POETRY, DRAMA, AND AESTHETICS

Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference held in Helsinki, Finland, 13–18 July 2003

Studia Orientalia 123

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Edited by

Albion M. Butters

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PREFACE

The General Editors of the Series "Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference held in Helsinki, Finland, 13–18 July 2003"

The plan to publish the proceedings of the entire 12th World Sanskrit Conference was a most ambitious one. Only a few organizers of the World Sanskrit Conferences have also published the papers presented in them, and even in those few cases not comprehensively. We are indeed very happy that our ambitious undertaking can now finally be brought to conclusion. It is also gratifying to know that our example has inspired the organizers of the succeeding WSCs to adopt a similar procedure.

A publication agreement with Motilal Banarsidass Publishers (MLBD) in Delhi secured that the volumes would be published on good paper at a reasonable price, that every author would get a free copy of the volume where his or her paper was published, and that the editors of the volumes would in addition each get a copy of all the volumes. This agreement with MLBD has worked very well, and guaranteed dissemination of the volumes to readers interested in Sanskrit studies in and outside India. We thank MLBD for their collaboration throughout the project.

We could get only a very small allowance for language checking and editing of the series, and these funds were soon exhausted. Our plan was to ask a prominent Sanskrit scholar of the respective field who was a native speaker of English to act as one of the editors of each volume and to revise on a voluntary basis the contributions of those colleagues whose native language was not English. On the whole, this plan worked very well.

Without going in detail into the difficulties we encountered in bringing out the last two volumes of the series – these were explained in the introduction to *Vedic Investigations* (2016) – it must be stated that we had almost lost faith in the appearance of Volume 3.1 (*Purāṇas, Āgamas and Tantras*, published as Studia Orientalia 121) and Volume 6 (*Poetry, Drama and Aesthetics*, published here as Studia Orientalia 123). Our own resources were exhausted, and it was most uncertain if the authors of the papers would be willing to have them published in the series, when more than fifteen years had passed after their presentation. In this rather desperate situation, Dr. Albion M. Butters came to our rescue. He offered to contact the authors of the papers, offering them a possibility to revise

the paper if they wanted to do so, and to take care of the English language editing of the two volumes, on the condition that the two volumes would first appear in *Studia Orientalia*, the journal of the Finnish Oriental Society. Republication of a printed version of these volumes is the prerogative of the MLBD, who, we trust, will also be happy for the completion of the series. Dr. Butters is a specialist of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism and thus also qualified to handle Sanskrit studies. It has been an arduous task for him, but he has succeeded. We are most grateful to him, and also to all the authors who nearly without exception have welcomed his initiative.

Helsinki and Rantasalmi, 30 November 2022

Asko Parpola and Petteri Koskikallio

INTRODUCTION

Albion M. Butters

In a discipline as venerable as Sanskrit, where the average age of the texts under discussion can be thousands of years old, it may perhaps be possible to forgive a delay of papers being published nearly two decades after they were originally delivered. At least that is the hope with the current volume, which consists of presentations from the 12th World Sanskrit Conference, which was held in 13–18 July 2003, in Helsinki, Finland.

The conference has provided a veritable treasure trove to the field. Since 2003, thirteen volumes in the Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference series were published through Motilal Banarsidass, reflecting the wide breadth of the themes covered. Under the patient and erudite supervision of the General Editors Asko Parpola and Petteri Koskikallio, these include:

Vedic Investigations (Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference 1). Ed. Asko Parpola & Petteri Koskikallio. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2016.

Epic Undertakings (Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference 2). Ed. Robert Goldman & Muneo Tokunaga. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2009.

Origin and Growth of the Purāṇic Text Corpus: With Special Reference to the Skanda Purāṇa (Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference 3.2). Ed. Hans T. Bakker. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004.

Indian Grammars: Philology and History (Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference 4). Ed. George Cardona & Madhav M. Deshpande. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2012.

Themes and Tasks in Old and Middle Indo-Aryan Linguistics (Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference 5). Ed. Bertil Tikkanen & Heinrich Hettrich, 2006.

Mathematics and Medicine in Sanskrit (Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference 7). Ed. Dominik Wujastyk. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2010.

Buddhist Studies (Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference 8). Ed. Richard Gombrich & Cristina Scherrer-Schaub. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2008.

Jaina Studies (Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference 9). Ed. Colette Caillat & Nalini Balbir. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2008.

From Vasubandhu to Caitanya: Studies in Indian Philosophy and Its Textual History (Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference 10.1). Ed. Johannes Bronkhorst & Karin Preisendanz. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2010.

Logic in Earliest Classical India (Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference 10.2). Ed. Brendan S. Gillon. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2010.

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Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta: Interaction and Continuity (Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference 10.3). Ed. Johannes Bronkhorst. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2007.

Script and Image: Papers on Art and Epigraphy (Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference 11.1). Ed. Adalbert J. Gail, Gerd J.R. Mevissen & Richard Salomon. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2006.

History of Indological Studies (Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference 11.2). Ed. Klaus Karttunen. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2015.

Due to various factors, it was not possible for the series to be brought to conclusion. In question was the fate of the volume on Purāṇas, Agamas, and Tantras and the volume on Poetry, Drama, and Aesthetics, respectively intended as Volumes 3.1 and 6 in the series. However, with the agreement of the general editors and the support of the Finnish Oriental Society (Suomen Itämainen Seura), it was decided that these two last volumes would be published in *Studia Orientalia*. In 2020, the first of these two volumes was published as Studia Orientalia 121, and the current volume concludes the series.

While the passing of time meant that some of the papers delivered in 2003 could not be included, due to having been published elsewhere or the inability to contact their authors, we are fortunate to have a sufficient number to comprise a volume. I would like to thank all the authors included here for their patience and diligence. I would also like to thank Professor Emeritus Asko Parpola for his detailed review of all the texts and Dr. Petteri Koskikallio for his technical assistance in resurrecting decrepit files and salvaging lost diacritics. Lotta Aunio and Sari Nieminen were of invaluable help in the production and layout process.

As a brief overview of the papers included herein, Lyne Bansat-Boudon explores the theater's myth of origin in the first chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharatamuni, Mandakranta Bose examines drama in relation to dance by exploring the category known as *uparūpaka*, compared to the more common term *rūpaka*, and Albion M. Butters examines Kālidāsa's *Megḥadūta* in relation to both its erotic double-imagery and its devotional aspects. Anna A. Esposito critically considers the Prakrit in the so-called "Trivandrum plays" attributed to Bhāsa, while E.H. Rick Jarow further opens the *Megḥadūta*, exposing the landscapes of the poem in terms of interiority and exteriority, and subjectivity and the natural world. Marina V. Orelskaya offers some brief notes on the practical tradition of Sanskrit manuals on Indian classical dance, and Daniela Rossella argues that Indian sacred poetry and mystical-erotic texts should be considered in terms of the rhetorical device of polysemy, operating simultaneously on multiple levels to profound spiritual effect. Finally, Bożena Śliwczyńska discusses the character Vidūṣaka of Sanskrit theater, specifically analyzing this fool figure in the context of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam tradition of Kerala.

The papers delivered during the Poetry, Drama, and Aesthetics panel at the 12th World Sanskrit Conference exhibit great richness and depth, and in that regard they continue to have enduring value for the field. It is with great satisfaction that they may finally be enjoyed by the wider public.

"SATISFIED WITH THE PERFORMANCE": AN EMBRYONIC AESTHETICS IN THE INDIAN THEATER'S MYTH OF ORIGIN

Lyne Bansat-Boudon

École pratique des hautes études, Paris, université PSL (Paris-Sciences-Lettres), GREI (Groupe de recherches en études indiennes)

major e longinquo reverentia

Tacitus, *Annals*

In our life, nothing happens. Nothing that goes from one extreme to the other. Nothing begins, nothing ends.

It's worth going to the theater just to see something happen. You pay attention! Something really happens! Something begins and ends!

Paul Claudel, *The Exchange*

The theater's myth of origin, or at least its first part, occupies the entirety of the first chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.[1] Indra and the other gods, who have decided to restore order in the world, speak to Brahmā:

1 The second part of this origin myth is found in chaps. XXXVI and XXXVII. I refer herein to the edition *Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharatamuni: with the commentary Abhinavabhāratī by Abhinavaguptācārya* (Nagar 1981–1984), thereafter abbreviated as NŚ [= *Nāṭyaśāstra*] and ABh [= *Abhinavabhāratī*].

The paper develops the lecture presented in French at the 12th World Sanskrit Conference held in Helsinki in 2003. Its translation into English, reviewed by the author, is by my friend and colleague Edwin Gerow, to whom I wish to express my deep gratitude. For several reasons, publication of the proceedings of the Poetry, Drama, and Aesthetics section was substantially delayed, and it is thanks to the work of Dr. Albion M. Butters that they are now coming into existence. An augmented French version of the paper has been published (see Bansat-Boudon 2012), and several topics dealt with in the Helsinki lecture were further elaborated in more recent articles. Therefore, while preparing my lecture for publication in this volume, I chose to stay with its original structure, while only adding references to the abovementioned later publications.

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> We desire something that will serve as a plaything (*krīḍanīyaka*), something that can be seen and heard. Vedic practice is not fit to be heard by those servile generations (*śūdrajātiṣu*). Create, therefore, a fifth Veda suitable for all the orders.[2]

It is because Indra defines theater as "a plaything to be seen and heard" – that is, as a locus both of aesthetic pleasure and of direct perception – that it acquires the role of a fifth Veda, accessible by everyone. In order to reestablish order (*dharma*), *dharma* must be made known, and this must be done by other means than Vedic study, itself arid and exigent, or those disciplines (*śāstra*) that are exclusively reserved to the twice-born. That other means is theater.

After evoking the creation of this new object (which does not receive the name *nāṭya* until verse 15),[3] the narration touches on the infancy of theater, describing its practical implementation, from rehearsal[4] to the first performance, which takes place during the Festival of Indra's Banner (*indradhvajamaha*). This turns out to be of some importance for what follows. In fact, Indra is already present, as is his banner, whose standard will ultimately become (vv. 69–75) the *jarjara*, the "destroyer" of the Asuras, and which will reappear in Chapter Three in the context of a preliminary ritual, the "offering to the divinities [superintending] the stage" (*raṅgadaivatapūjana*), as well in Chapter Five in the context of the preliminaries to the performance itself, the *pūrvaraṅga*.[5]

Let us recall in brief outline the account of that first performance (57b–82a), given before an assembly of gods and demons: prologue to the play, an archetypal drama that represents the combat of the very gods and demons there present, culminating in the victory of the former (57b–58a); satisfaction of the gods, who bestow presents on the actors (58b–63a); anger of the demons (chief among them, the "Obstacles", the Vighnas), who find insupportable the spectacle of their defeat; making use of their "magic power" (*māyā*), they make themselves invisible and immobilize the actors, stopping the performance (63b–66a); a "real"

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2 NŚ I 11b–12: *mahendrapramukhair devair uktaḥ kila pitāmahaḥ/ krīḍanīyakam icchāmo dṛśyaṃ śravyaṃ ca yad bhavet// na vedavyavahāro 'yaṃ saṃśrāvyaḥ śūdrajātiṣu/ tasmāt sṛjāparaṃ vedaṃ pañcamaṃ sārvavarṇikam/*. I translate *jāti*, in *śūdrajātiṣu*, according to the ABh.: it is not only to be understood as "social class" (viz. here the inferior class of the *śūdra*s), but as extending to all men (whatever social class they belong to by birth) who have been lowered to the status of *śūdra*s, now that they have ceased to study the texts and to observe the rules of *dharma*, as should be expected from *dvija*s.

3 NŚ I 15b: *nāṭyākhyaṃ pañcamaṃ vedaṃ setihāsaṃ karomy aham//*.

4 Thus is to be understood the term *guṇanika* in the commentary to NŚ I 57b (vol. I, 23), which contrasts rehearsal (*guṇanika*) and performance (*prayoga*), properly speaking.

5 On the *pūrvaraṅga*, to which is devoted the entirety of the NŚ fifth chapter, see Kuiper 1989: 166–193. Also, for a discussion of Kuiper's analysis, see Bansat-Boudon 1992: 67–80. I recently reconsidered the question of the *pūrvaraṅga*, adding some observations to my previous interpretation (see Bansat-Boudon 2017: 520–522 and n. 20).

combat of gods and demons then takes place; Indra cuts them to pieces with the standard of his banner, which receives thereupon the name "destroyer" (*jarjara*) (66b–75); the surviving Vighnas, who escaped from the massacre, rally; in order to protect the performance from further interruption, Viśvakarman, the architect of the gods, builds a playhouse (76a–82a).

What is at stake here in this narration is not simply constructing a myth of origin for the theater. Discreet but numerous indications allow us to read it in such a way as to understand here also an "embryonic aesthetics" of the theater, cleverly distributed among the episodes.

We pause here to examine one such indication (NŚ I 57b ff.): the archetypal performance representing the confrontation of gods and demons. After the prologue, the gods "satisfied with the performance", being delighted, offer presents to the actors, while the demons scowl, unhappy at seeing themselves defeated.

Let us look more closely at verses 57b–59b:

> At its [the *nāndī*'s][6] end, the imitation (*anukṛti*; viz. here, 'performance') was knotted (*baddhā*) together [in the form of a prologue]; it showed how the demons were conquered by the gods.[7]

By "imitation", according to the commentary, we are to understand the "performance" (*prayoga*) of the play, and by "was knotted together" (*baddhā*) "was introduced in the form of a prologue" (*prastāvitā*). The commentary insists: "was introduced in the form of a prologue, that is, was not brought to a conclusion" (*prastāvitā na tu niṣpāditā*).

Alternatively, the term "imitation" (*anukṛti*) may be understood as designating the prologue, inasmuch as the prologue is an imitation of the drama itself.

However that may be, concludes Abhinavagupta, what is at issue here is indeed the prologue (*prastāvanā*).[8]

The gloss inquires, to which of the dramatic genres does this drama, of which the prologue is here presented, belong? Since it concerns the depiction of "a battle,

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6 The *nāndī* is the liminary benediction of a play; see Bansat-Boudon 2001: 37–85.

7 NŚ I 57b: *tadante 'nukṛtir baddhā yathā daityāḥ surair jitāḥ//*.

8 For this, Abhinavagupta will offer another proof a bit farther on (ABh. *ad* NŚ I 67–68 (vol. I, 27)): the actors whose voices and gestures are paralyzed by the Vighnas in virtue of their *māyā* are the director of the troupe (the *sūtradhāra*) and his acolytes. Furthermore, Abhinavagupta reminds us, the *sūtradhāra* appears as such only in the prologue.

involving altercation and rout, where bodies are impaled and broken" (v. 58a),[9] the play must be assigned to one of three categories: *ḍima*, *samavakāra*, or *īhāmṛgā*.[10]

The narrative continues:

> Then the gods, Brahmā in the lead, extremely satisfied with the performance (*prayogaparitoṣitāḥ*), indeed made gifts of all facilities to my sons.[11]

Let us pause to consider the phrase "extremely satisfied with the performance (*prayogaparitoṣitāḥ*)". The commentary adduces several interpretations to which this phrasal unit lends itself.

The first, whose refutation will serve the exegete as basis for his own interpretation, is: "this signifies that one must describe, in order to please him, the heroic deeds of the patron (*prabhu*), at whose command the performance takes place – in this case [I may add], the gods, at whose behest the performance was undertaken."[12]

Pressing the logic of such an interpretation to its limit, Abhinavagupta observes that, if so, one would have to conclude that it was a contemporary event that was to have been represented on the stage (that is to say, an event contemporary to the audience itself, the gods and demons whose own deeds were represented before them). But this would contravene the exceptionless rule propounded in Chapter Ten, devoted to the ten dramatic genres (*daśarūpakalakṣaṇayuktivirodhāt*). Abhinavagupta continues:

> It will there be said that [one should represent only] an event well-known (*prasiddhacarita*; i.e. one 'belonging to a legendary past') or imaginary (*utpādyacarita*).[13]

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9 NŚ I 58a: [*anukṛtir baddhā*] *saṃpheṭavidravakṛtā chedyabhedyāhavātmikā/*.

10 Like the *samavakāra* and the *ḍima*, the *īhāmṛga*, among the ten genres (*daśarūpaka*), is full of noise and fury. It owes its name "seek-gazelle" (an epithet for the wolf, in everyday language) to the intrigue which is proper to it: the hero pursues (*īhate*) a celestial maiden who is as elusive as a gazelle (*mṛga*); see Lévi [1890] 1963: 145.

11 NŚ I 58b–59a: *tato brahmādayo devāḥ prayogaparitoṣitāḥ// pradadur matsutebhyas tu sarvopakaraṇāni vai//*.

12 It is indeed Brahmā who intimates the order to Bharata to organize the first performance: NŚ I 54–55ab: *mahān ayaṃ prayogasya samayaḥ pratyupasthitaḥ/ ayaṃ dhvajamahaḥ śrīmān mahendrasya pravartate// atredānīm ayaṃ vedo nāṭyasaṃjñaḥ prayujyatām/* ("Now comes a superb occasion for a performance. About to take place is the splendid Festival of great Indra's Banner. Let us here and now put into practice the Veda named 'theater'.")

13 ABh. *ad* NŚ I 58b (vol. I, 24): *prabhuparitoṣāya prabhucaritaṃ kadācin nāṭye varṇanīyam iti yathā daityāḥ surair jitā ity etasmāl labhyata iti kecid āhuḥ/ tad asat/ daśarūpakalakṣaṇayuktiviro dhāt/ tatra hi kiñcit prasiddhacaritaṃ kiñcid utpādyacaritam iti vakṣyate/*. The same principle applies in the definition of *nāṭaka* (NŚ XIX 145): *devatānām ṛṣīṇāṃ ca rājñāṃ cotkṛṣṭamedhasām/ pūrvavṛttānucaritaṃ nāṭakaṃ nāma bhavet/*. ("The past adventures of gods, of ascetic sages, of kings, of men endowed with a superior intelligence – we say that it is a *nāṭaka*.")

A rigorous demonstration follows, articulated in two parts. The representation of contemporary events would hinder our parallel accession both to aesthetic pleasure (*rasa*, *prīti*) and to instruction or edification (*vyutpatti*). On the one hand, such representation would leave no room for the development of the aesthetic process, which is itself the key to edification, as the organizing logic of the origin myth itself shows: in order to palliate the disorder of the world and extract humankind from its servile condition, a "Joyful Wisdom" (to borrow from Nietzsche's *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*) is needed (i.e. one not so grimly real or deadly serious as the Veda, but accessible to all in virtue of its playful and pleasing aspect). On the other hand, events represented on the stage as contemporaneous (with the audience) would imply that the necessary causal sequentiality of action and result would not be directly and immediately perceptible to the spectator, removing in this way all possibility that the theater might serve as a forum for edification. One might object that representing contemporary events on the stage need not in themselves hinder the apprehension of the causal relation of act and consequence. The commentary anticipates the difficulty by pointing out that every event represented on the stage should imply a moral sanction that imposes itself on everyone as indubitable – such authority as can only be conferred by tradition – and hence the requirement that the hero and his deeds be of an antiquity sufficient to assure their renown.

Let us examine this demonstration more closely. In the first stage, the representation of contemporary events inhibits the aesthetic process at its very source, namely, at the stage of generalization (or, of "putting at a distance" from oneself and one's immediate concerns (*sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*), which in turn provokes a chain reaction); without generalization, there is no "identification" with the personages represented (*tanmayībhāva*); without that, there is no pleasure (*rasa*, *prīti*) and, finally, there is no edification (*vyutpatti*).

> Imitation of contemporary deeds is not appropriate, for even edification is absent where there is no pleasure (*prīti*), which [lack of pleasure] results from the absence of identification [with the personages represented], which [in turn] is caused by affection, revulsion, or lack of interest [i.e. "real" emotions, or even boredom – all of which signify a failure of "generalization"] felt by the [spectators] who are to be edified.[14]

14 ABh. *ad* NŚ I 58b (vol. I, 24): *na ca vartamānacaritānukāro yuktaḥ/ vineyānāṃ tatra rāgadveṣamadhyasthādinā tanmayībhāvābhāve prīter abhāvena vyutpatter apy abhāvāt/*.

It is enough to turn the phrase around to discover, in the proper order, the stages of the aesthetic process, as one may reconstruct it following the commentary's argument: generalization ("distantiation"), identification, and aesthetic delight.[15]

It is an analysis that accords with the formula of Tacitus: *major e longinquo reverentia*, "respect increases with distance" (lit. [when the object is viewed] from afar), cited by Racine in the second preface to *Bazajet* (1676), in order to establish the conditions by which the theater functions and those of the pleasure that one thereby experiences:

> Tragic characters must be seen with an eye different from that with which we see ordinary characters, who are so close to us. One may say that the respect that one has for the hero increases in proportion to his distance from us: *major e longinquo reverentia.*

Abhinavagupta continues with the second stage of his demonstration, itself again in two parts:

> Moreover, where contemporary deeds [are at issue] – inasmuch as there is no direct apprehension (*apratyakṣatva*) of the relation between act and result in dharmic matters, etc. – a dramatic performance (*prayoga*) is useless, for, as the maxim says, "one cannot know the future".[16]

We notice here a theme dear to the commentator: in real life, witnessing *dharma* (that is to say, witnessing sacrifices and virtuous conduct) generally has no necessary pedagogic function, since the result of such acts and activities is often deferred, sometimes even to the next life, and so in the present moment is invisible. On the other hand, in the theater, understood as an act that is complete and finished, five or six days at most separate act and result,[17] the latter being clearly

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15 See Bansat-Boudon 1992b: 133–154.

16 ABh. *ad* NŚ I 58b (vol. I, 24), with correction of the text (*apratyakṣatve* instead of *pratyakṣatve*): *vartamānacarite ca dharmādikarmaphalasambandhasyāpratyakṣatve prayogavaiyarthyam/ apratyakṣatve bhaviṣyati pramāṇābhāvāt iti nyāyena/.*

17 ABh. *ad* NŚ I 14 (vol. I, 12): *evam api pratyakṣeṇa sadācārayajñādidarśanāt ko 'sya bedhaḥ/ āha – **sarve**ṣāṃ **karma**ṇāṃ kriyamāṇām **anu** paścād acireṇaiva kālena **darśakaṃ** pañcaṣādibhir eva divasaiḥ śubhāśubhakarmatatphalasambandhasākṣātkāro yatrety arthaḥ/* ("'How is it [viz. the immediate perception of *dharma* that one has in the theater] different from the perception of sacrifices and [other forms of] virtuous conduct, which are [themselves also] directly perceptible?' [Brahmā] answers, saying (v. 14b): *bhaviṣyataś ca lokasya sarvakarmānudarśakam*. [Abhinavagupta explains the compound as follows: "by 'all actions' (*sarvakarma°*) he means those actions presently undertaken [viz. in the theater]; by 'after' (*°anu°*) he means 'subsequently' [that is,] 'after a short space of time'; 'showing' (*°darśaka*) means that one has 'direct perception' (*sākṣātkāra*) [and now construing the compound as a whole]: 'the direct perception of the relation between good and bad acts [this is the final gloss of *sarvakarma*] and their results in the space of five or six days only'. [By this much is the theater different.]")

delineated and accredited by tradition. And so, inasmuch as the taught moral follows immediately upon the telling of the story, the theater's calling is unavoidably that of edification: one must act like Rāma, not like Rāvaṇa.

Therefore, concludes Abhinavagupta,

> Since one cannot describe the deeds of gods that are effected today [in the present age], and since this world is without beginning, [alone remains as a possible subject for the dramatist] the celebration of those deeds accomplished by gods and demons in an epoch (*manvantara*), etc.[18] of a preceding cycle of creation (*kalpa*). Such a celebration is in conformity with those authorized by Śruti and Smṛti. What is described here [in the prologue of the very first dramatic performance] is the conduct of those who belong to that category[19] [i.e. the conduct of gods and demons of preceding ages].[20]

Thus explaining the full meaning of "pleased with the [dramatic] performance" (*prayogaparitoṣitāḥ*), he continues:

> We will explain in what follows how the demons, deceived by the illusion [that they were witnessing] their [real] deeds (*caritrabhramavipralabdha*), began to be disturbed, whereas the satisfaction of the gods is here not due to the description of their own deeds [taken as real, but only to their representation]. This is why Bharata says *prayogaparitoṣitāḥ*, "extremely satisfied with the performance".[21]

We see, in light of the commentary, that the chronology of the beginnings of drama may be construed differently than is done by Kuiper. The combat of gods and demons that is represented in the archetypal performance cannot be, as he affirms (Kuiper 1989: 194), the one that just finished:

> According to this legend the first dramatical performance, after Brahmā had created the art as a fifth Veda, took place immediately after Indra's victory over the Daityas and Asuras and consisted of an imitation of his fight and victory.

Finally, it follows from the arguments put forth in the commentary that theater is intended for the *sahṛdaya*, that is, for the sensitive and intelligent spectator, able

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18 Viz. such and such *manvantara* and *yuga* within a preceding *kalpa*.

19 Literally, "that nature" (*jāti*).

20 ABh. *ad* NŚ I 58b (vol. I, 25): *devānāṃ tv adya prasiddhavarṇanīyāsambhavāt pūrvakalpaman vantarādigatadevāsuracaritakīrtanam anāditvāt saṃsārasya śrutismṛtyanumatadevāsurakīrtanavad iti/ tatra vartanopavarṇanaṃ tajjātīyānām…*

21 ABh. *ad* NŚ I 58b (vol. I, 25): *atha caritrabhramavipralabdhās tv asurāś cukṣubhur iti vakṣyāmaḥ/ na ca svacaritavarṇanād devānāṃ paritoṣa iha/ yata āha prayogaparitoṣitā iti/.*

to distinguish between life and the theater.[22] The gods are taken as emblematic of this spectator, whereas the demons, who take theater to be real, who have understood nothing of its "true lies", represent insensitive man, the *ahṛdaya*.

For this reason, I believe myself justified in disputing Kuiper's interpretation, whose rhetoric itself underscores – unbeknownst to himself, no doubt – the weakness of his conclusions:

> While the gods were elated, the Asuras were disconcerted because (as we may add) this "imitation" was in fact a new defeat by magical-religious means. (Kuiper 1989: 194)

And, later on:

> Every dramatic performance has potentially a dangerous "magical" power which arouses the resistance of an obstruction by fiendish spirits. (Kuiper 1989: 194–195)

His is an interpretation more or less ethnological in spirit, based not on the *Nāṭyaśāstra* or its commentary, but – or so it seems – on modes of thinking which we could say are typically Western: recourse to "magic" (always "dangerous"), from which we are asked nevertheless to distance ourselves by the use of parentheses ("as we may add") and quotation marks ("magical"), in order to explain phenomena of a religious kind, or, more generally, whatever escapes our understanding.

What is implicitly at stake in this passage from the *Nāṭyaśāstra* is rather an embryonic aesthetics, given scenic form, so to say, through the origin myth of the theater, and contained in exemplary fashion in the phrasal unit *prayogaparitoṣitāḥ* – an *aesthetica in nuce*.

Later on, Brahmā will make these matters more precise in the course of a dialogue with the demons (vv. 99–119): the theater should be a moment of truce, where gods and demons watch their eternal combat, no longer engaged in the fury of their real battle, and where even the partisans of unrighteousness (*adharma*), the demons, should be able to witness the representation of both good and bad conduct, thereby enjoy aesthetic delight, and at the same time learn the lesson of the spectacle, to act righteously according to *dharma*.

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22 For a definition of *sahṛdaya*, see Shastri 1940, *Vṛtti ad* I 1: *yeṣāṃ kāvyānuśīlanābhyāsavaśād viśādībhūte manomukure varṇanīyatanmayībhāvanayogyatā te svahṛdayasaṃvādabhājaḥ sahṛdayāḥ*. ("Those who have the capacity of identifying with the matter being depicted, whose mirror-like hearts are made limpid by the study and assiduous practice of poetry, and whose hearts correspond [to that of the poet] – it is they who are termed *sahṛdaya*.")

This functions on one condition: to take the theater for what it is, not the world but the representation of a world. Being a spectator means opening oneself to an aesthetic experience. Recognition of the otherworldly, extraordinary (*alaukika*) character of theater determines, accordingly, in Indian argumentation, the division of the society, whether divine or mortal, into beings both sensitive (*sahṛdaya*) and insensitive (*ahṛdaya*) – an aesthetico-psychological dichotomy that is at the same time a social dichotomy.

Since aesthetic emotion and edification are indissociable, it is evident that he who is sensitive is also righteous (*dharmika*); similarly, he who is insensitive is unrighteous (*adharmika*). Moreover, since in the myth of origin gods and demons are figures emblematic of these categories, it remains only to ponder the truth of a similar equation: he who is insensitive is demoniac, while he who is sensitive is divine.

Sensitivity, therefore, in the last analysis, is the organizing principle behind the division of beings into orders divine and demonic, for it is always possible to escape from one's condition, provided that one resolves to do it and that one receives the appropriate instruction. In his commentary on Brahmā's lecture intended to prove to the demons his impartiality ("one must recognize the theater as a place where are displayed the deeds of gods, demons, kings, householders, and ascetic sages"), Abhinavagupta attributes to the creator god Brahmā the view that, among the demons also, one finds some who are virtuous and worthy of praise: "consequently, where Bali, Prahlāda, and others are celebrated for their observance of righteous conduct (*dharma*), or for their spontaneous and sincere generosity, he also [viz. the demon] is glorified as the basis [of the deeds shown on the stage]."[23] In the same way, properly educated – to which end Brahmā applies himself extensively at the close of Chapter One – even the demons, and demons they are still, may hope to transform themselves into perfect spectators (*sahṛdaya*).

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23 ABh. *ad* NŚ I 118 (vol. I, 4): *ata eva yatra nirvyājasahajaudāryadharmādiviṣaye baliprahlādaprabhṛteḥ prasiddhis tatra so 'py udīrita āśrayatvena/.*

ANNEX

The Abhinavabhāratī *and the* Vākyapadīya

The satisfaction of the gods – a sign of their perfect sensitivity – manifests itself in turn by the presents offered to the actors at the conclusion of the prologue.[24] Among them is an umbrella (*chatra*) presented by Sūrya.[25] The commentary observes that *chatra* here signifies *vitāna*, 'canopy', the canopy "that is the image of the clouds to which the sun gives birth".[26]

At this point, the commentary adds a citation, quite corrupt, that in itself makes little sense: *ṛtave varṣānte mahato meghasampravān iti*.[27]

I have come upon this text in the *Vṛtti* to *Vākyapādīya* I 1. It is a portion of a long citation of unknown provenance that defines Brahman in twelve verses. The whole verse, of which Abhinavagupta cites only the second half, is (in my translation):

> *prakṛtitvam api prāptān vikārān ākaroti saḥ/*
>
> *ṛtudhāmeva grīṣmānte mahato meghasamplavān//*
>
> [Brahman] is that which gives form to phenomena, even those absorbed in their original form, as does the sun (*ṛtudhāman*), at the end of summer, in giving form to great masses of clouds.

This discovery has the double merit of correcting the text of the *Abhinavabhāratī* and, *vice versa*, of contributing to a better understanding of the *Vṛtti* on *Vākyapadīya* I 1. We note, in effect, that Madeleine Biardeau, whose translation I have followed above, renders *ṛtudhāman* by "la force de la saison",[28] without commenting further.

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24 NŚ I 58b–59a, cited *supra*, n. 12.

25 NŚ I 60b.

26 ABh. *ad* NŚ I 60b: *chatram atra vitānaḥ/ jaladānāṃ sūryodbhavatvāt tatpratimaḥ/*.

27 The edition of M. Shastri (1971: 91) emends (arbitrarily, it seems): *ṛtau pravarṣanti mahānto meghā iti*. The most recent "critical" edition of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and of the *Abhinavabhāratī*, namely, the revised GOS edition (originally published by M.R. Kavi in 1926 and republished in 1992 by K. Krishnamoorthy) proposes (with a question mark) one correction only: *meghasamplavād iti (?)*. I took up the question again to show (see Bansat-Boudon 2011: 49–52) that in his *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivimarśinī* (IV 1, 12; vol. 3, 393), Abhinavagupta, commenting on Utpaladeva's *Vivṛti*, which quotes precisely the same verse of Bhartṛhari as the one given in the *Abhinavabhāratī*, explicitly glosses *ṛtudhāma* as 'sun' (*aditya*).

