis* (cf. the discussion under the heading *anachrony*): only after Gilgamesh saw the Deep, he became the wise and mature king who is lauded in the *prologue*. But besides the *prologue*, nothing else is recorded about these prosperous years of reign.

2) Internal prolepsis

Internal prolepses, just like *internal analepses* do interfere with the story line of the *first narrative*. In this regard the category of *internal heterodiegetic prolepsis* is not applicable, for whether anticipation is external or internal, it

would have a different interest than the *first narrative*. As far as *internal homodiegetic prolepses* are concerned, Genette (1908:71) differentiates between *completing* and *repeating prolepses*.

i) Completing prolepsis

Completing prolepses “fill ahead of time a later blank” (Genette 1980:71). In a very uncertain sense Enkidu’s vision of hell (VII:165-202) may qualify as an example of such a prolepsis. As Enkidu lies dying, he has a dream in which he is seized by a bird-like, beast-like young man who drags him down to the Netherworld. If one disregards tablet XII as part of the *Epic*, Enkidu’s time after his death is filled in by this episode.

ii) Repeating prolepsis

Most of the *prolepses* in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) are in the form of dreams and fall into Genette’s category of “those that - still ahead of time - double, however slightly, a narrative section to come (repeating prolepses)” (Genette 1980:71). This appears to be more intricate than it seems at first, because Genette (1980:75) also states that true *prolepses* do create anticipation and should not be confused with advance notices and advance mentions. Especially because one is dealing with an ancient text like the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, and especially because Akkadian is not one’s first language, it is very difficult to ascertain the exact notice of each utterance. What seems to be an anticipation for one person, may just as well be an advance notice for another. Therefore, unfortunately one has to guess.

So, back to the dreams of Gilgamesh whilst Shamhat is instructing Enkidu on his purpose in life: to befriend the restless young king of Uruk. Gilgamesh dreamed of Enkidu some time ago, and his mother, the clever and wise Ninsun, explained these dreams: some time in the future, he is to meet a loyal and trustworthy friend, in her eyes, his equal (I:250-255; I:267-269). At

this stage the reader is not supposed to know that Gilgamesh and Enkidu are going to become blood brothers. Gilgamesh has just been portrayed by the narrator as the arrogant young king who abuses his power: the women have in the meanwhile prayed for the creation of his double in order to have his energy curbed. Enkidu is the answer to their prayers, but no one knows for certain what the result will be when Enkidu does meet Gilgamesh and challenge his strength. Ninsun's explanation, although she is a goddess, still has to be put to the test. Therefore, in these instances anticipation is created, and these passages do qualify as *internal completing prolepses*.

However, not all dreams are *internal completing prolepses*. The next series of dreams are the ones that Gilgamesh has as he and Enkidu travel towards the Cedar Woods to slay Humbaba (tablet IV). Every time that they pitch camp for the night, they perform rituals in order to provoke a dream, however, for Gilgamesh these dreams turn out to be nightmares. He relates his dreams to Enkidu, who tells him soothingly every time that he has nothing to worry about, and that everything will work out just fine.

The first question one needs to ask, is whether or not Gilgamesh's recounting of his dreams could also be regarded as *analepses* as well. The answer is no. The lapse of time between the event and its recall is simply too short. Gilgamesh vividly remembers the dream as he wakes up shivering and upset. The same argument holds for the dream Enkidu has about his own death. These dreams are recounted as soon as they happened, therefore they have the sense of the immediate presence rather than an aspect of retrospective remembrance.

However, these five dreams of Gilgamesh in tablet IV do create anticipation: the reader is aware of the ferocious nature of the monster, and is also aware of the fact that the two heroes are acting against the will of the god Enlil who appointed Humbaba to guard the Cedar Woods. Yes, Ninsun has asked Shamash for the protection of her son (II:42-56), but will he do so? Anything

might still happen. This feeling of anticipation increases when Shamash himself urges the two heroes to hurry towards the woods (IV:192-197) and carry out their intentions. It is almost as though the combat has taken on cosmic dimensions, a struggle between two gods who use the heroes and the monster as their pawns: Gilgamesh and Enkidu on the side of Shamash, and Humbaba on the side of Enlil.

The last matter of *prolepsis* concerns Enkidu's dream about his own death. Whether this is a *true prolepsis* can be doubted, because once again, very soon after he realises the implication of his dream, he becomes ill. Nevertheless, one cannot know how many days, weeks, and months or even years elapsed between VII:1 and VII:162 - that is from the beginning of the dream until the illness becomes full-blown. In between Enkidu becomes rebellious, cursing all and everyone, unwilling to accept his fate. Then, reprimanded by Shamash, he withdraws his curse on Shamhat. Only after that does he become really ill. Nevertheless, this passage does not seem to create the same sense of anticipation, because this dream comes true fairly quickly after it is recounted. And it comes rather as a shock: after Gilgamesh and Enkidu slew Humbaba, after they killed the Bull of Heaven, the gods decide that one of them shall die - an untimely and tragic end to a sincere and deep friendship. Therefore this dream does not create anticipation, one should rather say it gives a sad advance notice.

Achrony

Genette (1980:83) defines *achronies* as "*proleptic analepses*" and "*analeptic prolepses*", paraphrased as follows: "*It would happen later as we have already seen,*" or "*It had already happened, as we shall see later.*" The initial remarks on the *prologue* of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* pointed out that it is an *analepsis* and a *prolepsis* at the same time, however, also that it does not qualify as a *true* example of either, therefore it is not a case of *true achrony*. Although the narrator appears to be saying "*it had already happened as we shall see later*",

that which had happened is what he is going to tell about: the *story* that is going to become the *narrative*. This is different from isolated events which are being recalled and which will (or will not) interrupt the *narrative* at a later stage. Therefore, although the remote past becomes alive in the present of the reader, and although the *Epic* does create a feeling of timelessness, one cannot really say that present, past and future become confused.

Remarks

The ancient *Epic of Gilgamesh* succeeds in weaving its *primary* and *secondary* narratives in a masterly manner by means of its different devices with regards to *order*. This happens in a remarkable spontaneous and natural manner. Nothing is forced cerebrally. And that is exactly why it works. Together with the narrator the narratee moves along the lines of the narrative, now here, then there, sometimes in the middle of the action, sometimes outside and involved in events that took place many years before, of those that will only realise in the distant future.

2.1.2. Duration

Genette's later work (1988) is in a sense a defence of and a commentary on his earlier (1980) one. As far as *duration* is concerned, he notes that there are some levels of *duration* that are virtually impossible to compare with one another, therefore it is also impossible to ascertain the relationship between any of these (cf. Genette 1988:33-34). To begin with, the *story* has a specific duration: so many days, weeks, months or years, and so forth. These are recounted in the *text*: so many pages (or tablets in the case of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* [SBV]). However, the *text* needs to be read: so many pages (tablets) per hour. And due to the different circumstances and capabilities of different readers, *duration* expressed in terms of these relationships is very difficult, if not impossible.

In his 1988 work, Genette (1988:33) admits to a difference between an oral and a written *text*. An *oral narrative* - literary or not - does have a measurable *duration*: how long does it take to recite the *narrative*? The first oral Sumerian poems of *Gilgamesh* must have had a duration that perhaps could have been measured. As far as the later versions are concerned - the *Old Babylonian Version* and the *Standard* one - it is still unclear whether these were recited loudly or merely read or copied out quietly. However, even oral *durations* cannot be fixed for the simple reason that one person speaks slower or faster than another one. Even quoting dialogue into the *narrative* that is the closest one can get to the actual *duration* in the *story*, poses this problem (Genette 1980:87). So, the only way to measure the reading of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is: how many clay tablets per hour, per day or even per week - a matter which obviously would vary greatly according to the reading skills in Akkadian of the different readers. Consequently, for these very variable and undeterminable matters, Genette (1988:33-34) prefers to use the term *pseudo-time*. Furthermore he proposes that his chapter in *Narrative Discourse* (1980) should bear the heading *Speed* instead of *Duration*, or perhaps even *Speeds*, since “no narrative moves forward at an entirely steady pace...” (Genette 1988:34).

Thus, *duration* examines the connections between the *variable duration of the story sections* and the *length of the text* in which they are recounted (*i.e. the pseudo-duration*): *duration* pertains to connections of *speed*. The rhythm of a narrative is determined by the accordance or discordance between the duration of the story sections and the pseudo-duration. For example, there is considerable correspondence between dialogue in the *story* and its verbatim report in the *narrative*. But on the other hand, an expression like *for six days and seven nights* leaps over story-time within a few words to pleat time, as it were.

Finally Genette (1980:88) states: “...it is hard to imagine the existence of a narrative that would admit no variation in speed - and even this banal observation is somewhat important: a narrative can do without anachronies,

but not without anisochronies or, if one prefers (as one probably does), effects of rhythm.”

