

THE EMBASSY, THE AMBUSH, AND THE OGRE

GRECO-ROMAN INFLUENCE IN
SANSKRIT THEATER

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2. The Embassy

A “Potifar’s Wife” Story

Book 9 of the *Iliad* encompasses an assembly, a council of chiefs, and an embassy. At the assembly, king Agamemnon proposes to flee but young Diomedes insists on fighting. During the council of chiefs, old Nestor suggests the conciliation of the hero Achilles, and Agamemnon offers him compensation. Then, the orator Odysseus, the preceptor Phoenix, and the companion Ajax are chosen as ambassadors, and each delivers a speech for the benefit of the enraged hero, who, in turn, gradually and slightly yields his grudge. Phoenix’s speech includes three substories: the story of Phoenix, the story of the Prayers, and the story of Meleager.

The story of Phoenix (*Il.* 9.447-477) narrates a father-son *veikea* (strife). It involves not only the son Phoenix and the father Amyntor, but also the latter’s unnamed *ἄκοιτις* (wife) and *παλλακίς* (concubine). As a tale of two men disputing over a concubine, it resembles the plot of the *Iliad* itself. Nonetheless, when compared with other embedded narratives such as the story of Meleager, it appears “almost parodical” (Scodel, 1982, p. 133, n. 13): the anger is aimed not at the offender but at the offended, the supplication seeks to take the hero not to the battlefield but to bed, and the curse threatens not his life but his fertility.

The epic version is as follows: Amyntor favors his concubine over his wife. The wife, determined to divide Amyntor and the concubine, begs Phoenix to interfere by sleeping with the concubine. Her reasoning is that having slept with the young man, the concubine would prefer him to the old one. Phoenix reluctantly

obeys his mother's pleading and, in turn, faces his father's wrath. He gets cursed not to bear any children. Then, he thinks about killing his father, but a god makes him desist.⁶⁰ He wants to leave his father's palace, but friends and relatives prevent him from doing so, by guarding him day and night by turns. On the tenth night, he bursts open the door of his chamber, leaps over the fence of the court, and escapes without being noticed by the watchmen or the slave women.

οἷον ὄτε πρῶτον λίπον Ἑλλάδα καλλιγύναικα,
 φεύγων νείκεα πατρὸς Ἀμύντορος Ὀρμενίδαο,
 ὅς μοι **παλλακίδος** περιχώσατο καλλικόμοιο,
 τὴν αὐτὸς φιλέεσκεν, ἀτιμάζεσκε δ' ἄκοιτιν,
μητέρ ἐμήν. ἦ δ' αἰὲν ἐμὲ **λισσέσκετο** γούνων
 παλλακίδι προμιγῆναι, ἴν' ἐχθήρειε γέροντα.
 τῆ πιθόμην καὶ ἔρεξα· πατήρ δ' ἐμὸς αὐτίκ' οἰσθεῖς
 πολλὰ κατηρᾶτο, **στυγεράς** δ' ἐπεκέκλετ' Ἐρινῦς,
 μὴ ποτε γούνασιν οἷσιν ἐφέσσεσθαι φίλον υἱὸν
 ἐξ ἐμέθεν γεγαῶτα· θεοὶ δ' ἐτέλειον ἐπαράς,
 Ζεὺς τε καταχθόνιος καὶ ἐπαινὴ Περσεφόνεια.
 τὸν μὲν ἐγὼ βούλευσα κατακτάμεν ὀξεί χαλκῶ·
 ἀλλὰ τις ἀθανάτων παῦσεν χόλον, ὃς ῥ' ἐνὶ θυμῷ
 δήμου θῆκε φάτιν καὶ ὄνειδα πόλλ' ἀνθρώπων,
 ὡς μὴ πατροφόνος μετ' Ἀχαιοῖσιν καλεοίμην.
 ἐνθ' ἐμοὶ οὐκέτι πάμπαν ἐρητύετ' ἐν φρεσὶ θυμὸς
πατρὸς χωομένοιο κατὰ μέγαρα στρωφᾶσθαι.
 ἦ μὲν πολλὰ ἔται καὶ ἀνεψιοὶ ἀμφὶς ἐόντες
 αὐτοῦ λισσόμενοι κατερήτυον ἐν μεγάροισι,
 πολλὰ δὲ ἴφια μῆλα καὶ εἰλίποδας ἔλικας βοῦς
 ἔσφαζον, πολλοὶ δὲ σύες θαλέθοντες ἀλοιφῆ
 εὐόμενοι τανύοντο διὰ φλογὸς Ἥφαιστοιο,
 πολλὸν δ' ἐκ κεράμων μέθυ πίνετο τοῖο γέροντος.
 εἰνάνυχες δέ μοι ἀμφ' αὐτῷ παρὰ νύκτας ἱαυον·
 οἱ μὲν ἀμειβόμενοι φυλακὰς ἔχον, οὐδέ ποτ' ἔσβη
 πῦρ, ἕτερον μὲν ὑπ' αἰθοῦσῃ εὐερκέος αὐλῆς,
 ἄλλο δ' ἐνὶ προδόμῳ, πρόσθεν θαλάμοιο θυράων.
 ἀλλ' ὄτε δὴ δεκάτῃ μοι ἐπήλυθε νῦξ ἐρεβεννή,
 καὶ τότε ἐγὼ θαλάμοιο θύρας πυκινῶς ἀραρυίας
 ῥήξας ἐξῆλθον, καὶ ὑπέρθορον ἐρκίον αὐλῆς
 ῥεῖα, λαθῶν φύλακὰς τ' ἀνδρας δμῶας τε γυναῖκας.

60 The verses containing this intention (*Il.* 9.458-461) were transmitted only by Plutarch, *Mor.* 26 ff.

...like when, at first, I left Greece, of beautiful women, fleeing from a strife with my father Amyntor, the son of Ormenus, who was exceedingly angry at me about a **concubine** of beautiful hair. He loved her and dishonored his wife, my **mother**, who repeatedly **begged** me at my knees to sleep with the concubine, so that she would hate the old man. I obeyed her and acted on it. My father, immediately having suspected it, called down many **curses** and invoked the loathed Erinyes, so that he would never set on his knees a dear son, born from me. And the gods fulfilled his curses, both Zeus, the belowground, and the dreaded Persephone. I decided to kill him with the sharp sword, but one of the immortals held my wrath: into my mind he put the people's gossip and various recriminations, so that among the Achaeans I would not be called a parricide. Then the heart in my breast could not at all keep me living any longer in the palaces of my **wrathful father**. Truly, my fellows and my relatives, surrounding me and begging me, held me back there in the palaces. Many fat sheep, and cattle of curved horns and rolling gait did they slaughter; many swine, swelling with fat, did they lay to singe over the flame of Hephaistos; and much wine was drunk from the jars of that old man. For nine nights, they passed the night around me. Alternating, they kept guards, and the fire never went out: one beneath the portico of the well-fenced court, and the other in the porch in front of the doors of my chamber. But when the tenth dark night fell upon me, then, having broken the closely fitted doors of my chamber, I came out and easily leapt over the fence of the court, having escaped the notice of the male guards and the female servants.

(*Il.* 9.447-477)

In Euripides' fragmentary *Phoenix*, the father-son strife turns into a "Potiphar's Wife" story. From the two main sources available, i.e., Apollodorus the mythographer (ca. 1-100 CE) and Hieronymus of Rhodes (ca. 300-200 BCE),⁶¹ the plot can be roughly put together like this: the concubine makes sexual advances towards Phoenix, but he rejects her. Then, the concubine takes the matter to Amyntor, and falsely accuses Phoenix of rape. Amyntor blinds Phoenix and imprisons him. The outcome is tragic for Amyntor, who sees his son

61 I follow the Greek text by Collard & Cropp (Euripides, 2008). The translations are my own.

leave, as well as for the concubine, who dies with regret; but it is favorable for Phoenix, who recovers his sight and gets enthroned elsewhere.

The evidence from Apollodorus the mythographer is direct; however, in terms of dramatic action, it only mentions the blinding, the accusation, the treatment, and the enthronement. Regarding the characters, it offers further help, since it refers to the name of the concubine as Phthia,⁶² as well as to the role of the centaur Chiron within the story.⁶³

...Φοῖνοξ ὁ Ἀμύντορος... ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐτυφλώθη **καταψευσαμένης** φθορὰν Φθίας τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς παλλακῆς. Πηλεὺς δὲ αὐτὸν πρὸς Χείρωνα κομίσας, ὑπ' ἐκείνου **θεραπευθέντα** τὰς ὄψεις **βασιλέα κατέστησε** Δολόπων.

...Phoenix, the son of Amyntor... **was blinded** by his father, **having been falsely accused** of rape by Phthia, his father's concubine. And having taken him to Chiron, by whom he **was treated** for his eyes, Peleus **made him king** of the Dolopians.

(Apollodorus mythographus, *Bibl.* 3.13.8)

The testimony of Hieronymus of Rhodes is indirect since it speaks of the story of the Anagyrasian deity in comparison with the story of Phoenix. When it comes to dramatic action, it recounts the accusation, the blinding, and the imprisonment, and even though it remains silent about Phoenix's treatment and enthronement, it suggests Amyntor's and the concubine's tragic endings.

‘Αναγυράσιος δαίμων’. ἐπεὶ τὸν παροικοῦντα πρεσβύτην καὶ ἐκτέμονον τὸ ἄλσος ἐτιμωρήσατο Ἀνάγυρος ἥρωσ. Ἀναγυράσιοι δὲ δῆμος τῆς Ἀττικῆς. τούτου δὲ τις ἐξέκοψε τὸ ἄλσος. ὁ δὲ τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ ἐπέμνηνε τὴν παλλακὴν, ἣτις μὴ δυναμένη συμπεῖσαι τὸν παῖδα **διέβαλεν** ὡς ἀσελγῆ τῷ πατρὶ. ὁ δὲ **ἐπήρωσεν** αὐτὸν καὶ **ἐγκατωκοδόμησεν**. ἐπὶ τούτοις καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ἑαυτὸν ἀνήρτησεν, ἡ δὲ παλλακὴ εἰς φρέαρ ἑαυτῆν

62 On Clytia as the name for the concubine, assuming either an involuntary confusion with the toponym or a motivated change in the name, see Papamichael (1982, p. 217, n. 2).

63 On Chiron as a mediator between Amyntor and Phoenix after the blinding, see Collard & Cropp (Euripides, 2008, p. 406).

ἔρριψεν. ἱστορεῖ δὲ Ἱερώνυμος... ἀπεικάζων τούτοις τὸν
Εὐριπίδου Φοῖνικα.