28 Biardeau 1964: "C'est lui qui donne forme aux phénomènes, même à ceux qui étaient résorbés dans la forme originelle, tout comme la force de la saison [*ṛtudhāman*], à la fin de l'été, donne forme à de grands amas de nuages."

Now, the context of the citation in the *Abhinavabhāratī* establishes without a doubt the sense of 'sun' for *ṛtudhāman*, which then would signify rather 'light of the season'; this is how K.A.S. Iyer understands it, who translates "lustre of the seasons" without however associating it explicitly with a periphrasis of the sun.[29] Incidentally, Iyer ([1965] 1995) interprets the first half-verse differently: "He is the creator of those objects which are looked upon as ultimate causes, just as the lustre of the seasons is the creator of the masses of clouds at the end of summer."

The interpretation of Madeleine Biardeau appears to be preferable, for it better reflects the *bhedābheda* type of non-dualism[30] that is expressed in the verse – and whose coherence becomes more manifest, provided one understands *ṛtudhāman* as "sun". Note however that this would, as far as I know, constitute the only known occurrence of *ṛtudhāman* as a name of the Sun.

Moreover, this identification of the citation from the *Abhinavabhāratī* confirms what we know already: Abhinavagupta is a reader of the *Vākyapadīya*. Another corrupt passage of the *Abhinavabhāratī* (*ad* NŚ XXII 45) bears witness to this. It is presented by both the Gaekwad (vol. 3, 170) and Parimal (vol. 3, 164) editions as doubtful:

eko navavaca [...] *śabdaḥ kramo yudhyataḥ suhṛdbhir (?)*[31]

A fortuitous discovery[32] has permitted me to identify the quotation as belonging to *Vākyapadīya* II 1b, part of a passage (II 1–2) which presents itself as a synthesis of theories of the sentence:

ākhyātaś śabdasaṃghāto jātiḥ saṃghātavarttinī/
eko 'navayavaḥ śabdaḥ kramo buddhyanusaṃhṛtiḥ//
padam ādyaṃ pṛthak sarvapadaṃ sākāṃkṣam ity api/
vākyaṃ prati matir bhinnā bahudhā nyāyavādinām//.

I have analyzed the text subsequently (see Bansat-Boudon 1992a: 371, n. 396).

29 Iyer [1965] 1995.
30 See Bansat-Boudon 2011: 72–74.
31 The GOS edition proposes an emendation: *ekainaiva vacaḥ krameṇa (?)*.
32 It was a time when electronic resources were still in their infancy...

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UPARŪPAKA AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE PERFORMING ARTS OF INDIA

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One of the unresolved questions about the history of the performing arts of India concerns the category called *uparūpaka*.[1] The term *uparūpaka* is obviously related to the more clearly definable category of *rūpaka* but the precise relationship between the two, if any, is not so clear. *Rūpaka* was the term used unambiguously by Bharata for drama, that is, a narrative acted on stage, and that is the sense in which the term was used by the generation of writers on the performing arts who followed Bharata. No such consensus exists about *uparūpaka*. If *rūpaka* was the generic term for drama in the age of Bharata and remained so later, what might *uparūpaka* signify? In this paper I am trying, first, to understand the exact nature of the term *uparūpaka*, and second, to grasp its implications for the cultural history of the performing arts of India.

In the earliest extant account of the performing arts of India, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata,[2] drama and dance are conceived as distinctly separate arts, and although they might be components of a single performative event or share techniques of presentation in common, they would still remain separate parts of the stage event. In Bharata's view, drama was a narrative representation, while dance, for which he used the term *nṛtta*, was a non-representational system of body movements designed to create the beauty of form rather than to represent action or emotional states. The term used by Bharata for drama was *rūpaka*, a usage carried on by generations of writers on the performing arts of India. A *rūpaka* was a dramatic narrative with a structured plot. Bharata classified the *rūpaka* into ten types according to their content and structural form. For instance, a *rūpaka* telling an already known story in five to ten acts would be of the *nāṭaka* type, a *rūpaka* telling an invented story in five to ten acts would be of the *prakaraṇa* type, and a *rūpaka* telling a story in one act with a single character of the *bhāṇa*

1 A previously published essay of mine on this topic but treated from a different perspective is "Uparūpaka: a hybrid genre of drama in the Sanskritic tradition" (Bose 2000).

2 The *Nāṭyaśāstra* is believed to have been written close to the second century CE (Kane 1961: 47; Bose 1991a: 7–8n.).

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type. The technique for the presentation of drama was called *abhinaya*, of which there were four modes: *āṅgika*, *vācika*, *āhārya* and *sāttvika*.

This taxonomy of drama remains clear enough until we encounter another term, *uparūpaka*, literally, a lesser drama. If *rūpaka* was the generic term for drama in the age of Bharata and remained so later, what might *uparūpaka* signify? This was a term that came into use not till the fourteenth century, nor did it replace *rūpaka* as a signifier. Evidently, the invention of the term was a response to the need for describing a range of performing arts excluded from the category of *rūpaka* and yet, by virtue of their form, allied to *rūpaka*. From the descriptions of these performances that we find in a variety of early texts, it seems that the reason for excluding them from the *rūpaka* genre lay in their preference for telling stories through songs or dances or both, which did not leave much room for extended and developed narratives. These were thus hybrid art forms straddling the margins of music, dance, and drama but in themselves distinct enough to constitute a genre. This marginal character of *uparūpaka* requires a clear understanding of the relationship between dance, drama, and music, especially the first two since they are closer to one another as arts of the body and space. In investigating that relationship it is useful to examine evidence both in the form of contemporary descriptions of these arts and the history of the development of the terminology by which the authors of these descriptions attempted to define the nature of dance and drama. I shall begin with this second source first.

In speaking of drama, Bharata speaks of dance and music as ancillaries to the performance of a play. Songs might be sung during the course of a drama but only to provide resonance to the emotional state of a dramatic character rather than telling part of the story (for instance, the song of Hamsapadikā in the *Abhijñānaśakutntalam*). Dances were indeed standard components of the total performance that Bharata describes but they did not carry the narrative burden of the drama. Dance served as no more than a part of the preliminaries to a dramatic performance and was intended to draw the audience to the performance by its sheer sensuous charm. It is essential to note at this point that this kind of dance, *nṛtta*, was non-representational and that Bharata does not attribute to dance any narrative content. The term *nṛtya*, which signifies a representational style of dancing, does not occur in Bharata but came into use at a later point in the history of India's performing arts.

It seems, then, that in the earliest recorded period of India's cultural history, dance and drama were clearly separated genres, though mutually supporting ones. Yet, the advent and growing currency of the term *nṛtya* shows that this generic separation was being increasingly bridged. Since *nṛtya* by definition was representational, it necessarily employed the technique of *abhinaya* even as it

remained true to the aesthetic imperative of creating pleasure out of the form of movements. Soon after Bharata, there began to appear many other types of performing arts similar to *nṛtya* that were representational but not drama proper inasmuch as they lacked the substantial narrative content and structural organization of a play. As noted above, these were clearly in a class by themselves, which required a name, and the term *uparūpaka*, denoting a minor branch of drama, was the most fitting name for what we may loosely call playlets.

Within the category of *rūpaka*, Bharata and other early writers placed ten major types of drama, all of which require the skills of *abhinaya*, that is, acting, which has four modes of presentation: namely, *āṅgika* (expressive body movements), *vācika* (verbal communication), *āhārya* (costume and stage properties), and *sāttvika* (emotional expression). The ten types of drama described by Bharata are *naṭaka*, *prakaraṇa*, *aṅka*, *vyāyoga*, *bhāṇa*, *samavakāra*, *vīthi*, *prahasana*, *ḍima*, and *ihāmṛga*, and the term *nṛtya* is not mentioned by Bharata in any context. In giving his account of drama, Bharata also deals with dance as an allied art, devoting several chapters to stylized body movements. He places dance in the context of the preliminaries of a play and suggests that stylized body movements are as necessary for dramatic presentation as for dance.[3] That a connection between dance and drama was a common assumption becomes clear when we see that Abhinavagupta, the tenth-century commentator on the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, correlates some of the *karaṇa*s (dance poses used as choreographic units) with particular dramatic characters.[4] Bharata's own interests seem to have been in the broader principles and practices of stage presentation.

Bharata views the technique of body movements as an integral tool of dramatic performances, while he accords to music a less important part. It is important to note that Bharata recognizes the art of body movements as a discipline in itself, and that this discipline could be employed in both dance and drama. Taking this art as an essential tool, he uses five terms to describe dance: *nṛtta*, *tāṇḍava*, *piṇḍībandha*, *sukumāraprayoga*, and *abhinaya*. He uses the terms *nṛtta* and *tāṇḍava* synonymously to denote dances composed of non-representational movements pleasing to the senses and conveying the beauty of form (NŚ 4.261). The term *piṇḍībandha* means dances by a number of *nartakī*s (female performers), who group themselves on the stage to form various figures that represent different gods and goddesses emblematically in order to show reverence to them (NŚ 4.252–259, 4.287–290), while *sukumāraprayoga* denotes a graceful and

3 In one verse he recommends the use of the *karaṇa*s (components of *nṛtta* = dance) in the body of the drama to typify characters by their gaits and to convey the moods of battle scenes (NŚ 4.56).
4 See *Abhinavabharatī* on the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, I, 206.

delicate style of executing dance movements (NŚ 4.250).[5] The term *abhinaya*, however, is used in more than one context. In the context of the preliminaries of a play, it is the art of miming the meaning of a song by using gestures and body movements (NŚ 4.283). In the context of a play, Bharata uses the same term to mean the use of verbal inflections supported by body movements and emotional expression. Stylized movements are vital to it. Thus, the term *abhinaya* in Bharata encompasses more than the simple idea of miming or acting.

The treatises on dance and drama that appeared after Bharata followed in the main his schemes of categorizing the performing arts but elaborated the classification and introduced additional categories. With this expansion and the resulting proliferation of technical terms, the conceptual vocabulary for dance and drama became extremely complex and often confusing, as we find in a wide range of literature written after the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.[6] However, in a countervailing trend toward rationalization, the terms used for the many features of dance and drama were absorbed into two broad categories in the medieval period in addition to the basic category known as *rūpaka*. These two categories are *nṛtya* and *uparūpaka*, and they have to be examined closely to understand the evolutionary process of the performing arts, especially because the widening meaning of these terms renders their exact import often uncertain. For instance, the term *nṛtya* has caused considerable confusion because it was used synonymously with *nāṭya* in the early period but later underwent a change in connotation.[7] By the tenth century, *nṛtya* shed its ambiguity and came to mean mimetic dance, no doubt dramatic in its representational force but without the sustained narrative content of drama. But these categories still left several types of performing arts unlabeled, and eventually these were the arts that were included under *uparūpaka*, a separate category different from non-representational dance on the one hand and drama on the other. Still more complications arise in understanding the reality behind these terms when we find that in the early writings *nṛtya* is separated also from *uparūpaka* even though both are representational arts. How did they differ? Simply put, they differed in their use of *abhinaya*. *Nṛtya* employed only three of the four components of *abhinaya*: *āṅgika* (or body movements), *sāttvika*

5 *Piṇḍībandha* is no longer in use, either in dance literature or in dance performances. *Sukumāraprayoga* is not a category of dance but a mode of presentation.

6 Kalidāsa, Harṣa, Dāmodaragupta, and Kauṭilya are some of the writers who used the terms *chalita*, *dvipadī*, *rāsaka*, *carcarī*, *hallisaka*, *saṅgītaka*, etc. to signify mimetic dance pieces.

7 In the *Amarakoṣa, nāṭya* and *nṛtya* appear as synonymous terms (Amarasiṁha 1808: 42). The confusion evidently arose from the fact that both *nāṭya* and *nṛtya* denote a representational art; however, even in early commentaries they are taken to differ in scope and method. See Bose 1991a: 29, 169.

(or expression/representation), and *āhārya* (or costumes and stage properties). In contrast, *uparūpaka* made use of all four components, including the *vācika* or verbal *abhinaya*. In this it resembled *rūpaka*, but unlike *rūpaka* it had neither the substantial narrative content nor the structure of *rūpaka* as defined by Bharata and endorsed by those who followed in his footsteps.

It is, then, safe to say that *nṛtya* and *uparūpaka* are closely related. But could we further specify their relationship? Are we considering a hierarchy of categories here? Was *nṛtya* different from *uparūpaka* or was *nṛtya* simply one variety of *uparūpaka*? The term *nāṭya* appears for the first time in the *Daśarūpaka* of Dhanañjaya, in Dhanika's commentary in the tenth century, while *uparūpaka* appears in the fourteenth century in the *Sāhityadarpaṇa* of Viśvanātha Kavirāja.[8] In Dhanañjaya's time, *nṛtya* definitely signified a category different from drama since he kept it separate from the ten major forms of drama which he described after Bharata. Since *nṛtya* is absent from the taxonomy that was outlined by Bharata and accepted by Dhanañjaya and Viśvanātha, it could have been neither *nṛtta* (dance) nor *rūpaka* (drama). This does not mean that *nṛtya* and the seven constituent types attributed to it by Dhanika, the commentator on the *Daśarūpaka*, did not exist before Dhanañjaya or Viśvanātha but rather suggests that if they did exist, they were not prominent enough to be parts of the mainstream of the tradition of the performing arts that Bharata had made his subject. It is possible that they were simply left undescribed, just as regional varieties of dancing were acknowledged but not described by Bharata (NŚ 9.164).

To return to the relationship between *nṛtya* and *uparūpaka*, the evidence consists, first, in the cryptic glosses on technical terms in dramaturgical treatises before and after these terms begin to appear and, second, in the contexts in which they appear. Between the time Bharata wrote his *Nāṭyaśāstra* (*c.* second-century CE) and Abhinavagupta wrote his commentary on it in the tenth century, eight terms (*dvipadī*, *śamyā*, *rāsaka*, *skandhaka*, *chalika*, *carcarī*, *lāsya*, and *saṅgītaka*) appear in more than one text, denoting some form of representation or the other.[9] Most of these terms disappeared from dance literature after the early period, except *lāsya* and *rāsaka*, and the meaning of these two changed significantly over the centuries. Bharata described *lāsya* as a presentation style rather than a particular regimen.[10] But soon after Bharata it came to be identified as a form of dancing distinguished by delicate movements. *Rāsaka* has survived

8 *Nṛtya* first appears in *Daśarūpaka* 1.9 (*Avaloka* of Dhanika) and *uparūpaka* in *Sāhityadarpaṇa* 6.6.

9 For full descriptions of all eight terms, see Bose 1991a: 156–165.

10 See Bose 1987: 125ff.

as a group dance, a form of *nṛtya* connected with religious festivals in a number of regions in India where legends of Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā, and the *gopī*s are performed.[11] Since the eight terms mentioned here seem to have denoted dance pieces with representational content, it is hard to categorize them either as dance or as drama, especially because they appear mostly in *kāvya* and *alaṁkāra* literature, where they are never clearly defined. The example of just one term, *dvipadī*, will demonstrate the difficulty of reconstruction. It will also explain why it became so necessary to find a single generic term to absorb the idea of a performance type that was neither a play nor a dance but a blend of both.

The first reference to the term *dvipadī* is found in the *Kāvyālaṁkāra* of Bhāmaha, who defines it as a mimetic presentation: *abhineyārtham* (*Kāvyālaṁkāra* 1.24). But in later times it was identified with musical composition, meter, and tempo to which a delicate dance was sometimes performed. Lexically, *dvipadī* literally means a composition consisting of two meters or two verses. However, in Kālidāsa's *Vikromorvaśīyam* it appears as a graceful body movement when Urvaśī's friend Citralekhā moves about in *dvipadikā* (Act IV, prose passages following verses 1, 5 and 7): *praveśāntare dvipadikayā diśo'valokya* "after entering looks in all directions in *dvipadī*"; *anantare dvipadikayā diśo'valokya* "afterwards looks in all directions in *dvipadī*" and *dvipadikayotthāya* "after getting up in *dvipadī*".[12] Each of these stage directions is followed by a verse. Again on the same page we find the stage direction: *dvipadikayā diśo'valokya niḥśvasya sāsram* "afterwards looking in all directions in *dvipadī* and sighing with tears". A prose line follows which also refers to body movements. In *Mālatīmādhavam*, Jagaddhara, the commentator describes Mādhava's entrance in *dvipadikā*: *Mādhavapraveśa iha dvipadikayā* "Mādhava here enters in *dvipadikā*", which indicates a slow movement (*gamanamalasam*). This expresses a sad state of mind.[13] Rāghavabhaṭṭa takes *dvipadikā* as a laya or tempo: *dvipadīnāmā layabhedaḥ* "*dvipadī* is the name of a type of tempo".[14] Raghavan says that "from the *laya* to the song and from the song to the dance, the name *dvipadī* has had its semantic extension", and Raghavan also refers to a *dvipadikā* meter and a *dvipadikā* song still current in Telugu- and Tamil-speaking areas.[15] Warder cites Harśa's *Ratnāvalī* where two

11 D.R. Mankad (1936: 91–144), V. Raghavan (1963: 545–574), and A.K. Warder (1972, I: 138–168) have described these terms in their studies of drama.

12 *Vikromorvaśīya*, Velankar ed. 1961: 61, 65, 66.

13 *śokavibhramayukte tu vyādhicintāsamāśrite /*
śrutavārtādivairūpye yojyā dvipadikā budhaih //
Mālatīmadhavam, Bhandarkar ed., 1876: 36.

14 Rāghavabhaṭṭa's commentary on *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, Kale ed., 1925: 8.

15 Raghavan 1963: 561.

actresses are directed to act and sing a *dvipadīkhaṇḍa*, a sub-variety of *dvipadī*.[16] Bhoja, in his *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, refers to *dvipadī* as one of the features of *nartanaka*, a minor drama (*padārthābhinayātmaka prekṣyaprabandha*, that is, a composition which is to be seen and which conveys the meaning of words).[17] Śārṅgadeva in his *Saṅgītaratnākara* views *dvipadī* as a musical composition sung to *karuṇa tāla*, while in the *Nāṭyadarpaṇa*, Rāmacandra and Guṇacandra identify it as a meter. On the other hand, *dvipadī* is described as a *laya* by Dāmodaragupta in his *Kuṭṭanīmatam*.[18] Puṇḍarīka Viṭṭhala, in his *Nartananirṇaya*, merely follows Śārṅgadeva in defining *dvipadī* and agrees that it is a musical composition (NN 3.371). K.S. Upadhyaya says that *dvipadī* is still used in *yakṣagāna*, one of the folk dance-dramas of Andhra,[19] a surprising fact because there is no mention of *dvipadī* as a drama or a dance even in late medieval literature, in which it is generally taken as a musical composition.

Upadhyaya's information bears out precisely the argument offered here, namely, that terms such as *dvipadī* reveal a confusing fluidity of meaning. Five other terms, *śamyā*, *chalika*, *skandhaka*, *saṅgātaka*, and *carcarī* have similar histories of drifting from the arena of drama to that of music or musical plays,[20] while *lāsya* and *rāsaka* came to be identified with dancing even though they were conceived as dramatic presentations to begin with. The uncertainty about their identity is not surprising, given that they existed on the margins of drama as less substantial forms of performance. But substantial or not, that there were many such forms is acknowledged by several early authors who state that descriptions of these forms, omitted by themselves, were to be found elsewhere. A case in point is Abhinavagupta, who gives the names of minor types of drama, for which he cites Kohala and authorities even older than Kohala as sources.[21] None of these textual sources is extant and we have no knowledge of the dramatic types they described. But Abhinavagupta's reference confirms that they did exist. Equally, the absence of the actual texts simply compounds the confusion about their generic identity.

Even those authors who provide some descriptive comments on these types tend to confuse them. Bhāmaha, the earliest extant writer of *alaṁkāra* literature, cites the terms *dvipadī*, *śamyā*, *rāsaka*, and *skandhaka* as stage presentations, qualifying them as *abhineyārtham* (i.e. meant to be acted), which suggests that

16 *Ratnāvalī*, Shastri ed., 1978: 6; Warder 1972, I: 153.
17 Raghavan 1963: 555.
18 SR 4. 213–219; ND 1929: 214; *Kuṭṭanīmatam*, Kāvyamālā ed., III: 338, 858.
19 Upadhyaya, *Sangeet Natak*, no. 11: 39.
20 See Bose 1991a: 158–165.
21 NŚ, I: 171, 181–182.

they might be plays, but it appears rather that they are mimetic dances. Daṇḍin, the next writer on *alaṁkāra*, does not add to our understanding when he defines the terms *lāsya*, *chalika*, and *śamyā* as *prekṣyārtha* (i.e. meant to be seen). This does not identify them either as dance or as dramatic pieces. Neither Bhāmaha nor Daṇḍin provides any clue to their identities beyond their cryptic qualifiers. Abhinavagupta improves on this somewhat casual practice in his list of ten types of minor dramatic presentations. Nine of these, namely, *ḍombikā*, *bhāṇa*, *prasthāna*, *ṣidgaka*, *bhāṇikā*, *preraṇa*, *rāmakrīḍā*, *hallīsaka*, or *āsaka*, are claimed to have been derived from older authorities (the *cirantana*, or perennial authorities), and the tenth, *kāvya*, from Kohala. Abhinavagupta's discussion of these types, though brief, is sufficient to indicate that they were short dramatic pieces that conveyed the sense of emotional states by miming specific situations which required at least one, sometimes several dancers, usually female but occasionally male. Their performances were not simply mimes but rigorously structured dances set to specific *tāla a*nd *laya*. Once again, we have evidence of hybrid forms. Abhinavagupta adds another dimension to our understanding of these performances by describing them under five categories: *rāgakāvya*, *nṛttakāvya*, *rāgadarśanīya*, *gīyamānarūpaka*, and *nṛttapradhānarāgakāvya*.

The textual tradition in the performing arts clearly attests to scholarly awareness of the existence of dramatic arts beyond the limits of full-fledged drama. Even though the evidence is scanty, their existence is left in no doubt by references to them. Some of the terms we have examined occur in more than one writer before Abhinavagupta. Vātsyāyana (believed to be from the third century CE)[22] in his *Kāmasūtra* mentions *hallīsaka*, *nāṭyarāsaka*, *prekṣaṇaka*, and *goṣṭhī*.[23] Kumārila (believed to have lived between 590–650 CE)[24] in his *Tantravārtika* mentions *dvipadī* and *rāsaka*.[25] Since both Vātsyāyana and Kumārila predate Abhinavagupta, who cites them as authorities, their inclusion of the same terms testifies to a continuing tradition of recognizing minor dramatic types. Similarly, the *Agnipurāṇa* lists twenty-seven varieties of dramatic arts but neither describes them nor places them within any broad category.[26] On examining the names, we find that the first ten belong to the class of *rūpaka*s. The remaining seventeen are not defined but seem to be minor dramas (AP 338.2–4) because they seem to be the *abhineya kāvya*s, poetry to be acted out, that the preceding chapter of the text (AP 337.1, 39) mentions. Dhanika's *Avaloka* on the *Daśarūpaka*, as noted

22 Warder 1972, I: 11.
23 KS I.6; II.10.25.
24 Krishnamachariar 1974: 618.
25 *Tantravārtika*, Chowkhamba ed.: 279.
26 De 1960: 99.

earlier, names seven classes of *nṛtya* (DR 8), but like other texts this too offers no explanation.

The only descriptive account to succeed Abhinavagupta's brief mention of ten minor dramatic types is by Bhoja. Bhoja provides us with a fuller picture with two parallel lists, one setting out twelve major types of drama, *vākyārthābhinayātmaka prekṣyaprabandha*, and the other naming twelve minor types which Bhoja classifies as *padārthābhinayātmaka prekṣyaprabandha*, that is, compositions that are to be seen which also mime the meaning of words. He includes *dombālikā*, which could be the same as the *dombikā* mentioned in the *Abhinavabhāratī*.[27] The authors of the *Nāṭyadarpaṇa*, following Bhoja's description, describe fourteen such types, which they call *anyāni rūpakāṇi*, that is, other kinds of *rūpaka*s, obviously being unable to call them *rūpaka*s but at a loss to find a suitable generic term for them. The difficulty of finding a class name for these performances is evident also in Hemacandra, another writer on poetics, who places minor dramas under the class *geya*, that is, pieces to be sung (KAnu.H. 327–329). Following Hemacandra, Vāgbhaṭa (KAnu.V. 18) invents the term *geyarūpaka* as the class name. Both these writers quote the *Abhinavabhāratī* for the views of the old authorities and cite Bhoja's view of *goṣṭhī*. Their lists include *śrīgadita*, a minor dramatic performance.

From this later period onward, interest quickens in what was treated so far as peripheral performing arts. More types are listed and descriptions begin to appear. Sāgaranandin in his *Nāṭakalakṣaṇaratnakoṣa* (126–134) lists fifteen minor types of drama with brief descriptions. Two types of dramatic presentations that he mentions, *nāṭikā* and *toṭaka*, are however not placed in any particular category. Sāradātanaya provides the longest list by far of minor dramatic types, describing all twenty of them, calling them *rūpaka* and *nṛtyabheda* (BhP 255). Viśvanātha in his *Sāhityadarpaṇa* lists two fewer, eighteen in all, but he describes all of them in detail. More importantly, it is he who first uses the term *uparūpaka* as a category into which these minor types are to be placed, and it is a term that quickly passed into common usage by writers on dramatic art (SD 6.6). Since Viśvanātha's time, no other term for minor drama has been used in the Sanskritic tradition.

Beginning in the thirties, modern scholars have attempted to refine our understanding of the nature of *uparūpaka*s, although often on the basis of insufficient evidence. D.R. Mankad made the first detailed study of those types of drama that involved dancing, comparing their characteristics in tabular form,[28] but he drew occasional inferences that have since proven to be unwarranted and set

27 Raghavan 1963: 567.
28 Mankad 1936: 129–131.

right by subsequent writers based on additional material, the two most sustained investigations being those by V. Raghavan and A.K. Warder.[29] Surprisingly, the difference between *nṛtya* and *uparūpaka* continued to cause some confusion even though the available descriptions of the wide variety of dramatic arts make that difference clear. As I have outlined above, *nṛtya* employed only body movements and carried dramatic overtones with no speech. In contrast, *uparūpaka* used both body movements and speech, as in drama proper, except that it was narrower in scope than major dramatic types. Both were regarded as stage performances but the first category consisted of mimetic dances and, from the time of Śārṅgadeva, was designated as *nṛtya*. The second category consisted of minor types of drama, of which there was a sufficient variety to require a broad class designation. For this purpose, the term *uparūpaka* was a happy invention, suggesting an identity leaning towards but distinct from drama.

At this point a brief discussion of the numerous terms for musical plays, dance dramas, dramatic dances, and mimetic dances that were used by the early authors to signify the variety of performing arts in their times would help to underline how broad the spectrum of dramatic arts was. In the *Abhinavabhāratī,* Abhinavagupta uses five terms: *rāgakāvya* (a musical play) (NŚ, I, 172, 174, 181–182), *nṛttakāvya* (a dance drama) (175, 177), *rāgadarśanīya* (a musical presentation to be seen) (172), *gīyamānarūpaka* (a play to be sung) (171, 175–176, 180), and *nṛttapradhānarāgakāvya* (a musical play presented principally through dance) (180). While Dhanika uses the term *nṛtyabheda* for minor dramatic presentations (DR 8), Sāradātanaya refers to these presentations both as *rūpaka*s (dramas) (BhP 221) and *nṛtyabheda*s (BhP 181, 255). Bhoja refers to them as *padārthābhinayātmaka prekṣyaprabandha*s (compositions to be seen, which mime the meaning of words) (ŚṛP, II, 466–469). Both Vāgbhaṭa and Hemacandra mark them as *geya* (compositions to be sung) (KAnu.H. 327–329; KAnu.V. 18). Rāmacandra and Guṇacandra call them simply the other *rūpaka*s (ND 190). Sāgaranandin lists the types without placing them under any class (NLRK 113–114, 126–134) and Viśvanātha calls all of them *uparūpaka*s (minor dramas) (SD 6.6). Conflating all these accounts, we gather altogether thirty varieties of dramatic art that may be called *uparūpaka*s. Some of these are discussed in greater detail than others, which perhaps indicates their popularity.

Apart from their common hybridity, these minor types are also similar in following the mode of performance known as *kaiśikīvṛtti,* which includes song

29 Raghavan's most exhaustive study of *uparūpaka*s occurs in his study of Bhoja's *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa* (1964–1965, 1966–1967: 31–54; 1963: 545–574). Warder's discussion appears in his study of minor dramatic types (1972, I: 137–168). See also Bose 1991a: 154–193.

and dance.[30] However, not all minor dramatic types that used dancing could be called musical plays, nor did they use all the features of *kaiśikīvṛtti*. Hence, a detailed discussion of as much information on these art forms as can be found in all available sources is given below to clarify what they were. These minor dramatic types are thirty in number and they developed through a period of almost eighteen centuries. Except for *karṇa* all the other types are described in more than one text. These thirty types of minor dramatic performances known as *uparūpaka*s appear both in the works on poetics and in the manuals on drama, dance, and music. Three broad classes appear to have emerged through the evolutionary process of minor dramatic types. They can be classified as: a) verbal presentations, without any music or dance; b) verbal presentations, with music and dance; and c) primarily dance dramas, or musical plays. The first category includes: *durmallikā*, *prekṣaṇaka*, *mallikā*, *preraṇa*,[31] *śilpaka*, and *saṁlāpa*. The second category includes: *nāṭikā*, *troṭaka*, *kalpavallī*, *prakaraṇa*, and *saṭṭaka*. The third category has two subdivisions, namely, musical plays and dance dramas. The following types of musical plays are mentioned: *kāvya*, *prasthānaka*, *rāmakrīḍā* (this may be included in the first type but its definition is not clear), *ullāpyaka*, and *ṣidgaka*. The other subcategory, that of dance drama, includes the following: *goṣṭhī*, *ḍombī*, *nartanaka*, *nāṭyarāsaka*, *pārijātaka*, *vāra*, *vilāsikā*, *bhāṇaka*, *bhāṇikā*, *bhāṇī*, *rāsaka*, and *hallīsaka*. Of these, *goṣṭhī*, *ḍombī*, *rāsaka*, *nāṭyarāsaka*, and *hallīsaka* may be considered as a separate group, for they are exclusively dance compositions. To this group belongs one of the few surviving forms from this period, namely, *rāsaka* or *rāsa*, which is still practiced in Gujarat and Manipur.

The use of the term *uparūpaka* thus reflects a gradually coalescing view of those forms of performing arts which required body movements that were aesthetically pleasing as well as representational, and the verbal component was an essential part of it. In other words, these forms comprised a hybrid genre in that they possessed characteristics of both dance and drama, though some were more dance than drama and some the other way about. As my survey here shows, till the early medieval period there was a great variety of such forms, not always clearly distinguished from one another and even when so distinguished, not

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30 Bharata defines *kaiśikīvṛtti* as:
yā ślakṣṇanaipathyaviśeṣacitrāstrīsaṁyutāyā bahunṛttagītā /
kāmopabhogaprabhavapracārā tām kaiśikīvṛttimudāharanti // (NŚ 20.54–55)
That which is graceful, varied with special costume and make-up, performed by [lit: "added with"] women, which [contains] much dance and song [and is] prominent in the enjoyment of passion is known as *kaiśikīvṛtti*.

31 This term later came to denote a different presentation.

greatly differing from one another. With the passage of time it became evident that these forms fell into two broad divisions, both mimetic in nature but one, termed *uparūpaka*, emphasizing the verbal representation of events and character, the other, termed *nṛtya*, appealing to the senses through physical action. The development of the two broad categories marked a progressively clearer conception of the characteristics of dance as well as drama. It also meant that the classification of the performing arts was simplified, whereby the class names used earlier, except for *lāsya*, became part of the terminology of dance rather than of drama.