Anisochrony

Anisochrony pertains to the rhythm of *narrative discourse*, the *speed* with which it moves forward or slows down. *Narrated time* as compared to *narrating time* - that is the *duration of the story* set against the *length of the text* - indicates the *rhythm of narrative discourse*. Genette (1980:95) distinguishes four basic forms of *narrative movement* that he calls *the four narrative movements: pause, scene, summary and ellipsis*. He postulates the following scheme:

pause: NT = n, ST = 0 Thus NT oo > ST

scene: NT = ST

summary: NT < ST

ellipsis: NT = 0, ST = n Thus NT < oo ST

ST = story time; NT = pseudo-time of the narrative

oo > = infinitely greater than; oo < = infinitely smaller than

1) Summary

A *summary* is defined as “...*the narration in a few paragraphs or a few pages of several days, months or years of existence, without details of action or speech*”, (Genette 1980: 5&96). The *narrative* sums up what happened over a relatively long period in a relatively short way. Traditionally *summaries* functioned as a “*transition between two scenes, the background against which scenes stand out,*” (Genette 1980:97). For the flow of the *narrative*, *summaries* are necessary, however, they do not pertain to the dramatic moments of action or events.

A typical *summary* would be something like: “The beautiful goddess Ninsun fell in love with the young and handsome king Lugalbanda of Uruk. They married

and had one son whom they called Gilgamesh. However, Lugalbanda died tragically in a battle against Enmerbaragesi whilst his son was but a baby. Gilgamesh grew up without the strict discipline of a father. His mother doted on him since he was the living image of his father, so he turned out to be rather something of a spoilt brat. Thus, when he was made king of Uruk, he started his reign by abusing his power brutally.”

This type of *summary* seems absent in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Periods of time are either left out by means of *ellipses* (discussion follows), apparently because they are totally irrelevant, or otherwise acceleration is effected by means of *scenes* (see later). Genette (1980:97) notices the absence of *true summaries* also in Proust’s *Recherche*. Somehow, the ancient author just like Proust, decided against the use of this literary device just because it is available. Thus, it seems that many literary devices are at the disposal of authors, but that creative authors are not compelled to use them all.

2) Pause

Pauses are traditionally those long descriptive passages in which no action takes place, for example a description of a beautiful garden, the picture of a landscape, or of the view of the snow on the mountains, and so forth. Strictly speaking, a *true pause* is when an external *narrator* describes a picture “*solely for the information of his reader*”, (Genette 1980:100). This implies that the inward thoughts of a character are not really *pauses*, because the narrative does not exactly come to a halt.

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) does not have many such *pauses*. The closest one gets to a *pause* is in the beginning of tablet V. Gilgamesh and Enkidu completed the long journey towards the Cedar Forest, and have just arrived at its entrance. They stand still to admire the beauty of the trees. One gets the impression that a picture of beauty, peace and quiet is being created (V:1-16) [this description may even continue, but from line 11 the tablet is badly

damaged, therefore it is impossible to ascertain exactly how long this *pause* is]: the cedars are high, they decorate the slopes of the mountains where the gods live, they joyfully cast their sweet shadows, elsewhere there are aromatic smelling plants or shrubs. But within this serene presentation, Humbaba's spoor (V:4) casts an ominous smudge. All is not what it seems: the proverbial calm before the storm. Later on the picturesque beauty of the Cedar Forest contrasts sharply with the ugly fight that takes place within: the fight between Humbaba on the one hand, and Gilgamesh and Enkidu on the other.

This *pause* comes just after the long journey that comprises most of tablet IV. Now the *narrative* needs to take a deep breath after a period of travelling a long distance without stop, and before swinging back into action, before launching the deathly attack. Here the *pause* functions to highlight contrasts: the contrast between beauty and ugly; between stillness and movement. The initial dialogue between the men and the monster slowly but surely increases the tension by postponing the moment of the violent attack. As has been said, the text is badly damaged. However, the dialogue between Humbaba and the heroes can be reconstructed from V:81 to approximately line 103. The fight itself is described in V:115-126 - only eleven lines. Thereafter dialogue functions in an opposite way by slowing down the *narrative* as Humbaba desperately pleads for his life. And then, within one single line, the monster is beheaded.

Tablet VIII is perhaps an indication of a very long *pause*. It commences with Gilgamesh who summons the whole of the land, the people, the animals, and the animate and inanimate objects to mourn the death of his friend.

Everybody and everything *pauses* at the deathbed of Enkidu. Equally drawn out are the elaborations on the various gifts that are prepared to accompany Enkidu on his journey to the Netherworld. Enkidu has died. Everything must come to a standstill until the proper burial rites had been carried out. This whole tablet centres on the deceased Enkidu. One may conclude Tablet VIII, by

means of this very long *pause*, marks a transition between youthful self-reliance and the shocking realisation that even great accomplishments do not guarantee an everlasting life. The ideal of establishing an everlasting name by means of heroic deeds during one's life is cancelled by the realisation that the very thread of life is to be cut at some point or another.

Another *pause* or descriptive passage is at the end of tablet IX:175-195. Gilgamesh has passed through the tunnel of Shamash/the sun and finds himself at the seashore in the paradise where the trees and fruit are of semi-precious stone. This *pause* also functions to slow down the *narrative*, also after a period of very fast and intense movement. Gilgamesh's journey towards this location was a desperate race against time. For eleven double hours he rushed forth at a deadly pace, seeing only darkness behind and in front of him. Suddenly he finds himself in bright daylight, and not far off is a beautiful paradise. Gilgamesh has time to catch his breath and admire his surroundings before he proceeds on his journey towards Utnapishtim. This *pause* is also followed by dialogue (the dialogue between Gilgamesh and Siduri), and then by a fight - the fight Gilgamesh picks up with Urshanabi, the boatman. But instead of being the hero, Gilgamesh turns out to be the fool this time: his only success is the destruction of the Stone Things without which the boat cannot pass the Waters of Death. And instead of beheading a monster that might have killed him, he faces the inevitability of his own death.

3) Ellipsis

Genette (1980:106) states: "*From a temporal point of view, the analysis of ellipses comes down to considering the story time elided*", that is, time in the story not accounted for in *narrative discourse*. There are two types of *ellipses*: *definite ellipses* and *indefinite ellipses*. *Definite ellipses* indicate the elided time, for example: "Four years and two months later..." *Indefinite ellipses* do not indicate temporal duration, for example, "Some years later..."

Furthermore *ellipses* can be *explicit* (Genette 1980:106), *implicit* (Genette 1980:108) or *hypothetical* (Genette 1980:109).

i) Explicit ellipsis

Explicit ellipses are either definite or indefinite and they pertain to the examples mentioned above. The *narrative discourse* states explicitly that some *story time* has passed; *narrative time* pleated itself over so many years, or some time. On the whole the *narrative* of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) is not really concerned about being specific on temporal elapses. Indications of time are specified by means of *bēru* (George 2003:494): *bēru* is an ambiguous term for it may indicate either a measure of time - usually translated with *double hours* - or a measure of distance – then translated with *league*. In this regard one may state that the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is explicit with regards to temporal elapses, however, it is impossible to ascertain the exact duration. The other temporal indication occurs in the expression *for six days and seven nights*. However, this is rather an idiomatic utterance than one that has to do with a literal six days and seven nights - for example, *a week later* will simply not carry the same meaning as *for six days and seven nights*.

ii) Implicit ellipsis

Implicit ellipses are *mute* (Genette 1980:108). The reader has to work out for himself or herself that some indefinite time has elapsed, but can do so only indirectly after becoming aware of some chronological gap in *narrative* continuity. *Ellipses* of this kind do appear in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV), and the most obvious examples are in tablet I. Obviously a number of years had gone by since Enkidu's creation by the goddess Aruru (I:84&85), until the time that he is spotted by the hunter (I:96). Nothing is said about Enkidu's childhood, or of his growing up. Even if one assumes that he was created as a young adult from the start, this is merely a guess, and even then, he could not have been spotted by the hunter immediately after his creation: at least a day

or two must have gone by. A period of Enkidu's life is not accounted for - thus an *implicit* and *indefinite ellipsis*.

Likewise, after the raucous party with the shepherds, Enkidu becomes their friend who keeps watch at night, protecting their flock against wolves and lions (II:44-52). Suddenly a young man who is on his way to Uruk appears in the picture (II:53) and is questioned by Shamhat (on Enkidu's request) to explain what is going on (II:54-63). The next scene is the fight between Gilgamesh and Enkidu in Uruk. Obviously Enkidu did not spend only one night at the camp of the shepherds, and also one may assume that he would not simply rush off to the big city without saying goodbye. Furthermore, the trip from the shepherds' den to the centre of the city must have taken some hours at least, if not days or even weeks. Once again there is a period of time not accounted for, therefore an *implicit* and *indefinite ellipsis*.

