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## **AMBĀ, LUCRETIA AND THE QUESTION OF INDO-EUROPEAN ORIGINS**

Following in the tradition of Indo-European comparativists such as Georges Dumézil and Dominique Briquel, the paper compares two wronged females whose suicides lead to major developments within narratives from India and Rome. Ambā's reincarnation Śikhaṇḍin enables the death of Bhīṣma, the first Kaurava marshal in the Great War that stands at the heart of the *Mahābhārata*. The suicide of Lucretia, raped by one of the Tarquins, is the trigger leading on to the end of the Monarchy at Rome and the inauguration of the Republic. The paper compares not only the two females but also the sets of males with whom they interact. The numerous interlinked similarities are to be explained by Indo-European common origin.

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Regarded as a discipline, IE linguistic comparativism reminds one of a well-established state which, despite internal arguments, exercises reasonable authority within its territorial borders. If so, IE cultural comparativism reminds one, in contrast, of one of those anarchical areas of the world riddled by multiple cross-cutting conflicts. A basic theoretical question is whether the field is legitimate at all: perhaps narratives and ideologies change too quickly to allow analysts to imitate the linguists and reconstruct anything analogous to a proto-language. If the field *is* legitimate, how should one use the vast oeuvre of Dumézil (for instance as regards the number and definition of functions)? And in practice, where should an individual start? What should one compare with what, within the vast space-time extent of Indo-Europaea? My answers to these theoretical questions are mostly left implicit in what follows, and I start by explaining the limits within which I shall operate.

The paper belongs to the subgenre of India-Rome comparison – arguably Dumézil’s favourite subgenre.<sup>1</sup> Building on this area of Dumézil’s work, Dominique Briquel published in 2007 a valuable study called *Mythe et révolution*, its scope being explained in the subtitles: *La fabrication d’un récit: la naissance de la république à Rome*. In 2009a I reviewed the book (together with Briquel 2008), but even then I knew that I was omitting treatment of the particular comparison presented here. I knew too that the missing work could and should lead on to a far longer and deeper study than the one presented here. The compressed, fragmentary, and preliminary character of the present paper will be only too obvious. Ambā’s reincarnation as Śikhaṇḍin, and the possible comparisons with Śikhaṇḍin’s contemporaries, will hardly be touched on, and similarly no reference will be made to the concluding phase of the Birth of the Republic, when it is threatened by Porsenna. I shall mainly follow the concise Livy rather than the more prolix Dionysius of Halicarnassus (henceforth DH), and ignore other sources (and commentaries). After ten years delay it seems better to present a short comparison than to leave the topic to an indefinite future.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Compare his ‘breakthrough’ paper of 1938.

<sup>2</sup> Even so, as a comparativist study of the *Mahābhārata*, I hope it will intrigue our honorand, to whom I am particularly grateful for essential help in connection with Allen 2009b.

### Ambā and Lucretia

The *Mahābhārata* centres on the conflict between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas: their 18-day Great War at Kurukṣetra is recounted at length in Books 6-10 (out of the total of 18). Books 6-9 are named after the successive marshals of the Kauravas (the Ultimate Losers), and in Book 6, which covers ten days, their leader is Bhīṣma. Together with Arjuna, Ambā is responsible for the defeat of Bhīṣma — one of the major turning points of the war. Lucretia is central to the most salient turning point in Rome's pseudohistory (or 'mythistory'), namely the political transition from monarchy to republic.

Ambā, who has two younger sisters, is the daughter of the king of Kāśi (Banaras). To marry them off, their father holds a *svayaṃvara* ceremony, inviting the princes of India to sue for them. One of those who attend the event is Bhīṣma, regent of Hāstīnapura, who cannot himself marry but wants his dynasty (the Bhāratas) to be continued by his half-brother Vicitravīrya. Following a recognised procedure, he lifts all three princesses onto his chariot and drives off, overcoming the attacks of other suitors, and in particular, that of Śālva. Śālva's horses and charioteer are killed.