The attempt to classify the forms of dance continued to proliferate in the later period. However, from the fourteenth century, a consensus appears to emerge for the use of the term *uparūpaka*, which since then has been accepted in the general body of Sanskrit literature to refer to performance types that were not dramas but dramatic in character. Today, the term is not part of the vocabulary of contemporary performing arts, but the types of performance it was conceived to denote has by no means disappeared. These types are readily recognizable in many areas of the performing arts of modern India, as for instance in the forms perfected and popularized by Rabindranath Tagore under the terms *gīti-nāṭya* and *nṛtya-nāṭṭya*. While it is true that Tagore drew much of his inspiration from European opera and ballet, the ethical and aesthetic climate he created in his dance dramas is entirely in line with the Indian tradition.

In my view, the survival of the *uparūpaka* is in fact much more widespread. In considering it, we must note that its capabilities as a genre make it particularly suitable as a performance mode of our time. First, it is a brief and focused narrative and thereby commands audience attention. Second, it capitalizes on multiple forms of representation and expression, which allows performers to convey both the narrative matter and the emotional content on several levels of perception. Finally, its employment of stylized modes of speech and action has a distancing effect on the audience, thereby fostering critical perception.

These characteristics of the *uparūpaka* assume significance when we consider the classical performance arts of contemporary India, with their emphasis on rethinking issues of gender, race, identity, and tradition. In my own research on *Rāmāyaṇa* performance traditions, I have noted with interest the number of modern renditions of the Rāma story that focus on particular episodes, such as the Sambuka story or Sitā's deliverance from captivity, which are narrated in the mixed mode of the *uparūpaka*.

Indeed much of the dance performances by classical Indian dancers today that go by the name *nṛtya* lean much more towards *uparūpaka* than *nṛtya* proper. For instance, the Odissi compositions based on Jayadeva's *Gītagovinda* narrate

encounters between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa by means of singing and dancing and acting. Similarly, several contemporary Bharatanāṭyam renditions of Sītā's sufferings narrate the events of her exile through dance and song. These supposedly *nṛtya* compositions go far beyond the classically defined function of *nrttya*, that is, the development of emotional states through representational action. On the contrary, they narrate stories, develop complete though brief plots around particular episodes, and employ all form of *abhinaya*. It is thus hard to view these performances as anything but *uparūpaka*s.

Going beyond the classical performing arts, we may note a distinct kinship between the *uparūpaka*s and forms of modern mass entertainment, including the melange of dance, music, and dramatic narratives that constitute popular Bollywood films. Although this is hardly an identification I would make on a scholarly basis at the moment, thinking of *uparūpaka*s as mass entertainment is not altogether unreasonable. The Sanskritic tradition of scholarship in the performing arts began with Bharata as a self-consciously high cultural endeavor that drew a line between a central tradition of art and a peripheral one, a distinction confirmed in a later age by the use of the terms *mārga* and *desī*, the first denoting high art and the second, popular and regional forms that were not deemed worthy of scholarly attention to begin with. The confusion over the mixed forms that were eventually gathered under the rubric of *uparūpaka* was due to the uncertain response of scholars to mass culture. That popular art forms were not highly valued is evident as early as Bharata's own narrative of the invention of the performing arts. Even though a divine origin is attributed to them, Bharata tells us that they were boons from the gods for human beings who are not to listen to the four vedas, such as śudras:

> *na vedavyavahāro'yam saṁśrāvyaḥ śudrajātiṣu /*
> *tasmāt sṛjāparam vedam pañcamam sārvavarṇikam //* (NŚ 1.12)

Again, even though dance receives sanction from the legend of Śiva himself as the prime dancer, dance is confined by Bharata within the preliminaries of drama. Not surprisingly, in the first formulations of cultural levels, both class and gender played a part by underrating popular entertainment. Why is it that writers on dance and drama after Bharata's time accepted his views on the nature and components of drama or *rūpaka* without question? Why did their understanding of *rūpaka* never evolve? The obvious reason is that *rūpaka* was thought of as an art for the privileged class and privilege demands changelessness. On the contrary, the arts of the multitude are everchanging, and hence they require constant redefinition.

It is also to be noted that these arts of the common people, almost alien to ancient writers, are marked by the gender divide. It is significant of social attitudes that the term *uparūpaka* is formed by attaching the prefix *upa-* to *rūpaka*, for it means lesser. Indeed, in the textual tradition *uparūpaka* is thought of as a lesser art practiced mostly by women or sometimes by comic characters, whereas the *rūpaka* is a vehicle of actions by exalted personages, mostly male. Although female characters do appear in *rūpaka*s, except for the rare ascetic female, such as Gautamī in the *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, they do not speak Sanskrit, the language of authority, but Prākṛt, a language of less privileged members of society, such as *śudra*s and women. The descriptions of the popular dance/drama forms in the texts cited in this essay commonly assume the performer to be female. The gestures and movements prescribed as the components of these arts are generally identified as feminine. The list of qualifications required of the artiste in every single manual begins with the graces of the female form, consisting of firm breasts, a slender body, and a pretty face. The systematic sculptural presentation of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* in temples such as Cidambaram or Śārgapāṇi attests to this view by showing only female dancers. One would not be far from the truth in viewing the popular tradition of the performing arts in early India as a woman's tradition, except of course for the fact that the management of the performances and the training of the performers remained in the hands of men.[32]

The progress of the popular arts thus serves as an irony in demonstrating a reversal of fortune for the tradition of high art in two important ways. First, it shows the purity of conceptual categories such as dance and drama dissolving before the reality of practice, singularity giving way to hybridity. Secondly, it also shows the appropriation of the central domain of the performing arts by the formerly marginal art forms. What was peripheral in the second century became central in the fourteenth. Whether the same kind of development can be seen in other cultural domains of India and what this may say about the evolution of society in India are intriguing questions best left to contemporary historians.

In many ways, then, the history of *uparūpaka* reflects a common taxonomical aspect of Indian art history inasmuch as the term seems to have been invented to account for new and undefined forms of art by using an already known and established category as a point of reference. In its history we see how the *rūpaka*, formulated by a revered authority figure and accepted as such by his followers,

32 For studies in the male control of the performance of classical Indian dance, see my articles "Gender and Performance: Classical Indian Dancing" (Bose 1998), "Wem gehort der klassische indische Tanz? Die Frage nach den Besitzverhaltnissen und die Auffuhrung auf der globalen Buhne" (Bose 2002), and "The Ownership of Indian Classical Dancing and Its Performance on the Global Stage" (Bose 2010).

is used as a framework for art forms that do not quite fit into the category of the *rūpaka* but are close enough to it to claim legitimacy as a splinter form.

That this new term had to be invented suggests that the performance forms it denotes had become common enough to deserve particular categorization and description. Its entry into contemporary scholarly literature thus suggests a widening of the tradition of performing arts established by Bharata and marks a distinct stage in the history of the performing arts in India. But, in addition, the term in itself points at modes of performance that could not be covered by the available concepts of performance, since it denoted forms that are not proper dramas but exercised a dramatic impact. In other words, *uparūpaka*s were performances in mixed modes (i.e. amalgams of drama, dance, and music). This view of *uparūpaka*s is indeed borne out when we note that the components of each type are derived from a variety of performance modes, dramatic and non-dramatic. Thus, the *uparūpaka* must be understood not as a minor type of drama but as a genre in itself.

ABBREVIATIONS OF THE SOURCES

AP	*Agnipurāṇa*
BhP	*Bhāvaprakāśana*
DR	*Daśarūpaka*
KAnu.H.	*Kāvyānuśāsana* of Hemacandra
KAnu.V.	*Kāvyānuśāsana* of Vāgbhaṭa
KS	*Kāmasūtra*
ND	*Nāṭyadarpaṇa*
NLRK	*Nāṭakalaksaṇaratnakośa*
NN	*Nartananirṇaya*
NŚ	*Nāṭyaśāstra*
SD	*Sāhityadarpaṇa*
SR	*Saṅgītaratnākara*
ŚṛP	*Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*

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A *KETAKA* FLOWER BY ANY OTHER NAME: EROTIC DOUBLE-IMAGERY IN KĀLIDĀSA'S *MEGHADŪTA*

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This paper focuses on the erotic aspects of nature presented poetically in Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* (*c.* fourth/fifth century), as well as the way in which the poet skillfully uses anthropomorphic imagery and surreal description to heighten the aesthetic experience. That a cloud, described in the beginning of the poem as a mere collection of elements, is sent by a lovesick tree-divinity (*yakṣa*) to deliver to his distant lover a message of no less than a hundred Sanskrit verses should serve as an indication of what fantastic and magical realism will follow.

The prevailing feeling (*sthāyibhāva*) of the poem belongs to the mood of eroticism, a poignantly charged state (*ratī*) evoked by various poetic images (*vibhāva*). As we will be looking at the first half of the poem in which the entire environment is sexualized, rather than the second half where the attention largely falls on the beloved as the personified object of the cloud's message, the aesthetic and erotic impact of the imagery can be said to fall largely under the category of exciting a feeling (*uddīpanavibhāva*) rather than being a substantial cause (*ālambanavibhāva*). That is to say, the intimacy of the natural elements serves as a kind of catalyst to excitement in the reader, rather like *krauñca* "mood-music" that sets the tone for the *yakṣa*'s erotic disposition. In fact, Kalidasa's "playing poem" is not as concerned with a reconciliation of sexual tension as much as its heightening.

One might wonder if the entire poem, a soliloquy overflowing with erotic energy, is merely a mental imagining of the *yakṣa*. As Leonard Nathan (1976: 94) points out, the cloud's intimate relationship with the environment is in sharp contrast with the *yakṣa*'s own separation from his lover. Yet such distance is necessary, for it makes the poem's force of erotic description even more poignant, and also allows the *yakṣa* to maintain fidelity, even during his most licentious thoughts, by displacing his own sexual frustration on a seemingly philandering cloud.

Indeed, despite the obvious primacy of the *yakṣa* (explained in Vallabhadeva's commentary as a necessary ingredient in this new genre of poetry; Hultzch [1911] 1998; Kale 1997), the cloud becomes a dominant character in its own right.

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Expected to speak even if we never hear it do so, the cloud enjoys relationships of its own (even if they are not private) and should not be seen as a mere backdrop. The cloud's predominant role is only compromised by the *yakṣa*'s syntactic choice of imperative and optative moods. Indeed, responding as it does to the storyteller's (i.e. the *yakṣa*'s) own urgings while engaging in a very personal manner with the land, the cloud serves simultaneously as an example of both *ālambanavibhāva* and *uddīpanavibhāva*.

How features of the environment (such as the cloud) serve a dual function is a reflection of Kālidāsa's poetic genius. Creating subsets of relationships within relationships by means of anthropomorphism, aesthetic distance is kept without losing the powerful effect of the emotion itself. For example, by giving a river a face (v. 24, following Vallabhadeva's tenth-century recension), Kālidāsa uses her expressions of ecstasy as an example of emotion outwardly manifested (*anubhāva*). While some of these emotions seem to be intentional, such as the natural procreative responses of flora to a fecund cloud, other types of erotic responses to the cloud are strictly involuntary (*sāttvikabhāva*). As a side note, while many secondary emotions (*vyabhicāribhāva*) come up transitorily as the cloud makes its way on the campaign of love, they are not as important as understanding how the overall *sthāyibhāva* is steeped primarily in the erotic.

If we are to understand how this poem was meant to stir the blood and pluck the heartstrings of the reader, it is crucial that we try to engage with it on its own terms. While the eroticism prevalent in much Indian art has been the cause for national chagrin, residuals of Victorian ethics ironically bind mores around art more tightly than the aesthetic distance favored in *rasa* theory itself. There are times when Kālidāsa opens his metaphors like a centerfold, plain for all to see. Certain examples in the poem come directly to mind, such as when the cloud settles on the mountain, described like a dark nipple on a pallid breast (v. 18). The colorful flush of ripe mangos there serves as an *uddīpanavibhāva* to the mountain – which, as a breast, is itself an example of *uddīpanavibhāva* for the overall mood. Anthropomorphism does little to defuse the intensely sexual imagery employed by Kālidāsa. Indeed, that the Gambhirā River should be so graphically depicted as a naked woman (v. 41) may be cause for shock, even dismay. Amongst such critiques, V.G. Paranjpe's is archetypal: "This stanza forms probably the worst example of Kālidāsa's license in the Meghaduta" (Ambardekar 1979: 69).

In other moments, however, Kālidāsa uses sophisticated techniques of poetic *trompe l'oeil* to paint one action while something else, no less erotic, is hidden between his syntactic strokes. This might be illustrated, for instance, when the cloud is welcomed by the upturned faces of flower-plucking women (v. 26). Not only does he offer them shade but a delicate sprinkling (*siñcan*). The erotic

import of this word is not lost on Mallinātha, who suggests that the water of the cloud is like semen which falls to impregnate the earth. And this verse is but an echo of *tvayyāyataṃ kṛṣiphalam iti* (v. 16), whereby the thundering of the cloud is held to be responsible for the earth's bounty.

One way or another, the entire land comes to be seen as sensually interpenetrated with the throb of life. This not only heightens the *yakṣa*'s own emotional state but takes on the cosmic proportions of an aerial view. As Nathan (1976: 10) notes, "It is a brilliant stroke of Kālidāsa to portray his country from far above, as seen through divine eyes. Such vision puts all in its proper place and gives its witness the aesthetic pleasure of the wholeness that makes all its parts significant. Moreover, from the lofty view the landscape takes on the beauty of idealized distance." What better vantage for readers (or hearers) of the poem, granted a certain proximity to deities by sharing the same celestial perspective, to engage with the sublime double-imagery of a cloud dipping into rivers on his way to Alakā!

It is important to remember that the cloud serves a purpose of love for the gods as well as the immobile tree-spirit. This is evident not only in the interpretation of the cloud's journey as a pilgrimage but in the divine ornamentation which the cloud comes to wear. It takes the dark color of Kṛṣṇa (v. 46), the "throat-luster" of Śiva (v. 33), and the *gopa* dress of Viṣṇu (v. 15). Identification of natural elements with the divine also allows the use of *iva* in *upamā* similes rather than in the *utpekṣa* comparisons of poetic fancy. Thus, a breast-like mountain belongs to Bhudevī herself (at least according to Vallabha's commentary on verse 18), as does the union of the seemingly male cloud and the Sindhu River as a sapphire on a string of pearls (v. 46). Further compounding the complexity of the interpretation of double-imagery among commentators, of course, is the debate between grammarians and logicians whether comparative *karmadhāraya* compounds should be taken more as metaphorical (*rupakāsamāsa*) or as mere similes (*upamitasamāsa*). I should like to turn, then, to a closer analysis of actual double-imagery in the poem.

Rivulets make braids for the river (v. 29), the cloud is compared to Viṣṇu's foot (v. 57), and together they make a pearl necklace with a sapphire pendant (v. 46). Although not specifically erotic, they introduce us to the ornamental use of natural imagery. And if through the poem we can be said to enjoy the same celestial vantage point as the gods, whose relationships are often explicitly sexual, we come to an understanding of how the cloud as mere ornament is meant to serve for our own aesthetic purposes. Thus, our own fancy is tickled to see the cloud reconciling the gods, either by assuming the color and form of Śiva's bloody elephant-cloak, so that Bhavāni may be calmed (v. 36), or by taking the shape of

an undulating staircase to massage Gaudī's feet (no longer frightened by Śiva's snake-bracelet) as she mounts (v. 60).

The cloud, exhorted to remove Śiva's desire for the elephant-hide, does so by changing its color to that of the terrifically red *japa* flower (v. 36). Like Śiva, here we enter into a much closer relationship, albeit virtual, with the erotic imagery of the poem. Flowers, particularly the lotus, have been metaphorically associated with the female organ long before the paintings of Georgia O'Keefe. They arise throughout the poem, exuding their perfume and exciting passions, but for a tree-divinity their sexual symbolism must be especially poignant! In the very beginning of the poem (v. 3), for example, it is the blossoming *ketala* flower that evokes tears of longing in the *yakṣa*. The faces of flowers covered with dew (v. 39) mirror these tears but also hint at the sexual excitement of reunion.

While flowers set the *uddīpanavibhāva* tone of eroticism, the cloud moves throughout the first half of the poem as a protagonist primarily in union with rivers and mountains. The sexual undertones are not automatic. Rather, the cloud tends to survey a river, such as the sweetly murmuring Betwa (v. 24), before moving in for such a fulfilling drink (attaining the "goal of an amorous one") that her brow is knit with the agitation of her waves. This same sequence is found in the cloud's ever so polemic tryst with the Gambhīra River (vv. 40–41). The cloud first enters her tranquil water with its reflection alone, but enjoined not to disappoint her (literally, deprive her of the fruit) with firmness of heart, it soon works her into a froth of glances (like a row of bees, how sharp they have become!) akin to the roiling of fish all a'quiver.

Having come to enjoy "the taste of the river's loins", how would the cloud be able to forsake her lovely waters for the sake of the *yakṣa*'s mission without some assistance? Possessing its own arsenal of sensory pleasures, the wind comes to gently move the messenger along (v. 42). Smell, particularly that musky odor associated with the sex of animals (note v. 19, leading to v. 20 and v. 52, among others), is used repeatedly in connection with the cloud's elephant-like nature. Mounting on the wind, the cloud also brings fertility with the full sensory experience of the rainy season on the ripening earth.

One aspect of the beauty of natural elements lies in their ability to move back and forth between gender. Mountains are generally masculine, being friends with whom the cloud may sojourn and recuperate, yet at times they are also described as being embraced or excited by the cloud. For instance, the first mountain of the poem, Rāmagiri, endures the brunt of the cloud's violent sport (v. 2). Similarly, the low hill of Nīcai experiences horripilatory goose-bumps from contact with the cloud (v. 25). One might be tempted to suggest that the cloud assumes female aspects here, being associated with the feminine womb of fertility (v. 10) or the

luscious *japa* flower mentioned above, if it were not for Kālidāsa's clear comparison of the mountain with the bosom of the earth (v. 18). In yet another titillating example (v. 74), the "pleasure-hill" (*krīdāśaila*) of the *yakṣa*'s beloved can be read as topped with sapphires, which are either very beautiful or soft and tender, depending on how one takes *peśala* (see Roychowdhury 1991: 44). It is also of note that the *Raghuvaṃśa* (IV.51) makes mention of the mountains of Malaya and Dardura as a pair of breasts (see Ambardekar 1979: 52).

Another example of shifting gender is expressed by the lightning found in the womb (*vidyutgarbhe*) of the cloud. Whereas the lightning which is the cloud's consort is usually understood to be his wife (v. 38), perhaps as an indicator of *śakti*, even if the cloud is not female here (although these verses do follow directly on the *japa* flower metaphor), its lightning can be likened to a phallus that pierces the shadows like a needle (v. 38) and, tired from sporting/flashing so long (*ciravilasanātkhinna*), will take its rest before moving on (v. 39).

That the word for "lightning" (*saudāminī*) is in the feminine case (v. 38) is no help. Moreover, the word for "wife" or "consort" (*kalatram*), usually in the neuter, is here in the masculine due to the *bahuvrīhi* compound. This is just one illustration of how the gender of substantives could be shifted in accord with the clever poet's intent, although it is probably more necessary here to point out that grammatical gender does not limit an object's sexual symbolism. In other words, despite the fact that "flower" is generally neuter in Sanskrit, it often works (as mentioned above) as a double-image for a clearly feminine anatomical feature

Although Ambardekar (1979: 14) suggests that there are two major themes in the poem, erotic and devotional, I would conclude by arguing that the dominant mood decidedly leans toward the former, even as there is evidence of the fusion of the two in the classical aesthetic: in the cloud's relationship with the gods, nature serves as a link between mortals and the divine. As it reflects both macrocosmic powers and the play of our own hearts, nature is an ideal poetic staging ground, a sensual template for spiritual exploration, which comes to the fore in the erotic double-imagery employed in the *Meghadūta*.

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SOME REMARKS ON THE PRAKRIT OF THE SO-CALLED "TRIVANDRUM PLAYS" AS FOUND IN THE MANUSCRIPTS

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INTRODUCTION

There are two serious problems that we must deal with in considering the so-called "Trivandrum plays" attributed to Bhāsa:[1] at the time of the first editions (1912 till 1915), only a few, sometimes corrupt, manuscripts were available; in addition, Gaṇapati Śāstrī's editorial work turned out to be inaccurate in some respects.[2] These two problems affect in particular the Prakrit of these plays. We owe the most comprehensive research on the Prakrit of the "Trivandrum plays" to Printz, whose "Bhāsa's Prākrit", published in 1921, is an addition to Pischel's "Grammatik der Prakrit-Sprachen (A Grammar of the Prakrit Languages)", published in 1900. Unfortunately, Printz' investigations are based only on Gaṇapati Śāstrī's editions; so they sometimes lead to conclusions which do not agree with the evidence of the manuscripts. In this article, I would like to make some remarks, based on recently found manuscript material, on the Prakrit of the "Trivandrum plays".

Until now, no non-keralite manuscript containing one or more of the plays attributed to Bhāsa has been found. All the manuscripts are palm-leaf manuscripts, written in Malayāḷam script, or recent Devanāgarī paper copies of them.

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1 As neither a single authorship for all thirteen dramas nor the attribution of one or more dramas to Bhāsa has been unequivocally clarified, I will use in the following the term "Trivandrum plays", following the place of their first edition. For a study of the various arguments for and against a single authorship and the attribution to Bhāsa, as well as a possible dating of the dramas, see Esposito 2010a: 2–13.

This essay is based on parts of the 3rd chapter of my PhD thesis, a critical edition of *Cārudatta* with annotations, German translation and a study of the Prakrit of the so-called "Trivandrum plays". I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Heidrun Brückner for her steady interest and valuable advice and Dr. Lucinda Martin for correcting my English.

2 See Esposito 2010b.

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Furthermore, a Grantha manuscript, containing *Bālacarita* and *Avimāraka*, was discovered by the "Bhāsa Project" directed by Prof. Heidrun Brückner, University of Würzburg, Germany.[3] Therefore, examining the various readings we have to take into account the similarities between the syllables of the Malayāḷam and Grantha alphabets as well as some peculiarities of the spelling system of this South Indian tradition. For this reason, I would like to draw attention to the orthographic conventions and characteristics of the Prakrit in the manuscripts before describing the various dialects found in the plays.

1. THE SPELLING SYSTEMS OF THE PRAKRIT PASSAGES IN THE MANUSCRIPTS

In some of Printz's remarks, we can see that he had no clear notion of the orthographic conventions of the Prakrit passages in the South Indian manuscripts. He had to rely on secondary sources for some peculiarities (e.g. a special character indicating the gemination of consonants) (Printz 1921: 10) or the treatment of *ayya* (*ārya*) (Printz 1921: 21). The authors of these secondary sources were also unsure about the particulars, a fact that could certainly lead to futile speculations or mistakes. Therefore, before referring to the single dialects of the "Trivandrum plays" I would like to deal briefly with the spelling systems and some orthographic peculiarities found in the Prakrit of the Malayāḷam manuscripts.[4]

1.1 General Observations

Anusvāra: Concerning the Prakrit passages, there are two spelling systems. In the first system, Prakrit is written like Sanskrit: followed by a palatal or dental, the medial or final anusvāra is usually written as a nasal of this class; followed by a nasal, the anusvāra is assimilated. If the anusvāra is not assimilated, it appears as a small circle in the ongoing text (ം) or as *m* with *virāma*.[5] In the second system, the assimilation of the medial or final anusvāra is very rare; usually it is written as a small circle above the preceding consonant or vowel.

Geminate consonants: The two systems differ in the treatment of geminate consonants, too. In the first system, geminate consonants are written as in

3 For further details, see Brückner 2000: 511.

4 For further details concerning the orthographic conventions of the Prakrit as well as the Sanskrit in the Malayāḷam manuscripts, see Esposito 2010c: 146–149; Esposito 2012: 89–92.

5 The *m* with *virāma* looks like a small copy of the character *ma* (മ) with the diagonal line protruding at the top (മ്).

Sanskrit with ligatures (*tta* = ത്ത, *ddha* = ദ്ധ).[6] In the second system, however, the doubling of consonants is indicated by a small circle preceding the consonant to be doubled (*tta* = ൊത, *ddha* = ൊധ); ligatures such as in the Sanskrit spelling are rare. ൈ for *e* in combination with consonants – in the Malayāḷam script preceding the affiliated character – is written in this system between the circle indicating the doubling of the consonant and the consonant: *cche*, in Sanskrit as well as in the first spelling system, appears as ച്ഛ, but is written in the second system as ൊഛര. Peculiar to this system is the writing of *yya* as, for example, in *ayya* (*ārya*), written *a*-circle-*a* (അൊഅ). In the first spelling system, it is always written as double-*ya*, as in the Sanskrit (അയ്യ).

Nasal in combination with consonant: In the first spelling system, a nasal in combination with a palatal, cerebral or dental is written as in Sanskrit with ligature; a nasal preceding a guttural is written as Anusvāra; a nasal with preceeding labials or *va*, is usually written as Anusvāra or *m* with Virāma. In the second system, a nasal in combination with a consonant is written – like an Anusvāra – as a small circle above the preceding consonant or vowel; ligatures occur, they but are rare. In this system, confusion between the circle denoting the gemination of consonants on the one hand and medial or final anusvāra, as well as a nasal in combination with consonants, on the other hand is no rarity.

1.2 Some Peculiarities Found in the Prakrit of the Manuscripts

The explanation above was necessary to clarify the incidence of *ĕvva* and *ēva*. In the printed editions, both forms appear throughout the dramas without following recognizable rules. Printz denotes *ĕvva* by counting both forms as predominant in the Śaurasenī and Māgadhī of the "Trivandrum plays". The evidence of the manuscripts, however, indicates something completely different: *ēva* occurs only in the manuscripts with the Sanskrit spelling in the Prakrit passages, and *ĕvva* appears constantly in the manuscripts using the small circle in the doubling of consonants; *yyēva* can be found only in the manuscripts attesting *ēva* and is used quite regularly after short vowels, *ĕ* and *ŏ*, but it is never used at the beginning of sentences, after long vowels and vocatives. The arbitrary appearance of both forms, *ēva* and *ĕvva*, in Gaṇapati Śāstrī's editions and the rare occurence of *yyēva* can thus lead to wrong conclusions.

As often mentioned, the printed editions of the "Trivandrum plays" and other South Indian dramas like the *Bhagavadajjukīya*, *Mattavilāsa*, *Āścaryacūḍāmaṇi*,

6 To avoid complicated ligatures, the first consonant is sometimes written in both Sanskrit and Prakrit with *virāma*.

Subhadrādhanañjaya or *Tapatīsamvaraṇa* contain in the Prakrit passages only *ḷa*, never *la*. We can find this peculiarity not only in the Malayāḷam manuscripts but also in the Grantha manuscript containing the *Bālacarita* and *Avimāraka*. Writing mistakes are very rare (e.g. in the *Cārudatta*, only one out of four manuscripts attests a single Prakrit word *la* instead of *ḷa*).

According to the grammarians, Sanskrit *hṇa*, *hna*, and *hma* has to be changed to *ṇha* and *mha* in the Prakrit dialects (see Pischel §330), and this is carried out accordingly in the North Indian plays (for example, Skt. *brāhmaṇa* is changed to *bamhaṇa*). But in the printed editions of the South Indian plays we find without exception *hṇa* and *hma* instead of *ṇha* and *mha* (Skt. *brāhmaṇa* changes here to *bahmaṇa*). Printz (1921: 24) assumes a printing mistake. The manuscripts actually contain the ligatures throughout, as found in the printed editions, with two exceptions: only the Grantha manuscript CAL 1488, containing the *Bālacarita* and *Avimāraka*, and codex TRV 3168 constantly attest *ṇha* and *mha* like the North Indian plays.[7]

It is questionable whether the orthographic peculiarities mentioned above reflect actual grammatical differences in the Prakrit or if they are – more probably – the result of the influence of Malayāḷam pronunciation. This could be the case for some peculiarities found in the various Prakrit dialects, too. I would like to turn my attention to these in the following.

2. INVESTIGATION OF THE VARIOUS DIALECTS AS FOUND IN THE MANUSCRIPTS

Śaurasenī is the main dialect of the plays; Māhārāṣṭrī is not to be found. Further dialects are Māgadhī, spoken by the Unmattaka in the *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa* and the Śakāra in the *Cārudatta*, as well as the dialect of the herdsmen in the *Pañcarātra* and *Bālacarita*. The language spoken by Śakra in the *Karṇabhāra* and the wrestlers Cāṇūra und Muṣṭika in the *Bālacarita*, is characterized by Printz (1921: 6) as "Ardha-Māgadhī". Most of the following general observations made for Śaurasenī like the irregular dropping or preserving of consonants are valid for the other dialects of the "Trivandrum plays", as well.

7 Because of the similarity between both manuscripts – in readings as well as in mistakes – ms. TRV 3168 as the older one seems to be the direct source of ms. CAL 1488. Thus, both manuscripts belong to the same tradition.

2.1 Śaurasenī

Examining the Śaurasenī of the Malayāḷam manuscripts, we realize that there is no regular treatment of intervocalic consonants.[8] Sometimes they are preserved, sometimes dropped irrespective of the word, the manuscript or the play. While dental *da* tends to be preserved, *ka*, *ga*, *ca*, and *ja* tend to be dropped. Retroflex *ṭa* is normally changed to *ḍa*, but in some instances it is preserved (e.g. in *sākaṭia* (*śākaṭika*) C. 29.5 (after v. I.28) ms. TRV17622). The dental *ta* is unsystematically changed to *da* or dropped, which is especially striking in the ending *-ti* of the 3rd-person singular indicative present and the suffix *-ta* of the past participle. The treatment of intervocalic aspirata, especially of *dha* and *bha*, is quite irregular as well. Often the reduction to *ha* is not carried out. These irregularities can be found side by side within the same manuscript. As noted already by Pischel §257, in the Śaurasenī an occasional change from *ra* to *la* (South Indian mss *ḷa*) can be observed. The "Trivandrum plays" constitute no exception. Initial *ya* is changed to *ja*; the only exception is the verb *yāc*. Meanwhile, *yya* and *rya* are represented by *yya*, never by *jja*. The only exception is *ajjuā*, Skt. **āryakā*. Dealing with Sanskrit *jña*, the manuscripts alternate between retroflex *ṇṇa* and palatal *ññа*. The same alternation can be observed with Sanskrit *nya* and *ṇya*: for example, in *aṇṇa* or *aññа* for Sanskrit *anyai*. In some instances, all manuscripts show palatal *ññа* instead of the retroflex *ṇṇa* of the printed editions: see, for example, *suññа* (Skt. *śūnya*) PY. 46.10 (after v. III.1) or *abbahmaññа* (Skt. *abrahmaṇya*) PY. 43.4 (after v. III.1). In Gaṇapati Śāstrī's texts, the only instance of the change of Sanskrit *nya* to *ññа* is *Abhimaññu* in *Dūtaghatoṭkaca* 51.14. The infinitive of *kṛ*, *kattuṃ*, and *kattavva* as *participium necessitatis* are more frequent in the manuscripts than the *kāduṃ* and *kādavva* of the later plays. The gerunds *karia* (*kṛtvā*) and *gacchia* (*gatvā*) also occur in later South Indian plays, like the *Tapatīsaṃvaraṇa* and *Subhadrādhanañjaya*.[9]

To sum up, the Śaurasenī of the "Trivandrum plays" is very irregular with respect to the dropping or changing of consonants. This irregularity can be noted in every manuscript. That this phenomenon is by no means unique but can be observed in most of the other dramas as well has been documented very meticulously for Rājaśekhara's *Karpūramañjarī* by Salomon.

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8 Here only a short overall view of the various readings and peculiarities found in the Śaurasenī of the "Trivandrum plays" can be given. For a more detailed study, see Esposito 2004, Chapter III *Untersuchungen zum Prakrit der 'Trivandrum-Dramen'*.

