The Embassy, the Ambush, and the Ogre

Greco-Roman Influence in Sanskrit Theater

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1. Can Literary Parallelisms Prove Cultural Contact?

Theater Following in Epic's Footsteps

Epic (Gr. ἔπος, Skr. *itihāsa*) and theater (Gr. δρᾶμα, Skr. *nāṭya*) exist as literary genres both in the Greco-Roman world and in India. In both contexts, epic is an older literary genre and theater a newer one, so epic can function as a model for later literary production. Indeed, Greek theater and Sanskrit theater take their inspiration from their respective epics. For Ancient Greece, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* represent the main benchmarks, whereas for Ancient India, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* fill in that position.

The adaptation of epic materials is part of a process of tradition (Lat. *trāditiō*, Skr. *smṛti*), through which works from the past are assessed in terms of aesthetics and ethics, and accordingly reinterpreted in the present as an acknowledgment of their authority. Not only the Greco-Roman world, but also India reaches a classical period for their literature and language. In Greece, it is the Age of Pericles (fifth century BCE); in Rome, the Age of Augustus (first century BCE to first century CE); and in India, the Gupta Empire (fourth century CE to sixth century CE). Both in Greece and in India, theater constitutes the most conspicuous form of the *Belles Lettres*.

This book deals, first, with the adaptation of Greek epic into Greek theater; second, with the adaptation of Sanskrit epic into Sanskrit theater; and third, with the parallelisms between both

sets of adaptation products/processes. Furthermore, it argues that, not only do the adapted elements and adaptation techniques coincide, but also that it is possible that such coincidence is due to a hypothetical setting of influences and borrowings from the Greco-Roman world into India.

For this study, Greek epic will be represented by the Homeric Epics, that is, the *Iliad* (*Il.*) and the *Odyssey* (*Od.*).[1] These are narrative texts: the first one, about anger, fighting, withdrawal and return, power struggles, and the destruction of a generation of heroes; the second one, about homecoming, wandering, and reunion. They were probably dictated by Homer in the Aegean Islands between 800 BCE and 750 BCE.[2] The *Iliad* is structured in three sections: books 1-8, from the loss of Briseis and Zeus' promise to its fulfillment; books 9-16, from the embassy to Achilles and Agamemnon's promise to the loss of Patroclus; and books 17-24, from the war around Patroclus' corpse, to the peace-offering release of Hector's corpse.

The *Odyssey*, in turn, is structured in six sections: books 1-4, with Telemachus' adventures; books 5-8, with Odysseus' post-Calypso adventures; books 9-12, with Odysseus' pre-Calypso adventures; books 13-16, with the father/son encounter; books 17-20, with the much-awaited return; and books 21-24, with the trail, the punishment, the reunion, and Laertes' adventures. The ingenious author of these epics seems to have borrowed materials both from Greek myth and Near Eastern sources to put together a work concurrently producing aesthetic pleasure and serving didactic, religious, and moral purposes.[3]

In the Homeric Epics, the focus will be on the *Presbeia* (*Il.* 9), the *Doloneia* (*Il.* 10), and the *Cyclopeia* (*Od.* 9), which correspond, respectively, to the literary motifs of the embassy, the ambush, and the ogre. These three books have been viewed from various

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1   I follow the Greek text by Murray & Wyatt (Homer, 1999a and 1999b) for the *Iliad*, and by Murray & Dimock (Homer, 1995a and 1995b) for the *Odyssey*. The translations are my own. See Finkelberg (2011), Bierl (2015), and Pache (2020) for an overview of the Homeric Epics.
2   See Powell (2004, pp. 30-34).
3   See Edmunds (1997) and Graf (2011) for the "Greek myth" influence; and M. L. West (1971, 1997), Burkert (1992, 2004a, 2004b), Morris (1997), and Powell (2011) for the "Near East" influence.

perspectives within the tendencies of the so-called analysts, unitarians, oral theory researchers, and neoanalysts.[4] Within the *Presbeia*, analysists have seen Phoenix's intervention as an interpolation for its oddity in terms of both cultural values and dual forms, while unitarians have found common ground for integration in the folktale-nature of Meleager's story.[5]

As for the *Doloneia*, analysts, unitarians, oral theory researchers, and neoanalysts alike have almost unanimously regarded it as being a latter insertion. However, recent studies, from a conciliatory perspective combining neoanalysis and oral theory research, have contributed to a better understanding of the book within both the narrative and its tradition, by emphasizing the poetics involved in its composition.[6] Finally, regarding the *Cyclopeia*, both analysts and unitarians have profited from the tools of folklore studies, the consensus being the proposal of one or several previous folktales functioning as its sources.[7]

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4 Within Homeric scholarship, analysts view the plurality of the text as the result of either one originally shorter poem by a previous author that served as a kernel and was expanded through later insertions, or a series of originally shorter poems that functioned as lays and were given shape by a later author. On the contrary, unitarians understand the coherence of the plots as a mark of either their themes being developed during a first phase of creative activity but the poems themselves being ultimately composed during a second one, or them being the works of two different poets, one of them original and the other an imitator. Over time, the unitarian perspective split into those of oral theory research and neoanalysis: the former sees the Homeric Epics as traditional texts which result from a combination of an individual poet's performance and a style inherited from oral, pre-Homeric literature; the latter considers the *Iliad* (and to a lesser degree the *Odyssey*) a traditional text which results from a mixture of an individual author's intentions and materials drawn from written, pre-Homeric literature.

5 From an analytical perspective, see Page (1959, pp. 297-315) and Kirk (1962, p. 217). From a unitarian perspective, see Scodel (1982, p. 128) for an oral-theory view; and Kakridis (1944/1949, p. 14), Swain (1988, p. 271), and Burgess (2017, p. 51) for a neoanalytical view.

6 From an analytical perspective, see von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1916, pp. 60-67). From a unitarian perspective, see Hainsworth (1993, pp. 151-155) for an oral-theory critique; and Schadewaldt (1938, p. 142), Reinhardt (1961, pp. 243-250), and Danek (1988) for a neoanalytical critique. See Dué & Ebbott (2010) and Dué (2012) on the poetics of "ambush", and Bierl (2012) on the poetics of "night/light" and "death/life".

7 From an analytical perspective, see Page (1955, p. 17). From a unitarian perspective, see Schein (1970, p. 74) and Glenn (1971, pp. 141-142) for an oral-theory view; and Burgess (2001, p. 111) for a neoanalytical view.

If the Homeric Epics will provide the corpus for Greek epic, (Ps.-)Euripides will do so for Greek theater.[8] The playwright Euripides lived in Athens and Macedon from 485/480 BCE to 407/406 BCE. There are nineteen plays attributed to him, which tend to be separated into three groups: nine early plays, from 438-416 BCE (*Alcestis*, *Medea*, *Children of Heracles*, *Hippolytus*, *Andromache*, *Hecuba*, *Suppliant Women*, *Electra*, and *Heracles*); eight later plays, from after 416 BCE (*Trojan Women, Iphigenia in Tauris, Ion, Helen, Phoenician Women, Orestes, Iphigenia at Aulis*, and *Bacchae*); and the miscellanea (*Cyclops*, *Rhesus*, and fragments).

Even more so than those authored by Aeschylus and Sophocles, the plays associated with (Ps.-)Euripides rework epic subjects.[9] The fragmentary *Phoenix* borrows from *Il.* 9; the *Rhesus* (*Rhes.*), from *Il.* 10, as well as from Greek myth and literature; and the *Cyclops* (*Cyc.*), from the *Od.* 9, as well as from Greek myth and literature.[10] These three plays are, respectively, examples of the literary motifs of the embassy, the ambush, and the ogre.

Regarding the other side of the comparison, Sanskrit epic will be represented by the *Mahābhārata* (*MBh.*).[11] This is a narrative text

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8   I follow the Greek text by Kovacs (Euripides, 1994, 2003) and Collard & Cropp (Euripides, 2008). The translations are my own. The (Ps.-) is for acknowledging that the *Rhesus* is only attributed.

9   Aeschylus wrote a trilogy from the *Iliad* and another one from the *Odyssey*: the trilogy from *Il.* 16-24 included *The Myrmidons*, *The Nereids*, and *The Phrygians*; the trilogy from *Od.* 11-24, *The Ghost-Raisers*, *Penelope*, and *The Bone-Gatherers* (followed by the satyr play *Circe*). Sophocles composed three plays based on the *Odyssey*: *Nausicaa or The Washerwomen* from *Od.* 6, *The Phaeacians* from *Od.* 7-12, and *The Foot-Washing* from *Od.* 19. See Murnaghan (2011), Zimmermann (2014), and Sommerstein (2015) for an overview of the adaptation of Greek epic into Greek theater.

10   *Phoenix* is a tragedy, written by Euripides ca. 425 BCE (Collard & Cropp, in Euripides, 2008, p. xv). See Papamichael (1982) and Collard & Cropp (Euripides, 2008) for an overview of *Phoenix*'s sources. *Rhesus* is a tragedy, written by an imitator of Euripides ca. 336 BCE (Liapis, 2017, p. 342; Fantuzzi, 2020, p. 41). See Liapis (2012, Chapter 1), Fries (2014, Chapter 2), and Fantuzzi (2020) for an overview of *Rhesus*' sources. Lastly, *Cyclops* is a satyr drama, written by Euripides ca. 408 BCE (Seaford, 1982). See O'Sullivan & Collard (2013, pp. 28-39), Shaw (2018), and Hunter & Laemmle (2020) for an overview of the *Cyclops*' sources.

11   I follow the Sanskrit text by Sukthankar, Belvalkar, Vaidya, et al. (1933/1971). The translations are my own. See Sullivan (2016), Fitzgerald (2018), and Adluri & Bagchee (2018) for an overview of the *Mahābhārata*.

about *dharma* (duty), *bhakti* (devotion), *pravṛtti* (active life) and *nivṛtti* (ceasing from worldly acts), education, genealogies, power struggles, and the destruction of a generation of heroes. It was probably written by Vyāsa in Northern India between 1 CE and 100 CE.[12] The text is structured through two successive narrative frames.

