

THE EMBASSY, THE AMBUSH, AND THE OGRE

GRECO-ROMAN INFLUENCE IN
SANSKRIT THEATER

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5. Sanskrit Authors Adapting Greco-Roman Texts

Influences in the Adaptation Techniques

It is possible that the Greco-Roman world had an influence on the theater of India. The claim of a possible Greek influence on Sanskrit theater can be backed by the testimonies from ancient sources (Plutarch, *Mor.* 328d, *Alex.* 8.2-3, *Alex.* 72.1, *Crass.* 33.2; Philostratus, *V A* 2.32). It has also been acknowledged by modern specialists from the fields of Indology (Weber, 1852/1878, p. 207; Sinha & Choudhury, 2000, p. 32; Lindtner, 2002, p. 199; Bronkhorst, 2016, pp. 390-403), Classical Philology (Windisch, 1882; Reich, 1903; Tarn, 1938, pp. 381-382), Archaeology (Bernard, 1976, pp. 321-322), Theater Arts (Free, 1981, p. 84), and Comparative Literature (Walker, 2004). The possibility of a Roman influence on Sanskrit theater, on the other hand, has been acknowledged by at least one classicist (Rodríguez Adrados, 2012, p. 10).

Both Aeschylus (*The Myrmidons*, *The Nereids*, and *The Phrygians*, from *Il.* 16-24; *The Ghost-Raisers*, *Penelope*, and *The Bone-Gatherers*, from *Od.* 11-24) and Sophocles (*Nausicaa or the Washerwomen*, from *Od.* 6; *The Phaeacians*, from *Od.* 7-12; *The Foot-Washing*, from *Od.* 19) adapted the Homeric Epics (Sommerstein, 2015, pp. 461-462). Nonetheless, (Ps.-)Euripides (*Cyclops*, from *Od.* 9; *Phoenix*, from *Il.* 9; and *Rhesus*, from *Il.* 10) is the best source for studying Homer-imitatio (Lange, 2002, p. 22). Moreover, Homer and Euripides were

the best candidates for being exported into other cultural spaces (Tarn, 1938, pp. 382-384).

Likewise, (Ps.-)Bhāsa (*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), Kālidāsa (*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) all adapted the *Mahābhārata*, and yet, (Ps.-)Bhāsa stands out as the best option for examining Vyāsa-*anukaraṇa* (Ghosh, 1963).

From the point of view of the treatises, there are various points of encounter between the Greek and Sanskrit theatrical traditions: both Aristotle and Bharata offer similar views on avoiding on-stage deaths (*Poet.* 1452b11-13 ~ *Nāṭyaś.* 18.38) and sticking to a one-day timeframe (*Poet.* 1449b11-14 ~ *Nāṭyaś.* 18.90). But most importantly, the Greek tragedies and the Sanskrit heroic-type plays (*nāṭaka*, *samavakāra*, *ḍima*, and *vyāyoga*) share an inclination to adapt traditional themes and characters, and to do so by reworking their epic precedents.¹⁹⁰

From the perspective of the plays, the five-act division, the curtain, and the similarities in prologues, plots, and characters (Windisch, 1882), as well as in “choruses” (Sinha & Choudhury, 2000, p. 32) have all been adduced as arguments in favor of the influence hypothesis. So too have been the parallel practices, in both Greek and Sanskrit theater, of seeking their themes and characters in their respective epics (Wells, 1968, p. iii; Free, 1981, p. 84). And

190 See *Nāṭyaś.* 1.15: “Furnished with all the goals of the sciences, advancing all the arts, a fifth *Veda*, **accompanied by the epics** and called theater, I am fashioning [*sarvaśātrārthasampannaṃ sarvaśilpapravartakam | nāṭyākhyam pañcamaṃ vedaṃ setihāsam karomy aham*]”.

more recently, there has even been an attempt (Walker, 2004, pp. 10-11) to link (Ps.-)Bhāsa to the beginning of such influence, since a *prakaraṇa*, such as his *Cārudatta in Poverty*, certainly recalls the Greek Comedy by Menander, whereas his *The Broken Thighs* – which some consider an *aṅka* – does the same with, for instance, the Greek Tragedy by Sophocles. Throughout this book, I have advanced some complementary arguments, not only to support the original claim, but also to spark a conversation about it.

For the embassy motif, both Euripides' *Phoenix* and (Ps.-)Bhāsa's *The Embassy* evince the same two techniques, and this proximity, when combined with the followed chronologies for the texts and the attested contacts of the cultures, suggests an influence from the Greek playwright to the Sanskrit one. Even though every shorter version of a story must make do with missing out some elements, the proposed character subtraction-cum-merging entails two correlated moves: subtracting characters and merging functions. Fragmentary as it is, *Phoenix* offers just enough evidence for allowing an appreciation of the fact that its author subtracts the character of the mother and merges her triggering function into the advances of the concubine. Similarly, *The Embassy* portrays a scenario in which the father is almost subtracted, and in which he and the son are merged. Two characters and two speeches become one of each: it is all reduced by means of a creative combination.

The theme addition-cum-emphasis is also a key component in any adaptation, since it presents authors with one of the best ways for showcasing their creativity and criticality. Euripides' main innovations vis-à-vis the embassy motif would be the accusation and the blinding, that is, the cause and the effect of the emphasized wrath of the father, who seeks a fitting punishment for a more severe crime. Likewise, (Ps.-)Bhāsa's chief contributions to this well-known story are the painting and the personified weapons, which both point to the emphasized mulishness of the son: the former, by bringing back the memory of the crime; the latter, by procuring an adequate pondering of the punishment.

Lastly, neither in Greece nor in India is the theatrical version a step-by-step summary of the epic plot. Canonical authors, such as Homer and Vyāsa, are worthy of the adaptors always going the

extra mile. In *Phoenix*, the location changes from Troy, where the old ambassador currently is, to Thessaly, where he was born and raised; the time, from the present of the Trojan war to the past of the father/son conflict; the characters of the three messengers and their addressee, to those of the father, the concubine, and the son; and the themes of the pleading and the curse, to those of the accusation and the blinding. In fact, all of this – save the accusation and the blinding – is already present in the source text, but what was there a gemstone, i.e., one of the epic substories, is here, after much cutting and polishing, a piece of jewelry, i.e., an epic-inspired play.

If the Greek playwright is like a cameraman zooming in, his Indian counterpart is like someone who manages to see the elephant where the blind men cannot. *DV* works, not with one of the substories, but with the entire *MBh.* as its background: the location goes from the remoteness of the city to the immediateness of the camp; the time, from a moment when Bhīṣma is still not consecrated to one when the die is cast; the characters, from a plurality of advisors to just two contrasting views; and the themes of the sexual assault and the universal form, respectively, from the faraway experiences of the past tense and the divine realm, to the nearby ones of the ekphrastic painting and the tricky transformations.

In a sense, both Euripides' use of Homer and (Ps.-)Bhāsa's use of Vyāsa are ways of panning for gold. Out of the three parts of *Il.* 9, that is, assembly, council of chiefs, and embassy, the Greek author only focuses on the embassy. Out of the three ambassadors, that is, Odysseus, Phoenix, and Ajax, he concentrates on just Phoenix. And out of the three substories from his speech, that is, the story of Phoenix, the story of the Prayers, and the story of Meleager, he centers merely on the autobiographical portion. This laser focus makes sense within his literary tradition: Phoenix is already a father figure to Achilles, and therefore a worthy homage would not insist on that relationship, but exploit one close to it, such as that of Phoenix and his actual father, who, just like Achilles, ends up between a rock and a hard place because of a concubine.

Likewise, out of the four embassies, that is, the one of king Drupada's priest to the Kauravas, the one of king Dhṛtarāṣṭra's bard to the Pāṇḍavas, the one of Kṛṣṇa to the Kauravas, and the one of Duryodhana's cousin to the Pāṇḍavas, the Sanskrit author only focuses on that of Kṛṣṇa. He also moves past substories, like that of the victory of Indra, that of Dambhodbhava, and that of Ambā; other secondary narratives, like the deeds of Mātali and Gālava, and the colloquy of Vidurā and her son; didactic passages, like the instructions of the steward Vidura and of the sage Sanatsujāta; and even main events, like the yoking of the armies for battle, which gives name to *MBh.* 5. He is clearly taking a step back to see the bigger picture, and this also makes sense in the context of his canonical source: if the *Mahābhārata* is Vyāsa's entire thought, *The Embassy* is (Ps.-)Bhāsa's entire vision of this motif.

Even though there are messengers in Vedic literature (e.g., the dog messenger Saramā in *RV.* 10.108), there are two aspects that support a Greek influence here. On one hand, there is more in common between the Greek epic's version of the motif and the Sanskrit epic's version of the motif, both of which situate it in a war context and correlate it with substories. In fact, some critics (Lallemant, 1959; Duckworth, 1961) have pointed out the large-scale correspondences between the Sanskrit embassy and the Greco-Roman embassy. On the other hand, the fact that the embassy from the Homeric Epics is chosen for the Greek theater's version of the motif would have provided the perfect model for the *Mahābhārata* to be chosen for the Sanskrit theater's version as well. In other words, the elements would be Indian, but the techniques would be Greco-Roman.

For the ambush motif, both Ps.-Euripides' *Rhesus* and (Ps.-)Bhāsa's *The Five Nights* profit from the same four techniques. Such parallelism, together with the one discussed for the embassy motif, further supports the claim of a possible Greek influence upon India. To begin with, if dramas are more condensed, epics are more slow-paced. Through a series of narrative techniques, epics allow, not only for deferrals and suspense, but also for remembrances and gradual buildups. Nonetheless, of epic repetitions are among the better known of such procedures, in the adaptations, this is

substituted: *Rhesus* and *The Five Nights* alike combine and eliminate. The best argument for the influence hypothesis here is that both playwrights merge two ambushes into one. Another technique is that of emphasized characterization. As parallel examples, one can cite Dolon's tricky bargaining and Droṇa's tricky request, Rhesus and Uttara as *milites gloriosi*, the references to "ambush [λόχος]" and "cattle raid [*gograha(ṇa)*]" alluding the adaptations' respective sources, and Odysseus' anagnorisis by Hector mirroring those of Arjuna by Uttara, by Bhīṣma, and by Abhimanyu.