The whole of tablet IV tells about the long and exhausting journey towards the Cedar Forest. Tablet V recounts the fight between the two friends and Humbaba, and ends where Gilgamesh and Enkidu load their raft with wood and with the head of Humbaba (V:253). In the next tablet they are suddenly back in Uruk where the goddess Ishtar falls in love with Gilgamesh the moment she sees him (VI:1-7). Although they travel back by river that is apparently quicker than by land (why did they not do so in the first place?), the reader does not know how long did this journey take: hours, days, weeks, or months? An *implicit* and *indefinite ellipsis*.

There may be another one or two examples of this kind. However, most probably these literary devices were not deliberately applied by the ancient author. Certainly, Enkidu's early life before he became a human being was not important to this author, likewise he considered the time Enkidu spent with the shepherds and the time that it took to go to Uruk, irrelevant. Also the time that it took to travel back by river from the Cedar Forest to Uruk, is of no significance. It must be kept in mind that this author had existing material at his

disposal which he had to appropriate creatively in order to compose the *Epic* (SBV): this *narrative* is all about Gilgamesh, and if a time passes during which nothing significant happens, it is simply not worth the while to tell about it.

4) Scene

Traditionally a *scene* pertains to “*the strong periods of the action coinciding with the most intense moments of the narrative*”, (Genette 1980:109). *Scenes* are moments of dramatic actions described in an equal dramatic way. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) is mainly written in the form of dramatic *scenes* alternating with dialogue.

The first half of the *Epic* contain episodes of dramatic action, all portrayed intensely by means of *scenes*: Enkidu and Shamhat making love (I:171-177); the party with the shepherds (II:35-49); the fight between Gilgamesh and Enkidu (II:77-98); the fight with Humbaba (V:115-126); the fight with the Bull of Heaven (VI:145-152). Just like *scenes*, dialogues are supposed to be those *narrative* sections where *story* time equals *narrative* time. Dialogue, in this first half of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV), slows down the pace of *narrative discourse*, especially where long dialogues either precede or are followed by descriptions of rapid action. The long conversations with Humbaba before and after the fight (tablet V) are typical examples.

The second half of the *Epic* contains hardly any action. Brief introductory remarks and dialogue characterise this part. Enkidu dies in tablet VII.

Thereafter everything slows down. The pace of the *narrative* is drawn out almost excruciatingly by means of dialogue that becomes like a monotonous monologue as Gilgamesh laments Enkidu's death. The only thing that really happens is Gilgamesh roaming the plains in search of everlasting life. Tablet VII starts with Enkidu's dream (SBV) about his own death; both he and Gilgamesh verbalise their sorrow and fear by means of long dialogue. The

whole of tablet VIII tells of Enkidu's funeral, mainly in the words of Gilgamesh as he calls up everybody to mourn his friend and prepare the various gifts for Enkidu to keep the inhabitants of the Netherworld happy. Tablet IX poses a problem: the lamentations of Gilgamesh remain, but apparently some action takes place between lines 12-38 (before he meets the Scorpion People). After having a dream, he takes up his axe and his sword again, (IX:13-16), but what he does with them, is unclear. The *text* is broken, and some lines (29-36) are completely missing. In tablet X there is one brief moment of action as Gilgamesh tries to take Urshanabi by surprise (X:94-108). As Gilgamesh is introduced to Uta-napishtim, the latter philosophies about life and death (X:266-327), and the most of tablet XI is Uta-napishtim's recount of the Deluge (XI:8-204). Gilgamesh fails the two tests for obtaining life eternal quickly and decisively, and abruptly returns to Uruk.

Remarks

Thus, this ancient *narrative* seems to have a concept of increasing or decreasing time: the heroic times of Gilgamesh and Enkidu are short, sudden and intense. Then, when Enkidu dies, Gilgamesh has too much time on hands, and the worst of it all is that nothing happens during this time. He has too much time to think. His obsessive thoughts drive him insane until he needs to be shocked back into reality: he is going to die anyway. All that he has left, is time, time during which he needs to work out a life which is meaningful for himself and for others. This life becomes visible on the walls of Uruk, a concrete and tangible monument by which he shall be remembered. Somehow he succeeded.

2.1.3. Frequency

Frequency has bearing on the relationships between the *events* that occur *repetitively* in the *story*, and the *many times* (or lack of it) that they are

repeated in the narrative. In other words, this has to do with how many times did something really happen, and how many times is it reported in the *narrative*.

Culler, in his foreword to Genette (1980:11) remarks: “*Repetition, a common form of frequency, has emerged as the central technique in avant garde novels.*” *Narrative frequency* pertains to “*the relations of frequency (or more simply, of repetition) between the narrative and the diegesis,*” (Genette 1980:113). This means that an event in the *story* may happen once, twice, or many more times. This event may be recounted in the *narrative* once, twice, or many more times. In this way a relationship is established between the repetition of *story-events* and the *narrative statements* pertaining to these events. In this regard Genette (1980:113) points out that “*identical events*” or the “*recurrence of the same event*” is an abstract mental construction, because every event is in fact unique, even the sun that rises everyday. Events are considered similar only in terms of their resemblance. Nevertheless he (Genette 1980:114) reduces a system of relationships to four virtual types: “*the event repeated or not, the statement repeated or not.*” This is expounded as follows:

- 1) Narrating once what happened once (abbr. **1N/1S**) (Genette 1980:114).

Example: “*Yesterday I went to bed early.*”

This is also called the *singulative narrative* because both *narrative statement* and *narrated event* are singular and they correspond to each other. This is the most common type of *narration* in *narrative discourse* that is also appropriated in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV). The many *scenes* in the *Epic* fall into this category: the fight between Gilgamesh and Enkidu; the fight with Humbaba; the slaying of the Bull of Heaven, and so forth. What happened once is reported once only.

2) Narrating n times what happened n times (**nN/nS**) (Genette 1980:114)

Example: “*Monday I went to bed early. Tuesday I went to bed early. Wednesday I went to bed early.*” (Genette 1980:115).

Strictly speaking this is also a *singulative narrative* because *narrative statements* correspond to *narrated events*: however Genette (1980:115) prefers to call this an *anaphoric* type of relationship. *Singulative* in this case pertains to the matter of equality, not to number: *anaphoric* relationships deal with something that occurred more than once and is narrated more than once.

The repetitions in tablet IV in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) is an example of such an *anaphoric* relationship. The journey towards the Cedar Forest takes place in five stages: lines 1-20; 34-52 (line 6 is not repeated); 73-92; 109-129 (with the addition of line 113); 145-163. The same thing happens five times consecutively: for three days they travel a long distance, apparently without stopping. They pitch camp for the night and dig a well for some water. Then Gilgamesh climbs to the top of the hillside, pours out some flour as an offering and requests a dream from Shamash. Enkidu also performs some rituals and eventually they fall asleep. In the middle of their sleep, Gilgamesh wakes up trembling after a nightmare he has just had. The dream is different every time, but the explanation is the same: it is a good omen.

Reading the same twenty lines five times over does become monotonous after a while. However, it becomes clear that Gilgamesh and Enkidu are not having a holiday or a pleasure trip for doing some sightseeing: they have one purpose in mind namely to slay Humbaba. Therefore they need to get to the Cedar Forest as fast as possible. The monotony of the journey and the set frame of their minds are stressed by means of this technique: tablet IV is not exactly the most exciting tablet in the *Epic* as nothing remarkable happens - they travel, eat, sleep and dream - but the repetitions in the tablet does have a remarkable effect.

The same thing happens in tablet IX when Gilgamesh departs from the Scorpion People to proceed through the tunnel of the (S)un (IX:141-173). For eight double-hours everything remains exactly the same: the thick tangible darkness through which he races against time. However, in this series of repetitions, there is a turning point: at the ninth double-hour he becomes aware of the northern wind on his face (IX:165-166). The darkness is still the same and does not allow him to look behind him, and the race is not over yet, but things are about to change, hopefully for the better. Indeed, at the eleventh double-hour he realises that he is ahead of the (S)un (IX:171-172), and the bright light appears at the twelfth double-hour (IX:173). By maintaining the sameness of the circumstances for eight double-hours, a favourable turn from the ninth one comes as a pleasant surprise.

3) Narrating n times what happened once (**nN/1S**) (Genette 1980:115)

Example: “*Yesterday I went to bed early; yesterday I went to bed early; yesterday I went to bed early.*”

Genette (1980:115) calls this a *repeating narrative*, and in this regard he remarks: “*This form might seem purely hypothetical, an ill-framed offspring of the combinative mind, irrelevant to literature. Let us remember, however, that certain modern texts are based on the narrative’s capacity for repetition*” and then he quotes examples from some of these modern texts. But the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) uses exactly this device in Gilgamesh’s long lamentations as he mourns the death of his friend, roaming the plains in search of everlasting life (see the discussion under the heading: *iterative internal homodiegetic analepsis*). Enkidu died once - Gilgamesh tells about it over and over. Just like the mentioned discussion points out, the recurring thoughts that pertain only to one matter, stresses an obsession and irrational behaviour. Gilgamesh manifests a major depression. He neglects his appearance, he is unable to

carry out his duties as king. He is driven by a flight from death towards a quest for life eternal, both flight and quest are equally futile.