In the outer frame, the *sūta* (bard) Ugraśravas tells the story to the *kulapati* (family chieftain) Śaunaka at the Naimiṣa Forest during a twelve-year sacrifice; in the inner frame, the Brahman Vaiśampāyana tells the story to the *rāja* (king) Janamejaya at the city of Takṣaśilā during a snake-sacrifice. The ingenious author of this epic seems to have borrowed materials both from Vedic myth and Greco-Roman sources to put together a work concurrently producing aesthetic pleasure and serving didactic, religious, moral, and political purposes.[13]

In the *Mahābhārata*, the focus will be on the *Udyogaparvan* (*MBh.* 5), the *Virāṭaparvan* (*MBh.* 4), and the *Ādiparvan* (*MBh.* 1), which include, respectively, the literary motifs of the embassy, the ambush, and the ogre. These three books have been viewed from various perspectives within the tendencies of the so-called analysts and synthetists.[14] From an analytic perspective, the *Hiḍimbavadhaparvan* (*MBh.* 1.139-144) and the *Bakavadhaparvan* (*MBh.* 1.145-152) have been read in terms of postcolonialism, and the *Bhagavadyānaparvan* (*MBh.* 5.70-135) in terms of ethics; from

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12 See Wulff Alonso (2018a, p. 92; 2018b, p. 459).

13 See Minkowski (1989, 1991, 2001) and Feller (2004) for the "Vedic myth" influence; and Arora (1981, 2011) and Wulff Alonso (2008a, 2008b, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2018a, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b, 2020) for the "Greco-Roman" influence.

14 Within *Mahābhārata* studies, analysts assume an original kernel to which later layers would have been added, during a long process of oral composition ending in some form of redaction of the text. For them, the additions, mostly of didactic materials, would account for the epic's all-encompassing nature, which, in turn, would result in an aesthetically inferior quality. On the contrary, synthetists assume the text as having some form of cohesion and intention, be it in terms of law, philosophy, or literature. For them, the critical edition has provided a reliable point of departure for a unified view of the text.

a synthetic point of view, the *Virāṭaparvan* (*MBh.* 4) has been interpreted based on its supposed sources.[15]

If the *Mahābhārata* will provide the corpus for Sanskrit epic, (Ps.-)Bhāsa will do so for Sanskrit theater.[16] The playwright Bhāsa probably lived in Northern India between 100 CE and 200 CE.[17] There are thirteen plays attributed to him, which tend to be separated into three groups: seven *Mahābhārata*-and-Kṛṣṇa-inspired plays (*The Middle One, The Five Nights, The Embassy, Ghaṭotkaca as an Envoy, Karṇa's Task, The Broken Thighs*, and *The Adventures of the Boy Kṛṣṇa*); two *Rāmāyaṇa*-inspired plays (*The Consecration* and *The Statue Play*); and the miscellanea (two legendary plays, i.e., *Avimāraka* and *Cārudatta in Poverty*; and two historical plays, i.e., *The Minister's Vows* and *The Vision of Vāsavadatta*).

Even more so than Kālidāsa, Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa, Vatsarāja, Kulaśekhara Varman, Rājaśekhara, Kṣemendra, and Vijayapāla after him, (Ps.-)Bhāsa reworked epic subjects.[18] Focusing only on the literary motifs of the embassy, the ambush, and the ogre, one

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15 See S. K. Menon (2016) for the *Hiḍimbavadhaparvan* (*MBh.* 1.139-144) and the *Bakavadhaparvan* (*MBh.* 1.145-152), and Greer (2005) for the *Bhagavadyānaparvan* (*MBh.* 5.70-135). See Wulff Alonso (2018a, 2019a, 2019b, 2020) for the *Virāṭaparvan* (*MBh.* 4).

16 I follow the Sanskrit text by the Bhasa-Projekt Universität Würzburg (2007). The translations are my own. The (Ps.-) is for acknowledging that, to some, all the plays would be only attributed. See Pusalker (1940) for the "pro-Bhāsa" view; and Tieken (1993) and Brückner (1999/2000) for the "against-Bhāsa" view.

17 This dating, a little earlier than the traditional 200 CE–300 CE (Keith, 1924, p. 95; Bansat-Boudon, 1992, p. 38; Ganser, 2022, p. 30), responds to the presumed Greco-Roman influence.

18 Considering only the *Mahābhārata*-inspired plays, (Ps.-)Bhāsa wrote *The Middle One* from *MBh.* 1, *The Five Nights* from *MBh.* 4, *The Embassy* from *MBh.* 5, *Ghaṭotkaca as an Envoy* from *MBh.* 7, *Karṇa's Task* from *MBh.* 8, and *The Broken Thighs* from *MBh.* 9. On the other hand, Kālidāsa composed *The Recognition of Śakuntalā* from *MBh.* 1.62-69 and *On Purūravas and Urvaśī* from *Harivaṃśa* 10.26; Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa, *The Binding Up of the Braided Hair* from the entire *MBh.*; Vatsarāja, *On the Mountaineer and Arjuna* from *MBh.* 3.13-42 and *The Burning of Tripura* from *MBh.* 8.24; Kulaśekhara Varman, *On Tapatī and Saṃvāraṇa* from *MBh.* 1.160-163 and *Subhadrā and Arjuna* from *MBh.* 1.211-213; Rājaśekhara, *The Little Mahābhārata* from the entire *MBh.*; Kṣemendra, *The Blossom-Cluster of the Rāmāyaṇa* from *MBh.* 3.257-276; and Vijayapāla, *The Self-choice of Draupadī* from *MBh.* 1.174-185. See Ghosh (1963) and Thapar (1984) for an overview of the adaptation of Sanskrit epic into Sanskrit theater.

respectively notices that *The Embassy* (*DV*) borrows from *MBh.* 5; *The Five Nights* (*PR*), from *MBh.* 4; and *The Middle One* (*MV*), from *MBh.* 1.[19] The selection, from among several available options, of these three plays for the book was motivated precisely because they deal with the same three motifs that are present in the only three remaining plays by (Ps.-)Euripides that adapt Homer.

In sum, the aim of this book is to compare, by means of a philological and literary analysis, the adaptation of the embassy, ambush, and ogre motifs, on one hand, in (Ps.-)Euripides' Homeric-inspired *Phoenix*, *Rhesus*, and *Cyclops*, and on the other, in (Ps.-) Bhāsa's *Mahābhārata*-inspired *The Embassy*, *The Five Nights*, and *The Middle One*, towards the goal of supporting the hypothesis of influences and borrowings from the Greco-Roman world into India. Based on this comparison, I will argue that the techniques for adapting epic into theater could have been Greco-Roman influences in India; and some of the elements adapted within the literary motifs of the embassy, the ambush, and the ogre, could have been Greco-Roman borrowings by Sanskrit authors.

Let's Go to the Greek Theater (in India)

The earliest attestation of Greek epic influencing Sanskrit epic would coincide with the dating that I follow for the *MBh.* It comes from Dio Chrysostom's (40-115 CE) *Orationes* (*Or.*),[20] specifically from his discourse *On Homer*. The relevant passage offers three pieces of information that are noteworthy. First, the Homeric Epics would have been "sung" and "translated" in India. If the singing part already presupposes an influence in the form of an exposure

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19 *The Embassy* is a *vyāyoga* or one-act, epic-inspired play (Keith, 1924, pp. 95-105). See Esposito (1999/2000, 2010) for an overview of *The Embassy*'s sources. *The Five Nights* is a *samavakāra* or three-act, heroic play (Keith, 1924, pp. 95-105). See Tieken (1997), Steiner (2010), and Hawley (2021) for an overview of *The Five Nights*' sources. Lastly, *The Middle One*, as its Sanskrit title suggests, is also a *vyāyoga* (Keith, 1924, pp. 95-105). See Salomon (2010) and Sutherland Goldman (2017) for an overview of *The Middle One*'s sources.

20 I follow the Greek text by Crosby (Dio Chrysostom, 1946). The translations are my own.

to Greek language and literature, the translating part also opens the door for linguistic and literary borrowings.

Second, Indian people, and presumably Sanskrit authors as well, would have been "acquainted" with epic Greek themes and characters.[21] And third, there are two modes of interacting with epic Greek sources: one, with which other non-Greek speakers would have engaged, that would not have gone past mere enchantment; and another, which the Indians would have followed, that would have included a knowledge of the epic Greek "tongue" and "deeds".

> Ἔτι δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς τῆς χάριτος ἐπαινῶν τὴν ποίησιν σφόδρα ἄγαται τὸν ἄνδρα. ἀτεχνῶς γὰρ οὐκ ἄνευ θείας τύχης οὐδ᾽ ἄνευ Μουσῶν τε καὶ Ἀπόλλωνος ἐπιπνοίας δυνατὸν οὕτως ὑψηλὴν καὶ μεγαλοπρεπῆ καὶ προσέτι ἡδεῖαν γενέσθαι ποίησιν, ὥστε μὴ μόνον τοὺς ὁμογλώττους καὶ ὁμοφώνους τοσοῦτον ἤδη κατέχειν χρόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν βαρβάρων πολλούς· καὶ τοὺς μὲν διγλώττους καὶ μιγάδας σφόδρα ἐμπείρους εἶναι τῶν ἐπῶν αὐτοῦ, πολλὰ τῶν ἄλλων ἀγνοοῦντας τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν, ἐνίους δὲ καὶ τῶν σφόδρα μακρὰν διῳκισμένων· ὁπότε καὶ παρ᾽ Ἰνδοῖς φασιν **ᾄδεσθαι** τὴν Ὁμήρου ποίησιν, **μεταλαβόντων** αὐτὴν εἰς τὴν σφετέραν διάλεκτόν τε καὶ φωνήν.
>
> ὥστε καὶ Ἰνδοὶ τῶν μὲν ἄστρων τῶν παρ᾽ ἡμῖν πολλῶν εἰσιν ἀθέατοι· τὰς γὰρ ἄρκτους οὔ φασι φαίνεσθαι παρ᾽ αὐτοῖς· τῶν δὲ Πριάμου παθημάτων καὶ τῶν Ἀνδρομάχης καὶ Ἑκάβης θρήνων καὶ ὀδυρμῶν καὶ τῆς Ἀχιλλέως τε καὶ Ἕκτορος ἀνδρείας **οὐκ ἀπείρως** ἔχουσιν. τοσοῦτον ἴσχυσεν ἑνὸς ἀνδρός μουσική· καὶ δοκεῖ ἔμοιγε τῇ δυνάμει ταύτῃ τάς τε Σειρῆνας ὑπερβαλέσθαι καὶ τὸν Ὀρφέα.
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> τὸ γὰρ λίθους τε καὶ φυτὰ καὶ θηρία κηλεῖν καὶ ἄγειν τί ἔστιν ἕτερον ἢ τὸ βαρβάρους ἀνθρώπους ἀσυνέτους τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς φωνῆς οὕτως ἄγαν χειρώσασθαι, μήτε τῆς **γλώττης** μήτε τῶν **πραγμάτων** ἐμπείρους ὄντας ὑπὲρ ὧν ὁ λόγος, ἀλλὰ ἀτεχνῶς καθάπερ, οἶμαι, πρὸς κιθάραν κηλουμένους; ἡγοῦμαι δὲ ἔγωγε πολλοὺς καὶ τῶν ἀμαθεστέρων ἔτι βαρβάρων τό γε ὄνομα ἀκηκοέναι τὸ Ὁμήρου, ὅ τι δὲ δηλοῖ, τοῦτο μὴ εἰδέναι σαφῶς, εἴτε ζῷον εἴτε φυτὸν εἴτε πρᾶγμα ἕτερον.