In terms of changes, Ps.-Euripides moves the action from the Greek camp to the Trojan camp, and (Ps.-)Bhāsa, from the Pāṇḍava side to the Kaurava side. The former showcases Rhesus in a better light, as does the latter with Duryodhana. This is done, respectively, by changing the perspective from the Greeks to the Trojans, and by changing the timing of the sacrifice. And if *Rhesus* opts for a minor adjustment when augmenting the night watches from three to five, *The Five Nights* effects a major variation when turning the five villages into the five nights, which may have also been the result of an influence coming from Ps.-Euripides. Finally, the author of *Rhesus* tiptoes around the subjects of death and violence, whether they relate to the Trojan spy Dolon or to the Trojan warriors accompanying Rhesus, just as the author of *The Five Nights* remains silent about Virāṭa occasioning Yudhiṣṭhira's nosebleed and about the outcome of the story. The correspondences between traditions in this instance even transcend the realm of literary practice, for theorists like Aristotle and Bharata see eye to eye on this as well.

For Aristotle (*Poet.* 1452b11-13) and the Greek theatrical tradition, both violence and death, by themselves, are a bit too much for the stage, but since they relate to suffering, and suffering, unlike those two, can and should be depicted in a play, there is still some wiggle room for them to be incorporated. For Bharata (*Nāṭyaś.* 18.20 and *Nāṭyaś.* 18.38) and the Sanskrit theatrical tradition too, violence and death are to be dispensed with, especially if they relate to the hero or if they are to be made part of the acts themselves, but for other characters, as well as for other moments, such as the interludes, the position varies. It is also worth remembering that only Euripides and (Ps.-)Bhāsa violate said conventions, and that

Alcestis and *Hippolytus*, on one hand, and *The Broken Thighs*, on the other, do present deaths on stage. It is possible that the Indian theorist and author could have profited from the Greek take on this, had they been aware of it.

Going back to the cameraman analogy, the Greek author is shooting from a different angle. One must remember that Greek theater, and especially tragedy for obvious reasons, favors the point of view of the defeated over that of the victor. And as for his Indian counterpart, he is gifting his audience with the director's cut that is *The Five Nights*, instead of the theatrical release that would have been the *Virāṭaparvan*. His public would have been familiar with the outcome of the year incognito, and therefore, would have expected the tension to grow during the unfruitful feats of diplomacy and into the two massacre-producing wars. Nevertheless, he rolls the credits just in time to eschew the death and violence that would have ensued.

Just as Ps.-Euripides is a close reader of Homer – and of Euripides, for that matter – so too is (Ps.-)Bhāsa when it comes to Vyāsa – and presumably to the Greco-Roman sources as well. Instead of moving back and forth from the Greeks to the Trojans, Ps.-Euripides centers on the latter and gives the story a tragic spin, something that Homer himself occasionally does, e.g., with the Trojan happenings in *Il.* 6. This procedure of giving a voice to the opposing side goes as far as turning Rhesus from silent participant to title character. The heroic victory of the Greeks is also the no-less heroic defeat of the Trojans, whose inadequate leadership may even shed some light on the politics of fourth-century Greece, and whose appealing presentation – after all, the play was transmitted as part of the Select Plays of Euripides – may have caught the attention of one or more first-or-second-century Indians.

In the same way, (Ps.-)Bhāsa could not be farther away from a careless butchering of Vyāsa. He knows the *Mahābhārata* like the palm of his hand, and this is particularly evident in his merging and splitting of several ambushes: Duryodhana's ambush against Citrasena in the *Ghoṣayātrāparvan*, Suśarman's ambush against Virāṭa in the *Virāṭaparvan*, Duryodhana's ambush against Uttara in the *Virāṭaparvan*. And if the influence hypothesis sustains itself, the

list could also include Diomedes'/Odysseus' ambush against Dolon in *Od.* 10, Diomedes'/Odysseus' ambush against Rhesus in *Od.* 10, and Odysseus'/Diomedes' ambush against Rhesus in *Rhesus*. If the study of adaptations already presupposes a knowledge of various sources, for examining the proposed cross-cultural adaptations, the number of sources just keeps getting bigger.

Despite the various references to cattle raids in Vedic literature (e.g., *gáviṣṭi*- "quest for cows" in *RV.* 5.63.5, *RV.* 6.59.7, and *RV.* 8.24.5), and despite the undeniable presence of such cattle raids in several Indo-European traditions (e.g., in the Irish *Cattle raid of Cooley*), the points of encounter between the Greek and Sanskrit versions go way beyond an Indo-European connection. First, there is a certain consensus (Lincoln, 1976; Adams & Mallory, 1997) about the fact that, at the Indo-European stage, the cattle-raiding myth would have been part of the larger dragon-slaying myth, which has nothing to do with the studied plays. Second, while studying the various commonalities between different epic versions of the ambush motif, scholars have pointed out very specific Greco-Roman (Dué & Ebbott, 2010) and Greco-Indian (Wulff Alonso, 2008a) similarities, particularly in terms of devastating horses, nighttime deeds, and poetics of ambush. And third, just like with *Phoenix* and *The Embassy*, the Sanskrit author could have drawn his inspiration for adapting one of the *Mahābhārata* ambushes from his knowledge of *Rhesus* as a Greek adaptation of the Homeric ambush.

For the ogre motif, both Euripides' *Cyclops* and (Ps.-)Bhāsa's *The Middle One* resort to the same three techniques. This parallelism, together with those highlighted when examining both the embassy motif and the ambush motif, allows for more arguments in support of the claim of possible Greek influence. First and foremost, just as *Cyclops* appears to be the result of a *contaminatio* of elements coming from the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus* into the main narrative of *Od.* 9, so too *The Middle One* seems to be the product of a *contaminatio* of elements originally present in the *Bakavadhaparvan* into the main narrative of the *Hiḍimbavadhaparvan*.

If the author of *The Middle One* had just dramatized the epic story of Hiḍimba, the result would not have been even half as

good. In contrast, by merging the story of Hiḍimba and the story of Baka he showcases the best of both worlds. The physical proximity of the stories, appearing back-to-back in the *Mahābhārata*, is certainly a compelling argument to support the *contaminatio*, but so is the thematic proximity, since they are both stories about man-eating rakshasas. If (Ps.-)Bhāsa had been acquainted with Roman theater, whose authors routinely blended together Greek plays, either because their plots resembled each other or because their author happened to be the same, then this could have motivated him to engage in a similar form of creative criticism.

Moreover, and still profiting from the analogy of filmmaking, the author of the *MBh.* presents the two stories of Hiḍimba and Baka separately and sequentially, that is, occurring one after the other, much like in an anthology film. But the author of the *MV*, being the close reader that he is, reinterprets and re-creates this as a single story, involving both Ghaṭotkaca and Hiḍimbā, which is constructed jointly and simultaneously, that is, with one of its plots being embedded within the other, not unlike what crossover films do. And on that note, does Euripides himself not write a sort of crossover of his own, when bringing together stories about Odysseus and Cyclopes, on one hand, and about Dionysus and Satyrs, on the other?

There are several commonalities related to emphases: the trees, the sex, the mistaken identities. There are numerous coinciding additions as well, among which two that stand out because of their thematic correspondences in both literary traditions: the father/son conflict and the Chance/chance. The father and the son, in *Cyclops*, are represented by Silenus and the chorus of Satyrs, who not only accommodate the needs of the new literary genre of satyr drama, but also highlight the absence, in the adaptation, of a *sine qua non* from the source, i.e., the wine. In a similar way, the father and son, in *The Middle One*, are typified by Bhīma and Ghaṭotkaca, who stress the absence, in the adaptation, of a must-have from the source, i.e., the mother.

The Chance, on which the Greek playwright proposes that any tragic outcome would be to blame, has its mirror image in the chance which the Sanskrit playwright credits for the happy ending.

Thus, it would be nothing but Chance if Odysseus, who had already managed to escape death during the decade-long Trojan war, were to meet his Waterloo during his brief encounter with Polyphemus. And it is also by chance that, even though the Pāṇḍavas have left for a sacrifice, Bhīma remains close by, and even though Bhīma himself has momentarily left for an exercising session, he can still hear his name being called. At this juncture, the main argument in favor of any sort of influence is the addition of chance by (Ps.-) Bhāsa, especially when considering the impact that Euripides' notion of Chance had on the Greco-Roman stage.

Regarding change, Euripides shifts the location from the vicinity of a fictitious island to the very real island of Sicily; and the timing, from the boulder-name-ram order to the one of ram-boulder-name. In much the same way, (Ps.-)Bhāsa modifies the location by combining the wilderness from the story of Hiḍimba and the town from the story of Baka; and the timing, by substituting the sequential encounters with Hiḍimba and Baka from the epic source for the almost simultaneous encounters with Ghaṭotkaca and Hiḍimbā in the dramatic adaptation. In both adaptations, the characters become more authoritarian (Polyphemus as a tyrant, and Hiḍimbā as a bossy mother), and more devoted (Maron as a son, and Keśavadāsa as a father). Also in both adaptations, one theme in particular catches the eye: what was drawn by lots in the epics is now chosen in the plays.

While rakshasas are only briefly alluded in Vedic literature (e.g., the demon-smiting Agni in *RV.* 10.87), ogres are some of the best-known characters in folklore (Thompson, 1955/1958). Still, one scholar (E. B. West, 2005/2006) has put forth some compelling arguments for a closer connection between the rakshasas of the *Mahābhārata* and the Cyclopes of the *Odyssey*. It is her view that such commonalities are due to a common, Indo-European origin. However, if the influence hypothesis were to be accepted as possible, her findings could also be interpreted from this alternative perspective. Even speaking conservatively, I claim with some degree of confidence that, for the epic versions of the ogre motif, Polyphemus, on one side, and Hiḍimba and Baka, on the other, have more in common with each other than they do with

ogres coming from other traditions. This being the case, and if (Ps.-) Bhāsa had already shown an interest in Euripidean adaptations of Homer, what would have stopped him from imitating the Greek playwright when putting together this play as well?

Each one by itself, the Sanskrit adaptations of the embassy, the ambush, and the ogre seem to be nothing more than lucky coincidences, but the fact that a single author in India decided to rework the same three motifs that were associated with the name of a single Greek author, i.e., Euripides, is, at the very least, worth examining from the point of view of cultural contacts.