9 For example, in Tapatī. VI. Act 204.4, Subhadrā. I. Act 18.9, III. Act 80.8, 107.3, IV. Act 135.9, as well as in the Nāg. edition of the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series II. Act 111.6; *gacchiya* can be found in Hammīra. 34.17 (see also Clark 1924: 102).

2.2 Māgadhī

In Printz's opinion (1921: 6), the Māgadhī of the "Trivandrum plays" is divided into two groups: the dialect of the Śakāra in C. and the Unmattaka in PY., where the three sibilants of Sanskrit are represented by *śa* and the nom. sg. m. of the *a*-stems ends in *-e*, and the dialect of the herdsmen in P. and Bc., containing only the sibilant *ṣa* and the ending of the nom. sg. m. *-o*. In my opinion, however, we are dealing with two different dialects, which I will try to characterize below, drawing on all the manuscripts known to me.

2.2.1 The Dialect of the Unmattaka in Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa

Phonology: The change of *sa* to *śa* and of *ra* to *ḷa* is not carried out consequently in the speech of the Unmattaka.[10] Since in the Śaurasenī of the Vidūṣaka and the Śramaṇaka with whom the Unmattaka is talking, in some instances *śa* instead of *sa* slipped in, these mistakes can be attributed to the difficulty of changing between the two dialects. In the verse of the Unmattaka (III.1), *sa* is not changed to *śa*, but retained in all seven manuscripts. The dialect of this verse can, in spite of the regular change of *ra* to *ḷa*,[11] therefore be considered as Śaurasenī. Yet, *ṣṭa* is not, as prescribed by the grammarians, changed to *sṭa* (as in Hemacandra IV.289f.) or *śṭha* (as in Namisādhu for Rudraṭa, *Kāvyālaṅkāra* II.12), but to *ṭṭha*, as in the Śaurasenī dialect, a fact that according to Pischel (§303) occurs in most manuscripts. The Sanskrit *kṣa*, too, is changed to *kkha*, not to *ska* or *śka*. Against the rules, initial *ya* is changed to *ja*,[12] while intervocalic *ja* is usually dropped and only preserved in *devaḷājo* 42.9. There is no occurrence of Skt. *ṣṭha*, *jña*, *nya* or *ṇya* in the speech of the Unmattaka.

Morphology: The nominative singular of the masculine stems in *-a* ends always in *-e*. The only exceptions are *devaḷājo* 42.9 (all manuscripts) and *vajjha tti* 42.10 (all manuscripts; only London 42203/b contains *vajjhe tti*).

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10 The manuscripts investigated for PY. are CAL 793 E, London 42203/b D, TRV 5150 B, TRV 12356 B, TRV 22172 F, TRV 22848 B; in TRIP 834 H (formerly 338 H) and TRIP 838 B (formerly 337 B), the relevant folios are missing. Manuscript Madras SD 1024 B (formerly D 12542), being only a Devanāgarī copy of TRV12356 B, is not taken into account.

With regard to the preservation of *sa*, all manuscripts agree in the following cases: *esā* 41.9, *rasaṇā* 41.9, *joaṇasada* 42.5, *viḷavissaṃ* 43.5; all manuscripts preserve *ra* in *rasaṇā* 41.9, *karedi* 41.10, *rakkhanti* 41.14, *dhārāṇiaḷa* 42.10, *paribbhamanta* 42.11, *paribbhaṭṭa* 55.3. More deviations can be found in single manuscripts.

11 In the Śaurasenī of the "Trivandrum plays", a change of *r* to *ḷ* frequently occurs, as explained above.

12 The only exception is *yadi* 55.2 ms. TRV 22848.

Résumé: The change of *sa* to *śa* and of *ra* to *ḷa* is not carried out consequently, probably because of the dialogue of the Unmattaka with two Śaurasenī speakers. The dialect of the Unmattaka is, without a doubt, Māgadhī. Verse III.1, however, has to be considered as Śaurasenī.

2.2.2 The Dialect of the Śakāra in the Cārudatta

While the prose of the Unmattaka differs only slightly from the Māgadhī usually found in the Sanskrit plays, the speech of the Śakāra reveals itself to be a special variant of this dialect.[13]

Phonology: The writing of *sa* instead of *śa* and of *ra* instead of *ḷa* is very rare and can be considered throughout the manuscripts as a mistake. Meanwhile, *ṣṭha* and *ṣṭa* are changed to *ṭṭha* like in Śaurasenī and in the dialect of the Unmattaka. Several grammarians postulate in the Māgadhī a special treatment for Skt. *kṣa*. According to Vararuci XI.8, Skt. *kṣa* in medial position changes to *ska*,[14] according to Hc. IV.296 to *ẖka* and according to Namisādhu II.12 to *śka*, but as Pischel points out in §324, most of the manuscripts treat Skt. *kṣa* in Māgadhī in the same way as in all the other dialects. Two manuscripts of the *Cārudatta*, however, attest in some instances the change of Skt. *kṣa* to *ṣ(k)kha*: in C. 14.2 (after v. I.14) ms. Madras SR 1714 contains the form *paṣkkha* (*paśya*), either forgetting the *e* for *peṣkkha* or mixing the verbal roots *paś* and *pra-īkṣ*. Instead of placing *ṣkkha* in *tikkha* (*tīkṣṇa*) I.15a, ms. Madras SR 1714 writes by mistake *ṣkkhu* in place of preceding *kkhu*. In 16.8 (after v. I.17), ms. Madras SR 1714 contains *pakkha* (*pakṣa*), but ms. TRIP 834 (damaged in I.15a and 16.8) has *paṣkha*. According to Hc. IV.289, Skt. *ṣka* is changed in Māgadhī to *ska* (Pischel §302). Also, *ṣka* occurs in the Māgadhī of the Śakāra only once, in *dukkhada* (*duṣkṛta*) 23.9 (after v. I.25), where ms. Madras SR 1714 has the reading *duṣkkhaḍa*; ms. TRIP 834, as the other mss, has *dukkhaḍa*. The same alternation of Skt. *kṣa* and *ṣka* can be found in some instances in the dialect of the herdsmen in the *Pañcarātra* and *Bālacarita* (see below). This change is not carried out consequently in the respective manuscripts. The initial *ya* is mostly preserved, but changes to *j* in *jahā* v. I.10b and *jo* v. I.15d (all manuscripts). In addition, *nya* occurs once in *bahumaṇṇīadi* (*bahumānyate*) 14.2 (after v. I.14) and is changed in all manuscripts

13 The manuscripts investigated for C. are Madras SR 1714 G, TRIP 834 L, TRV 17622 D, and TRV 22848 D.

14 According to Hc. IV.297 and Namisādhu II.12, however, this change takes place only in *prekṣ* and *ācakṣ*.

to *ṇṇa*, as well as *jña* to *ṇāe* 12.9 (after v. I.11), 16.6, 16.12 (after v. I.17), if considered as Skt. *jñātā*.[15]

The speech of the Śakāra contains some peculiarities. In ms. Madras SR 1714, the change of *bha* to *pa* can be found twice: in *paṭṭi-* instead of *bhaṭṭi-* (*bhartṛ-*) 15.2 and *paṇāśi* instead of *bhaṇāśi* (*bhaṇ-*) 15.6 (both after v. I.15). Furthermore, a palatalization of dentals has taken place in *jajjhaï* (*dahyate*) v. I.8c, *vaśañcamāśa* (*vasantamāsa*) 12.10f. (after v. I.11), *vaśañcaśeṇiā* (*vasantasenikā*) 10.15 (after v. I.7) and more often, *vāśujeva* (*vāsudeva*) v. I.12a ms. TRV 22848 and the irregular change of *ta* to *śa*, as in the use of *-śi* for the 3rd person singular present or *pūḷiśa-* (*pūrita-*) 16.5 (after v. I.17).

Morphology: The nominative singular of the masculine stems in *-a* always ends in *-e*. The only exceptions, found in all the manuscripts, are *śanto śi tti* (*śānto 'sīti*) 15.6 (after v. I.15), which could be interpreted as a direct quotation of the Courtesan's remark, and, falsely, *dāḷuṇo khoho* (*dāruṇaḥ kṣobhaḥ*) 25.3 (after v. I.26).[16] The vocative singular of the masculine stems in *-a* ends in *-e* in all the manuscripts if the Śakāra is talking to the Viṭa, as in *bhāve* 11.10 (after v. I.9), but in *-a* in the dialogue with the Vidūṣaka, as in *māḷiśa* (*māriṣa*) 24.12, 25.3, *vaḍua* (*vaṭuka*) 24.12, 25.3 and *dāśīeputta* (*dāsyāḥputra*) 25.4 (all after v. I.26). As remarked on already by Printz (1921: 29), *ahake*[17] can be found once in 23.9 (after v. I.25); otherwise only *ahaṃ* is used. All manuscripts agree in this respect. The irregular use of *-śi* for the 3rd-person singular indicative present in *paḷittāaśi* (*paritrāyati*) 12.11 (after v. I.11, all manuscripts), *bhaṇāśi* (*bhaṇati*) 14.1 (after v. I.14, all manuscripts), 15.6 (after I.15, mss Madras SR 1714 (*paṇāśi*, see above), TRV 17622), 24.14 (after v. I.26, mss Madras SR 1714, TRIP 834, TRV 17622)

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15 Note that *ṇāe* seems to be a problematic word. Gaṇapati Śāstrī translates it in the *chāyā* of his second edition (1922) as *nārye* (according to his commentary in the sense of *anārye*) and Devadhar (1962) as *jñāte*. Printz proposes the translation "o proud one" with reference to Deśī. IV.23 *ṇāo gavviṭṭhe* (*ṇāo garviṣṭaḥ*). According to Monier-Williams' *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, *jñāti* is "intimately acquainted, a near relation, a kinsman". I would like to propose a feminine *jñātā* with the same meaning and follow the first explanation in the commentary of Gaṇapati Śāstrī *jñāte! sagotre!* and the *chāyā* of Devadhar's edition. In this case, the word has a clearly pejorative meaning.

16 The word *ṇāe*, in C. 12.9 (after v. I.11) vocative sg. f., in 16.6 and 16.12 (after v. I.17) clear nom. sg. f., has to be understood as a confusion of masculine and feminine; this is an additional proof of the Śakāra's stupidity.

17 According to Sukthankar (1920: 254) and Printz (1921: 29), Mg. *ahake* occupies a medial position between *ahakaṃ* in Aśvaghoṣa (Lüders 1911: 36) and later *hage* (compare also von Hinüber 2001: 158, §365). Among the grammarians, only Vararuci XI.9 (*asmadaḥ sau hake hage ahake*) mentions *ahake*. Besides that, *ahake* can be found in the Māgadhī of Monier-Williams' and Godabole's *Śakuntala* editions (for all references, see Michelson 1908/09: 130), in Tapatī. (IV. Act 143.2) and Subhadrā. (IV. Act 134.3, 8).

and *kāmeśi* (*kāmayate*) 16.8 (after v. I.17, mss TRIP 834, TRV 22848) is due to the inconsistent palatalization of dentals.

Résumé: The Śakāra speaks a kind of Māgadhī with some irregularities – among others, the inconsistent palatalization of dentals. These irregularities can be seen as additional caricature of the Śakāra and proof of his poor education.[18]

Compared with the speech of the Śakāra, the dialect of the Unmattaka found in the manuscripts does not differ essentially from the Māgadhī of other plays.

2.3 "The Dialect of the Herdsmen"

The dialect of the herdsmen in the *Pañcarātra* and *Bālacarita* contains some peculiarities which make the assignment to the common dramatic dialects very problematic. As mentioned above, Printz regards the dialect of the herdsmen in the *Pañcarātra* and *Bālacarita* as a variation of Māgadhī. Before discussing this thesis I would like to describe the dialect, including readings of all manuscripts of both the dramas that I know of.[19]

Phonology: The most obvious feature is that the three sibilants of Sanskrit are represented by *ṣa*. Occasional spellings in both the Malayāḷam and the Grantha manuscripts of dental *sa* or palatal *śa* can be regarded as a mistake;[20] *ra* changes with only a few exceptions[21] to *ḷa*. As in the dialect of the Śakāra, special treatment is given to Sanskrit *kṣa* and *ṣka* in some manuscripts, e.g. in *°ḷuṣkhkha* (*°vṛkṣa*) P. 20.9 ms. TRIP 834, *goḷaṣkhaṇiā* (*gorakṣaṇikā*) ms. TRV 17622, *ḷaṣkhaṣa*[22] (*rākṣasa*) Bc. 10.10 (after v. I.19) mss CAL 1488, TRV 22848 as well as in *ṣuṣkhkha*

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18 In *Suśrutasaṃhitā* I.3.54 (16.22f. in Āchārya & Āchārya) it is said that an appropriate education in pronunciation comprises the following points: *ananunāsikam* (no exaggerated nasal pronunciation), *suvyaktākṣaram* (clearly articulated syllables) and *apīḍitavarṇam* ("non-tormented sounds", that is, a clear differentiation in the way and place of articulation). Thus, the Śakāra is clearly breaking at least the last two rules.

19 The manuscripts investigated for P. are: Madras R 3810, Madras SR 1714 D (formerly R 3585 D), TRIP 834 K (formerly 338 K), TRV 17622 B, and TRV 22848 C. The manuscripts investigated for Bc. are: CAL 1488 A (in Grantha script), Madras SR 1714 F (formerly R 3585 F), TRIP 834 F (formerly 338 F), TRV 3168 A, and TRV 22848 G. Herdsmen appear in the *Pañcarātra* only at the beginning of the second act (Gaṇapati Śāstri 20.1–23.5) and in the *Bālacarita* in large passages of the first, third and fourth acts. As a full description of all exceptions and peculiarities in the *Bālacarita* would go beyond the purview of this article, exceptions are quoted in the following mostly from the *Pañcarātra*.

20 e.g. *Pañcarātra*: *viḷāḍaśśa* 20.5, *viḷāsaśa* 21.4, *siggḥaṃ* 21.11, *°viḷāḍaśśa* 23.5 ms. TRV 22848; *eśe* 22.12, *maṇuśśa* 22.12, *°saaḍiaṃ* 22.13 ms. Madras SR 1714; *maṇussa* 22.12 ms. TRV 17622; *°saṃpādā* 23.1 ms. TRIP 834.

21 Exceptions are in *Pañcarātra °paṇḍarehi* 22.13 and *paharaha* 23.4 (all mss) as well as *ṣara* 23.1 (mss TRIP 834, TRV 17622, TRV 22848). In Gaṇapati Śāstrī's edition, *dāḷaā* 23.1 (all mss) appears as *dāraā*.

22 *ḷaṣkhaśa* (ms. TRV 22848) can be seen as a writing mistake for *ḷaṣkhaṣa*.

(*śuṣka*) P. 20.9, 10 ms. TRIP 834. Sanskrit *ṣṭha* is dealt with in two ways: *ṣṭha* changes to *ṭṭha* in *ṣuṭṭhu* P. 22.5 (mss Madras SR 1714, TRV 17622, TRV 22848) and *ciṭṭhaha* P. 23.4 (all mss), but is retained in *ṣuṣṭhu* P. 22.5 ms. TRIP 834 and *jjeṣṭha / ñeṣṭha* P. 20.8, 12 (all mss). *jya* changes to *ña* in *ñeṣṭha* (*jyeṣṭha*) P. 20.8, 12 mss Madras SR 1714, TRV 17622.[23] Initial *ya* becomes *ja*, but *rya* is changed to *yya* as in *ṣuyya* (*sūrya*) P. 22.11 (all mss) and *kayya* (*kārya*) Bc. 10.16 (after v. I.19, all mss), provided that the *ya* is not changed to *i/ī* as in *acchaḷia* (*āścarya*) Bc. 36.1 (beginning of the 3rd act, mss Madras SR 1714, TRIP 834, TRV 22848) or *acchaḷīa* Bc. 15.3 (after v. I.20, all mss), 19.1f. (after v. I.28, all mss), 36.1 (beginning of the 3rd act, mss CAL 1488, TRV 3168). *jña* is changed to *ñña*, e.g. in °(*y*)*añña* (°*yajña*) Bc. 9.7 (after v. I.19, mss CAL1488, TRV 22848; mss TRIP 834, TRV 3168 are damaged; ms. Madras SR 1714 passage missing) and 12.7 (after v. I.19, mss CAL1488, TRV 22848; mss TRIP 834, TRV 3168 are damaged) or *ḷañño* (*rājñaḥ*) Bc. 10.16 (after v. I.19, mss CAL1488, TRV 3168, TRV 22848; ms. TRIP 834 is damaged; ms. Madras SR 1714 passage missing). In other instances, *jña* changes to *ṇṇa* as in °*aṇṇa* (°*yajña*) Bc. 12.7 (ms. Madras SR 1714) or, more often, *āṇavedi* (*ājñāpayati*) Bc. 13.1 (after v. I.19, mss CAL1488, TRV 3168, TRV 22848; ms. TRIP 834 is damaged; ms. Madras SR 1714 passage missing), 15.2 (after v. I.20, mss CAL1488, Madras SR 1714, TRV 3168, TRV 22848; ms. TRIP 834 is damaged). The same can be observed with Skt. *nya* (e.g. in (*ñ*)*ñāṣa* (*nyāsa*) Bc. 13.12 (after v. I.19, mss CAL 1488, TRV 3168, TRV 22848; ms. TRIP 834 damaged; ms. Madras SR 1714 word missing), *añña* (*anya*) Bc. 34.8 (beginning of the 3rd act, ms. TRIP 834), 38.4 (beginning of the 3rd act, all mss) and °*kañña* (°*kanyakā*) 38.7 (beginning of the 3rd act, mss CAL 1488, TRIP 834, TRV 22848; ms. TRV 3168 damaged) against *aṇṇa* (*anya*) 34.8 (beginning of the 3rd act, mss CAL 1488, Madras SR 1714, TRV 3168, TRV 22848) and °*kañña* (°*kanyakā*) 38.7 (beginning of the 3rd act, ms. Madras SR 1714)).

Morphology: The nominative singular of the masculine stems in *-a* always ends in *-o*.

Résumé: Printz describes the dialect of the herdsmen as Māgadhī. A point in favour of this identification is the change of *ra* to *ḷa* and the irregular but existing special treatment of Sanskrit *ṣṭha*, *kṣa*, and *ṣka*. But the representation of the three sibilants by the retroflex instead of the palatal sibilant and the nominative singular of the masculine stems in *-a* ending in *-o* instead of *-e* point to a different conclusion. Weller's (1922: iv) and Sukthankar's (1925: 105) proposal to identify this dialect as a variation of Śaurasenī is problematic, too, because of the change

23 My only explanation for this form is a confusion of the correct syllable (*j*)*je* with *jñe* and, further on, with *ñe*.

of *ra* to *ḷa* and the representation of the three sibilants by the retroflex sibilant. Neither in the NŚ. nor in the grammarians do we find the description of a dialect corresponding to the language of the herdsmen in *Bālacarita* and *Pañcarātra*. Since we have – as far as I know – no other classical Sanskrit drama containing herdsmen, it would be possible to describe this dialect as the special language of herdsmen with the following major distinguishing features: the sibilants are represented by *ṣa*, *ra* is changed to *ḷa*, and the nominative singular of the masculine stems in *-a* ends in *-o*.

2.4 Ardhamāgadhī

Ardhamāgadhī, known above all due to the canon of the Śvetāmbaras, is characterized in NŚ. 18.49 as the language of the menials, princes and leaders of bankers' guilds.[24] In the Sanskrit dramas, however, Ardhamāgadhī is not to be found apart from the Gobaṃ° in Aśvaghoṣa's fragments (see von Hinüber 2001: 80–82, §§56f. and 98f., §74). Printz (1921: 6) regards the term "Ardhamāgadhī" for the dialects of Śakra in *Karṇabhāra*, as well as Cāṇūra and Muṣṭika in *Bālacarita*, as "Notbehelf" (makeshift); in his opinion, it is difficult to draw a reliable conclusion because of the texts' limited corpus. Before arriving at a final conclusion, I will investigate both passages in all the manuscripts known to me.

2.4.1 The Dialect of Śakra in Karṇabhāra

Śakra, disguised as a brahman, speaks in *Karṇabhāra* 77.15 (after v. 14) to 82.7 (after v. 21) a curious dialect containing the following features:[25]

Phonology: Sanskrit *sa* and *śa* are represented by *sa*; the intervocalic *ṣa* is lacking in this short passage. Initial *ya* changes to *ja* in *jaso* (*yaśas*) 79.3 but is preserved (contrary to Pischel §252) in *yācemi* 77.15, 78.9, 79.11; *ra* is preserved in *mahattara* 77.15, 78.9, 79.11, *khīra* 80.3 (ms. TRV 22848 *khira*) and *karissaṃ* 81.8, but changes to *ḷa* in *sāgaḷa* 79.3 and *āḷuhāmi* 80.10, 81.1. All manuscripts agree with respect to these features.

Morphology: The nominative singular of the masculine stems in *-a* ends in *-e*, the vocative in *-a*, with *jaso* (*yaśas*) 79.3 being an exception.[26] Here, too, there are no deviations in the manuscripts.

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24 *ceṭānāṃ rājaputrāṇāṃ śreṣṭhīnāṃ cārdhamāgadhī* (18.49 c+d, Ghosh).

25 The manuscripts investigated for K. are: TRIP 834 O (former 338 O), TRV 3168 E and TRV 22848 J.

26 According to Pischel §356, Skr. *yaśas* should be m. in the Ardhamāgadhī and so end in *-e* or – as n. – in *-aṃ*.

Résumé: Because of the nominative singular masculine ending in *-e*, this dialect cannot be Śaurasenī, and Māgadhī has to be excluded because of the representation of sibilants by the dental sibilant and the frequent preservation of *ra*. In assigning this dialect, we should consider Lüders' results: Lüders (1911: 38) considers the dialect of the Gobaṃ° in Aśvaghoṣa's fragments as "Old Ardhamāgadhī". In this respect, three points are crucial: the nominative singular masculine ending in *-e*, the replacing of Skt. *ra* with *la*,[27] and *sa* instead of Skt. *śa* and *sa*. These three characteristics can essentially be found in the speech of Śakra as well, so that an identification with Ardhamāgadhī seems – despite some deviations – to be the most logical assignment for this dialect.

2.4.2 The Dialect of Cāṇūra and Muṣṭika in the Bālacarita

Phonology: The three sibilants of Sanskrit are represented by *sa*.[28] Initial *ya* is replaced by *ja*; *ra* changes to *ḷa* and is only retained in *karaṇa-*, °*ppa*(*h*)*ārehi* (°*prahāraiḥ*) 60.5f. (after v. V.5, all mss), as well as in *dāmodaraṃ* and *raṅga-* v. V.4d ms. Madras SR 1714. Furthermore, *ṣṭa* becomes *ṭṭha* except in °*muṣṭi-* v. V.5a mss CAL 1488, TRV 3168, as well as in °*muṭṭi-* v. V.5a, b ms. TRIP 834.

Morphology: The nominative singular of the masculine stems in *-a* always ends in *-o*. The locative singular °*majjhammi* (°*madhye*) v. V.4d can be considered as a peculiarity, but it is only verified in ms. TRV 834; mss CAL1488, Madras SR 1714 and TRV3168 contain °*majjhe hi*.[29]

Résumé: The difference between the dialect of the wrestlers and Śaurasenī consists only of a more frequent change of *ra* to *ḷa* than is usual. The locative singular in *-ammi* in the first verse, which is only attested by two manuscripts out of five, can be seen as an archaism that doesn't justify the classification as Ardhamāgadhī. This dialect can probably be considered as a variation of Śaurasenī.

CONCLUSION

The Prakrit of the manuscripts often disagrees with the rules formulated in the Prakrit grammars, and, in fact, the ancient Prakrit grammarians themselves

27 For the writing of *ḷa* instead of *la* in the Prakrit of the "Trivandrum plays", see 1.2 above.

28 On the manuscripts investigated for Bc., see above, fn. 19. The only exception, °*śaṅkha-* (°*saṅkhya-*) 62.8 (after v. V.9, ms. Madras SR 1714), can be considered as a mistake.

29 It can be assumed that ms. TRV 22848, now damaged in this passage, contained the reading °*majjhammi*, too, because it was the only manuscript used by Gaṇapati Śāstrī for his edition (vgl. Esposito 2000: 551, fn. 1).

contradict each other in some respects.[30] Frequently the boundaries between the various dialects are fluid, and it is therefore difficult to determine whether the language of a passage belongs to one dialect or the other.[31]

As I have shown above, editions that do not contain the whole range of readings found in the manuscripts can lead to simplifications and wrong conclusions. Hence, for proper study of the Prakrit dialects, critical editions based on a systematic study of the manuscript evidence are absolutely essential.

ABBREVIATIONS OF PRIMARY SOURCES

Bc. [Bālacarita] *The Bālacharita of Bhāsa.* Ed. with notes by Taruvai Gaṇapati Śāstrī. (Trivandrum Sanskrit Series 21) Trivandrum: Travancore Government Press, 1912.

C. [Cārudatta] *The Cārudatta of Bhāsa.* Ed. with notes by Taruvai Gaṇapati Śāstrī. (Trivandrum Sanskrit Series 39) Trivandrum: Travancore Government Press, 1914.

Deśī. [Deśīnāmamālā] *The Deśīnāmamālā of Hemachandra.* Ed. with critical notes by Richard Pischel. Second edition with introduction, critical notes, and glossary by Paravastu Venkata Ramanujaswami. (Bombay Sanskrit Series 17) Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, ²1938.

Hammīra. [Hammīramadamardana] *Hammīra-mada-mardana of Jayasinha Suri.* Ed. Dahyabhai Chimanlal Dalal. (Gaekwad's Oriental Series 10) Baroda: Central Library, 1920.

Hc. [Siddhahemacandram] *Hemacandra's Grammatik der Prākritsprachen (Siddhahemacandram Adhyāya VIII). Mit kritischen und erläuternden Anmerkungen herausgegeben von Richard Pischel. I. Theil: Text und Wortverzeichniss*. Halle: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1877.

K. [Karṇabhāra] *The Madhyamavyāyoga, Dūtavākya, Dūtaghaṭotkacha, Karṇabhāra and Ūrubhanga of Bhāsa.* Ed. with notes by Taruvai Gaṇapati Śāstrī. (Trivandrum Sanskrit Series 22) Trivandrum: Travancore Government Press, 1912.

Nāg. [Nāgānanda] The Nāgānanda of Srī Harsha Deva. With the commentary Nāgānandavimarsinī by Sivarāma. Ed. Taruvai Gaṇapati Śāstrī. (Trivandrum Sanskrit Series 59) Trivandrum: Government Press, 1917.

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30 Salomon (1982: 124, 126) mentions some evidence in the Prakrit dialects that should be seen as general tendencies, not fixed rules.

31 That is the evidence with some verses in Rājaśekhara's *Karpūramañjarī* (see Salomon 1982).

Namisādhu	[Commentary of Kāvyalaṅkāra] *Kāvyālaṅkāra (a treatise on rhetoric) of Rudraṭa. With the Sanskrit commentary of Nāmisādhu.* Ed. with the Prakāśa Hindī commentary by Rāmadeva Śukla. (Vidyabhawan Rastrabhasha Granthamala 136) Varanasi: Chowkhamba Vidyabhawan, 1966.
NŚ.	[*Nāṭyaśāstra*] *The Nāṭyaśāstra ascribed to Bharata-Muni,* I (*Chapters I–XXVII*). Ed. with an introduction and various readings by Manomohan Ghosh. Calcutta: Manisha Granthalaya, 1967.
P.	[Pañcarātra] *The Pancharātra of Bhāsa.* Ed. with notes by Taruvai Gaṇapati Śāstrī. (Trivandrum Sanskrit Series 17) Trivandrum: Travancore Government Press, 1912.
PY.	[Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa] *The Pratijnāyaugandharāyaṇa of Bhāsa.* Ed. with notes by Taruvai Gaṇapati Śāstrī. (Trivandrum Sanskrit Series 16) Trivandrum: Travancore Government Press, 1912.
[Suśrutasaṃhitā]	*Suśrutasaṃhitā of Suśruta. With the Nibandhasaṅgraha commentary of Śrī Ḍalhaṇāchārya and the Nyāyacandrikā Pañjikā of Śrī Gayadāsāchārya on Nidānasthāna.* Ed. Jādavji Trikramji Āchārya & Nārāyaṇ Rām Āchārya. (Jaikrishnadas Ayurveda Series 34) Varanasi: Chaukhambha Orientalia, ^{4}1980.
Subhadrā.	[Subhadrādhanañjaya] *The Subhadrādhananjaya of Kulasekhara Varma. With the commentary of Sivarāma.* Ed. with notes by Taruvai Gaṇapati Śāstrī. (Trivandrum Sanskrit Series 13) Trivandrum: Travancore Government Press, 1912.
Tapatī.	[Tapatīsaṃvaraṇa] *The Tapatīsaṃvaraṇa of Kulasekhara Varma. With the commentary of Sivarāma.* Ed. with notes by Taruvai Gaṇapati Śāstrī. (Trivandrum Sanskrit Series 11) Trivandrum: Travancore Government Press, 1911.
Vararuci	[Prākṛtaprakāśa] *Prākṛtaprakāśa of Vararuci with the commentary of Rāmapāṇivāda.* Ed. Chittenjoor Kunhan Raja & K. Ramachandra Sarma. (The Adyar Library Series 54) Madras: The Adyar Library, 1946.

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Esposito, Anna Aurelia 2010a. *Dūtavāyka: Die Worte des Boten. Ein Einakter aus den "Trivandrum-Dramen". Kritische Edition mit Anmerkungen und kommentierter Übersetzung*. (Drama und Theater in Südasien 10) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

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THE CLOUD OF LONGING: THE OPENING VERSES OF THE *MEGHADŪTA*

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This paper is part of an ongoing investigation into the nature of poetic language and sensibility in Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*, particularly in terms of how it reconstitutes relationships between interiority and exteriority, between subjectivity and the natural world. When Kālidāsa asks, in the fifth verse of the celebrated poem, "What does a cloud – a blend of smoke, flame, water, and wind – have to do with the meaning of messages that are meant to be conveyed by the skilled senses of the living (*dhūma-jyoti salila-marutāu saṃnipatāḥ kva meghaḥ/ sadeśārthaḥ kva paṭukaraṇaiḥ prāṇibhiḥ prapaṇīyaḥ*)?, he raises issues about the referential and meta-referential abilities of language that have commanded the attention of literary commentators, from *rasa-dhvani* theorists to contemporary post-structuralist critics.

Kālidāsa, like the poeticians, explores the special relationship (*sāhitya*) between words (*śabda*) and meanings (*artha*) in poetic utterance, and in so doing offers a "vision of place" that seeks to integrate physical location, subjective perspective, feeling, myth, and language. The landscapes of the *Meghadūta* literally bend and transform through figurative language, as the protagonist Cloud takes on forms suitable to the geography and mytho-history of a particular area, in alignment with the *bhāva* or mood of the poet/protagonist. The landscapes of the *Meghadūta*, however, are not only spellbinding and beautiful in a referentially descriptive sense, but also in a sense that challenges many assumptions about the boundaries between nature and culture, between language and love, between self and other. At the core of the poem, the Megha as messenger may be seen as emblematic of the poetic effort to creatively negotiate interior and exterior localities and to infuse space with *mythos* and visionary value. And more daringly, perhaps, one might speak of poetic ability (*śakti*) as opposed to effort (*yatna*) – the ability of the *rasa*-infused imagination to revision one's relationship to the natural world (this as opposed to seeing *vikalpa*, 'imagination', as an imposition upon "true perception").

My intention here is to eventually explore, in detail, a number of the *Meghadūta*'s landscapes (much as van Bueitenen has done with the thirty-sixth

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verse, in which the Megha, now a red sphere, has taken on the twilight luster of freshly bloomed *japa* flowers (*sāṁdyaṁ tejaḥ pratinavajapāpuṣparaktaṁ*). The Cloud appears caught between the trees like a drum between the raised arms of Paśupati, Śiva as the Lord of Beasts. With Śiva's dance now beginning, it is asked to serve as the god's moistened, bloody elephant hide – literally, to remove Śiva's desire for the bloody elephant hide – as his divine consort Bhavānī, her fear now appeased, observes the Cloud's devotion with steady eyes.