'The Anagyrasian deity' is such because the hero Anagyrus revenged himself upon an old neighbor who cut down his grove. The Anagyrasians were a deme of Attica. One of them cut down his grove, and he [sc. Anagyrus] drove his concubine mad about his son. Not being able to persuade the son, she **denounced** him to his father for lewd behavior. He [sc. the father] **blinded** him and **confined** him. After that, the father hanged himself, and the concubine threw herself into a well. Hieronymus reports this... comparing Euripides' *Phoenix* with it.

(Hieronymus of Rhodes, *On Tragedians* fr. 32 Wehrli,
in Photius α 1432 Theodoridis and other lexica)

This product/process of adaptation deals mainly with characterization. Its author exploits the following six procedures: [GE1]⁶⁴ he subtracts the mother's pleading, [GE2] he adds the concubine's advances, [GE3] he merges the mother and the concubine into a single character, [GE4] he ignores the dilemma of whether to obey the mother or to respect the father, [GE5] he emphasizes the father's wrath, and [GE6] he changes the outcome of the story.

[GE1] The subtraction of the mother's pleading is the result of the broader authorial decision of dispensing with the character of the mother.⁶⁵ In the epic version, the pleading of the mother, much like that of Thetis towards Zeus in favor of Achilles (*Il.* 1.503 ff.), is presented as the external force impelling Phoenix to act. [GE2] In the dramatic version, the subtraction of this component entails the addition of the concubine's advances.⁶⁶ In this case,

64 GE stands for "Greek Embassy". Hence, numbers GE1-GE6 refer to the adaptation of *Il.* 9 into *Phoenix*.

65 On the subtraction of the mother's pleading, see Papamichael (1982): "The role of his mother was almost certainly discarded and her figure as such is of very minor importance" (p. 220); and Collard & Cropp (Euripides, 2008): "...Amyntor's wife, of whose anger nothing is attested in the fragments, only in Homer" (p. 406).

66 On the addition of the concubine's advances, see Papamichael (1982): "In their [sc. the mother's pleas] place come the open, seductive advances on the part of the young mistress, who is clearly not the innocent girl we see in

the external force appears more negative in essence, considering Ancient Greece's ideological take on gender roles and male/female infidelities. Unlike the worried mother from the *Iliad*, the concubine from the *Phoenix* is worrisome. The topic of the false accusation by the father's wife/concubine is also presented, through Phaedra's character, in Euripides' *Hippolytus* (856 ff.).

[GE3] According to the economy of the play, the subtraction of one cause for action and the subsequent addition of a different one is possible because the characters that partake of such actions experience something of a merging.⁶⁷ In the absence of the mother, the concubine fills in both as Amyntor's paramour and as Phoenix's stepmother. In this sense, the two characters that come between father and son, and that end up provoking their antagonism, can be viewed as merged into one. Moreover, if the character inciting the sexual encounter and the character such an encounter must be held with are the same, the tragedy of the situation becomes much more manifest.

[GE4] In the epic, Phoenix, even though pushed by an external force, faces an internal dilemma: is it better to obey a mother's pleading or to respect a father's position? Choosing either party would result in mistreating the other. After some consideration, he sides with his mother, and his father becomes so enraged that he curses the young man, who becomes sterile. In the drama, there is no dilemma or inner conflict.⁶⁸ The whole ambiguity of the situation is derived from the setup. If the epic Phoenix was guilty of executing the mother's plan, the dramatic Phoenix is innocent,

the previous [sc. Homer's] account" (p. 220); and Collard & Cropp (Euripides, 2008): "In his [sc. Euripides'] version, moreover, Phoenix refused his mother's pleading, only to be falsely accused of rape by the concubine" (p. 406).

67 On the merging of the mother and the concubine into a single character, see Papamichael (1982): "The tightening of the bond between Amyntor and concubine and to some extent between the concubine and Phoenix, who in a way becomes her stepson in consequence of the removal of the mother, is the core of the tragic plot" (p. 220).

68 On the ignoring of the dilemma of whether to obey the mother or to respect the father, see Papamichael (1982): "He [sc. Phoenix] is under no great psychological compulsion to do or not to do anything imposed upon him from outside" (p. 220).

but framed by the concubine's trickery. As a matter of fact, the *Schol. ad Il.* 9.453 states: "But Euripides stages a guiltless hero in the *Phoenix* [Εὐριπίδης δὲ ἀναμάρτητον εἰσάγει τὸν ἥρωα ἐν τῷ Φοίνικι]".

[GE5] The emphasis on the father's wrath relates to the dramatic perspective.⁶⁹ The *Iliad's* Amyntor gets angry when he finds out about a consensual relationship between Phoenix and the concubine, but the *Phoenix's* Amyntor gets angrier when he hears about the alleged assault from the concubine herself. Therefore, the guiltless behavior receives a much harsher punishment than the guilty one. The anger, a very Homeric topic (e.g., *Il.* 1.1), is also dramatically explored in very Homeric ways (e.g., *Il.* 9.443): Homer, through the words of Phoenix, only grants access to Amyntor's deeds; Euripides, on the contrary, makes room for Amyntor's words.⁷⁰

In fragments 803a, 803b, 804, 805, and 807, Amyntor complains about life, children, wives, and old age. His complaint in 803a, "before, falling over his eyes, darkness has already reached him [πρὶν ἂν κατ' ὄσσων κιγχάνη σφ' ἤδη σκότος]" recalls Euripides' *Hippolytus* 1444: "Oh! Oh! Falling over my eyes, darkness is already reaching me [αἰαῖ, κατ' ὄσσων κιγχάνει μ' ἤδη σκότος]". After that, introspection gives way to interaction, and father and son argue, in an ἀγὼν λόγων (verbal contest) about the concubine's allegations.

Fragments 809, 810, and 811 refer to proofs, evidence, and the well-known "nature versus nurture" debate. The statement in 810, "Then, the most important thing is nature, since no one, by being nurtured, would ever adequately turn evil into good [μέγιστον ἀρ' ἦν ἡ φύσις· τὸ γὰρ κακὸν οὐδεὶς τρέφων εὖ χρηστὸν ἂν θείη ποτέ]",

69 On the emphasis on the father's wrath, see Papamichael (1982): "In other words Euripides could never have effectively permitted Amyntor to blind his son in fury, if he had kept the Homeric setting with a wife still rather close to her husband and a very young girl whom the old Amyntor had not yet touched" (p. 221); and Collard & Cropp (Euripides, 2008): "Euripides' purpose is plain, to maximize the pathos of Phoenix's tragedy and, so the fragments suggest, to create room for much introspection and agony in the disillusioned Amyntor... together with tense argument between father and son over the concubine's allegations" (p. 406).

70 On words/deeds in Euripides, see *Hipp.* 486 ff.

brings to mind Euripides' *Hippolytus* 921-922:⁷¹ “A wonderful Sophist – you say – is whoever will be able to force those thinking wrongly to think rightly [δεινὸν σοφιστὴν εἶπας, ὅστις εὖ φρονεῖν τοὺς μὴ φρονοῦντας δυνατός ἐστ' ἀναγκάσαι]”.

[GE6] Lastly, the change in the outcome of the story is also motivated by dramatic choices.⁷² Instead of being cursed with sterility, Phoenix is blinded by Amyntor. The blinding and the accusation, if originally introduced by Euripides, would be the playwright's two main innovations to the Homeric model. After the corrupt fragment 815, which may have contained the actual reference to the blinding, in fragments 816 and 817 Phoenix himself speaks of his ill fate, and bids farewell to his fatherland. It is not unreasonable to suppose a *deus ex machina*, in a manner like that in which they appear in other Euripidean plays.⁷³

Don't Shoot the Messenger!

Book 5 of the *Mahābhārata* is composed of twelve minor books. Minor book 49 includes, like *Iliad* 9, a council of chiefs and an embassy of king Drupada's priest to the Kauravas, as well as the siding of the divine Kṛṣṇa with the Pāṇḍavas, and the substory of the victory of Indra; minor book 50, a second embassy, of king Dhṛtarāṣṭra's bard to the Pāṇḍavas; minor books 51 and 52, respectively, steward Vidura's and sage Sanatsujāta's instructions; minor book 53, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's failed attempt at swaying his son Duryodhana from the war; minor book 54, a third embassy, of Kṛṣṇa to the Kauravas, as well as the substory of Dambhodbhava, the deeds of Mātali and Gālava, and the colloquy of Vidurā and her son.

Minor book 55 details Kṛṣṇa's and Kuntī's revelations about the warrior Karṇa's true origin; minor book 56, the yoking of the armies

71 Cf. Euripides' *Hec.* 592-602 and *Suppl.* 911-917.

72 On the change of the outcome of the story, see Papamichael (1982): “What happened after the blinding of Phoenix can only be surmised from parallel tragedies” (p. 226); and Collard & Cropp (Euripides, 2008): “Euripides may have introduced the blinding to the story” (p. 406).

73 See Euripides' *Hipp.* 1283 ff.

for battle, which gives name to the entire book 5;⁷⁴ minor book 57, the consecration of Dhṛṣṭadyumna and Bhīṣma as marshals, respectively, of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas; minor book 57, a fourth embassy, of Duryodhana's cousin to the Pāṇḍavas; minor book 59, a review of the warriors from both sides; and minor book 60, the substory of Ambā. Out of the four embassies,⁷⁵ that of Kṛṣṇa is the most prominent, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

The embassy of Kṛṣṇa (*MBh.* 5.83-129) narrates Kṛṣṇa's *yāna* (coming). The *dūta* (messenger) addresses, among several others, the father Dhṛtarāṣṭra and the son Duryodhana. The epic version is as follows: Dhṛtarāṣṭra knows that Kṛṣṇa is coming, and like Agamemnon in *Iliad* 9, Dhṛtarāṣṭra is willing to offer him various gifts. However, Vidura reminds him that Kṛṣṇa, similarly to Achilles in *Iliad* 9, will only settle for the one offering he expects, i.e., peace. Duryodhana agrees with recognizing Kṛṣṇa's dignity, but he disagrees with the gifts, which he thinks could be seen as a sign of fear. Instead, he expresses his intention to capture Kṛṣṇa.

One day later, Kṛṣṇa arrives at Dhṛtarāṣṭra's house, where all the noblemen rise from their seats to honor him. After visiting Vidura and his aunt Kuntī, Kṛṣṇa arrives at Duryodhana's house, where the noblemen also rise from their seats. Kṛṣṇa rejects a meal offering and eats at Vidura's place. Another day later, he enters the assembly hall, where for a third time he is welcomed by a standing crowd. Kṛṣṇa addresses his first speech to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who as king has the power to restrain Duryodhana from combat. His speech contains quotes from the Pāṇḍavas' speech. Then, as in Phoenix's speech in *Iliad* 9, follow three stories: the story of Dambhodbhava, the story of Mātali, and the story of Gālava.

The sage Rāma Jāmadagnya tells the story of king Dambhodbhava's challenging of Nara and Nārāyaṇa, intended to reveal the true nature of Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa. The sage Kaṇva

⁷⁴ Cf. *MBh.* 5.149.47.