Back at Hāstīnapura, before the wedding can be held, Ambā explains that prior to her abduction she was engaged to Śālva. Bhīṣma allows her to return to her fiancé, who however now rejects her on the grounds that she belongs to her abductor. In vain she pleads that she has never loved anyone but Śālva. Blaming her miserable situation above all on Bhīṣma, she goes to a rural hermitage and explains her plight to the ascetics. She talks to four named individuals of whom the last is Rāma Jāmadagnya.<sup>3</sup> Rāma eventually decides to support Ambā against Bhīṣma, and the two fight a duel which is only halted, following supernatural intervention, after 23 days. The duel has no decisive victor, but Bhīṣma returns to his capital, undefeated by Rāma.

Still determined to take revenge on Bhīṣma, Ambā undertakes fierce austerities lasting many years. Following a threat by Gaṅgā (mother of Bhīṣma), with half her body she becomes a river called Ambā, but with the other half she determines to become a man and kill her enemy in battle. Śiva appears and promises this will happen in her next life. Ambā builds a pyre, lights it, and enters it. Her suicide is to be 'for Bhīṣma's death' (*bhīṣmavadhāya*).

The scene shifts to the court of Drupada King of the Pāñcālas, who will become the primary allies of the Pāṇḍavas in the Great War. Drupada

<sup>3</sup> Henceforth simply Rāma; he is distinct from Rāma Dāśaratha in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

is desperate for a son and heir who will kill his enemy Bhīṣma. The god promises him a daughter, but one who will become a male (the sex change is not studied here). Bhīṣma follows Ambā's story via spies, and at some point takes an oath never to shoot at a woman or former woman. It is this oath that makes it possible for Śikhaṇḍin and Arjuna, acting together, to pepper Bhīṣma with their arrows on Day 10. The marshal does not die until much later but, lying on his 'bed of arrows', he cannot continue as Kaurava marshal.

*Now we can turn to Rome.*

Lucretia, daughter of Sp. Lucretius Tricipitinus, is the wife of Tarquinius Collatinus. Livy introduces her in a vivid story that starts in the Roman camp at Ardea (capital of the Latin Rutuli). Coveting the town's wealth, Tarquin the Proud besieges it, and as the siege drags on, a group of Roman officers are drinking together in the quarters of Sextus, eldest son of the king. The group includes the king's relative Collatinus, and when the conversation turns to wives each speaker praises his own. The group accepts Collatinus' proposal that they make a quick nocturnal visit by horse to inspect their wives and decide which one is in fact the best. The wives at Rome are feasting extravagantly with their friends, but at Collatia (10 miles east of Rome) Lucretia with her servants is working away with her spindle, demonstrating her matronly virtue. Sextus admires not only her dutiful domesticity but also her beauty, and decides that he will return to sleep with her.

A few days later Sextus takes a single companion and returns to Collatia. He is received hospitably, but when all are asleep he enters Lucretia's bedroom and, sword in hand, declares his desire. He threatens not only to kill her but also, when he meets resistance, to kill a slave, place the naked corpse beside her, and announce that he has killed them both for their shameful adultery. Faced with this additional threat, Lucretia succumbs.

Afterwards, Lucretia urgently summons her father from Rome and her husband from Ardea - each is to bring a friend. Recounting what has happened she demands that they vow to punish the rapist. Despite their efforts to console her, she then draws a knife concealed in her clothing, stabs her heart, and dies. While the other males are grieving, Brutus withdraws the knife and, holding it, swears again: he will not only attack the royal family but also abolish the monarchy. The other three swear in the same way. Brutus foments the revolution by speeches both in Collatia and Rome, and then at Ardea. The king is exiled to Caere (in Etruria), and Sextus is killed at Gabii, where his earlier rule had made him many enemies. Authority at Rome passes to the first two consuls, Brutus and Collatinus.