On one hand, we have an acutely accurate description of an incoming twilight cloud overhanging as a circular disc between the trees. We also have an imaginative vision of the Cloud's red reflection falling upon the dancing deity: the trees are his upraised arms, holding the Cloud as a drum of thunder, while drops of rain mix with the reflected light, causing his garment to appear to be wet and soaked in blood. This vision suggests the bloody hide of the demon, Gaja, who was destroyed in a dancing duel with Śiva, who then ripped off the demon's skin and performed a wild victory dance with it thrown over his shoulders. Seeing this, Bhavānī, her fear appeased, acknowledges the devotion of the Cloud, who has performed the requisite *seva* (*nṛttārambhe hara paśupater ārdranāgājinechāṁ śāntodvegastimitanayanaṁ dṛṣṭabkaḥtirbhavānyā*).

While acknowledging the commentarial *darśaṇa* of this verse, which sees the natural setting and mytho-suggestions as ways of creating *rasa*, or aesthetic mood, I also want to examine the way it can transform the natural world from an observed objective scene into a "full participant" in the narrative event. My sense here is that the animation and amplification of the natural world is more than a hyperbolic poetic device – the Cloud's journey being but a "flight of fancy". Moreover, the vision of the poetic depiction of nature as a means of setting the stage for *rasa* might also be somewhat incomplete; for *rasa*, itself, may not be able to occur without these natural correlatives, being intrinsically part of them. The particular scene mentioned above takes place in the highlands of Śiva's abode, and as the Cloud travels through a landscape of mountains and rivers, it integrates itself, here through serving as the drum, into the narrative of that landscape. There is no landscape without the narrative, and the Cloud seems to be right in the signifying center of perception, a perception that can be separated neither from the natural world and the stories that are part of that world, nor from the emotional states that arise with them. It may be noteworthy, in this regard, that the thirteenth-century Zen master Dogen insisted that *koans*, the inscrutable enigmas of existence, are themselves mountains and rivers. For indeed, Kālidāsa's mountains and rivers open one's vision of the natural world in a very radical way as landscape becomes amplified in its relationship to human consciousness and language. In this essay, I will focus on the early verses of the

Meghadūta, since they serve as a frame for the subsequent address of the lovelorn Yakṣa to the Cloud and introduce a naturalistic enigma that sits at the heart of the poem and its vision.

The enigma I am referring to is the "cloud as messenger", a notion that has continually provoked and disturbed readers of the *Meghadūta* and that challenges preconceptions regarding subject/object and landscape/observer. Whether in praise or blame, critical writing on the poem has gravitated toward this image. The early rhetorician, Bhāmaha (like T.S. Eliot claiming that Hamlet was a failure because it lacked an objective correlative) condemned the image as defective and also condemned poets who would attribute the role of messenger to objects naturally devoid of powers of speech.[1] The German comparative mythologist, Hillebrandt, was startled that no one else before Kālidāsa ever thought of writing a poem on "such a trifling subject as a cloud or the tale of a lovelorn Yakṣa". The Indian scholar and translator M.R. Kale claimed that the cloud device "has not been borrowed from any prior work", while the French Indologist Charlotte Vaudeville has traced a series of prior cloud themes in folk literature.[2]

There are, in fact, a number of texts that can be seen as indirect precursors to the "*Meghadūta*", but none of them are as nearly developed or imaginative as the Kālidāsa text.[3] It is only from the *Meghadūta* onward that the *dūta kāvya* becomes a standard that poets reproduce in various forms and for various reasons. Thus, the constant controversy over the cloud as messenger alerts one to its multivalent depth and complexity. As with the slaying of Vālin in the *Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa*, an incongruent incident or image/idea/metaphor, in this case the cloud as messenger, has provoked numerous re-writings (or "re-tellings") as well as all sorts of critical rationalizations for the situation.[4]

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1 Bhāmaha, *Kāvyālaṅkāra* I.42, cited by Warder 1972–1977: 145; De 1957: xxxi. Warder also feels that Kālidāsa may be responding to similar criticism with his justification of the cloud device in Megh. 5.

2 See Charlotte Vaudeville 1959.

3 In *Ṛg Veda* 5.83.3, the poet compares the rain clouds to the messenger of Parjanya. There are also a number of *Jātaka* texts that employ non-human messengers and treat the theme of intense longing. In #297, known as the "*Kāmavilāpajātaka*", the Buddha describes a monk who in a previous birth was pining for his beloved wife while being led to the gallows. There he saw a crow and wanted to send a message to her by means of the bird. Other *Jātaka*s have similar themes, including one (#504, *Bhallatika-jātaka*) in which a wife separated from her husband for only one night lamented for 700 years.

4 The *Meghadūta* has spawned at least one hundred and forty-one known *dūta-kāvya*s. Most of these are so indebted to Kālidāsa that they borrow the meter and, in some of the poems, every fourth of his lines. Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Sītā-Rāma logically predominate as the protagonists of these works (Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa being particularly predominant in the later *dūta-kāvya*s).

The mass of criticism, intertexts, and rationalizations produced by the phenomenon of the "cloud as messenger" may be indicative of its semiotic power. The "cloud as messenger" is an image that flies in the face (no pun intended) of literalist sensibilities and brings the issue of poeticity to the fore. Poetic indirection (*vakrokti*, *vyañjanā*), of course, is highly valued within the canon of *rasa-śāstra*, where the limits of representation compel one to look to the *dhvani*, the suggestive resonance of an image. The consistent "ungrammaticality" of "how can a cloud carry a message", however, sits as the ongoing unsolved riddle of the poem, and is perhaps the key to transforming its primary denotation (*abhidhā*) into *rasa*, and thus an objective landscape into an animated one.[5]

In looking at the first few verses of the *Meghadūta*, I am taking a page out of Edward Said's *Beginnings*, which focuses critical attention on the initial act of departure.[6] My purpose here, however, is somewhat pointed. I want to suggest that Kālidāsa himself is quite conscious of issues surrounding the poetic representation of reality. And although he will offer the "madness of love" as a reason for the "poetic fallacy", he simultaneously exalts such madness, offering with it a heightened vision of language, love, and *loka* (one's vision of the natural world and its inhabitants).

The Cloud expands throughout the *Meghadūta*, not only through the many forms and relationships accrued on its journey, but also through a rich series of associations that connect the realms of language with those of nature and of love in its many dimensions. The Cloud in fact, may ultimately be viewed as language itself, a vision that would not see language as an arbitrary human convention but as something that rises out of the nexus between the natural world and the imaginative faculty. As "*kāmarūpa*" ("able to take various shapes at will"; cf. Megh. 5), it swells into figuration; as indicator, it descends from the Vedic omen,

5 Here, both the *rasa-dhvani* theorists and contemporary literary semioticians agree that the actual significance of the literary work of art cannot be found through denotation. In the terminology of Michael Riffaterre, *abhidhā* could be construed as *mimeses* and *rasa* as 'significance'. Riffaterre (1978: 6) sees the actual interpretant as intertextual and always suppressed in the text itself: "I cannot strongly emphasize enough that the obstacle that threatens meaning when seen in isolation at first reading is also the guideline to semiosis, the key to significance in the higher system where the reader perceives it as part of a complex network." A cloud, an inanimate object, cannot carry a message. It is a physical impossibility, and it threatens mimetic representation. What of the cloud image then? Again, let me cite Riffaterre (1978: 121): "It demands that we accept the premise that representations point to a meaning wherein reality, once cancelled as referential, can be used as a textual sign referring to a concept – the motif, or theme, or subject, or poetic idea informing the text."

6 Said 1975.

the sign which portends the success or failure of the sacrifice.[7] As creative flow, it releases the waters of life in a process that has been connected to Sarasvatī, the patroness of poets.[8] Its fancied flight may be the strange, magical feat of poesy itself, through its poles of covering and revelation, captivating and brilliantly naturalistic, but without literal finality: the Cloud itself will never arrive at its appointed destination. Still, the *Meghadūta*'s language of love holds out the hope of appeasing the yearning of the Yakṣa's separation, floating through the text as *dhvani*, as intimation, as the resonant echo sounding through the sky, suggesting appearance, possibility, and beauty even while remaining elusive, untouchable, and inseparable from its world.

VASTUNIRDEŚA: THE OPENING VERSE

kaścitkāntāvirahaguruṇā svādhikārātpramattaḥ

śāpenāstaṁgamitamahimā varśabhogyeṇa bhartuḥ

yakṣaś-cakre janakatanayāsnānapunyodakeṣu

snigdhacchāyātaruṣu vasatiṁ rāmagiryāśrameṣu (Megh. 1)

A certain Yakṣa, grievous in heavy separation from his beloved, who, due to neglect of his duty, had his power eclipsed for a year by the curse of his Lord, made his dwelling among the sacred ashrams on Rāma's Mountain, where the waters were hallowed by the ablutions of Janaka's daughter and the trees cast rich shade.

The early poetician, Daṇḍin, notes the standard conventions for opening verses in his Kāvyādarśa.[9] Kāvyas may open with either a benediction (āśis), an invocation of a God (*namaskriyā*), or an exposition of the forthcoming subject matter

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7 The Veda often speaks of clouds as portents of oncoming rain. There is also mention of clouds of ominous form (serpents) that demand appeasement (*Atharva Veda*) and which must be split open in order to "find the cattle" ("release the rains"; cf. AV XX.16.11–12) .

8 See R.A. Kuruksetra's (1968) discussion of Vāc as being associated with the shedding of rain. In *Ṛg Veda* 8.59.10, she "gladdens her worshippers by shedding rain for their welfare like a milk cow when attended upon". Associated with the Maruts, the wind deities who stood by Indra when he slew Vṛtra, she is present when they "sundered Vṛtra limb from limb, split the gloomy, rocky, clouds, and thus performed the valiant act" (*RV* 8.7.231).

9 *Kāvyādarśa* 1.14. While the *Meghadūta* is usually classified as a *khaṇḍakāvya*, a shorter poem in the same high style as a mahākāvya, it shares similar characteristics. Daṇḍin (1.15–19) goes on to note the following appropriate subjects for such a work: "It has its source either in a story told in the *itihāsa*s [legends] or other good [true] material. It deals with the fourfold fruit [the *puruṣārtha*s]. It has a great and generous person as a hero. It is embellished with descriptions of cities, oceans, hills, the seasons, the moonrise, the sunrise, of sport in the garden, and sport in the waters, of drinking scenes, festivals, enjoyment [love], of separation, of marriage, and nuptials, and the birth of princes, likewise of consultation with ministers, of sending messages or ambas-

(*vastunirdeśa*). While opting for the third (and most usual) method, Kālidāsa includes an intertextual invocation that obliquely includes both a benediction and an invocation. As is characteristic of Kālidāsa, the opening verse suggests the poem's greater breadth. Through a series of "suggestions" (*dhvani*s) resonating with various cultural myths, the reader/hearer is told exactly what the poem is going to do.

This verse introduces "a certain Yakṣa", a semi-divine being, of a somewhat intermediate rank,[10] in exile from his abode, Alakā, the mythic capital of Kubera, the exalted Lord of Wealth.[11] Due to some unspecified infraction, he has been banished for a year and separated from his beloved.[12] The Yakṣa spends his time among the holy regions of pilgrimage on Rāmagiri (Mount Rāma) while suffering the pangs of separation. Now, all this appears to be rather straightforward and conventional in terms of an opening verse meant to introduce subject matter relating to *vipralambha śṛṇgāra* 'love in separation'. Among the strings of epithets used to describe the Yakṣa and his condition, however, certain phrases appear to be unusually strong or weak, or in some way strange and out of place. Through retroactive reading, one grows increasingly uneasy as it becomes clear that, on a representational level, the verse does not really make sense. One may be tempted to try and "make the verse work", to rationalize the text's meaning in any number of ways. A literal reading, however, is undermined from the very first word of the poem, *kaścit*. The interrogative pronoun *ka* when combined with cit becomes indefinite and is translated as 'some', 'this', or 'anyone'. In this verse it modifies "Yakṣa" (usually rendered as 'this' or 'a certain' Yakṣa) and emphasizes the sense of indefiniteness (i.e. 'a certain Yakṣa' or 'some Yakṣa'). Such an epithet is a radical departure from those found in the introductions of standard heroes in Kāvya, such as King Dilīpa in the *Raghuvaṁśa*:

tadanvaye śuddhimati prasūtaḥ śuddhimattaraḥ

dilīpa iti rājendur induḥ kṣiranidhāviva

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sadors, of journeys, of war, and the hero's victories. Such a poem being well established will be pleasing to the world at large and will endure for several epochs."

10 A.K. Coomaraswamy (1928: 6) describes *yakṣa*s as "genii of lower rank than that of the greater gods". The *Rāmāyaṇa* ranks them below the *deva*s but above goblins, ghosts, and other non-human beings.

11 Kubera, the Lord of Wealth, is known as *yakṣeśvara*, the Lord of the Yakṣas. Alakā (from *al* to decorate; according to Rayamukuta, *alati bhūṣyati alakā*) is the mythic capital of Kubera and is also known as *vasudhārā* 'holding bounteous wealth'. It is said to be located near Mount Kailāsa, the Himalayan peak associated with Lord Śiva, whom the poem describes as residing in its outer pleasure groves. Note similar descriptions in *Kumārasaṁbhava* VII.35 and *Raghuvaṁśa* VI.34.

12 Yakṣas, in general, have consorts, not wives (see Coomaraswamy 1928).

> In that pure lineage appeared the prince of
> kings, purer still, known as Dilīpa, like the
> moon, which appeared from the ocean of milk. (I.12)

One could argue that yakṣas, like clouds, are "indefinite" in the sense that they are usually unnamable, and that therefore such an introduction is appropriate. But one is still confronted with the unusual situation of a rather intermediate being as the apparent hero (*nāyaka*). The situation becomes even more incongruous when one considers the oxymoronic juxtaposition of *kaścit-yakṣa* (minimizing the subject's importance) with the compound *kāntā-viraha*guruṇā. This instrumental *tat-puruṣa-samāsa* (or "dependent compound") means "grievous (literally 'heavy') in separation from his beloved", a profound state which should theoretically be reserved for more ultimate situations or exalted characters (such as great heroes or divine beings). Intensified by the consonant alliteration (*yamaka*) between the first and third lines, the first word of the *Meghadūta* stands out in its uncharacteristic usage as a signal that the poem is not merely about a yakṣa in separation from his playmate but, in fact, points towards something else.[13]

The next description of the Yakṣa, *svādhikārātpramattaḥ*, is most often translated as 'neglectful of his own duty or office'.[14] While the *abhidhā* or primary denotative sense is correct here, and through *lakṣaṇā* (the inferred secondary sense of a word) one might speculate on the nature of the offense, as many commentators have done, there is a further nuance involved. The word *adhikāra* (office or position) through the pun on its sound (*śabda-śleṣa*) contains the word *adhika* which means 'excessive'. *Pramattaḥ* (from the verbal root *mad*, 'to revel, excite, rejoice'), aside from meaning negligent or careless, connotes recklessness

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13 Mallinātha and Bhāratamallika account for the omission of the Yakṣa's name on ethical grounds – he has committed an offense. Other commentators have found fault with *kaścit* for being an *anirdiṣṭanāma*, not giving the Yakṣa's name, a view that is refuted in the commentary of Sumativijaya. Bhāratasena and others, however, see *kaścit* as indicative of a hidden invocation due to the consonant *k*, which stands for Brahmā or Prajāpati. The copious critical literature around the word is a further indication of its problematic nature. I would suggest that the hidden invocation occurs through the intertexts, particularly the *Rāmāyaṇa*. What is being invoked is not so much the personal divinity (i.e. Rāma) but the ultimate situation of *śṛṇgāra rasa* itself, which Ānandavardhana described in *Dhvanyāloka* II.6 as *śṛṇgāra eve madhuraḥ paraḥ prahlādano rasa* 'the sweetest and most delectable of all rasas'.

14 While *pramattaḥ* is in the nominative case (and thus in apposition to *kaścit*), *svādhikārāt* takes the ablative due to the presence of *pramattaḥ* (Mallinātha). Kale (1969: 3) cites the Vartamāṇa commentary note of *Pan*. I.4.24 to explain this. Thus, I have translated it 'due to neglect'.

and intoxication, more often than not with erotic connotations.[15] In order to tie the poem to conventional mores, recent translators have rendered *kāntā* as 'wife' and *svādhikārāt-pramattaḥ* as neglect of duty. It is quite likely, however, that the offense alluded to in this verse is of a somewhat different nature. Its direct correlation to madness and love is made explicit in the fifth verse, and it is important in understanding the resonance with *pārakīya* 'lawless love', which the verse suggests.

The curse (*śāpa*) and loss of power are, at least since the epics, much used conventions in this regard. They serve as the external means to bring on and experience loss. The combining of *asta* with verbs of going (*gamita*, in this case) often connotes the setting of the luminaries, reminiscent of the fall of *deva*s from heaven, where they are said to suddenly lose their luster. The epithet also works referentially, since the Yakṣa must be deprived of his powers (such as flying in the air and changing form) in order to enforce the separation. The loss of power or impotence is part of the liminal nature of separation, much akin to being in exile. The Yakṣa here is not merely separated from his lover, but from his city and his role as a semi-divine being. The epic ideal was by and large a martial one. Kāvya, on the other hand, puts us fully in the realm of *śṛṇgāra*, whether courtly or otherwise. Therefore, the Yakṣa can fully succumb to the influence of *viraha* in a way that epic heroes may not quite be able to.

The exile exists as a prevailing motif in Sanskrit literature, as its centrality in both epics attests. Here, then, the epithet *śāpenāstaṁgamitamahimā* is overdetermined by previous epic texts, as is every descriptive phrase in this opening verse. This is why "straight genre" interpretation can be so misleading. Although belonging to classical *Kāvya*, there is no way that the reader/hearer cannot be plunged into the epic universe through this verse. The same holds true of the Purāṇas even though they are labeled "religious works" while *kāvya*s generally are not.

The compound *varśabhogyeṇa*, which modifies *śāpena* 'the curse' is usually rendered "to be endured for a year", with the standard translation of this compound in the instrumental case. But this phrase also calls to mind resonant themes of meeting and separation through its invocation of the natural world through a language whose system of signification is still semantically related to natural

15 Note that *mada* (from *mad*) is the intoxicating juice that exudes from the temples of elephants in times of sexual passion. See verse 20 of the *Meghadūta*, where the river's course is pungent with the temple-juice of wild elephants (*tiktair-vana-gaja-madair*). One may also note the customary literary association of *pramattaḥ* with *unmattaḥ* or insanity, as in *mattaṁ pramattam unmattaṁ suptaṁ bālaṁ strīyaṁ jaḍam prapannaṁ virathaṁ bhītaṁ na ripuṁ hanti dharmavit* (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 1.7.36). In his commentary, Śrīdhara glosses *mattam* as 'intoxicated', *madyādina pramattam* as 'inattentive', and *anavahitam* and *unmattam* as 'possessed'.

cycles. The word *varśa* puns on the meaning of *varśa* as the rain, or rainy season, while *bhoga* also indicates enjoyment (lit. *bhogya*, 'to be enjoyed', often connected with food or sex).[16] In India, the cooling advent of the rains has traditionally been a joyous time. During this period of reunion, men either return from travel or remain home with their wives in amorous enjoyment.[17] According to popular folk traditions, however, with the coming of the monsoon, women look to see if their husbands are arriving and if not, pine in separation, knowing that they will be gone for the remainder of the season.[18] Thus, the time of enjoyment becomes a season of lamentation as well and is recorded as such throughout the poetic tradition. Again, Kāvya takes its cue from the epic universe: in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma, Hanumān, and the *vānara*s must wait for the rains to pass before seeking out Sītā. The association of the rainy season, then, with possibilities of both meeting and separation, exists as a well-established convention, linking the falling rain with the pining heart. The descriptive *varśabhogyeṇa* simultaneously invokes its opposite meaning (*abhinnapada śleṣa*), as it juxtaposes the endurance of the curse with conventional stimuli to the mood of love (*uddīpana-vibhāvaḥ*), evoking the interacting *rasa*s of *saṁbhoga* and *vipralambha* (meeting and separation) *śṛṇgāra*.

The natural imagery of the following lines combines with the approaching monsoon and the word *kāntā* 'lover' to also obliquely suggests certain "pastoral" themes of meeting and separation that abound throughout Indian oral and literary traditions. One can easily be reminded of Kṛṣṇa's sporting with the cowherd girls (*gopī*s) in the forest of *Vṛndavāna* before his forced separation from them.[19] The *Kṛṣṇa-carita* tales, of whatever origin, were reformulated in the Purāṇas, and certain verses of the *Meghadūta* are too similar to those of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*

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16 The *Saroddhārinī* commentary considers a further interpretation of *varśa-bhogyena*, which puns on *varśa* as a sacred spot from the epic (one of the nine divisions of the world) and *bhogya* as 'to be enjoyed'.

17 In the rainy season, roads were impassable and rivers were flooded over. Thus, all traveling ceased. Wandering ascetics could also settle down at this time until the rains passed, often at the home of a householder. This could bring on the potential danger of attraction to a woman of the house. In the epic, Arjuna, masquerading as a wandering monk, becomes attracted to and ultimately carries off Subhadrā.

18 A commentarial controversy exists as to whether the text should read *prathamadivase* 'the beginning days' or *prasamadivase* 'at the end' in the second verse. Vallabhadeva and those who follow him, assuming a classical seasonal division with the rains beginning in the month of Śrāvaṇa, opt for the last day. In her article on the *Ghaṭakarpara* and the *Meghadūta*, Charlotte Vaudeville (1959) explains that folk literature generally ignores this division of seasons and thus sees Kālidāsa as relying on the popular folk traditions for his work. Vaudeville also discusses the above motif in popular folk traditions.

19 Varying versions of the Kṛṣṇa legend are found in the *Mahābhārata* and in certain Purāṇas. Many of his epithets and characteristics, however, appear in Vedic literature (see Miller 1977: 52, note 2).

to be coincidental.[20] What we actually have in this verse, then, is the invocation of a code of love-in-separation that extends from the oral tradition, through the *bhakti* poets, and even on through Tagore and Nirala. It is this same code which Jayadeva plays upon in his lyric *Gītagovinda*, as the dedication of love play between Kṛṣṇa and his unwedded consort Rādhā begins with the words *meghair meduraṁ ambaram* 'clouds thicken the sky'.[21] The specific way in which this code corresponds to seasonal and other natural cycles may vary with locality, but it is nevertheless clearly present. The human drama is not merely being played out on the stage of nature; it is also an enactment of nature.

The adjectival epithets of the last two lines modify *rāmagiri* (lit. 'The Mountain of Rāma'), whose waters have been made holy by the ablutions of Sītā, King Janaka's daughter (*janaka-tanayā-snānapuṇyodakeṣu*). The association of the mountain and the water with the mythic figures of Sītā and Rāma casts the natural world in resonance with both the pathos and otherworldliness of the *Rāmāyaṇa* narrative. The connection of *āśrama* with 'mountain' and *puṇya* with 'water', both signs of holiness, certainly serve to infuse nature with divine as well as mythic significance. But this type of reading may be bound by post-Cartesian perspectives. What if, to the poet's eye at least, the natural world has never been separate from the mythic? Then, there are no mountains and waters apart

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20 See, e.g. Megh. 35, 36; *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* X.9.5.

21 *meghair meduram ambaraṁ vanabhuvaḥ śyāmastamāladrumairnāktaṁ bhīrurayaṁ tvameva tadimaṁ rādhe gṛhaṁ prāpaya/itthaṁ nandanideśataścalitayoḥ pratyādhvakuñjadrumaṁ rādhā-mādhavayorjayanti yamunākūle rahakelayaḥ* (*Gītagovinda* 1.1)

I have gone with Barbara Stoler Miller's translation here, including her poetic license ("Clouds thicken the sky, Tamala trees darken the forest. The night frightens him. 'Rādhā, you take him home!' They leave at Nanda's order, passing trees in thickets on the way, until secret passions of Rādhā and Mādhava triumph on the Jumna riverbank."). The phrase *pratyādhvakuñjadrumam*, however, would more literally indicate their stopping (for erotic dalliance) at every thicket and bower. In a similar way, the Cloud of Kālidāsa irresistibly stops at every mountain and river.

The body of Kṛṣṇa, "the ultimate object of one's longing" in Bengali Vaiṣnavism, is compared to a fresh rain cloud in the *Gītagovinda* (2.23). In the *Caitanya-Caritāmrta* of Kṛṣṇadāsa, the devoted ascetic Mādhavendra Purī faints in a swoon of separation at the sight of a passing cloud which reminds him of Kṛṣṇa, an act repeated by the nineteenth-century mystic Ramakrishna. Note, as well, Tagore's translation of *Gītanjali* XVIII:

> Clouds heap upon clouds and it darkens
> Ah, love, why dost thou let me wait outside the door all alone?
> In the busy moments of noontide work I am with the crowd,
> But on this dark day it is only for thee that I hope.
> If thou showest me not thy face,
> If thou leaves me wholly aside,
> I know not how I am to pass these long rainy hours.
> I keep gazing on the far away gloom of the sky,
> And my heart wanders, wailing for the restless wind.

from mythic narratives of them, and, consequently, no narratives apart from the mountains and waters themselves. The landscape and the story are inseparable, and it may only be fitting that the Cloud will have to retrace the vast mythopoetic landscape of Vālmīki en route to its destination.

The reference to *Rāmagiri* casts the entire *Megha̍dūta* in the shadow of the *Rāmāyaṇa* (as the verse itself literally indicates with *snigdhacchāyā*, suggesting the rich shadows cast by the trees of Rāma's mountain). Not only do several verses of the *Megha̍dāta* echo the *Rāmāyaṇa*, but the entire route of the Cloud Messenger is said by some commentators to lie along the scenes of the latter half of the *Ayodhyā-kāṇḍa* and the earlier parts of the *Kiṣkindhā-kāṇḍa* from the epic.[22] While there is an entire genre of critical literature that has spent its time trying to "prove" the location of Rāmagiri, and another series of articles trying to establish the extent of influence or non-influence of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* on Kālidāsa, the way in which the epic infuses the narrative perspective of the poem is rarely discussed.[23]

The voyage of Hanumān to Laṅkā is, I would contend, a model that stands behind the *Megha̍dūta*. The profusion of cloud metaphors, the emphasis on figuration, and the wondrous aspects of the unusual journey in Vālmīki all resurface here. Hanumān's message to Sītā, moreover, is directly invoked towards the end of the poem:

> *ity ākhyāte pavanatanayaṁ maithilīvonmukhī sā*
>
> *tvām-mutkaṇṭhocchvasitahṛdāya vīkṣya saṁbhāvya caiva*
>
> *śroṣyaty-asmāt-param-avahitā saumya sāmantinānāṁ*
>
> *kāntodantaḥ suhṛdupanataḥ saṁgamā kiñcidūnaḥ*
>
> This said, her face, like Sītā's upturned toward Hanumān, with her heart sighing in longing, seeing and greeting you, she will thus listen closely. For a woman, O Gentle One, news of love brought by a friend is but slightly less than reunion itself. (Megh. II.107)

As in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the messenger assures the exiled lover that all is well and that reunion is to come soon (an assurance that cannot ultimately stand). In the

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22 See Raja 1948; Mukhopadhyaya 1948. Mallinātha (1.1) also asserts the *Megha̍dūta*'s debt to Vālmīki (*sītam prati rāmāsya hanumatsaṁdeśam manasi vidhaya*), as do numerous other commentators.

23 The major commentators on the *Megha̍dūta*, Mallinātha and Dakṣinavartanātha in particular, spend much time insisting on the *Rāmāyaṇa* as the model for the flight of the cloud but do not approach the issue more critically. The *Purāṇa Sarasvatī*, maybe the oldest commentary, interestingly enough rebuffs the notion of the *Rāmāyaṇa* as intertext, as do five others, all Bengali commentaries (see De 1952).

Meghadūta, as in the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, there is the hint that the message (or in Vālmīki's case, the *ayaṇa* or story) may have to stand in for reunion itself, an implicit admission that one may have to remain satisfied with memory, fantasy, and the delusively playful dexterity of poetic language as one's solace. Unless, of course, one comes to the position that narrative supersedes events themselves. This, I would argue, is one polemic of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, and possibly of the *Meghadūta* as well.

It is in the context of this greater separation and intimations of its possible finality that the disjunctive significance of *kaścit* and *virahaguruṇā* is resolved. The mythically charged resonance (*dhvani*) of the separation between Rāma and Sītā, as well as the pastoral resonance of separation during the rainy season (which may also be just as mythically charged), shifts the emphasis and the mood from the Yakṣa to *vipralambha-śṛṇgāra* itself and to all the spiritually potent, emotion-laden material that this kind of love-in-separation brings to mind.

While introducing the subject matter (*vastunirdeśa*), this opening verse evokes a higher presence (and is hence a benediction and a salutation) by recalling sacred histories infused in the earth herself and attested to by the thousands of pilgrims who continually visit such holy sites (*tirtha*s, *āśramas*). The resonant elements of Rāma's curse and exile, the pining of *viraha*, the animation of the natural world, and its integration into the mood of separation combine, then, along with the archetypal theme of sacred pilgrimage, to evoke the highest level of *śṛṇgāra-rasa*. And perhaps, on this level of *śṛṇgāra*, the so-called "natural world" takes on a different face, for it cannot be depicted separately from the gaze that longs for completion. The evocation is varied and complex, as the overt and more subtle series of suggestions combine with the slow-moving syncopated repetitions. Each descriptive phrase of this verse evokes either another text or a series of texts, and hence another mood of separation and exile, including the problematic "resolution" of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. An apparently secular narrative about a "minor deity" opens the door to layers of mythic resonance moving as a celebratory parade of lyrical richness, color, and sound. Various holy and unholy diversions line the path of pilgrimage, mingled with an erotic imagery that correlates nature with the remembered female form and totally mythopoeticizes the natural world through deepened moods of longing.

THE ARGUMENT

In the second verse of the *Meghadūta*, the Yakṣa is depicted through a conventional image of separation, so emaciated in his lovelorn condition that his golden

bangle has slid off his arm.[24] His mind, upon sighting the Cloud, becomes agitated at this sign of the oncoming rainy season. He manages to restrain his tears in the face of "the very cause of his longing":[25] "For such a cloud is able to disturb even the mind of a happy man, what to speak of one who longs for the embrace of his beloved who is far away."[26] Hoping to send news of his welfare to his dear one, he propitiates the Cloud with flower offerings and speaks words of welcome.

tasminnadrau katicidabalā-viprayuktaḥ sa kāmī

nītvā māsān-kanakavalayabhraṁśarikta-prakoṣṭaḥ

āṣaḍāsya prathama-divase meghamāśliṣṭa-sānuṁ

vaprakrīḍā-pariṇata-gaja-prekṣaṇīyaṁ dadarśa

Having passed months on that mountain apart from his mate, so wasted and aching for love that his golden bangle had slipped off his arm, he saw, on the first day of Āṣadha, a cloud embracing the mountain peak like a comely elephant playfully butting against a hillside. (Megh. 2)

The Cloud first appears enveloped in much of its mythic imagistic heritage, "embracing the mountain summit like a beautiful elephant playfully butting the hillside" (*āśliṣṭa sanuṁ-vaprakrīḍa-pariṇata-gaja-prekṣaṇīyaṁ*). According to Vedic and Purāṇic lore, clouds may appear in various ominous or auspicious forms, such as buffaloes, boars, and wild elephants (*Purāṇa Sarvasva*), or as weapons and in "five-colored" forms which demand rites of expatiation (*Atharva Veda* 7.3.4).[27] From early on, the cloud is a signifier, and an apt one, when one considers both its ability to suggest forms (*kāmarūpa*) and its correspondence to weather changes, particularly to storms with their weapons of thunder and lightning. The cloud as an elephant is another important and long-standing association. It is certainly auspicious, being associated with Indra through his celestial elephant mount, Airāvata, an emblem of the monsoon cloud itself, replete with rainbows and lightning. Elephants, in fact, were employed in rituals to bring

24 Śākuntala III.11: "This golden armlet slips to my wrist (*maṇibandhanāt kanakavalayaṁ srastam māya*) without touching the scars my bowstring has made. Its gemstones are faded by the tears of secret pain that every night wets the arm where I bury my face" (tr. Miller 1984). *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* X.60.24: "As her reason became benumbed and lost with excessive agony, fear, and grief, the fan dropped from her hand which became instantly so much shrivelled and loose that the bangles were slipping from them."