4) Narrating one time (or rather at one time) what happened n times (**1N/nS**) (Genette 1980:116).

Example: “*Every day of the week I went to bed early*” instead of “*Monday I went to bed early, Tuesday I went to bed early, Wednesday I went to bed early.*”

Genette (1980:116) calls this type of statement the *iterative narrative*. It is tempting to consider expressions which contain *kaiānamma* (the whole time e.g. I:110&111), or *6 urrī 7 mūšī* (6 days and 7 nights, e.g. I:177) may be a form of *iterative narrative*. In the sense of the classical novel they certainly are: they do function as an *informative frame or background* (Genette 1980:117), therefore they are rather subordinate to *singulative scenes*. This happens to be the case in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV). Genette (1980:118-160) goes into much detail as far as *iterative narration* is concerned. Typical expressions are *each time that...or every now and then...* which appear to be of great significance, not merely functioning as a background for a *scene*. A typical *iterative* novel would recount a series entitled something like *Sundays in the summer of 1890* (Genette 1980: 127): what used to happen every Sunday during the summer months of 1980?

In Genette’s discussion of the *iterative narrative* (cf. Genette 1980:118-160), it becomes clear that the ancient author does not appropriate this device with the same significance as Proust (or any author of the *nouveau roman*). Apparently seasons are irrelevant. The reader has to infer that Gilgamesh’s face that is burnt by heat and by cold is due to the many seasons that he roamed the plains (cf. the lamentations in tablet X). Days and months do play a role (cf. the trip towards the Cedar Forest in tablet V), but not weeks. (For example, do six days and seven nights constitute a week, or is it an idiomatic expression?)

The Epic of Gilgamesh (SBV) seems less concerned about what used to happen every time or every now and then. It rather concentrates on what is about to happen and what is about to change. Life is short and intense in the first half of the *Epic*, but the implications of its brevity are not yet realised. In the second half the *Epic* death becomes a reality, but life also: Gilgamesh comes to the shocking insight that he has only one life, and that he has to make it work, with or without Enkidu (in the final instance without his friend).

Probably he did pass the statue of his friend every Sunday; probably he did have recurring thoughts every time that he passed this statue. Perhaps these thoughts inspired him to be the wise and mature king who is lauded in the *prologue*. But the ancient author had enough trust in the capabilities of his reader to infer these possibilities, and therefore did not deem it necessary to state everything explicitly.

Remarks

Many literary devices are available to authors, whether they are post-modern or ancient. But availability does not imply necessity. A literary device needs to be functional for the *narrative*, otherwise it becomes a cerebral activity of which only the author is aware. Competent authors have the ability to distinguish between what is available and what is necessary. Neither Proust nor the author of *the Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) used all of the available literary devices. What is interesting is that the ancient author of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) did not have the faintest clue about Genette (1980 & 1988); but somehow he was instinctively aware of some aspects of *narratological aesthetics*. As far as *time* is concerned (which is discussed in this chapter), a remarkable sensitivity manifests for significant interruptions, for increasing or decreasing the pace of the narrative, and for repetitions. In this regard, one may conclude that the *Epic of Gilgamesh* was a remarkable literary masterpiece for its time, but not

only for its time. Modern readers are also able to appreciate the *Epic* by means of modern literary criteria.

Genette (1980) pays considerable attention to the concept of *time*. Sternberg (1990:914) remarks – rather sharply: *For anything like artistic status “narrative” must supposedly break away from the lifelike “story” because art works by deviance and disharmony.* In this article Sternberg (1990:901-945) criticises structuralist theorists – and especially Genette – who over-emphasise the appropriation of chronological interruptions in the story line, as though this device is determinative for the artistic appreciation of a narrative. Does this imply that a chronological narration – like a historical recount, for example – is devoid of artistic narration? Sternberg (above) argues strongly against such an impression. And indeed, he is correct. Simple narratives are often touching, striking, exactly because they are told with the greatest simplicity.

Thus, the discussion above – and that which is to follow, do not wish to create the impression that the *Epic of Gilgamesh* appeals to modern literary appraisal mainly due to its intricate temporal or other literary structures. The appropriation of Genette’s *narrative model* is rather to provide a *tool* that may contribute towards a fresh, perhaps even new understanding of the *Epic*.

2.2. Mood

Narrative *mood* aims at the following: “*one can tell more or tell less what one tells, and one can tell it according to one point of view or another*” (Genette 1980:161-162). A narrative may choose to give detailed information to its readers, or choose to withhold some information deliberately; this information may be given in a direct or an indirect way, thereby keeping the *reader* at a closer or further *distance*. And in the final instance, characters in the narrative give information according to a particular *perspective* or *point of view*. In short: *mood* pertains to narrative *distance* and to narrative *perspective*.

2.2.1. Distance

Genette (1980:162-164) discusses the classical tradition that made a distinction between *mimesis* and *diegesis*. The later Anglo American theorists called this distinction *showing* and *telling*, or *direct* and *indirect speech*. *Mimesis* imitates reality, *diegesis* only describes it. However, for Genette there can be no *imitation* or *mimesis* in narrative art, but only an *illusion of mimesis* (Genette 1980:164). Dramatic presentations, for example in live performances (theatre or cinema) are true *mimeses*, but a *narrative* can only aim at telling its *story* in a lively and vivid manner. Still, this does not *show* or *imitate* the *story*: Genette (1980:164) states that “...*narration, oral or written, is a fact of language, and language signifies without imitating.*” By this statement Genette agrees with the structuralists that the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary.

So, it seems that *mimesis* in *narrative discourse* is impossible. Only degrees of *mimesis* remain, and in this regard Genette (1980:164) distinguishes between a *narrative of events* and a *narrative of words*.

Genette (1980:164-165) elaborates on the traditional difference between *mimesis* and *diegesis* by referring to a passage of Homer that is rephrased by Plato. Traditionally a *mimetic* representation (like the one of Homer) is quite elaborate, informing the reader or listener about all the detail, facial expressions, sound and so forth. A *diegetic* reformulation (like the one of Plato) on the other hand, is much shorter, omitting descriptive detail, and is therefore less realistic. But this distinction is illusionary, because a narrative, whether of words or of events is always only but a *narrative*.

1) A Narrative of Events

A *narrative of events* is a “*transcription of the (supposed) non-verbal into the verbal*” (Genette 1980:165), thus, a *narrative of events* is but an *illusion of*

mimesis. This mimetic effect is not fixed and is also not an inherent quality of the *narrative text*, but it depends on the various perceptions of the different readers. For example, one reader may perceive the *Epic of Gilgamesh* as very alive and real, to another the same *narrative* may appear distant, strange and rather far-fetched. Genette does not elaborate on the reasons for this difference in appreciation.

An *illusion of mimesis* in a *narrative text* is achieved by means of two factors: “*the quantity of narrative information (a more developed or more detailed narrative) and the absence (or minimal presence) of the informer - in other words, of the narrator*” (Genette 1980:166). What he actually means is that the *illusion of mimesis* in a *narrative text* is determined by *how much is said and by whom*. A mimetic effect is created when much information is given but the contributions of the informer are minimal. Dialogue is a very typical way to bring about *mimesis*. The informer is absent, as it were, the characters themselves are speaking. As it appeared in the previous discussion, the first half of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) consists mainly of short dramatic scenes and of *dialogue*. The *narrator* seems to disappear from the *narrative* soon after the *prologue*. The reader or the listener comes right into the heart of Uruk where Gilgamesh is harassing his people. One is immediately drawn into the scene of hard labour, power abuse, unbridled energy and protest. From the beginning of the point in time where the *story* starts, a convincing *illusion of mimesis* is created by the *narrative of events*.

Nevertheless, in this regard it is important to note that, although the *narrator* seemed to have disappeared, he did not really vanish, in fact, he is still “*present as a source, guarantor, and organizer (sic) of the narrative, as analyst and commentator, as stylist and particularly as producer of metaphors*” (Genette 1980:167). The *narrator* is not passively looking on, but he or she is actively taking part in the *narrative discourse*. He or she did not simply go away, his or her presence only becomes less obvious. But he or she is still the

one who makes use of the *narrative of events* to create an effect in a particular way.

In the case of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) the *narrator* chose to be present in a very unobtrusive way. He announces himself in the first line of the *prologue*, and never again. However, he manages to arrange his material skilfully and to make the events appear alive and real. As has been said, dramatic *scenes* (*narratives of events*) mark the first half of the *Epic*. In the second half of the *Epic* these *narratives of events* are restricted to the minimum. Yet the *narrator* continues with his task of arranging his material, but this time by means of *narratives of words* - which are discussed in the next section.

2) A Narrative of Words

Once again Genette (1980:169-170) uses the example from Homer's *Iliad* and the way that Plato rephrased it to illustrate the difference between what was traditionally known as *direct* and *indirect speech*. Genette complicates this matter by discerning the following types of discourse (cf also Rimmon 1976:49): *imitated discourse*, *narratized* (sic) *discourse* and *transposed discourse* (Genette 1980:171-172).