⁷⁵ The topic of embassies/messengers offers several examples within the Sanskrit literary tradition. As a Vedic precedent, there is the hymn about the dog messenger Saramā (*RV.* 10.108); and as classical reinterpretations, pertaining to the genre of *Samdeśakāvya* (Messenger Poems), there is Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* (Cloud Messenger) and Dhoyin's *Pavanadūta* (Wind Messenger).

narrates the story of Indra's charioteer Mātali, who while procuring the snake Sumukha as a husband for his daughter, causes the eagle Garuḍa to inappropriately challenge a more powerful enemy. The goal of this story is for Duryodhana to learn his place. The sage Nārada recounts the story of the student Gālava, who to pay his *gurudakṣiṇā* (graduation fee), prostitutes princess Mādhavī to three kings and to his own teacher. From such unions, four sons are born, with the power to restore king Yayāti, Mādhavī's father and their own grandfather, to heaven, from where he had fallen because of pride. The aim of this story is for Duryodhana to give up his own pride. Unsurprisingly, all three stories fall on deaf ears.

After the stories, Dhṛtarāṣṭra admits his powerlessness and requests Kṛṣṇa to redirect his efforts towards Duryodhana. Accordingly, Kṛṣṇa addresses his second speech to Duryodhana. As he himself later comments,⁷⁶ he tries *sāman* (conciliation), *bheda* (alienation), and *dāna* (gifts), leaving no other option than *daṇḍa* (punishment).⁷⁷ The grandfather Bhīṣma, the preceptor Droṇa, and the father Dhṛtarāṣṭra comment upon Kṛṣṇa's speech. Duryodhana rejects the accusations, for he thinks not even in the game of dice was there any wrongdoing. At his brother Duḥśāsana's instigation, Duryodhana leaves the assembly hall, only to be promptly brought back. Then, because of his mother Gāndhārī's intervention, he once again leaves.

Duryodhana plots Kṛṣṇa's capture with his uncle Śakuni, his brother Duḥśāsana, and his ally Karṇa. Dhṛtarāṣṭra is warned about the plot by Kṛṣṇa's companion Sātyaki but is instructed by Kṛṣṇa himself not to impede it. Duryodhana is brought back for a second time by Dhṛtarāṣṭra and listens to Vidura's account of Kṛṣṇa's deeds. Kṛṣṇa shows his *viśvarūpa* (universal form), including his weapons: discus, bow, mace, conch, and sword, as well as spear and plough. The grandfather Bhīṣma, the preceptor Droṇa, the steward Vidura, and the bard Saṃjaya are given divine eyesight. The visit ends with Dhṛtarāṣṭra reminding Kṛṣṇa that he is in favor of peace but unable to control the bloodthirsty Duryodhana.

⁷⁶ See *MBh.* 5.148.7 ff.

⁷⁷ On the four *upāyas* (means of success against an enemy), see Kauṭilya's *Arthasā.* 2.10.47.

In (Ps.-)Bhāsa's *The Embassy*, the plot goes like this: after the standard invocation of the god Viṣṇu, the prologue has the stage manager draw the attention of the audience towards the council chamber, around which the events are about to unfold. Then, the one and only act moves through all the facets of wickedness that make up the character of king Duryodhana: the fine for standing up, the painting of Draupadī's humiliation, the dialogue with the ambassador, the attempted capture of the deity, and the intervention of the weapons.

The fine serves to introduce Duryodhana. After a lengthy monologue that has the appearance of a dialogue, Duryodhana consecrates the grandfather Bhīṣma as commander in chief of the Kaurava army. Then, through a brief exchange with a chamberlain, he starts insulting the ambassador Kṛṣṇa before even letting him into his chamber. And it is this self-centered and rude character who the audience eventually hears giving the order to fine anybody who stands up upon the arrival of Kṛṣṇa. All this display of prospective impertinence is nothing but a taste of what he is truly capable of. In retrospect, he comes out much worse.

The painting of Draupadī's humiliation is the darkest possible trip down memory lane. Duryodhana not only failed to impede the crimes against Draupadī in the assembly hall, but he is also gloating over them right now. It is all there: prince Duṣśāsana pulling her hair, her husband Bhīma struggling not to burn the entire assembly hall to the ground, her husband Yudhiṣṭhira being the voice of reason, her husband Arjuna daydreaming about revenge, her husbands Nakula and Sahadeva being just as enraged, not to mention the utter schadenfreude of the gambler Śakuni, or the impotence of the preceptor Droṇa and the grandfather Bhīṣma. The painting suffices to relive the whole experience. It is obvious that Duryodhana's crimes, both past and future, are just framing the present ones, those that this repulsive character commits during the embassy itself.

The dialogue represents the axis in this circle of evil. After all the noblemen cave in and after even Duryodhana sits down for the tricky newcomer, Kṛṣṇa transmits, word for word, the message that the Pāṇḍavas have sent to Duryodhana: they have

kept their side of the deal, and so should Duryodhana. But soon, the straightforward claim turns into a heated debate about the legitimacy of the Bhārata lineage and the appraisal of Kṛṣṇa's deeds. Then, Kṛṣṇa changes the carrot for the stick. Has Arjuna not been one step ahead of Duryodhana at every turn? Why should this time be any different?

Angry at Kṛṣṇa, Duryodhana expects his underlings to capture the messenger, whom he considers to be an inferior man, when, in fact, he is a supreme god, about to captivate the deities themselves. As if by magic, Kṛṣṇa keeps getting away with it, but he is growing more and more impatient. Kṛṣṇa summons his discus Sudarśana, who ends up having to calm him down. After all, Kṛṣṇa has descended into this earthly existence to help alleviate the Earth from her burden. Then comes a parade of divine weapons, including the bow Śārṅga, the mace Kaumodakī, the conch Pāñcajanya, and the sword Nandaka, and leading up to the arrival of the mount Garuḍa. Just before wrapping things up, king Dhṛtarāṣṭra is granted a cameo, in which he recognizes the divine nature of Kṛṣṇa.

This product/process of adaptation focuses on characters and events. Its author exploits these six procedures: [SE1]⁷⁸ he subtracts talking characters, [SE2] he adds the painting of the humiliation, [SE3] he merges the father and the son into a single character, [SE4] he adds the questioning of the genealogy, [SE5] he adds the fine for anyone who stands up, and [SE6] he adds the personified weapons.

[SE1] The subtraction of characters responds to the economy of the play.⁷⁹ According to the epic source, those present during

78 SE stands for "Sanskrit Embassy". Hence, numbers SE1-SE6 refer to the adaptation of *MBh.* 5 into *The Embassy*. These are just the adaptation techniques that will allow me to argue for parallelisms with the Greco-Roman world. Other techniques at play include changing the embassy's site and timing, emphasizing the grudge between cousins, maintaining the messenger's divinity but changing his characterization, merging several humiliations of the son into one and emphasizing his failure, changing the *viśvarūpa* (universal form), and splitting the final bewilderment between kings and gods.

79 On the subtraction of characters, see Esposito (2010): "Die Anzahl der Personen wird auf Kṛṣṇa, Duryodhana, den Kämmerer, Sudarśana und Dhṛtarāṣṭra reduziert, alle übrigen Charaktere werden durch die Technik

Kṛṣṇa's message to Dhṛtarāṣṭra were Vidura (*MBh.* 5.92.32a), Sātyaki (*MBh.* 5.92.32b), Duryodhana and Karṇa (*MBh.* 5.92.33b), Kṛtavarman (*MBh.* 5.92.33c), Dhṛtarāṣṭra (*MBh.* 5.92.34a), Bhīṣma and Droṇa (*MBh.* 5.92.34c), Duḥśāsana (*MBh.* 5.92.47a), Vivimśati (*MBh.* 5.92.47c), and Śakuni (*MBh.* 5.92.49a), alongside the innumerable hosts of Kauravas and Vṛṣṇis. However, in the dramatic adaptation, from the eleven characters mentioned by name, only four are alluded to: Droṇa ("preceptor [*ācārya*]", *DV* 4.14), Bhīṣma ("grandfather [*pitāmaha*]", *DV* 4.16), Śakuni ("maternal uncle [*mātula*]", *DV* 4.18), and Karṇa (*DV* 4.22). Two more partake in the dialogue: Duryodhana and Dhṛtarāṣṭra. And five are altogether subtracted: Vidura, Sātyaki, Kṛtavarman, Duḥśāsana, and Vivimśati.

As sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Duḥśāsana and Vivimśati, have no place in the play,⁸⁰ provided that even their father has had to make room for the sole focus on Duryodhana as representative of the Kaurava cause; and as Vṛṣṇis, neither do Sātyaki and Kṛtavarman, because this same highlight on the Kaurava side is to explain Kṛṣṇa as having come alone. Vidura's absence can be accounted for in a similar manner, since he always remains partial towards the Pāṇḍavas and Kṛṣṇa.⁸¹ The remaining characters are enough to situate the audience among the Kauravas.⁸²

[SE2] The addition of a painting of the humiliation is an authorial decision.⁸³ The author of the play could have opted

des *ākāśabhāṣita* dargestellt [The number of people is reduced to Kṛṣṇa, Duryodhana, the chamberlain, Sudarśana, and Dhṛtarāṣṭra, all other characters are represented through the technique of *ākāśabhāṣita*] (p. 18).

80 Although Vaikarṇa, one of the two invented silent characters, resounds with Vikarṇa, another one of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons.

81 In fact, during Kṛṣṇa's visit in the *MBh.*, Vidura's house serves as his hub: he goes to Dhṛtarāṣṭra's house and then to Vidura's (*MBh.* 5.87); and after meeting with Kuntī (*MBh.* 5.88), he goes to Duryodhana's house and then again to Vidura's (*MBh.* 5.89), where the two of them can openly discuss the matters at hand (*MBh.* 5.90-91).

82 Bhīṣma and Droṇa defend the Pāṇḍavas, while Karṇa and Śakuni oppose them. Cf. (Ps.-)Bhāsa's *The Five Nights*.

83 On the addition of the painting of the humiliation, see Esposito (2010): "Durch das neu eingeführte Motiv des Gemäldes wird ein Rückblick auf die Ursachen des Konflikts ermöglicht, der im Epos durch Anspielungen während der Diskussionen in der *sabhā* geleistet wird [The newly introduced motif of the painting enables a review of the causes of the

to include the causes of the conflict as part of the interactions between the ambassador and his addressee, as did the author of the epic. In the *MBh.*'s dialogue, Kṛṣṇa berates Duryodhana for humiliating Draupadī, among other things, by the way in which she was brought to the assembly hall against her will.

kaś cānyo jñātibhāryāṃ vai viprakartuṃ tathārhati |
āniya ca sabhāṃ vaktuṃ yathoktā draupadī tvayā ||
 kulīnā śīlasaṃpannā prāṇebhyo 'pi gariyasī |
 mahiṣī pāṇduputrāṇāṃ tathā vinikṛtā tvayā ||

Who else would be capable of dishonoring the wife of a relative and, **having brought** her to the assembly hall, of speaking to her like you spoke to Draupadī? The wellborn, the well-behaved, the queen of Pāṇḍu's sons, even dearer to them than their lives, was thus dishonored by you!