Folk, Indo-European, or Greco-Roman Literary Motifs?

The embassy, as a “folk motif”, has very few occurrences. It can relate to a bride, “Royal bride conducted by embassy to husband’s kingdom” (T133.2 in Thompson, 1955/1958); to a dog, “Dog’s embassy to Zeus chased forth; dog seeks ambassador; why dogs sniff each other under leg” (A2232.8 in Thompson, 1955/1958) and “Zeus has embassy of dogs imprisoned for fouling his court” (Q433.3 in Thompson, 1955/1958); or to an imprisonment, “King imprisons another king’s embassy” (R3 in Thompson, 1955/195).

Even though the link with a dog recalls the dog messenger Saramā in *RV.* 10.108, and even though the association with imprisonment resounds with the events from both Euripides’ *Phoenix* and (Ps.-) Bhāsa’s *The Embassy*, the war context and the applicable substories are nowhere to be found in the folklore, and neither is the sexual assault that brings together the Greek concubine, Phthia, and the Sanskrit wife, Draupadī. Still, the possibility of a folk origin of the embassy motif cannot be ruled out. Instead, what one can do is claim that the embassy being a folk motif is a possibility, but one with a very small probability.

Moving on, as an “Indo-European motif”, the embassy does not receive a single mention either in Mallory & Adams (1997) or in M. L. West (2007). This absence can be very telling in its own way. Embassies are, without a doubt, a key element in the plots of the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid*, and the *Mahābhārata*, but not in those of *Beowulf*

or *Nibelungenlied*. Once again, the embassy having an Indo-European origin is possible, but not highly probable. The embassy in the *Aeneid* is, much more likely, one of the many instances of Virgil's Homer-*imitatio*, and not the result of a centuries-long oral transmission. This opens the door to the possibility of a "Greco-Roman motif", for which one would also have to presuppose a contact with India.

There are at least two studies defending influences and borrowings between the Greco-Roman world and India within the epic versions of the embassy motif: Lallemand (1959) and Duckworth (1961), in reference to *MBh.* 5 and *Aeneid* (*Aen.*) 7.¹⁹¹ According to Lallemand, the broader epic texts that frame such motifs not only present similarities, but also those common aspects are of such nature that chance alone would not satisfactorily account for them: "La lecture du *Mahābhārata*, le vaste et célèbre poème héroïque indien relatant le grand combat des Bhārata, nous a révélé des ressemblances avec l'*Énéide* qu'il nous a paru impossible d'attribuer au hasard [Reading the *Mahābhārata*, the vast and famous Indian heroic poem recounting the great battle of the Bhārata, revealed to us similarities with the *Aeneid*, which seemed to us impossible to attribute to chance]" (p. 262).

Therefore, she advances a "Sanskrit influence hypothesis": "L'hypothèse d'une imitation de l'épopée indoue par Virgile se présente alors [Then the hypothesis of an imitation of the Hindu epic by Virgil arises]" (p. 263). Apart from suggesting correspondences, such as the eighteen-day battle,¹⁹² there are larger, structural parallelisms that could point towards direct borrowings. Given the chronology at the time of her publication,¹⁹³ she assumes an India-to-Rome direction. Even when disagreeing with these details of chronology and directionality, I appreciate her insight when phrasing the parallelisms in terms of an adaptation process.

191 I follow the Latin text by Fairclough (Virgil, 1918). The translations are my own.

192 See Lallemand (1959, p. 264).

193 For the *Aeneid*, the decade before 19 BCE. For the *Mahābhārata*, Hopkins' (1901) 400 BCE-400 CE. This dating of the *Mahābhārata* has, since then, been challenged by Adluri & Bagchee (2014). See Wulff Alonso (2018a, p. 92; 2018b, p. 459) for a 1-100 CE dating.

For the embassy motif, Lallemand (1959) offers the following comparative summary:

L'Udyoga parvan (V) et le livre VII de l'*Énéide* montrent les armements: après une ambassade des Pāṇḍava aux Kaurava, des Troyens aux Latins, Dhṛtarāṣṭra – et Latinus – sont impuissants à maintenir la paix. Duryodhana refuse toute conciliation; de même Turnus, visité par Allecto, décide de se battre. Les Kauvara déclarent la guerre, et, du côté latin, s'ouvrent, poussées par Junon, les portes de la guerre. Les Pāṇḍava ripostent et à la fin du livre V du *Mahābhārata*, on assiste au défilé des deux armées. Seules les troupes latines défilent à la fin du livre VII de l'*Énéide*...

The *Udyogaparvan* (V) and Book VII of the *Aeneid* show the armaments: after an embassy from the Pāṇḍavas to the Kauravas, from the Trojans to the Latins, Dhṛtarāṣṭra – and Latinus – are powerless to maintain the peace. Duryodhana refuses any conciliation; likewise, Turnus, visited by Allecto, decides to fight. The Kauvaras declare war, and, on the Latin side, the doors of war open, pushed by Juno. The Pāṇḍavas retaliate and at the end of Book V of the *Mahābhārata*, we witness the parade of the two armies. Only the Latin troops parade at the end of Book VII of the *Aeneid*...

(Lallemand, 1959, p. 264)

Duckworth (1961), in turn, basically follows in Lallemand's footsteps. In addition to extending the list of examples and redirecting the comparison from the themes to the characters, he picks up where she left off, by providing some explanations of the supposed influences and borrowings: "either we must assume that these similarities result from a series of almost incredible coincidences, or we must accept the possibility that Vergil knew and utilized the Sanskrit epic as he used the Homeric poems, combining, modifying, and rearranging the material as it suited his purpose" (p. 124). Although still thinking them to be of the Rome-from-India type, in terms of the adaptation process, he points out that they parallel the procedures that Virgil follows for his *Homer-imitatio*.

For the embassy, Duckworth (1961) provides the following table:

Table 1 Parallels between the *Mahābhārata* and the *Aeneid* (after Duckworth, 1961, pp. 111-112).

The <i>Mahābhārata</i>	The <i>Aeneid</i>
Book V	Book VII
Pāṇḍavas return from exile to receive kingdom promised to them by Kauravas.	Trojans come to Latium to receive land promised to them by Fate.
Pāṇḍavas desire peace (even willing to give up most of kingdom).	Trojans desire peace.
Embassies to Kauravas.	Embassy to Latinus.
Aged king Dhṛtarāṣṭra wants peace (supported by Bhīṣma, Droṇa, Vidura, and others).	Aged king Latinus wants peace, makes alliance with Trojans.
Duryodhana, urged by evil advisers, resolves on war.	Turnus, inspired by Allecto, resolves on war.
Dhṛtarāṣṭra helpless, but foresees disaster for Duryodhana.	Latinus helpless, but foresees disaster for Turnus.
Preparations for conflict.	Preparations for conflict.
Catalogue of warriors on each side.	Catalogue of Latin warriors.

In sum, given the embassy's scarcity in folklore and its apparent absence within the Indo-European framework, a Greco-Roman origin seems likely. And this, together with the reconsidered chronology of the Sanskrit sources, suggests that a Greco-Roman influence in India for the ambush motif stands, not only as a possible explanation, but also as a highly probable one. By accepting its higher probability, such influence could also be broadened to other Greco-Roman sources. For instance, Wulff Alonso (In Press),¹⁹⁴ when studying the embassy motif in *MBh.* 5, does not look solely into *Il.* 9. According to him, the sources for the *MBh.*'s embassy also include Euripides' *Phoenician Women* and

¹⁹⁴ The author has kindly shared with me an unpublished version of his work *El cazador de historias: Un encuentro con el autor del Mahābhārata*.

Statius' *Thebaid* (Chapter 6). Moreover, *Il.* 9 would be mirrored by *MBh.* 9, but in aspects other than the embassy itself (Chapter 4). And as for the character of Kṛṣṇa in *MBh.* 5, influence might come from Euripides' *Bacchae* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Chapter 6).

The ambush, as a "folk motif", also has few occurrences. It can relate to an animal, "Army saved from ambush by observation of bird's movements" (J53 in Thompson, 1955/1958), "Crocodile in ambush betrays self by talking" (K607.2.1 in Thompson, 1955/1958), "Bear killed from ambush as he leaves his cave" (K914.1 in Thompson, 1955/1958), and "Attacking animal is killed by another in ambush" (N335.6.1 in Thompson, 1955/1958); to an identity/appearance, "Enemy in ambush (or disguise) deceived into declaring himself" (K607 in Thompson, 1955/1958) and "Transformation to escape ambush" (D642.4 in Thompson, 1955/1958); and to a killing, "Murder from ambush" (K914 in Thompson, 1955/1958) and "Ambushed trickster killed by intended victim" (K1641 in Thompson, 1955/1958). Although there seems to be no relation, on this level, to night attacks, spying missions, or cattle raids, the reference to trickery does recall the Greek spy, Dolon. Just like with the embassy, one can, thus, claim that the ambush being a folk motif is possible, but also that its probability is low.

If the ambush's facet as a spying mission does, indeed, resound with folklore, its components of cattle raid and night attack are much more likely to correspond to an "Indo-European motif". The possibility of an Indo-European cattle raid, perhaps best represented by the *Cattle raid of Cooley*, has been studied by Weisweiler (1954, pp. 27-28), Venkantasubbiah (1965), Dillon (1975, p. 121), Lincoln (1975, 1976), Sergeant (1995, pp. 285 ff.), Adams & Mallory (1997), and M. L. West (2007, pp. 451-452). And that of an Indo-European night battle, as depicted in *Il.* 10, *Ilias Parva* arg. 4, *MBh.* 10, *R.* 6.22.18-34, *Beowulf* 3, and *Brot af Sigurðarkviðu* 12, has been considered by M. L. West (2007, p. 475) and Dowden (2010, p. 118). Still, this does not rule out the possibility of a "Greco-Roman motif" that could have made it into India.