> Furthermore, he [sc. Plato] himself praising the poetry for its charm, greatly admires the man [sc. Homer]. Indeed, without

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21 See J. Allen (1946) on the Gandharan *"tabula iliaca"*, an Indian depiction of the Trojan Horse. Also, see Derrett (1992, pp. 48-51).

a divine cause or without the Muses' and Apollo's intervention, it is simply not possible for an elevated, magnificent, and sweet poetry to appear and to enthrall for quite some time, not only those of the same tongue and of the same language, but also many of the barbarians. The bilingual ones and the mixed ones, not knowing much else about the Greeks, are versed in his poetry, and so are some living very far away. Among the Indians, so they say, Homer's poetry **is sung**, after they **translated** it into their own dialect and language.

In this way, even if the Indians are not looking at many of the stars that are near us –they say, indeed, that the Great Bear does not appear near them; still, in terms of Priam's sufferings, of Andromache's and Hecuba's laments and wailings, and of Achilles' and Hector's courage, they conduct themselves **not in an unacquainted manner**. So influential was the poetry of a single man! It seems to me that, in puissance alone, he surpasses the Sirens and Orpheus.

Indeed, how is enchanting and steering rocks, plants, and beasts any different than utterly subduing barbarian men who do not understand the Greek language, and who are unacquainted with the **tongue** and the **deeds** about which the text is, but are, I believe, simply enchanted by the lyre? Moreover, I think that many of the barbarians that are even more ignorant have certainly heard Homer's name, it is clear, not knowing well if it was an animal, a plant, or other thing.

(Dio Chrys. *Or*. 53.6-8)[22]

As a speculative interpretation of all this information I suggest the following: if Sanskrit authors would have had a mastery of the epic Greek language and an appreciation for the epic Greek literature, they could have profited from them, to re-create Greek epic, however freely, when coming up with the Sanskrit epic.

Contemporaneous to Dio Chrysostom is Plutarch (46-119 CE). From him, there is reason to include as many as four passages. In the first one, from *Moralia* (*Mor*.),[23] specifically from *On the Fortune of Alexander*, alongside Homer, he mentions Sophocles and Euripides. Although he is not speaking of India, but of its vicinities

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22 Throughout the book, I have added the boldfaced emphasis in the quotations/translations.

23 I follow the Greek text by Babbit (Plutarch, 1962). The translations are my own.

(Persia, Susa, and Gedrosia), he notes that these works of Greek literature, both epic and dramatic, would have been "read" and "sung". In the second one, from *Parallel Lives*, specifically from *Alexander* (*Alex.*),[24] he reveals that Alexander the Great traveled to Asia with Aristotle's "edition" of Homer's *Iliad*, and that once he was stationed there, he ordered for more "books", among others, by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.

> θαυμάζομεν τὴν Καρνεάδου δύναμιν, εἰ Κλειτόμαχον, Ἀσδρούβαν καλούμενον πρότερον καὶ Καρχηδόνιον τὸ γένος, ἑλληνίζειν ἐποίησε · θαυμάζομεν τὴν διάθεσιν Ζήνωνος, εἰ Διογένη τὸν Βαβυλώνιον ἔπεισε φιλοσοφεῖν. ἀλλ᾽ Ἀλεξάνδρου τὴν Ἀσίαν ἐξημεροῦντος Ὅμηρος ἦν **ἀνάγνωσμα**, καὶ Περσῶν καὶ Σουσιανῶν καὶ Γεδρωσίων παῖδες τὰς Εὐριπίδου καὶ Σοφοκλέους τραγῳδίας **ἦδον**. καὶ Σωκράτης ὡς μὲν ξένα παρεισάγων δαιμόνια δίκην τοῖς Ἀθήνησιν ὠφλίσκανε συκοφάνταις· διὰ δ᾽ Ἀλέξανδρον τοὺς Ἑλλήνων θεοὺς Βάκτρα καὶ Καύκασος προσεκύνησε.

> We admire Carneades' power, if it did Hellenize Cleitomachus, formerly known as Hasdrubal and Carthaginian by birth. We admire Zeno's character, if it persuaded Diogenes the Babylonian to philosophize. But while Alexander was civilizing Asia, Homer was habitual **reading**, and the children of the Persians, the Susianians, and the Gedrosians, **sang** Euripides' and Sophocles' tragedies. When even Socrates was condemned by Athenian slanderers for the charge of introducing foreign deities, through Alexander, Bactria and the Caucasus still worshiped the gods of the Greeks.

> (Plut. *Mor*. 328d)

> καὶ τὴν μὲν Ἰλιάδα τῆς πολεμικῆς ἀρετῆς ἐφόδιον καὶ νομίζων καὶ ὀνομάζων, ἔλαβε μὲν Ἀριστοτέλους **διορθώσαντος** ἣν ἐκ τοῦ νάρθηκος καλοῦσιν, εἶχε δὲ ἀεὶ μετὰ τοῦ ἐγχειριδίου κειμένην ὑπὸ τὸ προσκεφάλαιον, ὡς Ὀνησίκριτος ἱστόρηκε, τῶν δὲ ἄλλων βιβλίων οὐκ εὐπορῶν ἐν τοῖς ἄνω τόποις Ἅρπαλον ἐκέλευσε πέμψαι.
>   κἀκεῖνος ἔπεμψεν αὐτῷ τάς τε Φιλίστου **βίβλους** καὶ τῶν Εὐριπίδου καὶ Σοφοκλέους καὶ Αἰσχύλου τραγῳδιῶν συχνάς,

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24 I follow the Greek text by Perrin (Plutarch, 1967). The translations are my own.

καὶ Τελέστου καὶ Φιλοξένου διθυράμβους. Ἀριστοτέλην δὲ θαυμάζων ἐν ἀρχῇ καὶ ἀγαπῶν οὐχ ἧττον, ὡς αὐτὸς ἔλεγε, τοῦ πατρός, ὡς δι᾽ ἐκεῖνον μὲν ζῶν, διὰ τοῦτον δὲ καλῶς ζῶν, ὕστερον ὑποπτότερον ἔσχεν, οὐχ ὥστε ποιῆσαί τι κακόν, ἀλλ᾽ αἱ φιλοφροσύναι τὸ σφοδρὸν ἐκεῖνο καὶ στερκτικὸν οὐκ ἔχουσαι πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀλλοτριότητος ἐγένοντο τεκμήριον.

Considering the *Iliad* "provisions" for warlike excellencies, and calling it so, he [sc. Alexander] took – after Aristotle **revised** it – the one called "of the casket", and he always kept it near his dagger, placed under his pillow, as Onesicritus has reported; and other books not being available at the inland regions, he ordered Harpalus to send some.

   And he [sc. Harpalus] sent him [sc. Alexander] Philistus' **books** and lots of Euripides', Sophocles', and Aeschylus' tragedies, as well as Telestus' and Philoxenus' dithyrambs. Admiring Aristotle at first and loving him no less than he did his father, as he said – for thanks to one he lived, but thanks to the other he lived well – later, he [sc. Alexander] held him more under suspicion, not up to doing him harm, but his kindnesses no longer having such profusion and affection towards the other: thus, surfaced the proof of their estrangement.

<div align="right">(Plut. Alex. 8.2-3)</div>

If the orality of chanting suffices for positing a general influence, writing would be much more likely to account for specific borrowings, which naturally need not be copies. Following up the speculative interpretation, I postulate that if authors of Sanskrit theater would have had a mastery of Greek language (both epic and classical), an appreciation for Greek literature (both epic and dramatic), and written versions of Greek texts (both Homer and Euripides), they could have profited from them, to re-create Greek theater, however freely, when coming up with Sanskrit theater.

   In the third and fourth passages, Plutarch is also in the context of speaking about India's vicinities. *Parallel Lives*, still in *Alexander* (*Alex*.), stretches the reach of Greek theater up to Media. In Ecbatana, there would have been Greek "theaters" and "artists". Similarly, *Parallel Lives*, specifically *Crassus* (*Crass*.),[25] extends

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25 I follow the Greek text by Perrin (Plutarch, 1932). The translations are my own.

Euripides' influence up to Parthia and Armenia. There, king Orodes II (r. 57-37 BCE) is said to have become acquainted with Greek "language" and "literature", and king Artavasdes II (r. 55-34 BCE), to have composed, among other things, "tragedies". Moreover, the passage notably suggests a Parthian adaptation of "Euripides' *Bacchae*", during the staging of which, the head of Crassus would have taken the place of the head of Pentheus.

> Ὡς δὲ ἧκεν εἰς Ἐκβάτανα τῆς Μηδίας καὶ διῴκησε τὰ κατεπείγοντα, πάλιν ἦν ἐν θεάτροις καὶ πανηγύρεσιν, ἅτε δὴ τρισχιλίων αὐτῷ **τεχνιτῶν** ἀπὸ τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἀφιγμένων. ἔτυχε δὲ περὶ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐκείνας Ἡφαιστίων πυρέσσων· οἷα δὲ νέος καὶ στρατιωτικὸς οὐ φέρων ἀκριβῆ δίαιταν, ἅμα τῷ τὸν ἰατρὸν Γλαῦκον ἀπελθεῖν εἰς τὸ **θέατρον** περὶ ἄριστον γενόμενος καὶ καταφαγὼν ἀλεκτρυόνα ἑφθὸν καὶ ψυκτῆρα μέγαν ἐκπιὼν οἴνου κακῶς ἔσχε καὶ μικρὸν διαλιπὼν ἀπέθανε.

> When he [sc. Alexander] came to Ecbatana of Media and attended pressing matters, once again, he partook in theaters and festivals, after three thousand **artists** from Greece appeared before him. But around that time, Hephaestion happened to have a fever. Since he was young and a soldier, he was not following a strict regimen: as soon as his physician Glaucus took off to the **theater**, he turned up for breakfast, ate a cooked chicken, and having drunk a huge decanter of wine, fell ill and died shortly thereafter.