The two stories have the following features in common. (a) Within their respective narrative traditions they both occur at major transitions. In other words, if we treat Ambā-Śikhaṇḍin as a single individual, she intervenes causally at just the point when the Pāṇḍavas eliminate their first really important enemy; Bhīṣma is Kaurava marshal for more than half of the 18-day war. Lucretia causes the expulsion of the Tarquins. (b) Both females commit suicide: Ambā by entering the pyre she builds and lights, Lucretia by using the knife she has secreted about her own person for this purpose. (c) Both females kill themselves because of the deep humiliation they have suffered in connection with their marriages. Ambā is in love with Śālva, but because of the abduction her engagement to him collapses. Lucretia is a dutiful and loyal wife to Collatinus, but because she is dishonoured and raped by Sextus she feels unable to carry on. Both have very clear motives for their act. (d) Throughout her years of austerity Ambā plans her revenge on Bhīṣma, and finally she secures from Śiva the promise that she will succeed; in her final words she dedicates her suicide to her project. Lucretia first demands that her invitees swear to revenge her, and then, in her final words, addresses the future: 'Let no woman who is unchaste stay alive by (following) the example of Lucretia.'<sup>4</sup>

### The original partners

Let us summarise the rapprochements so far: placement within the sweep of the grand narratives; a female suicide; an interrupted marital history; and revenge for the interruption. Naturally one can also compile a list of differences, and use it to argue that the similarities are due to the analyst selecting only those themes that suit his case. Such a critic will see the similarities as coincidental. The best way to decide the issue is to look for other similarities that cohere with these earlier ones and thus support the common origin hypothesis. Let us express our initial finding as 'Ambā~Lucretia (Wronged or Suicidal Female)'<sup>5</sup> In that case, what about Śālva~Collatinus (her Original Partner) or Bhīṣma~Sextus (the violent Disrupter of the partnership)?

Śālva enters the story in the context of a *svayaṃvara*, a gathering of rival princes invited by a king who wants a good match for his

<sup>4</sup> *Nec ulla deinde impudica Lucretiae exemplo vivet.*

<sup>5</sup> Such 'tradition-neutral' formulae are partly analogous to a linguist's starred forms, but the cultural comparativist can hardly hope for anything like a Grimm's Law to link model and manifestation.

daughter(s). The Sanskrit word implies that it is the woman who makes the decision, though in practice, as at Banaras, the male suitors may compete as warriors. Collatinus' father has been mentioned previously in the pseudohistory of the Tarquin family, but the son only enters the story in connection with the drinking party at Ardea (25 miles south of Rome). The drinkers are not discussing the future husband of a princess, but rather which husband in the past chose the best wife. In this sense they are rivals competing with each other about their partners.

The Banaras gathering results from invitations sent to 'all the kings on earth' (5.170.10ab), and the bards announce the names of suitors 'in their thousands' (1.96.7). At Ardea the leaders (*primores*) or young princes (*regii iuvenes* 97.45) can only be a handful, but whatever the actual numbers, in each text only two names are given: first the Disrupter's, then the Partner's. The distinction between named and unnamed is reinforced by the account of fighting at Banaras. At first (Phase 1), the anonymous plurality of suitors is defeated, and Bhīṣma sets off homewards. In Phase 2 Śālva attacks Bhīṣma from behind, shouting 'Stay, lecher, stay!' This challenge, the Partner's final reported words at Banaras, can be compared with Collatinus' 'challenge' to his fellow drinkers and rival husbands. Since the group are in the quarters of Sextus, the proposer surely addresses at least his host.

In any case Śālva's challenge fails, and ends up costing him his fiancée. Compare Collatinus, whose proposal wins him a temporary victory in this particular competition but, eventually costs him his wife. As we shall see, the two phases in the Sanskrit can be compared to the two Ardea-to-Collatia trips made by Sextus. Note too that neither of the Original Partners becomes a leader in the process of punishing the Disrupters.