There are enough reasons to believe that the ambush of Nisus and Euryalus at *Aen.* 9.176-449 is an adaptation of the ambushes

upon Dolon and Rhesus at *Il.* 10. In this case, Homeric influences and borrowings are defended by both ancient authors, such as Ovid (*Ib.* 625-630), Macrobius (*Sat.* 5.2.15), and Servius (*ad Aen.* 9.1), and modern scholars, like Duckworth (1967), Lennox (1977), Grandsen (1984, pp. 102-118), Hardie (1994, pp. 23-24), Horsfall (1995, pp. 170-178), Casali (2004), and Dué & Ebbott (2010, pp. 142-147). There are some who even propose Euripidean influences and borrowings; for example, Fenik (1960, pp. 54-96), König (1970, pp. 89-108), Pavlock (1985), and Fowler (2000).

The structural parallelism is obvious: Nestor's proposal (*Il.* 10.204-217) and Hector's proposal (*Il.* 10.303-312) are merged into Ascanius' proposal (*Aen.* 9.257-280).¹⁹⁵ In *Il.* 10, Nestor proposes a spying mission procuring glory (*Il.* 10.212) and a gift (*Il.* 10.213), while Hector proposes another spying mission, which would also result in a gift (*Il.* 10.304) and much glory (*Il.* 10.305). As a gift, Hector proposes the best horses (*Il.* 10.306-306). In *Aen.* 9, after Nisus proposes a spying mission that will bring him glory (*Aen.* 9.195), Ascanius presents a catalogue of gifts, including the horse of Turnus (*Aen.* 9.269-270). But there are also lots of small correspondences.

In the Greek epic, Diomedes gets ready by putting on a lion skin (*Il.* 10.177), as does Nisus in the Roman epic (*Aen.* 9.306).¹⁹⁶ Nisus' helmet (*Aen.* 9.307) also recalls those of Diomedes (*Il.* 10.257) and Odysseus (*Il.* 10.261). By a division of tasks, on one hand, Diomedes is to take care of the sleeping men, and Odysseus, of their horses (*Il.* 10.479-481); on the other hand, Euryalus is to watch their backs, while Nisus leads the way (*Aen.* 9.321-323). Following the bloodshed, the earth (*Il.* 10.484 ~ *Aen.* 9.334) is stained with blood (*Il.* 10.484 ~ *Aen.* 9.333). In a simile, just as a lion (*Il.* 10.485 ~ *Aen.*

195 On Nestor's proposal and Hector's proposal being merged into Ascanius' proposal, see Casali (2004, pp. 327-333). On Agamemnon's gifts (*Il.* 9.122, *Il.* 9.128-131, *Il.* 9.139-140) being borrowed for Ascanius' gifts (*Aen.* 9.265 and *Aen.* 9.272-273), see Farrell (1997, p. 234), and Casali (2004, pp. 333-335). On the association with glory, see Dué & Ebbott (2010, p. 145).

196 On the parallelisms for the lion skin, see Dué & Ebbott (2010, p. 146); for the arming scene, see Dué & Ebbott (2010, pp. 145-146); for the division of tasks, see Dué & Ebbott (2010, p. 146); for the bloodshed, see Pavlock (1985, pp. 213-214); and for the lion simile, see Pavlock (1985, pp. 214-215), Dué & Ebbott (2010, p. 146), and Liapis (2012, p. xxxiii).

9.339) preys on sheep (*Il.* 10.486 ~ *Aen.* 9.339), so too, Diomedes and Nisus prey on the sleeping warriors. Lastly, Diomedes' prayer (*Il.* 10.284-294) is borrowed for Nisus' prayer (*Aen.* 9.404-409): two female deities, who had previously helped the fathers of the raiders, are now asked to help their sons.¹⁹⁷ And the decapitation of Dolon (*Il.* 10.455-457) is split into those of Nisus and Euryalus (*Aen.* 9.465-467).

Without a doubt, the most notorious aspects of this instance of Greco-Roman *imitatio* are the merging and the splitting: Virgil merges the themes from two Homeric books (the embassy from *Il.* 9 and the ambush from *Il.* 10),¹⁹⁸ but he also merges the two sides of the Homeric ambush (the ambush upon Dolon and the ambush upon Rhesus, both from *Il.* 10).¹⁹⁹ This is also followed by a subtraction-cum-merging, much like the one discussed in the Greek and Sanskrit adaptations of the ambush motif. Nisus and Euryalus receive features from Diomedes and Odysseus, such as the killing of the sleeping men, but they also inherit some of the aspects originally pertaining to Dolon, like the decapitation.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, Virgil's adaptation eventually becomes a tradition (Liapis, 2012, p. xviii, n. 6 and p. xxxiii), for Ovid (*Met.* 13.243-252), Statius (*Theb.* 10.1-448), and Silius Italicus (*Pun.* 9.66-177) all dabble in night attacks following his lead. Now, as voluminous as this information is, it will never be enough to dispense with the possibility of an Indo-European origin. What I do is, conservatively speaking, support the idea of a similarly high probability of this being a "Greco-Roman motif".

The *Mahābhārata* has several ambushes. Considering only those discussed *supra*, the ones in the *Ghoṣayātrāparvan* and the *Virāṭaparvan* relate more to the cattle-raiding and the

197 On Diomedes' prayer being borrowed for Nisus' prayer, see Pavlock (1985, p. 218), Casali (2004, pp. 335-337), and Liapis (2012, p. xxxiii). On Dolon's decapitation being split into those of Nisus and Euryalus, see Dué & Ebbott (2010, p. 147).

198 On merging *Il.* 9 and *Il.* 10 into *Aen.* 9, see Farrell (1997, pp. 233-234).

199 On merging Dolon's ambush and Rhesus' ambush into Nisus' and Euryalus' ambush, see Casali (2004, p. 325).

200 On merging Diomedes' and Odysseus' characters and Dolon's character into Nisus' and Euryalus' characters, see Casali (2004, p. 26).

spying-mission facets, whereas that of the *Sauptikaparvan* clearly offers a better representation of the night-attack component.

The possibility of a Greek influence on India, vis-à-vis the night attack, has been explored by Wulff Alonso (2008a, 263-285; 2013, pp. 176-178; In Press, Chapter 4). In his opinion, the Greek ambush by Diomedes and Odysseus (*Il.* 10 and *Rhes.*) shares several elements with the Sanskrit ambush by Aśvatthāman, Kṛpa, and Kṛtavarma (*MBh.* 10): the location in the tenth book, the deity invocations and interventions, the animal attires and the special weapons, the role of sacrifice and the impossibility of averting the disaster, the lack of sentries and the sleeping victims, the nighttime and the beheadings, the setting at the end of the first of two wars, the back-and-forth between past and present, the destroying gods and the turn of events, the “horse” theme (from the Trojan *Horse* to the Kaurava Aśva-tthāman) and the unusual entering, among many others. Wulff Alonso (2018a, p. 87; 2020, pp. 129-130; In Press, Chapter 5) has also considered a Greco-Roman influence for the cattle raid. In this case, what catches the eye are the architectural similarities between the Trigartas’ and Kauravas’ ambush of Virāṭa’s reign and the Itoni’s ambush of Omphale’s reign (Diodorus Siculus 4.31.7-8), as well as some smaller details, like the characterization of Arjuna in *MBh.* 4, which might have had some influence from Euripides’ *Hippolytus*.

In a nutshell, considering the ambush’s scantiness in folklore and its abundance in Indo-European traditions, the latter stands out as a far more likely explanation for its origin than the former. However, pondering the numerous views, both old and new, in support of a stronger link between the Greek and Roman ambushes, I propose, at least, the coexistence of both an Indo-European ambush motif and a Greco-Roman one. In this context, the Indian version of the motif could be a representative of either one of them. Furthermore, I argue that, if the origin of the embassy motif is Greco-Roman, as would very likely be the case, and if such a Greco-Roman motif would have had an influence in India, which appears as a highly probable explanation, then it is also possible that this second, Greco-Roman motif of the ambush could have made it into India as well. In other words, if there is a high

probability that Indians adapted one Greco-Roman motif, then there is a possibility that they did it a second time.

Finally, the ogre appears as the best candidate for the “folk motif” explanation. Ogres constitute one of the seven major categories established by Thompson (1955/1958). To mention only the subtitles, his list includes “Cannibalistic ogres” (G10-G99), “Giant ogres” (G100-G199), “Other ogres” (G300-G399), “Falling into ogre’s power” (G400-G499), “Ogre defeated” (G500-G599), and “Other ogre motifs” (G600-G699). For the most part, the Greek ogre Polyphemus has been approached as belonging to the realm of folklore. Such are the opinions of Glenn (1971), Page (1973, pp. 23-48), Mondy (1983), and even M. L. West (2007, pp. 297-298). Nonetheless, the option of an “Indo-European motif” is also possible, as has been suggested by E. B. West (2005/2006). And so is that of a “Greco-Roman motif”, according to Jacobson (1989) and Sansone (1991).

Some classicists have defended the assumption that the ogre Cacus from *Aen.* 8.184-279 is an adaptation of the ogre Polyphemus from *Od.* 9. An argument in favor of such claim is that the myth of Cacus robbing cattle and being killed by Hercules is nowhere to be found in Greco-Roman literature prior to Virgil (Jacobson, 1989, p. 101), although he does present some similarities with the Hermes from the *Homeric Hymn* (Jacobson, 1989, p. 102). The first element shared with the Polyphemus from the *Odyssey* is the topographical description (*Od.* 9.182-192 ~ *Aen.* 8.193-197), centered in the cave (*Od.* 9.182 ~ *Aen.* 8.193) where the monstrous man (*Od.* 9.187 ~ *Aen.* 8.194) lives.²⁰¹ The next elements are the bloodshed (*Od.* 9.290 ~ *Aen.* 8.195-197) caused by the man-eater, and the boulder (*Od.* 9.240-243 ~ *Aen.* 8.225-227) used for closing the entrance. An additional point of encounter is that of the running water (*Od.* 9.484-485 ~ *Aen.* 8.240).

There are two notorious aspects in this instance of Greco-Roman *imitatio*. On one hand, Virgil splits a single Homeric ogre (the Polyphemus from *Od.* 9) into two of his own (the Polyphemus from

201 On the parallelisms for the topographical description, see Jacobson (1989, p. 101); for the bloodshed, see Jacobson (1989, p. 102); for the boulder, see Jacobson (1989, p. 101); and for the running water, see Sansone (1991, p. 171).