> (Plut. *Alex*. 72.1)

> ἦν γὰρ οὔτε **φωνῆς** οὔτε **γραμμάτων** Ὑρώδης Ἑλληνικῶν ἄπειρος, ὁ δ᾿ Ἀρταοθάσδης καὶ **τραγῳδίας** ἐποίει καὶ λόγους ἔγραφε καὶ ἱστορίας, ὧν ἔνιαι διασῴζονται. τῆς δὲ κεφαλῆς τοῦ Κράσσου κομισθείσης ἐπὶ θύρας ἀπηρμέναι μὲν ἦσαν αἱ τράπεζαι, τραγῳδιῶν δὲ ὑποκριτὴς Ἰάσων ὄνομα Τραλλιανὸς ᾖδεν **Εὐριπίδου Βακχῶν** τὰ περὶ τὴν Ἀγαύην. εὐδοκιμοῦντος δ᾿ αὐτοῦ Σιλλάκης ἐπιστὰς τῷ ἀνδρῶνι καὶ προσκυνήσας προύβαλεν εἰς μέσον τοῦ Κράσσου τὴν κεφαλήν.

> Indeed, neither with the **language** of the Greeks nor with their **literature** was Orodes unacquainted, and Artavasdes even composed **tragedies**, and wrote discourses and histories, some of which are preserved. And when the head of Crassus was taken to the door, the tables had been removed and an

actor of tragedies from Tralles, named Jason, was singing
the scene about Agave from **Euripides' *Bacchae***. When he
was being cheered, Sillaces stood before the hall, and having
kneeled, he cast Crassus' head in the middle.

(Plut. *Crass*. 33.2)

What this would mean is that Greek theater would have been
susceptible not only to repetition, but also to re-creation. Still in the
same speculative manner, with the mastery of Greek language, the
appreciation for Greek literature, and the availability of Greek texts
in their favor, authors of Sanskrit theater could have re-created
Greek theater *while* re-creating Sanskrit epic into Sanskrit theater.
This is a key point: Greek theater alone does not account for Sanskrit
theater. The similarities between Sanskrit theater and Sanskrit epic
are too numerous to admit such a simplistic explanation. However,
as an alternative setting I propose the following: authors of Sanskrit
theater could have borrowed, *simultaneously*, themes coming from
Sanskrit epic, themes coming from Greek theater, and techniques
for the epic-to-theater adaptations, also coming from Greek theater.

The last two ancient sources are about a century later than
Dio Chrysostom and Plutarch. They are Aelian and Philostratus.
Aelian (175-235 CE), in *Historical Miscellany* (*VH*),[26] retransmits Dio
Chrysostom's ideas about "translating" and "chanting" the Greek
epic in India.

...ὅτι Ἰνδοὶ τῇ παρά σφισιν ἐπιχωρίῳ φωνῇ τὰ Ὁμήρου
μεταγράψαντες ᾄδουσιν οὐ μόνοι ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ Περσῶν
βασιλεῖς, εἴ τι χρὴ πιστεύειν τοῖς ὑπὲρ τούτων ἱστοροῦσιν.

...that Indians, **having translated** Homer's poetry into
their native language, **sing** it, and so too do the kings of the
Persians, if one must trust those who report these things.

(Ael. *VH* 12.48)

Philostratus (170-250 CE) provides the last attestations of Greek
epic and theater bearing an influence on Sanskrit literature. With
him, the number of passages goes up to five, all of which come from

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26   I follow the Greek text by Wilson (Aelian, 1997). The translations are my
own.

the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (*V A*),[27] a source that, on account of its tendency to fiction, must be considered with the utmost care. The first two passages refer to the mastery of Greek language in India itself, a practice that would have been so run-of-the-mill as to be qualified as "not remarkable", and as to be exemplified by pointing out the omission of a "single character".

> ...προσδραμόντα δὲ τῷ Ἀπολλωνίῳ φωνῇ Ἑλλάδι προσειπεῖν αὐτόν, καὶ τοῦτο μὲν **οὔπω θαυμαστὸν** δόξαι διὰ τὸ καὶ τοὺς ἐν τῇ κώμῃ πάντας ἀπὸ Ἑλλήνων φθέγγεσθαι...

> ...that after having run up to Apollonius, he [sc. the Indian] addressed him in the Greek language, and with this, he did not appear **remarkable at all**, since following the Greeks, everyone at the village spoke it...

> (Philostr. *V A* 3.12)

> ...τὸν δὲ Ἀπολλώνιον ἰδὼν φωνῇ τε ἠσπάσατο Ἑλλάδι καὶ τὰ τοῦ Ἰνδοῦ γράμματα ἀπῄτει. θαυμάσαντος δὲ τοῦ Ἀπολλωνίου τὴν πρόγνωσιν καὶ **γράμμα γε ἓν** ἔφη λείπειν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ, δέλτα εἰπών, παρῆλθε γὰρ αὐτὸν γράφοντα·

> ...after seeing Apollonius, he [sc. Iarchas] greeted him in the Greek language and asked for the Indian's letter. When Apollonius became puzzled by his foreknowledge, he told him that a **single character** was missing from the letter, adding that a "delta" had escaped the writer.

> (Philostr. *V A* 3.16)

The last three passages deal with the appreciation for Greek literature in India itself. They also serve to reinforce the assertion that Greek epic and theater would have been susceptible not only to repetition, but also to re-creation. According to the Indian character, respectively, the literary situation of the *Iliad*'s "Achaeans" could have applied to the historical situation of the Greeks, the Greek

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27   I follow the Greek text by Conybeare (Philostratus, 1912). The translations are my own. Regarding this source, it is worth mentioning that it is the literary work of a third-century author (Philostratus) about a much-mythologized first-century holy man (Apollonius). Therefore, the data gathered from it is not necessarily as credible as was the case with the previous sources.

"Palamedes" could just as easily have reincarnated as an Indian "young man", and the plot of Euripides' *"Children of Heracles"* could very well have been about an Indian king's "sovereignty".[28]

> ...ὁ δὲ Ἰνδὸς "Τροία μὲν ἀπώλετο," εἶπεν, "ὑπὸ τῶν πλευσάντων **Ἀχαιῶν** τότε, ὑμᾶς δὲ ἀπολωλέκασιν οἱ ἐπ᾽ αὐτῇ λόγοι· μόνους γὰρ ἄνδρας ἡγούμενοι τοὺς ἐς Τροίαν στρατεύσαντας, ἀμελεῖτε πλειόνων τε καὶ θειοτέρων ἀνδρῶν, οὓς ἥ τε ὑμετέρα γῆ καὶ ἡ Αἰγυπτίων καὶ ἡ Ἰνδῶν ἤνεγκεν."

> ...and the Indian replied: "Troy was destroyed by the **Achaean** sailors and your own words have destroyed you all. Indeed, while considering as heroes only those who fought against Troy, you are neglecting more numerous and more divine heroes, whom your land produced, as well as that of the Egyptians and the Indians."

> (Philostr. *V A* 3.19)

> γέγονε μὲν οὖν τὸ **μειράκιον** τοῦτο **Παλαμήδης** ὁ ἐν Τροίᾳ, κέχρηται δὲ ἐναντιωτάτοις Ὀδυσσεῖ καὶ Ὁμήρῳ, τῷ μὲν ξυνθέντι ἐπ᾽ αὐτὸν τέχνας, ὑφ᾽ ὧν κατελιθώθη, τῷ δὲ οὐδὲ ἔπους αὐτὸν ἀξιώσαντι. καὶ ἐπειδὴ μήθ᾽ ἡ σοφία αὐτόν τι, ἣν εἶχεν, ὤνησε, μήτε Ὁμήρου ἐπαινέτου ἔτυχεν, ὑφ᾽ οὗ πολλοὶ καὶ τῶν μὴ πάνυ σπουδαίων ἐς ὄνομα ἤχθησαν, Ὀδυσσέως τε ἥττητο ἀδικῶν οὐδέν, διαβέβληται πρὸς φιλοσοφίαν καὶ ὀλοφύρεται τὸ ἑαυτοῦ πάθος. ἔστι δὲ οὗτος Παλαμήδης, ὃς καὶ γράφει μὴ μαθὼν γράμματα.

> Indeed, this **young man** was once born as **Palamedes** of Troy and has had Odysseus and Homer as his worst enemies: the former, plotting tricks by which he ended up being stoned to death; and the latter, not even having deemed him worthy of a word. And since neither the wisdom that he possessed was of any use to him, nor did he find praise in Homer, by whom many of the not so earnest made a name for themselves, and since he was defeated by Odysseus while not doing anything wrong, he is at variance with philosophy and bewails his sufferings. So, this is Palamedes, who writes while not knowing the alphabet.

> (Philostr. *V A* 3.22)

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28 See Mills (2015, p. 262) for a reference to the play *Charition* (second century CE), a similar, India-inspired adaptation of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*.

καί μοι ἀναγιγνώσκοντι τοὺς **Ἡρακλείδας** τὸ δρᾶμα, ἐπέστη τις ἐντεῦθεν ἐπιστολὴν φέρων παρὰ ἀνδρὸς ἐπιτηδείου τῷ πατρί, ὅς με ἐκέλευσε διαβάντα τὸν Ὑδραώτην ποταμὸν ξυγγίνεσθαί οἱ περὶ τῆς **ἀρχῆς** τῆς ἐνταῦθα, πολλὰς γὰρ ἐλπίδας εἶναί μοι ἀνακτήσασθαι αὐτὴν μὴ ἐλινύοντι.

And when I [sc. Phraotes] was reading the play ***Children of Heracles***, someone from that place stood near me, bringing a letter from a man favorable to my father, who ordered me to cross the river Hydraotes to meet with him about my **sovereignty** there, for there was a lot of hope for me to recover it, if I were not to stand idly by.

(Philostr. *V A* 2.32)

If Greek testimonies of their influence in India are abundant, Indian testimonies of a Greek influence therein are altogether nonexistent.[29] Oddly enough, this Indian lack of acknowledgement agrees with the *sui generis* form of acculturation, evidenced for instance, in the Muslim philosophical influence in India. According to Nair (2020, p. 18),

If one should ask why, for instance, despite centuries of sharing the same soil, Sanskrit philosophical writings never discussed – and, overwhelmingly, never even acknowledged the existence of – Muslim thought, the controls set up by the philosophical "discursive tradition" are a significant part of the explanation: if the tradition has no precedent for such an endeavor, and if no foundational texts within the tradition provide any particular encouragement or even pretext to

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29 However, although a lack of documentation is not tantamount to a lack of influences and borrowings, there is certainly documentation of diplomatic contacts (Jairazbhoy, 1963, p. 63) since Aśoka (third century BCE), of bilingual coins (Jairazbhoy, 1963, p. 64) since Demetrius I (second century BCE), of Greek scripts in India (Jairazbhoy, 1963, p. 89) since Patañjali (second century BCE), and at least, of one instance of literary borrowing: Yavaneśvara (second century CE) would have translated the astronomical treatise entitled *Yavanajātaka* from Greek into Sanskrit, and Sphujidhvaja (third century CE) would have adapted it from prose into verse (Pingree, in Sphujidhvaja, 1978, p. 3). Moreover, there is a tendency to accept influences and borrowing from the Greco-Roman world to India in astronomy and mathematics (Pingree, 1971, 1976, 1993; Falk, 2002; Plofker, 2011), as well as in architecture, painting, and sculpture (Acharya, 1927; Nehru, 1989; Boardman, 2015).

do so, then, in such an environment, any dramatically new intellectual initiative would find scarcely any space to take root.