Imitated or reported discourse is dialogue that is recorded by the *narrator*, in other words, what used to be direct speech. *Narratized discourse* is dialogue that is summarised by a conspicuous *narrator* - or what used to be indirect speech. However, both Genette (1980:170) and Bal (1986:39) point out that *narratized discourse* is strictly speaking no different from a *narrative of events*. It becomes part of the *narrative discourse* and is treated just like any other event. *Transposed discourse* is rather interesting as this is dialogue that the *narrator* renders in an indirect way, however, still preserving the character's own words. This form of speech is also called *free indirect speech*.

In terms of *distance*, *imitated discourse* or direct speech creates the strongest illusion of mimesis, the smallest *distance* between the reader and the character. *Narratised discourse* on the other hand is far more diegetic by nature and would have the reader at a greater *distance*. Somewhere in between falls *transposed discourse* or *free indirect speech*.

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) uses only *imitated or reported discourse*. True enough, the introduction to this type of discourse is rather lengthy and usually follows the formula ...

X pâšu ipšuma iqabbi X opened his mouth, he says
ana Y amat izakkar to Y a word he says...

... but in this regard one needs to keep ancient literary conventions in mind. This was simply the way in which direct speech was introduced. The two other forms of speech, *narratised discourse* and *transposed discourse* are not used in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV).

Immediate speech is the term Genette (1980:173) uses for what used to be called *interior monologue*. The reader is brought directly into the thoughts of the character and the *distance* between them is eliminated. Two cases of this type of discourse appear in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*: Siduri and Uta-napishtim.

Siduri sees Gilgamesh approaching from afar and *thinks by herself* that he may be a murderer (X:11-13). Also Uta-napishtim sees him from afar and *wonders by himself* why the Stone Things of the boat are broken, why she is sailing without her equipment and concludes that the person who is on his way is not one of his household (X:182-187).

However, in the course of Genette's discussion it becomes clear that *immediate speech* is really functional in cases where a specific character is permanent in the *narrative* and the reader gains insight into why he or she does

certain things - or why not. Siduri and Uta-napishtim are rather different. Both these characters are new introductions into the *narrative*. They are part of their own *story* and will go back to it soon after their brief encounter with poor Gilgamesh. Their main role is to convince the main character that his quest for life eternal is a futile endeavour. The reader has enough insight into Gilgamesh's case; the only insight given by the *immediate speech* of Siduri and Uta-napishtim is that they are baffled by his tattered appearance.

Once again it appears that the *nouveau roman* appropriates the device of *immediate speech* far more deliberately than the *roman ancien* did. Neither Siduri nor Uta-napishtim tells the reader anything he or she does not know already.

Remarks

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) maintains an intimate mood by keeping the distance between the reader, the events and words in the *narrative* small. The first half of the *Epic* consists mainly of *narratives of events*. These do not give much detail, often *scenes* are depicted in short and abrupt poetic lines. Nevertheless, this does not seem to make these events less real. On the contrary, the *narrator* skilfully succeeds in maintaining the *illusion of mimesis* by enhancing the impression of intense and focused action. There is simply no time for unnecessary detail.

The second half of the *Epic* consists mainly of *narratives of words*, only in the form of *imitated or reported speech*. Dialogues are long, often giving the impression of being monologues. This is especially obvious in the cases where Gilgamesh verbalises his sorrow about his departed friend: to Shamash, to the Scorpion people, to Siduri, to Urshanabi and to Uta-napishtim. There are many repetitions that verge upon redundancy.

Yet because these dialogues are *imitated or reported discourse*, they also create an alive and a present mood: these are the actual words that were spoken by the characters themselves. Regardless of how long and drawn out, or how short and abrupt these speeches were, the *narrator* did not tamper with what was said or with how it was said. The characters speak for themselves.

2.2.2. Focalisation

(Mieke Bal (1986:108-123) has elaborated extensively on the matter of *focalisation*. This chapter in her work, *De Theorie van Vertellen en Verhalen* is highly recommended. However, in the discussion which is about to follow, it will become clear that most of the categories of *focalisation* are far too sophisticated to be applied to the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. For the sake of completeness they will be discussed, but in a very brief manner. Nevertheless, the whole matter of *focalisation* is important, and cannot be omitted completely.)

Culler (in his foreword to Genette 1980:10) observes: “*Insistence on the difference between narration and focalization (sic) is a major revision of the theory of point of view.*” Traditionally *point of view* used to pertain to categories such as first-person or third-person narratives, or subjective/objective narratives. The *narrator* was either present as a character in the narrative (a first-person or subjective narrative), or he/she was merely telling the story of someone else (a third-person or objective narrative). The question one needed to answer was: from whose *point of view* is this story being told?

However, recent literary theorists propose that this distinction is rather misleading because it suffers “from a regrettable confusion between what I call here *mood and voice*, a confusion between the question *who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective?* and the very different question *who sees?* and the question *who speaks?*” (Genette 1980:186). Bal

(1986:110) is perhaps more clearly than Genette in this regard. She simply states: “*A vertelt dat B ziet wat C doet.*” A tells that B sees what C does.

Now the whole matter of *perspective* or *point of view* becomes quite complicated. The concern is no longer about a first-person or third-person narrative, but from *whose point of view* the events or actions are perceived. This is called *focalisation*.

Of course, there are *narratives with zero focalisation* - or non-focalised narratives. This corresponds to a *narrative* with an omniscient *narrator* who knows more than any of the characters. Many classical *narratives* use this style, however, if one reads very closely, *zero focalisation* is not really sustained throughout: the case is rather that the device of *focalisation* is not exploited in the same manner as the *nouveau roman*.

Genette (1980:189) distinguishes two types of *focalisation* in a *narrative*:

(i) *Narrative with internal focalisation* of which the *focalisation* may be *fixed* or *variable*. When the *focalisation* is *fixed*, the whole *story* is told from the *perspective* of only one of the characters; *variable focalisation* has different focal characters in the same story; and *multiple focalisation* has the same *story* told from the different *perspectives* of several characters. The *narrator* who is *focalising* through the eyes of one or more of the characters, knows only as much as the character does, no more, no less.

(ii) *Narrative with external focalisation*. *Spy* narratives often *focalise* in this way. The character, usually the hero, knows much more than the *narrator* is willing to disclose.

Usually (but not necessarily) *narratives* vary in the way the *narrator* chooses to *focalise*. These variations in *point of view* are called *alterations* (Genette

1980:194-197). These can also be described as *momentary infractions*. Genette distinguishes between *paralipses* and *paralepses*.

Paralipsis is the usual type of *internal focalisation*. Some important information - an action or a thought - on the part of the focal hero is withheld, in other words, less information than is necessary is given to the reader. *Paralepsis* is the opposite case of *focalisation* that can be *external* or *internal*. In this case the reader is supplied with more information than is necessary.

These types of focalisations are usually appropriated to regulate the information in a narrative text. Perhaps Genette (1980:198) sums it up best in his own words: “*Narrative always says less than it knows, but it often makes known more than it says.*”

Polymodality is the last type of focalisation Genette (1980: 198-211) discusses. *Polymodality* pertains to autobiographical *narratives* in which the *narrator* is supposed to be the one who *focalises*. But in post-modern novels *focalisation* by the *narrator* as hero-character of his or her own story, or as real *author* in the sense of an *omniscient narrator*, becomes blurred.

Remarks

Thus, as it was pointed out right at the beginning of this section, the whole concept of *focalisation* is far better appropriated by the *nouveau roman* than by the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV). However, this ancient *Epic* does contain focalisations through the eyes of some of the very minor characters, and pertain mostly to the perception of either Enkidu or Gilgamesh. The hunter sees Enkidu and becomes frightened because he perceives him as a savage beast (I:96-103); the animals see Enkidu and they run away because they perceive him as a human being, no longer as one of their kind (I:180). Ishtar sees Gilgamesh (tablet IV) and is overcome with passionate desire. Siduri sees him and perceives him as a murderer (X:10-13); Uta-napishtim sees him

and recognises him as a stranger (X:182-187). But these *focalisations* appear rather naïve and not really of great significance.

What is startling though, is the *focalisation* that is embedded in the very first line or the *prologue* (Parpola's 1997 transliteration): Of the Deep that he saw, I must *tell* the land. Even the incipit of George (2003:539) hints strongly at *focalisation*: He who saw the Deep...

A *tells* that B saw something.

Initially the *Epic of Gilgamesh* appears as a *narrative* that is being told mainly from the perspective of an omniscient *narrator*, therefore a narrative that contains *zero focalisation*, typical of classical narratives. But everything changes if one realises that what is being told, is that which he - Gilgamesh - saw. Gilgamesh is the one who saw, who *focalised* in the first place. The object of his *focalisation* is the Deep - or *everything* according to some translations. This Deep/everything pertains to his life and the wisdom he acquired. However, he acquires wisdom only after he brings his life into perspective, only after he perceives and re-interprets the *narrative* of his life. In this way the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) becomes a *process of focalisation*.