Aen. 3 and the Cacus from *Aen.* 8);²⁰² and on the other, he reverses the roles, by transferring the deceit from the hero Odysseus to the ogre Cacus, and the rock throwing from the ogre Polyphemus to the hero Hercules.²⁰³ Similar reversals have also been suggested for the Sanskrit adaptations of the motifs considered for this study. Also, just like with the ambush motif, Virgil is to be credited with the establishment of a tradition, since, modelled upon his version, the story of Cacus is re-created in the works of Ovid (*Fast.* 1.543-578) and Propertius (4.9).

The Greek Polyphemus, the Roman Cacus, and the Indian Baka were first grouped together, on account of their commonalities, in the late nineteenth century. Lévêque (1880) says about Baka, “Il joue le rôle d’un ogre, comme le Cyclope de l’*Odysée*, et sa mort est une délivrance pour les habitants [He plays the role of an ogre, like the Cyclops of the *Odyssey*, and his death means the deliverance of the townsfolk]” (p. 441) and “Le personnage qui, dans la mythologie grecque, correspond réellement au rakchasa Vaka, c’est le Cyclops de l’*Odysée*, qui dévorait chaque jour des compagnons d’Ulysse [The character in Greek mythology who really corresponds to the rakshasa Baka is the Cyclops of the *Odyssey*, who devoured the companions of Odysseus day after day]” (p. 445, n. 2).

As Lallemand would do more than half a century later, Lévêque (1880) assumed that the Sanskrit epic’s account of the story would have been the source, and therefore, that of the Roman epic would have been the adaptation. Disagreeing once again with the directionality, I appreciate the parallelisms that he established (p. 446): the tree throwing (*Aen.* 8.248-250 ~ *MBh.* 1.151.15-16), the grabbing (*Aen.* 8.259 ~ *MBh.* 1.151.22-23), the blood vomiting (*Aen.* 8.260-261 ~ *MBh.* 1.151.24), the peeping townsfolk (*Aen.* 8.264-267 ~ *MBh.* 1.152.8-10), and the newly established rite (*Aen.* 8.268-269 ~ *MBh.* 1.152.18).

If Polyphemus and Cacus have things in common (Jacobson, 1989; Sansone, 1991), and if Cacus and Baka also have things in

202 On splitting Polyphemus’ character into Polyphemus’ character and Cacus’ character, see Jacobson (1989, p. 102).

203 On reversing the deceit from Odysseus to Cacus and the rock throwing from Polyphemus to Hercules, see Sansone (1991, p. 171).

common (Lévêque, 1880), then it does not come as that much of a surprise that Polyphemus and Baka do as well. E. B. West (2005/2006, pp. 129-148) lists up to seventeen parallelisms between the Greek Cyclopes and Laestrygonians, on one hand, and the Sanskrit rakshasas Hiḍimba, Baka, and Kirmīra, on the other.²⁰⁴

To recapitulate, the general notion of the ogre is, almost certainly, a folk motif. Nevertheless, the various arguments in favor of a subtype of this story specifically appearing in the Greek, Roman, and Indian traditions allow for a discussion of other possible explanations. As seen, the Greece-and-India connection, i.e., that of Polyphemus and Baka, has been interpreted from the point of view of an Indo-European origin, whereas the Greece-and-Rome connection, i.e., that of Polyphemus and Cacus, has been considered from the perspective of a Greco-Roman influence. Here, I have argued that the parallelisms found by E. B. West can also be accounted for by a hypothetical scenario of cultural contacts.

As with the ambush, the point of arrival of this ogre survey is that of the possibility of two separate versions of this motif: one would be a folk ogre, while the other might either be an Indo-European ogre or a Greco-Roman ogre. The most relevant one, for the purpose of this study, is obviously the latter. Fortunately, being unable to free this ogre from its Schrödinger's-cat-like status is not tantamount to being unable to hypothesize about it. After

204 "A. The Encounter Occurs During a Period of Dangerous Travel" (*Od.* 10.80-132 ~ *MBh.* 1.139-143), "B. The Ogre is Described as a Ruler of his Kind, but Later Revealed as Outcast and a Brute" (*Od.* 9.187-192 ~ *MBh.* 1.151.1-2), "C. Rest of Group Left Nearby" (*Od.* 9.116-176 ~ *MBh.* 1.150.1), "D. An Eater of Human Flesh" (*Od.* 9.347, *Od.* 9.374 ~ *MBh.* 1.148.4, *MBh.* 1.150.26, *MBh.* 1.151.1, *MBh.* 1.152.6), "E. The Ogre Lives Without Worries" (*Od.* 9.106-111 ~ *MBh.* 1.148.1-10), "F. The Ogre Compared to a Mountain" (*Od.* 9.190-192 ~ *MBh.* 1.152.8-9), "G. The Hero Helps a Priest" (*Od.* 9.196-200 ~ *MBh.* 1.145-149), "H. Priest's Food/Wine Taken to the Ogre" (*Od.* 9.212-215 ~ *MBh.* 1.151.1-2), "I. The Hero Eats the Ogre's Food" (*Od.* 9.231-233 ~ *MBh.* 1.151.3-5), "J. Victims/Attackers Drawn by Turn or Lot" (*Od.* 9.331-333 ~ *MBh.* 1.148.6-8), "K. The Tree as Weapon" (*Od.* 9.319-324 ~ *MBh.* 1.151.15-16), "L. Prominence of the Hero's Name" (*Od.* 9.502-505 ~ *MBh.* 1.151.17), "M. Other Ogres Congregate, but They Cause No Trouble" (*Od.* 9.399-413 ~ *MBh.* 1.152.1-5), "N. Rock Throwing" (*Od.* 9.481-486 ~ *MBh.* 3.12.51), "O. Encounter was Expected/Anticipated by the Ogre" (*Od.* 9.506-516 ~ *MBh.* 3.12.31), "P. The Accusation of Cheating" (*Od.* 9.511-516 ~ *MBh.* 3.12.30-31), and "Q. Sacrifice" (*Od.* 9.550-553 ~ *MBh.* 3.11.24).

all, an Indo-European motif that manifests itself in Greece, Rome, and India, is as much of a possibility as a Greco-Roman motif that travels to India. Moreover, if the embassy is, very likely, an example of the latter, so could be the ambush and the ogre. All three motifs being Greco-Roman influences on India is possible; the embassy being such, highly probable; the ambush and the ogre being such, at least probable.

If one accepts the possibility of a Greco-Roman influence on the Sanskrit ogre, the sources would not be limited to Homer's *Odyssey*. As with the embassy and the ambush, Wulff Alonso (2008a, pp. 385-388; 2008b, p. 89; 2020, p. 223, n. 76; In Press, Chapter 5) opines that other sources should be examined as well. These would include Herodotus' *Histories*, Euripides' *Alcestis*, and Virgil's *Aeneid*. As seen, there is still much work to be done in the comparison of the Greco-Roman world and India.

Before moving on to the next section, a few words on limitations are due. First, working with three-event probabilities means that, even if one of the three explanations – folk motif, Indo-European motif, Greco-Roman motif – corresponds to what has occurred, that does not mean that said explanation is the only one that does so. Second, working not with what has occurred but with what experts believe to have occurred – folk motifs, Indo-European motifs, and Greco-Roman motifs are nothing but agreed-upon hypotheses – means that there are no objective values whatsoever that one can input into such calculations. Third, even though these three are the most common explanations, there is, in theory, no limited number of explanations for the phenomenon of parallelisms (Stoneman, 2019, p. 419 ff.; Seaford, 2020, p. 8 ff.): a shared context of socio-economic change, shared story-patterns of the epic genre, Jungian archetypes, lucky coincidences – and the list could keep on growing.

Borrowings in the Adapted Elements

In (Ps.-)Bhāsa's *DV*, there are two possible instances of borrowing as a form of Greco-Indian *anukarāṇa*: the painting and the personified weapons. Paintings are never mentioned in Vedic literature, and their first mentions in Sanskrit literature are later

than the Greco-Bactrian kingdom (Arora, 2011, p. 55). Likewise, the first attestations of personified weapons in Indian art, the so-called *āyudhapuruṣas*, are later than the Kushan Empire (Sivaramamurti, 1955, p. 134; Gail, 1980/1981, p. 181), and in Sanskrit literature, both epic (*R.* 7.99.7) and dramatic (*DV* 41.4-54.2 and *BC* 1.21-28), they are, at least, later than the contacts with the Greco-Roman world.

Taken as a borrowing, the painting in (Ps.-)Bhāsa's *The Embassy* would have responded to three authorial decisions. On a structural level, the Sanskrit playwright would have been carrying out a cross-cultural adaptation of Euripides' *Phoenix*, that is, of a Greek play that, like his own re-creation of the *Mahābhārata*, reinterpreted an epic version of the embassy motif, in this case, of the *Iliad*. On the level of details, the Sanskrit playwright would have been merging these materials with those from Terence's *The Eunuch*, that is, of a Roman play that, like his own rendition of the humiliation of Draupadī, included the ekphrasis of a painting. Lastly, and as an explanation for selecting those two supposed Greco-Roman sources, the Sanskrit playwright would have made a connection, focusing on the sexual assault: the Draupadī of the *Mahābhārata* is assaulted, just as the Phthia of the *Phoenix* alleges that she is; however, the assault of the Draupadī of the *Mahābhārata* is linked to a painting, like that of the Pamphila of *The Eunuch*.

As mentioned, there are also similarities in the phrasing: “this painting [*pictura haec*]” (*Eun.* 584) ~ “this painting [*ayaṃ citrapaṭaḥ*]” (*DV* 6.15), “a painted picture [*tabulam quandam pictam*]” (*Eun.* 584) ~ “this picture was carefully painted [*suvyaktam ālikhito 'yam citrapaṭaḥ*]” (*DV* 12.5), “And I, a puny man, would not do it? [*ego homuncio hoc non facerem?*]” (*Eun.* 591) ~ “Then, how am I the vile one of perverted mind? [*nīco 'ham eva viparītamatiḥ kathaṃ vā*]” (*DV* 11a).

