The three satirists translated in this volume chose to pursue three very different strategies in their compositions. We may surmise that they wrote to fulfil three equally different aims, but these are not as clear-cut as might have been expected.

All three were members of privileged and learned aristocracies linked to the royal court. While Bhállata suffered a humiliating fall from his high rank of court-poet, Kśeméndra was an independently wealthy man of leisure, and Nila-kantha endured a number of vicissitudes.

Bhállata

Bhállata was a protégé of King Avánti-varman of Kashmir (reg. 855–883 CE) a celebrated patron of eminent poets. The chronicler Kálhana reports that his successor, King Shánkara-varman (reg. 883–902 CE) discontinued this royal patronage and that Bhállata and his poet peers were henceforth forced to support themselves with lowly work. While Kálhana portrays the new king Shánkara-varman as boorish (he preferred to speak vernacular dialects instead of cultivated Sanskrit), a quite different picture of him can be gleaned from the Ágama/dambhara, an historico-philosophical drama written by the logician Bharta Jayánta, a contemporary of Bhállata’s. There it is rather the learned elites who are being ridiculed, and Shánkara-varman is portrayed as interested in statecraft rather than the fine arts.

“Bhállata’s Hundred Allegories” is a collection of “detached poems” (muktaka), each complete in itself, composed in sophisticated courtly Sanskrit in various metres. “Detached poems” are usually classified as being “free of
context” (a/nibaddha), so that there is no narrative linking them. It is a common practice, however, to group verses that are thematically related into units (sometimes called paryā or vṛṣyā).

“Bhāllata’s Hundred Allegories” is the earliest known collection of detached poems devoted entirely to allegorical satire (anyāpadeśa). The poet Bhāllata is heir to a sophisticated verbal art, and both he and his intended audience expect literature to be crafted with genius within the bounds of formal rules. These verses of his allegories depend primarily on a few figures of speech (alaṅkāras, as taught in Sanskrit rhetorics) that relate two separate senses. The relation of the two senses can be of various kinds: “fusion” (iṣṭā = paronomasia); the “intended sense” and the “unintended sense” (prakṛta-aprakṛta in aprastuta/pratītyā, lit. “presentation of a topic not under discussion”); “compounding” (in sams’ākṛti lit. “compounded speech”) etc.

This second sense, that serves as a pretext, is usually quite easy to interpret. Trees, which give shade and fruit to weary travellers, represent charitable donors; gleaming jewels are learned scholars ablaze with learning; hissing, venomous serpents are miscreants whispering falsehoods, etc.

The general tone of the collection is one of resigned criticism, Bhāllata laughs not so much at the folly of his contemporaries as that he suffers from their mistakes. Bhāllata emphasises this pain by occasionally using tortuous syntax for effect.

Bhāllata’s verses are difficult, and they need to be read slowly and carefully.
The Kashmirian poet Ksheméndra (fl. ca. 990/1010–1070 CE), was a prolific writer whom recent scholars have variously charged with vulgarity and bad taste.

Many of Ksheméndra’s compositions may offend modern tastes, but a consequent vilification of his works’ literary merit may be premature (he fares better if his work is judged with the literary criteria prevalent in his time and milieu).

We need to take into account that no work of Ksheméndra’s has ever been critically edited, that he had studied literary theory with Abhinava-gupta, one of the greatest Sanskrit rhetoricians, and that his contemporaries credited his works with poetic merit. One sure measure of Ksheméndra’s popularity among traditional Sanskrit aesthetes is the large number of his verses which are current in poetic anthologies. Even when the chronicler Kálhana censures a lack of historical accuracy in Ksheméndra’s now lost “List of Kings” he fairly acknowledges that it was “the work of a poet.” Kálhana has even flattered Ksheméndra by reworking a number of his verses.

How, then are we to account for such discrepant receptions of his work?