From the top of the walls of Uruk the *narrator* is telling but also re-*focalising* the life of Gilgamesh. He is inviting the reader to do the same. Together they look at the life of the arrogant young king who fearlessly defies men, gods and monsters. They see the agony Gilgamesh goes through when Enkidu dies. And they perceive the futility of the quest for life eternal. Somehow *telling* and *seeing* becomes totally blurred. The *narrator* of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) cleverly disguised *focalisation* as *narrative*, thereby confusing who is *seeing* and who is *telling* in a challenging way.

Long time ago, from the top of these very walls, Gilgamesh also *focalised* his life. The Deep becomes the *narrative* of his life as he *focalises* it through tears of grief and shame. Despite killing monsters and defying the great gods in his

youth, his behaviour as king was not exactly honourable. He disintegrated completely when he was confronted with failure and loss. Yet, somehow back at the walls of Uruk, he manages to pull himself together. He *focalised*, he saw the Deep; now he realises that he must go on, but not in the way that he used to. *Focalisation* brings insight and wisdom.

2.3. Voice

Narrator is usually the term that is used for the one who *tells* (Rimmon-Kenan 1983:88), but once again Genette (1980:212) perceives the matter of telling in broader sense and uses the term *voice* to refer to the *narrating instance*, “*the mode of action...of the verb considered for its relations to the subject...*” The subject may be the person who does the narrating, but it may also be the one who does the reporting, in fact, *subject* pertains to every one who participates in the *narrating activity*, even passively. Of course one needs to keep in mind that there is a relationship between the *act of narrating* (telling) and the *instance of narrating* (narrator) who is performing the action. Consequently critics often mistakenly identify the “*narrating instance* with the *instance of writing*, the *narrator* with the *author* and the *receiver of the narrative* with the *reader of the work*” (Genette 1980:213).

Genette (1980:213-214) makes it quite clear that the *narrating instance* differs from the *writing instance*. The real *author* - the *writing instance* - is closely involved in the *action of writing*, however, the *narrating instance* has a *fictive role*, even if the real *author* decides to play this part. Bal (1986:124-125) points out that *narrating instance* pertains to a *linguistic instance*, and its function is purely *textual*. The *narrating instance* has nothing to do with a real person in the sense of someone who is telling his or her personal story, even if this *narrative* is an autobiography. It is very important to realise that one cannot make any assumptions about the *narrating instance* outside of the text, even if he or she happens to be the real *author* and one happens to know some

personal detail. So, the *narrating instance* or *voice* is the instance who - or rather which - is *telling*, it is a linguistic construct performing a textual function.

Voice in *narrative discourse* has a relationship to the following three elements: *time of narrating*, *narrative level* and “*person*” (Genette 1980:215). These elements are in fact closely intertwined and function simultaneously, they are only being separated for the purposes of analysis.

2.3.1. Time of narrating

The *narrating instance* is in a particular position with respect to the *story events* that it is reporting: “*I can very well tell a story without specifying the place where it happens, and whether this place is more or less distant from the place where I am telling it; nevertheless, it is almost impossible for me not to locate the story in time with respect to my narrating act, since I must necessarily tell the story in the present, past, or future tense*”, (Genette 1980:215). So, restated and oversimplified: is the *voice*, the *narrating instance* telling its story in the present, past or future tense?

Obviously and quite logically one may assume that events can only be reported only after they had happened, therefore in the past tense (Rimmon-Kenan 1983:90). Genette (1980:217) complicates this logical assumption by designating four temporal possibilities with regard to the distance between the actual time of the *story events* and the time that they are reported: *subsequent narrating*; *prior narrating*; *simultaneous narrating* and *interpolated narrating*.

1) Subsequent narrating

This is the classical *past-tense narrative*. Most *narratives* are written in this style, namely in the *past tense*. The *story events* and the *act of narrating* appear to correspond temporally, because the *past tense* is used for both. Usually the interval between the *occurrence of the events* and the *narrating* is

not indicated, and usually it is not important to know this. Genette (1980:220) calls this an “*ageless past*”.

Indeed, *subsequent narrating* in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* does convey something of an “*ageless past*”. The *voice* or *narrating instance* reports that it is about to tell of the things of ancient times. And the *narrating instance* uses mostly the *preterite tense*, but quite often also the *praesens*. Genette (1980:220-221) notes that some narratives, although they are written as *subsequent narrating*, do make use of the *present tense*, either at the beginning or at the end. Especially when the *praesens* is used at the end of the narrative, the effect is that the temporal interval between *story time* and *narrating time* seems to lessen, and a convergence between the two seems to take place. Also on a *diegetical level* a convergence seems to occur between the *story* and its *narrator*.

Indeed, the last lines of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) (XI:314-320) are written in the *praesens*, the words that Gilgamesh speaks to Urshanabi the boatman. The dramatic effect of the convergence between *story time* and *narrating time*, and of *story* and its *narrator* is enhanced by the fact that Gilgamesh at the end uses the same words that the anonymous *narrator* used at the beginning of the *narrative*. As it was pointed out in the section on *analepsis* and *prolepsis*, present, past and future merge in a striking and significant way.

Yet, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) is not really concerned about temporal durations or intervals. These convergences - of *present* and *past*, of *story* and its *narrator* - happen on the walls of Uruk. In this regard *place* is far more significant than *time*. In the beginning of the *narrative*, the *voice*, the *narrator* starts to tell the *story* of Gilgamesh from the walls of Uruk, and right at the end of the *narrative*, once again back on the walls of Uruk the *voice* becomes the *voice* of Gilgamesh who is telling his own *story*. In this *Epic* it is not only a temporal aspect that brings past and present together, but also a matter of locality, or place. The whole poem is enclosed by the walls of Uruk.

2) Prior narrating

Very few narratives are written throughout in the style of *prior narrating*, as it is very difficult to sustain this way of *narrating* from the beginning to the end of *narrative discourse* (Genette 1980:219-220). *Prior narrating* is the characteristic style of *prophetic* and *apocalyptic* literature, but if it does occur in other *narrative genres*, it is usually *narratives* on a second level and mainly in the form of *prolepses*. *Prolepses* in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) have been discussed in the previous section of this chapter (cf2.1.1b).

3) Simultaneous narrating

These are *narratives* written in the *present tense* and are according to Genette (1980:218) the simplest. Although most of the dialogues in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) are written in the *praesens*, the *preterite* is the tense that dominates; the use of the *praesens* seems to be more a matter of convention than fulfilling a particular function in the *narrative*.

4) Interpolated narrating

Interpolated narrating is the most complex style of the four. *Narrating* and *story* alternate in such a way that the *story* has an effect on the *narrating* (Genette 1980:217). This is especially the case in *epistolary novels* where, as we know, *the letter is at the same time both a medium of the narrative and an element in the plot*. This type of *narrating* has no bearing on the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV).

2.3.2. Narrative levels

Drastically oversimplified, *narrative levels* pertain to a *story within a story*. Some confusion exists with regards to the terminology that the different critics

use to designate these different levels. Rimmon-Kenan (1983:91) refers to *subordination relations* for which she uses the term *hypodiegetic levels*. Genette (1980:228) prefers the term *metadiegetic* for *narratives* on a different level from the *diegetic* one. In his later work (Genette 1988:87) he explains that the so-called *primary narrative* is not necessarily the most important one. In fact, it may be the case that the so-called *secondary narratives* are far more significant and functional than the *primary one*. Therefore the term *hypodiegetic* is not really suitable, because *hypodiegetic* does imply a relationship of subordination. So, by using the term *metadiegetic*, he simply systemises the traditional concept of embedded *narratives*. And he (Genette 1980:228) stresses that the relationship between *primary* and *secondary* levels of *diegesis* is one of dependency, not one of hierarchy.

Genette (1980:228) states: “We will define this difference in level by saying that any event a narrative recounts is at a diegetic level immediately higher than the level at which the narrating act producing this narrative is placed.” This definition is rather unclear, therefore a short explanation will be given. A *narrator* is either part of the *story events* he/she is recounting, or not involved at all. In the last case, a *narrator* who stands outside of the *story events*, is on an *extradiegetic level*. A *narrator* who is involved in the story, reports on an *intradiegetic level*. Thus, *diegesis* denotes the *narrative*, and a *narrator* is either outside or inside a particular *diegetic level*.

When an *intradiegetic narrator* tells a story at a different or deeper *diegetic level*, a *secondary narrative* is created on a *metadiegetic level*. As regards the terms *extradiegetic*, *diegetic* and *metadiegetic*, one must not assume that it is obvious that *extradiegetic* pertains to *story* - or to historical existence - and *diegetic* or *metadiegetic* to fiction (Genette 1980:230). Nothing could be further from the truth. Even a real *author* who assumes the role of an *extradiegetic narrator*, has a fictive role.