(*MBh.* 5.126.8-9)

Instead, the adaptation turns words into images, and opts for an ekphrasis, i.e., a verbal description of a work of art. The procedure is of Greco-Roman origin. Its most conspicuous representative in this context is the depiction of Achilles' shield (*Il.* 18.478-608), and it is already adapted by Virgil for describing the pictures at Juno's temple (*Aen.* 1.418-493). In fact, the idea of referencing paintings in plays is already common within Roman theater (Plautus, *Asin.* 174 ff. and 762, *Capt.* 998 ff., *Epid.* 620 ff., *Men.* 141 ff., *Merc.* 313 ff., *Poen.* 1271 ff., and *Stich.* 270 ff.; and Terence, *Eun.* 584 ff.).⁸⁴ And it could have been borrowed by Sanskrit theater ((Ps.-)Bhāsa, *DV* 6 and *SV* 6; Śūdraka, *Mṛcch.* 2; Kālidāsa, *Mālav.* 1, *Vikr.* 2, and *Śāk.* 6; Harṣa, *Ratn.* 2 and *Nāg.* 2; Bhavabhūti, *Mālatīm.* 2 and *Uttar.* 1; and Rājaśekhara, *Karp.* 2 and *Viddh.* 1).⁸⁵

The painting in *The Embassy* depicts two separate moments of Draupadī's humiliation in the *Sabhāparvan*. One concerns Duḥśāsana grabbing her by the hair to bring her to the assembly hall against her will. The other one occurs a few moments later,

conflict, which is made in the epic through allusions during the discussions in the *sabhā]*" (p. 19).

84 See Knapp (1917, p. 156).

85 See Saunders (1919) and S. S. Dange (1994b).

and it relates to Duḥśāsana pulling her dress, whilst in the middle of the assembly hall, and unsuccessfully trying to undress her.

tato javenābhisasāra roṣād; duḥśāsanas tām abhigarjamānaḥ |
dīrgheṣu nīleṣv atha cormimatsu; **jagrāha keśeṣu**
narendrapatnīm ||

Out of anger, Duḥśāsana quickly rushed towards her roaring, and then, he **grabbed** the king's wife by her long, dark, and flowing **hair**.

(MBh. 2.60.22)

tato duḥśāsano rājan draupadyā **vasanaṃ** balāt |
sabhāmadhye **samākṣipyā** vyapakraṣṭuṃ pracakrame ||

Then, O king, **having** forcibly **pulled** Draupadī's **dress** in the middle of the assembly hall, Duḥśāsana began to undress her.

(MBh. 2.61.40)

The author of *The Embassy* merges the two offenses into one. He also pushes them from their past timing, during the events of the *Sabhāparvan*, and into a present timing, set during the events of the *Udyogaparvan*; all this, whilst incorporating the ekphrasis device. The merging is not at all unexpected, since pictorial representations tend to operate within a single time frame, whereas verbal representations can more easily afford to develop multiple time frames. The solution provided to this challenge by (Ps.-)Bhāsa, that is, to depict both the hair-grabbing and the dress-pulling scenes as a single “pregnant moment”, is not dissimilar to what a painter would do. A case in point is the painting *Draupadī Vastraharan*, by Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906), in which Duḥśāsana appears grabbing Draupadī's hair with his right hand and pulling her dress with his left hand.

bādarāyaṇānīyatām sa citrapaṭo nanu yatra
draupadī**keśāmbarāvakarṣaṇam** ālikhitam

O Bādarāyaṇa, please fetch me that painting, where Draupadī's **hair-and-dress dragging** is depicted.

(DV 6.5)

[SE3] Merging father and son results in Duryodhana being presented as king.⁸⁶ In the *MBh.*, Dhṛtarāṣṭra is addressed as “king [*rājan*]”, for instance, by Vidura (*MBh.* 5.85.1a), and even by Duryodhana (*MBh.* 5.86.12a). For Duryodhana, in turn, the text is ambiguous: sometimes he is a king and other times he is a prince. In the *DV*, there is no ambiguity: Duryodhana is presented as “great king [*mahārājo*]” by the chamberlain (*DV* 2.7).⁸⁷ This title is befitting to his self-portrait, which mentions both the umbrella as a symbol of royalty and the water as a sign of the royal consecration.

aham avadhṛtapāṇḍarātapatro dvijavarahastadhṛtāmbusi
ktamūrdhā |
avanatanṛpamaṇḍalānuyātraīḥ saha kathayāmi
bhavadvidhair na bhāṣe ||

I, of the known white **umbrella**, of head sprinkled with **water** prepared by the hand of the best of Brahmans, I, and the attendant company of kings who have bowed, say: I do not speak with people like yourselves.

(*DV* 37)

Since father and son have been merged into one antagonist, the speeches towards them also need to be merged. One adversary, one attempted dissuasion. The simplification provides immediacy. Vyāsa, first, presents Kṛṣṇa’s speech towards Dhṛtarāṣṭra (*MBh.* 5.93.3-61). A summary of its contents would go as follows: the speech is pronounced expressly in pursuit of “peace [*śamaḥ*]” (*MBh.* 5.93.3). Despite the merits of the Bhārata lineage (*MBh.* 5.93.4-8), the Kauravas’ ill conduct could lead to the destruction of the earth (*MBh.* 5.93.9-11), unless Dhṛtarāṣṭra steadies them (*MBh.* 5.93.12-15). If united, the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas would be

86 On merging father and son, see Esposito (2010): “Im Gegensatz zum Epos aber tritt er [sc. Duryodhana] als Herrscher auf und führt den Vorsitz der *sabhā* [But in contrast to the epic, he appears as ruler and presides over the *sabhā*]” (p. 18). In any case, it is a matter of functions, since Dhṛtarāṣṭra does briefly appear as a talking character in the play. Cf. S. A. Dange’s (1994a) view that Duryodhana remains “childish”: “Bhāsa wants us to know that Duryodhana is still boyish (*bālīśa*) in this first drama on the life of Duryodhana” (p. 36).

87 Cf. Vāsudeva’s address to Dhṛtarāṣṭra as “Your Majesty [*atrabhavān*]” (*DV* 55.3).

invincible (*MBh.* 5.93.16-27); at war, they would annihilate each other (*MBh.* 5.93.28-32). Only king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, their father figure, can protect them (*MBh.* 5.93.33-39).

The Pāṇḍavas send Dhṛtarāṣṭra their message, quoted in full by Kṛṣṇa (*MBh.* 5.93.40-46). They also send one to the assembly (*MBh.* 5.93.47-49). Then, Kṛṣṇa asks Dhṛtarāṣṭra not to fall victim to anger, and instead, to give the Pāṇḍavas their share of the kingdom (*MBh.* 5.93.50-53). Despite numerous offenses against him, Yudhiṣṭhira would still abide by what is right (*MBh.* 5.93.54-58). In sum, the Kauravas are in the wrong, the Pāṇḍavas are ready either way, and the ball is in Dhṛtarāṣṭra's court (*MBh.* 5.93.59-61).

After the substories comes Kṛṣṇa's speech to Duryodhana (*MBh.* 5.122.5-61). Similarly, an outline comes in handy: despite the merits of his lineage (*MBh.* 5.122.5-8), Duryodhana's conduct goes against what is right and profitable (*MBh.* 5.122.9-12). Uniting with the Pāṇḍavas would prove fruitful for everyone (*MBh.* 5.122.13-17), as has already been admitted by Dhṛtarāṣṭra; and there is nothing better than a father's advice (*MBh.* 5.122.18-26). As he did with his father, Kṛṣṇa asks Duryodhana not to fall victim to anger (*MBh.* 5.122.27-31), because emotion is not as good as profit, which, in turn, is no match for duty (*MBh.* 5.122.32-41). Likewise, the Kauravas are inferior to the Pāṇḍavas (*MBh.* 5.122.42-50). Despite their best efforts, Arjuna will remain invincible (*MBh.* 5.122.51-56). In conclusion, by restoring their "half [*ardham*]" to the Pāṇḍavas, Dhṛtarāṣṭra could be rightfully enthroned as "senior king [*mahārājye*]", and Duryodhana as "young king [*yauvarājye*]", all while achieving the much-desired "peace [*saṁśamaṁ*]" (*MBh.* 5.122.57-61). Certainly, a win-win deal.

The Bhāratas' merits, Duryodhana's ill conduct, the cousins' allegiance, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's fatherly advice, the dangers of anger, the safety of duty, and the overarching goal of peace; all these topics bridge together two speeches that are related both in length and in depth. Peace was at the beginning of the speech to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and it is also at the end of the speech to Duryodhana. Half a kingdom does not seem such a high price to pay for full-fledged peace. But the master plan of relieving the Earth from her burden must proceed, and Duryodhana will help.

The advice from Bhīṣma (*MBh.* 5.123.2-8), Droṇa (*MBh.* 5.123.10-17), Vidura (*MBh.* 5.123.19-21), Dhṛtarāṣṭra (*MBh.* 5.123.23-27), and again Bhīṣma and Droṇa together (*MBh.* 5.124.2-18) does not suffice to dissuade Duryodhana. In his response to Kṛṣṇa (*MBh.* 5.125.2-26), Duryodhana sees no wrongdoing in the dicing match, or in any of his actions for that matter (*MBh.* 5.125.2-9). Working under the “warrior duty [*kṣatradharmam*]”, Duryodhana believes that he is right, and that it is his army which is unlikely to be vanquished; and even in that scenario, heaven would still await them (*MBh.* 5.125.10-21). The response ends with Duryodhana putting his foot down (*MBh.* 5.125.22-26): that “share of the kingdom [*rājyāṃśās*]” is going nowhere, not even “as much as could be pierced with the tip of a sharp needle [*yāvad dhi sūcyās tīkṣṇāyā vidhyed agreṇa*]”.

For the comparison between epic and drama, I focus on the section of Kṛṣṇa’s speech to Dhṛtarāṣṭra where Kṛṣṇa quotes the Pāṇḍavas’ message (*MBh.* 5.93.40-46). Here, the whole aftermath of the dicing match is summarized as a suffering encompassing the twelve-year exile and the extra year incognito. However, this suffering was always supposed to be temporary, and the thirteenth year was expected to bring an end to it. Such was the “agreement [*samaya*-]” (*MBh.* 5.93.42a, *MBh.* 5.93.42c, *MBh.* 5.93.43a), which, by an instance of an emphatic triple-mention, is accentuated as the main basis for the demand, involving both the part of the kingdom and the accompanying peace.

