Anatomy of "Decadence"

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Abstract

Examining the perception of literary decline in Greek, Latin, Arabic, and Persian, this study unearths an enduring taboo, one little changed by place and time, against verbal creation too readily sacrificing "nature" and "truth" to artifice and phantasy. The fading of the taboo after the nineteenth century, when "Decadent" yields to a non-normative name for the present ("Modern"), is without precedent. Demonstrating the opprobrium's enduring nature, this study compares for the first time four literary traditions' confrontations with a "Decadence" whose similarities have been conjectured since philology's "golden age."

Chapter I examines two ancient polemics against decline, the tableaux of decay painted by the Avestan liturgical texts and the Attic Greek thinkers before new attitudes towards verbal creation. A similar tableau emerges in Roman reactions to post-Augustan *eloquentia*'s "decline," as the analysis of Tacitus in chapter II demonstrates. Chapter III gives voice to non-specialist Imperial reactions to the "decline" heralded by the Second Sophistic, analyzing Plutarch's and Marcus Aurelius's rejections of verbal art. Chapter IV considers the effort to regulate artifice within the rhetorical tradition, examining the two great Hellenistic and Imperial authorities (Demetrius and Quintilian).

Chapter V finds the prohibition unbroken in the earliest Arabic debate over *suqāṭ* ("Decadence"). Al-Āmidī's *Muwāzana* is a summary statement of the rejection of verbal creation too enamored of facticity. Conversely, chapter VI looks to post-Classical Persian voices enshrining this very conception of verbal creation. Suhrawardī, Mullā Ṣadrā, and Ṣāʾib call for a language reflective of little other than *wahm* ("imagination") and *himma* ("desire").

Chapter VII examines "Decadence" in Greek and Arabic post-Classical fiction. The erosion of μῦθος by ψυχή as the banal desire of non-heroic protagonists eclipses action, as phantasy, shown through the pathetic fallacy, irradiates out into the world, supports critics' contention: Imperiousness of imagination goes with the *genera dicendi*'s loosening and the pull of language from the inhuman towards personal fancy. "Decadence" in fiction reflects a literature democratized, one mirroring (petty-) bourgeois interests. This is, argues chapter VIII, a premonition of Modernity: With Gutenberg and Calvin, with an unprecedented accessibility and banality of letters, the taboo against subjectivism and facticity recedes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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TRANSLITERATIONS AND TRANSLATIONS: Arabic and Persian transliterations follow the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES) guidelines, with the exception of the Persian short vowels *ḍamme* and *kasre*, which are rendered here as "o" and "e." Toponyms and historical periods (e.g., "Umayyad") are given in their standard Anglicized form. Greek proper names, for their part, are given in Latinized form. Translations, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

Mein garten bedarf nicht luft und nicht wärme.

—Stefan George

INTRODUCTION: AN ANATOMY OF "DECADENCE"

I

Sed causas requirimus ("Yet we are looking for reasons"), pronounces Vipstanus Messalla, rushing into the home of Curiatus Maternus and so breaking, *à la* Alcibiades, into the middle of Tacitus's *Dialogus de oratoribus*. *Causas* ("reasons"), the *Dialogus*'s affected and harried conservative intones, *cur in tantum ab eloquentia antiquorum oratorum recesserimus* ("why we have so far descended from the eloquence of the ancient orators," 24.3).[1] Left to the *Dialogus*'s cast reactionary to flatly pose, the question, remarkably, turns on a premise that every of Tacitus's interlocutors has already accepted. No speaker, that is, in Antiquity's most sustained consideration of the *vitia* ("sins") of *recens* ("Modern") discourse refuses the fact: Graver and ever more profuse, the *vitia* of the verbal arts (poetry and practical oratory receiving no distinction in the *Dialogus*) have become the defining feature of *saeculum nostrum* ("our age," 24.1).

Unanimity on the fact of decline implies no unanimity, to be sure, on the *causas* of decline. Remarkably, however, a throughline scarcely concealed, an implicit consensus on the reasons for literature's increasingly dismaying condition, runs with remarkable fidelity across the *Dialogus*'s six speeches. And it does not stop there. Astonishing consistency characterizes the diagnosis of literary decay over the course Greek and Roman Antiquity. Even there, however, it does not stop, the throughline, the consensus on how decline transpires, running later and elsewhere. Arabic critics in the first centuries after Muḥammad will begin to speak of the *suqāṭ* ("Decadence"), the *fasād* ("corruption"), the *ighrāb* ("grotesqueness") of *mutaʾakhkhir*

[1] Tacitus, *Dialogus de oratoribus* (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1983).

("belated," "Modern") poetry.[2] The fact of decline, the notion that the *madhhab* ("method") and *ṭarīqat al-awāʾil* ("way of the Ancients") is at once ideal and ever less pursued, is one that commands broad and enduring assent among observers of the Arabic verbal arts in the post-Classical period. The very fact that apologists for a *muḥdath* ("Modern") and *badīʿ* ("innovative") poetry feel themselves compelled to uncover precedents among the pre-Islamic poets is itself proof of begrudging assent, if not of the fact of decline then at least of its perils and causes. Even here, however, the throughline does not stop. Observers of Persian poetics too will, after the Samanid period, begin to speak of a language fading into *siyāhī* ("blackness"), a language ever more *bīgāne* ("alien") to reality, product of a world where *ḥarf-i rast borūn az qalam namī āyid* ("out of a pen an honest word does not flow").[3]

Skeptics might point to Genesis 3 or, for that matter, to the Qurʾān's second *sūra* (2: 36-7) as evidence for the triviality of undertaking a study of the enduring nature of arguments insisting upon decline, poetic or otherwise. Is not the elegy for "greatness" deflated, for an *aureum saeculum* lost, for the prohibitive heroism of the (fore-)father desecrated, the very song of culture? Do filial piety and cultural continuity not require an always unfinished work of mourning in order that "the centre can…hold"? Whether this elegy for art or customs or generations lost is or ought to be, in some sense, the fount of culture is a question, respectively, of anthropology and ethics. What need be said from the perspective of the study of literature, however, is that it simply is not the case that the mourning for what has gone before is some ineradicable feature of literary life. The post-Ciceronian poets and orators lamented by Tacitus in the *Dialogus* did not, protestations of modesty notwithstanding, feel themselves to be writing and

[2] Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥasan ibn Bishr al-Āmidī, *al-Muwāzana bayna shiʿr Abī Tammām wa-l-Buḥturī ("The Weighing of the Poetry of Abū Tammām and Al-Buḥturī")*, 2 vols., vol. I (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1961), 20.

[3] Ṣāʾib, *Dīwān-i Ṣāʾib-i Tabrīzī* (Tehran: Inteshārāt-i Negāh, 2004), 880:4; 986:3; 2166: 5.

declaiming orations, plays, or lyric necessarily worse than their predecessors'. Nor did their admirers. The *badīʿ* ("innovative"), *ḥadd-* ("boundary-") breaking poets of the early Abbasid period certainly did not feel themselves to be inferior to their *qudamāʾ* ("predecessors"). Names like *al-Mutanabbī* ("the self-made prophet") and (still relatively modest) lines describing themselves as in possession of *mukarramatan ʿan al-maʿnā al-muʿādi* ("a venerability free of borrowed meaning") suggest quite the contrary.[4]

Faith in human ingenuity, in *fikr* ("thought") that *āfāq-rā girift* ("has stolen the horizons"),[5] in language that concentrates the world's colors and shapes into ἓν σῶμα καὶ σχῆμα ("one body and form," 18),[6] in rhetoric that converts *spes inanes* ("silly desires") into *imagines* so real that they themselves *prosecuntur* ("h[a]unt," 8.3) us[7]—this is what critics of literary decline find so dismaying. Intemperate optimism, then, not pessimism—and certainly not some universal human tendency to lament the present—lies at the heart of what critics reject as the mark of corruption.

Optimism in a *fikr* ("thought") that can *sākhtan* ("build")[8] the world unites literary history's moments of "corruption" with the history of the verbal arts in the West since the seventeenth century, a "history" now, by grace of aesthetic colonialism, shared the world over. Modernism may, in fact, be Decadence by another name, for when Mallarmé promises a *virtualité*

[4] Abū Tammām, cited in Beatrice Gruendler, *The Life and Times of Abū Tammām* (New York, N.Y.: New York University Press, 2015), 172.

[5] Ṣāʾib, *Dīwān,* 1991: 8.

[6] Gorgias, *Encomium of Helen* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1993).

[7] Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1959).

[8] Ṣāʾib, *Dīwān*, 1991: 8.

of mind come true—where *Je dis: une fleur!* and reality submits to the idea[9]—or when Baudelaire speaks of *raison et…calcul* given to engaging in *un essai permanent et successif de réformation de la nature*, these early Modernists are talking in terms that the pre-Modern craftsman of "corrupt" language and, especially, his critics, would not find altogether unfamiliar.[10]

Marvel at what the imagination has wrought unites those two paradoxical facets of these literatures of immodest optimism (or "Decadence," beholder depending). The paradox is between, on the one hand, an imagination that delights in shutting its eyes to *ʿālam-i asbāb* ("the world of causes") and, on the other, a taste for the concrete, for *calamistros* ("iron ornaments") and *tinnitus* ("clanging"), those figures riffing on parallelisms of sight and sound (*Dialogus*, 26.1).[11] Chimera and craft, phantasy and artifice, ether of mind and simpering language beckoning eyes and ears—both flow from an identical fount. Both are products of human ingenuity and individual invention. Across literary history both are, moreover, unfailingly "comorbid" (in the critics' diction). Wherever critics speak of literary "corruption," they are sensing the profusion of mental phantom and phenomenal artifice in equal measure. The correlation of the two also supports the sense that literary Modernity is, in the end, simply "corruption" or Decadence by another name. That sinuous, paradoxical dance between imagined unreality and formal experimentalism—between *Ulysses*'s "Circe" and "Oxen of the Sun"—is as integral to post-Symbolist (and not just post-Symbolist) poetry and prose as it is to those episodes in the verbal arts historically called "corrupt."

[9] Mallarmé, "Crise de vers," in *Poésies et autres textes*, ed. Jean-Luc Steinmetz (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2005), 359-61.

[10] Charles Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* (Paris: Éditions Mille et une nuits, 2010 [1863]), 61-66.

[11] Ṣāʾib, *Dīwān*, 1202: 6.

II

It was Nietzsche who had characterized moments *beim Abblühen jeder großen Kunst* as those *mit einem überreichen, drängen den Formentriebe*.[12] The typically gnomic remark begs a question—*Formentriebe* against what, exactly?—that critics of literary corruption throughout history, with little hesitation and astonishing consistency, answer in terms perfectly explicit. The drive lies *fī al-khurūj ʿan al-ḥadd fī kull shayʾ* ("in exceeding the limits in all things").[13] It is the drive over precedent and decorum; over norms of syntax and diction; over, perhaps more than anything, the sundry and natural masks that culture dons in self-preservation's name ("truth," "reality," "nature"). "Decadence," is, finally, a disembedding by design. If Charles Taylor talks of Modernity as involving the (would-be) individual's "disembedding" from the "social imaginary,"[14] in the verbal arts, too, Decadence and, by extension, Modernity, involves its own kind of disembedding, only one now of language and will from nature and truth. This has never been much of a secret. Prophet of "Decadence," herald of language as παιγνίον ("plaything"), father of the Sophists, Gorgias was already saying as much in the fifth century BCE. Λόγος δὲ οὐκ ἔστι ("Discourse is not"), he pronounces in a surviving fragment, τὰ ὑποκείμενα καὶ ὄντα ("that which subsists and exists").

Asphyxiation of "nature," burying of "truth," the reduction of each to κατασκελετευόμενα ("lifeless skeleton") by the τεχνολογίαις ("technologies") of mind, this is the central, scarcely hidden impulse coloring all episodes of literary "decay" (Longinus, *On the Sublime*, 1.2). This, according to the critics. (And this, less usually, as the case of Gorgias suggests, according to the

[12] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Vom Barockstile," in *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in fünfzehn Bänden*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 1980 [1878]), 437.

[13] al-Āmidī, *al-Muwāzana*, 2 vols., vol. II (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1972), 204.

[14] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 146.

perpetrators themselves.) This goes also to the aptness of an "anatomy"—what the *Oxford English Dictionary* calls "a model of the body, showing the parts discovered in dissection"—of Decadence.[15] Taxonomic formalism and transhistorical consistency, the critical tendency to diagnose "literary" decline as involving identical elements no matter place and age, form but one motive for an "anatomical" approach.

As witnesses to literary "decline" instruct us again and again, the notion of "Decadence" is preternaturally likely to be drawn in the shadows of an "anatomy." Consistently, often explicitly, the critical testimony is offered as a sort of diagnostic. Plato is hardly the only one to see discourse in terms of the salubriousness of body (or its opposite), scarcely alone in insisting that δεῖν πάντα λόγον ὥσπερ ζῷον συνεστάναι σῶμά τι ἔχοντα αὐτὸν αὑτοῦ ("all discourse should be put together like a living creature, possessing a body all its own," *Phaedrus*, 264c). The body of healthy discourse, as Plato puts it in a formulation redolent of others' elsewhere and later, is to be composed ὥστε μήτε ἀκέφαλον εἶναι μήτε ἄπουν, ἀλλὰ μέσα τε ἔχειν καὶ ἄκρα, πρέποντα ἀλλήλοις καὶ τῷ ὅλῳ γεγραμμένα ("so that it is neither headless nor footless, so that it has a torso and members, fittingly composed one with the other and with the whole"). Some five hundred years later, Longinus, in an era beset by λόγων κοσμική…ἀφορία ("a total desiccation of letters," 44.2), will describe the dying, disfigured state of the verbal arts in terms of a κατασκελετευόμενα ("lifeless skeleton," 2.2), of ψυχρότης ("frigidity"), of language stricken by a λοιμικῇ τοῦ βίου διαφθορᾷ ("pestilential destruction of life," 44.9). Tacitus's Maternus, the next century, will speak of *oratio* ("speech") as *sicut corpus hominis* ("like the body of man"). *Ea demum pulchra est in qua non* ("Its attractiveness is certainly not where"), he continues, *eminent venae nec ossa numerantur* ("the veins protrude or the bones may be counted," 21.7).

[15] "anatomy, n." OED Online. March 2016. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Soundness of body, soundness of discourse—the equivalence is rather more than a metaphor. Al-Āmidī, the tenth-century Arabic critic, will say that he is distilling the views of *al-awāʾil* ("the Ancients") and those *shuyūkh ahl al-ʿilm bi-l-shiʿr* ("most esteemed of the experts in poetry") in listing four qualities failing which *ṣināʿat al-shiʿr wa-ghayrihā min sāʿir al-ṣināʿāt lā tajūd* ("the art of poetry and other of the arts is not sound"). These include *jawdat al-āla, wa-iṣābat al-gharaḍ al-maqṣūd, wa-ṣiḥḥat al-taʾlīf, wa-l-intihāʾ ilā tamām al-ṣanʿa min ghayr naqṣ fīhā wa-lā ziyādaʿalayhā* ("excellence of instrument, attainment of intended purpose, health of composition, and completeness such that in the whole of the work there is neither want nor excess"). Notions of organic harmony, of correspondence and balance, of indissoluble internal cohesion, govern the whole of this picture of the salubrious *ṣināʿa* ("art"). More than mere mimesis and realism are at stake. It is not that art is to be nature's mirror, though this ideal too (likely by derivation), is embraced and championed. Rather, art is to be made—*muʿallif* ("composed"), *makhlūq* ("created")—with an internal coherence worthy of the bodies of animals and plants. Inference is hardly needed. Al-Āmidī himself presses the point at once: *Wa-hādhihī al-khilāl al-arbaʿ laysat fī al-ṣināʿāt waḥdahā, bal hiya mawjūda fī jamīʿ al-ḥayawān wa-l-nabātāt* ("The four qualities do not, indeed, belong to the arts alone, but exist in all animals and plants").[16]

More than metaphor, the body, the health, the anatomy of discourse involves not so much an analogy between language and nature as the implicitly normative notion that sound words somehow belong to nature and the body, all ideally partaking of a single substance. More than metaphor, also, because the anatomy of unsound language—of language *fœda* ("disfigured") and *praepostera* ("perverse," *Dialogus*, 26.3), of words ψυχρός ("frigid," *On the Sublime*, 3.4; 4.5;

[16] al-Āmidī, *al-Muwāzana*, I, 402-03.

26.2) and *waḥshī* ("grotesque"),[17] of expression reduced to κατασκελετευόμενα ("lifeless skeleton")—all suggest organic, if not explicitly somatic, disorder. Pestilential sinew and veins, decaying nature turned inside out and left right-side up—such is the soil on which the diagnoses and etiologies of literary decline are consistently made to stand.

III

By no accident does the first attested use of "decadence" in English belong to a *dullit dreyme ande sopit visione* of decay of nature and body. *Ande the eird vas becum barran & stirril*, intones *The Complaynt of Scotlande* in 1549. Dame Scotia, *this desolat affligit lady…disparit of remeid* begins *to contempil the vidthrid barran feildis, quhilkis in vthir tymis hed bene fertil.* Allegory of earth, metaphor of country, Dame Scotia wears this destruction on person and body: Her once resplendent *hayr, of the cullour of fyne gold, vas feltrit & trachlit out of ordour*. Apostrophizing the narrator by appealing to her *decadens*, the *desolat* lady proclaims that she *dechays in miserabil aduersite*: *My triumphant stait is succumbit in decadens*.[18] The interplay between earthen and bodily decay persists in the term's use in the nineteenth century. "I fell to the ground in the dirtiest soil that could be selected by a man in a state of *decadence*," insists a diary entry from 1812. At the century's end, meanwhile, the *Birmingham Weekly Post* could describe a remedy for alopecia as "a process…said to prevent the *decadence* of the hair."[19]

The *Complaynt of Scotlande* presages the apparently political and cultural but implicitly bodily and organic import of the term after the seventeenth century. "Decadence" or, especially, "Décadence" would come in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to suggest post-Augustan

[17] One of the critic's favored epithets for poetry deemed not *maṭbūʿ* ("natural"). Ibid., 6.

[18] *The Complaynt of Scotlande*, (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1872 [1549]), 68-72.

[19] "decadence, n." Oxford English Dictionary Online. March 2016. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Emphases mine.

Rome, but, again, in a sense redolent of the health of body and nature. A "monstrous Gallicism" is how J.B. Mayor describes the term in an 1871 issue of *The Journal of Philology*, citing Comte and, especially, Montesquieu, the latter having published his *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence* in 1734. The word is meant, Mayor tells us, "to *connote* a scientific and enlightened view of…decline."[20] Mayor is not, of course, entirely correct: The anonymous Scotsman is using the term in a cultural and political sense in the middle of the sixteenth century, as is the author of *Theater of Honour & Knight-hood*, writing of "the entire decadence of the Kingdom." Decay of body and decay of nature already permeate the outwardly sociopolitical use of the term in *The Complaynt of Scotland*. The "scientific…view of…decline" that Mayor references (sniggeringly) only strengthens the connection between "anatomy" and "decadence." Rabelais uses the term *au sens physique* in 1546, and the notion of a *saison décadente* to signify *temps de la décadence (dans la vie humaine)* is already in use at the start of the century.[21] Chateaubriand, writing his *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, will speak of an *État* stricken by *de nombreux symptômes de décadence.*[22]

Transferred from body to body politic, the lifelessness or (alternatively) vigor connoted by "decadence" or its absence will come to refer quite naturally to arts other than that "of the possible." *Chaque école poétique*, Sainte-Beuve pronounces towards the nineteenth century's end, *a ses phases, son cours, sa croissance, sa décadence*.[23] And, indeed, it is in this sense, hovering somewhere between cultural and somatic degeneration, that the term will be applied

[20] J.B. Mayor, "'Decadence'," *Journal of Philology* 3 (1871). Emphasis his.

[21] Walther von Wartburg, "cadĕre," in *Das Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 2 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1948-), 24-31.

[22] Cited in "décadence," in *Le Grand Robert*, ed. Alain Rey (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 2007).

[23] Cited in ibid.

(initially, with opprobrium) to those *maladifs* poets and writers at the nineteenth century's end. Théophile Gautier, in his 1868 "Notice" to *Les Fleurs du mal*, speaks (approvingly) of *fielleux de bile extravasé*, of *roses de la phthisie*, of *blancs de la chlorose*.[24] All debt to the Gothic Poe notwithstanding, the Decadent inclination towards a *déliquescence* of the body is far from being restricted to a topical or thematic interest in *nuances morbidements riches de la pourriture*. This attitude towards the body and nature has a precise correlate in the Decadent attitude towards history and language. It spells an inclination for a *verbe faisandé*, for literature *à la dernière heure des civilisations*,[25] for books of peoples *dans les décadences*,[26] and, especially, for the writings of *les decadents de la langue latine* so enamoring to Huysmans's Jean des Esseintes.[27]

The wheel, then, has completed its revolution by the *fin-de-siècle*. No less in Greek and Latin than in the languages of the Near East (and, one imagines, well beyond), the idea of "decadence" is regularly grounded in the soil of nature and body, in an anatomy of the organism's *décomposition*, *perversité*, *dépravation*.[28] Since the *Phaedrus* (at least), "anatomical" decadence or vigor has closely shadowed notions of linguistic and literary soundness. The sticky threads between "anatomy" and "decadence" are as clear in Rabelais as they are in the anonymous Scotsman. They are clear in Tacitus, who talks of sound speech as *sicut corpus hominis* ("like a man's body," 21.7), using *degenerare* (27.3) and *desciscere* (28.2) for the body of language showing sickly bone and sinew. They are clear in Arabic criticism, al-Āmidī

[24] Théophile Gautier, "Notice Introductive," in *Les Fleurs du mal* (Paris: 1890), 2. Cited in A.E. Carter, "Théophile Gautier and the Conception of Decadence," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1951): 60.

[25] Gautier, "Notice Introductive," 2.

[26] Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, 56.

[27] J.-K. Huysmans, "Préface (écrite vingt ans après le roman)," *À rebours*, ed. Marc Fumaroli (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), 62.

[28] Gautier, 17, 31, 12; Cited in Carter, "Théophile Gautier and the Conception of Decadence," 59-61.

condemning speech which runs against *ṭabʿ* ("nature"), speech failing to maintain the organic coherence *mawjūda fī jamīʿ al-ḥayawān wa-l-nabātāt* ("found in all animals and plants"), as *suqāṭ* ("fallen"), *maṭrūḥ* ("overthrown"), and *mardhūl* ("debased").[29] The tenth-century Arabic critic even gives us the finite verbal form of what will, as a gerund and in the Modern period, become the usual gloss for "Decadence" (*inḥiṭāṭ*): *Yanḥaṭṭ ʿan daraja* ("he declines from the rank") of a better poet, al-Āmidī says disparagingly of a writer *shadīd al-takalluf* ("extreme in his mannerism").[30]

Any shadows keeping the threads between language, body, and the health of each more or less concealed have, by the *fin de siècle*, withdrawn entirely. Reading Sedulius, Merobaudes, and Marius Victor, des Esseintes is all the more ravished by their Latin of the early *Völkerwanderung*, *maintenant que complètement pourrie, elle pendait, perdant ses membres, coulant son pus, gardant à peine, dans toute la corruption de son corps, quelques parties fermes que les chrétiens détachaient afin de les mariner dans la saumure de leur nouvelle langue*. With an eye towards his contemporaries and overt praise for Verlaine and Mallarmé, Huysmans turns with approval to *la décomposition de langue française* and its *verbe faisandé* on display after the eighteenth century.[31]

IV

The turn of the twentieth century is an aberration in the history of literature. The sticky threads perceptible since Plato at least, threads ensuring that when one pulls at discursive "decadence," an anatomy of afflicted bodies begins to quicken immediately, are more overt than

[29] al-Āmidī, *al-Muwāzana*, I, 6, 12.

[30] Ibid., 6.

[31] Huysmans, *À rebours*, 120; 321.

ever before. What Mayor calls the "scientific view of decline," one indebted to Comte and Montesquieu and steeped in organicism and biology, could only have fortified the connection. Something more momentous is at hand, however. The anatomy of literary decline has historically been drawn only by the antagonists of unhappy developments in the verbal arts. With this literature of *caprices morbides*, however, this has been reversed.[32] The term of abuse has now been usurped, and quite explicitly at that, by the perpetrators themselves. As the pages of this dissertation will show, the reversal is simply without precedent in wantonness and scale. With *ce goût excessif, baroque, antinaturel*, this *goût particulier du poëte pour l'artificiel*, this *volonté humaine corrigeant à son gré les forms et les couleurs fournies par la matière*, the self-styled "Decadents" amass and extol what have belonged across history to the deadly faults of literature. Exceptions can obviously (and always) be summoned. "One sparrow," however, "doesn't make a summer."[33] With astonishing, even predictable consistency, pre-Modern witnesses to the verbal arts draw an anatomy of literary soundness and decadence whose fundamental elements even the poets themselves did not reject.

Symbolism and Decadence are, as Franke Kermode has put it, "palaeo-modernist."[34] They are Modernism's premonitions, a notion now so widely accepted as to be a critical commonplace.[35] This notwithstanding, the present study sheds new light, one brightened by cultural breadth and historical depth, on the interplay between Decadence and Modernism. Namely, pre-Modern witnesses to literary decline suggest that "Modernism" transpires when the

[32] Gautier, "Notice Introductive," 12.

[33] Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 19.

[34] Frank Kermode, *Continuities* (New York, N.Y.: Random House, 1988), 8.

[35] Abrams essentially agrees, even while hoping to spare Romanticism from these other (and unsavory) bedfellows. M.H. Abrams, "Coleridge, Baudelaire, and Modernist Poetics," in *New Perspectives in German Literary Criticism*, ed. Richard E. Amacher and Victor Lange (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), 150-51.

traditional opprobrium surrounding unhappy developments in the verbal arts—developments belonging to (historicized) notions of how culture should relate to nature—no longer holds. The dissipation of opprobrium surrounding a literature advertising a *volupté…se ruant à l'impossible*, one driven towards *la vie factice*, a literature enthralled by *les hallucinations bizarres de l'idée fiex tournant à la folie*, delighted by its *langue marbrée…de la décomposition et faisandée* is quite simply an outlier in literary history.[36] That its avowed attitude towards nature will be turned into its own norm, becoming the bedrock for later developments in the literature (and not just in the literature) of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, is a development with perhaps no historical analogue. "Postmodernism," as Fredric Jameson has it, "is what you get when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good." Or, in Hardt and Negri's even starker terms: "In a postmodern world all phenomena and forces are artificial…."[37] The extremeness of post-Symbolist aesthetics' embrace of facticity is possible only because the traditional intolerance for verbal art itself intolerant of nature has weakened considerably.

Conversely, the consistency (one "cross-cultural" at that) of the pre-Modern reaction to verbal art intent on reducing the world to shadow of the imagination suggests that for most of literary history the center *does* hold. Literature that exhibits too little patience for nature and denotative language (these intolerances being constant bedfellows) is often a loud outlier. The *badīʿ* ("innovative") poets of the early Abbasid period and Persian's "Indian" poets of the post-Timurid age are exemplary in this respect. In neither practice nor theory, by neither the poets themselves nor contemporaneous witnesses, was theirs considered to be "standard" poetic practice. This was, naturally, precisely the point for the bards themselves, tireless as they are of holding court on their own boldness and novelty. Inventors of a style *tāze* ("fresh") and *naw*

[36] Gautier, "Notice Introductive," 17.

[37] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 189.

("novel") was, after all, how the seventeenth-century Persian poets insisted on characterizing themselves. Intemperate optimism is only the "other side" of Decadence. *La décadence esthétique,* Nöel Richard justly puts it, *doit s'entendre par antiphrase; elle est synonyme de jeunesse fringante et de renouvellement*.[38] On the antiphrastic and reversible nature of Decadence, literary history is clear: Wherever observers are trying to hold the line before the various guises worn by the cults of facticity, the initiates themselves see their project as one of a renewal of world and word.

The tenacity of the critical wariness towards literary history's various cults of facticity means that "relativist" accounts are untenable. History offers no support for the notion that "decadence does not have a clear and stable referent"[39] or that "there is nothing to which it actually and legitimately applies."[40] The idea of "Decadence" is not formal or content-neutral:[41] It is not simply an idea adopted by critics in opposition to a poetics endeavoring for "a reformation of the aesthetic code."[42] Rather, the "transvaluation of the values of art" that Decadence involves is a transvaluation of specific and identifiable values whose rejection has, as rule, been neither welcomed nor long-tolerated. *Formentriebe*, "dehumanization," "annulment of

[38] Noël Richard, *Le Mouvement décadent: dandys, esthètes et quintessents* (Paris: Nizet, 1968), 259.

[39] David Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 13.

[40] Richard Gilman, *Decadence: The Strange Life of an Epithet* (New York, N.Y.: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), 158; Cited in Charles Bernheimer, *Decadent Subjects: The Idea of Decadence in Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Culture of the Fin de Siècle in Europe* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 4.

[41] As Eric Hayot's Realism, Modernism, and Romanticism are supposed to be. Eric Hayot, *On Literary Worlds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 120-35.

[42] Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism*, 14.

spontaneous life"[43]—in their stronger variants these have never managed to long evade critical opprobrium.

The little ambiguous critical consensus on the warp and woof of Decadence means that another sort of relativism, one now of a "parochial" sort, is also untenable. "Post-Orientalist" scholars of Near Eastern literary history are wont to dismiss the notion that "decadence" connotes a "Western" idea utterly foreign to Arabic and Persian literary history. As the received wisdom would have it, "The very term *decadence* (*inḥiṭāṭ*) and its use to describe—or even to create—an historical sub-period in Arab-Islamic history seems to have been, in fact, an import to the region."[44] The notion of an *ʿaṣr al-inḥiṭāṭ* ("age of Decadence") in reference to a specific period in literary history is perhaps eccentric to Arabic and Persian historiography, though even here haste may do injustice to the historical record. On the interplay between indigenous notions of periodization and the idea of decline much more work need be done.[45] It is not for nothing that ʿAbbās al-ʿAqqād found early twentieth-century French poetry so reminiscent of Arabic letters' post-Classical "Decadence" that he exhorted poets to turn towards "Romantic" German and English exemplars.[46] Period and chronology, however, scarcely begin to exhaust the issue of Decadence. The present study would suggest that the idea of Decadence is one of the organizing

[43] José Ortega y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Art and Other Essays on Art, Culture, and Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), 22-25.