Is it just the case that, as with so many other Sanskrit poems, recent literary evaluations of Ksheméndra’s satires are based on current notions of what a literary work should be? The short reply to such a reception, namely, that the work was not written for the modern reader, will avail little, for it is here presented to the modern reader. Nor would it be fair to exhort readers to immerse themselves into the world of the work, to understand the premises and prejudices of...
the author and his millieu. That, of course, is the job of the editor and translator.

The reader must, however, be warned that one may not blithely approach the works produced by one ancient classical civilisation with readily preconceived norms derived from another. When Lapanich laments that the so-called “didactic” verses in the “Grace of Guile” interrupt the flow of the narrative, this tells us merely something about what she believed poetic satire ought to be. To the trained Sanskrit ear that Kshemendra was addressing, smoothly flowing stories would have seemed fine in epic or Puranic narrative, or as refreshing interludes. But Kshemendra was no mere story-teller in the market-place. Like Bhallata, he was a learned, aristocratic wordsmith who crafted complex poems for connoisseurs (sahrdya) who would scarcely be interested in mere colorful tales. Even worse, Kshemendra’s audience would have perceived such as a monotonous breach of poetic propriety (aucitya). As he himself observes:

An uncultivated man, who merely cobbles together verses with difficulty, is a lousy poet, aware of only the literal sense of words. Like some newly-arrived, over-awed bumpkin in the depths of the big city, he has no idea what to answer when questioned in an assembly of the learned.11

The offending “didactic” verses, far from being a mere interruption to the all-important narrative, are the focus of Kshemendra’s poetic efforts. It is here that he shows his talent. He lights up these verses with varied and entertaining ornaments of speech (alankara), often involving learned
INTRODUCTION

puns (ileśa) and satirical parallel meanings (samās'ākṛti) and above all he is careful to do all of this with the restraint so important to rhetoricians of his time.

Kshemendra wrote a satire very similar to the “Grace of Guile” early on in his career: the Des'Bāpadeśa. This in no way implies that it is an easier or even simpler work. Quite the opposite, like many writers’ early work it is replete with learned puns and other rhetorical devices. In eight “lessons” (upadeśa) it ridicules wrong-doers, misers, prostitutes, bawds, parasites, and assorted cheats. That work consists of nothing but “didactic” verses. The “Grace of Guile,” on the other hand, is arguably didactically superior because Kshemendra has incorporated brief tales (deṣṭānata) to exemplify and reinforce his moral judgements. The result is the lighter and structurally more varied work of a mature and evidently well-established poet at the height of his powers.

Since it is not the narrative development alone that drove Kshemendra’s creative art, we should not be too hasty to judge his work by (for him) irrelevant standards.12

What has Kshemendra himself said about his efforts? Forestalling critics who may charge him with vulgarity, Kshemendra prefaces one of his satires with a disclaimer:

My labor is in no way meant for those who are tainted even slightly by the symptoms of the disease which is the conceit of sanctimoniousness.13

Like many other satirists Kshemendra claims that his intentions are entirely praiseworthy:
THE THREE SATIRES

Someone shamed by laughter will not persist in his wrongs. To help him, I myself have made this effort.\footnote{14}

But it remains questionable if this reflects merely a paternalistic concern with uplifting the lower orders of society.\footnote{15} Is his the voice of a Kashmirian moral majority, or a self-appointed minority with moral pretenses? Do we see a learned elite scorning the common people? Are they intended as a taxonomy of fallen characters?\footnote{16} Are there sectarian motivations? Who is the “public” for whose instruction he claims to have written the “Grace of Guile”?\footnote{17} And not least, how much of it is personal?

The scope for future scholarship is wide.

NILA-KANTHA

Nila-kantha Dikshita (fl. 1613–?CE) was born into the family of one the most important figures of sixteenth-century Sanskrit scholarship. As the grand-nephew of Appaya Dikshita (fl. 1553–1625CE) he first studied philosophy (\textit{s\=astra}) and literature with his father and eventually became the disciple of his grand-uncle.

Numerous hagiographical accounts agree at least that he was active in the seventeenth century as minister at the court of Tirumalai N\=ayaka of Maturai.