Considered as a borrowing, the personified weapons in (Ps.-)Bhāsa's *DV* would have responded to similar authorial decisions. On a structural level, *The Embassy* is as much an adaptation of the *Mahābhārata*'s embassy motif as is the *Phoenix* of the *Iliad*'s embassy motif. On the level of details, there would have been a merging of these materials with those from *The Greek Anthology*,

that is, with a selection of Greek lyric poems that, like this homage of the universal form of Kṛṣṇa, incorporated it-fiction with weapons.

Likewise, the choice of source here would respond to the Sanskrit playwright's association of ideas, presumably based on the *deus ex machina*: the Sudarśana of *The Embassy* brings the plot to an end, as the Chiron of the *Phoenix* probably did, but it does so by means of it-fiction, like the one found in poems of *The Greek Anthology* authored by Hegesippus the epigrammatist, Mnasalces of Sicyon, Nicias of Miletus, and Meleager of Gadara. There are a couple of commonalities in the phrasing as well: "I have been fastened [ἄμματα]" (*Anth. Pal.* 6.124.1) ~ "I have sprung [*nirdhāvito 'smi*]" (*DV* 42b), and "I stay [μένω]" (*Anth. Pal.* 6.125.1) ~ "should I openly appear [*mayā pravijṛmbhitavyam*]" (*DV* 42d).

(Ps.-)Bhāsa's *PR* contributes with five more possible instances of borrowing as Greco-Indian *anukaraṇa*: the remuneration, the scarred limb, the signed weapon, the five nights, and the violent arrogance. The remuneration, even if it is not monetary, certainly recalls the Greek impact in India on subjects like commerce and coinage (Bopearachchi, 1991). The scarred limb and the signed weapons, as means for achieving anagnorises, are more relevant for the study of Sanskrit drama. In this sense, it is worth noticing that tokens of recognition, such as signet rings, are first documented in Indian culture only from the beginning of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom (Arora, 2011, p. 56).

As for the title of the Sanskrit play, one must consider that the religious tradition of *Pāñcarātra* (five nights), which worships Viṣṇu as the supreme god, dates from a time when Greeks and Indians had already established their contacts – sometime around the last centuries BCE (Rastelli, 2018, para. 1). And in regards to the violent arrogance, one must bear in mind that the dramatic convention of avoiding on-stage violence, as exemplified both by the treatises of Aristotle and Bharata and by the plays of (Ps.-)Euripides and (Ps.-)Bhāsa, has no precedents in India that are older than the contacts with the Greco-Roman world.

To begin with, the remuneration points to oddity as a feature of the proposed Greco-Indian *anukaraṇa*. Although remuneration is no strange subject to Vedic literature (e.g., *dakṣinā*- "gift" in

the hymns of *dānastuti* (praise of gift giving), like in *RV.* 6.27.8), graduation fees are more a matter of the Sanskrit epics. In this context, even if the Droṇa of the *Virāṭaparvan* does not ask for his *gurudakṣinā* (graduation fee), the Droṇa of the story of Ekalavya (*MBh.* 1.123.10-39) certainly does. But unlike his epic predecessor, the dramatic Droṇa behaves in an odd manner when he does so. Like the Dolon of the *Rhesus*, who says to Hector that it is necessary “to give the worker a fair wage [πovov̄vτα δ’ ἄξιov/μισθὸν φέρεσθαι]” (*Rhes.* 161-162), the Droṇa of *The Five Nights* tells Duryodhana, “I will make a request [vyapaśramayiṣye]” (*PR* 1.27.17). That Greek asking, which makes sense within its fourth-century context of mercenary soldiers, would have become this Sanskrit telling, which conflicts with its epic context of preceptor/disciple relations. Even Duryodhana becomes confused by something so unbecoming of his preceptor.

Moving on to the tokens of recognition, i.e., the scarred limb and the signed weapon, the claimed borrowings seem to reveal, respectively, reversal and merging. The Agorastocles of Terence’s *The Little Carthaginian*, who is recognized by his older relative by reason of a scar on his left hand, would have been partly re-created as the Arjuna of *The Five Nights*, who is recognized by his younger soon-to-be relative thanks to a scar, which is probably on his right forearm: “there should be a sign on your left hand, where a monkey bit you, when you were playing as a kid [signum esse oportet in manu laeva tibi, / ludenti puero quod memordit simia]” (*Poen.* 1074) ~ “The scar, which was inflicted by the string of Gāṇḍīva and remains hidden in the interior of his forearm [prakoṣṭhāntarasaṅgūḍhaṃ gāṇḍīvajyāhataṃ kiṇam]” (*PR* 2.63a-b).

Similarly, the Palestra of Plautus’ *The Rope*, who is recognized by her old relative because her father’s name is spelled on a little sword and her mother’s name is spelled on a little axe, would have been reinterpreted, in part, as the Arjuna of *The Five Nights*, who is recognized by his old relative, when he sends an arrow with his own name carved on it. Two signed weapons would have become just one: “what is your father’s name, which is on the little sword? [in ensiculo quid nomen est paternum?]” (*Rud.* 1160) and “the name of your mother, which is on the little axe [matris nomen hic

quid in securicula siet]” (*Rud.* 1163) ~ “by means of words having their syllables in the feathers of his arrows [*bāṇapuñkhākṣarair vākyair]*” (*PR* 3.17a).

Even while being aware of the great cultural relevance of this theme of “five nights” within Indian religious traditions, I hazard an alternative hypothesis, dealing instead with literary traditions that are both Sanskrit and Greco-Roman, and stating that, if (Ps.-)Bhāsa read and rewrote some of the plays attributed to Euripides, the *Mahābhārata*’s “five villages” theme could have been changed into the “five nights” theme of *The Five Nights*, by means of a borrowing involving the time aspect of the “five watches of the night” theme of Ps.-Euripides’ *Rhesus*: “for the fifth watch [πέμπτην φυλακίην]” (*Rhes.* 543) ~ “within five nights [*pañcarātreṇa*]” (*PR* 1.45.7).

Finally, there would have been another change in the matter of violent arrogance. The King of Aeschylus’ *The Suppliants*, who censures the violence which the Herald has incurred, reminds one of the Virāṭa of *The Five Nights*: “Out of what kind of arrogance are you dishonoring this land of the Pelasgian men? [ἐκ ποίου φρονήματος / ἀνδρῶν Πελασγῶν τήνδ’ ἀτιμάζεις χθόνα;]” (*Supp.* 911-912) ~ “your untimely confident speech brings forth my wrath [*akāle svasthavākyaṃ manyum utpādayati*]” (*PR* 2.20.1). Moreover, as discussed when looking into the possible influences, Aristotle (*Poet.* 1452b11-13) and Bharata (*Nāṭyaś.* 18.20) share similar views on the topic of on-stage violence. If the Greek theory of drama had any influence on the Sanskrit theory of drama, then the argument for this borrowing would make even more sense.

The list of possible borrowings comes to an end with four more examples, drawn from (Ps.-)Bhāsa’s *MV*, and also pointing in the direction of a Greco-Indian *anukaraṇa*: the response in the negative, the *ad hoc* lineage, the end of the enslaving, and the anagnorisis. They all come from the same play by Plautus, whose name *me-naech-mo-* has already been linked to that of *ma-dhya-ma-*. Considering the response in the negative and the *ad hoc* lineage, one is, once again, faced with oddity and reversal. On one hand, the Menaechmus (Sosicles) of Plautus’ *The Two Menaechmuses* logically responds in the negative when asked if he knows someone whom he does not: “By Hercules, I truly do not [*Non hercle vero*]”

(*Men.* 280). And the Bhīma of *The Middle One*, without it logically following, responds in the negative when asked if he is also named “Middle One”: “So far, no other is [*na tāvad aparah*]” (*MV* 27.4). The logical responses would have been that he is or that he is not. Instead, with this odd response, he avers that nobody else’s name is the same as his.

On the other hand, the Menaechmus (Sosicles) of Plautus’ *The Two Menaechmuses* faces a straightforward question, which reveals specific details about the identity of the other Menaechmus, whereas the Bhīma of *The Middle One* embarks on an elaborate self-praise, which serves to proclaim general information about his own identity as “Middle One”: “Do I not know you to be Menaechmus [*Non ego te novi Menaechmum*]” (*Men.* 409) ~ “I am the “Middle One” [*madhyamo ’ham*]” (*MV* 28a and *MV* 28c). As seen, oddity and reversal appear to be recurring traits.

The last two examples, i.e., the end of the enslaving and the anagnorisis, relate to change. The Messenio of *The Two Menaechmuses* is a life-long slave, who obtains his freedom because of the events of the plot, while the middle brother of *The Middle One* has just been temporarily enslaved, pending the happy end: “Me setting you free? [*Liberem ego te?*]” (*Men.* 1024) ~ “He is not being set free [*na mucyate*]” (*MV* 39.3). As for the anagnorisis, I argue that both playwrights seem to be following Aristotle’s (*Poet.* 1452a28 ff.) anagnorisis referred to as ἡ διὰ τῶν σημείων (the one by signs): “the proofs [*signa*]” (*Men.* 1124) ~ “your proof [*pratyayah*]” (*MV* 48.24).

In brief, merging and changing, which are usual techniques for adapting within the same literary traditions, could also serve to characterize cross-cultural adaptations. Oddity and reversal might offer additional light on the matter. The borrowings would have come from various sources, including texts in Greek (*Phoenix*, *The Greek Anthology*, *Rhesus*, *The Suppliants*, and *Cyclops*) and in Latin (*The Eunuch*, *The Little Carthaginian*, *The Rope*, and *The Two Menaechmuses*), and texts pertaining to the genres of lyric (*The Greek Anthology*), and drama (*Phoenix*, *Rhesus*, *The Suppliants*, *Cyclops*, *The Eunuch*, *The Little Carthaginian*, *The Rope*, and *The Two Menaechmuses*). The predominance of theater is to be

expected, but the same number of Greek plays (*Phoenix*, *Rhesus*, *The Suppliants*, and *Cyclops*) and Roman plays (*The Eunuch*, *The Little Carthaginian*, *The Rope*, and *The Two Menaechmuses*) begs for further explanation. I deal with this in the closing section.

A few words on the implications of the preceding findings are now due. First, similarities between the Greco-Roman world and India, even when numerous and precise, do not prove borrowings. The adaptation of Greek epic into Greek theater, on one hand, and of Sanskrit epic into Sanskrit Theater, on the other, is well accepted in the scholarly milieu. So too is the adaptation of Greek literature into Roman literature. But the adaptation of Greco-Roman texts into Sanskrit texts remains hypothetical. This situation is like that of Indo-European linguistics, but with the very relevant difference that there is no literary equivalent for the methods of historical linguistics.