Anyhow, since someone asserting that something happens in a certain way is not quite the same as it having happened in that way, testimonies will never suffice. Therefore, in mid-nineteenth-century Germany, where the Greek influence hypothesis resurfaces, and in late-nineteenth-century France, where it finds its fiercest adversary, the attention is redirected towards the primary sources. As I will show, the straightforward rejection from most Indologists, paired with the inconsequential acceptance from the few classicists who have even dealt with the question, has resulted in relatively little progress having been made.

The Case of Classicists v. Sanskrit Playwrights

The idea that Greek theater had somehow influenced Sanskrit theater was first suggested by Weber in 1852:

> From the foregoing exposition it appears that the drama meets us in an already finished form, and with its best productions. In almost all the prologues, too, the several works are represented as new, in contradistinction to the pieces of former poets; but of these pieces, that is, of the early beginnings of dramatic poetry, not the smallest remnant has been preserved. Consequently the conjecture that it may possibly have been the representation of Greek dramas at the courts of the Grecian kings in Bactria, in the Panjáb, and in Gujarát (for so far did Greek supremacy for a time extend), which awakened the Hindú faculty of imitation, and so gave birth to the Indian drama, does not in the meantime admit for direct verification. But its historical possibility, at any rate, is undeniable, especially as the older dramas nearly all belong to the west of India. No internal connection, however, with the Greek drama exists. (Weber, 1852/1878, p. 207)

This first exposition argues for *influence*, but not necessarily for *borrowing*. The influence, expressed through the wording of a "birth", would explain "the idea of theater itself" (Walker, 2004, p. 6), and would only represent the "general thesis" (Bronkhorst,

2016, p. 392) that there was a Greek influence in Sanskrit theater, somewhere along the lines of what Diamond (1997) calls "idea diffusion" (p. 224). This is as far as Weber got.

The borrowing, on the other hand, thought of in terms of an "internal connection", would need "a certain type of theater" (Walker, 2004, p. 6), and would refer to a "specific thesis" (Bronkhorst, 2016, p. 392) about how that Greek or Roman theater relates to Sanskrit theater, in the sense of what Diamond (1997) refers to as "blueprint copying" (p. 224). Following Weber, came two explanations, both concerned with borrowing: Windisch sought answers in Greek New Comedy,[30] and Reich in Greek Pantomime.[31] Contrary to what might be expected, I will follow neither of these paths.

A turning point in the development of the hypothesis was due to Lévi, whose chapter on the subject was conceived as a challenge to Windisch. Lévi rules out the parallelisms one by one, whether by taking them as being broad enough not to be necessarily correlated, or by focusing on their differences more than their similarities. However, apart from striking details like the *yavanikā* (curtain), which is still regarded as a non-Greek term,[32] there are deeper similitudes that might have been overlooked. A case in point is the epic-to-theater procedure, which Lévi saw as an argument in favor of an Indian origin, and therefore, as one against Greek influence.

> La fable des drames classiques est tirée directement des épopées ou des contes, mis en œuvre et transformés à l'aide de procédés et de ressources empruntés au fonds commun de l'esprit indien, et qui portent tous une garantie incontestable d'origine.

> The fable of classic dramas is taken directly from epics or tales, it is implemented and transformed with the aid of processes and resources borrowed from the common stock of the Indian spirit, all of which bear an indisputable guarantee of originality.

> (Lévi, 1890/1963, p. 365)

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30   See Windisch (1882, pp. 14-15).
31   See Reich (1903, p. 694).
32   See Mayrhofer (1976), s.v. *yavanáḥ*. Cf. Bharata, *Nāṭyaś.* 5.11-12; Amarasiṃha, 2.6.3.22; and Halāyudha, 2.154.

There are three major assumptions behind this statement: borrowing is the same as being influenced, borrowing/being influenced is at odds with being original, and borrowing from/ being influenced by Indian texts is at odds with borrowing from/being influenced by Greek texts. Additionally, a fourth assumption is also at work elsewhere, in Lévi's one-dimensional concept of influence/borrowing: borrowing/being influenced is always an explicit procedure.[33] According to him, if Europe borrowed from/was influenced by the Greco-Roman Classics in an announced manner, then India too would have had to proceed thusly. Against Lévi's claim that borrowing from Sanskrit epic disproves borrowing from Greek theater, I contend that the textual evidence on this matter could be interpreted as signaling that the idea itself of theater borrowing from epic is part of the Greek influence in India.

Even though Lévi himself partly modified his position later on in his career,[34] after him scholars gravitated either towards admitting

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33 See Lévi (1890/1963): "Les littératures savantes de l'Europe, créées ou remaniées sur le modèle des classiques anciens, nous ont familiarisés avec les caractères ordinaires de l'emprunt: il ne se devine pas, il éclate; il ne se cache pas, il s'avoue orgueilleusement. L'admiration de l'œuvre originale, qui provoque l'imitation, porte l'imitateur à la copier avec une fidélité presque servile; il peut essayer d'adapter son modèle au goût du temps et du pays, de le naturaliser par une transposition habile; il ne réussit pas, il ne cherche pas même à en effacer les traits principaux. Les sujets, les sentiments essentiels, l'allure générale de l'action ne se modifient pas [The learned literatures of Europe, created or reworked on the model of the ancient classics, have familiarized us with the ordinary characteristics of borrowing: it is not to be guessed, it explodes; it does not hide, it proudly announces itself. The admiration of the original work, which provokes imitation, leads the imitator to copy it with almost servile fidelity: he can try to adapt his model to the taste of the time and the country, to naturalize it by a skillful transposition; he fails, he does not even try to erase its main features. The subjects, the main feelings, the general pace of the action do not change]" (p. 365).

34 See Lévi (1902): "Si le théâtre sanscrit est né à la cour des Kṣatrapas, la théorie de l'influence grecque semble gagner en vraisemblance. Le pays des Kṣatrapas était sans doute le plus hellénisé de l'Inde, puisqu'il était le marché le plus important du commerce hellénistique [If Sanskrit theater was born at the court of the Kṣatrapas, the theory of Greek influence seems to be gaining in credibility. The land of the Kṣatrapas was arguably the most Hellenized in India, as it was the most important market for Hellenistic commerce]" (p. 124).

defeat when faced with lack of evidence, or simply towards accepting the question as settled. For instance, Keith (1924), who in principle is open to the idea, ends up rejecting it: "But we do find in the epic indications that it was not necessary for Greece to give to India the ideas presented in the drama" (Keith, 1924, p. 63). Keith seems to be working under the same assumptions that Lévi did. In agreement with Keith's view, I argue that Sanskrit theater certainly borrowed from Sanskrit epic, but after further consideration, I also posit that the *why* (the idea itself of theater borrowing from epic) and the *how* (the techniques for adapting epic into theater) of such borrowing could have been Greco-Roman influences.

If, after Lévi, Indologists seemed ready to turn the page, classicists remained curious. This is the case with Tarn (1938), who with unprecedented clarity, is willing to delimit what to look for, i.e., general influences instead of specific borrowings, as well as where to look for it, i.e., Homer and Euripides instead of Menander: "And Egypt has at least taught us that whatever other works Greeks might take with them to foreign lands they would certainly take Homer and Euripides" (Tarn, 1938, p. 382). Indeed, literary motifs appearing in both Homer and (Ps.-)Euripides seem like a great starting point to investigate *what* (the elements adapted from epic to theater) could have been borrowed. But would the results of such research suffice? After all, as Thieme (1966) puts it, "Nach Lage der Dinge muss die Last des Beweises bei denen ruhen, die griechischen Einfluss behaupten [As things stand, the burden of proof must rest with those who affirm a Greek influence]" (p. 51).

Since themes and characters of the Attic New Comedy and the Greek Pantomime had already been presented as "evidence", but deemed inadequate, the question must be raised as to what would be considered "evidence", how would it be expected to "prove" a Greek influence, or even what would be regarded as an "influence". Trying to answer these questions, which have not been openly posed but seem to be awaiting a response anyway, I infer that only some sort of "borrowing" would amount to influence, that only something close to "imitation" would serve as proof, and that only a systematic exposition of "several such instances" within Sanskrit theater would once and for all settle the question. Such evidence

exists nowhere, which is why some scholars have made up their minds, while others expect indefinitely, as if some "new" evidence could appear at any moment.

The truth is that the expectations are too high for such a meagre reality: when it comes to the literary sources of the Ancient World, new discoveries occur once in a blue moon. For the philologist, even a few blurred lines on a torn manuscript could be the finding of a lifetime. For the archaeologist, on the other hand, the sight of new evidence is certainly a more usual experience. Nonetheless, even archaeological evidence has been deemed inadequate by a very demanding circle. In the 1970s, Bernard (1976) reported a piece of information that could have been the milestone that stirred the debate back to at least the possibility of Greek influence: there was, by the third to second century BCE, a Greek building serving as a theater in India.[35] According to him, this replaced the question of whether there had been an influence with that of what type of influence would it have been.

Bernard, like Tarn, distinguishes between general influence and specific borrowing. He also adds, as a third option, the most modest of contributions to a process that would have happened with or without it. This additional attenuation of the claim has much to do with the modern notion of originality, only now not from the point of view of the European colonizer, but from that of the colonized Indian. For the former, acknowledging the extra help would be a sign of merit that stresses their achievement in the light of their legacy, whereas for the latter it would signify demerit. A natural response to the discourse of colonialism is nationalism. Where the modern is foreign, the ancient is native. It is an independent accomplishment. Or at least, it should be.

Closing in on the research problem, in colonial India, where Elizabethan theater would have been seen as foreign, Sanskrit theater would have been thought of as native. Its invention would positively articulate Indian identity; contrarywise, the mere suggestion of its imitation would negatively affect it. Hence, Indian nationalism could have been one of the reasons for an *a*

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35   See Walker (2004, p. 9) and Bronkhorst (2016, p. 398).

priori rejection of the Greek influence hypothesis. The fact that two cultures, coinciding in space and time, and having contacts in other branches of the sciences (e.g., astronomy) and the arts (e.g., sculpture), would have both independently developed and mastered theater, without any borrowing, influence, or even contribution, seems, to say the least, unlikely.