### Disrupters

Bhīṣma makes only one trip to Banaras. When he hears of the *svayamvara*, he puts on his armour and (as the text emphasises) sets off in a *single* chariot, driven no doubt by the charioteer referred to in Phase 2 of the fighting (96.36). Sextus makes two visits to Collatia. The first is in the company of his drinking friends, but for the rape he sets off with a single companion (*cum comite uno*), and obviously without the knowledge of Collatinus. But the duality of Sextus' visits parallels the two phases at Banaras. Visit 1 resembles Phase 1 not only in

involving a multiplicity of participants, but also in its references to wealth. As the rival suitors don their armour, they shed the finery they wore for the ceremony: sparkling jewels rain all around like a shower of meteors (1.96.16). Though they start off seriously angry, and volleys of arrows are exchanged, no one is mentioned as dying, and the defeated suitors even end up applauding Bhīṣma's martial skill (1.96.23). At Rome Visit 1 begins with the group finding the king's daughters-in-law passing their time at a luxurious banquet with friends (*in convivio luxuque*). In Phase 2 the duel is more serious: nothing is said of jewellery, and Śālva's driver is killed. In Visit 2 the contest of wills (Sextus versus Lucretia) is a serious one, and though the killing of a slave proves unnecessary, the Disrupter uses the threat of doing so as an effective part of his tactics.

### Oath-takers

Bhīṣma cannot be reduced to the role of Disrupter, and to explore another aspect of this complex figure we must summarise his earlier biography. It is fundamental that he is the incarnation of Dyaus (or Dyū), the Vedic god etymologically cognate with Zeus and Jupiter. But the pre-birth stories of himself and his parents, fascinating though they are to a comparativist, need not concern us here. Let us start instead with his birth from the goddess Gaṅgā (the Ganges) and the Bhārata king Śaṃtanu.

At Bhīṣma's birth the goddess leaves her happy union with Śaṃtanu and takes the infant away for his education — only returning him as a teen-ager. He is then made Heir Apparent, and all goes well for four years. Now Śaṃtanu falls in love again, this time with the lowly ferry girl, Satyavatī. The girl's father, the Fisher King, will only part with her if her son is guaranteed to succeed Śaṃtanu, i.e. to replace Bhīṣma as heir. Torn between his love for Satyavatī and his son, the king is plunged into misery. In response, Bhīṣma goes to Satyavatī's father and swears oaths (which he keeps): he will neither accept the throne nor have any children (who might be rivals to any son of Satyavatī). Śaṃtanu marries the girl and after his death his two sons by her take the throne — first Citrāṅgada (who soon dies), then Vicitravīrya. This is why when Bhīṣma goes to Banaras, he is seeking brides not for himself but for his youngest brother.

Oaths are no less crucial in the story of Lucretia: her death is significant *because* it leads to the oath proposed by Brutus. So let us

consider the formulation ‘Bhīṣma~Brutus (Political Oath-taker)’. Both oaths concern succession to supreme authority in the respective capitals — Hāstinapura~Rome; and more precisely, both rule out the normal transmission of a throne from deceased king to his eldest son. The extraordinary character of Bhīṣma’s oath is emphasised. From the sky, gods and other supernaturals rain down flowers, describing the oath-taker as *Bhīṣma* ‘the awesome’. This is in fact how he acquired the name we have used for him — previously he had other names such as Devavrata and Gāṅgeya (1.93.44). The oath is even praised as ‘an impossible feat’ (*duṣkaram karma*).

The significance of Brutus’ oath, as of Bhīṣma’s, can only be appreciated in the light of his earlier life. His mother was related to Tarquin, and he enjoyed the best available education (DH 4.68.1). However, the vicious and greedy king killed his father and elder brother, and fearing a similar fate, Brutus defended himself by pretending to be a half-wit. For the moment it was safer to be despised and called a dullard (*brutus*); and he even allowed the king to confiscate his property. From this period just one event is reported. Tarquin is worried by a portent, and decides to consult the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. Keeping Sextus at Rome, he dispatches as his agents his younger sons Titus and Arruns, together with Brutus, who is regarded less as a companion than as a provider of light relief (a *ludibrium*). The word illustrates Brutus’s social standing before his oath (the climax of the anecdote will be discussed later).

Bhīṣma’s oaths have the effect of enabling his father to marry — thus reversing the normal pattern whereby fathers arrange marriages for their children. At the same time, Bhīṣma is giving up his status as heir apparent and as potential father — no wonder his act arouses astonishment. The heavens react; Bhīṣma acquires his new name; Śaṃtanu is so delighted that he grants his son the ability to choose the timing of his own death.