25 Lit. 'the cause of exciting his longing' (*kautugādhānahetor*).

26 *meghāloke bhavati sukhino'py anyathāvṛtti cetaḥ*
kaṇṭhāśleṣa-praṇayini jane kiṁ punar-dūrasaṁsthe (Megh. 3)

27 See also *Gobhila Gṛhyasūtra* 3.316 f., where the study of the Veda must be interrupted if clouds arise. The *Atharva Veda* is cited in Gonda 1980: 398–399.

on rain and crop fertility. According to the *Mātaṅgalīlā*, the Hindu book of elephant lore, elephants (like mountains) were once clouds, able to take any form at will (*kāmarūpa*), until a group of them, through neglect, brought on a curse which deprived their entire race of wings.[28] Nevertheless, the Yakṣa must hold back his tears at the sight of the rain cloud, a sight that reminds one of the joys of love and thus brings on the pangs of separation (in the *Raghuvaṁśa* of Kālidāsa, Rāma weeps at the sight of such a cloud).[29]

In this first *darśaṇa* of the Cloud, it is seen embracing and playfully butting the side of a mountain. One may note here the oblique suggestion of the Cloud being but a shadow of its former self. The *Sundara-Kāṇḍa* of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* narrates its own version of how the clouds lost their power: in the *kṛta-yuga*, mountains had wings and used to fly about in all directions with speed equaling that of both Garuḍa and the wind. However, the *ṛṣi*s and *deva*s were afraid that these flying mountains would fall down upon them, so Indra, in accord with their concerns, clipped their wings with his thunderbolt. The wings became the clouds. Similar allusions to clouds are found in Purāṇic literature (see, e.g. the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*). The Cloud appears, then, as something reduced from its original state and yet clinging (*āśliṣta*) to the mountain, as if seeking to recapture its former completeness, an apt metaphor for the position of the poem's protagonist.

A Western reader might also be reminded here of Socrates' discussion in the *Phaedrus* of the soul that has "lost its wings" and fallen to earth, being inspired by the sight of beauty to the "divine madness" of eros. This can be transformed by the philosopher into love and into the ultimate regrowth of the soul's wings. In both cases, there is an awareness of a union that preceded the bewilderment of multiplicity, one that can only be remembered with nostalgia or referred to through metaphor, as with the Cloud in this case. The cloud of language, like the Yakṣa, in some sense has been reduced. It is now an intermediary between heaven and earth. While *Para-Vāc* is transcendent and whole, "that part which humans speak" is separated, nuzzling and playfully butting against an objective world, carrying ancient trace-memories of pure flight and wholeness.

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28 Zimmer 1972: 102–109. *Mātaṅgalīlā* I describes the mythological relationship between clouds and elephants. The *Hastyāyurveda*, the other Indian text on elephants, describes a festival for rain and crop fertility, in which a white elephant plays an important role. The elephant is frequently referred to as *megha* 'cloud'.

29 *Raghuvaṁśa* XIII.26: *etadgirormālyavataḥ purastād āvirbhavaty/ambaralekhi śṛṇgam/ navaṁpayo yatra dhanairmayā ca tvādviprayogāśru samaṁ visṛṣṭam//* "Yonder appears that sky touching the peak of Mount Mālyavat where clouds poured down new showers along with me, who shed tears from your absence."

The relationship of the elephant form to auspiciousness is, of course, fully embodied in Gaṇeśa, the elephant-headed "Lord of Beginnings".

It may be no accident, then, that the description of the Cloud hints of figuration. The words used for embracing or nuzzling (*āśliṣta*) and for butting (*pariṇata*, lit. 'stooped over' or 'bent', which Mallinātha takes as "an elephant striking its tusks on a hillside") are both transformations of word stems from the critical metalanguage of Alaṅkāraśāstra. While *śliṣta* is the pun, a central figure of speech in Kāvya literature, *pariṇāma* is the figure of speech (*alaṅkāra*), also known as *vikriyā upamā*, in which the properties of any object are transferred to that with which it is compared. Both are fitting allusions to the figurative activity of poetic language, and both are presented through the Cloud's relationship to the landscape. Could it be that the landscape itself is figurative, that it exists in a deeply interwoven relationship to the imagination, and that it may itself be a part of that imagination?

The next verse, in which the Yakṣa stands contemplating the Cloud, holding back his tears, contains a couplet that is strikingly familiar to a verse in Kālidāsa's *Śākuntala* that has become one of the most oft-quoted passages in the language.

> *tasya sthitvā kathamapi puraḥ kautugādhānaheto-*
>
> *rantarbaṣpaściramanucaro rājarājasya dadhyau*
>
> *meghāloke bhavati sukhino'py-anyathāvṛtti cetaḥ*
>
> *kaṇṭhā-śleṣa-praṇayini jane kiṁ punar-dūrasaṁsthe*
>
> Standing there, somehow, in front of the very cause of his longing, this courtier of Kubera held back his tears and brooded for a long time.
>
> The sight of a cloud can disturb the mind of even a happy man. – What to speak of one desiring to embrace the neck of his beloved who is far away. (Megh. 3)

The *Śākuntala* verse reads as follows:

> *ramyāṇi vīkṣya madurāṁś-ca niśamya śabdān*
>
> *paryutsukhībhavati yat-sukhino 'pi jantuḥ*
>
> *yac-cetasā smarati nūnam-abodha pūrvaṁ*
>
> *bhāvasthirāṇi jananāntarasauhṛdāni* (*Śākuntala* V.2)
>
> Seeing rare beauty, hearing lovely sounds
>
> even a happy man becomes strangely uneasy... perhaps he remembers, without knowing why,
>
> loves from another life buried deep in his being.

Traces of this scenario appear in the epic (with the exchange of tokens between Rāma and Sītā through Hanumān in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, for example), and it will become a conventional mainstay of classical Sanskrit drama and poetry. The hero

is so affected by the artifice that he is transported into an illusory world of his projected desire. But this identification with the aesthetic world of *rasa* may also contain further substance. In both verses, an outer beauty awakens an already existing mood. In both verses, even a happy person is disturbed; puzzled by the intimation of that which is greater than appearance. The more one meditates upon *rasa-dhvani* aesthetics and their proponents' reading of Kāvya, the more one sees how deeply and particularly it participates in the Indian philosophical sensibility of appearance not being reality. I say "particularly" here, because rather than being ignored or devalued, the world of appearances may serve as an *upāya* or means that leads to a deeper reality. The Cloud is no longer connected to its mountain, but it will fly anyway and attempt to bring the message home, to connect with the beloved. And in doing so, it amplifies the general condition of humanity (*sukhino'pi*), perhaps not fully aware of the depth of loss and exile that is part and parcel of a separated self's experience of an objective world, but vaguely uneasy with the conventional sense of order that seeks to manage all this appearance and disappearance.

The Yakṣa next propitiates the Cloud with official worship as well as with flattering words of welcome:

> *pratyāsanne nabhasi dayitājīvitālambanārthīṁ*
>
> *jīmūtena svakuśalamayīṁ hārayiṣyan-pravṛtti*
>
> *sa pratyagraiḥ kuṭajakusumaiḥ kalpitārghāya tasmai*
>
> *prītaḥ prītipramukhavacanaṁ svāgatam vyājahāra*
>
> With the month of Śrāvaṇa arriving and desiring to send news of his welfare with the cloud, to sustain the life of his beloved,
>
> he joyously offered welcome with words of affection
>
> and worshipped him with kuṭaja flowers. (Megh. 4)

In this context, worship is calculated activity to achieve a desired end, the path of *karma-kāṇḍa* or engaging in sacrifice for a particular result. Moreover, the *argha*, according to the *Amarakośa*, is a rather formalized offering to a venerable person or deity. Note how this somewhat exaggerated propitiation comes right after the disturbing sight, perhaps as an effort to control language and to move away from the desolate state of separation by flattering the cloud, bringing it under a dharmic umbrella, and obliging some form of reciprocity.

The fifth and final verse of this narrative frame abruptly shifts from description to a rhetorical question that further focuses on this issue:

dhūma-jyotiḥ salila-marutāṁ saṁnipātaḥ kva meghaḥ

saṁdeśārthaḥ kva paṭukaranaiḥ prāṇibhiḥ prāpaṇīyāḥ

ityautsukyād aparigaṇayan guhyakas taṁ yayāce

kāmārtā hi prakṛti-kṛpaṇāścetanācetaneṣu

> What does a cloud – a blend of smoke, flame, water, and wind – have to do with meaningful messages that are meant to be conveyed by the skilled senses of the living? Heedless of this from intensity of love, the Yakßa made his request. For lovers afflicted by passion lack the common sense to tell the living from the dead. (Megh. 5)

This question, which has been described as an apology, an explanation, and a "weak rationalization" for the cloud device, raises, over and above this, a key argument and concern of the poem: the position and potential of poetic language. The interrogative repetition *kva*, a particular figure that Mallinātha notes as *viṣamālaṅkāra*, is employed to express great inconsistency or incongruity between two things. On one hand there is the cloud itself, described in terms of its separated elements much like the delineations of the elements of material nature (*prakṛti*) in the Sāṁkhya system of philosophy. The elements themselves are thought of, in prevailing Sāṁkhya ethos, as inanimate, separate from the animating force (*puruṣa*) and unable to move on their own. On the other hand, there is the meaning of the message (*saṁdeśārthaḥ*), which is meant to be carried by the living.[30]

Forlorn lovers in various folk traditions may have propitiated clouds as messengers, but textual traditions have usually enlisted living messengers. Hanumān's role in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, is well known. In the *Nalopākhyāna* of the *Mahābhārata*, Damayantī sends a swan as a messenger. In the *Jātaka*s, there is a crow messenger, and in the *Kṛṣṇacarita*s, *Gītagovinda*, and similar genres, a female messenger (*sakhī*) is usually sent to describe the lover's condition. The poem's question, then, serves to intensify this incongruity. How can an inanimate cloud carry a message? How can a series of verbal conventions, the signifiers of language, carry any meaning beyond their elemental components, beyond conventional reference?

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30 Mallinātha takes *saṁdeśārtha* as a *karmadhārya-samāsa* (*Pan*. 1.2.42) in which the compound members stand in the same case relationship. One can also construe this as a dependent *tatpuruṣa* compound, however, which would emphasize the resonance of *artha*, also part of the critical metalanguage of the Sanskrit poeticians. The word *artha*, usually translated as 'meaning', also connotes 'goal', 'aim', 'purpose', 'utility', and 'wealth', and is an integral part of early *alaṁkārika* definitions of poetry (cf. Bhāmaha, *Śabdārthau sāhitau kāvyam*).

Kālidāsa, like the poeticians, explores the special relationship (*sāhitya*) between word (*śabda*) and meaning (*artha*) in poetic utterance. I would point out that, while the Cloud may not be "living", it is organic, not exactly an artifact. Thus, Vedic clouds, aside from being omens, are also figures for poems. In *Ṛg Veda* I.38.14, the song in measured *gāyatrī* meter "spreads in the mouth like a spreading cloud". In *Ṛg Veda* I.116.11, the songs are "trimmed like grass and sent forth just as the wind drives the clouds".[31] Perhaps it is their dynamic ever-changing form, or their floating ease, that attract the imagination, or the fact that they have no fixed shape. But the use of a cloud as an intermediary intimates that language itself is

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31 Cloud imagery is found throughout the *Ṛg Veda*, and the flowing rainwaters are often identified with the inspirations of Sacred Speech, particularly in the form of Sarasvatī, who is described in I.164 as the "inexhaustible breast that flows with the food of life". The falling of rain and the process of speech was often associated with Soma, who is described as the "Lord of Speech, the inciter of the voice of song" (101.6). In the *Asya Vāmasya* hymn of Dīrghatamas, Soma is "the semen of the stallion bursting with seed". The fecund bull Parjanya, the personification of the rain cloud, is also described as the bull or stallion bursting with seed, who is "like a charioteer lashing his horses with a whip while he makes his messengers of rain appear" (V.83.3).

As a living cloud, Soma becomes a metaphor for the distillation of hymns (VI.39.1); in X.74, Soma is the androgynous cloud from which both milk and rain issue forth. The rain is milked from the cloud as the elixir of Soma is pressed from the stalk. Again, in I.164, the pressing of Soma is equated with the birth of speech. As a bull bursting with seed (*parjanya*), the cloud fertilizes the earth. As a cow, the cloud of speech is milked. In VII.101.1, the cloud (*parjanya*) is spoken of as one whose three voices are lightning, thunder, and rain.

> Raise the three voices with light going before them,
> Voices that milk the udder that gives honey.
> The bull created the calf, the embryo of the plants
> And roared as he was born.

Though full of seed, his udder is the cloud milked for rain. Wendy Doniger (1981: 175) suggests that the three voices may be the chants used during the pressing of the Soma, while the udder is the Soma plant itself: "In the cosmic metaphor, it is the rain cloud, the udder of the heavenly cow." Frederick Smith (pers. comm.) suggests that the three voices are more likely the three priests of the *Sāmaveda* who chant during the pressing of the Soma. In any case, as the flowing water of inspiration, speech is seen as the flowing milk of the cow. Nigrhaṇṭu etymologists claimed that the cow (*gauḥ*) and *Vāc* were synonyms.

> The red cow lowed and the flood waters came.
> She sits on the highest abode with a thousand syllables;
> Having become one-footed, two-footed, eight footed, nine-footed.
> From her flows the oceans in all directions, by her live the four regions
> From her flows the *akṣara* [undying syllable]. On it, the universe stands.
> (*Ṛg Veda* I.164.41,42)

The cow cloud, who yields Sacred Speech, becomes identified with speech itself. Sāyana also interprets references to milk cows as references to *Vāc* (as in VII.87.4, where she is described as having 121 meters attached to her breast, throat, and head). Here, again, the equation of an intermediary is made. The cloud of speech stands between the fecundating heavens and the receiving earth.

Such imagery of masculine (bull) and feminine (cow) association flows through the cloud descriptions in the *Meghadūta*. The cloud is constantly raining down upon parched mountains and exciting the feminine rivers as well.

an intermediary whose figurative potentials suggest an imaginative reality that is more than imaginary (in the *vikalpa* sense of imagination as imposition).

The fourth line offers a general maxim in this regard, a figure of speech known as *arthāntaranyāsa*, which corroborates the three preceding lines.[32] Those who are *kāmārta*, or overcome by passionate desire, cannot distinguish between the animate and the inanimate (lit. 'the moving and the unmoving'). Therefore, the Yakṣa, in his consumed state, is heedless of conventional perception as he propitiates the Cloud. The delirious lover appears again. We have seen him as Rāma, overcome by pangs of separation and abandoning his *dharmic* persona. He appears in Sanskrit poetry and Indian folk tradition as the mad lover talking to inanimate objects.[33] In Act IV of Kālidāsa's *Vikramorvaśīya*, Purūravas addresses the creeper as his lost lover, and in his *Śākuntala*, King Duṣyanta begins to speak to a painted bee in a picture of Śakuntalā and her friends, warning the bee not to touch the lips of his love. The buffoon, commenting that the king has gone crazy, reminds him that it is just a picture. "A picture", says the king, "How can that be?"

> My heart's affection made me feel
> the joy of seeing her –
> but you reminded me again
> that my love is only a picture.[34]

Such a verbal query often takes on a reckless, frenzied state of madness, as in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* when the *gopī*s search after Kṛṣṇa who has disappeared form his own *rāsa* dance.[35] In this condition, language articulates madness as the verbal imagination breaks from the sensible, distorting consensus perceptions of sensation and time.

> ...so now the moon is burning hot
> and sandal paste turns to fire,

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32 "*Arthāntaranyāsa*, 'introduction of another matter', is a figure of speech in which a proposition or remark is justified or substantiated by the adjunction of a relevant moral or rational" (Gerow 1971: 118). A particular case may be given to adduce a generalization as well as a contrary situation. Here, the fourth line supports the statement in the first three.

33 According to Vaudeville (1959), the motif here seems to be the "mad lover" known in Indian folk literature from very ancient times, where it appears always connected with the male character.

34 *Śākuntala* VI.21, tr. Miller (1984).

35 See *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* X.30.4: *gāyantya uccair amum eva saṁhatā vicikyur unmatta-vad vanād vanam* "Singing his glories in a clamorous chorus they sought for him like madwomen from forest to forest".

the nights each last a thousand years

and the lotus necklace weighs like iron. (Amaru)[36]

The utterance, losing contact with realms of conventional reference, depicts a purely subjective world that is only accessible to those who "whine in love's mad fantasies".[37] This vivid, altered state, far from being condemned, however, is relished by *rasika*s (those who can taste the aesthetic mood) as the most sublime mood of intense longing, and it flows continuously and almost verbatim throughout the Sanskrit and on into the subsequent traditions.[38]

It is fascinating to note in this context that the reckless lover overcome with desire in separation mirrors his polar opposite, the "mad" *avadhūta*, the renunciate who dwells in absence of all mental imagery and thus shuns speech altogether. The *avadhūta*, or sage who has renounced (lit. 'shaken off') all worldly attachments and connections, is traditionally compared to a madman. Note the Purāṇic description of King Ṛṣabha:

He took a vow of absolute silence and kept quiet

even though spoken to by men. Behaving like a stupid,

blind, deaf, dumb person or like a ghost or a mad person,

he took on the appearance of an *avadhūta*. (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa* V.5.29)

The *avadhūta* and the singer of separation are mad. Both seek to overcome partial perceptions of the conventional world by renouncing referential language. The poet, such as Jayadeva, is "obsessed in his heart by rhythms of the goddess of speech". The sage or *muni* (lit. 'silent one') speaks in strange riddles, oracles, and figures. Both silence and visionary utterance are strategies for dealing with the limits of language. Both seem to turn away from the sensible world, but one could argue differently. Silence may be a form of deeper intimacy with all things, and visionary poeticity may be a much more relational way of participating with objects than nominalism.

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36 Amaru is listed as the possible author of this verse in Ingall's *Anthology of Sanskrit Court Poetry* (1965: 231). Also see the collections entitled "The Lady Parted From Her Lover" and "The Lover Separated From His Mistress".

37 Cited from the *Gītagovinda*, translated by Barbara Stoler Miller (1977: 74): "Lonely wives of travelers whine in love's mad fantasies."

38 These verses seem to point out a flaw in the historical argument that sees intense, emotional *bhakti* as beginning in the tenth century. The exact same rhetoric is found in earlier epic and *kāvya*, as we see here. Perhaps the context has changed, but the mood exists in all the force of its emotionality. Furthermore, when one imagines the celebratory ritual of court recitation, the whole labeling of classical Sanskrit poetry as "secular" may not be as accurate as supposed.

The *Meghadūta*, in its multivalence, manages to incorporate both of these dimensions along with metaphysical ones as well. The "metaphysical" readings are favored by Vaiṣṇava schools, who prefer to see such poems as the *Meghadūta* as allegorical representations of the soul's separation from God. Indeed, one of the impetuses to the writing of this paper was a story I heard of a professor at Banares Hindu University, with Vaiṣṇavaite leanings, who could never get past teaching the first verse of the *Meghadūta* because he would fall into an ecstatic trance upon its recitation. Even in the general poetic tradition, however, the situation of love has interlocking dimensions.

> This debility of body and lack of all desire
> This fixing of your eye in trance, and perfect silence;
> This state bespeaks a heart fixed on a single object
> What is that one fair lady: Brahma or your lover?
> (*Lakṣmī dhara*; see Ingalls 1965)

One could thus read the Yakṣa's exile in these opening verses through complementary realms of language and love. The Yakṣa is separated from his beloved, and Sacred Speech (*Vāc*) is separated from the "speech that men speak", hence the objectification of the world through language. The poetic process, on the other hand, is one that, through indirection and image, seeks to reconfigure the relationship between self-awareness, language, and the natural world. But does it? Figuration, propelled by desire, certainly captivates the mind and seeks to effect a unity of opposites. Indeed, from this point on, the Cloud's journey will become one of pure, spellbinding lyricism, spoken of by partisans such as Aurobindo Ghose (1964) as the most perfect description and elegiac poem in the world's literature:

> Every possible beauty of phrase, every possible
> beauty of sound, every grace of literary association,
> every source of imaginative and sensuous beauty
> has been woven together in a harmony which is without
> rival and without fault.

The visionary swoon manifests fields of imagery and association that appear to be hallucinatory in the eyes of the world. The lover sees the beloved everywhere.

śyāmāsvaṅgam cakitahariṇīprekṣane dṛṣṭipātaṃ

vaktracchāyṁ śaśini śikhināṁ barhabhāreṣu keśān

utpaśyāmi pratanuṣu nadīvīciṣu bhruvilāsān

hantaikasminkvacidapi na te caṇdi sadṛṣyamasti

In the *śyāma* vines I see your limbs, your look in the eye of a startled doe, the loveliness of your face in the moon, in the peacock's plumage your hair, the playful lift of your brows in the light ripples of rivers, but, O, sadly, nowhere, my *caṇdi* is the whole of your likeness in any one of these. (Megh. 101)

This last line of Kālidāsa reveals a poetics of absence. The poetic effort, like Śaṅkara's world of *māyā*, is an illusion, a rope mistaken for a serpent, a superimposition of desire and memory upon a likeness that cannot be found. Such a world, a world of poetic vision, has no resolution. Not once in the *Meghadūta* will the cloud respond to its propitiator, for it exists only in the dreamlike yearning of the Yakṣa. Rāma cannot remain united with Sītā, and the *gopī*s cannot return to Kṛṣṇa at Kurukṣetra. The message can never be delivered, and in asking this question (*kva ... kva*), the poem poses the problem of its own impossible mimetic closure.

And yet, through this very literal impossibility, a new relationship with and a new vision of the world is generated. It is just the inability of definite expression, in fact, that is recognized and exploited by *rasa-dhvani* poetics. The poem must be unreal in order for it to be effective. But what is the nature of its unreality? Is it the *māyā* of *advaitic* illusion, or the *māyā* of the bewitching magic of mountains and rivers? The Cloud carries the message of the living through the magic (lit. *māyā*) of its unreality. The poetic effort does not negate language in the way of silence (*neti ... neti*). Rather, through *vyañjana*, it stretches, bends, and turns the word into the aesthetic mood of *rasa* and reunites the word with the world.

What is the relationship between the Cloud and the message, the form and the content, the sign and the object world? Does figuration reveal through indirection or does it simply magnify an inadequate situation? The answer given is the remainder of the poem, one that simultaneously dazzles with visionary capability and demonstrates figurative impossibility. Both, truth and silence, vision and annihilation, result from the pilgrimage of the imagination, creating associations that challenge supposed distinctions as well as laying bare the abyss which lies beneath the entire verbal effort. But never in the *Meghadūta* is this effort disassociated from the natural world, and perhaps this is crucial as the last words of the poem will be the Yakṣa's wish that the Cloud should never be apart from its lightening.

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ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SANSKRIT MANUALS ON DANCE

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Indian classical dance has a long history. The development of its technique is recorded in the Sanskrit treatises, which were composed up to the middle of the eighteenth century CE. After that, the writing of such texts stopped and the old classical dance itself has become nearly extinct. Today, there are about a hundred Sanskrit works dealing with dance in at least one of their chapters. Unfortunately, most of them exist in the form of unpublished manuscripts, some scattered fragments, or are simply known by their titles.

The major part of these manuals on dance were composed by musicians and musicologists at royal courts. They had been observing dance in practice and the teaching process, but clearly many of them were not proficient in this art themselves. The authors regarded dance as being inferior to music and completely dependent on it.

The dance chapters are usually much smaller then those on music. They are full of contradictory references from preceding and contemporary works. Often the authors are confused about some concepts, terms and dance nuances. They describe certain movements in a clumsy or unclear way, so that following their prescriptions is physically impossible. Most of the modern classical Indian dance styles seem to be much simplified and modified versions of the territorially limited old schools. As neither practicing dancers nor their teachers possess deep knowledge of the Sanskrit language, they usually are not familiar with the technical dance manuals, save the passages which are learned by heart at the beginning of their training.

As the revival of the *mārga* tradition in the thirties of the last century was extremely selective and quite speedy, enthusiasts did not have time to spend on many years of actual learning. Besides, to bring Indian dance to the stage, the public opinion about this art had to be changed. By the end of the nineteenth century, dance was mostly associated with South Indian temples (which made it exotic) and with prostitution (which made it immoral). The art was enjoyed and understood by few and despised by practically everybody. It had to be modi-

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fied in order to save whatever was left of the *mārga* tradition. Unfortunately, by that time, the royal court dancing was long gone and nobody remembered the Sanskrit manuscripts on performing arts.

Classical Indian dance is not a static art system; it undergoes continuous change. In the old times, changes occurred gradually and within the frames of established schools. The modern classical dances of India are the result of a drastic change, which was brought forcefully and implemented in a comparatively short period of time, in many cases not by professional keepers of the tradition.

It is interesting to note that at the present time, three different (and the most popular) modern Indian dance styles use one and the same Sanskrit text on dance technique as their principal handbook. The Bharat-natyam and Kathak dancers know the manual as the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, while the Kuchipudi performers call it the *Bharatārṇava*. The text was even published thrice, under different names, but each edition is a variant of one and the same treatise. While working on a critical edition of this manual, I have found nearly sixty relevant manuscripts in various libraries. Less than ten of these were used for the said editions.

The very fact that different dance styles rely essentially on the same Sanskrit treatise shows how wide is the field of possible interpretations of a technical manual. As was already mentioned, dancing is an art that changes constantly. Every innovation has to be smoothly fitted into a traditional technical scheme. The professional Sanskrit terminology used in the dance manuals is extremely complicated, and it often happened that with a change in the interpretation, the canonical texts were also altered to suit the contemporary situation and demands of the audience.

Modern classical dancers sometimes regretfully speak about what they call a limitation of style. For instance, Bharat-natyam performers feel bound by the prescribed sets of technical compositions. Such dancers usually proceed in two possible ways. Some of them start fusing different schools or even different styles, in an attempt to create something new and unique. Others return to the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and busy themselves with a practical reconstruction of *karaṇa*s and the like.

As a rule, in the first case, the dancers end up with mixed combinations, which are still limited by the same technical sets, only from different sources. In the second case, they either deal with poorly managed translations of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, with the result that reconstruction is not possible, or begin their quest with commentaries written in the native languages. It must be pointed out that in comparison with the original text, such commentaries are quite recent and, therefore, cannot be completely reliable.

It is a pity that even the dancers who wish to relate their styles to other technical Sanskrit sources become discouraged very quickly. The texts are not easily available. The available ones are not translated adequately and remain ridden with unclear terminology. Most of the extant Sanskrit manuals on dance belong to the medieval times and describe techniques contemporary to the authors. Although the basic technical sets of modern classical Indian dance can still be traced back to the old systems, it is becoming more and more difficult, as dance undergoes a great deal of modification with every next generation of performers.

Modern simplification of the dance makes artists unable to understand the principles of its development in the past and significantly narrows the possibilities of composing and further progress. Meanwhile, the history and resourcefulness of classical Indian dance technique are still traceable trough the lesser known Sanskrit manuals, which are lying in various manuscript libraries. Although much information about dance compositions have been lost, because dance, being a visual art, was passed from one generation to other in an oral manner, there exist texts which, step by step, elaborate even on certain dance items. Should Sanskrit scholars and practicing dancers come together in attempts to retrieve and study all those works, classical dance will progress and perhaps even flourish once more.

MAD OF LOVE, MAD FOR GOD

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The madness of love
Is a rich fief;
Anyone who recognized this
Would not ask Love for anything else:
It can unite Opposites
And reverse the paradox.
I'm declaring the truth about this:
The madness of love makes bitter what was sweet,
It makes the stranger a kinsman,
And it makes the smallest the most proud.
Hadewijch van Antwerpen

As we know, several Indian thinkers belonging to the Viṣṇuitic medieval *bhakti* movement cultivated not only devotion but also the most ardent love for God: its goal is passionate union with Him.[1] The subject matter, imagery, characters, and so on of their texts bear a great similarity with both older and contemporary Indian secular poetry. In the so-called nuptial mysticism of the Christian West, too, the soul's yearning finds its fulfilment in a mystical marriage with God. Here also the union is described in terms similar to those of romantic love: it has been hypothesized that this genre of Christian poetry is most closely related to the

1 I must thank for their help and support my *guru*, Carlo Della Casa, former Professor of Sanskrit Language and Literature at the University of Milano (Italy) and – last but not least – Father Claudio Stercal, Professor of Theology at the Catholic University of Milano and director of the "Centre of Studies on Spirituality" at the Faculty of Theology of North Italy (Milano). To them this work is dedicated.

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poetry of the Provençal troubadours, to the *Minnesang*, and to the courtly poetry of the so-called Spanish Golden Age.[2]

Now, I would like to focus specifically on the literary style that mystics of both traditions have chosen not as a vehicle for instruction or the promulgation of doctrine but as a medium suited to describe a spiritual event which is nevertheless always felt to be truly ineffable, inexpressible by reason of its sublimity, but perhaps faintly describable with the help of a special literary code designed to fulfill the essential purpose of any text: intelligibility. Hildegard von Binden (1098–1179) perfectly expressed the tension between the desire to communicate the mystical experience and the difficulty of doing it (a difficulty that led many religious men to the *silentium mysticum*) with the term *diversitas verborum*. In other words, she clearly perceived that the problem is exactly linguistic.[3]

In both the Indian and Western milieus, the love poet also describes an experience that he feels to be (or wishes to portray as) extreme, and often (here also) ineffable.[4] It seems to me that the history of sacred and profane love can also be read, or reinterpreted, as a history of this special literary challenge.[5]

It is a common and well-founded opinion that the frequent use of themes, motifs, situations, and characters drawn from (*laghu*)*kāvya* played a fundamental communicative function in Indian devotional texts: to facilitate the expression of the religious message by the use of well-known *tòpoi*.[6] It is important to under-

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2 As is well known, the theory that there is a relationship between aspects of the erotic and the sacred in various world literatures has sometimes been accepted and sometimes rejected, especially when specific examples of interaction between the two streams have been proposed. The comparative study of Indian and Christian mystical literature is certainly not virgin territory; here, too, opinions are varied and divergent.

3 In an acknowledgement of, and as an attempt to overcome, the inadequacy of language, she augmented her texts with drawings and images. Very similarly, Veronica Giuliani (1660–1727) wrote in one of her *Letters*: "Love, which works in a soul, makes something that drives me to madness. I cannot narrate these foolish things; all what I tell seems to put me to silence; in being silent, I shall say everything; in speaking, I don't speak nothing."

4 As a consequence, the profane writer is also forced to create a language that diverges from the normal usages. Yet, in his quest to make a nearly unimaginable experience intelligible, he is constrained to employ conventions that do not perfectly express his thought but which at least have the advantage of being immediately recognizable to his audience.

5 It is a challenge which both Indian and Western poets faced in their search for expressive strategies, that is, in their experiments with the intrinsic beauty of language, and with its utility for the expression of ideas. Their responses to this challenge richly reflect the epochs and the traditions out of which they wrote. In any case, as it happens in profane poetry, there are many dangers inherent in any generalization made about a gender as a whole. The immediate causes of individual lyrics are always both the literary background of each writer but also their virtuosity and his creativity: that is, the language of the convention was common to all the lyrics that used it; its formulation in any particular lyric was always unpredictable.