[44] Roger Allen, "Decadence: Notion Of," in *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Josef W. Meri (Routledge: New York, N.Y., 2006), 200-01.

[45] It obviously will not do to simply argue that "the narrative of decline is…more the triumphalist self-narrative of the conquerors and colonizers." Just after this statement, for instance, Lowry and Stewart themselves acknowledge that, "on the other hand, the decline paradigm was also employed by indigenous writers to describe the trajectory of their own cultural history in these centuries." They continue: "An archaeology of the notion of decadence or *inḥiṭāṭ* as it evolved in Arab thought has hardly been undertaken." Joseph E. Lowry and Devin J. Stewart, "Introduction," in *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography II: 1350-1850*, ed. Lowry and Stewart (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), 8.

[46] Pierre Cachia, "The Critics," in *Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. M.M. Badawi, The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 45.

principles of Arabic and Persian literary theory and practice, no less than it had been in Greek and Latin from the Classical period to Antiquity's end. Faced with the notion that literary Decadence belongs to "Orientalist taxonomies,"[47] the contemporaneous Arabic and Persian literary critics would likely have been bemused. As al-Āmidī puts it in a (slightly) different context: *Wa-hādhā idhā samiʿahu al-aʿrāb ḍaḥikū minhu* ("And if the Bedouin Arabs had heard this, they would have laughed").[48]

V

"House of Song" and "sugared tongue" (τῷ ἐπὶ γλώσσῃ γλυκερὴν), the Avestan and Hesiodic ideals for language, are where this study begins (*Theog.*, 84). Chapter I reveals the unanimity of the earliest extant Persian and Greek notions of how words turn twisted and acrid: The original linguistic sin lies in the usurping of reference by individual will and imagination, an act occluding divine inspiration and resulting in worldly, often grotesque disorder. Chapter II examines Tacitus's *Dialogus de oratoribus*, Antiquity's most sustained meditation on the *causas* ("reasons") for literary decline. Intervening in recent debates over the "coherence" of the *Dialogus*, the chapter argues that the (largely temperamental) differences among Tacitus's four interlocutors fail to eclipse the work's central argument: *Eloquentia* disintegrates on the shores of the imagination, split from *pectus* ("heart"), *veritas* ("truth"), and *vis* ("force"), and enthralled by linguistic spectacle. For Tacitus, rhetoric and epideixis prey, finally, on the individual mind's weakness for facticity. Age of epideixis, revenge of Gorgias, product, indeed, of the desuetude of oratory, the Second Sophistic provokes reactions among non-specialists essential to understanding post-Classical Greek and Roman views of literary decline. Chapter III turns, then, to the strategies proposed by Plutarch and Marcus Aurelius for confronting rhetorical and poetic

[47] Joseph A. Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago, Il.: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 29.

[48] al-Āmidī, *al-Muwāzana*, II, 95.

language, that μηχάνημα λυγκὸς αἰολώτερον ("machine more cunning than the lynx," *Moralia*, "How the Young Man Should Understand Poetry," 16d). Plutarch aims to use poetry against itself, turning it into a masked propaedeutic for philosophical truth. Marcus Aurelius is in perfect agreement: Poetry and rhetoric pull the mind's eye away from the soul. The emperor nevertheless offers Antiquity's most intemperate reaction to epideixis on record, turning his *Meditations* into a (likely vain) plea for wordless thought and utter silence.

Rhetoric as bond of the imagination, one drawn tighter as the influence of the first grows, is in chapter IV untied once more, only now with the help of Demetrius and Quintilian. Each leaves the most important treatment of rhetoric of his age, and each exhibits the discipline's wariness towards what Quintilian calls the *vitium* of the imagination (6.2: 31), a "sin" that rhetoric is wont to exploit. *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας* and the *Institutio oratoria* crystallize the anxiety presaged by Gorgias in *Ελένης Εγκώμιον* (18): The verbal arts may paint (and blind) the mind just as the painter himself paints and covers matter, giving rise to phantom forms which (as Quintilian says) *prosecuntur* ("h(a)unt," 8.3) us.

Impetuously breaking from the *ṭarīqat al-awāʾil* ("the way of the Ancients") in favor of perfidy, or, rather, a perfidious road pointed inward and away from nature, the *mutaʾakhkhir* ("Modern") poets of the early Abbasid period sacrifice the *ṣiḥḥa* ("health") and *qalb* ("heart") of Arabic poetry at the altar of imagination and artifice. Such, in any case, is the argument exhibited in the text whose analysis is the concern of chapter V, al-Āmidī's *Muwāzana* ("Weighing"), one of the "great works" of early Arabic criticism. Al-Āmidī's diagnosis of decline is relentless and efficient: The corruption of "Modern" poetics belongs as much to a wanton attraction to form as to images housed nowhere but the mind. Each flows from an identical (and poisoned) fount: Individual desire impatient with decorum and nature. Al-Āmidī's methods of persuasion are

similarly illuminating, being neither idiosyncratic nor particular to time and place. He plays a (generally adroit) sleight-of-hand between nature and culture, reality and precedent, and truth and norm, one leaving each hopelessly indistinguishable from the last by the text's end. Critics of Decadence seem unwilling (or, more likely, unable) to resist the move, turning norm into nature at every opportunity in order to condemn the artifice of their targets. Whether, however, the "corrupt" poet offers his affront to nature or culture is not, finally, the question: The source of the poetic aggression is intemperate, (indeed) pathological desire for individual invention at the cost of the shared fabric of mutually intelligible language.

Peering at Decadence from the other side of the looking glass, beseeching not witnesses but practitioners, chapter VI considers the *shanīʿ* ("twisted")[49] threads of thought towards imagination, language, and truth that interweave ultimately in the post-Timurid Persian poem. Developments in speculative theology, as Suhrawardī and Mullā Ṣadrā will show, anticipate every of the "Indian" style's essential features: Breaking from Peripatetic faculty psychology for want of patience with the passive imagination, Suhrawardī and Mullā Ṣadrā elevate inner and individual experience, one lying at the meeting of *wahm* ("imagination") and *himma* ("desire"), to *nūr* ("light") of the world.[50] The near theomorphosis sheds its own light on the confidence of the "Indian" poet—the confidence to renew language and world in a single breath—so marvelously captured in Ṣāʾib's line: *Cheh lāzem ast barāyam az khwīshtan Ṣāʾib?/ marā ke har kaf-i khākī jahān-i dīgar shod* ("Why would I need to leave myself, Ṣāʾib/ Me from whose every handful of earth another world is made?").[51] Giving light, creating world, speaking in tropes answerable to *wahm* ("fancy") alone, the private imagination is, in its astonishing prestige and

[49] Riẓāqulī Khān Hedāyat, *Majmaʿ al-fuṣaḥāʾ*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Chāp-i pīrūz, 1957), 9-10.

[50] Suhrawardī, *Le Livre de la sagesse orientale*, trans. Henry Corbin (Lagrasse: Éditions Verdier, 1986), 659.

[51] Ṣāʾib, *Dīwān*, 1610: 10.

increasingly "democratic" accessibility, the key to understanding post-Timurid poetics. The chapter's perspective, however, is tilted to the other side: What will after the eighteenth century so dismay Persian observers, themselves tellingly enthralled with European Romanticism, was viewed as anything but "Decadent" by the writers themselves: Theirs was an optimistic, indeed "Modernizing" undertaking.

Imperiousness of imagination and literary decline, and the seeming comorbidity of the two so dismaying to Hellenistic and Imperial observers, is the concern too of chapter five. The lens shifts now, however, from theory to practice, examining in post-Classical prose narrative the erosion of μῦθος by ψυχή, of act and deed by mind and desire. In the species of the pathetic fallacy, in phantasy sleeping and waking, in perspectival ekphrasis, the Sophistic novel and *Alf layla wa-layla* reveal the counterpart in prose to what observers of poetry and oratory had taken as symptomatic of decline: Namely, starker subjectivism, starker concern with banal individual desire, and starker tolerance of phantasy and the impossible. The turn towards ψυχή in post-Classical fiction serves as a premonition for European fiction after, say, Madame de La Fayette: Fastening upon imagination and desire requires an ethical deterioration of character and a loosening of the *genera dicendi*: Assiduous treatment of the banal desire of definitively non-heroic characters is unusual in literary history, no less in Greek and Latin than in Arabic and Persian. Reading's democratization in the urban milieux to whose inhabitants the Sophistic novel and post-Saljuq Arabic fiction meant to appeal may explain this subjectivism.

The slow death of the separation of styles in European literature after the sixteenth century is explored further in this study's eighth and final chapter, seeking as it does to clarify the relationship between Decadence and Modernity. With the inordinate fascination with form, its unfailing bedfellow throughout literary history, indulgence in facticity and phantasy regularly

provokes consternation among observers. The consternation, as previous chapters will have shown, is neither culturally nor temporally idiosyncratic: Socially "constructed" it may well be, but chariness towards unbridled formalism and imagination is, as history teaches us, nearly ineradicable. And yet, European letters after the sixteenth century shows itself to be accommodating to these otherwise Decadent tendencies to a degree without precedent. The softening of the critical chorus as facticity becomes not simply welcomed, but its own norm, one irradiating its own horizon of expectation of what verbal art ought to resemble, is little mysterious. It belongs to the gradual though unceasing democratization of letters after Gutenberg and Calvin, the same democratization permitting the nation's invention through the "imagined community." The history of criticism offered in this study, one whose "anachronic" and non-parochial approach to the question permits the uncovering of a throughline that has always been there, offers an unequivocal rejoinder to the historical hapax that is the Postmodern present: Like some Thermidorian Lazarus, the critical bulwark against the cults of facticity and subjectivism have never gone long without rebuilding themselves. Modernity is likely no hapax at all.

CHAPTER I

TWISTS OF THE TONGUE:

SPEECH, THOUGHT, AND TABOO IN ANCIENT IRANIAN AND GREEK

THE AVESTA AS ELEGY FOR MIMESIS

The idea, one hardly restricted to nineteenth-century "Orientalists,"[52] that the Iranian verbal arts are somehow preternaturally consumed with linguistic form and excess is far dimmer than it ought to be. It ignores the world's earliest extant polemic against literary decline, one left us by the Gāthās and the early Avestan texts, one where the very fabric of theology as bulwark against speech too little patient with nature and divinity, speech too far oriented towards private intent, speech too little limpid with respect to true thought and meaning can be witnessed, indeed, in the weaving. Neither European nor some anachronistic "Orientalist" loan, Decadence, or, the elegy for a language of truth, is the single loudest motif in the most ancient Iranian texts. Sounding only with a clarity more urgent in the Younger Avesta and in the Pahlavi texts, the lament for mimesis begun in the Gāthās, the elegy for a language still in unison with its referent, the concern with the deepening perfidy of language is, in its intensity, unparalleled in pre-Classical Greek literature or the Hebrew Bible.

Understanding the language of incontrovertible truth whose loss occasions such dismay in the Gāthās and, later, in the young Avesta means understanding the organic unity of ideal speech. The refrain to become a commonplace in the Yasnas is heard already, only slightly less

[52] The implication is that New Persian's post-Classical poetry and prose evince only the "natural" consequence of these tendencies. Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab stresses the importance of rhetoric and, especially, hyperbole already in the Pahlavi texts. "Introduction: Persian Rhetorical Figures," in *Metaphor and Imagery in Persian Poetry*, ed. Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 7. Ehsan Yarshater notes the importance of each in Sasanian historiography, "Iranian National History," in *The Cambridge History of Iran: The Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanian Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 400. Dick Davis, finally, has a suggestive discussion of the Parthian roots of "Asiatic" style: Fakhraddin Gorgani, *Vis and Ramin*, trans. Dick Davis (Penguin: New York, 2009), xxiii.

faintly, in the Gāthās. Inasmuch as they are good, thought, speech, and action are indissoluble. They are seamlessly interwoven, very nearly homonymous. Nietzsche might remark that this perfect nexus of thinking, speaking, and acting—notions distinguishable only retroactively—is the zero-point of non-repression: Thinking and saying happen in a single act, without the temporal delay that the calculating, perfidious imagination will require. "I say (it) forth with my praise/ with (thoughts) well thought, (words) well spoken, (acts) well done," proclaims the first Yasna.[53] Next arrives a promissory reiteration: These "(thoughts) to be well thought, (words) to be well spoken and (acts) to be well done" (Y 0.4). The antithesis of (good) thinking, saying, and acting is immediately invoked only to be condemned: "I regard as worthy of being left out/ all (thoughts) badly thought, (words) badly spoken, (acts)/ badly done" (Y 0.4).

A synoptic view of the Avesta fast reveals that saying is evil to the degree of its delay from thinking (what might now be called, indeed, "imagining"). In its opacity, fallen discourse is then associated with a split between the phenomenal act of speech and the non-phenomenal moment of thinking. A breakdown between meaning and expression emerges as the central moment of malevolent speech: "May we classify evil beings by their tongue," intones the Ahunawaitī Gīathaī (1.28.5), since evil thoughts, existent in the mind but unexpressed, remain non-phenomenal, nearly imperceptible. "The one possessed by the Lie," says the Usthawaitī Gāthā, is "impeded by the utterances of his tongue" (2.45.1). Ādurbād-i Mahraspandān, priest from the fourth century CE, is recorded in the *Dēnkard* averring that "he who has information he does not give becomes possessed by the lie."[54]

[53] Citations are to *Zoroastrian Texts*, translated with notes by Prods Oktor Skjærvø (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 2007), 3 vols. Volume I.

[54] *Zoroastrian Texts*, I, 249.

Approaching the eclipse of intention and thought by fallen speech requires fully grasping the Avestan view of the perfect unison, the total unconcealment of benevolent thinking, speaking, and acting. The indissolubility of three facets of a single moment generates the illocutionary force reverberating through each. Emerging in the hairsbreadth between benevolent "thought" and "words," "poetic thoughts" are efficient causes. Their effect is the "smashing" of "obstructions," the healing of the warps and kinks in what ought to be an immanent and totally manifested "order." An encomium of "poetic thoughts," Yasht 3 enumerates the deeds and acts of speech in its ideal state, which is to say the real effects of language in the non-discursive world:

> He [Ahura Mazda] shall smash (the hostilities?) of all (hostile ones?), of
> the Evil Spirit,
> of sorcerers and witches,
> the *Ā Airyama Ishyō*, greatest of poetic thoughts,
> best of poetic thoughts,
> most beautiful of poetic thoughts,
> the strong (one) among poetic thoughts,
> the strongest of poetic thoughts,
> the steadfast (one) among poetic thoughts,
> the most steadfast of poetic thoughts.
> The one of obstruction-smashing strength among poetic
> thoughts
> the one of greatest obstruction-smashing strength among
> poetic thoughts.
> The healing (one) among poetic thoughts,
> The most healing among poetic thoughts.
>
> Among poetic thoughts
> The one that heals with Order,
> The one that heals with the Law,
> The one that heals with knives,
> The one that heals with plants,
> The one that heals with a poetic thought,
> The most healing of healing remedies:
> The healing life-giving poetic thought,
> Which heals from the innards of the Orderly Man.
> For this is the most healing of healing remedies.

Action is ideally subordinate to "poetic thought" entirely. The social healing assured by Order and Law, the defeat of antagonists, the somatic (and nutritive) healing of "knives" and "plants"—each depends entirely on "poetic thought." "Healing," then, is meant in its etymological sense, for the power and force of thought lies in the mitigation of any warps, any intention or energy withheld (evil, imagination), in the natural order. Only in this way is the "obstruction-smashing" capacity of such thinking to be understood. Indeed, all of the disorders for which the healing powers of "poetic thought" are indicated involve "obstruction." These knots must be understood as twists in what is ideally immanence and harmony. More importantly, they twist apart thinking and speaking, non-phenomenal "intent" and phenomenal expression, as the immediately manifest, diaphanous nature of "poetic thought." In Yasna 9.18, "sorcerers and witches, false teachers, and mumblers" are said to be "obscurantists." The "unorderly one" is said to "darken Order" by cultivating a split between speech and action: "Against the man possessed by the Lie/…strike your weapon, O golden Haoma!/ Against the unorderly one who darkens Order, who destroys (this) existence,/ who heeds in speech this *daēnā*,/ (but) does not follow up in acts" (*Y* 9.31).

Speech and thought are "evil" where not illocutionary, where the would-be speaker begins to cultivate inner space, inner intent, inner will, these last being little other than the ideal, noumenal soil of the imagination. Where, meanwhile, non-expression, repressed speech, and the breakdown of the illocutionary bond among thinking, speaking, and acting constitute "evil," the benevolent thought-speech-act is totally apparent, unobstructed: Such thought-speech exists in perfect unison with the natural world. "Increase by my word in all (your) roots/ in all (your) buds, and in all your protuberances," commands the Yasht addressed to the sacred Haoma, for the plant "grows when he is praised" (*Yt.* 10.5). Where good thought-speech is diaphanous, its

fallen counterpart is opaque. Where, as another of the Avesta's antitheses would have it, good thought-speech is straight, evil speech is twisted:

> Then Zarathustra said.
> So, say the word, you whose words are straight,
> O Ahura Mazdā,
> how they will be as I would bring (them) forth through
> Best Order,
> I Spitama Zarathustra
> as praiser, libator, invoker,
> as holder of the poetic thought, sacrificer, inviter, and
> glorifier,
> (so that) the brilliant lights and the sunny invigorants will
> shine,
> for sacrifice and hymn to you,
> the Life-giving Immortals.

The passage takes place against the backdrop of the expulsion of faithful mimesis—consonance of object, intent, and word—from the divine "House of Song." At hand is the divorce of speech from the light of truth, conversion of the first to "speech" inwardly held, darkened, imaginary. Repressed ideality, then, turns speech-thought "dark." It is, in fact, in the withdrawal of meaning and intent from speech and act that hairsbreadth becomes fissure, the ideal illocutionary eclipsed by knotted, darkened intent.

The Avesta understands illocutionary thought in terms of visibility: "He will see with the eyes of the guiding thought...he shall overcome the evil Lie,/ the one of darkness" (*Yt.* 19). "Poetic thought" precipitates "brilliant lights." The *kawis* are said to "look at one another's soul/ as it proceeds through (thoughts) well thought,/ (words) well-spoken and (deeds) well-performed" (*Yt*. 13.91). Indeed, the very structure of the soul reflects this concern with the diaphanous. The *daēnā* is the "vision-soul," and it "represents the totality of a person's, thoughts, words, [and] acts."[55]

[55] *Zoroastrian Texts*, I, 2 (note 2).

The Avesta's interest in visibility—with a signified irradiating brightly through the limpid carapace of language—may very well be (*velut*) a defensive wound, one formed in reaction to the split between thinking and speaking, between the noumenal and phenomenal, as obscure words initiate their repression of the signified. Every, indeed, of the metapoetic distinctions emergent already in the Gāthās is a reaction to the specter of a signifier no longer faithfully signified. The antitheses between unseen and seen, unsaid and said, thought and (speech-) act, all themselves radiate out of this split.

The signified's withdrawal into the self spells little less than the shift in the object of mimesis and source of poetic inspiration. Where the "holder of the poetic thought" cannot but make that thought manifest, cannot but engage in "audible sacrifice" (*Yt*. 5), those "possessed by the Lie" keep their *daēnā* hidden (an etymological absurdity). No longer is their "inspiration" and object of mimesis "the house of Song" of Ahura Mazda; it is now that of an inner and autonomous will. "Those possessed by the lie," the Spentāmanyū Gāthā laments, "are moving away from this inspiration,/ the life-giving one, O Mazdā." Split and no longer immanently unfolding from speech-thought, the acts and gifts of "the one possessed by the lie" go "without obtaining your pleasure,/ because of dwelling—on account of his own actions—on the side of bad thought" (3.47.4-5). To deceive is to turn from the natural world and to deny the fact of nature as emanation of the divine "poetic thought," "word," and "Order" (*Yt.* 13.91).

This moment of withdrawal, where the human first "understand[s] (the world) as it was not really" (*Yt.* 19.34) is, as the Bundahishn reiterates, the "first lie." The Avesta, then, weaves a (tragic) thread between a fall from the "House of Song" and an individuated, inwardly held truth, one kept in an inner sanctum where the natural, empirical world is disavowed. When he will

argue, light years later, for a connection between eremitic mysticism and Decadence, Nietzsche is pulling at this very thread.

Desiccation, disorder in the natural world is the instant effect of the liberation of poetic will and object from the divine "House of Song": "And they fouled up the waters, dry out the plants, and destroy all prosperity" (7.8.23). Tmesis of the word is, then, tmesis of the world. The undoing of nature is the effect of a signifier, now "liberated" from divine inspiration, now able to swell according to a grotesque logic all its own. This language of "the Lie" is explicitly zoomorphized as a "dragon." In Yasna 9, Haoma recounts Āthviya's valiant "smashing" of "the giant dragon/ with three mouths, three heads/ six eyes, a thousand tricks/ the mighty strong, deceiving Lie/ that evil (affecting) the living beings possessed by the Lie." Haoma proceeds to figure this "Lie" as an object "whittled forth/against the bony world of the living/ for the destruction of the living beings of order" (*Y* 9.8). The names of the antagonists heighten the sense that the calamity is one first of speaking and thinking, one which only after this disorder of discourse radiates outward: They are "villains," "poetasters, and mumblers…obscurantists" (*Y* 9.18). Disorder of speaking soon becomes disorder of nature and the body. The Vahishōishtī Gāthā proclaims that "[t]he 'composition' in accordance with the Lie—which/ you, who are possessed by the lie now regard as furthering…monstrously fattened your bodies of old."

Physical, bodily decline results, then, when unknotted, "straight" speech becomes "twisted" discourse. Yasht 9 praises Haoma for not asking "with a tortuous question/ about something spoken straight" (*Y* 9). "Twisted" speech is variously characterized as "obscure," "tortuous," "monstrous." It is an object "whittled in the bony world" by "poetasters" or "liars." Central to the Avesta's understanding of how the fall from the divine "House of Song" transpires is the sense that the status of the speaker is affected as much that of language itself. The first,

namely, changes from vessel to efficient cause. No longer limpid medium for the orderly, clear speech of Ahura Mazda, the speaker is freed from the strictures of "the correctly spoken" and "straight" word. Thought, indeed, can now be withdrawn and hidden from speech (and lying made conceivable). Imitated now is whatever serves the "monstrous" and "obscure" ends of the "poetaster." The result is speech riddled with hyperbole and paradox: "Lies and false statements [are mixed] with truth/ spells of sorcery with pure poetic thought/ excess and lack with moderation" and denatured absurdities, "darkness with light/ poison with nectar/ bitterness with sweetness" (5.1, p 194).

None of the features of this tragic and, indeed, "Decadent" tableau will be unfamiliar by this study's end. The conversion of a given language, a language natural and divine, one existing in imperceptible unison with its referent, to one instead given form by the poet and this according to obscure and private will—these pathologies of language and world are not only attested in the most ancient of Iranian sources: They are carefully emplotted in a narrative of decline. What is more, the early history of the taboo against verbal creation too little patient of nature and truth, too far turned towards inner will, accounts for much of the theological drama that plays out in the Avesta. The taboo, it seems, is woven into the very fabric of Avestan theology. The concern with verbal form twisted and wrenched from meaning and intent; with the world as a denatured reflection of this act of verbal decay; with a "poetaster" and "liar" diverting language from the "House of Song" according to his personal ends—all of this can only be posterior to the fall of verbal creation. Or: All of this relies on the possibility of conceiving of language as material cause for an autonomous, profane will in the first place. The divine "house of Song," it seems, may have been built as a bulwark against the threat of Decadence.

Decadence and Τέχνη in the Classical Period

The breaking of λόγος from a φύσις ideally returned to itself in the poem, the turning of the ἱερὴ δόσις ("sacred gift") of the Graces and Muses to profane instrument, the splitting of speech from intent—these are in the Greeks' earliest debates over literary decline no less menacing to an implicit taboo than in the Avesta. The disunion of nature and discourse at the hands of the private (non-liturgical) individual is, as the Avesta has it, the origin of decline.[56] With this in mind, matters appearing disparate at first blush—Hellenistic and Imperial debates over "Asianism," the enduring concern over verbal art's relationship to truth, the argument over rhetoric's status as craft—become decidedly less so in the context of Antiquity's first known polemic over the relationship between language and nature: Namely, that surrounding Protagorus, Gorgias, and their disciples both direct and indirect.

The very first attestation of ῥητορεία, in Isocrates's *Against the Sophists*, occurs when the author criticizes the (other) Sophists precisely for splitting the phenomenal aspect of language from truthful phronesis. The critique is redolent of the Avesta's concerning the split of speaking and thinking, for in manipulating εἰδόσι ("forms," *Against*, 16), the Sophists abuse τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπιμέλειαν ("the pursuit of the psyche," *Against,* 8). [57] Isocrates will repeat the critique in the

[56] Modern observers put the split at the very heart of their analyses of Decadence in language. The Baroque split between representation and a nature-turned-"grotesque" and "ghastly" leads Spitzer, for instance, to propose the *klassische Dampfung*. Here "the boundaries of form" and "plastic beauty" subdue "these chaotic vital forces." Such is, he says, Racine's approach. Spitzer suggests that other Baroque authors are less interested in such artificial constraints, willing as they (e.g., Quevedo) are to "overthrow the boundaries of form." Leo Spitzer, "The 'Récit de Théramène' in Racine's *Phèdre*," in *Essays on Seventeenth-Century French Literature*, ed. David Bellos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983 [1948]), 250. Finding this break of nature and word in Silver Age and "Neo-Baroque" (i.e., Postmodern) literature, Christopher Johnson more recently frames it (following Derrida) thus: "Nature is presence but presence ruined by original sin and thus in need of the remedies supplied by art. The most extreme remedy that Baroque discourse provides to this fallen condition comes, I would argue, in the form of literary and philosophical hyperbole. Such hyperbole institutes a metaphysics of presence and absence in which the gap between signifier and signified is manneristically decreased and increased." Christopher D. Johnson, *Hyperboles: The Rhetoric of Excess in Baroque Literature and Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010), 13-15.

[57] Jeffrey Walker, *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 32-33.

Antidosis and *Evagorus*, commenting in the latter (10) that the rhetoricians ψυχαγωγοῦσι τοὺς ἀκούοντας ("lead the listeners' souls") through the ability to manipulate and warp speech independent of nature or truth. Unlike φιλοσοφία, a τέχνη burnishing logos as mirror of nature and truth, the verbal creation of the rhetor is language where meaning, intent, and idea have yielded to what is supposed to be only their means of transmission, those εἰδόσι of discourse. Gorgias's (other, less enlightened) followers engage in little more than ἐμπειρία, cobbling together speech whose discursive parts add up to little besides themselves.

The arc of decline is little ambiguous. Before what Longinus will call the ἀφορία of discourse (1.2), a condition of the present exploited by the Sophists, verbal creation admitted no disharmony between the physical and the psychical, between speaking and thinking. One can think forward to Suetonius's early Republican Romans, uncertain as to why, in the words of the edict of 92 BCE, there would ever be a need for the *novum genus disciplinae* peddled by those immigrants *quos rhetoras vocant* (*De grammat.*, 3; 25; *Dialog*., 28.1-30.2). The critique leveled against the rhetors from the beginning, of course, is that they are all talk and no thought. Despite dubious origins and an initial (and uncanny) resemblance to Sophism—Socrates is alleged in the *Clouds* to make of a man a σοφιστὴν δεχίον ("ready Sophist," 1110)— philosophy's acceptability lies in the promise of reuniting discourse with a truth only half-remembered. Speaking without thinking, phenomenon without noumenon, matter without form—such is the fundamental Platonic critique of verbal creation no matter the various guises worn by Socrates's argument.

Only where the verbal arts might themselves become a guise for philosophical truth are they redeemable (an argument, as we will see, that Plutarch and the Roman critics will also endorse). Where the guardians of the *Republic* are exposed to μεμυθολογημένα ("stories"), these

last had better be κάλλιστα ("noblest") so that the adolescents πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἀκούειν ("hear about virtue," *Rep*. II, 378e). The decade or so after *Against the Sophists* finds Plato reprising Isocrates's intramural critique: What is now in the *Gorgias* being called (and perhaps for the first time) ῥητορική (462b) is a mindless ἐμπειρία (462c) heaping together words bereft of any necessary tie to knowledge, let alone truth. Isocrates's solution, one that Tacitus's Messalla will cultivate further, is to plant verbal creation in the soil of παιδεία (or a *tirocinium*) unconcerned with language as such. Failing education in far more than *linguam modo et vocem* ("only tongue and voice," *Dialog.*, 31.1), rhetoric is merely μηχανὴν δέ τινα πειθοῦς ("a kind of mechanism of persuasion," *Gorg.*, 459c) the likes of which a Pollus or Callicles might use for a ψυχαγωγία directed towards unhappy ends.[58]

Out of the break between thinking and speaking—a break, at least in its "institutionalized" form, novel and "Modern" for Isocrates and Plato—the various disorders of discourse begin to seep out. Speaking but οὐ ειδότα ("not knowing"), the Sophist is the philosopher's μιμητής (*Sophist*, 268e). Where language takes shape as a matter of course for the speaker who *does* know, being neither more nor less than a limpid mirror for idea and truth, the verbal creator turns the process upside down. The shift is one away from passivity, away from the patient act of listening for truth already implanted in the soul, to activity, to creation, to, indeed, manipulation. Plato could hardly be clearer: The move from reverent passivity to poetic making is the move from the sacred to the profane. The acts of the verbal creator are οὐ θεῖον ἀλλ᾽ ἀνθρωπικὸν (*Soph*. 268e). They are directed towards appearance, phenomenon (ὥστε φαίνεσθαι, *Gorg*. 459c) and, as such, are at once a non-divine, human machination but also inherently untrue. Their discourse is εἰδωλοποικῆς ("image-making"), εἰρωνικοῦ ("dissembling"), and φανταστικοῦ ("phantastic," *Soph*. 268e). It is, then, a θαυματοποικὸν ("juggling") of

[58] Walker, *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*, 34-36.

appearances, an ἀπάτη ("deception," *Phaed*. 261e), a dialectic to nowhere. The summersaulting and twisting of this vacuous dialectic violates the "law" of non-contradiction, taking on self-contradictory and phantastic forms. Οὐκοῦν ("Will not"), Socrates asks Phaedrus, ὁ τέχνῃ τοῦτο δρῶν ποιήσει φανῆναι τὸ αὐτὸ τοῖς αὐτοῖς τοτὲ μὲν δίκαιον, ὅταν δὲ βούληται, ἄδικον; ("the one using this technique make the same thing appear to others now just, but, now, if he wants, unjust?" 261d).