Literatures just do not change in the same way that languages do. What this means is, on one hand, that promising tools should be employed, and their results evaluated;²⁰⁵ and on the other, that an open mind must be kept, since Greco-Roman influence and Indo-European inheritance do not disprove each other, and since even less likely possibilities, such as coincidence or Indian influence, could hardly ever be eliminated altogether. That the borrowings are likely to have happened is as definitive a statement as can be made in this respect.

Second, just as similarities between the epic sources and the dramatic adaptations within each individual tradition do not necessarily imply that those exact passages were the ones adapted, so too is the case with line-by-line correspondences between different traditions. In narratives, themes recur. And the same is true for plays. Therefore, for every quotation from a Sanskrit play that recalls a specific passage of the Greco-Roman repertoire, there might be other sources of inspiration. Maybe Menander, or some other authors whose oeuvre has been preserved in a more

205 See Wulff Alonso (2020, pp. 15-16) on the applicability of the concept of “plagiarism”, in the context of forensic linguistics, for the analysis of the hypothetical Greco-Roman borrowing in India.

fragmented way, or not at all. In literature, influence rarely comes from just one place, or arrives at just one place, for that matter.

The author of *The Embassy*, *The Five Nights*, and *The Middle One*, about whom one of the few certain things that can be said is that he must have admired the author of the *Mahābhārata*, could have been following in the latter's footsteps by making adaptive reuses. Wulff Alonso (In Press) envisions this when speaking of the presumed use of Greco-Roman sources by the author of the *Mahābhārata*: "Es un avezado cazador de historias que se mueve en terrenos que conocemos. Podemos ver cómo las utiliza como quien utiliza una cantera o viejos materiales de construcción y los adapta a un nuevo edificio que ha diseñado y construye [He is a seasoned hunter of stories, who walks on ground that is known to us. We can see how he uses them, like someone who uses a quarry, or some old construction materials, and adapts them into a new building, that he designed and constructs]" (Introduction).

Third and last, if (Ps.-)Bhāsa borrowed from the Greco-Roman world through procedures such as merging, changing, and reversal, he would have done so in accordance with the Sanskrit tradition, since Vyāsa himself, when presumably adapting Greco-Roman sources (Wulff Alonso, In Press), would have profited from "repartir [distributing]", "concentrar [concentrating]" (Chapter 4), and "invertir [reversing]" (Chapter 5). This would coincide with the view of reversal as a trademark of Greco-Indian *anukarāṇa*. Furthermore, if both Vyāsa and (Ps.-)Bhāsa borrowed from the Greco-Roman world, this would be an instance of traditional adaptation:

Nuestro autor conoce sus obras, los textos griegos que utilizan, las técnicas con las que lo hacen y cómo continúan con el uso desprejuiciado de escritos anteriores que había caracterizado a la propia cultura griega y con los procedimientos adaptativos correspondientes.

Our author [sc. Vyāsa] knows their [sc. Virgil's and Ovid's] works, the Greek texts that they use, the techniques with which they do so, and how they continue with the unprejudiced use of previous writings, which had characterized Greek culture itself, and with the corresponding adaptive procedures.

(Wulff Alonso, In Press, Chapter 7)

Greco-Indian Historical Contexts?

By the late fourth century BCE, there are three main avenues of contact between the Hellenistic world and India: the Greeks in Bactria, the Seleucids in Syria, and the Ptolemies in Egypt (Wulff Alonso, 2008a, p. 44). By the third century BCE, the Greek imprint in Bactria is a well-accepted phenomenon (Holt, 1988, 1999, 2005, 2012), as is the cultural interaction between Greeks and non-Greeks in Central Asia (Coloru, 2009; Widermann, 2009; Mairs, 2014, 2020; Iliakis, 2015). During this time, there is also evidence for at least four theatrical performances during Alexander's expedition (Le Guen, 2014, p. 360), as well as record of a fragmentary Greek play preserved in the very ruins of Ai Khanoum (Stoneman, 2019, pp. 408-409).

These contacts seem to have developed into something more during the second century BCE. By then, the Kandahar Sophytos Inscription (Hollis, 2011, pp. 114-115) already bears witness to Greek influence: "As we have seen, however, throughout the epigraphic record we have evidence of Indians adopting Hellenistic culture in the Greek city-states of Bactria (Subhūti [sc. Sophytos])..." (Baums, 2017, p. 41). And, possibly, even to Greek borrowings, since the text from the inscription has been compared with various passages from the Homeric Epics (Wallace, 2016, p. 220, n. 51): line 1.2 ~ *Il.* 5.90, *Il.* 10.467, and *Il.* 17.53; and line 1.10 ~ *Od.* 1.3. Not to mention that Sophytos himself is portrayed as a kind of Odysseus. Up to this point, the contact is merely with Greece. However, a constantly expanding Rome is not far from entering the stage.

By the first century CE, one of the main avenues of contact with the Greco-Roman world was the Western Satraps in Bharukaccha/Barygaza (Wulff Alonso, 2011b, p. 25), as attested in both Greco-Roman (*Periplus Maris Erythraei* 14, 21, 27, 31, 32, 36, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 56, and 57) and Sanskrit sources (*MBh.* 2.28.50-53 and *MBh.* 2.47.7-8). But the most relevant context for eventual literary influences and borrowings would have been the Kushan Empire, whose link with the Roman Empire (Thorley, 1979) played a key role in Indo-Roman relations (Tomber, 2008).

In the middle of the territory occupied by the Kushans (Steward, 2016, p. 3), by the second or third century CE (Stoneman, 2019, p. 375), a depiction of a “Trojan Horse” in the style of Gandharan art is to be found (Karttunen, 2001, pp. 179-180). Near that time, (Ps.-) Bhāsa would have been the first Indian author to adapt this Greco-Roman theme (Homer, *Od.* 4.265 ff., *Od.* 8.492 ff., and *Od.* 11.523 ff.; Euripides, *Tro.* 511 ff. and *Hec.* 905 ff.; and Virgil, *Aen.* 2) into that of the “Trojan Elephant” in his *The Minister’s Vows*. The philosopher Buddhaghosa (fifth century CE), in his *Path of Purification*; the poet Bāṇabhaṭṭa (seventh century CE), in his *Deeds of Harṣa*; and the writer Somadeva (eleventh century CE), in his *Ocean of the Streams of Stories*; they all would have eventually followed in (Ps.-)Bhāsa’s footsteps, thus turning his adaptation into their tradition.

Besides some amazing discoveries, like that of an Indian figurine in Pompeii in 1938 (Weinstein, 2021), it is worth noticing the Greco-Roman practice of producing plastic representations related to plays, for instance, in the form of the terracottas from Roman Egypt depicting actors and theater masks (Sandri, 2012). It would be a good subject for future research to look at similar findings in India.

The relations between the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, on one hand, and India, on the other, are well established (Karttunen, 1989, 1997, 2001, 2015; Arora, 1996, 2011, 2018; Parker, 2008). Most of the reconstructed history of their contacts is based on numismatic and archaeological evidence (Turner, 1989; Bopearachchi, 1991, 2005), which has naturally strengthened the long-standing acceptance of commercial exchanges between the Greco-Roman world and India (Warmington, 1928; Sidebotham, 1986, 2011; Seland, 2010; Cobb, 2018). It is in this context that influences and borrowings from the Greco-Roman world to India are generally accepted in the exact sciences, such as astronomy and mathematics (Pingree, 1971, 1976, 1993; Falk, 2002; Plofker, 2011), as well as in the visual arts, such as architecture, painting, and sculpture (Acharya, 1927; Nehru, 1989; Boardman, 2015). On other subjects, such as medicine (Karttunen, 2021) or philosophy (Seaford, 2020), a lack of consensus is still the norm.

Although the extension of such cultural impact in India when it comes to literature is certainly a matter of speculation (Pisani, 1940), it is still interesting, for the sake of argument, to draw one's attention to a couple of well-attested, contemporaneous examples of "philhellenism". The first one comes from the Roman Republic, which during the third and second centuries BCE not only follows "the adoption of policy and behaviour actively represented as beneficial to, and respectful of, Greece and Greeks", but also is "characterized by the actively favourable reception of Greek language, literature, and philosophy within the Roman ruling class" (Derow, 2016, para. 1). The second example is provided by the Parthian kings, who during the second and first centuries BCE used the Greek script and language for their coins and, in some cases, went as far as taking the epithet of *philhellene*, i.e., "friend of the Greeks" (Aperghis, 2020).

Could there not have been in the India of the first and second centuries CE, whose interest in Greco-Roman arts and sciences has been sufficiently acknowledged, anything along the lines of what nineteenth-century classicists referred to as the "Scipionic Circle", i.e., "a group sharing the same cultural and even political outlook" (Erskine, 2016, para. 1), which would have included an appreciation for Greco-Roman literature? Could they have had access to those texts, in the form of either papyrus scrolls or parchment books, even in the Indian subcontinent? Could they have even read or understood them, let alone admired and adapted them?

That there was at least some degree of multilingualism bringing together the Greco-Roman world and India can be corroborated by the Kandahar Greek Edicts of Aśoka, which were written in both Greek and Prakrit (Schlumberger, 1964), and that this had an impact on literature can be assumed, considering that the *Yavanajātaka* was probably translated from the Greek to the Sanskrit during the second century CE. The Greek original would have come from Alexandria, and the Sanskrit translation would have been made under the rule of the Western Satraps (Pingree, in Sphujidhvaja, 1978). Moreover, that Greco-Roman literature was accessible throughout a chronologically and geographically vast extension in Eurasia around the turn of the millennium can be corroborated

by the data. The Hellenistic world has book depositories since the foundation of the library of Alexandria, circa 300 BCE, a trend to which the Roman world also contributed, at least since the opening of Rome's first public library, around the 30s BCE (White, 2009).