6 In fact, the present criticism, both Indian and Western, seems to establish itself on some basic elements: among them, that the propelling element of *kāvya* and the ground on which it was sup-

posedly formed is lyric poetry, in particular the *muktaka* (single-stanza poem), destined to remain its favorite form. Themes, motifs, situations, and characters of so-called literature as a form of art are ratified in the *alaṃkāraśāstra*s and – in the field of love – were designed to evoke the *śṛṅgārarasa* (perhaps rhetoricians have directed their own closest and most stubborn examination just toward this *rasa*). In the chapters concerning the *śṛṅgārarasa*, the aesthetic experience of love is usually described as love in union (*sambhoga*) and love in separation (*vipralambha*). The last one is illustrated both before an actual union (and in this case we talk about *ayoga* or *pūrvānurāga*, the passion unconsummated or born before the *sambhoga*) or when a couple is actually formed. The union is considered a moment of absolute beatitude for the couple (obviously also for illicit couples an earthly, sometimes blasphemous *ānanda*), but the *sambhoga* is also often considered the result of separations, difficulties, and obstacles, both actual and sentimental. In fact, Kālidāsa, the so-called poet of love and of women, also maintains that separation increases love (*Meghadūta*, II, 5), that the pleasure following suffering is very delightful (*Vikramorvaśīya*, III, 21), and that the absence of an actual fulfillment of love makes greater the following joy of passion (*Abhijñānaśakuntala*, II, 1). Viśvanātha (*Sāhitya-darpaṇa* 3,213) remarks in his turn that the *sambhoga* is *eka* (one, unique): that is to say, it does not have reasons and causes like the *vipralambha* (of which, almost always, it is the happy result); he adds that just as a dress does not completely acquire its color unless dyed correctly, so union cannot blossom without being preceded by a form of separation. The most recurring sources of a separation, minutely enumerated by the *kāvyaśāstrin*s, are: first, *pūrvarāga*, *pūrvānurāga*, *ayoga* (love sprung before union, or unconsummated love); it can be caused by *śruti*, *śravaṇa* (to hear news about the beloved) or *darśana* (to see the beloved). *Śruti* or *śravaṇa* can have as media: a *dūta* or *dūtī* (messenger); *guṇastuti* (praise of the beloved's qualities); *sakhī* (she-friend); *vandin* or *gītamagadha* (praiser, bard); or *vyāja* (artifice, device). *Darśana* can have as media: a *chāyā* (shadow, reflected image); *citra* or *pratikṛti* (picture or image); *indrajāla* or *māyā* (sorcery, magic); *sākṣāt* (*de visu*); or *svapna* (dream). Second, *māna* (anger, indignation) has as causes the presence of a rival in love (another wife or another lover) and the consequent *nāyikā*'s jealousy (*īrśyā*), or the unpredictable nature of the passion (*praṇayamāna*). Jealousy can spring from five media: *anumita bhogāṅka*, or conjecture sprung from seeing marks of love on the beloved man's body; *anumita gotraskhalana*, or conjecture sprung because the beloved man mistakes the beloved woman's name; *anumita utsvapnāyita*, or conjecture sprung from the beloved man's starting out of sleep; *śruta* or *śravaṇa* (i.e. to hear news about the beloved man's unfaithfulness); and *dṛṣṇa* or *darśana* (i.e. to see the beloved man's unfaithfulness). Jealousy can be of four types: *guru*, strong; *madhyama*, moderate; *laghu*, light; and *sambhogacārin*, near to a reunion. Jealousy can be displayed by the *nāyikā* in eight ways: *apamāna*, disrespect; *avahitta*, dissimulation; *bhaya*, fear; *māna*, rage; *manyu*, fury; *sammoha*, stupefaction; *vaimanasya*, depression; and *vyalīka*, offense. Third, *pravāsa* (the beloved man's absence from home) or his amorous estrangement or his estrangement due to many concrete causes (such as *kāryabhūta*, the beloved man's past absence because of his business; *kāryabhavan*, the lover's present absence because of his business; and *kāryabhāvin*, the beloved man's future absence because of his business) or mysterious causes (*śāpa*, a curse by a deity or by a hostile person; *saṃbhrama*, confusion due to calamities caused by a deity or by a hostile person). The *pravāsa* can be shown by the *nāyikā* through eleven displays: *asauṣṭhava* (want of lightness, suppleness); *tapas* (pain, fever, feverish thirst); *aruci* (aversion, disgust); *adhṛti* (absence of control or lack of firmness); *anālamba* (despondency); *tanmaya* (being absorbed in one's own thoughts); *pāndutā* (paleness); *kṛṣatā* (thinness); *unmāda* (madness); *mūrchana* (stupefaction); and *maraṇa* (death). Fourth, the pain (*karuṇa*) caused by the death of the beloved person (about the *karuṇa* the rhetoricians are very trenchant that it is a cause of *vipralambha*, not an effect). If the beloved dead person does not return alive by means, for example, of the grace of a god or by magic, or, in other cases, the two lovers do not have the possibility to reunite in another existence – as the dogma of *saṃsāra* permits – the aesthetic experience of love ceases, and there starts that of grief

line that the same vocabulary and rhetorical structures are used in both profane and sacred poetry. We hear the same language in both, different as the message of each may appear to be.[7] Considered as literature, these mystical and erotic texts are stylistically identical, and thus it seems natural and right to approach both, so to speak, in the same spirit.[8] In other words, the vocabulary that gives voice to the passion for a human partner is not used in order to create a symbol, or an allegory, or a metaphor for the ecstatic passion for God, but it actually describes the same relationship.[9] The use of profane language is not a bid to obfuscate a concealed erotic or spiritual meaning; it is an earnest attempt to express as clearly as possible a meaning that transcends and defies these conventional categories. Obviously, the opposite is also true: if, as Indian secular erotic poetry frequently emphasizes,

(*karuṇarasa*). As the rhetoricians affirm, the *vipralambha* sets in motion the so-called *daśāvasthā*s (also well known by means of the celebrated treatises on love or *Kāmaśāstra*s), that is, the ten stages of love, a hierarchy of ten phases characterized by a growing suffering of the unsatisfied lover, which can end in the death of the unlucky person. They are typically experienced by the *nāyikā*s. They are: desire (*abhilāṣa*); anxious thought (*cintā*); remembrance (*smaraṇa*, *smṛti*); enumeration of the beloved's qualities (*guṇakirtana*, *guṇakathā*); agitation, distress (*udvega*); incoherent or delirious speech (*pralāpa*, *saṃpralāpa*); confusion, madness (*unmāda*); sickness or fever (*vyādhi* or *saṃjvara*); stupor (*jādaṭa*); and death (*maraṇa*, which can be *jātapraya*, very near; *cetasākankṣita*, desidered; or *pratyujjīvana*, with a return to life). According to other rhetoricians, the *daśāvasthā*s are: joy at seeing the beloved person (*nayanaprīti* or *cakṣurāga*); to be totally attached, with mind, to the beloved man (*cittāsaṅga* or *mānaḥsaṅga*); the declaration of the *nāyikā*'s purpose (*saṃkalpa*); insomnia or impossibility to sleep (*nidrāccheda* or *jāgara*); thinness or emaciation (*tanutā* or *kārśya*); discontent or loss of interests (*arati* or *viśyanavṛttī*); loss of shame or of pudency, or of dignity (*trapānāśa* or *lajjātyāga*); confusion, foolishness (*unmāda*); stupefication, insensibility (*mūrcchā* or *mūrchana*); and *maraṇa* (death). In conclusion, the experience of love is often unhappy or very uncertain. Also, in the description of the stages of love the rhetoricians hardly ever talk about the *nāyikā*'s sufferings. If she does not obtain the beloved man, or if she loses him, she falls into a progressive deterioration of the body and that can culminate in death (sometimes, as several stanzas show, by the adharmic suicide of the woman disappointed in her expectations). All this, the *muktaka*s demonstrate, also pertain to the case of the adulteress. Here it is necessary to emphasize two matters. First, the rhetorical treatises dedicate a lot of space to the *vipralambha* theme (and in *laghukāvya* it emerges with great frequency through the motif of an unconsummated, uncertain, or unhappy passion). Secondly, the reference point of the *kāvyaśāstrin*s and the authors of love poetry is the *nāyikā*. In short, as the poetry shows, love is for all the *nāyikā*s an experience that is very often full of suffering or uncertainty, because the woman is always dependent on the will of the man. On the one hand, the man is the master of her life and, on the other hand, he is often treacherous, unfaithful, false, ungrateful, and centered only on his own pleasure.

7 In tasting the literary expression of the two different unitive experiences, we are *de facto* faced with the same language.

8 Mystical and erotic texts are, at the literary level, identical; therefore, the interpretations in the sacred and profane sense can be, so to say, appreciated at the same time, or they can even functionally coexist.

9 That is, it evokes and mirrors the actual substance and essence of the loving relationship with the deity.

each lover (or, more specifically, each *nāyikā*)[10] must love the partner as a god, then

10 About the *nāyikā*s, the rhetorical treatises, pondering on the literary production, in the long run arranged methodically and fixed definitively their characteristics and peculiarities with unequaled punctuality and accuracy, in the end transforming them into pre-established types acting in the prefigured or dramatized situations of the *kāvya*. In addition, during this theorical arrangement, the *nāyikā* becomes more and more explicitly recognized by the rhetoricians as the character suitable to represent, to describe and to exemplify amorous situations and circumstances (as results in the descriptions, almost always from the feminine point of view, of love also in the poetical production). In other words, she is suitable electively to evoke the *śṛṅgārarasa*. The *nāyaka*, obviously involved in his turn in the love stories, frequently plays a role of secondary rank. The rhetoricians often underline that the *rasa* of love exists also for the man, but it is more effective and more touching when it is traced by the feminine characters. In other words, the *svadharma* of the women, both in the real world and in the aesthetic world, is the *kāma*. In my PhD thesis, I have tried to demonstrate that, as for the *śṛṅgārarasa*, the synodic roles are played by the *nāyikā*s, which are well traced in the *muktaka* poetry. Many of the most important classical rhetoricians describe the heroines or *nāyikā*s and the aesthetic experience of love in different sections of their treatises. The various types of the *nāyikā*s are always illustrated only with reference to the erotic *rasa*; thus, the heroines are unanimously examined according to three different points of view, which in my thesis I have called qualifications of relationship, circumstantial qualifications, and women's ornaments (or graces). The qualifications of relationship concern the objective relation between the *nāyikā* and the man (*nāyaka*): in other words, the type of relationship that the woman would have also in the real world in the light of the *dharma* ratified by the sacred tradition (*smṛti*). So, we have the subject's own partner (*svā*, *svīyā*, *svakīyā*); the other woman (*parakīyā*, *anyā*), that is, the unmarried girl (*kanyā*, *kanyakā*) and the adulteress (*anyoḍhā*, *paroḍhā*); and the common woman, the courtesan (*sādhāraṇī*, *sāmānyā*). The *svīyā* is always faithful, fair, and honest, and she considers her husband as a god. In particular, the youngest wife (*mugdhā*, *navoḍhā*) is timid in love and naïve in her behavior, and she is in full possession of the perhaps most preferred quality of women: bashfulness (*lajjā*), which is very seductive for the man, who takes great pleasure in his role of teacher in the erotic science. The *nāyikā* of ripe years (*madhyā* and *pragalbhā* or *prauḍhā*) acquires, on the contrary, self-consciousness and arrogance (i.e. *dhīratvam*). She knows well the erotic art – and this is very agreeable for her partner – but she also becomes most quarrelsome, possessive in love, and jealous, and frequently she is insolent to the unfaithful husband. The *parakīyā* is described as impudent, always resolute, and ready to cross every obstacle in order to conquer the lover (*kānta*) and to make love with him, but the *kāvyaśāstrin*s do not usually tax her openly with dishonesty. The *parakīyā* loves, suffers, and is jealous exactly as a *svīyā*, and her passion is always felt as absolute and overcoming. But what is more, it is often this suffering, caused by sentimental or actual impediments, that constitutes a guarantee of the absolute truthfulness of a *parakīyā* devotion to her adharmic lover. In poetry, this all happens according to a laic and profane concept of life, when this is not either immoral (violating moral – that is to say, dharmic – rules, such as in the case of adultery) or amoral (beyond all moral rules, such as in the case of the numerous stanzas where *sadhu*s, philosophers, and gods are themselves rendered ridiculous because of their search for happiness through *mokṣa* or in heaven, not by the hugs of a beautiful girl). But, I must underline, the rhetoricians never speak openly about this vision of the adulteress; they describe her, basing their illustration on the lyrical literature, but they refrain from any judgement. The courtesan, according to the *Kāmaśāstra*s and the *Arthaśāstra*s, carries out an activity considered normal in society: she is avid, cunning, and skilled in all the arts but especially in the art of fleecing her customers by simulating true love, the *svīyā*'s love. The eight circumstantial qualifications reveal a snapshot of the *nāyikā* in a precise stage or moment of her relationship with the *nāyaka*. Thus, we have eight canonical types: the *svādhīnabhartṛkā* or *svādhīnapatikā* (the woman whose partner is under her own control);

the passion of the religious lovers of a god can assume all the sensual characteristics of erotic love.[11] Consequently, on the level of expression, at least, the profane becomes sacred, an identification which becomes an absolute value in poetry; in its turn, the sacred absorbs the voluptuous tones of profane compositions. Thus, I hypothesize that Indian mystical-erotic texts can be defined at the literary and

the woman who goes to the meeting with the lover (*abhisārikā*); the woman who is waiting for her lover (*vāsakasajjā*); the woman abandoned or betrayed (*vipralabdhā*); the woman offended by her beloved or disappointed in her hopes (*khaṇḍitā*); the woman suffering from the separation caused by the beloved (*virahotkaṇṭhitā*); the woman distant from the partner because of a quarrel (*kalahāntaritā*); and/or the woman whose beloved is forced to be far away (*proṣitapriyā* or *proṣitabhartṛkā*). The rhetoricians agree upon the idea that only one of these types of heroine is always happy, that is, the *svādhīnabhartṛkā* or *svādhīnapatikā*. All the other women are abandoned, betrayed, offended by their beloved, or disappointed in their hopes. Also, the *abhisārikā* is sometimes described as full of anxiety or lovesick (*madanāturā*) because she is not sure of the arrival of the man at the rendezvous. And in her eager anticipation, the *vāsakasajjā* doubts to the last the truth of the beloved's passion. Women's ornaments or graces (*alaṃkāras*) comprise a lot of qualities of the *nāyikā*s considered natural, spontaneous, or innate: *bhāva* (to feel love without showing it); *hāva* (to show love, but only a bit); *helā* (to show passion completely); *līlā* (playful imitation of the lover's gestures); *vilāsa* (coquetry); *vicchitti* (deliberate carelessness in dress and decoration); *vibhrama* (agitation with change of voice, color, and gestures); *kilakiñcita* (amorous agitation, such as weeping, laughing, etc.); *moṭṭāyita* (silent expression of love); *kuṭṭamita* (the affected repulse of the lover's amorous gestures and sentiments); *bibboka* (affectation of indifference toward the beloved); *lalita* (amorous voluptuousness); *vihṛta, lajjā, trapā* (bashful silence, shame, bashfulness); *śobhā* (beauty caused by a happy sensual union); *kānti* (charm that underlines woman's beauty caused by a happy love); *dīpti* (splendor, being the maximum of women's charm); *mādhurya* (sweetness or grace in female behavior); *dhairya* (fortitude, calmness); *pragalbhatā* (bravery, estimable behavior); *audārya* (noble-mindedness, absolute probity); *kutūhala* (impetuosity or to surrender to love or to the lover); *cakita* (trembling, timidity); *hāsa* (laughing with grace); *māda* (pride, arrogance); *tapana* (mental distress due to passion); *maugdhya* (to mince or behave like a child); *vikṣepa* (anxiety, in particular the woman's consequent actions lacking rationality); and *keli* (to be light-hearted and prone to jokes). The aim of these graces, both in the dramatic and in the lyrical literature, is to make clear to the audience or to the readers (*sahṛdaya*, *rasika*) women's supposed common tendencies and behavior in love. As regards the feminine typologies, all the types of the *nāyikā* demonstrate beyond any doubt four matters. First, the *nāyikā* is centered only around love, in a total obliteration of her roles of mother and pious housekeeper (on the contrary, only this role is emphasized and praised by *smṛti*). Secondly, she is always dependent on the wills of the beloved. In fact, the character of the *nāyikā* who makes the choice to abandon the lover is absent both in the treatises and in poetry (the unique form of abandonment sometimes made by the *nāyikā* is suicide; in other words, she does not forsake the lover, even if he is guilty, but her painful life). Thirdly, by this subordination to the man the rhetoricians allude to the typical motifs of the relationship among women (always alternating solidarity with hostility) and the bent for forgiveness also toward a guilty *nāyaka*. Fourthly, love itself is observed and evoked mostly by means of the *nāyikā*s' words, emotions, stories, behavior, and eyes. In other words, the predominant outlook is the feminine one.

11 Obviously again, the passion between divine lovers can also assume all the sensual characteristics of erotic love.

rhetorical levels as ambiguous.[12] This ambiguity, it seems to me, is based in the texts' polysemy,[13] in the sense of a rhetorical device (or figure) that can involve not only a single word or sentence, but even an entire text.[14] Polysemy, to my mind, is the principal instrument chosen by the Indian mystic for the communication of his message. From this, at least three consequences arise. First, through polysemy, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, the two main characters of Indian erotic mysticism, are not, as the Western poetry of nuptial mysticism would lead us to expect, figures of erotic allegory. Rādhā's passionate love for Kṛṣṇa – represented, in completely secular terms, as being of the highest intensity – is not an allegory for religious passion; *it is* religious passion.[15] In this way, the creators and audiences

12 In reality, the secular love poems and religious love poems appear identical in form and expression because the medieval poet found the relationship of lover and beloved between God and man most exciting in his spiritual quest. In this relationship, the man is at his highest, and the distinction between the two levels (divine and human) is completely dissolved. In the *Kṛṣṇabhakti* poems, the poet juxtaposed conventional descriptions of carnal love plays with traditional expressions of devotion, creating an ambiguous relationship between the sacred and the profane dimensions of love. By this convergence, there is a reconciliation of the orthodox ideal of liberation through detachment (*vairāgya*) with the ideal of devotion and love for God. In this religious ideal, the source of inspiration is represented by secular and laic poetical ideals of taking joy in this ephemeral world, of completely fulfilling oneself in sex, and of love as an absolute value. The difference between sacred love and profane love does not seem to reside in the expression of love (and in its descriptions) but only in the nature of the beloved. All conventions of the secular-amorous lyrics, ratified by rhetorical treatises, are present at the syntactic, semiotic, grammatical, and rhetorical levels, and in light of the various typologies of protagonists they are the same as in secular, amorous lyrics. In turn, the ambiguity of language reconciles devotional vocabulary with that of earthly, carnal, and erotic compositions.

13 Textual density, semantic alienation from the usage and the normal meaning of terms, and polysemous utilization of the word are, of course, ineliminable textual characteristics of *kāvya* overall.

14 In this way, a literary work evokes a multitude of meanings that can be deciphered only in the context of the complex of meanings and semantic relationships of the particular text.

15 Of the five degrees of feelings (*rasa*) through which the devotee may enter a relationship with God, the highest is the *preman*, *prīti*, or *mādhurya*, being strongly dyed in sexual colors, such as human love (*kāma*), compared with the monogamous passion that unites a she-lover with her beloved. It is represented by the *gopī*s, among whom Rādhā stands out; to them Kṛṣṇa confers beatitude (*ānanda*) according to the ways of *śṛṅgārarasa* (see Rūpa Gosvāmin, 1489–1564). The highest degree of feeling (*rasa*) toward God is embodied by Rādhā: on the abstract level Kṛṣṇa's *hlādini-śakti* (beatifying power), on the bhaktic plane an emblem of the greatest *bhakti-rasa* gift, being totally blind, forgetful of social conventions, and inclined – as to testify to total self-donation (*sarvabhāva*) to the bridegroom-God – to suffer the cruel sufferings of detachment. Such total devotion is, so to say, strengthened by the fact that Rādhā is described as a *nāyikā*, heroine, and protagonist *parakīyā* (the other woman, or woman who loves a man who is not her husband, an adulteress); her love is also total because it breaks the bonds warmly supported on the empirical human level by the dharmic normative. Nevertheless, this beatitude, which is the image of the condition of perfect and unselfish servants in love with Kṛṣṇa (to which the *bhakta*s aspire), may often assume hints of suffering. Just as the *bhakta* lives her possible separation from God like an unutterable suffering, so the *gopī*s and Rādhā, revealing their total love, live the

of *bhakti* poetry seek to project themselves into Rādhā's love for Kṛṣṇa through poems that recount all the phases of the passion of love.[16] Secondly, polysemy makes possible the simultaneous allusion to the two forms, quite consistent with each other, through which Indian thought traditionally represents divinity: on

painful (aesthetic) experience of *vipralambha śṛṅgāra* and *ayoga-pūrvarāga-pūrvānurāga*. Hence, we have three consequences. First, by representing the *gopī*s – and Rādhā first of all – as *nāyikā*s *parakīyā*s, it results that their form of love is an extreme one, since it ignores the limits set by the *strīdharma*, the law of women, sanctioned by the texts of tradition; identified as a lover, and not as spouse, of her beloved, Rādhā again embodies the type of woman that chooses to love totally beyond any law and social convention, turning away from the only traditionally desirable (for her) result, that is, marriage, in the name of her own passion. Second, the female suffering is irrefutable proof of love. The love pains felt by Rādhā and the milkmaids – and by the devotees – also become a form of passion. This is exactly as happens in secular poetry, in which the *nāyikā* often suffers in waiting for the lover, becomes foolish by jealousy, or languishes due to his absence; she often suffers the pains deriving from the separation from her beloved, who is frivolous and inconstant, like many lovers in poetry. Third, assuming the form of pure love for God (*preman*), the traditional argument that says *kāma* (love, of course, conducted within the insurmountable limits laid down by the Sacred Law) is women's *svadharma* (one's own duty) is transformed into a kind of renunciation (*vairāgya*) by the female, or of loss of interest and detachment for any kind of object different from the beloved divine in the sense that, in aesthetic terms, the type of character that depends on the beloved concentrates upon the beloved divine; the union with the lover is a spiritual and, at the same time, carnal beatitude. In my opinion, it is possible to hypothesize that these aspects of *Kṛṣṇabhakti* are matched by many themes and situations expressed by the *laghukāvya* of love: see the predominance of *nāyikā*s' *parakīyā*s; the conception of their love as total and unselfish, in that it excludes the dharmic result (marriage) contemplated by tradition, which is warmly supported; passion experienced also through sufferings due to feared or effective separation from the beloved as well as from the adharmic condition of the relationship; and suffering of love ultimately considered as the extreme proof of the absoluteness of the devotion to the *priya* (lover). Meaningful is the fact, everywhere verifiable, that the treatises of rhetorics themselves not seldom cite Rādhā in exemplifying strophes in relation to moments of amorous unhappiness, which are implicitly or explicitly related to her condition of being not a true wife, a spouse (*svā*, *svīyā*, *svakīyā*) or, on the contrary, are in relation to moments of burning passion within the *sambhoga* (love in union).

16 The devotee must enjoy the divine love games. Feminizing his soul, he identifies himself with Rādhā; now the symbol of absolute love becomes the same as women's passionate, unscrupulous, and *rāga* (unsettled passion) love described in profane poetry. As Rādhā is like a mad person, mad for love, unconscious due to love, so the devotee must be. Thus, in the *bhakti* also emerges the image, or the prototype, of being mad for love for God; this figure is very frequent in poetry, too, above all in female characters, often defined as *madanāturā*, being love-sick (or intoxicated by love), and, in any case, completely, and frequently foolishly, involved in her love story. So, by *bhakti*, we can observe the creation of a new symbol in Indian religious life that again has found its inspiration in profane poetry. Love and passion are felt, and shown, through a female perspective, exactly as it happens in the profane poetry. This is the meaning of making the soul female or of feminizing it – a process that is, so to say, normal, and obligatory, in order to depict absolute, purposeless, and mad love for God. Moreover, it appears clear that as love-poetry, *bhakti* is preeminently feminine in its orientation, and the erotic love for Kṛṣṇa is envisioned entirely from the woman's viewpoint. Male devotees, saints, and poets must all adopt a feminine persona and behavior to recreate Rādhā's responses in themselves. So, the intimacy of the *bhakti* relationship is possible for the male *bhakta* by experiencing himself as female.

the one hand, in its *nirguṇa* aspect, as a purely spiritual entity, which comprehends in itself all forms of Being; on the other hand, in its *saguṇa* aspect, as a divinity endowed with material form, a perceptible manifestation granted to men by the godhead through its divine mercy (*prasāda*) and love, a concession to the incapacity of mortals to contemplate and worship that is not within the limits of their experience. Thirdly, these texts' mode of literary expression could itself suggest that two apparently opposite values (the search for detachment from earthly desires and the search for passionate attachment to them) might coalesce in the human love for God. In fact, this special kind of passion, both sacred and carnal, is superior to any moral rule, to the orthodox *dharma*, to wisdom, and to *mokṣa* itself: it is a new *dharma*,[17] with new rules and, of course, a new language. The passion for the human, if directed toward God, is now seen as sacred: attachment becomes a means rather than an obstacle to liberation. Thus, religion may be used as a means not to suppress earthly desires but to give voice to them, and to offer them to God. It seems to me that, on the textual level, this coalescence of opposites is possible precisely because of polysemy. That unity of multiple meanings and messages, both explicit and implicit, which is so fundamental to poetry, is exploited in devotional texts for both literary and religious purposes. The polysemic ambiguity of Indian devotional texts seems to have at least three functions. First, it strengthens the literary incisiveness of the work, and gives to it its peculiar *saundaryam* (beauty), a beauty which I am inclined to define as polysemic, and which is most to be found in the semantic amplification of the contents. Secondly, polysemy is itself a stylistic ornament, which also serves the function of augmenting the expressive panoply of the poet. Consequently, these works can be appreciated by readers who have different degrees of culture, different ideological backgrounds, and even quite different types of character from that of the poet.[18] Thirdly, at the stylistic level, polysemy brings coherence to a multiplicity of meanings, including the erotic one: just as *rasa*, in the aesthetic theory of the secular *kāvya*, universalizes the empirical emotion of *rati*

17 The aim is to love God and to be loved by Him, and this goal is considered superior to liberation, too. Liberation comes through loving God passionately. We can say that the devotee does not have a specific interest in liberation, because his purpose and goal is to love God, and liberation only results from this immense love. Heaven and liberation are attained through *bhakti*, but the *Purāṇa*s agree in proclaiming that a true devotee does not care for heaven or even for *mukti*: he only wants *bhakti* in his heart forever. In other words, the devotee no longer *mumukṣati* (desires liberation; i.e. he is no longer a *mumukṣu*, a searcher of *mokṣa*) but *bibhakṣati* (desires to love).

18 Similarly, the plays of Shakespeare appealed to the whole theater, from the groundlings and penny-stinkers who stood right below the stage and may have come mainly for the costumes, swordfights, and fistfights in the audience, to the effete aristocrats high above, who may have come mainly for the soliloquies, the allusions to Seneca, and the swordfights in the audience.

(fondness) by means of a poetic act, so here this poetic beatitude can become a means of transcendence, and the poetic act can now become devotional. Sacred ascetic meditation and profane sexual passion converge in a condition of perfect beatitude in which the *rasika-bhakta* is dissolved in a love-*rasa*, that is, into love and union with the beloved object. Profane language and devotional language lead the audience to parallel yet converging paths; thus, to a certain extent, the love-*rasa* and *bhaktirasa*, which is the *ātman* of the mystical text, coexist. To my mind, on this point we should look to a work like Rāmacandra's *Rasikarañjana* for our paradigm: each of its 125 stanzas is to be read as both a paean to *kāma* and a hymn to the love of God through renunciation of the world.[19] Here, ambiguity

19 That I introduce here in its first Italian translation. Rāmacandra was the son of Lakṣmanabhatta and wrote his work in 1524 (Krishnamachariar 1989: 191). In this text, the author himself openly subdivides the two different interpretations in giving them, respectively, the titles of *vairāgya* (renunciation) and *śṛṅgāra* (love, or, better, the aesthetic experience of love). A few examples may be offered here: in stanza 6, *vairāgya*, meaning: "Which desire heard by a devotee cannot Viṣṇu fulfill? By means of an intense devotion He can fulfill all the prayers of the person who looks at him." And *śṛṅgāra*, meaning: "What longing heard by a lover cannot this beautiful woman fulfill, having hands so lovely to look? With the complete devotion of a slave-girl she will fulfill all the pleasures that you want." Stanza 10 addresses renunciation: "He who practices the *yoga*, the charming *yoga*, and shows indifference for the earthly world and desires, only he is a rich person, a person to be honored, because he has understood the evil." And love: "He who is able to enjoy, and always drinks the inebriating wine, and takes delight in sexual pleasure, he only is a rich person, a person to be honored: not the man who has understood the evil." Renunciation appears again in stanza 20: "O my God! Your light can be enjoyed by means of heaps of good actions! But I've not been able to make it. So, my birth is useless." And love again: "O charming woman! Who gazed at your beauty by means of heaps of good actions? Since I couldn't contemplate it, my birth is useless." Renunciation in stanza 31: "How, in this world, would the perfect happiness be possible without a complete annihilation of the body? So, the wise man must concentrate himself on it: on the other hand, from where may arrive the salvation of humanity?" And love: "How, in this world, can the most exquisite beatitude be possible without the seducing pleasure that women promote? So, the wise man must concentrate itself on it: on the other hand, from where may arrive the salvation of humanity?" Renunciation in stanza 62: "Only the man who, always, keeps in his heart God Viṣṇu, is free from *saṃsāra*. I've thought: "Our life, here, will last only two, or three days – and it is a matter of no importance." Thus, I've reached the detachment from this world." And love: "Damn! The beautiful, lotus-eyed girl has her period: I cannot do anything. No sex – for two or three days, alas!, my life is purposeless." Renunciation in stanza 80: "At once, God is here: his light is blinding, his words are blinding, too. But He gives beatitude and glory to his devotee – He follows him, He loves him, and He cancels any pain." And love: "The woman sets her eye – which, even without kajal, lights, and gives shudders, on the ascetic: she seduces him, she makes him lose his head [...] and she appeases his ardour!" Renunciation in stanza 98: "The sacred tradition often says: don't make this! And prescribes restrictive rules. It is it which leads to the greatest, neverending happiness accompanied by a perfect blissfulness." And love: "I have often made love with her, who was saying 'No, no!' and prescribed restrictive rules. Now this beauty newly gives me a perfect, new voluptuousness accompanied by a perfect blissfulness." The stanzas read in the love context present all the conventions of *kāmakāvya*: namely, the absolute priority assigned to love, sex, and earthly pleasures; the ridiculization of spiritual life and goals. Above all, the idea that women – and among them those defined as sinners by sacred

is brought to its acme, which, it seems to me, is exemplary of the mystical-erotic Indian lexicon. Here, we are led through polysemy to polysemy's extreme form, namely, enantiosemy.

To turn to the West, the first works of so-called nuptial mysticism were written during the age of the troubadours.[20] Modern literary critics and Christian thinkers have often analysed the topics, imagery, and vocabulary of the secular literary tradition – from the Duke of Aquitaine's (*c.*1080–1127) compositions to Andreas Cappellano's (second half of the twelfth century) manifesto of courtly love, the *Tractatus de amore* – and have drawn a comparison with those of the contemporary Cistercian mystical poetry; yet, the conclusions of critics and theologians about the relationship between those two literary trends are quite different. Secular critics almost always agree that mystical texts have been one of the most significant sources of inspiration for courtly love poetry. The sentiment that the courtly love poets feel for the beloved woman, the *domna*, and their attitude to her, as it appears in their compositions, are considered similar to, and believed to be derived from, the literature of religious devotion. In this way, therefore, a sort of mysticism of profane love was born, and in it may be seen the unmistakable influence of the doctrine of mystic love expressed in the middle of the twelfth century by Bernard de Clairvaux and Guillaume de Saint-Thierry. An analogous mutual influence is often seen between the chivalrous code and concept of love-*Minne* – present in the mystical writings of Hadewijch van Antwerpen (thirteenth century), Jan van Ruysbroeck (1293–1381), and Heinrich Seuse (*c.*1295–1366), among others – and the theme of amorous vassalage, which was afterwards developed in the *Minnesang*. Finally, the courtly love of the Spanish *cancioneros*, which was heavily influenced by the troubadour lyric of Provençal, is often considered to be an attempt to reevaluate human love in religious terms, for which inspiration was drawn from the mystical works of Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582) and Juan de la Cruz (1542–1591)[21] but also those of Luis de

tradition, like the adulteress – are the unique source of the unique beatitude worthy to be pursued by men. Obviously, the same 125 stanzas read in the religious meaning sustain the opposite *Weltanschauung*: only in renouncing earthly engagements and pleasures is it possible to reach both virtue and the final liberation. Here virtue and renunciation do not mean living according to the ethical values of Hinduism, or Buddhism, but specifically *bhakti*, or devotion to God, in our case. In fact, almost all the stanzas having a contemplative slant propose being devoted to God as a unique way to salvation. And this devotion is specifically expressed with the quasi-carnal words and images typical of kṛṣṇaitic erotic *bhakti*.