The standing by required by such agreement is stressed by a repetition of “*sthā*”. Originally, the Pāṇḍavas thought that Dhṛtarāṣṭra would stand by the agreement, but now he appears to not have done so; therefore, they ask him to stand by it, given that they themselves are doing just that. Moreover, even if they ever stood on the wrong path, it would be up to him to set them straight; so, they ask for him to help them and help himself in the process. Those are seven examples (*thatā*, *tiṣṭha*, *sthitānām*, *sthāpayitavyā*, *āsthitāḥ*, *saṁsthāpaya*, and *tiṣṭha*), coming from the exact same number of verses. The importance of the “*sthā*” theme is clear. Evident too is its connection to the theme of the agreement. Other themes seem to reverberate around those two, like Dhṛtarāṣṭra being a father figure: “our father [*pitā*]” (*MBh.* 5.93.42c), “O father

[*tata*]” (*MBh.* 5.93.42c), “like a father and a mother [*mātrpitr̥vad*]” (*MBh.* 5.93.45a), “by our father [*pitṛā*]” (*MBh.* 5.93.46a); or like duty being the key to it all: “duty [*dharmam*]” (*MBh.* 5.93.44a).

āhus tvām pāṇḍavā rājann abhivādya prasādyā ca |
 bhavataḥ śāsanād **duḥkham anubhūtaṃ** sahanugaiḥ ||
 dvādaśemāni varṣāṇi vane nirvyuṣitāni naḥ |
 trayodaśaṃ tathājñātaiḥ sajane parivatsaram ||
sthātā naḥ **samaye** tasmin piteti kṛtaniścayāḥ |
 nāhāsma **samayaṃ** tāta tac ca no brāhmaṇā viduḥ ||
 tasmin naḥ **samaye tiṣṭha sthitānām** bharatarṣabha |
 nityaṃ saṃkleśitā rājan **svarājyāṃsaṃ** labhemahi ||
 tvaṃ **dharmam** arthaṃ yuñjānaḥ samyaṅ nas **trātum**
arhasi |
 gurutvaṃ bhavati prekṣya bahūn kleśāṃs titikṣmahe ||
 sa bhavān mātrpitr̥vad asmāsu pratipadyatām |
 guror garīyāsī vṛttir yā ca śiṣyasya bhārata ||
 pitṛā **sthāpayitavyā** hi vayam utpatham **āsthitāḥ** |
saṃsthāpaya pathiṣv asmāṃs **tiṣṭha** rājan svavartmani ||

O king, having greeted and propitiated you, the Pāṇḍavas said: “At your command, we **experienced suffering**, together with our companions, during these twelve years of us living in exile in the forest, and a thirteenth year incognito among people. We were certain that our father **would stand by the agreement**. O father, we have not backed out on **the agreement**, and our Brahmans know this. O bull of the Bharatas, **stand by this agreement** with us **who are standing by it**. O king, after always being harassed, we should attain **our share of the kingdom**. Adequately bringing together **duty** and profit, **you can protect** us. Having observed the mastery in you, we are enduring many hardships. Behave towards us like a father and a mother. O Bhārata, the conduct of a teacher is very important, and so is that of a pupil. Having **stood** on the wrong path, we **should be made to stand straight** by our father. **Make us stand straight** on our paths, O king, and **stand** on your own road.”

(*MBh.* 5.93.40-46)

The Pāṇḍavas’ quoted message within Kṛṣṇa’s speech towards Dhṛtarāṣṭra is a major influence on the message brought by the *DV*’s Kṛṣṇa. An easier path would have probably been to borrow only from the speech to Duryodhana, since after all, he is the

only one with which the *DV*'s Kṛṣṇa is debating. But easier is not always better, and (Ps.-)Bhāsa recreates the quoted message in at least two of the *DV*'s verses. The first one states that the Pāṇḍavas “experienced a great suffering [*anubhūtaṃ mahad duḥkhaṃ*]”, which seems to reinterpret the epic’s “experienced suffering [*duḥkham anubhūtaṃ*]” (*MBh.* 5.93.40c-d). It also mentions their inheritance being “dutiful [*dharmyaṃ*]”, which echoes the epic’s “duty [*dharmam*]” (*MBh.* 5.93.44a).

anubhūtaṃ mahad duḥkhaṃ saṃpūrṇaḥ samayaḥ sa ca |
asmākam api **dharmyaṃ** yad dāyādyaṃ tad vibhajyatām
||

We **experienced a great suffering**, and our time span is completed. Let the inheritance that is **dutiful** towards us be distributed.

(*DV* 20)

The other verse conveys the demand that “half of the kingdom [*rājyārdhaṃ*]” must be given, which appears to recreate the epic’s “our share of the kingdom [*svarājyāṃśaṃ*]” (*MBh.* 5.93.43d). A share suddenly becomes a half, a partition previously attempted in the epic source by Dhṛtarāṣṭra, when he sent the Pāṇḍavas to the Khāṇḍava tract, and offered them to take it as “half of the kingdom [*ardhaṃ rājasya*]” (*MBh.* 1.199.25e). But the verse also evinces another example of adaptation, through the by-now-known technique of repetition with variation. Thus, the epic’s “you can protect [*trātum arhasi*]” (*MBh.* 5.93.44b) becomes the drama’s “you can give [*dātum arhasi*]”. With this, the general possibility of ‘being able to protect’ turns into the specific compulsion of ‘being obliged to give’. In a much shorter version, the message needs to be much more straightforward.

dātum arhasi madvākyād **rājyārdhaṃ** dhṛtarāṣṭraja |
anyathā sāgarāntām gāṃ hariṣyanti hi pāṇḍavāḥ ||

O son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, based on my speech, **you can give** them **half of the kingdom**; otherwise, the Pāṇḍavas will seize the earth up to the ocean.

(*DV* 34)

One last feature that might be worth mentioning is the phrasing “based on my speech [*advākyaḍ*]” (*DV* 34), within what is presented as the speech itself. This does not happen in the epic Kṛṣṇa’s speech towards Dhṛtarāṣṭra, which is referred to as a “speech [*vākyaṃ*]” only before and after it is spoken (*MBh.* 5.93.1c, *MBh.* 5.93.62a). Nonetheless, in the epic Kṛṣṇa’s speech towards Duryodhana it occurs twice. The first time is as part of a *tatpuruṣa*-compound “my speech [*advākyaṃ*]” (*MBh.* 5.122.6b), which is the same one that appears in *DV* 34, thus indicating the source of the adaptation. The second time is at about one third of the way through the speech, as part of the expression “word of advice [*niḥśreyasaṃ vākyaṃ*]” (*MBh.* 5.122.21a). This word is relevant, since it also functions, as part of another *tatpuruṣa*-compound, to give a name to the entire play: *Dūtavākyaṃ* literally means “The messenger’s speech”.

[SE4] After the speeches, the epic source includes a debate centered on the Kauravas’ wrongdoings (*MBh.* 5.126); but the dramatic adaptation adds the questioning of the genealogy.⁸⁸ Where Vyāsa focuses on the characters’ actions, such as the humiliation of Draupadī, (Ps.-)Bhāsa reinterprets this by looking into the characters’ relationships: is Pāṇḍu the legitimate father of the Pāṇḍavas, or is Vicitravīrya the legitimate father of Dhṛtarāṣṭra? The fact that Pāṇḍu’s curse led to Kuntī’s summonses, and then to Dharma, Vāyu, Indra, and the Aśvins fathering, respectively, Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, and the twins, as well as the fact that Vicitravīrya’s death led to Vyāsa begetting Dhṛtarāṣṭra on Ambikā and Pāṇḍu himself on Ambālikā are obviously known to the author of the *MBh.* In fact, they are narrated as early as the very first book. The novelty in treatment by the author of the *DV* is that one is used by Duryodhana to question the Pāṇḍavas’ claim to the kingdom, while the other is adduced by Kṛṣṇa as a counterargument against that exact claim by the Kauravas.

88 On the addition of the questioning of the genealogy, see Esposito (2010): “Weitere Rückblicke finden, wie im Epos, während der Diskussion statt [Further retrospectives take place, like in the epic, during the discussion]” (p. 19).

tvayāhaṃ hiṃsito yasmāt tasmāt tvām apy asaṃśayam |
dvayor nṛśaṃsakartāram avaśaṃ kāmamohitam |
jīvitāntakaro bhāva **evam evāgamiṣyati** ||

Since you injured me, then I will certainly make you, who caused the harm of this couple, unwillingly deluded by love. You will be the cause of your own death; **just so, it will happen.**

(MBh. 1.109.25)

vane piṭṛvyo mṛgayāprasaṅgataḥ kṛtāparādho **muniśāpam**
āptavān |
tadāprabhṛty eva sa dāranisspṛhaḥ **parātmajanām**
piṭṛtām kathaṃ vrajet ||

In the forest, my paternal uncle went hunting, made a mistake, and received **a sage's curse**; ever since then, he was deprived of desire for his wives. **How could one reach a conclusion about the paternity of those born from others?**

(DV 21)

tayor **utpādayāpatyaṃ** samartho hy asi putraka |
anurūpaṃ kulasyāsya saṃtatyāḥ prasavasya ca ||

O son, since you are the right person, on those two [sc. Ambikā and Ambālikā] **beget children**, who are worthy of this family and of increasing the lineage.

(MBh. 1.99.35)

vicitravīryo viṣayī vipattiṃ
kṣayeṇa yātaḥ punar ambikāyām |
vyāseṇa jāto dhṛtarāṣṭra eṣa
labheta rājyaṃ janakaḥ kathaṃ te ||

The voluptuous Vicitravīrya met his death through sickness, and yet, Dhṛtarāṣṭra was born to Vyāsa from Ambikā. **How could your father have obtained the kingdom?**

(DV 22)

[SE5] The addition of the fine for standing up evinces a superb mastery of the *Udyogaparvan*. For Vyāsa, the action of standing up is telling

in terms of courtesy towards the ambassador.⁸⁹ He emphasizes this procedure by mentioning it on three separate occasions during the embassy: first, during Kṛṣṇa's arrival at Dhṛtarāṣṭra's palace; second, during Kṛṣṇa's first arrival at Duryodhana's palace, which gets interrupted because the ambassador will not eat until he has spoken his mind; and third, during Kṛṣṇa's second arrival at Duryodhana's palace, where the audience listens to the speech towards the father, and then, to the speech towards the son, a doubling down on the former, and a last-ditch attempt to avert disaster.