Within other fields, the Greek influence hypothesis endured, as it did with the classicist Tarn and the archaeologist Bernard. A case in point is Free (1981), whose background is in theatre arts. Free does not differentiate between borrowing and influence, but she does distinguish between coincidence and intentionality. Coincidence could account for some parallelisms, but not all of them. According to her, to explain every similarity, one must accept influence/borrowing in both directions, that is, from the Greco-Roman world to India, and the other way around. The last option is certainly possible but seems less likely, based on the dating of the playwrights. In addition, Free's (1981) article offers one of only two statements that I have been able to identify,[36] suggesting a possible Greek influence in terms of the epic-to-theater procedure, as I postulate here: "The epic sweep of Sanskrit drama and the indebtedness of the subjects of the earliest plays to the Indian epic offer a further parallel with Greek tragedy" (p. 84). Regrettably, the idea is subject to no further consideration.

Sinha & Choudhury (2000) and Lindtner (2002) are probably the first Indologists since Windisch to openly accept the hypothesis as possible. For the former, not only could (Ps.-)Bhāsa have been influenced by Greek theater, but he could have even borrowed the device of the Greek chorus for his triads of characters (e.g., *The Middle One*, *The Five Nights*, *The Broken Thighs*, and *The Consecration*).[37] For the latter, a long study on the matter is still pending.[38] Following them, there are two studies with a lot in common: they are recent, they provide historiographical and bibliographical contributions, and they openly defend the Greek hypothesis. As differences, one can point out that one is by an expert

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36   The other is Wells (1968, p. iii).
37   See Sinha & Choudhury (2000, p. 32).
38   See Lindtner (2002, p. 199).

in comparative literature, while the other is by an Indologist; and that one favors borrowing, while the other prefers influence.

The first of these studies is by Walker (2004), who revisits the comparison with Greek New Comedy. The old theory is refurbished with new "circumstantial evidence".[39] This encompasses a text that had not been considered before, as well as a text that was not even available before. These are, respectively, the parallel example of religious borrowing in the adapted Latin theater of Hrostvitha (ca. 935-973),[40] and the lucky discovery of the plays attributed to Bhāsa. Walker's take on the hypothesis is quite ingenious. On one hand, (Ps.-)Bhāsa's *The Broken Thighs* has much in common with Greek Tragedy;[41] on the other, so do the *prakaraṇa* and the Greek New Comedy. This could mean that, at an early stage, Sanskrit theater could have begun with borrowings from both Greek tragedy and Greek comedy, only to abandon them later, to develop other dramatic genres that were more relatable to their audiences. As advanced when discussing Windisch, I will not follow this line of inquiry.

In fact, I advance two major criticisms against Walker's proposal. First, the *nāṭaka*, with its epic-to-theater procedures, is closer to Greek theater than the *prakaraṇa*; second, Sanskrit theater and Roman theater, although influenced by the same Greek models, yielded such contrasting results, not because of a language barrier that Walker presupposes, but by reason of conscious choice. If the authors of Sanskrit theater knew Greek and Latin, and if they were aware that there is more than one way to adapt a text,[42] they could have consciously designed their adaptations in a new way, that

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39   See Walker (2004, pp. 4-5) and Bronkhorst (2016, p. 397).

40   See Walker (2004): "As regards Greco-Roman New Comedy as a subtext for didactic religious plays, parallels between Hrotswitha and the Buddhist playwright Asvaghosa might prove especially striking, if more of the text of Asvaghosa's *prakaranas* had survived" (p. 6, n. 6). Walker's example could be strengthened by mention of the adapted Greek theater of Gregorius of Nazianzus (ca. 329-390), who borrowed from none other than Euripides.

41   Walkerś example could be strengthened by mention of (Ps.-)Bhāsa's *Karṇa's Task*.

42   For instance, Euripides adapts Homer's *Embassy* by emphasizing *Phoenix*, but Seneca adapts Euripides' *Trojan Women* by merging its plot with that of *Hecuba*.

could be called "Greco-Indian *anukaraṇa*",[43] mirroring the concept of Greco-Roman *imitatio*.

The texts and genres having much in common is not tantamount to them being the same. If Walker's similarities are noticeable, so too are the differences that have been adduced time and again by those who reject the influence hypothesis. Just like arguing in favor of what is similar does not entail proving the hypothesis, so too, counterarguing with what is different does not mean disproving it. The Greek influence hypothesis is not a scientific one, precisely because it is not falsifiable. In Classics, Indology, and other disciplines of the Humanities, analysis and interpretation, rather than data and hard evidence, tend to guide the process from hypotheses to conclusions. Unlike Science's empirical methods, their critical ones hardly ever lead to definitive answers, yet the field of knowledge profits from the debate. Hence, any reframing of the hypothesis of a Greek influence in the Sanskrit theater should be intended to reignite this debate.

To put in an analogy, up until now, Sanskrit borrowing has been approached as if it were a case of copyright infringement: classicists, the plaintiffs, have been seen as alleging that Sanskrit playwrights, the defendants, would have been making unauthorized use of Greco-Roman plays, and since academia, the jury, is not yet convinced by a preponderance of the evidence, therefore, it should have already been determined that there has been no harm done. This picture is troubling in various ways: copyright infringement is a felony, but imitation used to be the norm, e.g., in Rome; neither ancient authors nor modern critics have any exclusive rights over the Greco-Roman Classics; and far from any harm, the supporters of the influence hypothesis have repeatedly emphasized the benefits of acknowledging such interactions for achieving a better understanding of the Ancient World as a whole. Innocent until

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43 This term would presuppose the Indian imitation of both Greek *and* Roman models. Moreover, if said imitation did occur in India, its very motivation might lie in Rome. After all, classical Rome was chronologically closer to classical India than classical Greece was, and by the first century CE, Roman authors had already under their belt several centuries of productively imitating another literary canon.

proven guilty is not a model that works here, and in consequence, a higher standard of proof should not be required. All that the academic jury needs to accept is the possibility of an influence: it is a hypothesis, after all.

The most recent study is Bronkhorst (2016), who openly acknowledges that the mainstream view is still that there is no need for further research into the Greek influence hypothesis. The author is aware of the flawed assumptions that have guided this line of reasoning that started with Lévi. Following Bernard, he distinguishes between borrowing, influence, and contribution; even if he opposes borrowing, he does support influence and contribution. And finally, in overt opposition with the generally accepted view, he even encourages new research to be done in pursuit of influences and contributions: "…in the form which Weber had given to it, the thesis of Greek influence on the Sanskrit theater still awaits its first serious criticism" (Bronkhorst, 2016, p. 403). Still having in mind borrowings, although not of the kind that have been looked for, this book was conceived, in part, in the hopes of filling in this void.

A final word on implications: the fact that two entities resemble each other is, certainly, no proof for one being derived from the other, and even when such resemblances are quantitatively and qualitatively relevant, there is still not just one single explanation; but it might at least amount to a matter worth considering. As objections to a book like this one, one could foresee the claim that it still has not provided any definitive "proof" of an "influence" of the Greco-Roman world in India. "Proof", indeed, there will not be; "influences" and "borrowings", on the contrary, there might have been, and it is about time to start discussing them.

The Building Blocks of Tradition and Adaptation

A text modeled upon another text works on two basic levels: it keeps some of the components of the original text and it makes some changes of its own. This mixture of something old and something new can be further analyzed in terms of two counterbalancing

theories: the theory of tradition and the theory of adaptation. Both concepts have their roots in Roman Antiquity.

In English, *tradition* is attested since the sixteenth century and refers, among other things, to "a literary, artistic, or musical method or style established by a particular person or group, and subsequently followed by others" ("Tradition", n.d., para. 1). This definition, encompassing two crucial moments, i.e., the establishment and the follow-up, retains, to some degree, the idea of handing over that comes from the word's etymon. In Latin, *trāditiō* becomes frequent after the Age of Augustus and means "a saying handed down from former times" (Lewis & Short, 1879, s.v. *trādĭtĭo*).

Likewise, in English, *adaptation* is documented from the thirteenth century onwards and designates "an altered or amended version of a text, musical composition, etc., (now *esp.*) one adapted for filming, broadcasting, or production on the stage from a novel or similar literary source" ("Adaptation", n.d., para. 4). This meaning also comprises two pivotal moments, i.e., the production and the alteration. The word derives from the Latin *adaptō*, which gives form to an abstract noun during the Middle Ages, and signifies "to fit, adjust, or adapt to a thing" (Lewis & Short, 1879, s.v. *ăd-apto*).

Tradition has been studied from a theoretical standpoint by several authors. Alexander (2016) distinguishes between three forms of tradition: a) anthropological, b) literary, and c) religious. Each of them is characterized by the presence of specific elements of tradition, which also add up to three: a) continuity, b) canon, and c) core. In his model, the three forms of tradition are organized in terms of the increasing number of elements that constitute them. Hence, an anthropological tradition is one whose sole element is continuity; a literary tradition, one that contains continuity plus the additional element of canon; and a religious tradition, one that is composed of all three elements, that is, continuity, canon, and core.

Anthropological traditions are merely continuous. This continuity exists because the cultural phenomena present in these traditions are characterized by these three features: "(i) they are instances of social interaction; (ii) they are repeated; (iii) they are psychologically salient" (Boyer, 1990, p. 1). The features serve as

criteria of recognition, meaning that by their presence or absence an anthropological tradition is recognizable as such. As instances of social interaction, traditional phenomena are to be understood only as actual events and never as hypothetical explanations for such events; as repeated instances, these phenomena refer to previous, similar occurrences; and as psychologically salient instances, traditional phenomena are "attention-demanding".[44] Two additional features are worth noticing, for they complement this basic formulation: on one hand, anthropological traditions cannot be written; and on the other, their members tend not to be self-aware. To put it another way, in such traditions, events are always oral, and the participants are usually unaware of the theoretical implications of such practices.

Conversely, literary traditions[45] are both continuous and canonical. The element of canon is key, since it allows for the repetitiveness, the orality, and the unawareness of anthropological traditions to turn, respectively, into creativity, literacy, and criticality. Creativity, unlike repetitiveness, is an active endeavor. In this sense, an adaptation of a text would never be solely the repetition of its form or content, but an independent text altogether. In the Greco-Roman world, this is what is meant by the term Gr. μίμησις / Lat. *imitatio*,[46] defined as "the study and conspicuous deployment of features recognizably characteristic of a canonical author's style or content, so as to define one's own generic affiliation" (Conte & Most, 2015, para. 1).