20 It is obviously impossible to furnish a complete bibliography about this topic, including the various mystics. An excellent starting point is Marcel Viller et al. 1932–1995. Each foreword ends with an excellent bibliography.

21 A strong stylistic bond is often found between the poetry of de la Cruz and Garcilaso de la Vega's (1501–1536) compositions. Interesting enough, in perceiving both the strong erotic tones

León (1527–1591). Thus, we appear to find a process that is exactly opposite to what we see in the Indian milieu. Christian thinkers, basing themselves on what they must assume to be the authentic meaning of mystical texts, have usually proposed the opposite view, denying both the derivation of the amorous lyric from the mystical and the mutual influence of the two genres, and insisting on a complete difference of the meanings and purposes that inform them.[22]

On the matter of style, it is a common opinion that the mystics, in order to communicate (or at least suggest) their experience of mystical union, naturally resorted to the standard constellation of literary tropes, and in particular to metaphor.[23] Moreover, vis-à-vis the analytical, not emotional, style of the theological treatises,[24] the language used in the lyrical texts in which we are now interested is that of unpremeditated utterances of an exceptional spiritual condition; it is a synthetic language. In other words, it is the result of a sort of improvisation,[25] and so it was often and correctly defined as contradictory, transgressive, and

of de la Vega's – but also Juan Almogáver Boscán's (*c.*1495–1542) – poetry and its evident relationship with mystical lirics (felt as ethically dangerous), some moralistic writer tried to convert their profane themes *a lo divino* (i.e. into religious topics). This is also the case of Sebastián de Córdoba's *Las obras de Boscán y Garcilaso transladadas en materias cristianas y religiosas*.

22 In short, these Christian critics have held that despite the great and obvious stylistic similarity of the two genres, the comparisons drawn between them, and the theory of their interpenetration, are erroneous. And this, they believe, is the source of the error: equipollence – that is, the mutual derivation or influence of the two genres – does not necessarily mean identity. On the contrary, it is often found that a very similar lexicon and complex of concepts (like love, desire, love pains, contemplation of the beloved, rapture, longing for union, and so on) are shared by completely different fields, the similarity being demonstrably coincidental, and the appearance of commonality totally illusory. Thus, it is not necessary to postulate an interdependence, that, regarding the case in point, is only fortuitous. Likewise, they maintain, even a common fund of imagery can be put to completely different uses in two different fields. In their opinion, the courtly and Cistercian concepts of love are completely different products of the same age, which gave voice to totally opposite aspirations and existential yearnings, however similar in expression.

23 This is apparently felt as the unique device by means of which it is possible to describe a condition that is inexpressible in literal terms, and by means of which it is possible to mark the abyssal difference between the content of the mystical experience and the limits of the human language. Above all, the metaphor is necessary because, obviously, the mystic considers, *ex professo*, the union with God to be spiritual, even when he describes it in ecstatic and passionate tones.

24 Thus, at the literary level it is necessary to distinguish between two different languages. The commentary and its accompanying treatise (which is written by the same author, and which almost always gives an exposition of his inspired poetry) represent the mode of explication: their language is strictly didactic and analytical, that is, it makes clear, on the phenomenological level, and without emotion, all that has been intuitively apprehended in mystic vision or understood by God's grace.

25 This extends until the extremes of glossolaly and glossopoiesis (e.g. the *nuevas palabras* sought by Teresa of Ávila).

paradoxical.[26] Above all, it is a language that does not shrink from drawing its inspiration from erotic poetry.[27] Leaving aside the problem of the possible relationship between mystic and profane poetries, I am inclined to include Christian mystical language in this study of ambiguity and, more precisely, in the study of that semantic expansion which is one of the main characteristics of poetic language, and which gives it a certain air of obscurity. Composed in this way, mystical poetry exploits to the advantage of writer and reader alike all the emotive potential connected with human love and its language.[28] It seems to me that it is this poetical language, in which ambiguity operates at the highest pitch, that constitutes the real connection between courtly and mystical lyric. Courtly poetry describes refined love (*fin'amors*), and it is considered to be the prerogative and property of noble souls alone. But it is also the expression of a strong lust that nevertheless acquires spiritual tones through another play of ambiguity: that is, through the use of religious language. Thus, voluptuousness is purged of any sensual feature; in fact, the poets condemn sensuality as vulgar. The pleasures of the flesh actually seem to disappear in a sort of sublimation, or transformation, or angelicization *in nuce* of the beloved object (here the woman seen as the feudal Lord, or *midonz*, a term that can also be interpreted as God); the lover-poet is only her vassal, always humbly waiting for her grace. This is possible by the regular use of topics and linguistic structures typical of religious language. In order to allude to the *unio mystica* with the greatest precision, mystical poetry thus resorts to the language of profane love; and courtly poetry, in order to allude to carnal union with the greatest precision, resorts to the language of mystical marriage. In brief, each type of poetry conceals its truth precisely in its use of the literary devices of the other. Or, if one prefers, erotic and sacred love raid and plunder the language and imagery of each other's compositions.[29]

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26 Thus, paradox – along with oxymoron, catachresis, amphibology, antithesis, and so on – is rightly defined as the mystic's house; see Baldini 1990: 48.

27 In other words, the descriptions of human courtship and lovemaking made in order to establish the analogy between human love and the divine are possible by, and wrapped in, poetry. Moreover, it is impossible to underestimate the milieu in which these mystics were writing (i.e. under the authority of the Church). For example, in the era of Juan de la Cruz, the religious and the obscene were demarked by the Index and the Inquisition, and the so-called obscene was banned.

28 This is so even if at the theological level profane and sacred love are, of course, considered different *per se*. In other words, these compositions are an effective expository medium exactly because of their manifold evocative capacity; besides, their allusive multivalence assures maximum literary appeal.

29 Both of them walk the same path of ambiguity, and both describe the same essential human passion. Yet, it is a similitude that it is culturally impossible to acknowledge, and so each genre, unconsciously aware of the unnatural limitation that convention imposes upon both its

It seems to me that it is here that we find the true difference between the polysemic and converging ambiguity of Indian devotional texts, and the obscure and divergent ambiguity of their Western counterparts. The first represents its subject as mirroring another experience that is felt to be essentially the same, and whose identity it is culturally possible to acknowledge and even to celebrate; while the second treats its subject as completely unique, repressing the irrepressible identity of sacred with profane love, while making full use of the language of the latter.

But perhaps Indian devotional compositions and the poetry of this form of Christian mysticism have this much in common: the essential ambiguity of the experience they needed to describe forced the poets of both traditions to develop a literary method that resulted in poetry of the highest order of beauty and refinement, which preserves for us, despite the compromises that underlie it, an uncompromising record of divine madness in all its profound and indescribable complexity. "All I want, life after life, is unmotivated devotional service to You", says Caitanya,[30] while Bernard says, "Causa diligendi Deum, Deus est; modus, sine modo diligere."[31]

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experience and its description of an all-consuming love, is reduced to distortion and ambiguity, to a clandestine allusion to the half of the experience from which it is debarred by convention, but which its sister genre, its literary mirror, has full access to, and which it describes, paradoxically and ironically, with the same rhetorical resources.

30 Rūpa Gosvāmin, *Padyāvalī*, stanza 95.

31 *De diligendo Deo*, I, 1.

THE VIDŪṢAKA OF THE KŪṬIYĀṬṬAM THEATER TRADITION

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Vidūsaka is an extraordinary figure of the Classical Sanskrit theater, the very part of any theater troupe. Bharata in his *Nāṭyaśāstra* says: *Ataḥ paraṃ pravakyāmi bharatānāṃ vikalpanam. Bharatāśrayāśca bharato vidūṣakaḥ*. Only then do the others follow: musicians, actors, dancers, actresses, a stage manager (*sūtradhāra*), and so forth.[1] Thus, it is no wonder that Vidūṣaka is also present in the Kūṭiyāṭṭam temple theater of Kerala that is the only surviving form of the once pan-Indian tradition of Classical Sanskrit theater. Kūtiyāttam has developed its own stage techniques for presenting Sanskrit dramas referring both to classical and indigenous traditions. The figure of Vidūṣaka has a significant place there. His part of a drama text has been much enlarged and elaborated, sometimes creating a separate performance of its own and lasting many days.

According to the Sanskrit treatises on poetry, a physical deformity marks the figure of Vidūṣaka: those protruding teeth (*dantura*), tawny eyes (*piṅgālakṣa*), bald head (*khalati*), distorted face (*vikṛtānana*), dwarfish figure (*vāmana*) with a hunch on the back (*kubja*), funny look and walk. His exorbitant self-esteem and self-satisfaction are known as well, and not to forget his inclination to enormous gluttony. The Kūṭiyāṭṭam Vidūṣaka generally follows the pattern. His stage appearance is quite peculiar. He wears a bizarre headgear with a kind of partly rolled top. The huge monstrous black moustaches overshadow his face make-up, and the eyes are heavily painted black. He does not wear an upper garment (that is a must for other characters), only a very puffy half-skirt and an *uttarīya* (a long, twisted white shawl) that he often plays around with. His chest is painted white with cross-lines and red dots. Of course, Vidūṣaka wears his Brahmin sacred thread he is so proud of and he fiddles with it all the time. His first stage entry is a very elaborate performance piece called *puṟappāṭu*.[2] The *puṟappāṭu* is an extremely significant part of the multilevel and complex Kūṭiyāṭṭam perfor-

1 NŚ XXXV, 21.

2 The first entry of an important character of the play, *puṟappāṭu* consists of many dance patterns accompanied by auspicious songs (*akkitta*s). Usually it constitutes a separate performance unit.

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mance, a ritual of its own. It also gives the very first opportunity to a drama person, here to Vidūṣaka, to present his nature. He appears on the stage walking and moving in a way characteristic only for his figure; he plays with his sacred thread, he strongly chews a betel leaf in his mouth, he touches and massages his heavy round belly, he combs his hair with his hands and throws some of them around, and with the constantly folded and unfolded *uttarīya* he dries sweat away from his body. Thus, we observe usually unexceptional in public behavior in full display. And we do not mind it.

Vidūṣaka being a companion of the Nāyaka, or the king, has acquired a reputation of the frolic royal fool. However, he is not the mere companion but an intimate of the king. As such, Vidūṣaka tries his very best to support his royal friend. The relationship of the two is extraordinary. Vidūṣaka treats the king with great intimacy and freedom of speech and behavior as well. Thus, he is not a common member of the court; just another courtier, he is the institution ruled by its/his own principles. Vidūṣaka's first meeting with the Nāyaka on the Kūṭiyāṭṭam stage is dedicated to demonstrating his very close personal relationship with the king in a series of gestures and words prescribed only to his character. He approaches the love-stricken and absent-minded Nāyaka (just to mention the names of Dhanañjaya, Udayana, and Saṃvaraṇa) with curiosity and concern. At the beginning he tries to break Nāyaka's stupor, touching his arms, stretching his fingers, touching/grazing his body (first the left, then the right side). The king stays stock still. Finally Vidūṣaka waves both of his hands in front of the face of his royal companion to "awake" him and bring back to normal. His efforts are of no avail. Then he starts his comments on the mental as well as physical condition of his best friend. A verbal humorous cannonade of Vidūṣaka teases the Nāyaka to everybody's satisfaction. The Nāyaka himself is too absentminded to respond.

The Kūṭiyāṭṭam Vidūṣaka is allowed to expand his part of the drama text and he takes advantage of this rule enormously. He not only recites his drama lines in Prakrit but he translates them into Maṇipravāḷam, or Sanskritized Malayalam, interspersed with his own comments to a great extent. He often repeats the Sanskrit lines of the Nāyaka and renders them into Maṇipravāḷam, sometimes very freely, as he often misunderstands them or rather pretends to. This peculiar dialogue of the hero with Vidūṣaka (or vice versa) in the form of *śloka*s and *pratiśloka*s is full of humorous comments and blunders. Needless to say, all that is very much appreciated by the audience, to whom Vidūṣaka openly refers and addresses his wit and criticism as well. However, this practice does not suit everyone, both at the present and in the past. The *Naṭāṅkuśa*, an anonymous critique of Kūṭiyāṭṭam belonging to approximately the fifteenth century, severely

criticizes the inclination of Vidūṣaka to ridicule the learned spectators, using the vernacular.[3]

While staging the drama text,[4] the Kūṭiyāṭṭam artists verily elaborated on Vidūṣaka's part a lot. In the dramas of Kulaśekhara Varma, the *Tapatīsaṃvaraṇa* and *Subhadrādhanañjaya*, Vidūṣaka has his special kind of solo prologue or interlude of five days duration.[5] The first day of his lone performance brings the *puṟappāṭu*, the formal entry of the character. The *puṟappāṭu* is followed by a *nirvahaṇa*, or flashback.[6] Vidūṣaka is the only character who can speak while presenting the *nirvahaṇa*.[7] No wonder, his domain is speech (*vāc*), not acting with gestures (*abhinaya*). The Vidūṣaka's *nirvahaṇa* of four days is dedicated to his parody of four *purusārthas* (*dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, *mokṣa*).

Āmantraṇaṃ brāhmaṇānāṃ hi dharmaḥ
Sevā rājnām arthamūlaṃ narāṇām/
Veśastrīṣu prāptir evātra kāmo
Bhūyastāsāṃ vañcanaṃ mokṣahetuḥ//

He keeps repeating the stanza and referring to it many times while on the stage. Vidūṣaka presents his very own interpretation of the *puruṣārthas* in a different

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3 *Vācikāṅgikādicaturabhinayaparipūrṇaprayogamahimnā kathāśarīre sacamatkāram anubhūte prameyaparijñānārthaṃ idam ityaho sādhu upanyastam. Pratyuta ca eṣaḥ bhāṣāparigrahaḥ prekṣakāṇām nindāprakāraṭām āviśet, bhoḥ sādhavaḥ etāvatklāṃ prayuktam idaṃ na khalu yuṣmābhiḥ avagataṃ, tadahaṃ bodhayāmi ityayam upakramaḥ iti pratīteḥ.* Naṭāṅkuśa V, 11.

4 According to the Kūṭiyāṭṭam tradition, only one act of a drama is enacted as a complete performance event of the very complex structure pattern.

5 This particular unit of Vidūṣaka used to appear while presenting the *Nāgānanda* of Harṣa as well. However, it is rather a matter of the past. For the last half century, the *Nāgānanda* is not in the permanent repertoire in the Kūṭiyāṭṭam theater. The last, much abbreviated attempt of staging the second act of the drama has been undertaken recently. A group of Cākyārs (actors) belonging to different families presented the second act in Tṛśśūr on 17 September 2001. It was only a one-night performance (*c.*8 hours) with an enhanced role of Vidūṣaka, still shortened to the maximum as compared with an old traditional presentation of the *Nāgānanda* second act that took sixteen days, seven days of which exclusively belonged to Vidūṣaka. In 2006, the second act was performed in Kūṭalmāṇikkam temple (in Iriṇṇālakkuṭa) by Ammannūr Cākyārs and Aparṇā Naṅṅyār as the heroine for eleven days. The performance was not repeated as such.

6 The *nirvahaṇa* narrates the past story of the character up to the moment the drama text begins. The *nirvahaṇa* of Vidūṣaka concentrates on his parody of the *purusārthas*; however, it also gives some account of his life as well.

7 The technique of the *nirvahaṇa* is quite peculiar. The story is delivered by Sanskrit stanzas sung by an actress (Naṅṅyār) sitting at stage side playing the *tālam* and by an actor (or actress) elaborating them with gestures (*abhinaya*) taking the part of different characters. Vidūṣaka as the only drama person who recites stanzas and elaborates them with *vāc*. He renders Sanskrit verses into Prakrit and Maṇipravāḷam.

sequence. He starts with *veśyāvinoda* (enjoyment/debauchery), or *kāma*. This is followed by *vañcana* (deception), or *mokṣa*; *aśana* (eating), or *dharma*; and *rājasevā* (flattering service to a king), or *artha*. The whole presentation is much intricate in its structure as well as multifarious in its matter. For Vidūṣaka, it becomes a perfect and essential tool to criticize the moral degradation of the Brahmins (of the past and the present).

The performance structure is fixed; however, it gives room for an actor to elaborate some parts and improvise within the structure limits.[8] While presenting the *puruṣārtha*s, Vidūṣaka refers to local events and well-known personages. He is famous for his semi-interaction with the spectacles. Thus, in the first of the *nirvahaṇa* Vidūṣaka relates a part called *vātutīrkkal* that is a settlement of a quarrel, here in the example of a village community trying to find out what king is worth offering their service to (the name will be known on the very end of the last day of the *nirvahaṇa*). On the second day, Vidūṣaka presents the *veśyāvinoda* (enjoyment) and *vañcana* (deception), both dealing with courtesans and all the pleasure they can offer. In the not-so-remote past, these two parts were somehow ceased in elaboration due to the severe criticism of some observers for their vulgarity – or, should we say, a lack of hypocrisy. However, nowadays there are attempts to enlarge them more. Completing his very specific lecture on *kāma* and *mokṣa*, respectively, Vidūṣaka is ready to comment on *dharma*.

Thus, the *nirvahaṇa* third day is dedicated to Vidūṣaka's favorite topic: eating, or rather enormous feasting (*aśana*). At the beginning of his long verbal tirade on his interpretation of *dharma* as *aśana*, Vidūṣaka compares food to a king, since both, the king and the food, support a country and subjects.[9] The *aśana* portion proper is preceded by a mythological episode "Gaṇapati's breakfast" (*Gaṇapati prātal*), commonly called in Kerala "Feeding Gaṇapati". Vidūṣaka is at his best while describing how Kubera invites for breakfast two sons of Śiva, Gaṇapati and Subrahmanya. To feed the latter is an easy task, but to appease the hunger of Gaṇapati, who is unceasingly greedy and food-demanding, is an unrealizable chore. Vidūṣaka himself is a big glutton and "cuisine connoisseur"; thus, his presentation is very tasty, though it finishes with a bitter touch – a supernaturalistic description of a stomach surfeit. "Gaṇapati's breakfast" is an extremely popular story among the spectators, who listen to it with enormous

8 The Kūṭiyāṭṭam artists have at their disposal the acting and staging manuals transmitted from generation to generation.

9 *Sayak prajāpālanajāgarukaḥ*
Sarvapriyaḥ kṣudrajanairadṛśyaḥ/
Caturvidhāmātyarasānukūlo
Jayatyasāvodanabhūmipālaḥ//

interest and enthusiasm. Then the *aśana* part proper starts. Vidūṣaka narrates a journey of Brahmins for a feast organized on the first death anniversary. While traveling they talk about all the tasty varieties of food they expect to eat there. Many delicious Kerala dishes are described in detail in the series of famous *kaṟi ślokas*, which are a great attraction. The results of the extraordinary gluttony session are not ignored as well. The complex part of the *aśana* is the longest and most enjoyed by the audience.[10]

On the fourth day of the *nirvahaṇa*, Vidūṣaka discusses the *rājasevā*, or flattering service to a king. According to him, *rājasevā* means *artha*. He describes the advantages and disadvantages of serving the king, stressing the former. Finally he describes the ideal royal ruler, naming him. There is no surprise that we hear the name of the Nāyaka, the king of the drama enacted (King Saṃvaraṇa of the *Tapatīsaṃvaraṇa*, Arjuna-Dhanañjaya of the *Subhadrādhanañjaya*).[11] Thus, with the *artha–rājasevā* portion Vidūṣaka's flashback is completed and the drama text proper may be performed, of course with Vidūṣaka as a leading character.

There is another interesting performance within the Kūṭiyāṭṭam theater tradition: Cākyār or Prabandha Kūttu. It is a solo performance of an actor (Cākyār) presenting different stories mainly referring to the epics (*Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*) and the Puraṇas. It precedes a presentation of a drama very often. The Cākyār Kūttu may last for many days, and the longest is of 41-day duration (Vaṭakkunnātha temple, Tṛśśūr). Vidūṣaka is the only character of this form. He is a great storyteller, making a considerable number of spectators to gather. Nowadays his performance is usually based on the *prabandha*s taken from the most popular collections: the *Prabandhamañjarī* by Melputtūr Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa

10 The imporatance and popularity of this part is stressed by the fact that the invocation stanza to Gaṇapati of the *aśana* part has been taken to create a debut Kūttu performance. We should know that a Cākyār boy has to complete three steps of his initiation process to become a full member of the Cākyār performing community. See Śliwczyńska 2007: 105–118.

11 The performance of the *Tapatīsaṃvaraṇa* takes eight days. The presentation pattern of the *Tapatīsaṃvaraṇa* I watched in the Vaṭakkunnātha temple in Tṛśśūr (26 October 2001 to 2 November 2001) was as follows. The first five days belonged to Vidūṣaka: his *puṟappāṭu* on the first day (3:15 hrs), then four days of his *nirvahaṇa* presenting parody on the *purusārthas*; the second day, the *vātutīrkkal* episode and beginning of the *vinoda* (4 hrs); the third day, the *vinoda* continued and the *vañcana* (4 hrs); the fourth day, the *aśana* (7 hrs); the fifth day, the *rājasevā* (2:30 hrs); the sixth day, the *rājasevā* continued (3 hrs) and a beginning of the drama text, King Saṃvaraṇa followed by Vidūṣaka (1:30 hrs); the seventh day, Saṃvaraṇa followed by Vidūṣaka (3 hrs); the eighth day, Saṃvaraṇa and Vidūṣaka (3:00 hrs). Vidūṣaka was played by Ammannūr Kuṭṭan Cākyār, except for the first (Kalāmaṇḍalam Rāma Cākyār) and second days (Mārgi Madhu); Saṃvaraṇa–Potiyil Ranjit Rāmacandran on the sixth day, Ammannūr Rājaniś on the seventh and eighth days. According to the Kūṭiyāṭṭam tradition (that reached the present), only the first stanza of Saṃvaraṇa with the preceding lines of Vidūṣaka from the first act is enacted.

and *Rāmāyaṇa prabandham* by K.M. Rāma Nampyār.[12] The basic structure of a performance unit is defined. It always starts with a short entry pattern (a short *puṟappāṭu*) prescribed for Vidūṣaka, then benedictory verses (*pīthīka*), a summary of the story from a previous day (if it is a succeeding day of telling the story), and then the first stanza of a day follows. The stanza is recited in Sanskrit and explained in Maṇipravāḷam (or Malayalam) word after word, phrase after phrase. The explanation method is quite intricate. It is not a mere rendering from one language into another, but a whole story behind the words. Vidūṣaka – the story-teller – has some rules to follow while explaining; still there is a lot of scope for his own invention. He should be a master of improvisation to react to the audience's expectations and (so to say, "silent") response.[13] To combine both stage and non-stage realities is a great task. He can wittily comment on what is going on while he is performing and can refer to the spectators, who vividly are part of his performance, even if they snore sometimes. While Vidūṣaka is the only stage character who has the right to openly criticize everyone (the rulers are not an exception), and not to be punished for his opinions, stories from the past tell us that sometimes a Cākyār paid for his criticism and had to go into hiding or even leave his abode forever for the sake of safety of his family.[14]

Let us mention two other types of the Kūṭiyāṭṭam Vidūṣaka that together with the Vidūṣaka described above mark the succeeding stages of the figure development against the history of Kerala. In fact, they create two earlier stages.[15] Both are known by their names from the drama text: Vasantaka and Sāḍilya.[16]

Vasantaka, the Vidūṣaka of the *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa* of Bhāsa, is a favorite friend (*narmasaciva*) of King Udayana. Though a Brahmin, he feels more at home with a Buddhist community. He is much in favor of the Buddhists, praising their virtues and criticizing the Brahmins. According to the Kūṭiyāṭṭam tradition, the

12 The Cākyār Kūttu at the Vaṭakkunnātha temple in Tṛśśūr (16 September 2001 – 26 October 2001): *Rāmāyaṇa prabandha*, completing the Rāma story from the previous year (12 days) followed by the *Pāñcālīsvayamvara* (13 days), then the *Subhadrāharaṇa* (16 days). The Cākyār Kūttu of 41 days was followed by staging the *Tapatīsaṃvaraṇa* drama (8 days). Śliwczyńska 2020: 105–112.

13 According to the Kūṭiyāṭṭam tradition, a spectator or spectators should not verbally answer Vidūṣaka's criticism and witty comments.

14 In 1874, one of the ancestors of the Ammannūr Cākyār family had to leave his village in Pattambi district due to the fact that he revealed a crime committed by the local ruler during his performance. Thus, the Ammannūr Cākyārs moved to Iriṅṅālakkuṭa, where they still reside nowadays (with one branch of the family in Mūḷikulam).

15 Vidūṣaka's three-step development was proposed by K.P.N. Piṣārōṭi and accepted by many scholars in Kerala. See Piṣārōṭi 1981: 183; cf. Nampūṭirippāṭ 2001: 35–37.

16 Their stage appearance slightly differs (particularly face make-up and headgear) from that of Vidūṣaka-Vidūṣaka.

third act of the *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa* called the *Mantrāṅka* is totally overtaken by Vasantaka. The longest presentation of the *Mantrāṅka* lasts 41 days.[17] We may say that it is a solo *vāc* performance of Vasantaka. The four initial days of the performance are dedicated to his *puṟappāṭu*, followed by other ritual patterns (*kriyā*s), then from the fifth to the eighth day there is Vasantaka's nirvahaṇa, concentrating on finding a proper way to rescue King Udayana and describing the previous deeds of the king. On the ninth day, Vasantaka starts his great cycle of stories that are of a different character. The second of the dramatis personae of the third act, Yaugandharāyaṇa, appears only on the fortieth day; thus, for the two last days of the performance Vasantaka has a companion on the stage.[18]

Sāṇḍilya of the *Bhagavadajjukā*, a *prahasana* by Bodhayāna, marks the second stage. He is an eager student of his teacher Bhagavān; however, he tries to find his own way in life. It leads him to join a Buddhist monastery for some time (in fact, free meals mostly attracted our poor Brahmin). While staging the *Bhagavadajjukā*, Sāṇḍilya-Vidūṣaka holds the stage for sixteen days (16th–31st days of the whole performance).[19] It is enough time for him to realize that the best for him is *brahmajñāna*, so he learns four Vedas with their ritual application and discusses all his newly acquired knowledge eagerly. He humorously comments on different schools of philosophy, from Cārvāka to Advaita. To Buddhism he dedicates four days (the 27th to 30th days of the performance), describing and criticizing in his own way its four schools (Vaibhāsika, Sautrāntīka, Yogācarā, and Mādhyamaka). He is not such a fool as he pretends to be, or rather the others like to see him as.

Vidūṣaka marks the last step in the figure's development and he is still very present nowadays, though many are of the opinion that "the Vidūṣaka is degenerated beyond description": "His puruṣārtha narration is near to vulgarity when he explains the *veśyāvinoda*. Brahmins are ridiculed. The degeneration of the society is at its worst."[20] This opinion about Vidūṣaka's art is not rare and does not belong to the present only. Severe criticism on Vidūṣaka's stage activities, especially those connected with the *brāhmaṇaninda* (reproach or critisism of Brahmins) resounded earlier as well, and the strictest critic was the anonymous

17 The only Cākyār who was able to present the whole 41-day *Mantrāṅka* performance was Kiṭaṅṅūr Rāma (Kuṭṭappan) Cākyār. He passed away in 2015. Thus, staging the traditional 41-day *Mantrāṅka* is to disappear.

18 For more details about the full-length *Mantrāṅka* performance by Kiṭaṅṅūr Kuṭṭappan Cākyār, see Moser-Achuthath 1999–2000: 563–584.

19 To stage the *Bhagavadajjukā* according to the Kūṭiyāṭṭam tradition, it takes 35 days; only on the 32nd day does the drama text start. The play is not performed in the temple theater any longer. Outside the temple premises, it is staged in a very abbreviated form, sometimes only one day long. For more details, see Paulose 2000.

20 Paulose 1991: 82–83.

author of the *Naṭāṅkuśa*. But it should be asked if the vulgarity of the narration was just a pure fancy and ill inclination of the narrator (Vidūṣaka) or if it was a reaction to what was happening in the society; after all, theater reflects the world. Was not (is not) Vidūṣaka an extraordinary chronicler of the world around, the chronicler belonging to stage and non-stage realities, so vividly involved in both? This is a unique position that Vidūṣaka himself takes exemplary advantage of.

Though criticized and ridiculed by many, Vidūṣaka remains an important character in the Kūṭiyāṭṭam theater tradition. We may even say that he rules the Kūṭiyāṭṭam stage, overshadowing all other characters, even his best friend (Nāyaka) to whom he is the real counter-nāyaka. Vidūṣaka has been chosen and has a privilege to tell the stories of the world of gods while performing his Prabandha/Cākyār Kūttu.[21] Thus, we observe a fun-making character developing into the narrator of the divine and commentator of the mundane, wise and witty. He is considered and called Mahāṛṣi, the sage of the eternal. He is always ready to dispense his wisdom to others. The audience treats him with great esteem and pays the respectful *namaskaram* to him. We should not forget that both Cākyār Kūttu and Kūṭiyāṭṭam performances staged in the temple premises are meant to be a temple ritual, a sacrifice offered to the god residing in the *sanctum sanctorum*. The spectators are not accidental figures and their participation in the performance is very much intentional. Their exceptional meeting with Vidūṣaka-Mahāṛṣi redeems wrong and installs right for the sake of their ancestors, their families, and themselves.

Just to conclude, let me recall the Vedic god Varuṇa and his impersonator Jumbaka, a Brahmin whose physical appearance (ŚB XIII, 3.6.5) resembles that of Vidūṣaka mentioned in the poetical treatises. The ambivalent character of Varuṇa makes him a divine scapegoat, removing all impurities, evil, and sin. To Jumbaka representing him, the last offering is made by pouring an oblation on his head at the end of the sacrifice.[22] Thus, he redeems all wrongs and is purified by this act. Vidūṣaka's unique status reflects that of Varuṇa-Jumbaka. He may be considered a scapegoat of the sacrifice (*yajña*) in the form of theater (*nāṭya*). Vidūṣaka is like a lightning conductor saving the surroundings; he aggregates and brings down all misfortunes, purifying the stage and non-stage realities since he belongs to both. He always acts within the realm of (*ṛta*)*dharma*. In the Kūṭiyāṭṭam theater tradition, Vidūṣaka is the sage of singular wisdom and authority. [23]

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21 The *sūtradhāra* may have been taken under consideration as well.

22 ŚB XIII, 3.6.5. The Varuṇa-Jumbaka-Vidūṣaka relationship is discussed in detail by Kuiper 1979.

23 In this article, I refer first and foremost to my own observations made while on my regular annual research visits to Kerala since 1998 up to the present. About Vidūṣaka, see also Śliwczyńska 2009: 179–204.

ABBREVIATIONS OF THE SOURCES

Naṭāṅkuśa *Naṭāṅkuśa: A Critique on Dramaturgy*. Ed. K.G. Paulose. Tripunithura: 7. Government Sanskrit Committee, 1993.

NŚ [Nāṭyaśāstra] *Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharatamuni with the Commentary Abhinavabharatī by Abhinavaguptācārya*, I–IV. Delhi: Parimal Publications, 1983.

ŚB [Śatapathabrāhmana] *Śatapatha-brāhmana in the Mādhyandina-śākhā*. Ed. A. Weber. Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1924.

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