Although Nila-kantha provides ample information about his ancestral lineage, he never himself mentions by name the prince he served.\footnote{18}

His “Mockery of the Kali Age” is a work in 102 \textit{anuv\=stabh} verses that provides a catalogue of fallen characters. It was composed specifically for the amusement of the royal
court. As such, it was presumably intended as a warning to his audience.

TEXTUAL CONSTITUTION

For “Bhällata’s Hundred Allegories” I have used the Kātyāmālā edition, (gucchaka IV), Bombay 1899, and the polyglot critical edition by Vedāmur ī Ghai & Rampratap, New Delhi 1985. I have also used the anthologies citing Bhällata’s verses.


For the “Mockery of the Kali Age” I based my text of the edition of P.-S.Filizot, Pondichéry 1967, collating it with the lithograph edition by Keraḷavarmā, Trivandrum 1886.

TRANSLATION

The translations offered do not pretend to be poetic. Such attempts seem often doomed to failure, as had already been noted by Kumārajīva, the early translator of Sanskrit into Chinese (Translated from the “Biography of Kumārajīva” in Hui-chiao’s Biographies of Eminent Monks by Victor H. Mair & Tsu-Lin Mei (1991:382–31)):

"Once Sanskrit is converted into Chinese, the subtle nuances are lost. Though the general meaning gets across, there is no way to bridge the gap in genre and style. It is like feeding another person with chewed-over rice. Not only is the flavour lost, it will cause the other person to vomit."
Rather than risking such an outcome by attempting facile reductions to contemporary fashions in English poetry, this translation strives to be an aid so that readers may consult the original themselves and discover whatever poetic beauty there is in the original.

NOTES

1. Rājatarāṅgini 5:34.
2. Rājatarāṅgini 5:204.

3. Only four of Kṣemendra’s works are dated: [1.] the Samayamātya to the first day of the bright lunar fortnight of December-January in the [Laukika] year [41]25 = 1049 CE (epilogue 2: saṃsvatāte satatāmyaṁ vasiśṭhāya itidanye kṛṣṇaṁ Kalpalatikā śrījanahamabharāte). [2.] Somendra writes in his Introduction to Kṣemendra’s Aavadānakalpalatā that it was completed during the Buddha’s birth-celebrations in the bright fortnight of April-May of the [Laukika] year [41]27 = 1052 CE (Aavadānakalpalatā Introduction 16: saṃsvatāte satatāmyaṁ vasiśṭhāya itidanye kṛṣṇaṁ Kalpalatikā śrījanahamabharāte). [3.] The Aucityavicāracarita was completed in May–June of the [Laukika] year [41]34 = 1059 CE (Aucityālam.kārodadhāra b.o.r.i ms no. 578/1887–91, colophon: niṣpattayā citraya śrīma-dAnantāśramaṇarādāvāraśrījñacarita– saṃsvatāte catuvirāmye āṣemble śyāmbi ‘janma ‘hansi / Kṛitya ucicīvācārā ‘yam iśāyānti pattaḥ kṛtaḥ). [4.] The Daśasvāmcarita to October–November of the [Laukika] year [41]41 = 1066 CE (epilogue 3abc: ekādhikā ‘bde viśhtāte catuvirāmye akārīte ‘niyye Kalajasāhābhāhārtyaḥ). Kṣemendra further tells us that he wrote this work “while enjoying a rest on the summit of the Tripureśvara mountain” (epilogue 3a: sene 11 Tripureśvarasāhanīkāhaḥ viraśāntaṃtyotpateḥ), an ancient site of great sanctity near Śrīnagar (see Stein 1900:192–3). Secondary literature frequently makes the false assertion that the Bhuratahāmaṭajāti is also dated. Sternbach (1979:1) places it in 1039 CE, then (without explaining the discrepancy) in 1037 CE (1979:10), where it had already been placed by Mahajan (1956:3) and Śrīvakṣeta (1954:6). This would put the
verifiable beginning of Kśemendra’s literary career back by 10 years, but it is based on no more than a misunderstanding of Bhaktakāmāṇjarī 19.37. The verse states merely: kadā cid eva viprasya sa duśdāyāṁ upṣṭaḥ / prārthito Rāmaṇaśāra uṣaṁ svacchācetān. “At one time, he, full of love, who was fasting on the twelfth [lunar day] was requested by the clear-minded Brāhmaṇa Rāmaṇaśa.” Here duśdāyāṁ cannot mean “in the twelfth [Laukika] year,” e.g. 4112 = 1037 CE. The Bhaktakāmāṇjarī remains undated. We further know that his works were composed in the reign of the Kashmirian kings Ananta (reg. 1028–63 CE) and Kālaśa (reg. 1063–89 CE).