This way of interacting with authoritative texts differs from three other parallel modes of interaction: plagiarism, parody, and intertextuality. In plagiarism (Gr. κλοπή / Lat. *furtum*), there is derivative copying, whereas in imitation this turns into creative re-use, which is why even though plagiarism was condemned, imitation was encouraged, not only as a pedagogic means towards literary proficiency, but also as a form of artistic mastery by

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44   See Lewis (1980).
45   See Grafton, Most, & Settis (2010), for a study on Greco-Roman literary tradition; and Patton (1994), for a study on Indian literary tradition.
46   In its rhetorical use, which differs from the poetical one, see Seneca the Elder, *Suas*. 3.7, and Seneca the Younger, *Ep*. 114.

itself. In parody (Gr. παρῳδία / Lat. *ridicula imitatio*), the re-use is intended as mockery, and not as a manifestation of admiration towards a revered author, as is the case with imitation. Even satyr plays, such as Euripides' *Cyclops*, are not to be interpreted as a parodies;[47] instead, they are meant as "mythological burlesques" (Shaw, 2014, p. 109). Finally, in intertextuality, the entire body of literature works as a system; in contrast, imitation is limited to individual authors like Homer, or at the most, to specific genres like epic.

Even more so than orality, literacy is suited for tradition. In fact, the emergence of writing is "the most significant event in the history of tradition" (Alexander, 2016, p. 12), because it broadens the temporal frame of tradition. Whereas anthropological traditions tend to focus on mortality and its temporal correlate, the present, literary traditions pay attention to immortality and its temporal correlate, the past. The link between literature, immortality, and the past is a relatively obvious one, especially within the epic genre. This is the reason why the element of canon is the most valuable one for a study encompassing literary traditions, as represented by Greek and Sanskrit ancient cultures and their respective written texts. A canon results from the dialectics of the old and the new, as Eliot (1919, p. 55) clearly puts it:

> The existing order is completed before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new.

If a canon were a qualitative system of measurement, then the classic would be its qualitative unit of measurement, in which, similarly, the dialectics of ancient and modern tend towards a synthesis or "organic unity"[48] of form and content. However, such dialectics,

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47   If one were to accept, for the sake of argument, that Euripides' *Cyclops* is indeed a parody, it would then be a parody of tragedy (Arnott, 1972), but never a parody of Homer's *Odyssey*.

48   See Matarrita Matarrita (1989).

since they allow for differences of opinions, also imply criticality, whether in the form of positive criticism or in that of its negative counterpart. In any case, there is to be expected some degree of underlying tension, as Kermode (1975, pp. 15-16) explains it:

> The doctrine of the classic as model or criterion entails, in some form, the assumption that the ancient can be more or less immediately relevant and available, in a sense contemporaneous with the modern – or anyway that its nature is such that it can, by strategies of accommodation, be made so. When this assumption is rejected the whole authority of the classic as model is being challenged, and then we have – whether in Alexandria or in twelfth- or seventeenth- or nineteenth or twentieth-century Europe – the recurrent *querelle* between ancient and modern.

Lastly, religious traditions are, at once, continuous, canonical, and core oriented. The extra element of core accounts for these types of traditions being hierarchical, immutable, and indisputable. The shared events and the shared texts, belonging, respectively, to anthropological and literary traditions, are shared through horizontal interaction; contrarywise, the shared truths of religious traditions are conveyed from a position of knowledge towards one of ignorance, in an expository fashion. Such exposition, as one of immutable truths, comes closer to the repetitiveness of traditions having only continuity than it does to the cumulative creativity of those adding canon. Immutable truths, as a matter of faith, are never subject to dispute, not because of unawareness, like in anthropological traditions, but because of lack of criticality, unlike in literary traditions. For these reasons, religious traditions transcend both mortality and immortality through the notion of eternity and they go beyond present, past, and even future, in a timeless manner.

Adaptation, in turn, has also been the subject of various theoretical projects. Hutcheon & O'Flynn (2012) identify three perspectives for looking at an adaptation: a) as a product; b) as a process of creation; and c) as a process of reception. Each perspective focuses on one of the key participants in an adaptation, respectively, text, author, and audience. Moreover,

each perspective results in a specific definition, adding up to three parallel definitions of adaptation: a) adaptation, as a product, is a transposition or a transcoding; b) adaptation, as a process of creation, is a reinterpretation and a re-creation; and c) adaptation, as a process of reception, can be a subtype of intertextuality.

When taken as a product, an adaptation is a transposition that must be extended, deliberate, specific, and announced; it could also be intermedial. The criteria of extension and deliberateness rule out shorter or unintentional interactions, such as echoes or allusions; the criterion of specificity leaves out more general forms of intertextuality; and the criterion of announcement excludes instances of plagiarism. Most importantly, the fact that these transpositions need not change media (e.g., literary adaptations of literary works) but may vary in genre (e.g., theater adaptations of epic works) allows for the type of study that I am undertaking: "This 'transcoding' can involve a shift of medium (a poem to a film) or genre (an epic to a novel), or a change of frame and therefore context" (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2012, pp. 7-8). The textual elements being transposed in the product of an adaptation are "themes" (p. 10), "characters" (p. 11), "time and space" (p. 13), among others.

When seen as a process of creation, an adaptation is both a reinterpretation and a re-creation. In two inverted juxtapositions, intended more as a reflection than as a mere play on words, the former is to be thought of as a creative interpretation, and the latter as an interpretative creation. To put it another way, the creative process consists of two intertwined facets: the interpretation of the traditional text, which must be undertaken with creativity, that is, with one of the distinctive qualities of literary traditions; and the creation of the adapted text, which ought to be assumed with criticality, that is, with the other distinctive quality of literary traditions. Some of the authorial techniques at stake in the process of creation are "contraction" and "expansion" (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2012, p. 19), as well as "omissions and additions" (Corrigan, 2017, p. 1).

A relevant example of adaptation as a process of creation within the Indian tradition is that of "adaptive reuse", a concept borrowed from the fields of architecture and city planning, and

itself reused in those of philosophy and literature by Freschi & Maas (2017, p. 13):

> The concept of reuse comprises four main aspects, viz. (1.) the involvement of at least one consciously acting agent, who, (2.) in order to achieve a certain purpose, (3.) resumes the usage (4.) of a clearly identifiable object after an interruption in its being used. The attribute "adaptive" presupposes that the reusing person pursues a specific purpose by adapting something already existent to his or her specific needs.

Like adaptation as a product, adaptive reuse is characterized by deliberateness (the agency from aspect 1) and specificity (the attribute *adaptive*); also, like adaptation as a process of creation, adaptive reuse is defined by creativity (the purpose from aspect 2). In this sense, adaptative reuses appear as instances of adaptation whose key features are the interruption and the resuming of the use (aspects 3 and 4). However, just as not all adaptations are adaptive reuses, so too, not all reuses are adaptive ones: the interruption and the resuming of the use, by themselves, account only for simple reuses, whereas the deliberateness and the creativity, not to mention the more obvious aspect of specificity, procure the necessary components for adaptive reuses.

If adaptation and reuse come together in the concept of adaptive reuse, adaptation can be further linked to tradition through the notion of textual reuse, as explained by Freschi & Maas (2017, p. 17):[49]

> In the case of textual reuse, adaptive reuse highlights the fact that the textual material has been reused. Its reuse emphasizes the text and its connotations. For example, it possibly adds prestige to the newly created text or situates that text within a continuous and illustrious tradition.

Textual reuse, the manifestation of adaptive reuse in literary traditions, should be both intended and identified as such: without intention, instead of a textual reuse all that is left is simple reuse; and without identification, mere recycling. Even though textual

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49   Cf. Hutcheon & O'Flynn (2012, p. 32): "Adaptation, like evolution, is a transgenerational phenomenon".

reuse operates more directly at the level of the text (i.e., of adaptation as a product), it also, through the standard of intention, lays part of the responsibility on the author (i.e., on adaptation as a process of creation), and, through the standard of identification, lays the rest of it on the audience (i.e., on adaptation as a process of reception).

Going back to Hutcheon & O'Flynn (2012), when understood as a process of reception, adaptation can be a subtype of intertextuality, if, and only if, two conditions are met: "if the receiver is acquainted with the adapted text", and if "they are also acknowledged as adaptations of specific texts" (p. 21). For adaptation to be intertextuality, in the reception end of the spectrum, acquaintance (like identification in textual reuses) is a *sine qua non*; and in the creation end of the spectrum, acknowledgment (like intention in textual reuses) is. Nonetheless, for adaptation to be adaptation, acknowledgement and acquaintance are optional.[50] This nuance fits better in the Greco-Roman and Indian contexts: even though in most cases a play based on the Homeric Epics or on the *Mahābhārata* would certainly be intended as such (given the canonical status of the texts) and identified as such (given the cultural background of the audience), this could not be asserted of every single case.[51]

In sum, adaptation is a "double-faceted" (Elliott, 2020, p. 198) concept: it *is* product and process, production and consumption, old and new, creativity and criticality; and it *can be* deliberate or unintentional (or even unconscious).

A combination of the views from the theory of tradition, with its dialectics of the old and the new and its ways of understanding written literature and a canon of classical texts, on one side, and the theory of adaptation, with its integrations of products

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50   This clearly contradicts Hutcheon & O'Flynn's (2012) theory, and is more in line with Elliott's (2020, pp. 198-199) theory.

51   What if the author is not adapting the canonical text but previous adaptations of it, as might be the case with Euripides' *Cyclops*? What if the audience does not identify all the conflated canonical sources, as might be the case with (Ps.-)Bhāsa's *The Middle One*? What if the references can only be retrieved by means of scholarly commentaries and digital humanities? Can one even address the matter of ancient reception when the dating of authors and texts (and, therefore, audiences as well) is still subject to large scholarly debate?

and processes and its ways of conceiving reinterpretations and re-creations, on the other, can benefit my proposal by way of delimiting the conceptual building blocks upon which an appropriate methodology can be supported.

If It Looks like a Duck…

Concepts provide an appropriate methodological basis for research in the Humanities in general and in Philology specifically. While in a narrow sense philology refers to the collecting, editing, and commentating activities associated with textual criticism, in a broader sense this discipline deals with making sense of texts. This second view is to be thought of, not in terms of higher criticism, but as a form of close reading. Notoriously present in the Greco-Roman world, where the term was coined,[52] philology is also well represented in India, the phenomenon at least, if not an equivalent concept. For this book, I intend for the philological and literary analysis to bridge theory and practice, concepts and methods, tradition and adaptation, epic and theater, the Greco-Roman world and India. The key concepts for the following analyses are "motifs", "adapted elements", and "adaptation techniques".

A motif is "a situation, incident, idea, image, or character-type that is found in many different literary works, folktales, or myths" (Baldick, 2001, p. 162). Moreover, a literary motif is a "unidad temática mínima con valor de contenido y situación dentro del texto [minimum thematic unit with content and situation value within the text]" (Orea Rojas, 2018, p. 181). This unit, smaller than the text itself but larger than one of its themes, can be identified by answering the following questions (Bremond, 1980): When? Where? Who? What? To whom? How? With what result? With what consequences?