The rapprochement is with the reaction aroused by Brutus’ oath. As they watch Lucretia’s suicide, most of those present are plunged into misery, but Brutus stands apart. He withdraws the knife and swears by the blood dripping from it; then he passes the weapon to Collatinus, Lucretius and Publicola, who repeat the oath. Brutus’ behaviour would be impressive whoever performed it, but there is more to it. The friends are dumbfounded by the miraculous aspect of the event (the *miraculo rei* 59.2), and ask themselves where the new



spirit in the breast of Brutus has come from (*unde novum in Bruti pectore ingenium*).<sup>6</sup>

So both oaths mark massive changes in the condition of their makers. Bhīṣma gives up the normal situation of a prince, but will attain ‘imperishable worlds in heaven’ (*divi*, locative of *dyaus*, 1.94.88d). Brutus gives up his disguise as an insignificant fool and will become the Liberator. There may be a certain symmetry here, but the more obvious similarity is between the effects of the transformations on others.

At a more detailed level, neither oath-taker confines himself to a single formulation. Bhīṣma begins by conceding that Satyavati’s son will be the next king at Hāstīnapura, but the Fisher King is not satisfied until Bhīṣma follows up with his renunciation of fatherhood. When Lucretia’s four supporters arrive after the rape and are told about it, she insists that they promise to punish Sextus. Each does so in turn (*dant omnes ordine fidem* 58.9), but nothing further is said of the wording or the sequence of this initial vow about vengeance. It is only after the suicide that the wider-ranging oath is taken, with its commitment to political change. The rapprochement is less between the contents of the oaths than between their duality.

As noted earlier, Bhīṣma takes one further oath: not to kill anyone who has been a woman. We are not told when, where or why he took it, but it raises an interesting question. Bhīṣma incarnates Dyaus, and in Vedic and cosmological contexts Dyaus ‘Heaven’ (usually male) is regularly coupled with Pṛthivī ‘Earth’ (always female). But when, after Day 10 of the war, Bhīṣma lies mortally wounded, the arrows sticking into his body ensure that he does not touch earth (e.g. Allen in press). So does Brutus have any special relationship to earth? This question takes us back to the Delphi mission (1.51.10-12).

The oracle is asked not only about the portent that worried Tarquin, but also about who will become the next king. The reply is that the highest authority at Rome will pass to whichever of the youths first kisses their mother. Titus and Arruns understand this as referring to their mother in the ordinary sense (namely Tarquinia), but Brutus takes it to refer to Earth, Mother of all mortals. He pretends to stumble and touches his lips to the earth.

<sup>6</sup> Immediately afterwards, Lucretia’s corpse is carried to the Forum, where the crowds naturally react similarly to the *miraculo rei novae* (59.3).

Evidently the sequel shows that Brutus is right, and Livy and his audience no doubt saw the episode as illustrating the intelligence and foresight that Brutus is trying to hide. They were not wrong, but comparison implies that there is more to it. Bhīṣma is related to the earth not only via Dyaus and the bed of arrows, but also via Ambā, whose life he disrupts. Since *ambā* can mean ‘a mother’, Biardeau plausibly interprets her as representing or being conceptually close to *la Terre-royaume*, ‘the Earth-kingdom’; and, as the eldest of the three princesses, she could have been expected to marry Bhīṣma, as the heir apparent (2002 : 218, 1092-3, 1102). But by kissing Mother Earth, Brutus too relates to earth, and the question arises whether an earthy aspect can be detected in Lucretia who, as Wronged Female, corresponds to Ambā. Not obviously; but in IE contexts earth is often characterised as ‘dark’ or ‘black’ (West 2002: 179-180). So it may be relevant that Lucretia wears black for her final journey to Rome and is displayed in the Forum there on a bier spread with black cloth (DH 4.66.1; 76.3). In any case the rapprochement between our two Oath-takers is supported by the fact that both relate to earth.<sup>7</sup>

### The Judge

The oaths taken at Lucretia’s death-bed are not the only ones associated with Brutus. Livy’s Book 2, which starts by describing the political arrangements of the new regime, mentions him forcing the people to swear that they will not allow anyone to be king at Rome (2.1.9); nor (2.2.5) will they allow anyone who may threaten their liberty to live at Rome. DH is fuller: Brutus himself swears to treat as an enemy anyone who seeks reconciliation with the Tarquins. Not only does he make his friends swear likewise, but he also persuades the populace to ratify a law of capital punishment for anyone promoting the restoration of the old regime (4.70.5-71.1; 84.2). Together with other young aristocratic conspirators, Brutus’ two sons become guilty of this crime, and pay the penalty.