At Alexandria (Casson, 2001, pp. 31-47), Ptolemy II (282-246 BCE) was responsible for the library's specialization in the Homeric Epics, while his successor Ptolemy III (246-222 BCE) went to great lengths to obtain the official versions of the plays of Euripides and the other Greek tragedians. The library had multiple texts in Greek and perhaps even some in Latin. And the work of this pioneering, groundbreaking institution was imitated thereafter to the point that by the first and second centuries CE and thanks to the Pax Romana that benefited most of the Indo-Mediterranean routes, libraries proliferated, at least in major centers. For instance, there is evidence that the works of Homer, Euripides, and many more were readily available in Asia Minor, in cities like Halicarnassus and probably several others.

At Rome (White, 2009, p. 271, n. 7), the sources reveal that bookshops made it relatively easy to purchase both Greek and Latin books, whether they were old or new. There, the works of Plautus, Terence, and several other authors could have begun a long journey that would have landed them virtually anywhere within the Roman Empire – or elsewhere. Literature traveled fast within the Greco-Roman world, and this can be corroborated by the fact that the first Roman adaptation of a play by Menander is dated less than fifty years after the death of the Greek author (Le Guen, 2014, p. 371). Likewise, literary techniques, such as those involved in adaptation, developed rapidly, as suggested by the overt contrast between the easily identifiable and understandable Greek influences and borrowings into the Roman tragedy from the Republic, on one side, and the more challenging ones coming from the Roman tragedy of the beginnings of the Empire, such as that of Seneca, on the other (Goldberg, 2014, p. 640).

Apart from the Greeks and the people of Greek tradition in India, there were also traders and travelers coming from the Greco-Roman world and settling in India. And more importantly, thanks to the new maritime routes, there were Indians in Alexandria, who

could have served as cultural intermediaries for the hundreds of navigators who, year after year, completed the back-and-forth journeys (Wulff Alonso, 2008a, p. 50).

For the study of Greco-Roman *imitatio*, epic is the gold standard (Farrell, 1997): Virgil is probably the ancient author whose sources are best known from the point of view of a modern audience. Likewise, the still quite underrepresented study of Greco-Indian *anukaraṇa* has found its most valuable *comparanda* in the epics (Arora, 1981, 2011; Wulff Alonso, 2008a, 2008b, 2013, 2014, 2015a, 2018a, 2018b, 2019a, 2019b, 2020). And if the subjects of study coincide, so do the methods.

First, Homer's influences and borrowings in Virgil are "pervasive", that is, they are to be found almost in "every line" of the *Aeneid* (Farrell, 1997, p. 228), while Homer's influences and borrowings in Vyāsa would be of such "quantity" and "quality" that, by a "principle of improbability", causation would be more likely than mere correlation (Wulff Alonso, 2019a, p. 2; 2019b, pp. 226-227; 2020, pp. 18-19). Furthermore, there would be a "strong probability" of "many" of such epic themes having been adapted from Greece into India (Arora, 1981, pp. 178-179; 2011, p. 56). Second, Virgil's use of Homer is "analytical", thus evincing both his creative interpretation of the "sources involved" and his interpretative creation into an "allusive programme" (Farrell, 1997, p. 228), and Vyāsa's use of Homer would be "structural" or even "architectonic", implying the overall organization of the adapted plot "along the lines" of the source plot, and therefore, providing a "litmus test of the essential identity" (Wulff Alonso, 2019a, p. 3; 2020, pp. 20-21).

Third, the cross-cultural adaptation by Virgil is "thematically motivated", so that thematic proximity is usually responsible for the "modelling" of several elements into one, or the other way around (Farrell, 1997, p. 228), and the "working methodology" developed by Vyāsa would be characterized by recurring to "textual proximity" when merging or splitting literary "works" or "characters" (Wulff Alonso, 2019a, p. 3; 2019b, pp. 239-240; 2020, p. 21). Lastly, the *Aeneid's* reworking of sources is "not limited" to the Homeric Epics, for even the works of Roman authors, like Lucretius

(e.g., *Aen.* 9.224-228 ~ *Lucr.* 1.80-86), had an impact on Virgil (Farrell, 1997, pp. 229-235), and neither would the *Mahābhārata's* be, for it also would rely on Vedic sources (Minkowski, 1989, 1991, 2001; Feller, 2004).

If these four criteria, i.e., extensiveness, intentionality, proximity, and non-exclusiveness, suffice for characterizing Virgil's *imitatio* of Homer, why would they not when it comes to Vyāsa's supposed *anukaraṇa* of Homer – and perhaps even Virgil himself? The former is a fact, but the latter remains a hypothesis. Farrell (1997) even begins his exposition by stating, "The fact that Virgil's poetry exhibits many points of contact with the literature of the past is beyond dispute" (p. 222). But what gives this claim factual status? Virgil himself never announces that his intention was *Homerum imitari* (to imitate Homer), as Servius puts it in the prologue of his commentary. Instead, this is accomplished by a tradition of well-established "Homeric scholarship" (Hexter, 2010, p. 31), within whose ranks are various authors, both ancient (Macrobius, *Satur.* 5-6) and modern (Knauer, 1964; Barchiesi, 1984; Cairns, 1989; Berres, 1993; Dekel, 2005).

In India, neither does Vyāsa announce *yavanān romakāṃś cānukartum* (to imitate the Greeks and the Romans), nor are there any such explanations within the commentarial tradition. But more importantly, even if the methods were the same, the results were very different. And yet, as stated by Farrell (1997), "it is probably unwise to assume that the phenomena that we clearly observe at work in Virgil would be visible in others too" (p. 222). He is referring to Greco-Roman *imitatio*, but he might as well be talking about Greco-Indian *anukaraṇa*. Claiming that there could have been influences and borrowings from the Greco-Roman world into India will never be as "Eurocentric" as assuming that Greco-Roman *imitatio* is the only form of literary adaptation. If ancient Indians were at all impacted by the Greco-Roman world, it is obvious that they developed their own independent tradition thereafter.

Moving on to theater, the picture of Greco-Roman *imitatio* gets much blurrier. In Antiquity, Dio Chrysostom (*Or.* 52)²⁰⁶ had the pleasure of contrasting firsthand Aeschylus' *Philoctetes*, Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, and Euripides' *Philoctetes*, and he did so with the availability of still more epic sources than are extant now. For instance, it is known from his critique that Homer's (*Od.* 13.429-438) Athena transforming Odysseus to avoid him being recognized by Philoctetes was changed by Aeschylus, but maintained by Euripides, who "having imitated [μιμησάμενος]" (13) the canonical author, is then "following [ἐπόμενος]" (6) him; and that, even when Euripides is not borrowing from specific passages of Homeric he still evinces a general influence, since he proceeds "in a Homeric manner [ὁμηρικῶς]" (14).

Similarly, Gellius (*NA* 2.23.11)²⁰⁷ had the opportunity to compare Caecilius Statius' *The Necklace* with its Menandrian original, only to conclude that the Roman playwright had failed "to interpret [*enarrare*]" some of its best parts, and instead, he had "crammed in [*incolavit*]" some bits and pieces from the Mime, while he "omitted [*omisit*]" others that the Greek author had devised. As seen, Dio Chrysostom's observations about Euripides' "maintaining" and Aeschylus' "changing", as well as Gellius' judgments on Caecilius Statius' "adding" and "subtracting" are, *mutatis mutandis*, analyses of their reinterpretations and re-creations, or in other words, on their adaptations.

Nowadays, the study of adaptation represents a greater challenge. Although "all the plays of Roman comedy are overt adaptations of originals of Greek 'New Comedy' (*nea*)" (Telò, 2019, p. 47), the scarcity of extant pairs of Greek source and Roman adaptation is notable. Considering the fragments, the examples are limited to Alexis' *Demetrios* (fr. 47.1-3) and Turpilius' *Demetrios* (fr. 5), Menander's *The Ladies Who Lunch* (fr. 337) and Plautus' *The Casket Comedy* (89-93), Alexis' *The Man from Carthage* (fr. 105) and Plautus' *The Little Carthaginian* (1318), Menander's *The Double Deceiver* (POxy. 4407 and fr. 4) and Plautus' *Bacchides* (494-562

²⁰⁶ I follow the Greek text by Crosby (Dio Chrysostom, 1946). The translations are my own.

²⁰⁷ I follow the Latin text by Rolfe (Gellius, 1927). The translations are my own.

and 816-817), and as mentioned, Menander's *The Necklace* and Caecilius Statius' *The Necklace* (Fontaine, 2014, pp. 409-414). The last one stands out, for not only can one compare the source and the adapted product, but also one can contrast those two with the commentary, in Gellius, about the process of adaptation. But this clarity is, indeed, a *rara avis*.

As said, blurriness is the norm, and it only gets worse when trying to extrapolate the findings from these sparse cases of Greco-Roman *imitatio* within the theater to the supposed Greco-Indian *anukaraṇa* within the theater. And yet, the context would have been favorable. Around the turn of the Millennium, India experienced both the transformation of Sanskrit into a code for literary expression (Pollock, 2006, p. 1), and the growth of manuscript culture (Pollock, 2006, p. 4). And the Greco-Roman world must have had an impact on this, since the Sanskrit word for "writing-reed [*kalama-*]" comes from the Greek word for "reed-pen [κάλαμος]", and the Sanskrit word for "ink [*melā-*]" comes from the Greek word for "ink [μέλαν]" as well (Jairazbhoy, 1963, p. 91; Mayrhofer, 1956, s.v. *kalāmaḥ*¹, and 1963, s.v. *melā*).

Sailors, merchants, settlers, or even slaves could have made Greco-Roman literature available in the India of the first and second centuries CE (Jairazbhoy, 1963, p. 97). Some learned Indians could also have read Greek and Latin, and therefore, they could have written Sanskrit epics and dramas that incorporated at least some Greco-Roman influences and borrowings (Jairazbhoy, 1963, p. 97). The examples may not be as abundant in the theater as they are in the epics, but they are still there. And unless archaeologists gift us with some paradigm-shifting discoveries from the vicinities of modern-day Afghanistan in the up-coming years, it is up to the disciplines of Philology, Classics, and Indology to come together, in an interdisciplinary effort, to make sense of the various parallelisms between Greco-Roman and Sanskrit theaters, for instance, in other plays by (Ps.-)Bhāsa, in other Sanskrit playwrights, and even in other Sanskrit treatises on dramaturgy. *Audientes audiant*.