The notion that the philosopher's μιμητής pulls discourse ever further from nature, truth, and the gods, towards something instead mechanical and manmade, a mere θαυματοποικὸν ("juggling") of appearances, is hardly the property of critics alone. Gorgias is well-aware that he is toying with a taboo, presenting his "philosophy" of discourse as a break from the received wisdom. Λόγος δὲ οὐκ ἔστι τὰ ὑποκείμενα καὶ ὄντα ("Discourse is neither what subsists nor exists"), he avers (by Sextus Empiricus's account). The break between language and existence is definitive: Οὐκ ἄρα τὰ ὄντα μηνύομεν τοῖς πέλας ἀλλὰ λόγον, ὃς ἕτερός ἐστι τῶν ὑποκειμένων ("We do not disclose to others what exists but discourse, which is other than what subsists"). Having disentangled discourse from τὰ ὄντα ("what exists"), Gorgias proceeds to bait his critics in *The Defense of Helen*, inviting the accusation that rhetoric is a kind of discourse of the "worst case," one endeavoring, that is, to reduce language to a παίγνιον ("plaything").

Language as Παιγνίον: Gorgias Defends Helen

Where the philosopher aims to repair the break between speaking and thinking by returning words to their state of unity with a knowledge now buried deep within the soul, the purely verbal creator drives the wedge as far as it can go. His ποίησις appeals not to the formal faculty, that part of heart and soul grasping forms still half-remembered from (the *Phaedrus*'s) supralunar world, but rather to the material senses and these alone. Where the contradictory and often absurd

manipulations of matter enter the psyche, they are not truth but imagination, the φανταστικοῦ ("phantastic," *Soph*. 268e). Gorgias uses *The Defense of Helen* to embrace this charge of purely sensual εἰδωλοποικῆς ("image-making"), likening those who engage in the ποίησις of discourse to οἱ γραφεῖς ("painters").

Gorgias's verbal creation becomes an epitaph on the grave of a word formerly one with τὰ ὄντα. It is a dizzying affair of unstable matter, cloyingly diverting the senses ever further from truth. Its makers proceed as though they were γραφεῖς ("painters") who πολλῶν χρωμάτων καὶ σωμάτων ἓν σῶμα καὶ σχῆμα τελείως ἀπεργάσωνται ("from a multiplicity of colors and substances ultimately work [these materials] into a single substance and form," 26). Having been charged with cultivating a practice that involves nothing more than θαυματοποικὸν, the curating of a cheap pastiche of appearances, Gorgias opts for expressly provocative metaphors, figures deliberately aimed at breaking the taboo against a language barren of ideality. He revels, moreover, in the power of this language of the senses to imprint itself upon and within the mind, spawning stillborn phantoms of the imagination. The fabrication of speech is like ἡ δὲ τῶν ἀνδριάντων ποίησις καὶ ἡ τῶν ἀγαλμάτων ἐργασία ("the making of statues and the creation of sculptures," 18). The maker θέαν ἡδεῖαν παρέσχετο τοῖς ὄμμασιν ("effects a visual pleasure for the eyes"), just as the verbal artist creates an ὄψις ("appearance") by taking τὰ λεγόμενα ("what is said") and ἐνέγραψεν ἐν τῷ φρονήματι ("writing it into the mind," 17; 20-26).

Inspiration, already beginning to sound creaky in the *Ion*, is in Gorgias's eyes an absolute absurdity. The Sophist's pastiche of words is definitively, purposefully οὐ θεῖον ἀλλ' ἀνθρωπικὸν (*Soph*. 268). Of import are but two considerations: That verbal creation please its maker and that it further his ends in the act of persuasion. Autonomous creator, juggler of matter, the speaker now sets upon speech which is not an organic outgrowth of truth but, rather, discrete parts

bearing no necessary relationship to one another. Little more than fragments now, the parts of discourse—statements, words, letters, phonemes—are like πολλῶν χρωμάτων καὶ σωμάτων. These parts are to be, in an act of virtuosity, worked ingeniously into ἓν σῶμα καὶ σχῆμα.

Plato was still calling rhetoric a species of mimesis gone awry (*Soph*., 268), but it is hardly clear where imitation would fit into the Gorgianic conception of verbal creation. Gorgias will hint with his very last word (παιγνίον) that he does not necessarily believe his exoneration of Helen (21). He has, furthermore, already declared that discourse does not reveal "existence." Neither feeling nor world, then, is necessarily at stake in speech-making. This formulation—and the move, in abstract terms, is one from necessity to contingency—is more radical than anything in Plato, for even in the *Republic* verbal ποίησις is still only bad mimesis. The individualism is remarkable, the world beyond the speaker's wit and pleasure being irrelevant, or relevant only where the speaker wishes to use language as μηχανὴν δέ τινα πειθοῦς ("a kind of mechanism of persuasion," *Gorg.,* 459c). Caprice and arbitrariness suffuses the entire account. The parts of language are inorganic, to be pieced together according to what Sydney would call the "zodiac" of the poet's wit. And they are imperfect as is, the implication being that "inartistic," natural speech stands in need of the technicians' correction, as these artisans τελείως ἀπεργάσωνται ("finally work") words into servants faithful only to their own ends.

HESIOD AND THE SACRED GIVEN

If Gorgias assents with little hesitation to the charge that he is transgressing a prohibition against too far separating speaking and thinking, this is all the more reason not to take him at his word. The question need still be posed: Are he and the Sophist's antagonists correct? Does the Gorgianic conception of verbal creation really mark a break—"decline" or "improvement" depending, of course, upon the beholder—from earlier Greek conceptions of the ποίησις of

speech? Homer's favorite metaphor for language provides one indication that both sides of the polemic over rhetoric, a polemic quickly overflowing into one over verbal art as such, are indeed correct. In a formulation repeated more than 128 times and approximated in another 80 or so instances, Homer refers to ἔπεα πτερόεντα ("winged words").[59] The metaphor stresses the unbroken bond between thought and speech, for it is by their "feathers" or "wings" that words faithfully transmit thought from speaker to speaker, even—and this is the metaphor's crux—across time and space. Once thought is poured into these ἔπεα πτερόεντα, their speaker can rest assured that they will reach their destination with message (intent, thought) intact.

The fifth-century polemicists' sense that a basic taboo regulating thought and speech was, for better or worse, imperiled by "Modern" notions of discourse is similarly supported by the Archaic period's first glimpse of "metarhetoric." In the prelude to the *Theogony* (35-45), Hesiod describes his αὐδή ("speech") as a ἱερὴ δόσις of the Muses, one come from on high, true incontrovertibly, and λειριοέσσῃ ("lily-like"), in perfect harmony with nature.

> τοίη Μουσάων ἱερὴ δόσις ἀνθρώποισιν.
> ἐκ γάρ τοι Μουσέων καὶ ἑκηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος
> ἄνδρες ἀοιδοὶ ἔασιν ἐπὶ χθόνα καὶ κιθαρισταί,
> ἐκ δὲ Διὸς βασιλῆες· ὁ δ' ὄλβιος, ὅντινα Μοῦσαι
> φίλωνται· γλυκερή οἱ ἀπὸ στόματος ῥέει αὐδή.
>
> Such is the holy gift of the Muses to men.
> For it is indeed from the Muses and well-aiming Apollo
> that men are bards [ἀοιδοὶ] and citar-players on Earth,
> while it is from Zeus that they are kings. He is blessed, whom the Muses
> Love. His sweet voice flows sweet from his mouth.

Organic, a δόσις ("gift"), speech invites no meddling, let alone θαυματοποικὸν ("juggling") from the poet. It is to be heard, heralded, reported as is. It is not to be improved upon by artifice, and it is certainly not to be made into a θέαν ἡδεῖαν ("pleasurable spectacle") or

[59] William Bedell Stanford, *Greek Metaphor: Studies in Theory and Practice* (New York: Blackwell, 1972 [1936]), 136.

μηχανὴν δέ τινα πειθοῦς ("some mechanism of persuasion," *Gorg.*, 459c). Λειριοέσσῃ" ("lily-like"), γλυκερή…ῥέει ("flowing…sweet"), this αὐδή is, in fact, no creation at all. It is natural and sacred, borne of that "chthonic cult" embodied in the Graces and Muses.[60] Words, nature, gods—these are for Hesiod at first but parts of an indissoluble whole. Μουσάων Ἑλικωνιάδων ἀρχώμεθ᾽ ἀείδειν ("Let us begin to sing of the Heliconian Muses"), the poet announces in the *Theogony*'s very first line. The Muses are, he continues, sentries of Ἑλικῶνος …ὄρος μέγα τε ζάθεόν ("Helicon…the great and holy mountain"), guardians dancing about the κρήνην ἰοειδέα ("violet spring"). "Nature dwellers" just like Pan and Orpheus, god and prophet of song,[61] these goddesses περικαλλέα ὄσσαν ἰεῖσαι ("shoot forth their brilliant voice") for the human to catch and relay. In the myth of Hermes and Apollo, gods associated too with poetry and thought to engage in melic jousts amidst the ζάθεος λειμών ("sacred meadow"),[62] the Archaic Greek ideal of a unity of speech, nature, and god seems similarly at play. Even Sappho, a poet with little mantic pretense, conceives of lyric as in unison with nature, thinking of roses as metaphors for poems and garland-weaving as a likeness of "the entire poetic process."[63]

In every hint of the Archaic understanding of verbal creation, little liberty is left the individual to give virtuosic form to words, whether in order to procure private pleasure or to seduce the listener in the act of suasion. Discourse is, rather, already made, a gift bestowed. As for a break between truth and appearance, intent and expression, thought and speech—the very break that Gorgias exploits with such self-conscious purposefulness—not even a hairsbreadth is to be

[60] Deborah Steiner, *The Crown of Song: Metaphor in Pindar* (London: Duckworth, 1986), 50.

[61] Ibid., 43.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Thomas McEvilley, "Sapphic Imagery and Fragment 96," *Hermes* 101, no. 3 (1973): 269.

found in these Archaic accounts: They are one, as indissoluble as the Muses and Helicon and, indeed, their ἱερὴ δόσις to the Greeks.

PINDAR AND THE ARTIFICE OF DISCOURSE

The Archaic ideal of λόγος, φύσις, and τὸ θεῖον united as one remains the central motif in Pindar's understanding of verbal creation, even as the poet himself contains hints of the deliberately subversive "philosophy" of language proffered the following generation by the Sophists. A language of nature remains the nature of (ideal) language. Like Sappho, Pindar is inclined towards "metaphors which make vegetation of the song." He offers a θαλὸς ἀοιδόν ("sprig of song," *I.* 3/4, 45), a φύλλ' ἀοιδόν ("leaf of song," Fr. 70a.14).[64] The poet's role as recipient and vessel of words not his own but granted, rather, by divine nature is no less definite than in Hesiod. By returning this given speech to the world, the poet μέλιτι εὐάνορα πόλιν καταβρέχων ("rains honey upon the glorious city," *O* 10.98). Νέμομαι ("I shepherd," "I tend") my ἀγγελίαν ("message"), promises Pindar, these ἄνθεα δ' ὕμνων ("flowers of songs," *O* 9) being conceived as wholly given (and given whole) by nature. The integrity of this song received is assured by Pindar, because ἐξαίρετον Χαρίτων νέμομαι κᾶπον ("I tend the Graces' exalted garden"). Close, patient attention alone ensures that κεῖναι…ὤπασαν τὰ τέπρν' ("they…grant what delights") (*O* 9.25).

Not invention but inspiration—the ability to become human mirror for inhuman truth—is the ideal. Indeed, Pindar polemicizes expressly against skill acquired and technical, as much in the athletic *laudandus* as in the poet. Τὸ δὲ φυᾷ κράτιστον ἅπαν ("All that is natural is best"), he avers in the ninth *Olympian* ode (100). Πολλοὶ δὲ διδακταῖς ἀνθρώπων ἀρεταῖς κλέος ὥρουσαν ἀρέσθαι ("Many men strive to seize fame with skills that have been taught," *O* 9.100). And it is here, in speech made ἄνευ δὲ θεοῦ ("without god," 103), that poetic disorder sets in. When Pindar indicts

[64] Both cited in Steiner, *The Crown of Song: Metaphor in Pindar*, 35 (the first translation is hers).

bad encomiasts for κόρος ("excess"), he is speaking of words fallen short of the ideal, mirrors now not of truth but rather of human frivolity and caprice (*O* 2).[65]

Μηχάνημα αἰολώτερον ("machine most cunning"), rhetoric depends, as much for Gorgias's "school" as for his critics, on a calculus of the imagination against τὰ ὑποκείμενα ("what subsists"). The calculus involves turning language against truth, not so that what is said is necessarily perfidy, but precisely so that there is no longer any necessary relationship between the two: Hence Gorgias's smirking conclusion to *The Defense of Helen*. Perhaps his exonerating proofs were true; perhaps he even believed them. Little matter in any case: His peroration pronounces these of tangential relevance and undecidable from the language alone in any case. Thinking and speaking have been broken apart and, for the less meek of the Sophists (i.e., not Isocrates), this is cause if not for celebration then at least for profit. The preening, punkish attitude of the original of *quos rhetoras vocant* is critical for charting the origins of "decline" in Greek verbal creation: Even putting aside the accusations of their antagonists, everything about the original Sophists suggests a conscious awareness of a break from tradition.

The Pindar still claiming to be little more than shepherd of Hesiod's ἱερὴ δόσις ("sacred gift"), still extolling, indeed, verbal creation as the act of uncovering, not inventing, the act of returning divine nature to the world, would likely have been aghast at the κόρος ("excess") enshrined the century following. And yet, the seeds of ingenuity and invention at inspiration's expense are not altogether absent from the panegyrist. Compared with their part in Hesiod, the Muses and Graces play in Pindar a role rather diminished. The poet "no longer looks to the Muses to furnish him with the material of his verse, but creates songs as autonomous feats of

[65] Elroy L. Bundy, "The 'Quarrel between Kallimachos and Apollonios' Part I: The Epilogue of Kallimachos's 'Hymn to Apollo'," *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 5 (1972): 90, footnote 112.

personal art and technique."[66] The shift is perceptible in the Pindar's statements about his art. Verbal art becomes less a matter of heeding and tending to an already perfected nature, ἀγγελίαν ("message") of the gods, than of improving and remaking the world into a reflection of the poet's individual genius. At moments, that is, Pindar is inching towards what Plato will call a θαυματοποικὸν ("juggling," "curating," *Soph*., 268e) of words to ends variously mercantile, hedonistic, and phantastic. The poet describes himself as περιστέλλων ("clothing") Poseidon and the natural world (Isthmus and Onchestus) with ἀοιδάν ("song," *I* 1.33-35).[67] Not from mountain, honey, or stream, verbal art is now fabricated and, indeed, fabric, the poet proclaiming himself to πλέκων ποικίλον ὕμνον ("weave a variegated hymn," *O.* 6.86-87). Where Pindar turns from the Hesiodic ideal of a language received, one made previously perfect by elements and forces inhuman, his account of verbal creation is suffused with images of technology, building, and artifice. Act of individual virtuosity, the hymn supplements and improves upon nature and gods. *Pythian* 6 opens with Pindar proclaiming that ὕμνων/ θησαυρὸς ἐν πολυχρύσῳ/ Ἀπολλωνίᾳ τετείχισται νάπᾳ ("out of hymns/ a treasure-house of much gold/ has been built in Apollo's glen"). *Olympian* 1 ends with the encomiast proclaiming himself able, in light of his technical skill and Hieron's triumph, to δαιδαλωσέμεν ὕμνων πτυχαῖς"("embellish [the *laudandus*] with plates [or 'folds'] of hymns").[68] Δαιδάλλω commands special attention for its suggestion of technicity and untruth at once. The word, as Liddell and Scott instruct, means "*to work cunningly*, *deck* or *inlay with curious arts*, *to embellish*." It is used in reference to "polished surfaces, of jewelry, of embroidered cloth or wood and metal inlay."[69]

[66] Steiner, *Crown of Song: Metaphor in Pindar*, 45.

[67] Ibid., 54.

[68] Cited in ibid., 59-60 (translations mine).

[69] Ibid., 60.

The connection in δαιδάλλω between the human-made and untruth is the subject of Pindar's most sustained meditation on the poet not as vessel of inhuman truth but rather as maker and technician of something all too artificial. *Olympian* 6, that is, begins with Pindar describing his ὕμνον to Hagesias in architectonic terms:

> Χρυσέας ὑποστάσαντεσ εὐ-
> τειχεῖ προθύρῳ θαλάμου
> κίονας ὡς ὅτε θαητὸν μέγαρον
> πάξομεν· ἀρχομένου δ᾽ ἔργου πρόσωπον
> χρὴ θέμεν τηλαυγές.
>
> Laying golden pillars upon the well-
> protected portico of the temple,
> let us build as though it were a wondrous palace.
> Now having started the job,
> we should make its façade far-shining [or "conspicuous"].

This ekphrasis of an edifice imagined is itself a "conspicuous" turn away from the Hesiodic ideal of sacred, given language. Inhuman inspiration for the song's building is not even countenanced, the Muses and Graces, Helicon and springs forming parts of another world altogether, one perhaps now left behind. Pindar, meanwhile, pivots from erstwhile and deferential mirror of truth and song not his own to efficient cause, one building a monument to private ingenuity. His material causes, meanwhile, are inorganic through and through (marble, gold), his formal causes designs of the imagination, ("golden pillars," "a far-shining façade"). All that remains of the world beyond the poet's "zodiac of wit" is Hagesias himself, the athlete whose triumph occasions the ode in the first place. Just like the matter of the edifice, Hagesias need be embellished by mental design. Already εὐτειχής ("well-built") though he may be, he must now be given a "radiant façade" (homonymy of πρόσωπον being, naturally, in play here). And, just like that, the poet is given the role of drawing out and improving upon—ἄυξειν, as the rhetoricians would later have it—what in nature has been only adumbrated. Invention and artifice

perfect an inhuman world beset by original lack. The difference between the εὐτειχής Hagesias and the golden colonnade is amplified further by the hypothetical tone of the third line: ὡς ὅτε θαητὸν μέγαρον πάξομεν ("let us embellish [him] as though a wondrous palace").

Witness to the transition from the Hesiodic ideal of a language of nature divine to the Sophist's παιγνίον of the imagination, Pindar is brushing up against a taboo still firmly internalized. *Olympian* 6 may find him celebrating his ability to ἄυξειν ("amplify") nature by virtuosic linguistic artifice, but this is in spite of a thread running uninterrupted through the encomiast's corpus. Rejection of the Hesiodic ideal, characterization, that is, of verbal art not as a vessel for inhuman truth but rather as a tool serving human wit and whim draws opprobrium still. "Metaphors of craft," observes Steiner, "traditionally describe attempts to trick and deceive."[70] Pindar, indeed, describes verbal perfidy in terms of invention and artifice deforming nature. Out of καθαρᾷ γνώμᾳ ("spotless judgment"), he proclaims in *Olympian* 4, οὐ ψεύδεϊ τέγξω λόγον ("I will not dye language with deceit," 16-18). He indicts Hippolyta in *Nemean* 5 for having ψεύσταν δὲ ποιητὸν συνέπαξε λόγον ("constructed a lying and fabricated story").[71] And following the ideal of a poetry that receives and uncovers but does not invent, Pindar associates invention and deceit. These vices make themselves known in κόρος ("excess"), by which Pindar seems to mean a combination of macrology and hyperbole. Unlike συγγενεῖ δέ τις εὐδοξίᾳ ("someone with knowledge inborn"), Pindar says in *Nemean* 3, ὃς δὲ διδάκτ᾽ ἔχει ("the one possessing what is taught") is ψεφεννὸς ("obscure"), ἄλλοτ᾽ ἄλλα πνέων ("flittering this way and that," *N.* 3:40-43).[72]

Human invention and cultural product, acquired knowledge is, Pindar suggests, the sign of a poet where the artificial has eclipsed the source of inner inspiration, erstwhile fount of nature and

[70] Steiner, *Crown of Song: Metaphor in Pindar*, 62, 60.

[71] Cited in ibid., 62 (translations mine).

[72] Cited in Bundy, "The 'Quarrel between Kallimachos and Apollonios' Part I," 90, footnote 112.

gods. Reliance on knowledge taught and artificial invites a split between tongue and thought, for the one armed with little other than human contrivance and cultural fashion can parrot and transmit convention with neither understanding nor sincerity. Such a speaker can, in Plato's words, well speak even if he οὐ ειδότα ("does not know," *Sophist*, 268e). Pindar, then, anticipates Plato's more programmatic defense of the prohibition against wrenching speech too far from thought. Pindar's is, naturally, a defense on grounds of style. Σοφὸς ὁ πολλὰ εἰδὼς φυᾷ" ("The one who by nature knows many things is wise"), the encomiast pronounces. But he is far more than simply σοφός. This is also the speaker more apt to speak without subterfuge, more apt to speak with those ὠκέα βέλη ("fleet arrows") that Pindar himself claims to shoot to συνετοῖσιν ἀγκῶνος ("other of the wise," 83-87). Manipulating, "juggling" dicta, the μαθόντες ("instructed") are, in contrast, precisely those more inclined towards simpering, sinuous vapidity. Μαθόντες δὲ λάβροι/ παγγλωσσίᾳ κόρακες ὣς ἄκραντα γαρύετον/ Διὸς πρὸς ὄρνιχα θεῖον ("Loud and prolix, the instructed are like crows cawing vainly before the holy bird of Zeus"). Αἶνον ἐπέβα κόρος ("praise becomes excess," 95) in their hands, poetry perfidy. What they say is οὐ δίκᾳ συναντόμενος ("not justly tempered"), the fount of their deceit lying in self-interest and personal desire. Τὸ λαλαγῆσαι θέλων ("Desiring to speak vapidly") is a symptom of μάργων ὑπ᾽ ἀνδρῶν ("wanton men"). Revealing nothing save for personal whim and, indeed, pathology, their speech becomes a κρυφόν ("cloud") thrown over and concealing ἐσλῶν καλοῖς ἔργοις ("the noble deeds of fine men").

Transmitting nature or truth, carrying Hesiod's ἱερὴ δόσις ("sacred gift") from the soul and into the poem, is, of course, out of the question for Pindar's μάργων ἀνδρῶν ("wanton men"). The critique, however, reaches further. Παγγλωσσίᾳ ("many-tongued"), these κόρακες ("crows") are anything but univocal, offering no assurance of harmony between what they say and what they

mean. Worse than simply making for failed, bad poetry, these croaks and caws holding little other than acquired, artificial knowledge are an affront to Zeus—are, that is, a sacrilege.

And they are an affront to the limpid, fleet speech of the gods' faithful envoy—that ὄρνιχα θεῖον ("holy bird"), or Pindar himself. For this is a poet at pains to ensure that his words remain in unison with whatever inhuman truth he can uncover within himself. Ἄγε θυμέ ("O my soul!"), Pindar intones, beseeching himself to produce uncrooked speech faithful to the gods. Ἔπεχε νῦν σκοπῷ τόξον ("Now aim the bow towards the target"), he commands, recalling his ὠκέα βέλη ("swift arrows") from earlier (85). And, finally: Αὐδάσομαι ἐνόρκιον λόγον ἀλαθεῖ νόῳ ("I swear that I will tell my story with a truthful mind"). An ἀλαθεῖ νόῳ ("truthful mind") is one in harmony with the θυμός, one where the voice of divinity, nature, and truth might speak itself into the poem, and this, more robustly and clearly than any speech holding knowledge merely "acquired" or invented. Pindar's ideal, then, continues to be Hesiod's. It continues, indeed, to be the Avesta's. The tongue and soul unite in a verbal creation that is—to reverse exactly Plato's indictment of the rhetoricians (*Soph*. 268e)—οὐ ἀνθρωπικὸν ἀλλὰ θεῖον ("not human but divine").

CHAPTER II

TACITUS AND THE LOST SOUL OF *ELOQUENTIA*

Worse than nothing, the new pedagogy centered on *linguam modo et vocem* ("only tongue and voice," 31.1) constructs what Seneca, whom the interloping Messalla echoes throughout, had called an (urbane) *spectaculum*.[73] With the (already well-established) "vogue of declamation," the death by *suasoria* of the speaker's *tirocinium* ("apprenticing"), and the intrusion of epideixis into secondary education as his obvious targets, Messalla directly contrasts a pedagogy whose object is ethics with one whose object is discourse itself.[74] Worlds more pessimistic than Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, itself published only a few short years before (i.e., just before the second century's turn),[75] the *Dialogus de oratoribus* offers in its five speeches five ultimately harmonious answers to the question *cur in tantum ab eloquentia antiquorum oratorum recesserimus* ("why we have so far descended from the eloquence of the ancient orators," 24.3). Quibbling, sniping, and excurses—and differences in temperament, perhaps, more than anything—have threatened to wash out the distinct lines and unmuddied

[73] *Nihil vero tam damnosum bonis moribus quam in aliquo spectaculo desidere* ("Nothing, in truth, is so damaging to good morals than tarrying at some public show"). On the dangers of the *spectaculum* as one justification for pastoral withdrawal, see, especially, letter VII in Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Opera quae supersunt*, vol. III: Epistulae morales ad Lucilium (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1898), 13.Epist. VII.3 *Dialogus* citations are to *Dialogus de oratoribus* (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1983). Citations for Tacitus are to Tacitus, *Dialogus De Oratoribus* (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1983).

[74] Suetonius insists that the risk had been there all along: *Veteres grammatici et rhetoricam docebant…secundum quam consuetudinem posteriores quoque existimo….vel retinuisse vel instituisse et ipsos quaedam genera meditationum ad eloquentiam praeparandam…ne scilicet sicci omnino atque aridi pueri rhetoribus traderentur* ("The old grammarians would also teach rhetoric…. Following this practice, their successors have themselves also, I imagine, either retained or introduced certain kinds of exercises aimed at preparing for skilled speech…so that the boys are not, naturally, given over to the teachers of rhetoric altogether jejune and unprepared," 4.4-5). *De grammaticis et rhetoribus*, ed. Robert A. Kaster (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) (Translation mine). For the post-Republican "vogue of declamation" see Stanley F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome* (London: Methuen & Co., 1977), 98-104.

[75] Roland Mayer, Introduction to *Dialogus de oratoribus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 23.

colors making up Tacitus's portrait of the *vitia* ("sins") of the Modern verbal arts.[76] The draining of *ingenium*, *veritas*, and *vis*, the emptying of inspiration, truth, and sincere affect from a language now reduced to *calamistros* ("iron ornament") and *tinnitus* ("jangling"), a language serving no end beyond personal and mercantile calculus—such is the tableau of "degeneration," the tableau of a taboo imperiled, emerging more or less unobscured through the *Dialogus*'s five pleas.

Much like Isocrates at the *Antidosis*'s exordium, Messalla views the ethical *animus* as product of an education rooted not in discourse but in the cultivation of *natura* and *pectus*. So rooted, the *animus* produces eloquent speech as a matter of course. Moral sympathy must unite *animus* and tongue, for the stuff, the matter of *eloquentia* must itself be just. In Aristotelian terms (*Rhet*. I, 1356a), Messalla insists that eloquence resides not simply in a moral *ethos* but equally in an ethical logos and in the pathos that the speech is bound to excite among listeners. The relationship between soul and discourse is nevertheless organic, the ethical soul manifesting itself naturally in ethical subject-matter. *Haec est…subiecta ad dicendum materia* ("this…is the subject matter to be addressed," 31.1) in true oratory: *Disserimus* ("we talk") in dicanic speech *de aequitate* ("about justice"), in symboleutic *de utilitate* ("about the useful"), and in epideictic *de honestate* ("about honor," 31.2). In Messalla's highly idealized presentation of Aristotle's genres of rhetoric (*Rhet.* I, 358b), the orator would be at a loss *nisi cognovit naturam humanam et vim virtutum pravitatemque vitiorum* ("unless he has understood human nature and the power of virtues and the depravity of vices," 31.2) and that which lies between the two. Just as verisimilar discourse issues from the ethical soul, so too do the powers of true persuasion *profluunt* ("pour out") of ethical knowledge like water *ex his fontibus* ("from these fountains,"

[76] Only in recent decades have critics begun to appreciate the coherence of the *Dialogus*'s diagnosis of decline. This chapter aim s to help Tacitus's portrait come more clearly into view.

31.3). So primary, indeed, is the soul in Messalla's obviously stylized and much-critiqued [77] account of traditional Roman pedagogy that the *eloquentia* of a Cicero or a Caesar was the byproduct not of verbal but of ethical training.