After being introduced by an absolute construction about Kṛṣṇa's arrival, the first scene about standing up offers two expressions that will turn out to be key in terms of the text's self-referencing: *udatiṣṭhan* (stood up) and *āsanebhyo 'calan* (rose from their seats). The enumeration of those who stand is structured in descending order, from Dhṛtarāṣṭra, passing through Droṇa and Bhīṣma, and down to the rest.

abhyāgacchati dāśārhe prajñācakṣur nareśvaraḥ |
 sahaiva droṇabhīṣmābhyām **udatiṣṭhan mahāyaśāḥ** ||
 kṛpāś ca somadattaś ca mahārājaś ca bāhlikaḥ |
āsanebhyo 'calan sarve **pūjayanto** janārdanam ||

When the Dāśārha arrived, the **renowned** king whose sight was knowledge, as well as Droṇa and Bhīṣma, **stood up**. Kṛpa, Somadatta, and the great king Bāhlika all **rose from their seats, honoring** Janārdana.

(*MBh.* 5.87.13-14)

The second scene repeats the absolute construction about Kṛṣṇa's arrival, and it offers a variation on one of the expressions from the previous scene: *udatiṣṭhat* (stood up). The plural is substituted by the singular since now the subject is just Duryodhana. As in the previous case, the enumeration begins with the most prominent character. That the passages are to be taken in tandem is further signaled by Duryodhana's renown, mirroring that of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, as well as by Kṛṣṇa's being honored.

⁸⁹ Cf. the courtesy involved in presenting the first gift to the guest of honor, as exemplified by Kṛṣṇa during Yudhiṣṭhira's royal consecration (*MBh.* 2.33).

abhyāgacchati dāsārhe dhṛtarāṣṭro **mahāyaśāḥ** |
udatiṣṭhat sahāmātyaḥ **pūjayan** madhusūdanam ||

When the Dāsārha arrived, the **renowned** son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra **stood up**, together with his advisors, **honoring** Madhusūdana.

(MBh. 5.89.6)

The third scene provides greater variation. It opens with Dhṛtarāṣṭra, whom, in similar order, the others follow: Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and the rest. Then comes the expression *āsanebhyo 'calan* (rose from their seats), which occupies the same metrical position as before. In fact, MBh. 5.92.34c-d = MBh. 5.87.14c-d. After this, there is the absolute construction about Kṛṣṇa's arrival, immediately followed by two of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's recurring features: his renown and his special kind of sight. By realizing that MBh. 5.92.35 ~ MBh. 5.87.13, it becomes clearer that the passages are to be taken conjointly. By now, the expression *udatiṣṭhan* (stood up) reverberates with the one from MBh. 5.89.6c and the one from MBh. 5.87.13d. If all these repetitions were not enough of a token, MBh. 5.92.36 presents two additional variations on the “*ud- + sthā*” theme: *uttiṣṭhati* (stood up), as part of a new absolute construction; and *samuttasthuḥ* (stood up), with an additional prefix. As in MBh. 5.89.6, the last verse mentions one prominent character and fills in with several unnamed ones.

dhṛtarāṣṭraṃ puraskṛtya bhīṣmadroṇādayas tataḥ |
āsanebhyo 'calan sarve **pūjayanto** janārdanam ||
abhyāgacchati dāsārhe prajñācakṣur mahāmanāḥ |
sahaiva bhīṣmadroṇābhyām **udatiṣṭhan mahāyaśāḥ** ||
uttiṣṭhati mahārāje dhṛtarāṣṭre janeśvare |
tāni rājasahasrāṇi **samuttasthuḥ** samantataḥ ||

Following Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and the rest all **rose from their seats**, **honoring** Janārdana. **When the Dāsārha arrived**, the **renowned** and magnanimous one, **whose sight was knowledge**, as well as Bhīṣma and Droṇa, **stood up**. When the great king Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the lord of the people **stood up**, those thousands of kings **stood up** around him.

(MBh. 5.92.34-36)

(Ps.-)Bhāsa subtracts these threefold repetition, and in its place, adds the fine for standing up. Three epic variations on the same theme become one new dramatic theme. Could it have been that the playwright deemed this treatment excessive or inadequate for the new genre? This is unlikely since he himself turns the triple acknowledgement of Karṇa's curses (*MBh.* 8.29, *MBh.* 8.66, and *MBh.* 12.2-3) into Karṇa's three calls for action in *Karṇa's Task* (*KBh.* 5, *KBh.* 14, and *KBh.* 24). An authorial decision seems more suitable, because the addition of the fine maintains the emphasis on the action of standing up that the traditional text already reveals, but it does so in a creative way. Such adaptation is suggested by the phrasing *pratyutthāsyati* (stands up), a new variation on the “*ud-* + *sthā*” theme. On a separate note, when presented with the detail of a twelve-coin penalty, a reader of the *MBh.* cannot help but remember the twelve-year exile.

api ca yo 'tra keśavasya **pratyutthāsyati** sa mayā
dvādaśasuvarṇabhāreṇa daṇḍyaḥ

Moreover, he who **stands up** here for Keśava, will be penalized by me with a fine of twelve gold coins.

(DV 6.1)

[SE6] As stated, another major addition is that of the personified weapons.⁹⁰ The weapons in the play are the same ones, minus the spear and the plough, as in the narrative. What is new is that one of them speaks. The personification of the discus Sudarśana allows for the introduction of themes that are already present in the *MBh.*, such as the relieving of the Earth. The themes are so close that there can be little doubt about the source of the adaptation: “to relieve Earth's burden [*bhūmer nirasituṃ bhāraṃ*]” and “the relief of Earth's burden [*mahībhārāpanayanam*]”. However, the technique is much more innovative. Since “it-fiction”, i.e., speaking

90 On the addition of the personified weapons, see Esposito (1999/2000): “In my opinion these verses were not modelled on the *Bālacarita*, where each weapon of Viṣṇu is introducing itself in a separate verse, because of the very simple style of the *Bālacarita*'s verses” (p. 557). Cf. *Hariv.* App. 31, vv. 908ff and 1029ff; *V.P.* 5.37.47; (Ps.-)Bhāsa's *BC* 1.21-28; and Kālidāsa's *Raghuv.* 10.60.

objects, is common in Roman lyric (Catullus, 4, 66, and 67; Horace, *Sat.* 1.8; and Martial, *Epigr.* 13.50, 14.39, 14.41, 14.44, and 14.64),⁹¹ and since examples involving weapons are already a feature of Hellenistic lyric (Hegesippus, *Anth. Pal.* 6.124; Mnasalces, *Anth. Pal.* 6.125; Nicias, *Anth. Pal.* 6.127; and Meleager, *Anth. Pal.* 6.163),⁹² this could have been another borrowing by Sanskrit theater.

asyā **bhūmer nirasituṃ bhāraṃ** bhāgaiḥ pṛthak pṛthak |
asyām eva prasūyadhvaṃ virodhāyeti cābravīt ||

And he said, “**To relieve Earth’s burden**, one by one you must be partly born on her for the sake of strife.”

(*MBh.* 1.58.46)

mahibhārāpanayanaṃ kartuṃ jātasya bhūtale |
asminn eva gate deva nanu syād viphalāḥ śramaḥ ||

After you were born on earth to achieve **the relief of Earth’s burden**, O god, if he passes away, your effort, indeed, would be fruitless.

(*DV* 46)

Ekphrasis and It-fiction

After analyzing the motif of the embassy in *Il.* 9 and *Phoenix*, as well as in *MBh.* 5 and *The Embassy*, I put forward two cases of possible Greek influence in the adaptation techniques: [EM1]⁹³ *epic characters that are not essential are subtracted in the plays, provided that their functions are merged into other characters*, and [EM2] *dramatic themes which have no precedent in the source texts are added with the intention of providing an emphasis*.

[EM1] Epic characters that are not essential are subtracted in the plays, provided that their functions are merged into other characters. It is a truism that any theatrical work must compress

91 See Cuvaradic García & Cerdas Fallas (2020).

92 See Gutzwiller (2017).

93 EM stands for “Embassy Motif”. Hence, numbers EM1-EM2 refer to the proposed influences from *Phoenix*’s adaptation of *Il.* 9 into *The Embassy*’s adaptation of *MBh.* 5.

when adapting from a narrative text. However, the combined technique of subtracting one or more characters, and then merging their functions into other characters, is something that can be identified even in a fragmentary play such as *Phoenix*, where the subtraction of the mother (GE1) is correlated with the merging of the mother and the concubine (GE3). Then, a single character comes between *Phoenix* and his father.

If the author of *The Embassy* knew these sources, the procedure could have influenced his parallel subtraction of characters (SE1), which is also linked to the instances of merging involving the father and the son, as well as the speeches directed towards them (SE3). The merging of father and son is, certainly, the more relevant one, for it results in a single character opposing Kṛṣṇa. Moreover, the father/son conflict between Amyntor and *Phoenix* would have offered an epic model, which already had been proven to be adaptable to the theater in Greece, and therefore, its adaptation into the father/son conflict between Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Duryodhana, would have had an influence in India.

If this were an instance of Greco-Indian *anukaraṇa*, its trademark would be reversal: the Greek texts (*Il.* 9 and *Phoenix*) about an embassy's addresser (*Phoenix*) who opposes his father (Amyntor), would have become the Indian texts (*MBh.* 5 and *The Embassy*) about an embassy's addressee (Duryodhana) who opposes his father (Dhṛtarāṣṭra).

[EM2] Dramatic themes which have no precedent in the source texts are added with the intention of providing an emphasis. In *Phoenix*, apart from ignoring the dilemma (GE4) and changing the outcome (GE6), the two main innovations would be the accusation and the blinding: the concubine falsely accuses *Phoenix* of rape, and in turn, his father blinds him. In this sense, the addition of the concubine's advances (GE2) entails the emphasis on the father's wrath (GE5). And, in *The Embassy*, the two chief contrivances are the painting and the personified weapons: at the beginning of the play, the keepsake of the humiliation attests Duryodhana's ethos; and at the end of the play, the speech by the discus reveals Kṛṣṇa's ethos. Minor additions, such as the fine for anyone who stands up (SE5) and the questioning of the genealogy (SE4), highlight certain

details too: respectively, the honoring of the messenger figure and the legitimacy of the father figures. However, it is the major additions, like the painting (SE2) and the personified weapons (SE6), that better exemplify the technique of emphasizing.

One of *The Embassy's* chief contrivances, i.e., the painting, is introduced by an ingenious combination of flashback and ekphrasis, both common procedures in the Homeric epics (e.g., *Od.* 9-12 and *Il.* 18.478-608, respectively). Nonetheless, the specific choice of a painting could have been borrowed from Roman theater.