1) Metadiegetic narrative

Metadiegetic narrative, a story within a story, or *mise en abyme* is a very old technique that Genette (1980:231-234) traces back to Books IX-XII in the *Odyssey*. But long before the *Odyssey* the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (SBV) used the same technique by inserting the *Atrahasis Epic* - the recount of the Deluge - into the primary narrative of Gilgamesh's *story*. This is absolutely a pure form of a *metadiegetic narrative*: Uta-napishtim, who is actually a character in the *primary narrative* becomes the *narrator* of the *secondary* one in which Gilgamesh is the *narratee*.

Genette (1980:232) differentiates three main types of relationships that connect the *metadiegetic narrative* to the main one into which it is inserted:

i) *Direct causality*.

In other words, there is a causal relationship between the first and the second *narrative*. Characters and/or events on the second *narrative level* explain why something on the *first level of diegesis* happened or did not happen. The *narrative* on the second level explains “*what events have led to the present situation*” (Genette 1980:232). The function of the *narrating instance* is to link the two narratives together and it does so by making the direct causal relationship obvious.

ii) *A thematic relationship* (Genette 1980:233).

There is no temporal or spatial connection between *diegesis* and *metadiegesis*. The relationship is purely *thematic* which may be a relationship of *contrast* of one of *analogy*. The *Atrahasis Epic* that is embedded in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* has greater significance, but temporally there is no connection: Uta-napishtim's *story* happened a long time ago that is before and during the Deluge. Spatially there is also no connection: Gilgamesh wishes to live forever in his city, Uruk:

Uta-napishtim used to live in Surripak as a mortal, but now he lives for ever beyond the Waters of Death.

The relationship between the two *narratives* is one of contrast: Uta-napishtim managed to gain life eternal, but Gilgamesh needs to come to terms with the reality that he is going to die. This *indirect* relationship between the *narrating instance* of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the *Atrahasis Epic* is effected by the *narratives* themselves.

iii) *No explicit relationship.*

In this case no *causal* or *thematic* relationship exists between the *diegesis* and the *metadiegesis*. *Metadiegetic content* does not matter at all, but *it is the act of narrating itself that fulfils a function in the diegesis* (Genette 1980:233). The most classic example of *metadiegetic narratives* of this type is *A Thousand and One Nights*. Scheherezade has to tell a different story every night in order to keep the king interested and to save her life. The *functions* of these kinds of *narratives* are usually *distraction* or *obstruction*.

At this point one may question the Shamhat-Enkidu episode that starts with the creation of Enkidu and ends where Enkidu and Gilgamesh meet. Strictly speaking this is not really a *metadiegetic narrative* because the narrator who is telling the *story* is the same *narrator* of the *primary* one. Yet, the *first narrative* is interrupted, not by means of an *analepsis* or a *prolepsis*, but with a different *narrative* that occurs simultaneously with the *primary* one. It introduces its own main character, Enkidu. Is this a *causal relationship*? Yes, but in this case the *primary narrative* caused the events on the second one to take place, therefore one may perhaps term this relationship as an *inverted causal* one. Then, at a certain point in time the two *narratives* do blend to become one *primary* narrative with its *two* main characters: Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Even after Enkidu's death he is not forgotten - on the contrary!

In this case one may conclude that, although the *Enkidu-narrative* interrupts the *narrative* of Gilgamesh-proper (after all, Gilgamesh was carrying on with his reign of terror in Uruk whilst Enkidu was peacefully roaming the plains), this is still part of the *Gilgamesh-narrative*. The *narrator* simply needs to explain who Enkidu is, where did he come from, and why must he be there. Therefore, the *Enkidu-narrative* seems to be a *secondary narrative* that overtakes the existing *primary narrative* temporarily to become a *primary* one in its own right. Only when it catches up with the *narrative of Gilgamesh*, one is baffled: exactly what is *primary* and/or *secondary*?

Enkidu is a hero. Unlike Uta-napishtim whose introduction is brief and whose disappearance is equally sudden, Enkidu remains an important character until the bitter end. His life as well as his death influences just about everything that happens on the first level of *diegesis*. Somehow a temporal intertwining takes place. The *narratives* of Gilgamesh and Enkidu start off separately, then they become enmeshed. Even after Enkidu is supposed to disappear from the *story*, he is present. His death motivates the theme of the second half of the *Epic*: the quest for life eternal.

Both Gilgamesh and Enkidu have a *narrative*. They met, and their *narratives* interlocked. They became so much part of each other's *story* that the critic cannot determine what is *primary*, *secondary*, *diegetic* or *metadiegetic*. And somehow Genette's (1980) analyses do not really help to solve this problem. Perhaps one must conclude that just as inseparable as the *narratives* of Gilgamesh and Enkidu, were the two friends themselves - in life and in death.

2) Metalepsis

Genette (1980:234-235) uses the term *narrative metalepsis* for “*any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.)...[that] produces an effect of strangeness that is either comical...or fantastic.*” This happens when the

boundaries between the different narrative levels are disturbed (cf also Genette 1988:88), for example when a *real author* or a *real reader* introduces himself or herself into the *fictive world* of the *narrative*, or vice versa, when a *fictive character* introduces itself into the world of the *author* or the *reader*. “*The world in which one tells becomes the world of which one tells*” (Genette 1980:236).

Especially post-modern literature is very aware of a *reality out there* and a *reality on paper* and exploits this realisation to the utmost. *Ontological boundary* is the term that indicates the separation between the world *outside of the text* (the real world), and the *world of the text* (cf McHale 1987:201). Real authors are consciously aware of the fact that they are transgressing an *ontological boundary* when they transpose themselves and their personal experience of *writing this particular novel* into *this particular novel*. He or she may even take a break from the novel, does something else – to take a vacation for a week or so, or to go shopping for groceries. Likewise a *character* of the *world of the text*, may remind the *real author* that he or she has the power to kill off any *character* that happens to be in disfavour within the next few lines. Self-consciousness is the key word in this regard: the author knows that he/she is entering the world on paper, and the characters know that they are transgressing their boundaries of text.

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* does not transcend *ontological boundaries* in this dramatic way. However, the *narratee* does get the uncanny feeling of crossing some sort of reality at the *narrator's* personal invitation to climb on top of the walls of Uruk and admire the surroundings (I:11-17). Sure enough, the *narratee* never becomes a *character* but neither does the *narrator*. Both *narrator* and *narratee* remain spectators, witnesses of a real life drama that is playing off in front of their very eyes. Somehow the *world of which is told* becomes the *world in which is being told*.

2.3.3. Person

On reaching this last section of Genette's *Narrative Discourse* (1980), one starts to realise that the heading *Character* is not going to appear. Nowhere does Genette discuss matters like *flat* or *round characters*, *character development* or any other special criteria that may be applied to *character*. Is this a shortcoming in Genette's model, or are there reasons for this omission?

Apparently for Genette *character* is so much interwoven into the *structural devices* of the *narrative discourse* that a separate category would be unnecessary. *Character* seems to fuse into denotations of *narrator* and *narratee* (discussion follows), into matters like *focalisation* (cf 2.2.2 of this chapter) and so forth. In other words, *character* is structured by the various devices of the *narrative*. Mimetic or emotional attributes are strictly shunned. The *character* finds himself or herself somewhere inside or outside a particular *narrative level*, partaking either actively or passively in aspects of *tense*, *mood and voice*. Thus, it appears that Genette regards *character* as being incorporated sufficiently by his other categories, therefore it does not deserve a special heading.

1) Narrator

Genette (1980:243-244) describes the usual terms *first person - or third-person narrative* as "*inadequate, in that they stress variation in the element of the narrative situation that is in fact invariant - to wit, the presence (explicit or implicit) of the 'person' of the narrator.*" A *narrator* can be present in his or her *narrative* only in the *first person*: the author or the novelist may choose to have a story told by one of its characters, or by a *narrator* outside of it. For a *narrator* who occupies a position outside of the *story* he or she is telling, Genette (1980:245) uses the term *heterodiegetic*, and for a *narrator* who is also a character in the *story*, he uses the term *homodiegetic*.

The *narrator's* status is defined both by *narrative level* (i.e. *extra- or intradiegetic*) and by its relationship to the *narrative* (Genette 1980:245). There are four basic types of a *narrator's status*:

- (1) extradiegetic – heterodiegetic
- (2) extradiegetic – homodiegetic
- (3) intradiegetic - heterodiegetic
- (4) intradiegetic – homodiegetic

The *narrator* in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is obviously an *extradiegetic* one who occupies a *heterodiegetic* position with respect to the *narrative*. He is completely absent from the story he is telling - that is, until one gets the sudden and overwhelming impression that the *narrator* is actually Gilgamesh who is telling his own *story*. However, this only happens in the last lines of the *Epic*, and until then the *narrator* remains an *extradiegetic - heterodiegetic* one.