Unmoored from the ethical soul and from ethical content, post-Republican oratory gives itself over to simpering spectacle concealing its own dissolution. Flirting with bad taste, Messalla figures this conversion from *eloquentia* to rhetoric—the two being strictly antithetical in his account—as a conversion from royal to prostitute. Speakers under the rhetors' spell *detrudunt eloquentiam velut expulsam regno suo* ("strip down an eloquence dispossessed, as it were, of its own sovereign," 32.4). This sovereign was *olim omnium artium domina* ("formerly queen of all arts"). She *pulcherrimo comitatu pectora implebat* ("would fill hearts with her most splendid court"). She is, however, *nunc circumcisa et amputata, sine apparatu, sine honore…sine ingenuitate* ("now isolated and stripped down, without beauty, without honor…without nobleness"). She is now treated *quasi una ex sordidissimis artificiis* ("as though one of the basest crafts"). Echoing Cicero's Antonius (*De oratore* II.19, 83), Messalla's word for the degraded condition of a formerly regal eloquence is *artificium*, a notion at the heart of his entire analysis of the "degeneration" of letters (27.3; 28.2). *Artificium* suggests an object invented and contrived, product of the *artifex* ("craftsman"). It suggests the unnatural, *ingenium*'s opposite and antithesis of the *animus acer* ("keen mind") pronounced by Antonius to be *eloquentia*'s true fount (*De oratore* II.20, 84). It suggests something foreign to the *pectus*, the former seat (or "throne") of eloquence. *Artificium* suggests, finally, something added to and, by its cloying appearance,

[77] The portrait's clearly idealized character—which is nevertheless quite unlikely to be, as Hömke has it, "ironic"—suffices to make the case that "scholars should be chary of citing Tacitus as an ancient authority against declamation." Christopher S. van den Berg, *The World of Tacitus' "Dialogus de Oratoribus"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 82; Nicola Hömke, *Gesetzt den Fall, ein Geist erscheint: Komposition und Motivik der ps.-quintilianischen 'Declamationes Maiores' X, XIV und XV* (Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 2002), 66. The relevance of Messalla's realism, in any case, is far from evident: His vehemence and exaggeration bespeak precisely the affect and conviction whose putative absence from practical oratory he is lamenting.

concealing nature. This misleading appearance, one taking shape where *artificium* mediates between *natura* and the verbal arts, consists in the separation of *linguam…et vocam* from the *animus*. Where rhetoric operates this dissociation, oratory is free (or forced) to give itself over to phenomenal embellishment—to the *calamistros* ("adornments") and *tinnitus* ("jingles") later lamented by Messalla (26.1)—and to *fictis nec ullo modo ad veritatem accedentibus controversiis* ("invented arguments in no way approaching truth"). Its *subiecta…materia* no longer justice and morality, oratory finds itself reduced to *paucissimos sensus* ("the fewest topoi [or clichés]") and *angustas sententias* ("narrow notions," 32.4).

A New Golden Age: Maternus's Pastoral Restoration

Maternus's solution to the *fracta* ("broken") state of Modern oratory paradoxically anticipates Marcus Aurelius's paranoid rejection of language itself in the *Meditations* (the subject, indeed, of chapter IV). If the emperor's inner ἡγεμονικόν ("government") looks like Maternus's poet in a state of vatic aloneness, this is because both are reactionary, *post facto* phantasies imagined as solutions to the problem of discursive decay. The extremeness of the emperor's solution hardly needs stressing. Maternus's, however, is strident in its own right, and, again, more defeatist than anything in Quintilian's just-published *Institutio oratoria* (a text to which the *Dialogus* may be responding).[78] The type of discourse that Maternus offers as a solution to the corrupted speech of public life is, as he puts it in no uncertain terms, an individual and anti-social endeavor in its essence: *Inter praecipuos carminum fructus numerem quod non in strepitu…componuntur* ("Among the principal rewards of poems I count the fact that they are not composed in the clamor"). This is a specifically urban *strepitus* ("clamor"), as Maternus cites the disagreeable prospect of having, as *patronus* ("defender"), to field requests from defendants

[78] Mayer, *Dialogus de oratoribus*, 23.

appearing *sedente ante ostium* (“seated before one’s door”) with their *sordes ac lacrimas* (“squalor and tears”).

Oppressing, assaulting an *animus* ever more alienated from inspiration and truth, urban *sordes* (“filth”) can be combatted only by a poetic withdrawal into the self. *Secedit animus* (“the soul withdraws”), Maternus promises, *in loca pura atque innocentia fruiturque sedibus sacris* (“to places pure and innocent, and it profits from [these] sacred spaces”). Healing oneself of the alienating effect of *lucrosae huius et sanguinantis eloquentiae* (“this gainful and bloodied eloquence”) in the sacred seat of poetic composition spells a return at once to self-presence and to meaningful speech. Maternus’s concern with a return to a meaning beholden to the soul emerges in explicit terms: The *animus* can once more access *haec eloquentia primordia, haec penetralia* (“these primordial bases, these inmost secrets of eloquence”). Returned to nature, saved from the soul-damaging alienation of the “bloodied” and mercantile oratory of *recens* (“Modern”) times, Maternus’s poet can draw once more from inner truth. Self-presence restored, the poet can reprise the vatic role, one where language *illa casta et nullis contacta vitiis pectora influxit* (“flowed into those pure hearts untouched by any evils”). The poets *sic oracula loquebantur* (“spoke as oracles”), being *primum apud [illos] deos* (“first among [those] gods”) whose *responsa* were given voice in their songs.

Maternus’s restoration of the integrity of the soul in a recreation of the *aureum saeculum* (“golden age”) imagines a language not as yet treated as an object for manipulation. The senator-turned-playwright’s objection to Modern oratory is the *repertus* (“invented”) character of the latter, this very inventedness inviting the *vitia* (“evils”) with which oratory now finds itself afflicted. The difference is between a language unable to conceal perfidy—poetic expression, *pectus* (“heart”), and truth being as yet indissoluble—and one whose relationship to truth is tenuous. The shift is

also from necessity to contingency, the once-invulnerable bond among the word's expression, content, and use being frayed, perhaps hopelessly so. Its meaning and intention assured no longer by sheer virtue of their flowing from a pure source, the *pectora*, namely, of the speaker, *recens* ("Modern") language is employed recklessly, wantonly, for any end whatever.

The individual's alienation from self and the word's alienation from meaning are strictly parallel developments in Maternus's account. The decline of oratory is inevitable where language becomes a mirror not of the heart but of the calculus of imagination and will. Avaricious and mercantile, language is now used *in locum teli* ("in place of a weapon"). It can with scarcely a second thought defend the guilty and harm the innocent, *remotum* ("far") from the language of that *aureum saeculum* ("golden age"), which quite naturally reserved praise only for the good. Modern speech, however, finds itself forced *aliquid contra animum faciendi* ("to do something counter to the soul," 13.6).

Messalla's Rhetoric: Interloper Between Speech and Life

The unnatural relationship between language and meaning, one where imagination and human will have wrenched discourse from truth, is precisely what Socrates had cited in the *Gorgias* as rhetoric's original sin. Speech transforms unhappily into rhetoric where it becomes ruse of self-interest, issuing from ψυχῆς δὲ στοχαστικῆς ("an ingenious mind," 463b) needing only μηχανὴν δέ τινα πειθοῦς εὑρηκέναι ("discover some technique of persuasion," 459c) with little concern for conviction, knowledge, or truth on the speaker's part. Indeed, Messalla will explicitly blame rhetoric for the rise of a language that breaks with nature. For it is through rhetoric that human self-interest can intervene between expression, on the one hand, and right meaning and right use, on the other. In his scathing diagnosis of the "degrading" of discourse, Messalla blames the influence of rhetoric in the *tirocinium* for encouraging an estrangement from pragmatic and

empirical knowledge. Only when the speaker is himself imbued with knowledge of *rerum motus causasque* ("the movements and laws of [natural] things"), with *moralis partis utilitatem* ("the usefulness of ethics"), with *dialeticae subtilitatem* ("the intricacies of argumentation") does *oratoris vis et facultas* ("the force and ability of eloquence") *exundat et exuberat* ("well up and overflow," 30.5). The speaker must, that is, possess *omnium rerum scientia* ("knowledge of all things," 30.5). Under the spell of rhetoric, however, discourse is isolated from both world and heart. An eloquence *quae olim…implebat pectora* ("which used to…fill the heart," 32.4) is now *expulsam regno suo* ("dethroned from its rule"). The agents of this unhappy revolution are named explicitly: They are *paucissimos sensus et angustas sententias* ("the tritest topoi and constrained cogitations"). Messalla's diagnosis already smacks strongly of the "phantastic" and "unreal"; as it turns out, the breeding ground for the *paucissimos sensus et angustas sententias* so inimical to eloquence is nothing other than the *scholis rhetorum* ("schools of the rhetors"). And Messalla points his finger even more directly: It is in *fictis nec ullo modo ad veritatem accedentibus controversiis* ("invented controversies in no way approaching truth," 31.1) that young Romans learn to treat speech *quasi una ex sordidissimis artificiis* ("as though one of the most vulgar crafts"). Artificially *circumcisa et amputata* ("cut off from, shorn of," 32.4) truth and guileless passion, Messalla's *veritas* and *vis*, speech becomes heartless, synthetic and mechanical, an exercise in *linguam modo et vocem* ("only tongue and voice"). That sacred speech of the *vates* ("seers") is replaced by something *fictum* ("fabricated"), something *artificialis* ("artificial"), something churned out in the rhetors' factory. Eloquence is supplanted, that is, by precisely the μηχανήν that Socrates had warned against.

The root of the problem, as Messalla makes clear following his interruption of the dialogue, is the abstraction of discourse from the lifeworld of the here and now. Maternus's

withdrawal to a phantastic *locus amoenus* should, indeed, be understood in this light: His is an effort to reconnect language and nature by abandoning the urban setting, itself an unsavory venue for self-interest, mediating between the two. Self-interest and untruth unite in forensic practice, one with obvious roots in the ἀντιλογίαι of the progymnasmata, of amoral advocation. Already, then, Maternus's first speech contains a subtle critique of rhetoric as that which fastens upon pragmatic speech only to drive language and nature apart. The return to a purified epideixis—and the return of the vatic poet summoning forth song from the *pectora*—is an obvious reaction to this separation.

Rhetoric, however, can more directly intervene between discourse and life, and it is left to Messalla to more fully expound upon this mediating effect. Given the explicit assignment of explaining the *causas cur in tantum ab eloquentia eorum recesserimus* ("reasons why we have fallen so far from their [the ancients'] eloquence"), Messalla proceeds at once to draw a strict antithesis between a discourse in unison and one in disunion with the soul. His diction is unambiguous: The pre-modern orators *omnes eandem sanitatem eloquentiae ferunt* ("all still bear the same healthiness of eloquence"), and this because they hold speech close to the heart. Cicero is *vehementior et plenior* ("quite ardent and strong"), Caesar *splendidior* ("quite brilliant"), and Asinius "nervosior" ("vigorous indeed"). Caelius and Calvus are, respectively, *amerior* ("very brackish"), *adstrictior* ("very direct"). To these Messalla compares "Modern" style, one wrought from the *calamistros* ("iron ornaments") of a Maecenas and the *tinnitus* ("jangling") of a Gallio.

Messalla pursues the antithesis between brilliant, passionate speech—window of truth, mirror of feeling—and one severed from the soul. Oratory until Cicero's death was unmediated, issuing directly from heart and body; it reflected the *cultus* of its speaker, being, indeed, his direct extension. The anthropomorphic figures (*nervosior*, *vehementior*) suggest the hearty soundness of

this bygone speech. In contrast, the discourse of the Moderns owes nothing to the *pectora*. And it is, appropriately, described in terms of mechanism, artifice, and vanity. A *calamister* is a curling iron, while *tinnitus* suggests the din of metals striking one upon the other.

Messalla's figures for Modern style suggest a language drawing its force not from a well of passion and truth but rather from cheap riffs on sight and sound. With borrowed and flamboyant dress, the rhetorical style of orators after Cicero is no extension of feeling, body, and soul. Gone is a language unobtrusively serving as what Maternus had characterized as vessel and conduit of divine truth. *Recens* ("Modern") style flatly refuses to *induere* ("don") an unobtrusive and *hirta toga* ("modest toga"), seeking instead to *insignire* ("advertise") itself in *fucatis et meretriciis vestibus* ("multi-colored and whore-like vestments"). Language and soul, still consonant, still intact in pre-Ciceronian style, are wrenched apart by what does not properly belong to either. Messalla figures this mediating element in terms of the garish trappings of the vainglorious, the effete, and (for the second time in the *Dialogus*) the harlot. These trappings are, of course, metaphors, and what Messalla is aiming at here is rhetoric and, especially, the unhealthy concern with outward, phenomenal embellishment at the expense of a language of natural sincerity.

Not simply does this Modern discourse in *meretriciis vestibus* ("whore's clothing") emphatically not issue from the soul or emotion, but it perverts speaker as much as it perverts meaning, the implicit equivalence of soul and meaning remaining undiminished across the whole of the *Dialogus*. Rhetoricized language neuters the man: *Neque enim oratorius iste, immo hercule ne virilis quidem cultus est* ("For that 'oratory' is not, good God, the manner of the masculine at all"). It likewise neuters probity of meaning: *utuntur…lascivia verborum et levitate sentantiarum et licentia compositionis* ("they delight in…a wantonness with words, a libertinage of ideas, a licentiousness of composition"). And, as ever, practitioners of rhetoric risk the soul, its speakers

being no longer even themselves: *actores* ("actors"), Messalla calls them, speakers expressing themvelves in *modos histrionales* ("theatrical mannerisms").

Under the spell of rhetoric, post-Ciceronian discourse becomes garish spectacle. It conceals character and ethos, being anything but a language of sincerity as words become their own fruitless end. This, to be sure, is no faint condemnation for a dialogue whose central and universally shared assumption escapes not only intact but even strengthened by Tacitus's abrupt conclusion: Namely, *ad utilitatem vitae omnia consilia factaque nostra derigenda sunt* ("to utility for living all our designs and deeds should be directed," 5.5). Speakers now, accordingly, speak like men divided against themselves, travestied in women's clothing, histrionic like actors on a stage. When Messalla finally arrives at the *causas* ("reasons") behind a decline beginning, he says, with Cassius Severus's *contempto ordine rerum* ("disdain for the order of things"), he points to rhetoric's insinuation into traditional Roman education. The result will be an impoverishment of learning consonant with a delight in spectacle and, it follows, a spectacular kind of discourse.

Dramatizing the theme of rhetoric as unsavory interloper, Messalla goes so far to connect the (invariably bad) influence of the first with the dissolution of the Roman family. Rhetoric can enter the *focus* ("home") only with a decay in the *severitate ac disciplina maiorum circa educandos formandosque liberos pauca* ("the seriousness and discipline of the ancients in educating and training young children"). *Nam pridem* ("For in the beginning"), Messalla recounts, a child *gremio ac sinu matris educabatur* ("was educated in his mother's lap and bosom"). The integrity of the mother-child union spelt also the integrity of the child's speech. *Coram* ("face-to-face") with his mother, or perhaps a grandmother or aunt, *neque dicere fas erat quod turpe dictu, neque facere quod inhonestum factu videretur* ("it was forbidden to say what was ugly to say or to do what seemed shameful to do"). Even over her son's *remissiones…lususque* ("recreation…and

games") did the mother *sancitate quadam ac verecundia temberabat* ("regulate sacredly and with a certain reverence"). This education reached (and fortified) the child's *sincera et integra et nullis prauitatibus detorta…natura* ("pure, whole, and undistorted…nature") so that he would *pectore…arriperet artes honestas* ("with his heart…fasten upon the honorable arts"). Where education was a direct extension of the sacred bond between mother and child, the results spoke for themselves. It was in this way that Cornelia raised the Gracchi, and Aurelia and Atia, respectively, Caesar and Augustus.

The disuniting of the mother-child bond brings with it a parallel disunion: That between speech and the soul. "Delegation" of the child to someone not of the family, namely to *Graeculae alicui ancillae* ("some little Greek slave-girl"), is named as culprit. Messalla's excursus is intent on demonstrating that this is no mere interruption or mediation of the traditional Roman nuclear family. Breathlessly (and somewhat recklessly) slipping between allegory and etiology, Messalla presents the weakening in the familial fabric through the foreigner's incursion as the point of rupture from which rhetoric is born. From these outsiders *virides teneri statim et rudes animi imbuuntur* ("the pristine, tender, and untouched souls are imbued") with *fabulis et erroribus* ("fables and lies"). The corruption radiates outward, spreading *etiam ipsi parentes* ("even to the parents themselves"), now *adseufaciunt* ("accustoming") their children to *lasciviae et dicacitati* ("wantonness and banter") and, ultimately to *impudentia et contemptus* ("shamelessness and contempt") for the world around them.

So endemic do impatience and scorn for reality become in the fragmenting Roman *focus* ("home") that the passion for spectacle and the unreal seem very *paene in utero matris concipi* ("nearly to be conceived in the mother's womb"). Harkening back to Maternus's call for the

pastoral restoration of true language, Messalla places the tendency towards spectacle and lies among *peculiaria huius urbis vitia* ("the special vices of this city"). The child is virtually born, then, with *histrionalis favor et gladiatorum equorumque studia* ("an inclination for the theatrical and a passion for gladiators and horses"), all of which become, to the exclusion of *bonis artibus* ("the good arts"), *obsessus* ("obsessions") of the wanton soul.

Love of spectacle brings with it an impoverishment of language. Discourse becomes unmoored from the ideal of a substantive, ethically rigorous education just as it moves ever further from the real world. What begins in the home—what begins with the disruption of that mother-child bond planting right speech deep within the child's soul—soon spreads beyond domestic walls and into post-domestic education. So pervasive is inanity and even perfidy in the household's speech that Messalla can confidently assert by erotema, *quotum quemque invenies qui domi quicquam aliud loquatur?* ("Whom would you ever find who speaks at home about anything else?"). Now even in the *auditoria* the *sermones adulescentulorum* ("the discourse of adolescents") touches upon little else. Even the *praeceptores* ("teachers") have little other to impart to *auditoribus suis* ("their listeners") than *fabulas* ("chatter"). The emptiness of their *fabulas*, and the proximity of the latter to *erroribus* ("lies"), is reflected in the lecturers' own unbecoming comportment: They too make a spectacle of themselves, with *ambitione salutationum* ("desperation for recognition") and *inlecebris adulationis* ("lust for adulation").

The conversion of speech into *fabula*, *error*, and *spectaculum* reaches its devastating conclusion in pedagogy, leaving the *prima discentium elementa* ("the first elements of learning") a wizened husk of a once-luxuriant and far-reaching παιδεία. The relationship between knowledge and speech in Imperial Rome finds itself, in fact, reversed. Cicero's *Brutus* bears witness, notes Messalla, to a young man following *gradus* ("training") strictly unrelated to

eloquentia proper precisely in order to develop *suae eloquentiae* ("his own eloquence"). Cicero recounts that he *se apud Q. Mucium ius ciuile didicisse* ("studied civil law with Q. Mucius") and that he *omnes philosophiae partes penitus hausisse* ("deeply imbibed all of philosophy's parts") with Philo the Academic and Diodotus the Stoic. Scarcely *contentum* ("contented"), moreover, with only what Rome afforded him in terms of learning, Cicero would travel through Achaea and the Near East *ut omnem omnium artium varietatem complecteretur* ("in order to embrace every type of all the disciplines"). The resulting depth and sweep of knowledge would, says Messalla, permeate Cicero's oratory: *In libris Ciceronis deprehendere licet non geometriae, non musicae, non grammatiae, non denique ullius ingenuae artis scientiam ei defuisse* ("In Cicero's speeches one can see that his knowledge of geometry, music, grammar, or finally any of the important disciplines is not wanting"). Messalla is especially impressed by Cicero's grounding in practical knowledge*: Ille dialecticae subtilitatem, ille moralis partis utilitatem, ille rerum motus causasque cognouverat* ("This man had known the subtlety of dialectic, the utility of ethics, and the motions and causes of things").

Cicero is case study and proof for Messalla's larger point. Failing *omnium rerum scientia* ("knowledge of all things"), the would-be speaker can hardly hope to attain *eloquentia*. Eloquence is emphatically not a foundational or, *hercule* ("by God"), propaedutic skill to be acquired alongside the other disciplines; nor is it an innate talent belonging entirely to the *ingenium* ("inborn talent"). *Eloquentia* is quite simply impervious to direct study: Targeted and pursued in itself, it will remain elusive, and this because *eloquentia* is the natural consequence of practical knowledge previously mastered. Only from this fount may eloquence, inevitable consequence of non-oratorical knowledge, *exundat et exuberat* ("flow forth and abound").

The pursuit of eloquence as its own spectacular end produces little more than a phantom of this naturally occurring *admirabilis eloquentia* ("marvelous eloquence"). Traditional Roman education, built for Messalla on that primal scene of the mother suckling her child with true speech, had respected the status of eloquence as a secondary effect of primary wisdom. Only with the arrival in Rome of that discipline trying—and failing, as Messalla has it, quite spectacularly—to isolate oratory as something attainable in itself does verbal art go awry. Foregoing the assiduous building of proper non-verbal knowledge, men now *expetentur quos rhetoras vocant* ("seek out those whom they call 'rhetors'"). This *professio* ("profession") carries with it an inversion of pedagogy that could scarcely have been countenanced by *maiores nostros* ("our ancestors"). Vainly pursuing eloquence as its own end, the rhetors invert the natural order by which practical wisdom flowers into speech at once persuasive and beautiful.

Messalla is at pains to demonstrate the jarring novelty of the rhetor's *professio*. *Professio quando primum in hanc urbem introducta sit* ("when the profession was first introduced in this city"), he says, *quamque nullam apud maiores nostros auctoritatem habuerit* ("it had altogether no authority among our ancestors"). The opposite of rhetoric, as Messalla notes in the same sentence, is a broad, soul-penetrating pedagogy without regard for the verbal arts. The stark contrast is, once more for Messalla, that between a pedagogy cynically fixated upon *eloquentia* and one directed instead towards the liberal education of the young *animus* ("soul"). From the worthy orators' own works, we hear how the *animum* was held *ad eam disciplinam* ("to this discipline"), namely one involving *infinitus labor et cotidiana meditatio et in omni genere studiorum adsiduae exercitationes* ("unending labor and daily meditation and continuous practice in every kind of study"). The reversed and, indeed, perverse state of affairs in the post-Augustan *tirocinium* is novel and unnatural in equal measure. It is an essentially urban

phenomenon born under the insalubrious spell of high-end foreign labor. It is a matter of *mala primum in urbe nata, mox per Italiam fusa, iam in prouincias manant* ("evils born first in the city, spread quickly throughout Italy, and pouring now into the provinces"). It is a matter, indeed, *de urbe et his propriis ac vernaculis vitiis* ("of the city and its own and local vices").

Perfect mirrors throughout Messalla's analysis, Roman *animus* ("soul") and Roman *eloquentia* ("eloquence") appear increasingly irrecoverable. Asphyxiated in an air as morally polluted within the *focus* ("home") as without, the *animus* can now scarcely hope to avoid the *vitiis…quae natos statim excipiunt"* ("evils…which immediately at birth seize us"). Messalla struggles to articulate the precise character of *vitia* whose true nature nevertheless begins to reveal itself over the length of this plea. The essence of the problem is a Modern passion for stagey artifice at the expense of a foundation that is, at any rate, left increasingly to wither. This is at once a problem of speech and soul, the *animus* steeped from birth in *fabula* ("fable") and *error* ("lie") being inclined as much towards pursuits dishonorable and vain as towards speech clouded by embellishment. The neglect of the soul produces young men more apt to turn rhetoric proper, even as the influence of this (no longer quite) novel *professio* has already made itself felt in the home and now *per singulos aetatis gradus* ("through every stage of our life").

The orator's training, meanwhile, comes to reflect soullessness and superficial learning in equal measure: *Neque oratoris vis et facultas sicut ceterarum rerum, angustis et brevibus terminis cluditur* ("the orator's force and ability is not, as with other matters [i.e., disciplines] confined by narrow and small borders"). Indeed, eloquence is absolutely not the result of achievement in any of the three facets of persuasion identified by Aristotle (*Rhet.*, 356a). It lies neither in the ability to speak *pulchre et ornate* ("beautifully and ornately") nor in the capacity to appeal to *voluptate audientium* ("listeners' pleasure"). It lies not even in the ability *ad persuadendum apte…pro*

dignitate rerum ("to persuade appropriately…to the measure of the subject"). Rather, Messalla tells us, *is est orator* ("an orator is he") who can use these skills only once the ability to speak about *omni quaestione* ("every matter"), with a *omnium rerum scientia* ("knowledge of all things"), has already sunk deep within the *animus*. By themselves, the secondary, technical skills of rhetoric amount to less than nothing for Messalla: Concealing the absence of real knowledge, concealing the ignorance and even perversity of the soul, they produce a phantom eloquence, little other than the discursive counterpart to the games of the coliseum.

MATERNUS'S PERORATION: THE DEATH OF VIS *IN PRAGMATIC DISCOURSE*

Messalla's etiology of decline as the result of a mediation between soul and speech by rhetoric points to the throughline belying the supposed contradiction of Maternus's two contributions to the *Dialogus*.[79] The "trial's"[80] first indictment of oratory finds Maternus in full-tilt idyllic mode, proposing a return to a poetic and indeed vatic discourse beyond the alienating *vitia* ("evils") of the city (12.1-6). Oratory is *fracta* ("broken") because alienated from the *animus*, and it is to repair this separation that Maternus proposes a language faithful once more to the *pectus.* The *Dialogus*'s fifth and final speech, in contrast, finds Maternus arguing that *magna oratoria* ("great oratory") is a *flamma* ("flame") fed by discord and extinguished in a *composita et quieta et beata re publica* ("a composed, calm, and peaceful republic," 36.1-2). Maternus's cynical and (in equal measure) sympathetic explanation for true oratory's

[79] Arguments for irony (Köhnken 1973: 33) or doublespeak (Bartsch 1994: 111) momentarily aside (see note 6), observers detect varying degrees of incompatibility between the two speeches, which Luce (1993: 22) and Lier (1996) have attempted to bridge by reading the *Dialogus* in terms of the mock-declamation. For further discussion of the debate, see Christopher S. van den Berg, *The World of Tacitus' "Dialogus de Oratoribus"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 67-9 and ibid., 43. Shadi Bartsch, *Actors in the Audience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994); Luce, "Reading and Response in the *Dialogus*," in *Tacitus and the Tacitean Tradition*; Hans Lier, "Rede und Redekunst im Diskurs: Tacitus' *Dialogus de oratoribus* als Schullektüre," *Der Altsprachliche Unterricht* 39: 52-64.

[80] "The ethos of the whole dialogue," observes Mayer, "is that of a trial, and thanks to Messalla's intervention the accused turns out to be 'Modern Eloquence.'" *Dialogus de Oratoribus* (2001), 39.

disappearance has puzzled critics, who find it jarring (or perhaps ironic) in light of his passion for politically risqué *praetexta* (i.e., his *Cato*) and an initially romantic defense of the verbal arts.[81] Substantially less tenuous than it initially appears, the relationship between the two speeches lies in their explanation of discursive decline in terms of a shift from the ingenuous to the ingenious, from an open and even naïve speech belonging to the *pectus* to one removed from the soul. The alienation of speech from the soul—the end of discourse as an immediate and urgent product of the passions—is the crux of Maternus's critique of the Imperial verbal arts as much at the start as at the conclusion of the *Dialogus*. This, however, begs the question: What interrupts the immediacy of discourse and *animus*? Messalla and Aper answer the question unambiguously: It is rhetoric and rhetorical pedagogy that turns language into a *spectaculum* ("show") and *repertus* ("invention," 11.2) split from feeling and reality, an object to be admired for its phenomenal "virtues" (and virtuosity). Maternus takes this assessment, with which he is fundamentally in agreement, and provides it with extrinsic justification. Ironically, where Messalla's and Aper's diagnoses of decline are intrinsic and stylistic, it is left to the (creative) writer to explain *eloquentia*'s end in terms of social and political conditions.

More for the infelicitous conditions of which it is a sign than for its overt (and, indeed, vulgar) stylistic tendencies, Maternus condemns rhetoric as *eloquentia usus recens* ("a recent use of eloquence," 12.2). The problem—one no less urgent in the first than the second speech—is that rhetoric becomes the vehicle by which unhappy social conditions annul a human connection

[81] Adolf Köhnken, "Das Problem der Ironie bei Tacitus," *Museum Helveticum* 30 (1973): Taking Symes' caution that "irony is all-pervasive" in Tacitus as an invitation for a more suspicious reading, Köhnken will conclude that Maternus's second speech is *ironische Lob* which *ist in Wahrheit eine viel wirksamere Kritik an den bestehenden Zuständen....* I agree with Williams that the tone is "more of slightly rueful good humor than irony" and with Mayer that an ironic reading is, in any case, unnecessary: The case for Maternus's republicanism may help explain the cynical tenor of the second speech, but the etiology of the decline of *eloquentia* remains unchanged for Maternus, lying as it does in the withdrawal of *animus*, meaning, and affect from a rhetoricized speech. Gordon Williams, *Change and Decline: Roman Literature in the Early Empire* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1978), 40. For Syme on Tacitean irony, see *Tacitus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 206.

with language. With Domitian's reign fresh in his (or, rather, Tacitus's) mind, Maternus uses his first speech to blame rhetoric for introducing *lucrosae huius et sanguinantis eloquentiae usus* ("the practice of this mercantile and blood-thirsty eloquence," 12.2). From there he rejects pragmatic discourse as hopelessly corrupt, offering instead the alternate vision of an *aureum saeculum* ("golden age") in which he can in a single breath speak of *poetis et vatibus* ("poets and seers") worlds away from *et oratorum et criminum* ("both speeches [of defense] and accusations," 12.3). Maternus now uses the trial's final speech to lay responsibility for the death of eloquence on the institution of a *moderatore uno* ("single ruler," 36.2). Political circumstances convert eloquence to rhetoric, *magna oratoria* ("great oratory") to *curam…diligentis stili anxietatem* ("anguished care for careful style," 39.3), cutting discourse off from its source. Just as it is in his first speech and, indeed, just as it is for Messalla and even Aper, this source of an eloquence unscathed by rhetoric is *pectus* and *animus*.

Now, however, there is a streak of Polus coloring Maternus's conception of the relationship between speech and soul. Where his first speech focused on the ingenuous soul and a speech that *casta et nullis contacta vitiis pectora influxit* ("flowed into hearts pure and untouched by any evil," 12.2), his second is concerned less with innocence than with *vis* ("force," "power"). Where his first speech sees rhetoric as a symptom of the monetization and corruption of a language formerly (and properly) belonging to the soul, his second sees it as a mirror of a *res publica* that has split the soul from its means of discursive expression. Maternus could hardly be more explicit on the point: Post-Augustan Rome has deprived speech of the *vis* of uncalculated passion. The pastoral solution from his first speech shadows the second, even if Maternus is now more concerned with clear-eyed analysis than with a *locus amoenus* where soul and speech might unite once more. He immediately follows Messalla (or the dialogue's likely brief lacuna) with the

declaration that pre-Imperial speech was a matter of force—a discourse approaching the "illocutionary" utterance of speech-act theorists—by which a speaker transmits feeling to an immediately moved crowd. *Tantum quisque orator saperet* ("any speaker was respected"), Maternus declares, *quantum erranti populo persuadere poterat* ("inasmuch as he was able to persuade an unruly populace," 36.2). The translation of vehement eloquence into pragmatic gain that Maternus now lauds subtly is of the same ilk: Again, speech was measured absolutely not by its intrinsic or stylistic merits but rather by its empirical effects. *Quanto quisque plus dicendo poterat* ("the more anyone was able in speaking"), Maternus instructs us, *tanto facilius honores adsequebatur* ("the more easily did he obtain honors," 36.4).