With Tarquin’s encouragement a conspiracy is hatched to restore him, but the plan is reported to the authorities by the slave Vindicius (2.3.7-4.1). Since Brutus is consul, it falls to him to oversee the

<sup>7</sup> A fuller study could naturally take account of the Ouranus-Gaia relation, not to mention the somewhat elusive Gaia Caecilia (Briquel 2007: 218-9).

punishment of the traitors, who are bound to a stake, stripped, flogged, and beheaded. But the public is not interested in the fate of the majority; it focuses attention only on Brutus' sons and on their father's facial expression. Livy emphasises, concisely but vividly, the inner conflict between the consul's paternal feelings and his duty as a magistrate (2.5.7-9).

Bhīṣma has no sons,<sup>8</sup> so any Indian parallel will necessarily be rather different. However, the Sanskrit does provide a story involving a problematic judgement and a painful penalty, and this story is told in connection with Bhīṣma; in fact, it is told twice. A short version appears at 1.57.77-81, immediately following an apparently unconnected shloka about the birth of Bhīṣma; but we shall mainly follow the longer version in 1.101. The context is the royal succession after Vicitravīrya dies (in 1.96), leaving his two childless widows. The problem is solved (more or less) when, with Bhīṣma's agreement, the widows are persuaded to sleep with the sage Vyāsa. Skipping the details about him and his unions (Allen 2007), we need only note that he also impregnates Ambikā's slave-girl and fathers a half-breed called Vidura. It is Vidura's pre-birth story that provides what we are looking for. Immediately after it (1.102), the text reverts to Bhīṣma who, as regent, presides over a sort of Golden Age.

There was once a sage called Māṇḍavya (or Aṅī-Māṇḍavya). While he is plunged in silent meditation, robbers arrive and hide themselves and their loot in the hermitage. Hot on their heels guardsmen arrive, question the silent sage, search the premises, and arrest both robbers and sage. The king, offhandedly, decrees death for all of them, and the sage is impaled on a stake. The king eventually realises his mistake and has the sage freed. However, it proves impossible totally to withdraw the stake and it is cut off, its tip (*aṅī*) being left inside the sage's body.

The sage consults Dharma, God of Justice, asking the justification for his suffering. He is told that it was punishment for his childhood sin of impaling little flies with blades of grass (or a little bird with a reed). Indignant at the disproportion between sin and penalty, Māṇḍavya curses the god to incarnate (as Vidura) in the womb of a slave. Henceforth, children younger than fourteen are to be treated as minors.

<sup>8</sup> But perhaps his two childless younger half-brothers parallel Brutus' two childless sons?

Both stories are situated in the sphere of law and justice, and both involve harsh or horrific punishments associated with stakes. Moreover, both divide their offenders into two classes — insignificant and significant. Though they are *nobilissimi*, the conspirators other than Brutus' sons are almost ignored: it was as though they were mere rabble (*ignota capita* 2.5.6). In that respect they resemble the Indian robbers (*dasyus*), of whom nothing further is said after the king's death sentence.

In addition, both stories are pervaded by irony. The law that Brutus finds himself enforcing on his sons is one that he himself promulgated. The 'justice' enforced by Dharma seems to the sage, as it seems to us, unjust: the crime was too small and the offender too young. From this point of view it is the sage who has the proper sense of justice, and the irony lies in the God of Justice being himself subjected to judgement. The first viewpoint implies Dharma~Brutus (Judge who is or may be too strict), while the second implies Māṇḍavya~Brutus (Judge who himself suffers severely — whether mentally or physically). Both readings are acceptable, but the second has the advantage of casting further light on the mission to Delphi.