4 Sternbach (1979:2–9) lists forty-one works attributed to him, of which twenty are no longer extant. Of these twenty, four titles are however alternates (see Sternbach (1979:11 footnote 2)), and the Dānapārījāta is by a different author called Kśemendra Mahopādhyāya, hence we arrive at thirty-six works.

5 Sternbach (1974:81): “His work is often vulgar and it is not an amusing comedy, but an acrid, cheap satire, often in bad taste.” Sternbach (1974:77) does at least concede that: “Perhaps the best of his satiric and didactic works is the Kalāvilāsa.”

6 Bhaktakāmāṇjarī 19.37.

7 See Sternbach (1979) for a list of 415 verses quoted in the surviving classical anthologies.

8 Rājastamāna 1.13: kavikarnaṁ saty api.

9 The difficulty, of course, lies in discovering that something is such a preconceived norm in the first place.

10 Lapanich (1979:9): “. . . the only defect found in the Kalāvīlāsa is that Kshemendra intersperses too many didactic verses which interrupt the smooth flow of the didactic story.”
Kavikavatábharana 5.1: na hi paricayabhisóab kevalé kávyakaśte kahávair abhipiśiśte spájaáabhadapraprivateś / vibudhásadaí prajáat kláśadhir veiti vaktrón nava iśu negarátamarga-khótere ke śy aśriśraśtaḥ. Elaborating on this verse, Ksheméndra demands that a poet must be a cultivated scholar, versed in: logic (tarka), grammar (vyákarana), dramaturgy (Bharata), politics (Cáňaka), erotics (Vátsyáyana), epic literature (Bhárata), the Rámásyana, the Mokopátya, (this is the earliest dateable reference to this work), self-knowledge (átmajána), metallurgy/chemistry (dhatuváda), gemology (ratnapáríksha), medicine (vaidyaka), astronomy/astrology (jyautisá), archery (dhanurveda), elephant-lore (gajalaksána), equestrian science (turgalaksána), physiognomy (purusálañcñá), gambling (dyúta), and sorcery (Indrajála).

This will hardly be news to those familiar with a common type of “criticism” often met in secondary literature on Sanskrit poetry. As Warder & Kunjunní Raja (1986:xlv) remark in their introduction to the Naśadájañanda: ‘Such persons are incapable of grasping the significance of a classical play or of enjoying dramatic poetry. It is shocking that they have condemned this and many other plays, novels and poems without troubling to read them, much worse that such empty arrogance has been set up by others as “authority.”’

Deśopadeśa 4: hásena lajjito ‘tyantam.na dos.es.upravartate / janás tadapakáriya mamátám svayam adyántah.

Unlike many more well-researched literatures, the study of Sanskrit Kávyá has not yet generated a substantial body of work that could meaningfully contribute to its Rezeptionsgeschichte.
INTRODUCTION

16 As Baldissera (2000:153) notes: “It is a work that could well compare with Theophrastus’ Characters.”

17 Kalavilāsī 10.43: lokapadeśaviyayāḥ.

18 P.-S. Filliozat (1967) has attempted to reconcile the conflicting hagiographical accounts with other data and provides a fuller account.

19 “Mockery of the Kali Age” 102.