The flattering portrait of men who were indeed best capable of converting speech to power is only further indication of Maternus's assimilation of speech and *vis*. *Hi clientilis etiam extrarum nationum redundabant* ("These men would enjoy patronage even of foreign nations"), he tells us, and *et populum et senatum…regerent* ("they would control both the people and the senate," 36.5). The emphasis on immediacy—on discourse as an unvarnished mirror of honest passion—emerges again in Maternus's depiction of the traditional (and lost) importance of the face-to-face encounter in symboleutic and dicanic oratory. *Cum parum esset in senatu breviter censere* ("since it was insufficient to briefly move in the senate"), one had to present *ingenio et eloquentia sententiam suam* ("one's own opinion through talent and eloquence," 36.7). Moreover, *cum in aliquam invidiam aut crimen vocati* ("When summoned for any offense or crime"), Maternus tells us, *sua uoce respondendum haberent* ("they had to respond in their own voice"). Witnesses, meanwhile, were *coram et praesentes dicere cogerentur* ("compelled to speak face-to-face and on the spot") and not *per tabellam* ("by written testimony," 36.7). The necessity of live communication led, Maternus concludes, *ad summa eloquentiae* ("to the heights of eloquence," 36.8).

Only in giving voice to human emotion, suggests Maternus, does true oratory flourish. The severing of this fragile connection through the institution of authoritarian quiescence produces not eloquence but rhetoric. This is, again, the unifying principle of Maternus's two speeches: His first had imaged the lyric poet, impassioned and bewitched by a lover or the Charites, giving voice to what *influxit* ("flowed into," 12.2) the heart. Now he turns from praise to blame, from the corruption of sincerity to the suppression of "negative" emotion in speech. Failing the second, oratory is a flame extinguished. *Meminerimus sciamusque nos de ea re loqui, quae facilius turbidis et inquietis temporibus existit* ("Let us remember and be aware that we are speaking about something which has existed more easily in chaotic and unquiet times," 37.6). Maternus connects *mala* ("evils," 37.5) with oratorical content: Calamity, he says, produces *ingentem eloquentiae materiam* ("great material for eloquence,"), ensuring *ut uberem ad dicendum materiam oratores haberent* ("that orators have an abundance of material to talk about," 37.6). The matter is not, of course, disaster *per se*, but rather the emotional *vis* that social evils excite in orator and audience. The matter is not, that is, *expilatis sociis et civibus trucidatis* ("swindled friends and murdered citizens," 37.4), but rather the intensity of feeling engendered by these unhappy events. For it was not Cicero's early (and successful) defense of Publius Quinctius's estate or his plea on behalf of the Roman citizenship of Archias that ensured the orator's *fama*. Rather, it was to the spirited indictment of Catiline's sedition or the defense of a friend imperiled (i.e., Milo on trial for assassination) that his reputation is owed. Great danger spells great passion, and the more of each, Maternus suggests, the better the oratory (37.6).

Given his concern with the eruption of *vis* into discourse and with the will's oratorical translation into power, it is hardly surprising that Maternus seems little patient with peaceable social conditions. A martial tempo not unworthy of Marinetti marks, in fact, the whole of his

second disquisition. The trouble with peace is that it is simply unpropitious to the excitement of the inner force necessary to reach *ad summa eloquentiae* ("to the heights of eloquence"). *Plures tamen bonos proeliatores bella quam pax ferunt* ("wars, however, produce more good fighters than peace," 37.7). Eloquence, then, will rest upon a *similis…condicio* ("similar…condition"): *nam quo saepius steterit tamquam in acie* ("for the more often it would stand, as it were, on the battle line") and the *plures…ictus* ("more strikes") it would land, the sharper will discourse be (37.8). The *maiores adversarios…acrioresque pugnas* ("the greater the adversaries…and the nastier the fights") into which it falls, *tanto altior et excelsior* ("the more [is it] sublime and awesome"). For *ea natura est* ("this is the nature") of humans: Though *secura velint* ("they desire the safe"), they desire also *spectare aliena pericula* ("to witness the trials of others"). The *pericula* here reside in the willingness to speak as the warrior fights, which is to say with vehemence mounting from the *pectus* ("heart").

Unbridled emotion of the uncivilized heart is, Maternus says, the perennial source of eloquence. Any mediation of passion is perforce an attack on oratory. He colorfully and disparagingly cites, for instance, the imposition of decorum on the *formam…veterum iudiciorum* ("the organization...of the courts of old," 38.1). Gnaeus Pompeius's introduction of time-limits on speeches and the duration of cases has been, Maternus insists, ruinous. Formerly, *modum dicendo sibi quisque sumebat* ("everyone would assume for himself a limit in speaking"). Now, in contrast, it is as though one *adstrinxit imposuitque veluti frenos eloquentiae* ("has bound and imposed, as it were, bridles on eloquence," 38.2). So sensitive is Maternus to interference with an oratory free and pure that even the *paenulae* ("mantles") worn in court pose a threat. In these costumes speakers find themselves *adstricti et velut inclusi* ("constricted and practically imprisoned," 39.1-2). Costumes and decorum's other trappings have, Maternus suggests, led to a

diminishing of the *virium* ("energies") of eloquence. For true orators are like *nobiles equos* ("prize horses"); they need their own unencumbered *cursus* ("tracks") through which to run *liberi et soluti* ("free and unfettered"). Failing this, *debilitatur ac frangitur eloquentia* ("eloquence is crippled and broken," 39.1-2).

Ruinous above all is the absence of a proper crowd. If eloquence is passion mirrored in *vis*, it is also the ability to translate this energy to an audience. Now, however, it is conducted *velut in solitudine* ("practically in solitude," 39.3). *Pars Italiae* ("part of Italy") used to throng the forum. Not simply were respectable men, clients, members of the concerned tribes, and even delegates from the *municipia* to be found in attendance, but *crederet populus Romanus sua interesse quid iudicaretur* ("the Roman people believed itself invested in what was decided"). Major trials were, indeed, occasions for the *concursu totius civitatis* ("assembly of the whole state"). Now without an unruly audience, the orator's *vis* is forced to remain more or less subdued. For *oratori clamore plaususque opus est* ("the speaker needs shouting and applause," 39.4). The turbid assembly of the Republic was, in contrast, able in its *studia* ("zeal") to *excitare et incendere* ("excite and ignite") the force of even the worst—or the *frigidissimos* ("most frigid")—of speakers (39.5).

In depicting *eloquentia* as essentially foreign to constraint, Maternus returns us to the *locus amoenus* of his first speech. There, we will recall, the antidote to the city's corrupt rhetoric is to be found in an ambiance of natural inspiration. The consistency of his position is, as a rule, lost on observers who insist on the irreconcilability of the dialogue's second and final speeches: *Eloquentia* is rooted in nature, flows into the soul, and is deprived of its natural *vis* only by mediation. In both speeches it is the separation of speech from affect that marks the original depravation endured by discourse. Pragmatic oratory's corrupt insincerity is the principal culprit

in the first, its desuetude and superfluity that of the second. The connection among nature, inner *vis*, and speech, however, remains clear as ever even at the end of the second speech. After explaining that government and the enforcement of harmony are really *frenos* ("bridles") on the inner passion without which speech *debilitatur* ("is crippled," 39.1-2), Maternus returns to the idyllic imagery of his first speech. *Magna illa et notabilis eloquentia* ("that great and resplendent eloquence") is *contumax* ("unyielding") and *temeraria* ("heedless"), unable to "spring forth" (*oritur*) in *bene constitutis civitatibus* ("well-regulated states," 39.2) precisely because it belongs not to culture but to nature. To suppress strife is, finally, to suppress nature itself. What *tulit sine dubio valentiorem eloquentiam* ("undoubtedly brought forth a more robust eloquence") was *dissensionibus et discordiis* ("dissension and discord"), specifically the absence of peace in the forum, agreement in the senate, and respect for hierarchy. Issuing from nature, eloquence requires an *indomitus ager* ("an uncultivated field," 40.4).

Belonging not to culture but rather to human nature, *eloquentia* is for Maternus perennial, always ready to shoot forth like *herbas laetiores* ("richer grasses") given the right conditions. And the right conditions consist in the absence of precisely the sort of authority that make Imperial Rome, like Persia and Sparta before it, so unpropitious to the surfacing of recalcitrant *vis* (40.3). Maternus could scarcely be more emphatic in insisting upon the enduring and natural essence of eloquence as mirror of an enduring human *ingenium*. Quite unlike Aper, eager as the young Gaul is to suggest that *eloquentia* is socially constructed, Maternus sees true oratory as belonging to an unchanging human force whose variability is due to the relative constraints of culture. The *natura* of eloquence is the constant through Maternus's two speeches, its importance to the character (and likely to Tacitus himself) being evinced by its reiteration, now in its "strongest" form, as the very last thought of the *Dialogus*. Finally apostrophizing his

interlocutors, Maternus proclaims each of them to be skilled in discourse *in quantum opus est* ("inasmuch as there is need," 41.5). The backhandedness of the compliment is blunted by the fact that things could very much have been otherwise. Aper, Messalla, and Secundus could have been, if not Ciceros, at least Gracchi, if only the repression of culture were less. And the converse holds as well: The marvelous orators of ages past simply enjoyed the *licentia* ("liberty") to put their inner *vis* into words: Maternus conjures a hypothetical as proof. Imagine, he asks, that *aut vos…aut illi, quos miramur* ("either you…or those, whom we admire") had been born in different ages. Or imagine that *deus aliquis vitas ac [vestra] tempora repente mutasset* ("some god had suddenly switched your lives and times," 41.5). The exchange of cultural restraints would have spelt an exchange not in oratorical ability—*ingenium* remains, Maternus suggests, constant—but in the conditions needed for it to pour forth. The great *flammae* of eloquence past would, conversely, find themselves more or less extirpated in Imperial Rome: *Nec vobis summa illa laus et gloria in eloquentia neque illis modus et temperamentum defuisset* ("Neither would you have been wanting in that highest praise and glory of eloquence, nor would they have been wanting in limitation and constraint," 41.5).

APER AND RHETORICAL HOMEOPATHY

Something, finally, of a red herring, the conceit of an unresolved diversity of opinion in the *Dialogus* masks a deeper unanimity about the reasons for *eloquentia*'s decline. Nowhere is this more evident than in the two speeches of Aper, the latter a Gallic *novus homo*[82] whose defense of the *praesens* in eloquence is supposed—especially by observers who find in the character an analogue to Cicero's Antonius—to be a strict rejoinder to the indictment of

[82] Syme, *Tacitus*, 107.

oratory's decline offered by Maternus and Messalla.[83] Aper's views on the threats to eloquence have, however, far more in common with Maternus's and Messalla's than might otherwise be supposed. The dimming of *eloquentia* is, for Maternus and Messalla, a result of the mediation between inner *vis* and speech by a deadening rhetoric. It is to heal this interruption of affect and discourse that Maternus proposes a withdrawal into poetry. Given the association of Asianism with a poeticization of oratory—with the remaking of pragmatic discourse into epideixis—this solution is somewhat ironic. Irony notwithstanding, the impulse leading Maternus to try to rid *eloquentia* of the rhetoric having cut speech from its rightful source in the human *pectus* is no less vehement in Aper. The defender of "the moderns" simply adopts a different tack.

Just as Maternus views the desuetude of pragmatic oratory as fatal to the passion that *eloquentia* requires, so does Aper view discourse as *exsanguem et attritum* ("bloodless and dissipated," 18.5) failing stylistic innovation.[84] Owing partly to what Aristotle had called the "pathetic" function of logos (*Rhet.* I, 1356a), lifelessness threatens to overtake discourse as speech sediments into rote topos and cliché: this simply because the audience remains unmoved by such speech. Cassius, for instance, is the earliest target of the *antiquorum admiratores* ("admirers of the ancients") for having *primum…flexisse ab ista vetere atque directa dicendi via*

[83] Werner Deuse, "Zur advocatus-diaboli-Funktion Apers im *Dialogus* und zur Methode ihrer Deutung," *Grazer Beiträge* 3 (1975): 61-8. That Aper is playing the role of *advocatus diaboli* in the vein of the Antonius of *De oratore* has been stressed by Deuse, though Luce and van den Berg note (significantly) that Aper admits no such insincerity on his own part. The problem, again, is the coherence of the dialogue, since a strict reading of Aper as *advocatus diaboli* would lead, at best, to the marginalization of his analysis. Not simply does Tacitus permit Aper to speak more than anyone in the dialogue, but, indeed, "[t]he Academic literary form permits the exploration of a variety of potentially valid and convincing viewpoints." We should be chary of the inclination, in any case, to "atomize" into irreconcilable set-pieces a dialogue that diagnoses decline with what I am suggesting is remarkable consistency throughout. Christopher S. van den Berg, *The World of Tacitus' "Dialogus de Oratoribus,"* 66-7; T.J. Luce, "Reading and Response in the *Dialogus*," in *Tacitus and the Tacitean Tradition*, 11-38, ed. T.J. Luce and A.G. Woodman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 18.

[84] Yet another reason to beware demoting Aper to *advocatus diaboli* is that the character may indeed be defending a style close to Tacitus's own. Costa and Mayer both suggest as much. C.D.N. Costa, "The 'Dialogus'," in *Tacitus*, ed. T.A. Dorey (London: Routledge, 1969), 35-61; *Dialogus de Oratoribus*, ed. Mayer, 42. This notwithstanding, careful reading hardly permits a view of Aper as a defender of a "strong Asianism." He is fundamentally wary of rhetoric and even style as such, advocating an indulgence in *poeticus decor* only to enliven deadened discourse.

("first… turned from that ancient and direct way of speaking," 19.1). The poet was, however, absolutely correct *transtulisse se ad illud dicendi genus* ("to have moved to that kind of speaking") for which he would come in for criticism. Cassius understood what for Aper is a universal law of the non-universality of literary style: *cum condicione temporum et diversitate aurium formam quoque ac speciem orationis esse mutandam* ("with the character of the times and a difference in listeners the form and also the shape of oratory had to change," 19.2). Just as for Maternus pragmatic oratory requires an audience to truly work towards a crescendo of and even communion with *vis*, so for Aper is the interest of the audience critical in avoiding "bloodless" speech. The straightest route to the listener's pathos is, Aper suggests, stylistic. Only insofar as worn patterns of speech are shattered is the listener's boredom avoided. To take Aper's contributions to the *Dialogus* as some sort of blanket endorsement of rote Gorgianism or rhetoric would be to miss his point altogether: The *praecepta rhetorum aut philosophorum* ("teachings of rhetors or philosophers,"19.4) were useful only because they introduced jarring elements into otherwise *longa* ("long") and *repetita* ("repetitive," 19.3) orations. Precisely because of their success and profusion, however, the *praecepta rhetorum* are now of limited use. *At hercule pervulgatis iam omnibus* ("But, by God, now that they are widely disseminated"), Aper avers, *novis et exquisitis eloquentiae itineribus opus est* ("novel and extraordinary means of eloquence are needed," 19.5). The value of the *poeticus decor* ("poetic decoration") demanded *enim ab oratore iam* ("now even of the orator," 20.5) lies only in the style's ability to touch the listener's pathos. Virtuosity of itself offers nothing to *eloquentia*.

Whatever *eloquentia* owes to style lies, finally, in its ability to solicit the *pathos* of the listener. To the question begged—how, precisely, does style speak to feeling?—Aper answers unambiguously: Discourse must break through patterns of sedimented cliché in order to rouse

what is emphatically not culturally contingent: Namely, inner *vis* and feeling. The explicit premise of Aper's second speech is that *eloquentia* is stylistically non-universal: *Illud ante praedixero, mutari cum temporibus formas quoque et genera dicendi* ("I'd premise beforehand that the forms and also the types of speaking change with the times," 17.2). Unchanging, however, is the relationship between successful discourse and its *exsangua* ("bloodless") counterpart: *Eloquentia* always emerges out of and against a backdrop of language whose banality has split it from feeling. Trafficking in a language well-worn and cliché, failed "eloquence" is simply discourse that does not manage to rise out of the indiscriminate mass of everyday language. The true failing of such discourse, however, is that it cannot speak to the unchanging human predilection for novel and even defamiliarizing language. Aper's critiques of failed *eloquentia* are remarkably consistent. Calvus was *exsanguem et attritum* ("bloodless and exhausted"), Brutus *otiosum* ("disengaging"), Cicero as *solutum et enervem* ("lax and enervated") as he was *fractum atque elumbem* ("crippled and weak," 18.5). Caelius suffered from a *sordes…verborum* ("commonness…in diction"), *hians compositio* ("loose organization"), and *inconditi sensus* ("unformed notions," 21.4). Nor is poetry exempt from critique: To borrow from Accius or Pacuvius would be to leave a speech *veterno inquinatus* ("polluted by the soporific," 20.5). Cicero is, as ever in the *Dialogus*, the turning point, *primus excoluit…orationem* ("first to have refined…his oratory"), first to understand the importance of breaking with common or fusty language (22.2). The critiques that Aper does direct towards (the early) Cicero are, however, telling: His first speeches *are lentus…in principiis* ("slow…at their start"), *longus in narrationibus* ("tedious in their body"), *otiosus circa excessus* ("dissipated by their digressions," 22.3).

Eloquentia changes in appearance but not in method. The *oblitterata* ("used-up") and *olentia* ("dank") will, no matter the age, lead speech away from eloquence (22.5). *Nullum sit verbum velut rubigine infectum* ("let no word be, so to speak, stained by rust") and *nulli sensus tarda et inerti structura…componantur* ("no torpid sentences and indolent arrangements…be composed," 22.5). To be avoided at all costs is drab prose untouched by the fashions of the Second Sophistic: what is *morem annalium* ("wont of the historians," 22.5) leads assuredly to boredom. What will in contrast and no matter the times excite the *pathos* of the listener—connecting speech and feeling—is what cuts against the grain of normal discourse. Words must be so arresting as to justify one's efforts to *excerpere* ("extract," 22.3) and *referre* ("cite," 20.4) them. Their *sensus* ("ideas") should be *arguta* ("piercing"), their *sententia* so crystalline that they *effulsit* ("flash out," 20.4). Against a hazy and undifferentiated backdrop of speech tired and spent, words succeed only where they *nitent* ("shine") and *radiantur* ("beam," 20.7), seizing the interest and rousing the passion of their audience.

Style in the service of affect is nothing less than what Aper calls for in his second speech.[85] The criterion is evidence neither of craftsmanship nor virtuosity, but rather to what point language might meet the *pathos* of the listener. Aper never comes close to praising rhetoric *per se*; rather, its *praecepta* are valuable only where they help to subvert accreted habits of speech. He is, moreover, explicitly hostile towards schemata and topoi that simply join the

[85] The rejection of a reading of Aper as a mere "straw man" given an ostensible "vulgar sense of values" (Williams 1978: 28) and a *goût du profit* (Michel 1962: 73-5) is undertaken persuasively by Champion (1994), who points out that Maternus is no less cynical about the social benefits of oratory. Goldberg (1999), meanwhile, endeavors to restore "Aper's role to seriousness and respectability" by noting, in part, that the latter's "shrewd" and "progressive" view of oratory's need to accommodate social conditions is virtually endorsed in Maternus's second speech. Neither author, however, discerns the more fundamental point of agreement between the two men (one uniting them, indeed, with Messalla), namely that whatever form or genre *eloquentia* takes as its guise succeeds only inasmuch as it manifests sentiment and affect, carrying *vis* to fruition and moving the audience by grace of the perennial *ingenium.* Craige Champion, "'Dialogus' 5.3-10.8: A Reconsideration of the Character of Marcus Aper," *Phoenix* 48 (1994): 152-163; Sander M. Goldberg,. "Appreciating Aper: The Defence of Modernity in Tacitus' *Dialogus de oratoribus*," *Classical Quarterly* 49 (1999): 224-37.

monolith of common discourse: *Fugitet foedam et insulsam scurrilitatem* ("let him [the orator] avoid ugly and silly absurdity," 22.5), he demands, just before mocking two supposedly awkward genitive metaphors from Cicero and one of the orator's unhappier euphuistic ticks. *Nolo inridere "rotam Fortunae" et "ius verrinum"* ("I don't want to mock his 'wheel of Fortune' and 'juice of the swine,'" 23.1), says Aper, promising to dwell neither upon Cicero's pretentious habit of ending sentences with *esse videatur* ("it would seem to be"). The value of rhetoric is, for Aper, rigorously circumscribed by inartificial passion, a universal *pathos* demanding the non-universality of style in order that the heart may always be moved. Rhetoric is, then, neither more nor less than a homeopathic antidote to correct affectless and banal speech.

Even as he remains optimistic about the state of practical oratory, Aper maintains as his abiding concern one marking no departure from Maternus's and Messalla's: *Eloquentia* lies in the communion of *animus* and speech. The conceit that Maternus and Aper are at irreconcilable odds in Tacitus's *agon* over the health of eloquence wears awfully thin when we compare Aper's first with Maternus's second speech. Maternus, we will recall, is transfixed by the ability of *eloquentia* to translate will to power, moving against rhetoric for interceding between *vis* and speech. Aper's defense of the moderns appeals in the second speech to this very capacity, though now in terms of audience response: Unfamiliar language is necessary to capture the mind's wandering attention. The speech with which the *Dialogus* opens actually anticipates Maternus's peroration. Nothing in Aper's critique of the *periculosius* ("more hazardous," 10.6) pastime to which the erstwhile advocate has retired would be out of place in Maternus's second speech. The only disagreement is whether practical oratory continues to provide an avenue for the soul's enrichment and expression or whether, as Maternus will suggest, rhetoric and desuetude have

hopelessly obstructed the way.[86] Maternus's idyllic retreat is, for Aper, premature. Poetry remains among the *ludicras…artes*; by cultivating it at oratory's expense, Maternus prefers *errare* ("to tarry") with that which is *levioribus* ("rather lightweight," 10.5).

The sin that Maternus commits in Aper's eyes is the neglect of his *natura*. The debate between the two men turns, then, on the relationship between contemporary discourse and the soul, for it is precisely to protect what remains of his enervated *natura* that Maternus renounces practical oratory. Not nearly so jaded, Aper insists that oratory remains the straightest path by which inner *vis* can express itself: Only in the domain of oratory can men *ingenii viribus* ("by the forces of talent") ascend ("*pervenirent*") to starry *fortunam* ("success"), becoming *principes fori* ("leaders of public affairs") and even members of the emperor's coterie (8.2-3). Just as Maternus uneasily balances *eloquentia*'s vatic sanctity with its ability to make good on the will-to-power, so does Aper assimilate beatific inspiration with careerism in a single breath. The *ipsa eloquentia* ("very eloquence") that permits the making of some of Rome's best-deserved *parvenus*—Eprius Marcellus and Vibius Crispus, say—comes from the seat of *numen et caelestis vis* ("divine will and heavenly force," 8.2). In a formulation that actually anticipates Maternus's poet receiving inspiration through the *pectus*, Aper says that the special quality of these ingenious orators lies in *quod…nec accipi possit* ("what…cannot be comprehended," 8.3). Historically specific though literary style may be, the seat of eloquence rests unmoved: It is pre-discursive (hence Aper's apophatic and opaque description) and wrapped up in an *ingenium* or *animus* that may or may not itself be in contact with *caelestis vis* ("heavenly force").

[86] Walker and Williams both insist that the *Dialogus* represents an indictment of pragmatic oratory—"the traditional Roman (and Quintilianic) ideal," notes Walker—in favor of the epideictic (i.e., poetry). Nevertheless, the critique of decline emerging from the dialogue's five speeches is hardly so generically specific: "Poetic" language (the tragedies of Accius and Pacuvius, for instance) can suffer the same flight of affect threatening post-Republican dicanic and symboleutic oratory, just as *poeticus decor* in pragmatic discourse is no insurance against unhappy results (20.5). Jeffrey Walker, *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 105; Williams, *Change and Decline: Roman Literature in the Early Empire*, 47.

Oratory's great virtue in Aper's view is its ability to give immediate expression to this inner and unnamable *numen*. So ineluctable is the force of *eloquentia* that it makes a meritocracy out of Imperial hierarchy. This ascension is, as Aper describes it, one of the soul: When speaking, *mihi supra tribunatus et praeturas et consulatus ascendere videor* ("it seems to me that I am ascending beyond the offices of the tribune, praetor, and consul" 7.2). This non-phenomenal force is *quod, si non ultro oritur, nec codicillis datur nec cum gratia venit* ("what, if it does not emanate from beyond, is neither by privileges given nor through favor obtained," 7.2). Indeed, the whole of Aper's defense of oratory stands on precisely the grounds that Maternus had employed in calling for a turn to poetry: Namely, the care of the soul in the making of a discourse reflective of psyche and affect. Again, *eloquentia* depends on reinvesting speech with the affect of which normal speech is deprived and this perhaps only recently. Even the meticulously crafted oration does not fail to involve the soul, for even here *est quoddam sicut ipsius dictionis, ita gaudii pondus et constantia* ("there is something as though of the diction itself in the depth and lastingness of the [speaker's] pleasure," 6.5). Never, however, does Aper depart from the assumption running scarcely beneath the surface of the entirety of the *Dialogus*: Best is what is most immediate, namely speech emanating from *natura* and *animus*, two concepts as seemingly interchangeable for Aper as they are for Messalla and Maternus. To extemporaneous speaking belongs a *praecipua iucunditas* ("special pleasure"), *nam in ingenio quoque, sicut in agro* ("for as in the soul, so in the field"): *Gratiora…quae sua sponte nascuntur* ("dearer…[are] those things which grow of their own will," 6.6).

Aper's explicit endorsement of nature and inspiration over *quae diu serantur atque elaborentur* ("that which is long sown and belabored," 6.6) is remarkable for a speaker often mistaken for a defender of Gorgianism. But this is, for Aper, *voluptatem oratoriae eloquentiae*

("the pleasure of eloquent oratory," 6.1). Nothing is *dulcius libero et ingenuo animo* ("sweeter for the free and noble soul"). And nothing, finally, beckons more sweetly (or "persuasively") to the listener's psyche. For the rush of natural inspiration is the lifeblood of eloquence, a charge moving from soul to discourse and finally to audience in the act of persuasion. Just as Maternus and Messalla insist that speech deprived of the ability to impact the immediate world cannot know eloquence, so does Aper assert that eloquence—which is yet, for him, to flee the forum—works by working its spell on the listener in a meeting of the *animus*.

CHAPTER III

AN INNER *ἡγεμών*:

POETIC LIES IN PLUTARCH AND MARCUS AURELIUS

No Antique statement on the arts has better suited Modern "interarts" sensibilities than Simonides's: ζωγραφίαν μὲν εἶναι φθεγγομένην τὴν ποίησιν, ποίησιν δὲ σιγῶσαν τὴν ζωγραφίαν ("Poetry is vocal painting, painting mute poetry"). Momentarily leaving aside the citation's source and context—Plutarch, citing it to criticize it (*Moral*. 18a)—Simonides's statement should elicit a chariness for no reason besides its suspiciously "Modern" tenor. Verbal art as painting in the imagination what the plastic arts construct in the world is an understanding all too consonant with Mallarmé's notion of *le dire* transformed into *rêve*. It is all too consonant with a notion of *le parler* become *un art consacré aux fictions, sa virtualité*.[87] And it is all too consonant with post-Symbolist "concrete" poetics, with what Jacques Rancière rightly calls the Modern *ruine* of *l'orthodoxie lessignienne de la séparation des arts.*[88]

Antiquity is itself hardly mute on the subject. A painterly, plastic attitude to verbal creation is associated with Sophism and Sophistry, with facticity, with—because no longer limpid vehicle for nature, truth, and gods—decline. Wherever verbal art makes excessive appeal to what Quintilian will call the *oculus mentis* ("mind's eye," *Inst. orat.*, 8.3: 62), critics are wary and this nearly without exception. The names for time's artificial freezing, for chimeras' creation in the psyche, for *phantasia*'s vise-grip upon the mind are, in the Hellenistic and Imperial rhetorical traditions, many and overlapping. Much of the anxiety over a literature given too far over to the imagination, a literature become too much like, as Longinus says of the late Homer,

[87] Mallarmé, "Crise de vers," in *Poésies et autres textes*, ed, Jean-Luc Steinmetz, 345-361 (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2005), 361.

[88] Jacques Rancière, *Le Partage du sensible: esthétique et politique* (Paris: Éditions de la Fabrique, 1998), 18; 41.

ὑποχωροῦντος εἰς ἑαυτὸν Ὠκεανοῦ ("an ocean turning into itself," 1.13), crystallizes in discussions over *enargeia* and *ekphrasis*. Non-specialists, naturally, discuss facticity and mental "creation" in less exact terms, though, in turn, with a consternation generally more extreme than the specialists'. The question of decline is one always implicitly posed, for the specialists and non-specialists alike regularly agree with Longinus (1.13): The turn towards τοῖς μυθώδεσι καὶ ἀπίστοις ("the mythical and incredible") is a sign of ἐρημουμένου…μεγέθους ("decaying…greatness"). What is more, the move away from deed and act towards phantasy and artifice is associated with the same desuetude of pragmatic oratory at the center of Tacitus's *Dialogus de oratoribus.* Facticity is associated, that is, with the growing prestige of what Marcus Aurelius (in a single revealing breath) calls ῥητορικῇ καὶ ποιητικῇ (*Meditations*, 1.17: 4). It is an affair, that is, of the growing prestige of epideixis and the Second Sophistic more generally.