Much like concepts themselves, motifs travel within traditions, as adaptations from epic to theater, and sometimes even across cultures, if they come into contact. Rather than presenting all the Greco-Roman epic-to-theater transitions, followed by all the Indian

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52   See Plato, *Phdr*. 236e, *Tht*. 146a, *Lach*. 188c-e, *Phd*. 89d-e and *Phd*. 90b-91a.

ones, in this book I structure the contents according to motifs. Also, for all relevant passages, I successively present textual contexts,[53] emphasized summaries, parallel quotations, and commentaries.

The first literary motif is that of the embassy (Gr. πρεσβεία, Lat. *legatio*, Skr. *dūtya*). It relates how, *during the war/before the war, at a bivouac/at a city, three ambassadors/one ambassador deliver(s) a message to the opposing side, with the aid of applicable substories, and the speakers fail to convince the estranged party to fight/not to fight, thus almost producing total annihilation*. It is found in *Il.* 9, from where Euripides reworks the substory of the eponymous character in the fragmentary *Phoenix*, as well as in *MBh.* 5, out of which (Ps.-)Bhāsa fashions *The Embassy*. The second chapter of this book is dedicated to analyzing this motif.

To that end, I first give a side-by-side translation[54] of relevant epic and dramatic passages, whose similarities have for the most part been noticed by the critics. This serves to determine the main adapted elements. Second, I provide a comparative analysis of such passages with the aim of identifying the chief adaptation techniques. I present all this separately for each literary tradition. Then, as a third and final step, I bring together the two sets of information, and I postulate a list of possible influences and borrowings from the Greco-Roman world into India.

The third chapter deals with the ambush motif (Gr. λόχος, Lat. *insidiae*, Skr. *sauptika*), present, on one hand, in *Il.* 10 and Ps.-Euripides' *Rhesus*; and on the other, in *MBh.* 4 and (Ps.-)Bhāsa's *The Five Nights*. This motif depicts how, *during the night/during the day-to-night transition, at a bivouac/at a city, two soldiers/two armies attack the opposing side, without them expecting it, and the attackers massacre enemies/seize cattle, thus obtaining valuable intelligence.*

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53 See Baldick (2001): "**context,** those parts of a *TEXT preceding and following any particular passage, giving it a meaning fuller or more identifiable than if it were read in isolation" (p. 50).

54 The sole exception is the *Phoenix*, whose fragmentary nature makes a side-by-side presentation much more difficult. In that case, the entirety of the epic version is provided from the start, and then, all the relevant dramatic passages are organized and analyzed.

Likewise, the fourth chapter focuses on the ogre motif (Gr. κύκλωψ, Lat. *sēmifer*, Skr. *rākṣasa*), which stages how, *after the war/ before the war, while traveling through the sea/through the forest, a hero faces a man-eating ogre, with the aid of wine/food coming from a priest and his family, and the hero defeats/kills the ogre, thus freeing his companions/the townsfolk*. This motif appears, on the Greco-Roman side, in *Od.* 9 and Euripides' *Cyclops*; and on the Indian side, in *MBh.* 1 and (Ps.-)Bhāsa's *The Middle One*. In both cases, I follow the same three-stage process of reviewing adapted elements, adaptation techniques, and Greco-Roman influences and borrowings.

The fifth and concluding chapter builds on all the parallelisms that previous scholars have identified between the Greco-Roman and Sanskrit theatrical traditions, both in theory and in practice, and it does so by bringing together not only the postulated influences and borrowings from the three motifs, but also their distinctive literary features and their hypothetical historical context, with the intention of proposing a preliminary model for Greco-Indian *anukaraṇa*, mirroring that of Greco-Roman *imitatio*.

Elements and techniques are useful for analyzing adaptations within the same tradition, like that of Greek epic into Greek theater or that of Sanskrit epic into Sanskrit theater; but they can also contribute to the examination of cross-cultural adaptations, be they well-accepted, such as that from the Greek literary tradition into the Roman literary tradition, or hypothetical, such as that from the Greco-Roman literary tradition into the Sanskrit literary tradition. In this sense, additional methodological criteria, such as those brought forward by Wulff Alonso (2019a, pp. 2-3; 2019b; 2020, pp. 18-23) for the also hypothetical adaptation of the Greco-Roman literary tradition into the Sanskrit epic, may also be useful when considering such cross-cultural adaptation into the Sanskrit theater. Especially, the "argument of improbability" and the "argument of oddity" appear relevant and are worthy of my reformulation here.

In my opinion, the argument of improbability would mean that a higher quantity and quality of shared elements between two versions of a literary motif coming from historically connected

cultures is proportional to a lower probability of explanations other than adaptation.[55] It is possible for two literary motifs to belong to the realm of folklore, and so, to be completely unrelated to each other.[56] It is also possible for them to exist exclusively – or to share more elements – within Indo-European traditions, thus suggesting a relation via common heritage.[57] And cultural contact is no less of a possibility, as the Greco-Roman *imitatio* itself demonstrates.[58] Just as coots, grebes, and loons resemble ducks without actually being ducks, so too, folk motifs and Indo-European motifs might resemble Greco-Roman motifs. Therefore, a review of the shared elements between two versions of the same literary motif, paired with an examination of the opinions of those who have classified it one way or the other, will reveal a higher or lower probability of such motif pertaining to one of these three categories.

If a *culture hero being susceptible to wounds* is generally regarded as pertaining to folklore, if an *otherwise invulnerable hero having a weak spot* (Achilles in the *Iliad*, Kṛṣṇa in the *Mahābhārata*, Esfandiyar in the *Shāh-nāma*, or Siegfried in the *Nibelungenlied*) tends to be narrowed down to the Indo-European realm, and if a *group of heroes carrying out an unexpected night attack* (Dolon, but also Diomedes and Odysseus in the *Iliad*; Nisus and Euryalus in the *Aeneid*) is usually accepted as a Greco-Roman feature; then, why could the latter not be regarded as a Greco-Indian feature as well? After all, Suśarman and Duryodhana, but also Aśvatthāman, Kṛpa, and Kṛtavarman in the *Mahābhārata*, can just as easily exemplify those elements too.

In my view, the argument of oddity would entail, first, that odd elements which are shared between two versions of a literary motif coming from historically connected cultures increase the probability of an adaptation more than ordinary elements do; and second, that when they are coherent within one culture

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55   Cf. Wulff Alonso's (2020) view that this principle "denies the possibility of explaining repetition by chance or other explanations" (p. 18).

56   On "folk motifs", see Thompson (1955/1958).

57   On "Indo-European motifs", see Mallory & Adams (1997), and M. L. West (2007), and N. J. Allen (2020).

58   On "Greco-Roman motifs", see West & Woodman (1979).

but incoherent within the other, such odd elements suggest the directionality of the adaptation, from the former towards the latter. For instance, remuneration for a job done is ordinary, but asking for it when not offered is odd; and remuneration for a soldier or for a teacher is ordinary, but depending on the cultural context, them demanding it would be odd.

If motifs are thematic units for the analysis, which are delimited by a series of questions, adapted elements respond to one specific question: the "what?" or the "forms" in Hutcheon & O'Flynn's (2012) categories. My proposed typology of adapted elements includes themes, characters, times, and spaces.

A theme is "a salient abstract idea that emerges from a literary work's treatment of its subject-matter" (Baldick, 2001, p. 258). Among the elements of the story, themes are the most easily recognizable as "adaptable" (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2012, p. 10). In turn, a character might refer either to "(the representation of) a human(-like) individual in a literary text" (de Temmerman & van Emde Boas, 2018, p. xii) or to "the sum of relatively stable moral, mental and social traits and dispositions pertaining to an individual" (de Temmerman & van Emde Boas, 2018, p. xii). In adaptations, characters additionally relate to the "how?" or the "audiences", since they convey "rhetorical and aesthetic effects" (Hutcheon & O'Flynn, 2012, p. 11).

Time and space are correlated. Even though obviously linked to the categories of "when?" and "where?", that is, of "contexts" in Hutcheon & O'Flynn's (2012) nomenclature, they can also be part of the things being adapted, and as such, they can serve some specific functions. Time is determined by the "story" (the events when ordered according to the text), rather than the "fabula" (the events when ordered according to time itself), because storytelling profits from variation: "the events in the story may differ in frequency (they may be told more than once), rhythm (they may be told at great length or quickly), and order (the chronological order may be changed)" (de Jong & Nünlist, 2007, p. xiii). Similarly, space fulfills "thematic", "mirror", "symbolic", "characterizing", "psychologizing", and "personification" functions (de Jong, 2012, pp. 13-17).

Now, if adapted elements respond to the "what?" or the "forms" of adaptations, then adaptation techniques are determined by the "who?" and "why?", that is, by the "adapters" themselves, according to Hutcheon & O'Flynn's (2012) paradigm, and by their intentions. Just as I advanced a typology of adapted elements, so too am I putting forward one for the adaptation techniques, which comprise the contrasting pairs of maintaining/changing, adding/subtracting, emphasizing/ignoring, and merging/splitting.

The maintaining/changing pair resonates with the dialectics of tradition/adaptation. Theatrical versions of epic motifs maintain some features, not only to be recognizable as their reworkings, but also out of respect for their canonical status. The changes, in turn, even when intended to provoke laughter, are tokens of said deferential attitude. The adding/subtracting pair recalls Corrigan's (2017) observation about "omissions and additions" (p. 1). Two basic sub procedures of changing are, precisely, to add new elements or to subtract some of the previously existing ones. Although subtraction, given the performative nature of theater, is a far more common technique in the epic-to-theater transitions, additions are not at all atypical, whether it be for resolving problems caused by previous subtractions, or as the result of other authorial choices.

Similarly, the emphasizing/ignoring pair suggests Hutcheon & O'Flynn's (2012) "contraction" (p. 19) and "expansion" (p. 19). This is a technique usually related to the element of time, whose features of frequency, rhythm, and order, make it ideal for various kinds of emphases. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the intentional ignoring of something might be very telling, since sometimes silence speaks louder than words. And the last pair, formulated as merging/splitting, arises from the Greco-Roman term of *contaminatio*, "a word used by modern scholars to express the procedure of *Terence (and perhaps *Plautus) in incorporating material from another Greek play into the primary play which he was adapting" (Brown, 2015, para. 1).[59] This is very similar to what (Ps.-)Bhāsa does in *The Middle One*, borrowing materials from two

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59   See Terence's *An.* 9 and *Haut.* 17.

separate *Mahābhārata* episodes and combining them into a single play. For that reason, this is one of my main arguments in support of the influence hypothesis.

Having explained the gist of the book in terms of contents and procedures, it is now time to proceed to the analysis itself.