Among Romans playwrights, Plautus (254-184 BCE)⁹⁴ employs, mostly for the purpose of comparisons, eight references to paintings: in *Asin.* 174, a well-wishing bawd is something that has never been “painted [*pictum*]”; in *Asin.* 762, an exclusive courtesan should be made to get rid of every undesirable “painting [*pictura*]” so that she is deprived of any writing surfaces; in *Capt.* 998, several “paintings [*picta*]” of the Acheron’s tortures are no match to certain quarries; in *Epid.* 624, a scene depicting a maiden and a usurer is compared to a “beautifully painted picture [*signum pictum pulchre*]”; in *Men.* 143, a youth is likened to the mythical Ganymede and Adonis that one can see in any “picture painted on a wall [*tabulam pictam in pariete*]”; in *Merc.* 315, a decrepit old man is said to be worth as much as a “picture painted on a wall [*signum pictum in pariete*]”; in *Poen.* 1272, a scene depicting a youth and a courtesan is something that only a famous painter “would have painted [*pingeretis*]”; and in *Stich.* 271, a slave’s pose is equated to that “from a painting [*ex pictura*]”.

Terence (185-159 BCE)⁹⁵ only has one reference to a painting, but it is by far the most relevant one. If Plautus falls short of expectations in not describing the paintings and in not exploiting them enough as artistic devices, the situation with Terence is very different. Not only does *The Eunuch's* painting entail ekphrasis, with the description of how Zeus sends a shower of gold, turns

94 I follow the Latin text by Nixon (Plautus, 1916, 1917, 1924, 1930, and 1952). The translations are my own.

95 I follow the Latin text by Sargeaunt (Terence, 1918). The translations are my own.

himself into a man, enters a house, and tricks a woman; but also, it is central to the plot:⁹⁶ in the painting, a god (Jupiter) turns into someone else (a man) and rapes a woman (Danae); in the play, a youth (Chaerea) dresses up as someone else (a eunuch) and rapes a woman (Pamphila).

It is striking that *The Eunuch's* painting has not yet been linked to *The Embassy's* painting. The commonalities are numerous. They are both presented as nearby paintings: “this painting [*pictura haec*]”, “this painting [*ayaṃ citrapaṭaḥ*]”. In both cases, there is an explicit reference to the painting process: “a painted picture [*tabulam quandam pictam*]”, “this picture was carefully painted [*suvyaktam ālikhito 'yam citrapaṭaḥ*]”. They function as ekphrases: “in which [*quo pacto*]”, “this one right here [*eṣa*]”. A sexual assault is the main event: “as they say, sent a shower of gold to her lap [*misisse aiunt quondam in gremium imbrem aureum*]”, “grabbed her by the lock of her hair [*keśahaste grhītavān*]”. The offender and the victim are the first ones to be mentioned: “Jupiter [*Iovem*]” and “Danae [*Danaae*]”, “Duḥśāsana [*duḥśāsano*]” and “Draupadī [*draupadīm*]”.

Then, both descriptions are further elaborated: “a god that turned himself into a man and secretly came under another man's tiles, through the impluvium, all as a hoax aimed at a woman [*deum sese in hominem convortisse atque in alias tegulas / venisse clanculum: per impluvium fucum factum mulieri*]”, “manhandled by Duḥśāsana, her eyes wide open out of perplexity, she shines like the digit of the moon that has already gone inside of Rahu's mouth [*duḥśāsanaparāmṛṣṭā sambhramotphullalocanā | rāhuvaktrāntaragatā candralekheva śobhate*]”. Down to the smallest details, Jupiter's shower of gold, i.e., rainwater, would turn into Rahu's mouth devouring the moon, i.e., an eclipse.

Lastly, both pictures condone a previous offense and serve to rationalize an impending one. Through *The Eunuch's* painting, Jupiter raping Danae sets an example for Chaerea raping Pamphila: “And I, a puny man, would not do it? I certainly did it, and gladly!

96 On the centrality of the painting to the plot of *The Eunuch*, see Germany (2016, Chapter 1).

[*ego homuncio hoc non facerem? ego illud vero ita feci ac lubens*]”. Through The Embassy’s painting, Duḥśāsana grabbing Draupadī sets an example for Duryodhana attempting to take Kṛṣṇa captive: “Then, how am I the vile one of perverted mind? O experts in conduct and misconduct, let go of your anger today! Unforgiving of the dishonor related to the dicing match, may they have their heroism censured among the truly courageous ones [*nīco ’ham eva viparītamatiḥ katham vā roṣaṃ parityajatam adya nayānayajñau | dyūtādhikāram avamānam amṛṣyamāñāḥ sattvādhikeṣu vacanīyaparākramāḥ syuḥ*]”. The use of the first person, the rhetorical questions, and in general, the blunt statements, all come together to support the claim of a borrowing from Rome into India.

...dum adparatur, virgo in conclavi sedet
**suspectans tabulam quendam pictam: ibi inerat pictura
 haec, Iovem
 quo pacto Danaae misisse aiunt quondam in gremium
 imbrem aureum.**
 egomet quoque id spectare coepi, et quia consimilem
 luserat
 iam olim ille ludum, inpendio magis animus gaudebat mihi,
**deum sese in hominem convortisse atque in alienas
 tegulas
 venisse clanculum: per inpluvium fucum factum
 mulieri.**
 at quem deum! qui templa caeli summa sonitu concutit.
**ego homuncio hoc non facerem? ego illud vero ita feci
 ac lubens.**

While this [sc. a bath] is prepared, the maiden sits in her room, looking at a **painting**. On it, was **this painting in which Jupiter, as they say, sent a shower of gold to Danae’s lap**. I started to look at it too, and since he had already played such a trick, my heart rejoiced even more: **a god that turned himself into a man and secretly came under another man’s tiles, through the impluvium, all as a hoax aimed at a woman**; and what a god! – ‘He who shakes the highest regions of heaven with his thunder’. **And I, a puny man, would not do it? I certainly did it, and gladly!**

(Ter. *Eun.* 583-591)

aho darśanīyo 'yam citrapaṭaḥ | eṣa duḥśāsano draupadīm
keśahaste grhītavān | eṣā khalu draupadī ||

7. duḥśāsanaparāmṛṣṭā sambhramotphullalocanā |
rāhuvaktrāntaragatā candralekheva śobhate ||
eṣa durātmā bhīmaḥ sarvarājasamakṣam avamānitām
draupadīm dṛṣṭvā pravṛddhāmarṣaḥ sabhāstambhaṃ
tulayati | eṣa yudhiṣṭhiraḥ ||

8. satyadharmaghrṇāyukto dyūtavibhraṣṭacetanaḥ |
karoty apāṅgavikṣepaiḥ śāntāmarṣaṃ vṛkodaram ||
eṣa idānīm arjunaḥ ||

9. roṣākulākṣaḥ sphuritādharoṣṭhas
trṇāya matvā ripumaṅḍalaṃ tat |
utsādayiṣyann iva sarvarājñāḥ
śanaiḥ samākarṣati gāṅḍivajyām ||

eṣa yudiṣṭhiro 'rjunaṃ nivārayati | etau nakulasahadevau ||

10. kṛtaparikarabandhau carmanistriṃśahastau
paruṣitamukharāgau spaṣṭadaṣṭādharoṣṭhau |
vigatamarāṇaśāṅkau satvaram bhrātaram me
harim iva mṛgapotau tejasābhiprayātau ||

eṣa yudhiṣṭhiraḥ kumārāv upetya nivārayati ||

11. nīco 'ham eva viparītamatiḥ katham vā
roṣaṃ parityajatam adya nayānayajñau |
dyūtādhikāram avamānam amṛṣyamāṇāḥ
sattvādhikeṣu vacanīyaparākramāḥ syuḥ ||

iti | eṣa gāndhārarājah ||

12. akṣān kṣipan sakitavaṃ prahasan sagarvaṃ
saṅkocayann iva mudam dviṣatām svakīrttyā |
svairāsano drupadarājasutām rudantīm
kākṣeṇa paśyati likhaty abhikhām nayajñāḥ ||

etāv ācāryapitāmahau tāṃ dṛṣṭvā lajjāyamānau
paṭāntāntarhitamukhau sthitau | aho asya varṇādhyatā
| aho bhāvopapannatā | aho yuktalekhatā | suvyaktam
ālikhito 'yam citrapaṭaḥ | pṛito 'smi ||

Ah, **this painting** is beautiful! **This Duḥśāsana right here, grabbed Draupadī by the lock of her hair.** Indeed, **this one here is Draupadī.**

7. **Manhandled by Duḥśāsana, her eyes wide open out of perplexity, she shines like the digit of the moon that has already gone inside of Rahu's mouth.**

Having seen Draupadī despised before the eyes of all the kings, **this evil-minded Bhīma right here, of pent-up**

anger, is examining the columns of the assembly hall. **This one here is Yudhiṣṭhira.**

8. Endowed with truth, duty, and compassion, his mind lost to gambling, just by casting a look at Vṛkodara, he transforms his anger into peace.

Now, this one here is Arjuna.

9. His eyes twitching from anger, his lower lip quivering, having regarded that entire circle of foes as just a straw, as if intending to annihilate all the kings, he gently draws Gāṇḍiva's string.

This Yudhiṣṭhira right here is holding Arjuna back. **These two here are Nakula and Sahadeva.**

10. The binding of their girdles done, shield and sword in their hands, the reddening of their faces harshly prompted, their lower lips discernibly bitten, deprived of the fear of death, they hastily and fiercely set out against my brother, like two fawns against a lion.

This Yudhiṣṭhira right here, having come near the youths, is refraining them.

11. **Then, how am I the vile one of perverted mind? O experts in conduct and misconduct, let go of your anger today! Unforgiving of the dishonor related to the dicing match, may they have their heroism censured among the truly courageous ones.**

There, I have said it. **This one here is the king of Gāndhāra.**

12. Casting the dice like a gambler, laughing with arrogance, as if blithely degrading the condition of his opponent with his own glory, sitting where he wants, with a frown he looks at **the weeping daughter of king Drupada**, and being skilled in the game, he scrapes the ground.

The preceptor and the grandfather right here, ashamed after having seen her, stood with their faces covered by the edges of their robes. Ah, the richness of its colors! Ah, the lifelikeness! Ah, the skillful nature of the strokes! **This picture was carefully painted.** I am delighted.

(DV 6.15-12.6)

If this were another instance of Greco-Indian *anukaraṇa*, its trademark would be merging: a Greek text (*Phoenix*) about an alleged sexual assault (Phthia's pretend rape) that results in an unforgiving father (Amyntor) blinding his son (Phoenix), would

have been combined with a Roman text (*The Eunuch*) about a sexual assault (Pamphila's actual rape) depicted in painting, to produce an Indian text (*The Embassy*) about a sexual assault (Draupadī's humiliation) depicted in painting, that results in a blind father (Dhṛtarāṣṭra) asking for forgiveness in the name of his son (Duryodhana).

The other one of *The Embassy's* chief contrivances, i.e., the personified weapons, as a device intended to restrain the choleric god from harming the king, and thus impeding the divine plan, exhibits the signs of a *deus ex machina*, a frequent technique in the works of Euripides (e.g., *Hipp.* 1283 ff.). This notwithstanding, the concrete decision of utilizing personification could have been borrowed from Hellenistic/Roman lyric.