This and the following chapter begin to unfold the history of Hellenistic and Imperial conservatism in the face of the imagination's efforts to outdo decorum. The polemic often wears the mask of concern over the verbal arts' plastic, painterly pretensions, but—given Marcus Aurelius's own concession of the impossibility of a non-imagistic discourse—the real target is individual desire and fancy no matter the medium. For, obviously, it is a painting of the mind, one asphyxiating inspiration and truth and so blinding the soul, that is the "problem." Conceiving of the poem's capacity to ἀποπλανᾶσθαι ("seduce," 16c) as the sacrilegious promise of a truth γεγραμμένην ("painted"), one made cheap object of the human sensorium, Plutarch, a *littérateur* but no rhetor or poet, is a crucial Imperial witness. Even if intemperate—and, indeed, his is Antiquity's most intemperate condemnation of the verbal arts—Marcus Aurelius gives voice to the Empire's non-specialist elite still dismayed by the influence of *quos rhetoras vocant*. The emperor agrees with Plutarch: Verbal creation is essentially perfidy. He nevertheless refuses Plutarch's

cynical apology reducing poetry to propaedeutic for philosophy. Protecting the soul, inner δαίμων, divine ἡγεμονικόν, from linguistic illusion—keeping it μὴ φύρειν μηδὲ θορυβεῖν ὄχλῳ φαντασιῶν ("from being confused and confounded by the chaos of images," III.16)—requires a refusal of language altogether.

Chapter IV turns to the genealogy of *enargeia* as a sign of Decadence according to the specialists themselves. *De Institutione oratoria* exhibits the discipline's traditional and traditionally wary position before what Quintilian designates as *hoc animi vitium* ("this vice of the soul," 6.2: 31). This *vitium* is the imagination's natural proclivity for facticity and caprice, for looking beyond what is *perspicuo ac probabili* ("clear and probable") to what has been *verbis depingitur* ("by words painted," 8.3:61-63). "Demetrius" of Phalerium, Quintilian's Hellenistic predecessor, had in *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας* (*On Style*) anticipated this critique: Τοῦ ὑπερβεβλημένου τῆς διανοίας καὶ ἀδυνάτου ("Impossible and hyperbolic thinking," 115) is a vice of both style and mind, the heart of suasion itself, the possibility of mental "creation"—and it is one whose indulgence must be carefully regulated.

PLUTARCH AND THE SALUTARY UTILITY OF THE POETIC

In *Πῶς δεῖ τὸν νέον ποιημάτων ἀκούειν* (*How the Youth Must Understand Poetry*), Plutarch attempts a "reparative reading" of poetry's value in education. Despite its constitutive falsity—οὐκ ἴσμεν δ᾽ ἄμυθον οὐδ᾽ ἀψευδῆ ποίησιν ("We know of no poem without myth and lying," 16c)—the youth's initiation is an inevitability. Only with careful supervision and advance warning can the dangers posed by this μηχάνημα λυγκὸς αἰολώτερον ("machine more cunning than the lynx,"16d) be at all softened. Despite this seemingly "moderate" call for a "third way," one apparently more accommodating towards poetry than Marcus Aurelius's flat rejection, the method of ἀκούειν ("understanding") advocated in the *Moralia* admits little compromise.

Deprived of intrinsic value, poetry finds itself reduced by Plutarch to little other than a propaedeutic for philosophical training. As Plutarch himself has it it in the essay's final line, this is a reparative hermeneutics that would render the youth προπαιδευθεὶς ("conscious in advance") of truth's perilously tenuous status in poetry. So armed, the youth will approach the poets' lying μηχάνημα ("machine") only ἵνα…ὑπὸ ποιητικῆς ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν προπέμπηται ("so as…to be led by the poetic to philosophy," 37b).

Addressing himself to Marcus Sedatus, his putative interlocutor, Plutarch announces from the epistle's opening apostrophe a hermeneutics that would manipulate the "pleasure" of poetry in order to inculcate τὰ δόγματα ("the doctrines," 14f) of philosophy. Inasmuch as ἔχει τοσοῦτον αἰμυλίας καὶ χάριτος ὅσον εὖ πεπλεγμένη διάθεσις μυθολογίας ("nothing possesses as much enchantment and charm as a composition well-woven with myths," 16b) the teacher's burden is knowing how to manipulate this pleasure for doctrinal ends. Similar to τὸ φαρμακῶδες ("poison," "tonic") poetry is unconcerned with its own safety and value; it is all in the dose and use. Moreover, the poem works by enveloping its content, which may or may not itself be corrupt, in what Homer (cited by Plutarch) terms a πάρφασις, ἥ τ᾽ ἔκλεψε νόον πύκα περ φρονεόντων ("a spectacle, which steals by force the mind of the wise," 15c). The spectacle's force exercising far greater influence upon the reader uninitiated, it is to be combatted only if the youth is given ἐν ταῖς ἀναγνώσεσι μᾶλλον ἢ ταῖς ὁδοῖς παιδαγωγίας ("more direction in reading than in the street," 15a).

The *Moralia*'s own method of ἀνάγνωσις ("reading") is one of extraction and purification. Once instructed in looking beneath and beyond the phenomenal πάρφασις—source of pleasure, untruth, and fiction—the novice reader might begin to reach the truth and value, no matter how modest it may be, otherwise distorted by poetry's appeals to the imagination. The real menace

takes form when the elimination of the phenomenal bait fails to take place, for poetry, owing to an outer sweetness beckoning the imagination, is preternaturally capable of conjuring a truth not real. Hardly a philosopher, Plutarch gives the epistle's sole metaphysical passage, one whose Platonic and even cultic debt is unmistakeable, on precisely this point:

> ... πάλιν παρασκευάζωμεν εὐθὺς ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἔχειν ἔναυλον ὅτι ποιητικῇ μὲν οὐ πάνυ μέλον ἐστὶ τῆς ἀληθείας, ἡ δὲ περὶ ταῦτ᾽ ἀλήθεια καὶ τοῖς μηδὲν ἄλλο πεποιημένοις ἔργον ἢ γνῶσιν καὶ μάθησιν τοῦ ὄντος εὖ μάλα δυσθήρατός ἐστι καὶ δύσληπτος, ὡς ὁμολογοῦσιν αὐτοί.... καὶ νὴ Δία τὰ Σωκράτους ἐξομνυμένου παρὰ Πλάτωνι τὴν περὶ τούτων γνῶσιν. ἧττον γὰρ ὡς εἰδόσι τι περὶ τούτων προσέξουσι τοῖς ποιηταῖς ἐν οἷς τοὺς φιλοσόφους ἰλιγγιῶντας ὁρῶσιν (17e-f).
>
> At once and from the beginning [of education] let us inculcate [the novice] with the constant reminder that the poetic is not especially preoccupied with truth, that the truth concerning things, even for those who have given themselves no task other than the assiduous knowledge and understanding of its [truth's] being, is evasive and fugitive—as they themselves admit…. And by God [let the novice recall] Socrates in Plato denying any knowledge of these matters. By seeing the philosophers [themselves] at a loss in this things, they [neophyte readers] will adhere less to the thoughts of the poets.

Conversing with the imagination, poetry can hide truth, lies, anything, indeed, in between by contorting itself into readily accessible ὁμοιότητα τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ("semblances of truth," 25c). The more the neophyte reader is seduced by the illusion of a truth easily seized, the more the youth will invest confidence in a vision of the actual world deprived of real truth, which is to say one deprived of the sacred and imperceptible. Anticipating Weber's *Entzauberung der Welt* ("disenchantment of the world") or, indeed, Hölderlin's *entflohene Götter* ("fled gods") by what the first would call *Rationalisierung und Intellektualisierung*, Plutarch's picture of a world emptied of divinity—a lying picture built by the poet—is that of nothing less than a sacrilege.[89]

By what twist does poetry create this blasphemous vision of the world? Following his remarks on truth's fugitive nature, Plutarch provides two revealing citations which the new reader

[89] Max Weber, "Wissenschaft als Beruf," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre* (Tübingen: Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr, 1922 [1918]), 554.

is to keep πρόκειρα ("at hand," 17e-f). The first is from Empedocles, the second Xenophanes (the irony of citing verse to prove essentially non-poetic truth escaping Plutarch).

> οὕτως οὔτ᾽ ἐπιδερκτὰ τάδ᾽ ἀνδράσιν οὔτ᾽ ἐπακουστά
> οὔτ᾽ νόῳ περιληπτά
>
> These things are thus neither visible nor audible to men,
> Nor are they comprehensible to the mind.

> καὶ τὸ μὲν οὖν σαφὲς οὔτις ἀνὴρ γένετ᾽ οὐδέ τις ἔσται
> εἰδὼς ἀμφὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἅσσα λέγω περὶ πάντων
>
> None then has been born and none will exist
> knowing with clarity about the gods and all of the things I recount.

Like a *trompe l'œil* trapping the guileless νόυς ("mind"), poetry lies by casting over reality a blinding shadow parading as light. The parade works only because poetry, like Gorgias's rhetoric, twists and turns forms, lines, and colors in the mind, building a phenomenal language that lulls the imagination into a quiescent stupor. Captured, fixed, nailed into place, ἀλήθεια is by poetry's *effet de réel* concealed altogether. For truth, real truth is ἐπιδερκτὰ ("invisible"), being of the θεῶν ("gods"). Τὰ δόγματα ("the doctrines") of dialectical reason are, as Socrates himself had been at pains to show, to the imagination never so cheaply given.

Why, however, is poetry's illusion of an ἀλήθεια perceptible by the mind's eye such a menace to philosophic doctrine? The reason lies in these doctrines' essential ideality. Space, quite simply, cannot be predicated of them. Plutarch is fixated from the epistle's exordium by the poetic threat to τὰ περὶ τῶν ψυχῶν δόγματα ("the doctrines concerning the souls"), for poetry's language of the imagination makes the mind ever blinder (or more forgetful) of the soul and non-phenomenal truth.

The *Moralia* owes the notion of an essential non-spatiality of truth and soul to Plato, who, especially in the *Timaeus*, speaks of a matter δεξόμενον ("which receives"), a substance

which can at best bear ἐκτυπώματος ("imprintings") of which the ideas are themselves "deprived" (ἐκτὸς αὐτῷ...τῶν εἰδῶν, 51c). Plato names this passive substance χώρα (52b), Attic Greek's earthiest, least metaphysical word for "space."

> διὸ καὶ πάντων ἐκτὸς εἰδῶν εἶναι χρεὼν τὸ τὰ πάντα ἐκδεξόμενον ἐν αὑτῷ γένη, καθάπερ περὶ τὰ ἀλείμματα, ὁπόσα εὐώδη, τέχνῃ μηχανῶνται πρῶτον τοῦτ᾽ αὐτὸ ὑπάρχον, ποιοῦσιν ὅ τι μάλιστα ἀώδη τὰ δεξόμενα ὑγρὰ τὰς ὀσμάς· ὅσοι τε ἔν τισι τῶν μαλακῶν σχήματα ἀπομάττειν ἐπιχειροῦσι, τὸ παράπαν σχῆμα οὐδὲν ἔνδηλον ὑπάρχειν ἐῶσι, προομαλύναντες δὲ ὅ τι λειότατον ἀπεργάζονται.
>
> It is appropriate, then, that what receives all [of the ideas] be in itself and by its very nature deprived of all of these ideas. Just as with oils, when they are fragrant, they [artisans] produce this state first by *tekhnè*. They accomplish this by rendering what receives these liquid fragrances as deprived of fragrance as possible. Just as those who work on malleable matter first efface forms, allowing none to remain visible, they flatten what they finish by transforming it into a substance as smooth as possible (50e-51b).

POETIC LYING AND THE SILENT ARTS

Plato's analogy in the *Timaeus* between plastic artisanship and the ontogenesis of existence—the latter emerging where ideality crashes into space—goes hand in hand with wariness towards poetry, for the poet, as Plutarch has it, engages in a like kind of ontogenesis. The poet apes an act of invention, however, belonging properly to the gods. Uniting the qualities of sculptor, painter, and architect, ὁ κόσμος ὅ τε δημιουργὸς ("the demiurge of the cosmos," 28a) is the being in possession of the sacred right to fix truth into space. Aiming also to manipulate matter, endeavoring too to create the (semblance) of existence and existents through the τέχνῃ of his ideas and imagination, the poet poses as a god. The existence borne by the poem, however, is nothing but a phantom of the mind.

Plutarch describes the factitious creation of the impostor poet in terms of literature's purloining of the silent arts' power. True language, non-poetic language (these being indissoluble in Plutarch's eyes) engage not in invention but in heuresis and this alone. Tool (at most) for the purveying of truth, ideal language needs none of that lying μηχάνημα ("machine") of false

phenomena, that πάρφασις ("allure") speaking its language of images. Imitating the act of invention proper to the plastic artist—itself an imitation of the work of the demiurge (or vice versa?)—the poet is a speaker not content to passively, denotatively give voice to what has already been given (*data*) for truth. The poet begins, that is, to give them form—false form, mental form, one "existing" in the imagination alone. And this the poem accomplishes by painting a scene that would fix itself in space and, in an act analogous to the demiurge's, substitute itself for empirical reality.

The word that paints in the mind, poetry conjures the effect of an ἀλήθεια captured and visible through a scene-setting that blinds the naïve reader to the possibility of non-phenomenal truth. Poetic lying is the promise of a truth accessible to the senses in a grammar of images. True language, denotative language can never hope to compete in seducing the imagination: οὔτε γὰρ μέτρον οὔτε τρόπος οὔτε λέξεως ὄγκος οὔτ᾽ εὐκαιρία μεταφορᾶς οὔθ᾽ ἁρμονία καὶ σύνθεσις ἔχει τοσοῦτον αἰμυλίας καὶ χάριτος ὅσον εὖ πεπλεγμένη διάθεσις μυθολογίας ("For neither meter nor trope, neither the weight of diction nor the consonance of metaphor, neither the harmony of composition possesses as much ruse and charm as a narration melded guilefully with fiction," 16b). Plutarch unhesitatingly describes this fabulous ruse in terms of the poet's imitation of the painter: Ἀλλ᾽ ὥσπερ ἐν γραφαῖς κινητικώτερόν ἐστι χρῶμα γραμμῆς διὰ τὸ ἀνδρείκελον καὶ ἀπατηλόν ("Just as in pictures color is more kinetic, vivid, and misleading than the line[s] [themselves]"), poets add ψεῦδος ("deceit") to their compositions in order to furnish them with the ability to ἐκπλήττει καὶ ἀγαπᾶται ("astonish and please"). Language of deceit, false at the core—οὐκ ἴσμεν δ᾽ ἄμυθον οὐδ᾽ ἀψευδῆ ποίησιν ("We do not know of non-mythical, non-lying poetry," 16c)—poetry is discourse refusing to communicate, refusing to modestly and imperfectly point to truth (as in dialectics). It offers instead a cloying and easily accessible likeness of a truth little more

than invention.

Since Plutarch is offering an apology, refusing to deny that the twisted language of poetry can itself be twisted for pedagogic ends, it is all the more remarkable that the *Moralia*'s definition of poetry as essentially false is more radical than anything from the Classical period, anything, indeed, in all of Plato. In an astonishing moment, the *Moralia*'s explicit equivalence of ψεῦδος ("deceit") and ποίησις ("poetic making") finds itself drawn precisely when Plutarch attempts to explain Socrates's mysterious pastime on the eve of his execution. The philosopher bides his time, the *Phaedo* tells us, versifying Aesop's fables. Plutarch's apology for this act of surprise ποίησις is absolutely tortuous, and the very need to justify this (seemingly) grotesque juxtaposition suggests just how vexed the *Moralia*'s author is by this eleventh-hour meeting between Socrates, ἀληθείας ἀγωνιστὴς ("combatant for truth"), and a language that has just been deemed false in its very essence. By Plutarch's reasoning, Socrates, ἅτε δὴ γεγονὼς ἀληθείας ἀγωνιστὴς τὸν ἅπαντα βίον οὐ πιθανὸς ἦν οὐδ᾽ εὐφυὴς ψευδῶν δημιουργός ("having been a combatant for truth for all his life, was neither a skilled nor a natural fabricant of lies," 16c). The philosopher would, it follows, have been incapable of obeying the order received in his dreams to "make poetry," since ποίησιν οὐκ οὖσαν ᾗ ψεῦδος μὴ πρόσεστι ("there is no poetry to which deceit is not added"). Nevertheless, because Socrates claims to have the μύθους τοὺς Αἰσώπου ("the fables of Aesop") already (and somewhat mysteriously) at hand and in his memory (the redundancy is the *Moralia*'s), he manages to fulfill the oneiric command.

The "amplification" that the *Phaedo*'s original narration of the acts of Socrates between condemnation and death undergo in the *Moralia* is telling. Indeed, Plutarch's modifications to Plato's account suggest an intensification of the rhetoric of decline after the Roman "revolution," as the antithesis between verbal creation and truth, one already salient among rhetoric's Republican

antagonists (in, for instance, Cato the Elder), is heightened. In the *Phaedo*'s very middle, in a passage where the voice of Plato sounds more clearly than ever, Socrates offers a categorical distinction between myth and logos. The first, he says (explicitly) belongs to the poet, the second (he implies) to the philosopher. Being a philosopher by vocation, Socrates says that αὐτὸς οὐκ ἦ μυθολογικός ("he is no mythograph") and is thus incapable of imitating the poet. The limits of the poet's office are infrangible: Ἐννοήσας ὅτι τὸν ποιητὴν δέοι, εἴπερ μέλλοι ποιητὴς εἶναι, ποιεῖν μύθους, ἀλλ᾽ οὐ λόγους ("Given that the poet must, if he is really a poet, compose myths and not speeches," 61b), Socrates would have been incapable of "making poetry" in prison failing easy access to the Aesop's fables.

Whereas in Plato's account the distinction between dealer in μῦθος and λόγος is a professional one—Socrates simply lacks the poetic knack—in Plutarch's the difference is transformed into one strictly between the verbal arts and truth. Socrates never mentions that the poet or mythographer fabricates what are inevitably ψευδῆ ("lies"): Only once in the *Phaedo* does the term ψεῦδος appear, and here (remarkably) in the context not of "myth" but of "logos" (90b). Plutarch's fixation with the relationship between artifice and poetic lying is suggested not simply by lexical repetition, but by his insistence on translating an originally professional difference into a moral one. Unlike Plato's Socrates, Plutarch's cannot compose poetry not because of a weak knowledge of prosody but because he, as a philosopher, is flatly incapable of lying.

Well beyond what Socrates himself suggests, the strict opposition that the *Moralia* draws between poetry and truth is symptomatic of the broader post-Republican view that discourse and *eloquentia* are in decline because under siege by a fatuous epideixis. This reaction is an extreme form of precisely what the original Sophists had engendered—and in Plato no less, though the philosopher's wariness before poetry is, tellingly, more nuanced and less stridently utilitarian than

Plutarch's. As Marcus Aurelius will make even clearer, the assimilation of verbal art and facticity among Imperial critics is complete, while the philosopher's logos (whose relationship to rhetoric and poetics had never been resolved) emerges somewhat ironically as the model for ideal discourse.

The hardening of the opposition between verbal art and truth in Imperial criticism, the hardening of what Suetonius (*De grammat.*, 3) and Tacitus (*Dialogus*, 35.1) insist was the early Republican hostility to rhetoric, is in perfect accord with the disequilibrium in the *genera dicendi* nascent already in Athens and Alexandria. To oppose philosophic discourse to verbal art produces a vision of philosophy that Plato (to say nothing of Socrates) would have found unrecognizable. Conversely, the notion of poetry and "mythography" as essentially opposed to truth would have shocked those for whom the words of Hesiod, Homer, and, indeed, the pre-Augustan narratives of Aeneas would have filled a sacral role.

At the heart of the appropriation of truth by philosophic discourse—and truth's flight from poetry—is a total reformulation of ἀλήθεια in terms of utility. None says this better than Tacitus's Aper, who provides a formulation mutely accepted by each of the *Dialogus*'s interlocutors: *Ad utilitatem vitae omnia consilia factaque nostra derigenda sunt* ("To utility for living all our designs and deeds should be directed," 5.5). Inasmuch as philosophic reason now gives view to a truth beyond the poet's reach, this reformulation of the role of truth in the *genera dicendi* does not leave philosophy itself unchanged. The latter is ever more reduced to its ethical dimensions, emerging (as in Marcus Aurelius) as a kind of upscale wisdom literature.

Unrecognizable, then, even compared to its already more "pragmatic" Peripatetic form, philosophy is conceived in Imperial circles not simply as a genre of discourse essentially opposed to the verbal arts, but as the path to a truth itself now reduced to utility. Above all (and as Marcus

Aurelius will show with such unpretentious clarity), philosophy has become the path away from imagination and delusion back into the soul. Plutarch, then, will begin his apology for the discursive arts with the "hopeful" proclamation that the youth can be taught to extract from poetry τὸ χρήσιμον ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ σωτήριον ("the useful and salutary in it," 14f). Declaring poetry a propaedeutic to philosophic truth (προφιλοσοφητέον τοῖς ποιήμασιν), Plutarch repeats the necessity of his hermeneutics of "extraction" almost verbatim: Those who read poetry must be ἐθιζομένους ἐν τῷ τέρποντι τὸ χρήσιμον ζητεῖν καὶ ἀγαπᾶν ("habituated to search for and to adore the useful amidst the pleasant"). If no utility is to be found in a given poem, its readers must be taught to διαμάχεσθαι καὶ δυσχεραίνειν ("refuse and find intolerable," 16a) such a work.

Reading Between the (Painted) Lines

How, though, is the novice reader to extract from the text the ὠφέλιμα καὶ χρήσιμα ("profitable and the useful," 28e)? By eliminating, the *Moralia* tells us, precisely those elements of the poem which speak the language of images. Like the "color" of the χρῶμα γραμμῆς ("painted line,"16b), the pigments of verbal art conspire to produce a γεγραμμένην ("tableau," 18a) and ἀπατηλόν ("illusion," 16c). The χρῶματα ("colors") of verbal art include ποιητικῇ λέξει ("poetic diction," 28e), τῷ κάλλει καὶ τῇ κατασκευῇ τῶν ὀνομάτων ("the beauty and arrangement of words," 30d), and the φάσματα καὶ εἴδωλα ("phantasms and semblances" 17b) that it is able to summon. Plutarch is categoric: If behind this γεγραμμένην ("tableau") a truth is to be found, it is a *philosophical* truth, a truth belonging strictly to utility. Faced with the seductions of poetic artifice, the novice δεῖ δὲ τοῦτο μὴ πάσχειν μηδ᾽ ἀποπλανᾶσθαι τῶν πραγμάτων ("must not suffer an estrangement from real facts," 28e). The reader must never allow the πολλὰ…ὠφέλιμα καὶ χρήσιμα ("many…useful and profitable things") masked by poetic form to διαφεύγει[ν] ("flee," 28e).

Transformed into the rigorously pragmatic, something scarcely surviving the μηχάνημα ("machine," 16d) of epideixis, the ἀλήθεια to be extracted from the poetic text turns out to be rather monotonous indeed. That Aeschylus criticizes human vanity in warning that one must μηδ' ἐπαίρεσθαι τοῖς παρὰ τῶν πολλῶν ἐπαίνοις ("not become inflated before the praise of the many," 32d); that Homer reveals τήν τε γὰρ ἀνδρείαν ἀποφαίνων μάθημα ("valiance as a learned quality," 31f); that Timotheus of Miletus praises the αἰδῶ ("humility," 32d) of the noble warrior—these are the type of philosophical lessons to be recovered amid and despite the artifice of poetic form. These also happen to be just the sort of pop-ethical "discoveries" of an increasingly diluted and "light" Stoicism. These are truths, in any case, which if present in the poem are not merely distorted anamorphically by the imagistic word; they are on loan from philosophy. The exegete's role is to make sure that this is never lost on the young man: The teacher ἐκτρέφειν χρὴ καὶ αὔξειν ἀποδείξεσι καὶ μαρτυρίαις φιλοσόφοις, ἀποδιδόντας τὴν εὕρεσιν ἐκείνοις ("must amplify [these lessons hidden in the poem] through philosophical proofs and citations, attributing to them [i.e., the philosophers] their discovery," 35f).

The Inner ἡγεμών*: Marcus Aurelius and the Rhetoric of Silence*

Obsessed with the verbal arts no less than the cultivation of the self, Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* is an intemperate (and invaluable) entry in the polemic, one to which Sophism's emergence in fifth-century Athens first gives voice, over the growing influence of rhetoric and poetry on both "normal" speech and the soul. The emperor offers no concessions: The epideictic—under which rhetoric, poetry, and Sophism are confusedly grouped—corrodes the integrity of the self whose cultivation and stewardship is the singular aim of the wise. The inverse of a "philosophical" discourse unmasking the illusions of the material world, rhetorical discourse seduces the inner ἡγεμών ("general") with phantom images concealing existential

impermanence. The capacity to deceive is owed, Marcus Aurelius suggests, to the verbal arts' ability to lure by images the imagination ever further from the soul. So perilous, indeed, is the threat of verbal creation to the soul that Marcus Aurelius seems finally to endorse a *reductio ad absurdum* of sorts, showing discomfort even with "inartistic" discourse. The unconfessed phantasy of which the whole of the *Meditations* seems to issue envisions a self-sufficient, reflexive, inner "thinking" purified of phoneme and even idea—a soul, that is, stripped of discourse as such.

If Plutarch represents a "moderate" voice on the question of the value of an "artified" discourse—the verbal arts containing for him a philosophico-utilitarian truth disguised in a ἀντίστροφος τῇ ζῳγραφίᾳ ("homologue to painting," 17f)—Marcus Aurelius offers no such concession. Epideictic discourse exercises a corrosive influence that, failing the reader's assiduous effort, promises the ruin of the soul's equilibrium. Compared to that of Plutarch, a professional writer whose mother tongue was Greek, the attitude of Marcus Aurelius in the wake of the Second Sophistic is far more representative of the antipathy towards supposed Asiatic mannerism among not only the Roman populace but among a substantial part of the Imperial elite: *quae mala primum in Vrbe nata* ("some evils first born in the city"), pronounces Tacitus' Messalla on the influence of *quos rhetoras uocant* ("what they call 'rhetoricians'") in Roman education, *mox per Italiam fusa, iam in prouincias manant* ("soon spread throughout Italy, [and] now permeate the provinces") (*Dialogus de oratoribus*, 28.1-30.2).

The emperor's *Τὰ εἰς ἑαυτόν* (*That Which [is] for Himself*)—commonly translated as *Meditations*—embodies a heightening of antitheses belonging originally to the debate surrounding Sophism's first appearance in fifth-century Athens. Utility and ἀλήθεια ("truth") have become indistinguishable: The philosophic logos has become an exact opposite of rhetoric, poetry, and

Sophism, themselves homogenized haphazardly under the banner of the epideictic. Above all, it is the measure to which discourse resembles the "silent" arts that language corrodes the integrity of a psyche whose stewardship and cultivation is the singular mark of the learned man.

The *Meditations*' initially perplexing fixation on the verbal arts from the exordium is a little appreciated characteristic of a book ostensibly consecrated to ethical cultivation. Nevertheless, the essential position of discourse beholden to the spell of rhetoric and poetry—as the crystallization of everything constituting a threat to truth, reason, and utility—is clear even in the rote expressions of gratitude with which the *Meditations* open. The emperor thanks Q. Junius Rusticus (100-170 AD), his personal instructor in Stoicism, for having taught him τὸ μὴ ἐκτραπῆναι εἰς ζῆλον σοφιστικόν ("to not be seduced by Sophistic extravagance," I.7) and to not προτρεπτικὰ λογάρια διαλέγεσθαι ("discourse in insignificant exhortations," I.7). As though these disapproving allusions to the progymnasmata were insufficiently clear, the emperor concludes his praise of Rusticus with thanks for having instructed him to τὸ ἀποστῆναι ῥητορικῆς καὶ ποιητικῆς καὶ ἀστειολογία ("abstain from rhetoric, the poetic, and urbane discourse," I.7).

As the putative expression and vehicle of utility's opposite, verbal art finds itself subject to special condemnation. One must remain in perfect communion—and in a communication accomplished without the interference of artificial *logos*—with τὸ ἡγεμονικόν ("the [inner] government, II.2). The emperor is unhesitating as to what menaces self-governance and self-sufficient understanding: ἄφες τὰ βιβλία. μηκέτι σπῶ. οὐ δέδοται ("Away with books! Do not be led astray [by them]. They are not allowed." II.2). The essential connection between ethical deviation, the interruption of autonomous internal communication, and the discursive arts is announced towards the end of the fourth book: Ἐπὶ τὴν σύντομον ἀεὶ τρέχε. σύντομος δὲ ἡ κατὰ φύσιν, ὥστε κατὰ τὸ ὑγιέστατον πᾶν λέγειν καὶ πράσσειν ("Always pursue brevity. The succinct

being consonant with nature, it [brevity] ensures that one speaks and acts in the soundest fashion"). Renouncing any enunciation not "succinct" and "immediate" ("σύντομος") holds salutary power for the individual: ἀπαλλάσσει γὰρ ἡ τοιαύτη πρόθεσις κόπων καὶ στρατείας, καὶ πάσης οἰκονομίας καὶ κομψείας ("This very decision frees [you] from troubles and struggles, of all calculations and mannerisms" [IV.51]).

The very notion that a dialectic between temporality and spatiality is the relevant delimitation of "artistic" possibilities in a manner itself a-temporal and non-spatial is incoherent. What is nevertheless clear is that Marcus Aurelius—following a thread already perceptible in the criticisms provoked by the birth of rhetoric (and hence of Sophism)—opposes a logos purified of spatial materiality to a discourse participating in the artificial suspension of temporality. Insofar as the plastic arts offer the most "flagrant" manifestation of this interruption of time, it is to their supposed influence that discursive spatialization is attributed. By no accident does Marcus deplore the corruption of theatrical discourse by characterizing this corruption in terms of an artifice fixed in time (and hence irreal). Immediately following this critique—where he attributes theater's corruption to the fetishism of φιλοτεχνίαν ("artisanal *tekhnè*")—the emperor directs his attention towards spatial art as such. Οὐκ ἔστι χείρων οὐδεμία φύσις τέχνης ("Nature is not inferior to any art [*tekhnè*])," he pronounces (citing a maxim of unknown origin, XI.10). He continues: καὶ γὰρ αἱ τέχναι τὰς φύσεις μιμοῦνται ("For the arts [*tekhnai*] imitate what is natural.") And εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, ἡ πασῶν τῶν ἄλλων τελεωτάτη καὶ περιληπτικωτάτη φύσις οὐκ ἂν ἀπολείποιτο τῆς τεχνικῆς εὐμηχανίας ("If that is the case, nature, the most perfect and comprehensive of all, cannot be surpassed by the ingenious arts," XI.10).