On this trip, as a gift to Apollo, Brutus carried a rod of gold (*aureum baculum*) inserted in a hollowed-out stick of cornel wood (1.56.9). This, says Livy, was an indirect image of his own character (*per ambages effigiam ingenii sui*). The point is of course that the Brutus' inner virtue, which will emerge after Lucretia's death, is for the moment hidden beneath his disguise as a dullard. But we can now add that the secreted golden rod parallels the tip of the impalement post that remains out of sight in the body of Māṇḍavya.<sup>9</sup>

This is not the only possible comparison for the golden rod. The plot to restore the Tarquins was foiled by the action of the slave Vindicius, whose rewards included manumission. Indeed he was reportedly the first Roman slave to be freed by this procedure, and consequently he gave his name to the object used in it (2.5.9-10): at manumission an owner touched the head of his slave with a *vindicta*, a rod, staff or wand. It seems unlikely that this ritual rod is unrelated to the others we have met, but it is not stated who used the rod to free Vindicius, and some may judge the comparison too bold.

<sup>9</sup> The sage's mortifications enable him to win worlds scarcely attainable by others (1.101.21cd). Perhaps compare the post-mortem glory attained by Brutus the Liberator.

Bhīṣma is not particularly a judge, as are Dharma and Brutus, and the link between this section and our main argument was presented in terms of textual juxtaposition. But there is also an ontological argument connecting Bhīṣma with Vidura. In 1.58, in response to Earth's complaint of being overburdened, Brahmā tells the supernaturals in general to incarnate as humans, and a list is given of the epic figures that they become. Both Bhīṣma and Vidura are included in the list (1.61.68-9, 79). However, elsewhere, the descent to earth of these two figures is not attributed to Brahmā's general command. Unlike the others, they incarnate as a result of curses uttered by offended ascetics — respectively by Vasiṣṭha (1.93.43) and Māṇḍavya.

### A quartet

When Ambā, rejected by Śālva, visits the rural hermitage, she recounts her woes to the ascetics in general, and receives sympathy and comfort. But she converses with only four named individuals, one after the other: the ascetic Śaikhāvatya; her maternal grandfather Hotravāhana, who recommends recourse to Rāma; Akṣitavraṇa, who says Rāma will arrive the next day; and finally Rāma himself.

In the Latin there seem to be two distinct quartets. The number of drinkers at Ardea is not made explicit, but each officer extols his own wife, and the wives they inspect in Rome are royal daughters-in-law, *regias nurus*. Assuming these are the wives of Tarquin's three sons, the inspectors consist of the three plus Collatinus. Certainly, after the rape, a set of four names is explicit. Lucretia summons her father from Rome, where he is *praefectus urbis*, and her husband from Ardea. Lucretius brings P. Valerius, later called Publicola, and Collatinus brings Brutus, with whom by chance he has been travelling back to Rome. After the initial oath, the quartet offer her sympathy (*consolantur* 1.58.9) and comfort her: *she* is not to blame. After the suicide each in turn follows the example of Brutus in taking the second oath. Moreover, during the first year of the Republic each of the four will be consuls. Brutus and Collatinus come first, and when Collatinus is pressurised into resigning, he is replaced by Publicola. Then, when Brutus dies in battle (see below), he in turn is replaced by Lucretius (though, says Livy, some historians omit him). When Lucretius soon dies of old age, he too is replaced, but our

rapprochement concerns the quartet who, in both stories, support the Wronged Female.<sup>10</sup>

Within each quartet only one individual is the female's senior blood relative: as such, Hotravāhana the grandfather parallels Lucretius the father. Moreover, in both stories the last individual to be introduced — Rāma or Brutus — shows the greatest leadership and commitment; whether she is alive or dead, he champions her cause. As an individual Publicola lies outside the scope of this essay, and I do not try to correlate him and Collatinus with the remaining pair of figures in the Sanskrit. But it is worth noting the shared theme of friendship within the quartet: Hotravāhana and Rāma are close friends (5.175.5, 12; 185.14), and so are at least Lucretius and Publicola (1.58.5-6).