Among Roman lyric poets, it-fiction can be exemplified by Catullus (84-54 BCE),⁹⁷ Horace (65-8 BCE),⁹⁸ and Martial (40-104 CE).⁹⁹ in Catull. 4, a boat telling its life story, "says that he was [*ait fuisse*]" once a forest; in Catull. 66, a curl/constellation tells the story of the woman from whose hair it was cut, and it can even add, "I swear it [*adiuro*]" ; in Catull. 67, a door reveals everyone's secrets, and it further explains, "I have heard it [*audivi*]" ; in Hor. *Sat.* 1.8, a statue of the god Priapus proclaims, "once I was the trunk of a fig tree [*olim truncus eram ficulnus*]" ; in Mart. *Epigr.* 13.50, some truffles say, "as fruiting bodies we are second only to mushrooms [*boletis poma secunda sumus*]" ; in Mart. *Epigr.* 14.39, a lamp, ironically enough, proclaims, "I shall remain silent [*tacebo*]" ; in Mart. *Epigr.* 14.41, another lamp asserts, "I am called a single lamp [*una lucerna vocor*]" ; in Mart. *Epigr.* 14.44, a candelabrum states, "you know me to be wood [*esse vides lignum*]" ; and in Mart. *Epigr.* 14.64, a flute complains about its flutist, "she is breaking us [*nos... rumpit*]" . There are many other examples of this topic.

97 I follow the Latin text by Cornish (Catullus; Tibullus; Pervigilium Veneris, 1962). The translations are my own.

98 I follow the Latin text by Fairclough (Horace, 1942). The translations are my own.

99 I follow the Latin text by Ker (Martial, 1920). The translations are my own.

Among Hellenistic lyric poets, examples of speaking objects are also quite common. The following poems¹⁰⁰ by Hegesippus the epigrammatist (ca. 300-200 BCE), Mnasalces of Sicyon (ca. 300-200 BCE), Nicias of Miletus (ca. 300-200 BCE), and Meleager of Gadara (ca. 100-1 BCE) are relevant for this study. The first three texts represent instances of a shield speaking, and therefore, appear close to the next quoted passage from *The Embassy*, in which a discus speaks. In *Anth. Pal.* 6.124, the “shield [Ἀσπίς]” even identifies himself as such.

In all three Greek epigrams, there are verbal forms evincing that the speaker is the object itself: “I have been fastened [ἄμμαι]”, “I stay [μένω]”, and “I was destined [Μέλλον]”. This also happens in the Sanskrit quotation: “I have sprung [*nirdhāvito 'smi*]” and “should I openly appear [*mayā pravijrmbhitavyam*]”. Furthermore, there are a couple of forms that even signal the locutionary act: “I proclaim [φάμι κατὰ]” and “having heard [*śrutvā*]”. All the Greek poems also feature a warlike god: “Pallas [Παλλάδος]” and “Enyalios [Ἐνυαλίου]”, which is the same as “Ares [Ἄρης]”. Epithets stand out as being predominant, since Pallas, probably meaning “the maiden”, and Enyalios, meaning ‘the warlike one’, are respectively used for Athena and Ares, the two gods traditionally associated with war in Greek myth. The Sanskrit verse also opts for epithets: “the fortunate one [*bhagavato*]” and “the one of the large, lotus-like eyes [*kamalāyatākṣaḥ*]”. However, a warlike demeanor is not as distinctive a feature in Kṛṣṇa’s case. After all, Sudarśana says, Viṣṇu has descended, not to bring about the annihilation, but to see that it is done.

In addition, in two of the Greek texts, the shield talks about saving its owner: “always saving my bearer [τόν με φέροντ’ αἰεὶ ῥυομένα]” and “having often saved my master’s handsome chest [καλὸν ἄνακτος/στέρνον...πολλάκι ῥυσαμένα]”. This is not explicitly stated in the quoted passage from *The Embassy*. Nonetheless, by remembering Kṛṣṇa’s plan, Sudarśana kills two birds with one stone: he saves Duryodhana (from being killed by Kṛṣṇa) and he

100 I follow the Greek texts by Paton (*The Greek Anthology*, 1916). The translations are my own.

saves the plan (of relieving the Earth from her burden). He truly saves the day, as any *deus ex machina* would when it comes to wrapping up the plot.

Ἀσπίς ἀπὸ βροτέων ὤμων Τιμάνορος ἄμμαι
ναῶ ὑπορροφία **Παλλάδος** ἀλκιμάχας,
πολλὰ σιδαρείου κεκονιμένα ἐκ πολέμοιο,
τόν με φέροντ' αἰεὶ ῥυομένα θανάτου.

As **the shield** from the mortal shoulders of Timanor, **I have been fastened** to the attic on the temple of the bravely fighting **Pallas**, considerably covered with the dust of the iron war, after **always saving my bearer** from death.

(Hegesippus, *Anth. Pal.* 6.124)

Ἦδη τῆδε **μένω** πολέμου δίχα, **καλὸν ἄνακτος**
στέρνον ἐμῷ νώτῳ **πολλάκι ῥυσαμένα**.
καίπερ τηλεβόλους ἰοὺς καὶ χερμάδι' αἰνὰ
μυρία καὶ δολιχὰς δεξαμένα κάμακας,
οὐδέποτε Κλείτσιο λιπεῖν περιμάκκα πᾶχυν
φαμί κατὰ, βλοσυρὸν φλοῖσβον **Ἐνυαλίου**.

Now **I stay** here, away from the war, **having often saved my master's handsome chest** with my back. Although having received far-reaching arrows, thousands of dreadful stones, and large spears, **I proclaim** that I never left Cleitus' huge forearm, at the hair-raising sound **of Enyalius**.

(Mnasalces, *Anth. Pal.* 6.125)

Μέλλον ἄρα στυγεράν κάγώ ποτε δῆριν **Ἄρηος**
ἐκπρολιποῦσα χορῶν παρθενίων αἴειν
Ἄρτέμιδος περὶ ναόν, Ἐπίξενος ἔνθα μ' ἔθηκεν,
λευκὸν ἐπεὶ κείνου γῆρας ἔτειρε μέλη.

So, at that time **I was destined** to give up the loathsome contest **of Ares**, for looking at the dances of the maidens around the temple of Artemis. Epixenus placed me there when old white age had weakened his limbs.

(Nicias, *Anth. Pal.* 6.127)

śrutvā giraṃ **bhagavato** vipulaprasādān
nirdhāvito 'smi parivāritatoyadaughāḥ |
kasmin khalu prakupitaḥ **kamalāyatākṣaḥ**
kasyādyā mūrdhani **mayā pravijṛmbhitavyam** ||

Having heard the voice of the fortunate one, I have sprung from his great kindness, surrounded by a stream of clouds. With whom is he angry, **the one of the large, lotus-like eyes?** On whose head **should I openly appear** now?

(DV 42)

The last Greek epigram is not spoken by a weapon, but by the god of war himself, who was presented with weapons as a means of honoring him. It mentions “spears [αἰγανέαι]”, a “helmet [πήληξ]”, and on two occasions, a “shield [σάκος]” / “shields [ὄπλα]”. The topic has broadened but the emphasis is still there. It also remains in the next Sanskrit quotation, in which the “discus [cakram]” features twice. In the Greek poem, the god is identified by name (Ares) and epithet (Enyalios), as well as by a pronoun: “for me [μοι]”. The Sanskrit verse opts for the god’s pronoun too: “mine [mama]”. The gruesome expression, “with human blood [λύθρω... βροτέω]”, makes room for a more attenuated one: “the discus of your death [kālacakraṃ tava]”. Finally, both gods (Ares and Kṛṣṇa) are talking to someone (the mortals and Duryodhana) while intending for their message to be heard by someone else (the weapons and Sudarśana).

Τίς τάδε **μοι** θνητῶν τὰ περὶ θριγκοῖσιν ἀνῆψε
σκῦλα, παναισχίστην τέρψιν **Ἐνυαλίου**;
οὔτε γὰρ **αἰγανέαι** περιαγέες, οὔτε τι **πήληξ**
ἄλλοφος, οὔτε φόνω χρανθὲν ἄρηρε **σάκος**·
ἀλλ’ αὐτως γανόωντα καὶ ἀστυφέλικτα σιδάρω,
οἷά περ οὐκ ἐνοπᾶς, ἀλλὰ χορῶν ἔναρα·
οἷς θάλαμον κοσμεῖτε γαμήλιον· **ὄπλα** δὲ **λύθρω**
λειβόμενα **βροτέω** σηκὸς **Ἄρης** ἔχοι.

Which of the mortals hung up **for me** these spoils here, the ones around the walls, the poorest form of enjoyment **for Enyalios**? For no broken **spears**, not a single crestless **helmet**, nor a **shield** stained with blood have been presented; only these that are gleaming like before, unbeaten by the

iron, as if they were spoils, not of battle, but of dances. With them, embellish a bridal bed, but let the precinct **of Ares** have **shields** that are dripping **with human blood**.

(Meleager, *Anth. Pal.* 6.163)

yadi lavaṇajalaṃ vā kandaraṃ vā girīṇām
 grahagaṇacaritaṃ vā vāyumārgaṃ prayāsi |
mama bhujabalayogaṃprāptasaṃjātavegaṃ
 bhavatu capala **cakraṃ kālacakraṃ tavādya** ||

Even if you go to the ocean, to a cave of the mountains, or to the path of the wind, traversed by the planets, O ill-mannered one, may **my discus**, whose resulting speed is obtained by means of the strength of my arm, now be **the discus of your death**.

(DV 45)

If this were a third instance of Greco-Indian *anukaraṇa*, its trademark would also be merging: a Greek text (*Phoenix*) probably ending with a *deus ex machina* (Phoenix's eye treatment by Chiron?), would have been combined with a selection of Hellenistic texts (*The Greek Anthology*) featuring it-fiction with weapons (speaking shields), to produce an Indian text (*The Embassy*) featuring it-fiction with weapons (a speaking discus) as a form of *deus ex machina* (Duryodhana's life being spared by Sudarśana).

In sum, I postulate a Greek influence from *Il.* 9 and *Phoenix* into *MBh.* 5 and *The Embassy*. Such influence would encompass two adaptation techniques: character subtraction-cum-merging (EM1), and theme addition-cum-emphasis (EM2). As an instance of Greco-Indian *anukaraṇa*, the key component of this Greek influence would be reversal. Furthermore, from the embassy motif, I claim two Greco-Roman borrowings: on one hand, the painting about a sexual assault, from Terence's *The Eunuch*; on the other, it-fiction with weapons, from *The Greek Anthology*. As instances of Greco-Indian *anukaraṇa*, they would both be characterized by merging.