Gradually and almost imperceptibly, the *Meditations*, a treatise beginning with a plea for pragmatic restraint, transforms into a macabre and even intemperate polemic against worldly

attachment as such. In the terms of the explicitly hylomorphic scheme interpolated by Marcus Aurelius—Τίς ἐπὶ τούτου ἡ ἱστορία τῆς ἀληθείας ; διαίρεσις εἰς τὸ ὑλικὸν καὶ εἰς τὸ αἰτιῶδες ("What, then, is knowledge of truth? The dissolution [of the phenomenon] into matter and into form," IV.21)—the *Meditations* become a polemic against all of sublunar existence. As the virulence of the rhetoric intensifies, so too does the extremity of this analytic dissolution of the phenomenon reveal itself. Ζόφῳ καὶ ῥύπῳ...κινήσεως ("Blackness, mud, instability," V.10), the temporal world and the phenomena constituting it offer nothing to the *hegemon* within. τί ποτ᾽ ἐστὶ τὸ ἐκτιμηθῆναι ἢ τὸ ὅλως σπουδασθῆναι δυνάμενον; ("What is there to be honored or pursued entirely by our power?" V.10). His immediate answer: οὐδ᾽ ἐπινοῶ ("I imagine nothing"). To the contrary, τοὐναντίον γὰρ δεῖ παραμυθούμενον ἑαυτὸν περιμένειν τὴν φυσικὴν λύσιν ("one must wait and seek refuge in natural dissolution," V.10). Inasmuch as the temporal world surrounds us with distractions appealing to our sensual faculties (i.e., those not originating from the internal δαίμων), maintaining "hope" in φυσικὴν λύσιν ("natural dissolution") is no simple charge.

To conserve the soul in its pure formalism before a worldly ἡδονὴ ("pleasure") which σφάλλει ("ensnares," V.9), it is necessary to submit the imagination to a discipline unrelenting. Such regulation of thought entails the abstraction of the formal cause from its material counterpart in recalling that only the idea belongs to the inner *hegemon*—and that it is therefore subject to contemplation—while temporal substance once unmasked as such is only a νεκρὸς ("cadaver," VI.13). Τὰ γὰρ...ἐγκόμματα ἤτοι τοῦ σωματικοῦ ἐστι τοῦ νεκροῦ ("The obstacles [of the sublunar world] belong to the body—a cadaver, in truth," X.33). Γυμνὰ τῶν φλοιῶν θεάσασθαι τὰ αἰτιώδη ("To perceive the forms denuded of their scales," XII.8"). By dominating an imagination habitually and blindingly submerged in matter, one can be trained to perform a sustained meiosis (so to speak) before every phenomenon encountered. It is a matter of inducing the νοῦς ("mind") to

clear every aporia (διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ἀντιπίπτοντος...πορεύεσθαι, X.33]), dissolving matter from the inside as though it were ὡς πῦρ ἄνω ("fire [burning] upwards," X.33).

The cooling of the seductive force of matter is the result of this perceptual dissolution. When τὸ φαντασίαν λαμβάνειν ἐπὶ τῶν ὄψων καὶ τῶν τοιούτων ἐδωδίμων ("the imagination fixes itself on repasts and edibles"), one should say to oneself ὅτι νεκρὸς οὗτος ἰχθύος ("that is the corpse of a fish," VI.13). When the imagination finds itself seized by the image of a περιπόρφυρος τριχία ("purple-bordered toga"), the mind should resound with the knowledge that this is but προβατίου αἱματίῳ κόγχης δεδευμένα ("a bit of sheep's wool died in mollusk's blood," VI.13). And in thinking of τὴν συνουσίαν ("sexual intercourse") one should envisage instead ἐντερίου παράτριψις καὶ μετά τινος σπασμοῦ μυξαρίου ἔκκρισις ("the friction of the groin with, in a spasm, the excretion of mucus," VI.13).

The idealization of matter to be unceasingly combatted is not an autonomous process. It depends on a discourse which ὑποκρίνηται ("plays the role," II.16) of the other arts, acting πλάστως καὶ ἀναλήθως ("like plaster and [thus] untruthfully," II.16). Plastic, deprived of truth, and imitating non-verbal *tekhnè*, this discourse transforms into a seductive ἱστορίαν ("fiction," VI.18) a substance utterly without intrinsic value. This inflation and substitution is inconceivable absent a discourse that has (allegedly) appropriated for itself the power of the spatial arts. The logic behind the emperor's fixation with epideictic discourse from the *Meditations*' first act of thanks now begins to show itself in fuller clarity: Artified discourse is constituted by a force not belonging to it, one not belonging, in fact, to "normal" discourse. Contrary to a discourse that refuses to efface itself, a language seducing by its very oratorical extravagance, "normal" logos coincides imperceptibly with the truth. Following his explanation of the antidote to the hyperbole of the untrained imagination before materiality—that is, hylomorphic extraction—Marcus

Aurelius immediately names this idealization "smoke" and a "guileful liar," this last figure conjuring (by no accident) that of the sophist (δεινὸς γὰρ ὁ τῦφος παραλογιστὴς, VI.13).

The essential connection between a discourse enticing the imagination away from the empirical world and the plastic arts reveals itself in the strict parallels at work in the rhetoric of the emperor himself. In a somewhat bewildering analysis of the evolution of Greek theater at the end of the *Meditations*' penultimate book, Marcus Aurelius blames the New Comedy's substitution of τὴν ἐκ μιμήσεως φιλοτεχνίαν ("mimetic artificiality") for the ὑπομνηστικαὶ τῶν συμβαινόντων ("hypomnesis of events") in Greek tragedy for the degeneration of the Greek play (XI.6). "Old" Comedy represents a median stage of decline between the two inasmuch as it, with αὐτῆς τῆς εὐθυρρημοσύνης ("its plainness of speech"), continues to impart a "pedagogic" message (XI.6). In place of the dramatization of an eternal and inner moral that classical tragedy had aimed to induce (ὑπόμνησις), the plays of Menander substitute a stylized tableau. It is a question of the technicization of theater, the substantive φιλοτεχνίαν connoting sculpture and producing (in the manner of rhetoric and Sophism) a representation emptied of deeper truth—stripped, that is to say, of utility and (social) profit. Given the New Comedy's diminishing of χρήσιμα ("the useful"), Greek theater finds itself reduced to an "autotelic" art (a redundancy for the emperor). In ceasing to be a discourse eliciting a heroic moral from the spectator, Greek theater after the fourth century BC is no longer rooted in a logos revealing an ἀλήθεια χρήσιμος ("useful truth"). Insofar as logos splits from the useful and the true—two facets of a unique ideal for Marcus Aurelius—the discourse of tragedy and comedy become purely poetic and rhetorical. The New Comedy ἀπέβλεψεν ("aims") at no σκοπὸν ("objective") and is reduced to ἡ ὅλη ἐπιβολὴ τῆς τοιαύτης ποιήσεως καὶ δραματουργίας ("an affair entirely of a sort of poetry and dramaturgy," XI.6).

That the emperor arrives at the conclusion that dramatic discourse is transformed into

"poetry" and into "artificial mimesis" insofar as it draws its force not from an idea(l), not from the useful, and not from hypomnetic re-memoration but instead from matter, from a fetishism of "technique," and from the construction of an anamnetic tableau, self-sufficient and external, is the logical consequence of his analysis of the verbal arts' corrosive influence. The degeneration of discourse and the transformation of logos into art are but two sides of an identical process. Given the confused assimilation of Sophism, rhetoric, and poetry in the exordium to the *Meditations*, Marcus Aurelius' logic unfolds follows: Logos becomes "poetic" insofar as language is displaced from its ideal state—formal and internal, an ideality purified of all extrinsic materiality—and finds itself contaminated by spatiality (the Platonic *khôra* of the *Timaeus* or even the chthonic goddess of Hesiod). The spatial contamination of a signified that is supposed to remain in a perfect harmony with the *hegemon* or the internal *daimon* represents the externalization and the anamnetic technicization that is the mark of the silent arts.

A Chimeric Purification: The Emperor and Non-Existent Discourse

For the uncultivated imagination, the inventivity of the arts promises the over-valuation of the spatial world—giving the naïve spectator a fixed and permanent image of the real—at the expense of respect for the fluid regularity of the temporal world. Φύσις ("nature) for Marcus Aurelius is always a *memento mori*, always opposed to spatiality, the latter being nothing but a phantom of art and imagination. Insofar as the imagination is captivated by and fixed upon a representation promising the suspension of temporality, the mind is blinded to the order of nature—to the fact ὅτι πάντα ταῦτα ὅσα ὁρᾷς ὅσον οὐδέπω μεταβάλλει καὶ οὐκ ἔτι ἔσται ("that everything that you see is at the point of transforming and will no longer exist," IV.4).

As manifestations of the uncultivated imagination's tendency to deny existential impermanence, the spatial *tekhnai* must themselves be demystified. To the extent that one learns to perceive the

flux of time across fictive appearance (a tautological formulation by the emperor's reasoning), one emerges "in possession of a profound sensibility and understanding." The one capable of continually anticipating τὴν πάντων μεταβολὴν καὶ διάλυσιν ("the transformation and the dissolution of everything," II.17) will be equally capable of resisting the denial of temporality on which artifice depends: οὗτος δὲ καὶ θηρίων ἀληθῆ χάσματα οὐχ ἧσσον ἡδέως ὄψεται ἢ ὅσα γραφεῖς καὶ πλάσται μιμούμενοι δεικνύουσιν ("He will not look at the real jaws of beasts with less pleasure than what imitative paintings and sculptures show").

Artifice and material appearance—two aspects of the same process of mystification—depend on the suppression of temporality, and it is to mitigate their effects that the emperor proposes his hermeneutic of the temporal. The capacity to resist the imitative works of painting and sculpture is simultaneously the capacity to perceive vigor in the old man and decrepitude in the youth (III.2), recalling that ἡ δὲ ὅλου τοῦ σώματος σύγκρισις εὔσηπτος ("the entire form of the body is on the point of putrefying," II.17). The antithesis of the logos participating in the mystification of image and space, the inverse of the logos overtaking the phoneme in appropriating the powers of appearance, would be a "discourse" purified of matter. Like Plutarch, Marcus Aurelius conceives of this immaterial logos as the logos of philosophy. What they mean by "philosophy"—a discourse stripped of metaphysics and epistemology and reduced to proverb and utility—would have astonished the Classical and Hellenistic schools, as much for its ignorance of the profound complicity between the verbal arts and philosophy as for its hostility to epideixis. Their perspectives nevertheless reveal the Imperial and non-literary reaction to the prestige of letters at the apex of the Second Sophistic.

In conceiving poetic discourse as a deviation of a purely philosophical logos and in "discovering" the difference between the two in the artificializing of a discourse remade in the

image of the "silent" arts, Plutarch and Marcus Aurelius adopt a refrain already announced in the critiques leveled against Gorgias. This refrain is amplified and sharpened by them, and it is in this amplification that a primal phantasy masked by any critique of discursive "artification" begins to reveal itself. Given the mutability of a world in incessant transformation, a world whose αἴσθησις ("formal perception") is ἀμυδρά ("obscure"), Marcus Aurelius asks: τί οὖν τὸ παραπέμψαι δυνάμενον; ("What is there capable of helping [us]?") He at once answers his own question: "A single thing: philosophy, which protects the interior *daimon* from corruption and harm" (II.17). Only under the aegis of philosophical discourse is the *hegemon* protected μὴ φύρειν μηδὲ θορυβεῖν ὄχλῳ φαντασιῶν ("from being confused and confounded by the chaos of images," III.16).

Empirically impossible and (thus) impossible to confess, the end towards which the effort to bulwark the self before the image and before an "imagistic" discourse is directed reveals itself in the passages of the *Meditations* endeavoring to imagine a conscience stripped of images. Marcus Aurelius describes a conscience αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἐνιδρυμένου ἐν σοὶ δαίμονος ("built by and for the *daimon* in you"), one housing a *hegemon* which has τάς τε ἰδίας ὁρμὰς ὑποτεταχότος ἑαυτῷ καὶ τὰς φαντασίας ἐξετάζοντος καὶ τῶν αἰσθητικῶν πείσεων ("subjugated each of the impulses [in you] to himself, scrutinizing the images and dominating the perceptions," III.6). The emperor describes an ideal conscience possessed by the one who "τὸν ἑαυτοῦ νοῦν καὶ δαίμονα καὶ τὰ ὄργια τῆς τούτου ἀρετῆς προελόμενος ("favors his own faculty of intellection and [his] *daimon* and the rites of his genius," III.7). The conscience τοῦ κεκολασμένου καὶ ἐκκεκαθαρμένου ("disciplined and purified," III.8) is emptied of all but πάσῃ εὐμαρείᾳ ("abundance peace,"IV.3). The psyche becomes τὸ ἀγρίδιον ἑαυτοῦ ("a little field for oneself") to which ὑποχωρήσεως ("retreat," IV.3) should be sought. Under the regime of the *daimon*, the disciplined conscience finishes by so radically turning from the world that empirical πράγματα ("circumstances") lose

significance altogether (V.19). Τὰ πράγματα ("circumstances") lose all access to the inner spirit ("οὐδὲ ἔχει εἴσοδον"), "incapable" as they now are "of influencing or moving it."

Philosophic Logos as Immaterial Discourse

In a formulation conjuring the reflexive noesis of the Peripatetic first cause, Marcus Aurelius describes the disciplined conscience as an entity that κινεῖ αὐτὴ ἑαυτὴν μόνη ("personally turns itself and moves itself," V.19). The total exclusion of the inverse of the logos of philosophy—Sophism, rhetoric, poetry—is required for the attainment of this ideal noesis inasmuch as the "artified" logos, in promising a truth both spectacular and independent of the useful, mystifies the conscience. Nevertheless, the vision from which all of the emperor's rhetoric unfolds remains unarticulated across the *Meditations*' twelve books. Despite his insistence that the philosophic logos, divulging a truth undisclosed in the sublunar world, is the only consolation left to the purified conscience, a far more radical vision begins to reveal itself towards the end of the text.

Unlike the verbal arts, building their phantom edifices by demanding the self-sufficiency of the image-imbued word, the philosophic logos harmonizes perfectly with reality. Philosophy *is* the discursive version of the real. It nevertheless depends on the same linguistic quality whose supposed hypertrophy marks the original transgression of verbal art—specifically, that of the acoustic-image or the phenomenal face of language. In criticizing "artified" discourse, Marcus Aurelius suggests that he is imagining a discourse whose content and idea dominate what Saussure would name *l'image accoustique* on which they depend. The domination of the signifier (of the image, of sound, of materiality itself) by the signified is the emperor's minimal condition for the cultivated conscience. Nevertheless, the very discursivity of philosophic logos leaves the truth vulnerable to the same contaminating effects veiling and perverting pure noesis in "artified"

discourse—which is to say, the spatialization of the concept in the imaged and imagined figure.

Certainly, the emperor owes his reasoning to the phenomenological metalepsis whose "deconstruction" is at the heart of Derrida's own early meditations. The phoneme—the vehicle on which (seemingly) internal and silent thinking (seemingly) depends—is assimilated to the concept, to the idea, and to the truth. The proximity of the self belonging to phonemic substance reduces the external vehicles of this pure noesis—from "l'image accoustique" to the rhetorical schemata and tropes—to a deviation through materiality. In "formalizing" the voice and in "materializing" the external manifestations of the phoneme, this phonocentrism participates in the same phenomenological (and, ultimately, metaphysical) scheme governing hylomorphism. That Marcus Aurelius conceives the noetic act of the perfected conscience in terms of an inner *daimon* or *hegemon* conversing with and reflecting upon itself is unsurprising in light of the phenomenological substitution on which the priority attributed to the immaterial depends. That he expresses a total intolerance for the "extrinsic" and material instantiations of this pure thinking—in the form, most flagrantly, of the "artified" logos—is no less unexpected.

Nevertheless, the emperor's phantasy of a noesis liberated from material "deviations" contains a twist that would be absurd were it not the consequence of his "logic." Only in light of this twist does the *Meditations*' fetishism of silence begin to come to light. The ideal is not only a conscience abstracted from the spatial and graphic deviations of discourse—of which verbal art, insofar as it (seemingly) apes the lying suppression of temporality in the silent arts, is the worst example. The ideal is not even a conscience dominated by a self-moving first cause (the *hegemon*) whose sole occupation is the act of reflexive communication. The ideal is a conscience where even phonemic substance—even internal and "silent" talk to oneself—constitutes a distraction from pure noesis: The germ out of which the rest of the emperor's anti-rhetorical phantasy issues is the

possibility of thought liberated from discourse as such.

Divergent reactions to the dismaying prestige of the verbal arts and epideixis at the Second Sophistic's acme, Plutarch's *Moralia* and Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* offer two paths by which the non-specialist Roman, holding still to early Republican prejudice against formalized training in the verbal arts, might reconcile himself to the triumph of non-pragmatic rhetoric. More specifically, the essayist's and the emperor's reactions to a language under the spell of φιλοτεχνίαν ("love of technique," "love of art") cast two distinct lights on the non-specialist's perception of the domination of the Sophistic τεχνή in Roman education (by means, as Suetonius tells us, of the progymnasmata's incursion into the *tirocinium*). The difference in their "solutions" however—cynical reduction of verbal art to philosophy's handmaiden versus total rejection of (poetic) language—must not obscure the indistinguishability of their assumptions. Ῥητορική καὶ ποιητική (*Meditations*, 1.17: 4), and the prestige of each, are marks of decline, and this because each casts factitious shadows in the imagination, shadows obscuring veracity and reality, nature and gods, and a soul, finally, whose cultivation remains the best, the only hope of recovering a language of truth half-forgotten.

CHAPTER IV

VITIUM OF THE MIND:

DEMETRIUS AND QUINTILIAN ON *ENARGEIA*

Reaction to the perils of a language falling away from the world, a language broken from utility and ethics in favor of the imagination's heuresis, is scarcely an affair of the non-specialist alone. Continually vexed by speakers who ψυχαγωγοῦσι τοὺς ἀκούοντας ("lead listeners' souls," *Evagorus*, 10) by εἰδόσι ("forms," "images," *Against*, 16) belonging only tenuously to truth, Isocrates offers the opening salvo in efforts to regulate rhetoric from within. Indeed, given the unflinchingly prescriptive, normative tenor of the specialists' treatment of verbal art right from the Classical period, rhetoric and poetics as disciplines may even be understood to have taken shape precisely as bulwarks against the excesses of this τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπιμέλειαν ("pursuit of the psyche," *Against the Sophists,* 8).

Ενάργεια by name or no is one *Ansatzpunkt* into this potential for excess, the promiscuous use of language to apparently suspend the normal flow of temporality for a lifeless but lifelike creature of the imagination being a source of abiding anxiety for the specialist.[90] The conjuring trick of ἐνάργεια belongs exactly to that capacity of discourse whose dangers lead Marcus Aurelius to call for a paranoid muteness: Namely, the translation of natural time into imagined space. Even setting aside the anxieties that the term will in Hellenistic and Imperial rhetoric help to name, in the Archaic period the word turns out to be already attested, already, indeed, embodying the imagination's duplicity. "Central to all ancient theory on pictorial

[90] *[E]ine Handhabe gleichsam* ("a handle, as it were") with which *den Gegenstand anzugreifen* ("to set upon the object"): *Die Eigentümlichkeit des guten Ansatzes liegt einerseits in seiner Konkretheit und Prägnanz, anderseits in seiner potentiellen Strahlkraft* ("The characteristic of a good beginning lies, on the one hand, in its concreteness and pithiness, on the other in its potential to radiate outwards"). Erich Auerbach, "Philologie der Weltliteratur," in *Weltliteratur: Festgabe Für Fritz Strich Zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Walter Muschg; Emil Staiger (Bern: A.Francke AG, 1952), 47.

vividness in literature," predating, "all other literary terms for 'visual description,'" ενάργεια in its Archaic forms already suggests a "misleading of the mind," a ψυχαγωγία gone wrong, a decline (perforce) from a language bridging soul and world. [91]

The adjective ἐναργής suggests in Homer a suspension of the unfolding of temporal action by epiphany at once divine and, emanating from personal imagination, potentially, even probably deceptive. In the *Odyssey*, Penelope describes as ἐναργής Athena's appearance in the form of Iphthime: Ἀθήνη εἴδωλον ποίησε, δέμας δ᾽ ἴκτο γυναικί, Ἰφθίμῃ….. φίλον δέ οἱ ἦτορ ἰάνθη, ὥς οἱ ἐναργὲς ὄνειρον ἐπέσσυτο νυκτὸς ἀμολγῷ ("Athena created an image [or phantom], the corporal form of a woman, Iphthime…. Her heart was ignited with love, a dream so clear having visited her in the middle of the night," *Od.* IV.795-7; *Od.* IV.841). Anticipating the later role of ἐνάργεια as linguistic chimera preying on desire, the "phantom" of Athena is obviously illusory and obviously wish-fulfillment. Line 841, via "psychonarration," suggests Penelope's conviction that the εἴδωλον has somehow entered her dreams from without, a sense which the verb ἐπισεύω ("to hasten towards," "to set upon") emphasizes. Penelope is, of course, entirely wrong. An ἐναργὲς ("visible") apparition may reveal itself to her mind's eye, but this vision is little more than the creation of inner desire. This vision of Athena wearing the mask of Iphthime is but a figment of the perturbed mind of a queen fearing the permanent loss of her husband. Creature of the imagination, this εἴδωλον is private and unreal, a mere epiphany masking desire displaced.

The constellation of notions encircling the Homeric attestations of ἐναργής—connecting an artificial, even grotesque suspension of nature as much to εἴδωλον ("image") as to interior "seeing"—will emerge even more starkly in the Classical period. Deïanira begins Sophocles's

[91] G. Zanker, "*Enargeia* in the Ancient Criticism of Poetry," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 124 (1981): 304-07.

Τραχίνιαι (*The Trachiniae*) by recounting the appearances of an Achelous metamorphizing with the hopes of winning her hand: ὅς μ᾽ ἐν τρισὶν μορφαῖσιν ἐξήτει πατρός, φοιτῶν ἐναργὴς ταῦρος, ἄλλοτ᾽ αἰόλος δράκων ἑλικτός, ἄλλοτ᾽ ανδρείῳ κύτει βούπρῳρος ("He asked my father in three forms, arriving now in the form of a bull, now in the form of a serpent slithering and twisting, now in the form of a man with a bovine face," I. 10-14). Like the ἐναργής ("visible," "palpable") phantom—doubtful reflection of the imagination—appearing to visit Penelope's dreams, the ἐναργής forms of Achelous pursuing Deïanira appear only in order to mollify and deceive the imagination (even if the "ethical" difference between the false Athena and the randy Achelous seem to diverge).

If rhetoric's suspicious lookers-on from the outside find the germ of all of the pathologies of discourse in the pretension to build in the mind what the silent arts build in space, critics writing within the rhetorical tradition, even while remaining ethically non-committal, offer tacit support for this perspective. A particularly remarkable proof of the connection between ἐνάργεια and mental imagism is the traditional definition of the first as ἔκφρασις' defining end. "Enargeia," as Ruth Webb observes, "is at the heart of ekphrasis." [92]

The canonical description of ekphrasis, one which scarcely changes after Theon, is mental painting, the discursive imitation of plastic art. This is entirely different from the taking of plastic art as object of description, though the *Εἰκόνες* of Philostratus the Younger are, of course, "ekphrases." Strictly speaking, the description of plastic art can hardly be said to be traditionally ekphrastic failing a painting in the mind. The question is one of technique, not object. Cramped and impoverished, the anachronistic understanding of ekphrasis as art's description obscures the more profound (and, indeed, traditional) connection between the

[92] Ruth Webb, "Ekphrasis Ancient and Modern: The Invention of a Genre," *Word & Image* 15, no. 1 (1999): 11-13.

technique and the silent arts. Classical rhetoric could hardly be clearer: In a process (said to be) analogous to what painting and sculpture make "out there," ekphrasis creates a non-existent image in the mind. Analogous to but not *about* a "physical" or "literal" construction, ekphrasis and *enargeia* both sinuously intertwine to suggest freedom from the temporal world, a freedom which the rhetoricians and progymnasmata consider to be silent art's condition of possibility.[93]

Well before ekphrasis is taken to refer to interarts description—rightly or wrongly, but without question untraditionally—traditional rhetoric itself draws an essential, deeper connection between verbal, mental painting and silent, plastic invention. Moreover (and ironically), ekphrasis belongs to *enargeia* in the sense with which Homer already imbues the adjective ἐναργής. Both suggest, that is, the depiction not of of existing objects, but of precisely the opposite: the mental making of what does not yet or not really exist. The progymnasmata (and not just the progymnasmata, as we will see) conceive of this appropriation by language of the creative, inventive right forming the essence of the silent arts. The essence of ekphrasis according to the progymnasmata is precisely to construct an object which "appeals to the mind's eye of the listener, making him or her 'see'" what does not exist.[94] The potentially false, duplicitous "inventiveness" of ekphrasis depends on its *enargetic* capacity. It is the "pictoral" capacity to conjure within the imagination that which does not (yet) belong to the empirical world.

The relationship between ekphrasis, *enargeia*, and the perception of discursive decline lies in the sense among critics, specialist or no, that language is both imperiled and perilous (because more "psychagogic") where it turns away from the world for mental creation. The sense among critics—Longinus's unfavorable comparison of the *Odyssey* with the *Iliad* being

[93] Webb, "Ekphrasis Ancient and Modern: The Invention of a Genre," 11-13.

[94] Ibid.

exemplary here—is that in turning to mental making, in fastening upon the imagination, discourse renounces the truer, original charge of carrying the soul into reality. As the *Dialogus de oratoribus* suggests, the sense of a departure from a language of *utilitas* and *veritas* does much to explain the anxiety that *enargeia* elicits among critics, the increasing irrelevance of dikanic and symboleutic oratory after the Hellenistic period and, especially, after the Roman "Revolution" being, of course, central to this story. Clearly, much of the "innovation" (positive or no) of the Second Sophistic would have been inconceivable without a heightening of the *enargetic* capacity of language, often though not always in moments of ekphrasis. Compelling evidence for this turn towards the imagination lies in the *Anthology*'s epigrams, ever more "ekphrastic," interpretative, and independent of their supposed epigraphic pretext and, perhaps most obviously, in the erotic novel, the entirety of Longus's and Achilles Tatius's being presented explicitly as ekphrases.[95] If *enargeia*, ekphrasis, and the subjectivism of which they are symptomatic gain in flamboyancy and respectability after the Hellenistic period, this should not obscure the fact that the germs of imagination and unreality are already developing in Archaic epic and lyric. Sappho's proclivity for mental painting, for what one observer calls the "hypothetical unreal," at the expense of empirical phenomena (themselves reduced to a pretext) is already well-developed.[96] In Homer, similarly, readers encounter a tendency to focalize description on nature (and *not* on a man-made object) as pretext to introduce what quickly becomes "a shade unreal." The ekphrasis of Calypo's grotto is, in this respect, especially telling (*Od*., 5.63-83).[97]

[95] Christopher Chinn, "Statius Silv. 4.6 and the Epigrammatic Origins of Ekphrasis," *The Classical Journal* 100, no. 3 (2005): 247-49.

[96] McEvilley, "Sapphic Imagery and Fragment 96," 273.

[97] A.M. Parry, "Landscape in Greek Poetry," *Yale Classical Studies* 15 (1957): 23.

QUINTILIAN, SEDUCTION, AND THE OCULUS MENTIS *("MIND'S EYE")*

In the rhetorical tradition, the web of often indissoluble threads weaving *enargeia*, ekphrasis, and the species of αὔξησις ("emphasis") into the more general idea of the capacity of language to give body—matter, palpability, space—to creatures of the mind becomes the source of unshakable anxiety.[98] Only in degree does wariness before these figures of the imagination differ between verbal art's antagonists and specialists. In his *Institutio oratoria*, for instance, Quintilian will call what allows for *enargeia,* cause of *ornatum* and *copia* ("decoration" and "amplification," 8.3: 87-88), an *animi vitium* ("vice of the mind") to be subjugated to utility at once: *[H]oc animi vitium ad utilitatem non transferemus?* ("Should we not convert this vice of the mind into something useful?"), he asks. The mental vice in question consists in what Homer was already calling ἐναργής in the apparition of Iphthime, namely the conjuring of the absent, inexistent even, as these begin to flit before and then crystallize in the mind's eye.

Finding *enargeia* at the heart of the techniques *ad movendos adfectus* ("for affecting states of mind," 6.2: 26), the *consul* reaches a striking conclusion. Namely, the *penetralia* ("secrets") for the manipulation of *adfectus* ("states of mind") consist in the capacity not of the percipient but of the speaker himself to construct and then be seduced by his own *enargetic* invention. *Summa enim…circa movendos adfectus in hoc posita est, ut moveamur ipsi* ("For what matters the most….in affecting states of mind lies in the fact that we are ourselves affected"). Siphoning energy from the engine that makes silent invention possible—the capacity, namely, to give form to matter according to mental design—the speaker must employ *quas* φαντασίας *Graeci vocant* ("what the Greeks call *phantasias*," 6.2: 29). These φαντασίας consist in the stilling of temporality

[98] George L. Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric* (Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, 1973), 158.

in the *animus* of the speaker himself, who must even before leading astray the mind of the listener himself be led into the "frozen, stilled world of plastic relationships."[99] Quintilian's Latin translation of φαντασίας puts the accent on the term's spatial and graphic character: *Nos sane* visiones *appellemus* ("let's simply call them 'visions'"). Giving form to the inexistent, inducing *oculus* and *animus* to mistake these visions for something real, *enargeia insidet* ("imprints itself") upon the mind*: Imagines rerum absentium ita repraesentantur animo ut eas cernere oculis ac praesentes habere videamur* ("Images of absent things are represented in the mind such that we have the impression of perceiving them with our eyes and of having them before us"). These fabulations then insinuate themselves into the willing psyche because the imagination—and here lies the rhetor's implicit psychology—is already home of artifice, invention, and desire. *Quod quidem nobis volentibus facile continget* ("for through our desires we can easily do this")—easily, that is, give mental life to the non-existent in *spes inanes* ("absurd phantasies") and *somnia quaedam vigilantium* ("certain waking dreams," 6.2: 30).