On a *metadiegetic* level, that is on the level of the narrative of the Deluge, Utnapishtim becomes the *narrator* of his own story. He is thus a narrator with an *intradiegetic-homodiegetic* status. However, Genette (1980:245) points out that not all *narrators* are equally *present* in the story that they tell. A *narrator* can either be the hero of his or her own *story*, or merely be a witness or observer of someone else's *story*. *Hero-narrators* of the *homodiegetic* kind, Genette calls *autodiegetic*. Utnapishtim is the undisputable *hero* of his own *narrative*, thus becoming a *narrator* with an *autodiegetic intradiegetic - homodiegetic status*.

The primary function of the *narrator* is of course to tell the *story*. But once again Genette (1980:255) points out that this matter is far more complicated than it seems at first sight. The functions of the *narrator* are connected to several aspects of *narrative*.

As it was said, the first and obvious aspect of *narrative* is the *story* to be told. The *function* connected to the *story* is the *narrative function* - to tell. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the *narrator* tells the *story* of Gilgamesh. The *narrative text* is the second aspect of a *narrative*. The function of the *narrator* in this regard is *metalinguistic*, which pertains to the internal organisation of the *text* by means of articulations, connections and interrelations. This has to do with the way in which the *story material* is arranged, and how the matters of *time*, *mood* and *voice* are appropriated. The *narrating situation* is the third aspect of *narrative*. The *narrator* and the *narratee* - present, absent or implied - are involved, because the *function* of the *narrator* is to establish or to maintain a *relationship* with the *narratee*. Genette (1980:256) also calls this function the *function of communication*. It has been said that the *narrator* of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* tries to establish this relationship at the very beginning of his *act of narrating*: apparently he assumes that this relationship will be maintained throughout the *narrative discourse* because he never refers to the *narratee* again, except for that open invitation in the beginning of the *Epic*.

The last function is the *testimonial function*, or *the function of attestation*. This function pertains to the relationship the *narrator* has with the *story* that he/she is telling and concerns his or her emotions. The nature of this relationship is affective, but could also be a moral or an intellectual one. “*But the narrator’s interventions, direct or indirect, with regard to the story can also take the more didactic form of an authorized (sic) commentary on the action. This is an assertion of what could be called the narrator’s ideological function;* (Genette 1980:256), and this last function certainly pertains to the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. He witnesses the foolish behaviour of the immature braggart, he empathises with the loss of a dear comrade and friend, and he even partakes in the whole futile quest for life eternal in a very emotional manner. Never does he judge which of these actions are morally acceptable and which are not. He leaves it to the *narratee* who is witnessing along with him to decide for himself or herself. However, he also witnesses at the end that Gilgamesh’s life did not work out in the way that he wished. His people were not happy with his arrogance. His

best friend died. He failed two vital tests and came to the depressing realisation that he is not going to obtain life eternal, no matter how hard he tries. And this hard lesson is not told by means of didactic instructions that have to be memorised. It is done by means of telling a story.

2) Narratee

Genette (1980) does not devote many pages to the role of the *narratee* with regards to the *narrative*. Only the last three pages of his book pertain to this *person*. Obviously he does not really say very much. “*Like the narrator, the narratee is not one of the elements in the narrating situation, and he (sic) is necessarily located at the same diegetic level; that is, he does not merge a priori with the reader (even an implied reader) any more than the narrator necessarily merges with the author*” (Genette 1980:259). From this follows a relationship of correspondence: an *intradiegetic narrator* would correspond to an *intradiegetic narratee*, whilst an *extradiegetic narrator* addresses an *extradiegetic narratee*. The *Epic of Gilgamesh* starts with the latter case: both *narrator* and *narratee* are *extradiegetic* with regards to the *diegetic level* of the *narrative*. But within the *metadiegetic narrative* Uta-napishtim (a character on the primary level of *diegesis*) becomes the *narrator* of his own story as he addresses Gilgamesh (also a character on the primary level of *diegesis*) who now becomes the *narratee* on the second level of *diegesis*. And so forth.

However, in terms of the didactic, moral and ideological implications (cf previous discussion), the *narrative* does not end with the return of Gilgamesh to the walls of Uruk. At the end of the *narrative* the *narratee* is witnessing a life style that does not work. However, somehow Gilgamesh must have achieved success - it says so in the beginning of the *narrative*. With this knowledge it is now up to the *narratee* to muster all his or her creative abilities and write his or her own *narrative*: a *narrative* of what really makes sense in life. And all this is done in a very indirect and subtle way: once again, by means of *telling a story*, this time his or her own.

3. Discussion of the *Epic* in terms of Genette's model

One has to admit that Genette's model is rather sophisticated and not all of its components apply to the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. However, some interesting features did come to light. It appeared that the ancient author was not really concerned about exact points in time, therefore many observances on *time* (i.e. *order, duration and frequency*) were inferred indirectly, rather than being deduced from obvious textual information. For example, are Ninsun's dreams *analepses* or *prolepses*? In what way does the *duration* of Enkidu's roaming the plains coincide with the *duration* of Gilgamesh's reign of terror in Uruk? For how *long* did Gilgamesh wander around in search of everlasting life? But do these uncertainties matter?

The category of *frequency* illustrated the relentless nature of the trip towards the Cedar Forest, the urgency of having to complete the journey through the tunnel of the (S)un in time, and the endless depressing thoughts that occupied Gilgamesh's mind as he ventured in search of life eternal.

The *inclusio* effected by the lines I:16-21 and XI:315-320 makes the actual *duration* of time irrelevant. *Time* itself becomes significant in the way that present, past and future merge exactly because specific durations are omitted. The criteria of *timelessness, agelessness and universal meaning* are those of the *New Critics*: however, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* becomes *timeless, ageless* and universal in a striking manner. It pertains to the past, present and future of everyone who was or is serious about the meaning of life.

Mood illustrated the intimate and lively way in which the *narrator* tells his story. Intense dramatic *scenes* alternating with dialogue in the form of *reported speech* mark the first half of the *Epic*. In the second half of the *Epic*, *imitated* or *reported* speech dominate, often so drawn out that these dialogues create the impression of being the same monologue, *repeated* over and over. But

Gilgamesh is driven by his grief over the death of his friend and by his own fear for death. *Reported speech* stresses the obsessive-compulsive nature of Gilgamesh's behaviour as he roams the steppe until he reaches Uta-napishtim.

Focalisation (which is a sub-category of *mood*) seemed straightforward at first, until one discovers the *focalisation* that is embedded in the first line of the *Epic*. Then one realises that this whole *narrative* is in fact a *focalisation*, a perspective on life itself.

Voice examined the matter of the *narrator* and various positions the *narrating instance* may occupy with regards to the various *levels of diegesis*. In this case it appeared that the *narrator* of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, although he occupies an *extra-diegetic* position, is very much concerned about the *story* he is telling. He remains close to the *story events* he is recounting and he wishes to create the same interest in the *narratee* by inviting him or her into the majestic city of Uruk. However, the *didactic ideological function* of the *narrator* is effected by leaving the *narrative* open-ended, by not disclosing any *final message*. By means of circular reasoning to and from Uruk, it is left to the devices of every *narratee* to work out for himself or herself just how did the tear-stained and heart-broken man at the end of the *Epic* become the brave and wise king of the prologue.

Remarks

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* started confidently and proudly on the city walls of Uruk. It ended in exactly the same manner at the same place: on the walls of Uruk. Many events took place within these walls as well as outside of their enclosure. Dreams were dreamt of coming events. Dreams actually came true: a friendship was formed. There was dramatic and intensive action. The ladder of success was being climbed rapidly, regardlessly, too urgently and too quickly for anyone to keep up.

Then death struck. Fear would not leave, it kept on coming back. There were also painful memories that would not go away. The initial success story became one of failure. From the top of the success ladder a process of tumbling down had begun until rock bottom was hit. However, together with shock and humiliation came insight into what life is really all about.

All the events begin and end at Uruk. This points to an important element that is missing in Genette's theory: he has no category for *place*. The reason is fairly obvious: Genette is a structuralist. *Place* – whether Uruk or New York is a *literary construction*, not a place that one can locate on a map. The *walls of Uruk* in the beginning and at the end of the *Epic* serve to form a *literary structural inclusio* to the *Epic* – such an *inclusio* may equally have been effected by *the highways to New York*. For the structuralists the only reality is that which appear on paper – or stone – in other words, reality is textual by nature.

However, these sturdy city walls probably meant to the ancient author and the ancient recipients more than a *literary construct*. To them they symbolised many things: power, honour, cultural progression, civilisation, security (see chapter 3). Furthermore, Uruk was a very special city: she represented the old Sumerian culture, and the glory and romance associated with ancient times.

The following chapter will deal with a critique on structuralist theories in more detail. However, these brief remarks intended to convey the following: a structural narratological analysis does bring matters to the fore which may otherwise be overlooked. But there are also matters that are more than literary constructs – in the frame of reference of authors and readers alike.