Given the rapprochement Rāma~Brutus (Wronged Female's Champion), we must ask what form the championing takes.

After his expulsion Tarquin tries surreptitiously to regain his throne by mobilising his supporters in Rome. The sympathisers, including Brutus' two sons, are betrayed and executed, so Tarquin turns next to open force. He raises armies in Etruria and marches against Rome. His eldest son Sextus has already been killed by enemies he made in Gabii, and Tarquin's cavalry is led by Arruns. The Republic's cavalry is led by Brutus. The two leaders charge straight at each other, and each kills his opponent.

The duel could not have been shorter, and in that respect contrasts with the long-drawn-out fight between Rāma and Bhīṣma. However, in another respect the two duels resemble each other: the military prowess of the opponents in Italy is exactly equal, and this is no less true in India. For instance, when Rāma deploys the ultimate *brahmā* weapon, Bhīṣma does the same, and the two missiles clash in mid-air without reaching their targets (5.185.15-17). Close to the end, when both duellers are urged to stop fighting, both claim that they cannot do so owing to vows they have made (5.186.18-26). Finally (186.29), it is announced by the goddess Gaṅgā and hermits that each dueller is invincible to the other.

In Italy the equality of the enemies applies almost as well at the level of the two armies. The outcome of the battle remains in doubt

<sup>10</sup> Like many quartets, they can be construed as parts of a quintet: here, four males, *but one woman*.

until the matter is settled by *miracula* (2.6.2), i.e. by divine intervention. During the night a loud voice is heard emanating from the Arisian Wood (*silva*) and attributed to the god Silvanus. It announces that the Etruscan armies have suffered one more casualty than the Romans, who are consequently the victors. It is the supernatural intervention at the end of the conflict, not the identity of the interveners or their verdict, that provides the rapprochement.

### Concluding remarks

When comparativists present rapprochements, whether they explain them by contact or by common origin, it is always easy to find differences as well as similarities: differences arising in the course of oral transmission are to be expected. But the central question is whether the similarities can be dismissed as trivial or tendentious, or whether on the contrary they are persuasive; and the verdict has to turn less on the number of similarities than on how well they interrelate or cohere. Had we focused on isolated motifs selected from here and there across the vast extent of the *Mahābhārata*, it would be easy to explain them away as coincidences arising from general similarities of genre and culture between archaic societies. But the similarities we have identified were not general ones: they were, or tried to be, precise and detailed; and they were not assembled at random. They all concerned Ambā and Lucretia themselves, or a small number of individuals who interact with these females. Since any explanation that relies on cultural contact is so implausible, a theory of common origin in early IE times is the best one available. Classicists who try to understand early Rome without taking account of what is presented here are ignoring relevant material, and much the same has to be said of those who try to analyse the *Mahābhārata*.

As was emphasised at the start, the paper only aims to offer an approach, building on Briquel's, towards fuller India-Rome comparisons. So much has been left unexplored. For instance, with few exceptions, each entity from one tradition, whether it was an individual, a group (like the quartet) or a capital city, has been compared only to a single entity from the other. An obvious exception was of course Bhīṣma, who parallels both Sextus (the Disrupter) and Brutus (the Oath-taker). But a fuller study could be expected to show that one-to-one parallels are far from being the rule. More complex parallels are common, and there is no reason why they should only be one-to-two. They could

perfectly well turn out to be several-to-several — a possibility that is as relevant to the Wronged Females as to anyone else.

The potential complexity of the comparative task is enormous. Rather than returning to the complications of the Bhīṣma-Judges rapprochement, let us consider our relatively simple one-to-two comparison between Bhīṣma and Sextus-plus-Brutus. Two simple hypotheses could explain it. If the protonarrative was like the Sanskrit, it contained a single figure combining the roles of Disrupter and Oath-taker, which Italic or Roman tradition split. If the protonarrative was like the Roman tradition, it distinguished the two roles, which the Sanskrit fused. Ideally we would find arguments favouring one or other process — and all the better if, at the same time, the arguments suggested *reasons* for the splitting or fusion. This issue too has been left unexplored. The first task is to collect the material.

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