The sophistication of Quintilian's understanding of the imagination lies in his refusal to limit the psychagogic, manipulative capacity of *enargeia* to pathos and perception alone. Before language can prey on the *vitium* ("vice") in its audience, its speaker must first himself be seduced by his own invention. The *Institutio oratoria* makes persuasion by false image a matter of *ethos* (what pertains to the speaker) before *pathos* (what pertains to the listener). Moreover, the seduction of reader or listener by a vision invented, one phantastically entering and mollifying the psyche, is the condition for the effectiveness of all discourse. Quintilian's ambivalence—one representative of the entirety of the rhetorical tradition—towards persuasion's factitious powers comes from the failure of insufficiently imagistic discourse to stick in the mind: *Non enim satis efficit neque, ut*

[99] Murray Krieger, cited in Shadi Bartsch and Jaś Elsner, "Introduction: Eight Ways of Looking at an Ekphrasis," *Classical Philology* 102, no. 1 (2007): i-ii.

debet, plene dominatur oratio si usque ad aures valet, atque ea sibi iudex de quibus cognoscit narrari credit, non exprimi et oculis mentis ostendi ("For discourse is neither as effective as it ought to be, nor does it fully dominate [the mind] if at the ears it stops, while the judge recognizes that the things in which he is to believe are narrated, being unexpressed and not shown to the mind's eye," 8.3: 61).

Enargeia is an *ornatum* inasmuch as it *est quod perspicuo ac probabili plus est* ("is more than what is clear and probable," 8.3: 61). Probability and clarity belong to temporality, to denotation, to the simple narration of brute facts. Paradoxically, *oratio* persuades only where it takes leave of the *perspicuo ac probabili* ("clear and probable"), becoming more *clare* ("clear") where it ceases to simply *patere* ("show"). Quintilian resolves the paradox with an appeal to the will to dominate the imagination: The clarity of denotative and temporal narration, of narration which *usque ad aures valet* ("works up to the ears"), is in truth less *clare* than a non-empirical and visual description because the language of the *animus* ("psyche") is less acoustic than imagistic. And herein lies the *vitium* of the imagination. Privileging image over sound, graphic fixity over phonemic flux, the imagination and its *adfectus* respond to what *verbis depingitur* ("by words is painted").

That this rhetoric which *depingitur* involves an artificial immobilizing of nature and reality is manifest where *tota rerum imago quodam modo verbis depingitur* ("a totality of things is depicted in a single given image," 8.3: 63). Citing the boxing match between Entellus and Dares in the *Aeneid*'s fifth book, Quintilian summons as an example Virgil's description: *Constitit in digitos extemplo arrectus uterque* ("and back-stiff and on his toes each man immediately arose"). The ekphrasis provides, Quintilian tells us, the sort of scene-setting *quae nobis illam pugilum congredientium faciem ita ostendunt ut non clarior futura fuerit spectantibus* ("which shows us the

appearance of the fighters encountering one another such that to the spectators [themselves] it would not have been clearer"). A slowing and then stilling of action emerges as *enargeia*'s essential effect in the citation of *In Verrem* which follows: *Stetit soleatus praetor populi Romani cum pallio purpureo tunicaque talari muliercula nixus in litore* ("Standing and wearing slippers, the praetor of the Roman people, in his purple robe and a tunic running to his heels, leaned upon his servant," 8.3: 64).

Description deemed ἐναργής, the discursive mode for Quintilian most apt to move *adfectus* ("states of mind"), is nevertheless not strictly restrained to the simple translation of time into space in the stilled "shots" provided by the *Institutio*. Indeed, the *vitium* of the mind allows for, demands even, the introduction of factitious element foreign to the original scene. Already implicit in Quintilian's insistence that *enargeia* exceeds what is *perspicuo ac probabili* ("clear and probable," 8.3: 61) and in his characterization of *somnia quaedam vigilantium* ("diurnal phantasy") as a *animi vitium* ("vice of the mind")—the very vice on which *enargeia* draws—the rhetor now adds that *enargeia* consists in inducing the psyche to add to the scene what is not there in fact. *Non solum ipsos intueri videatur et locum et habitum* ("Would we not only have the impression of observering them [the boxers] and their place and appearance"), asks Quintilian, s*ed quaedam etiam ex iis quae dicta non sunt sibi ipse adstruat?* ("but that we ourselves are even filling in certain elements which have not been said?"). These invented additions, no way of verifying their verisimilitude existing, are inextricable from the percipient's desire. Like that which materializes in the psyche in response to *spes inanes* ("silly desires") and *somnia quaedam vigilantium* ("diurnal phantasies"), these additions of the imagination appear to the mind as substantial and independent: Soon, *hae…imagines prosecuntur* ("these…images haunt us").

Περὶ ἑρμηνείας: *The Noetic Reality of* Enargeia

That *oratio* must abandon the limpid narration of temporal action for an image frozen and phantastic in order to truly *dominari* ("dominate") the mind is an observation neither particular to Quintilian nor extraordinary within the rhetorical tradition itself. The necessity of a rupture with the given data of the world—and the characterization of this rupture in graphic, pictorial terms—emerges as central to *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας* (*On Style*) of "Demetrius." A text redacted in the Imperial period but composed in the Peripatetic ambiance of Hellenistic Egypt, *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας* conceives, with a normative ambivalence consonant with Quintilian's own, the potential unreality of ἐναργής ("palpable," "visible") language to be the essential risk that all rhetoric must run.[100] In Demetrius's eyes, a stark division exists between discourse that mirrors and discourse that obscures. Sententiously and almost by chance, Demetrius delineates these two basic functions of speech in his discussion of ἐπιφώνημα, the latter being, appropriately enough, one of several figures in *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας* involving embellishment by detail.

Τῆς γὰρ λέξεως ἡ μὲν ὑπηρετεῖ, ἡ δὲ ἐπικοσμεῖ ("Sometimes discourse serves [or 'functions'], sometimes it embellishes," 106), the rhetor proclaims. Crystallizing in a single breath the assimilation of denotation, utility, and truth to which critiques of rhetoric and its excesses must continually appeal, Demetrius's formulation is little ambiguous. Like the enslaved rower to whom the verb likely owes its origins, discourse which ὑπηρετεῖ ("serves") is but a means of transport the integrity of whose semantic contents across the perilous passage of communication is the singular concern. Discourse is to subordinate and even efface itself in the

[100] Walker characterizes Demetrius's as "the only genuinely Hellenistic treatise that still survives." Innes includes a helpful discussion of the treatise's date and origins in her introduction to the Loeb text. Walker, *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*, 47; Doreen C. Innes, ed., Introduction to "Demetrius: On Style," in *Aristotle: Poetics; Longinus: On the Sublime; Demetrius: On Style* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 317-19.

strictly utilitarian function to which communication in this scheme finds itself reduced. Where discourse, in contrast, announces itself, the inverse materializes. Obscuring, muddying the limpid reality to which clear communication is subordinated, discourse which ἐπικοσμεῖ ("embellishes") insinuates itself into the given data that it would otherwise slavishly carry. The critic's lexical choice (ἐπικοσμεῖ) makes clear that this semantic content and the reality that it is supposed to transmit are *already* established, *already* in existence. The preexistence of a factual scene to which language will factitiously add is equally implied by κοσμεῖν, the notions of redundancy and of superfluity being only accentuated by the prefixed form (ἐπικοσμεῖ).

That the effects of this discourse which ἐπικοσμεῖ are not restricted to the superfluous or to the merely decorative is precisely the problem. This is not a matter of the mere addition of schemata: Language that ἐπικοσμεῖ touches the "idea," reforming the true data of the world according to the imagination. Refusing functional, servile self-repression, discourse ceases to transfer semantic content strictly coincident with the temporal world. Once this act of linguistic dissimulation is abandoned, language begins to participate in and to give form to reality itself.

Enargeia, the technique where verbal art acts upon the mind like plastic art upon matter, is the name that Demetrius gives to this reformation of reality. The phantastic, impossible remaking of the empirical world in Demetrius's conception of *enargetic* description reveals the technique's deeper affinity with both ὑπερβολή ("hyperbole") and ψυχρότης ("frigidity") (the latter being, of course, central to Longinus's own notion of decline). Demetrius talks of *enargeia*'s dependence upon both τοῦ ὑπερβεβλημένου τῆς διανοίας καὶ ἀδυνάτου ("hyperbolic and impossible thinking," 116). And this despite his insistence that *enargeia* involves a kind of radical "completeness": Γίνεται δ' ἡ ἐνάργεια πρῶτα μὲν ἐξ ἀκριβολογίας καὶ τοῦ παραλείπειν μηδὲν μηδ' ἐκτέμνειν ("*Enargeia* comes first from the details and from the fact that nothing is omitted or

suppressed," 209). If *enargeia*, however, really does consist in leaving no detail to the percipient's imagination, the ἀκριβολογίας ("details") on display in the *enargetic* description do not belong to the temporal world. These ἀκριβολογίας belong, rather, to the mind of the speaker, a speaker who, like the silent artist, seizes the right to give noetic and subjective form to matter.

The inescapably subjective quality of *enargeia* is manifest right from the technique's first illustration in *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας*: Οἷον "ὡς δ᾽ ὅτ᾽ ἀνὴρ ὀχετηγὸς" καὶ πᾶσα αὕτη ἡ παραβολή. τὸ γὰρ ἐναργὲς ἔχει ἐκ τοῦ πάντα εἰρῆσθαι τὰ συμβαίνοντα καὶ μὴ παραλελεῖφθαι μηδέν ("With the whole of the following simile—'like the man drawing water from a well'—what is *enargetic* lies in the fact that all of the happenings are said and nothing omitted," 209).

What, however, is the source of this "completeness" in description? The example in question, whose context Demetrius himself tellingly omits, is a figural description (a prosopopoiea) from book twenty-one of the *Iliad*. There, Homer is describing the effort of the river Simoeis to protect Troy against Achilles and the Greek army (*Il.*, 21.257ff). A "Homeric" comparison, the figure is elaborated in the same anthropomorphic terms across several lines. None of this "completeness" in *enargeia* however is "proper" or "literal": Homer is quite explicitly exercising his imagination in a conceit, presenting anything but the brute facts of the battle itself. That Homer means to distinguish between the narration of actions unfolding across time and a static, *enargetic* image whose form depends upon the imagination, phantasy, and space is evident from the marked difference between the conceit and the pragmatographic narrative surrounding it.

Demetrius conceives of the moment of truth's imaginary suspension as the moment where speech becomes literary and epideictic. Other of the examples of *enargeia* in *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας* support the centrality of mental painting to his sense of verbal art. The citation of

Simoeis personified, for instance, is followed immediately by one to the games in Patroclus's honor. Again, the facts hardly speak for themselves. Rather, their description involves a series of hyperboles. In approaching the chariot of Eumelos, for instance, Diomedes's horses are described by Homer as follows: Αἰεὶ γὰρ δίφρου ἐπιβησομένοισιν ἐΐκτην ("They seemed ever at the point of mounting the chariot," 210, *Il*. 23.379-81). The scene is *enargetic* because of its supposed "completeness": Πάντα ταῦτα ἐναργῆ ἐστιν ἐκ τοῦ μηδὲν παραλελεῖφθαι τῶν τε συμβαινόντων καὶ συμβάντων ("This is entirely *enargetic* because from what is happening and from what has happened nothing has been omitted," 210).

Once again, however, the seeming all-embracing nature of the description is noetic, not phenomenal. Homer uses a clearly marked hyperbole, beginning the description with ἔοικα ("it seemed"). The semantic content, moreover, denotes neither τῶν συμβαινόντων ("what is happening") nor συμβάντων ("what has happened"), the adverb ἀεί ("ever," "always") evoking not a time that belongs to the games themselves but rather one proper to a stilled image in the author's mind. Neither in or outside of the *Iliad*'s twenty-third book does a horse "mount" (ἐπιβαίνω) a chariot. The verbal metaphor is hyperbolic, meant to emphasize the startling nearness of the steeds of Diomedes to Eumelos's chariot. Demetrius cites, moreover, only one in a series of impossible hyperboles (a tautology according to Demetrius himself) used by Homer to describe what does not in fact happen in the race. Added onto τῶν τε συμβαινόντων ("what transpires") in Patroclus's games in order to refract, distill, and figure the competitions by and then for the *oculus mentis*, Homer's noetic embellishments are as alien to the actual funerary rites as the κονίη...ἀειρομένη ("raised…dust") is from the νέφος ("cloud") in the sky to which the poet, in yet another hyperbole, compares it (*Il.* 23: 366).

Περὶ ἑρμηνείας's sometimes unwitting discovery that the submission of natural time to

mental creation forms the core of *enargeia* is little surprising. Striking nevertheless, however, is Demeterius's initial insistence that *enargeia* consists in merely leaving as little of the scene to the imagination as possible. Without exception the rhetor is betrayed by his examples, each of which works not by leaving no fact or deed to the imagination but rather by putting the imagination into τῶν συμβαινόντων ("the events") themselves, translating what happens into a frozen *tableau* stylized by hyperbole and metaphor and existing nowhere besides the narrator's imagination. The blindspot on Demetrius's part, however, is emblematic of the paradox particular to *enargeia*, namely the pretension to depict acts and deeds from first to last undermined immediately by the turn of the imagination's screw.

No naïf, the last surviving of the Hellenistic rhetors is aware of the deep connection between *enargeia* and facticity. This is clear enough in the common thread that he perceives between *enargeia* and hyperbole, this last being, he says, the figure that is constitutively impossible (161). The twist of the psyche on which *enargeia* depends, the interiorizing and remaking in the mind of what happens "out there," does not then escape the author of *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας* altogether. Like Longinus, Demetrius connects noetic imperialism to what is ψυχρὰ ("frigid"), declaring hyperbole μάλιστα ψυχρὰ ("frigid above all") by virtue of being ἀδυνάτῳ ("impossible," 125). An imaginary undoing of the empirical world, hyperbole is ψυχρὰ in its essence, factitious, misleading, a perversion of the *genera dicendi*. Το μικροῖς πράγμασιν ("vulgar matters") it adds something ὄγκον ("august"); to pristine nature, grotesque and "inappropriate" interpretation (119). Hyperbole makes insect into beast, tiny wasp into βοὸς ἀγρίου ἢ τοῦ Ἐρυμανθίου κάπρου ("savage bull or wild boar"). So metamorphized in the mind, the insect κατανέμεται μέν τὴν ὀρεινήν, εἰσίπταται δὲ εἰς τὰς κοίλας δρῦς ("pillages the hillsides and invades the hollowed oaks," 304). Hyperbole makes the human head οὐρανῷ ἐστήριξε ("stretch to the

sky"), the jaws of the enemy capable of carrying cattle by the teeth (βοῦς ἐν ταῖς γνάθοις ἔφερον, 157), and inexistent qualities (qualia), like an entity χρυσῶ χρυσοτέρα ("more gold than gold," 127), suddenly conceivable.

Hyperbole's flirtations with τῷ ἀδυνάτῳ ("the impossible") share a common source not only with *enargeia* but also with the tenuous, sinuous connections that Demetrius uncovers in ἐπισφαλές ("precarious") and κινδυνωδέστερος ("dangerous," 80) metaphors. Grotesque products of an impossible πόρρωθεν ("far-fetched") comparison, these metaphors (or catachreses) do not arise αὐτόθεν ("from [the] common ground") that their syntax would have us believe. They may act as though related ἐκ τοῦ ὁμοίου ("by similarity," 78) when, in fact, they are yoked together by little other than the mind.

By no accident has each of these figures—hyperbole, catechresis, *enargeia*—become indissoluble from the others by the end *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας*. Reducing each to a distortion, factitious and imaginary, of nature and time, Demetrius ultimately recognizes the shared essence of each of these violations of the δυνάτῳ ("possible"). Each issues from an identical turn of mind, namely the shattering of nature by inner *visiones*, by an author claiming the right to reduce reality to παίγνιον ("plaything") of the imagination. If these figures owe their common essence to what is named *enargeia*—the elevation of vision, stasis, and reification at the expense of the phonetic, the spontaneous, and the narrative—this is because each is for Demetrius an iteration of an original mental distortion.

Conceiving of this distortion as the triumph of art and artifice over the world, *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας* is but another pull of the thread first glimpsed among Sophism's antagonists in the fifth century. "Art" and "artifice," τέχνη and τέχνη, cannot be coherently distinguished in Demetrius any more than among the polemicists outside of the the discipline proper. Plato had in

the *Gorgias* (disapprovingly) joined the two, referring to τὴν ῥητορικὴν…τέχνην ("the rhetorical…art," 453a). And the critique remains impressively consistent all the way to the end of the Imperial period: Art or artifice of speaking, rhetoric depends on an imagination that refuses to passively register τῶν συμβαινόντων ("what happens") in language. Though obviously a specialist in Peripatetic rhetoric of the Hellenistic period (citing Aristotle fourteen and Theophrastus four times), Demetrius moves between ἐπιδεικυμένου ("epideixis"), τέχνη, κακοτεχνίαν ("failed techne") so casually that the author of *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας* ends up reproducing the same polemical confusion of a Cato (older or younger) or a Marcus Aurelius. By neither "art" nor "artifice" can τέχνη be translated, for Demetrius (like the self-styled antagonists of rhetoric) never distinguishes rigorously between fortuitous or failed "artifice." *Περὶ ἑρμηνείας* suggests that every manipulation of language inches towards the false and factitious, that every figure begins to reduce affect to something ψυχρός ("frigid") and unworldly, and that every figure of speech τινα πλανῶντι ἔοικεν ("is like something for deceiving," 24). The displacement of natural clarity by σκότῳ ("obscurity"), of χρηστοηθείας ("moral purity," 101) by guileful calculation, and of direct denotation by παίζοντι ("that which diverts," 250) is the result.

Inextricable even from the modest charge of "description," the φαντασίας, *visiones*, and εναργεία whose unworldliness so concerns rhetoric's antagonists from the fifth century onwards is determined by the specialists themselves to form the very core of verbal art. Disconcertingly, they concede that the more "phantastic," the more "psychagogic" discourse may indeed be. This, however, is no invitation to indulge: With little hesitation and not a little moralism, the specialists from Demetrius to Quintilian (Longinus likely composing between the two) blame excess invention and imagism—in hyperbole, in catachresis, in *enargeia*—for the ἀφορία

(“desiccation”) of discourse. Their *Ursprache*, their ideal language is no different from the critics’: Even as they walk the impossible tightrope between specializing in language which does not ὑπηρετεῖ (“serve”) and arguing for more than a modicum of restraint, their ideal is Hesiod’s, the taboo against too far separating speaking and thinking still internalized.

CHAPTER V

BREAKING THE ANCIENTS:

DECLINE IN AL-ĀMIDĪ'S "WEIGHING"

Poetic caprice—the seemingly unjustifiable desire to twist *lafẓ* and *maʿnā,* "wording" and "sense," beyond the *ḥadd* ("limit")—is, in al-Āmidī's eyes, the poisoned fount from which every of the *muḥdath* ("Modern") poet's sins pours forth.* For it is here, from hubris unalloyed and inspiration "individuated," from an ingenious *khayāl* ("imagination") eclipsing ingenuous *salīqa* ("instinct"), that the *muḥdath* ("Modern") poet wrenches thinking from speaking, breaking language from the shared fabric of discourse, and breaking language from the *aʿrābī* ("Bedouin," "Ancient") ideal of verbal creation as one with truth, nature, and (above all) tradition.[101] Al-Āmidī's is a psychologizing polemic against psychology as such: Arabic letters' "first serious attempt at applied criticism,"[102] one offered by a *kātib* ("secretary") at Baghdad and Kufa[103] dismayed by poetry's *muḥdath* ("newly invented") style at the dawn of the Abbasid age, is a rearguard effort to shutter the Pandora's box of poetic imagination.[104] In returning us to motive, will, and mind, al-Āmidī's *Muwāzana* ("Weighing") suggests that contemporary observers err in too hastily casting *muḥdath* ("Modern") style as a matter of "mere" discourse, a matter merely of

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* I am grateful to Geert Jan van Gelder for his patient revisions of my translations and transliterations throughout.

[101] For a discussion of a psychology as decisive in accounting for the stylistic differences between *al-aʿrābī* ("the Bedouin [poet]") and his *mutaʾakhkhir* ("belated") counterpart, see, Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥasan ibn Bishr al-Āmidī,. *al-Muwāzana bayna shiʿr Abī Tammām wa-l-Buḥturī ("The Weighing of the Poetry of Abū Tammām and Al-Buḥturī")*, 2 vols., vol. I, ed. Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1961), 243. See also, ibid., 24. (Cited hereafter as "*al-Muwāzana*, I.")

[102] Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, "Naḳd," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill Online, 2016 [First print edition 1960-2007]).

[103] Geert Jan van Gelder, "al-Āmidī, Abū al-Qāsim (d. 371/987)," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey, vol. 1 (New York: Routledge, 1998), 85.

[104] Heinrichs, "ancients and moderns," in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, vol. 1 (New York: Routledge, 1998), 90-91.

creating *einem Spiel der Sprache mit sich selbst*[105] or a poetics irradiating out of "semiological mimesis."[106]

Subjectivism, egoism, hubris—and these as much in the "Modern" poet as in his hermeneutical enablers—are to blame for the disharmony of the *jāhilī* ("pre-Islamic") bond between thinking and speaking. This disharmony had, in fact, been at the heart of a *querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* playing out with special intensity in the century leading up to the *Muwāzana*'s publication (i.e., after the mid-eighth century or so). Adapting and reducing the *querelle* to a self-conscious, self-contained staging—and casting each player as synecdoche for one of two irreconcilable poetic *madhāhib* ("methods")—al-Āmidī scarcely conceals his antagonist. What makes the (vast) difference between Abū Tammām and al-Buḥturī, the first a bristling pioneer of the *badīʿ* ("innovative") style, the second a self-styled pursuer of the *ṭarīqat al-ʿarab* ("way of the Ancients [lit., Arabs]"), is intensity of poetic will. For it is by will that the imagination tears through the tissue of a discourse uniting the increasingly urban *ʿarab* ("Arabs") with their *aʿrābī* ("Bedouin") antecedents; and it is by will that decorum and the bounds of communally understood speech are made to bend before the unpredictable (and, so the argument goes, indecipherable) whim of the individual imagination.

Al-Āmidī is as chary of the machinations of *fikra* ("contemplation") on the part of the poet, as chary of *qaṣd* ("intent") and *maʿnā* ("meaning") withheld from *tartīb* ("composition") and *lafẓ* ("expression"), as he is of the *istikhrāj* ("extraction") and *ghawṣ* ("excavation") that the

[105] Heinrichs, "'Manierismus' in der arabischen Literatur," in *Islamwissenschaftliche Abhandlungen: Fritz Meier zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Richard Gramlich (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1974), 128.

[106] Stefan Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry: A Structural Analysis of Selected Texts (3rd Century Ah/9th Century Ad—5th Century Ah/11th Century Ad)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 159-60.

Modern line demands of the percipient.[107] Modern composition and interpretation are equally inclined to suppress language or *ẓāhir lafẓ* ("the surface of discourse")[108] in favor of what Mansour Ajami terms "nebulous meanings that can be explicated only through cogitation."[109] The suspicion of al-Āmidī and other wary observers of *badīʿ* ("innovative") poetics had also been the Avesta's before the lying poetaster visiting ruin upon the harmonious "House of Song" (Yt. 3.3; 3.4); it had been Tacitus's before a rhetoric interrupting the Roman matriarch as she passes words of perfect truth and sincerity to her sons (*Dialog*., 28.4); and it had been the anxious observers' of Sophism and its Hellenistic and Imperial legatees before a discourse drained of honesty and realism, one having ὑποχωροῦντος εἰς ἑαυτὸν ("turned into itself") and into the mind, giving birth only to φαντασίαις ("phantasies," *On the Sublime*, 1.13). The suspicion is of thought and intent withheld from language, of verbal art converted to inner discovery, of a poet whose *oculus mentis* has blinded his physical eyes.

MUḤDATH ("MODERN") PATHOLOGIES

Setting al-Āmidī's critique of the poet's supposed hubris apart from the rest of the critic's objections is the nature of this poetic caprice, for no mere stylistic fault is at play in the pathology of Abū Tammām's language. The disorder is, moreover, endemic to poetics after the Abbasid Revolution in 750 more generally, Abū Tammām being, as al-Āmidī is wont to remind us, one with and representative of the whole panoply of unhappy developments in *mutaʾakhkhir* ("belated") poetry. Al-Āmidī is presenting readers with an "argument from morals,"[110] finding in

[107] On *istikhrāj* ("extraction") and the hermeneutics alleged by al-Āmidī to be required by the Modern poem, see *al-Muwāzana*, I, 5-7; 402.
[108] Ibid., 171.

[109] Mansour Ajami, *The Neckveins of Winter: The Controversy of Natural and Artificial Poetry in Medieval Arabic Literary Criticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 31.

[110] Gordon Williams, *Change and Decline: Roman Literature in the Early Empire* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1978), 49.

verbal *suqāṭ* ("Decadence"), *fasād* ("corruption"), and *ighrāb* ("defamiliarization")—three of the *Muwāzana*'s favored epithets for *muḥdath* ("Modern") poetics—a mirror of ethical and even psychological disorder. That character is at stake in a work billing itself as an impartial *muwāzana…fī shiʿrihimā* ("weighing…of the poetry of the two"), a work whose author is so eager to prove impartiality that he devotes the first section (and others besides) to the "objective" narration of third-person dialogue, is obvious right from the psychologizing tone al-Āmidī's preface.[111] Summarizing the state of the debate between partisans of both poets, al-Āmidī suggests that Abū Tammām and the Moderns invent their way to a *waḥshī al-kalām* ("grotesque discourse"), one *mardhūl* ("debased"), *maṭrūḥ* ("disturbed"), and, indeed, befitting poets who *mustakrih* ("abhor") linguist norms—and one worlds away from the stylistic (and, indeed, moral) *ṣiḥḥa* ("soundness") of their classicizing counterparts.[112] This "soundness" or "health," in turn, overflows from a *ḥalāwat al-nafs* ("sweetness of spirit"). The reference to the ethical fitness of the Classical or classicizing poet is a near hapax: Al-Āmidī's diagnosis of psychological corruption as the source poetic error is as a rule restricted to pathology, which is to say that only the aberrant motives of the *mutaʾakhkhir* ("belated") poet are deemed relevant in the *Muwāzana*.

The pathology, as we will see, lies in the individuation of inspiration: Emptying the poet of any vestige of vatic responsibility, emptying the poet, that is, of any claim to allow nature or truth to return to themselves in the poem, the "belated" poet is moved by a desire belonging to neither *ṭabʿ* ("nature") nor *qarīḥa* ("genius"). Born not of nature—being the child, as al-Āmidī suggests, of a perverse activism of the imagination—this desire cannot be moved towards nature, which is to say that it cannot be moved towards the limpid representation of the world as it is

[111] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 8-129.

[112] Ibid., 5-6. Among al-Āmidī's numerous endorsements of these appraisals, the summary statement on page 243 is especially pithy.

collectively experienced: It is attracted to and powerless to create nothing other than artifice, leaving a shattered mirror in the place of the peerless work of the *maṭbūʿūn* ("naturalists") and the *awāʾil* ("the first ones"), realism and precedent being interchangeable without exception throughout the *Muwāzana*.[113] That the Modern poem's pathology lies in an interruption by the rapacious imagination of a process that had allowed for nature's return to itself is the key to understanding al-Āmidī's argument: *Qalb* and *nafs*, "heart" and "spirit," are assimilated and opposed, rigorously and consistently, to *khayāl* ("imagination") and desire. The first are the source of *ṭabʿ* ("nature"), *ḥaqīqa* ("truth"), and *ṣidq* ("sincerity"), all of which emerge, once more, assimilated seamlessly in al-Āmidī's rhetoric. The *sabīl* ("path"), the *ṭarīqa* ("way"), the *madhhab* ("way of going" [i.e., method])—three more of the *Muwāzana*'s ubiquitous terms—followed closely by the Ancients and trodden by their admirers form the channel by which unaffected sentiment and verisimilar meaning pour forth. The verbal art of the ancients was a poetics of *qalb* and *nafs*, "heart" and "soul." Even if somewhat diminished, the *ḥalāwa* ("sweetness") and *barāʿa* ("genius")[114] of poetry remain available where the poet allows nature and truth into *qalb* and *nafs* and where—the temptations of *khayāl* ("imagination"), desire, and falsehood remaining at bay[115]—these are, in turn, allowed to pour out unbidden into verbal art.

The diagnosis of the privatized and unnatural desire, one divested of interest in universal truth or dialogic communication, one casting its long shadow over all of *muḥdath* ("Modern") poetics, is underway right from the *Muwāzana*'s preface. Al-Āmidī is already endeavoring to persuade readers here that Modern poetics are a matter of *niyya* ("intention"), *mayl*

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[113] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 496.

[114] al-Āmidī, *al-Muwāzana bayna shiʿr Abī Tammām wa-l-Buḥturī ("The Weighing of the Poetry of Abū Tammām and Al-Buḥturī")* 2 vols., vol. II, ed. Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1972), 188; 381. (Cited hereafter as "*al-Muwāzana*, II.")

[115] Ibid., 187.

("inclination"), and *ṭalab* ("desire"). Following the "path" of the ancients requires no desire at all: Indeed, it requires a suppression of private desire in favor of a truth and precedent supposed to emerge of an accord all their own. *Maʿānī ḥulwa* ("pleasing meanings")[116] and *ḥulw al-lafẓ* ("pleasing expression")[117] from a *ḥalāwat al-nafs* ("pleasing soul")[118]—such is how al-Āmidī regularly characterizes Abū Tammām's classicizing counterpart, a poet deferential at once to the *maʿrūf* ("known")[119] and to a *barāʿa* ("brilliance") and *ḥidhq* ("genius")[120] of which he is very nearly a mere witness. *Laysa shayʾ* ("There is nothing") in the work of al-Buḥturī borne of a conscience clouded by the compulsion to invent,[121] or by the desire to please only himself, nothing *khārijan ʿan maqāyīs al-ʿarabiyya* ("departing from the standards of the Arabs") or unattested *fī ashʿār al-qudamāʾ* ("in the poems of the ancients").[122] In contrast, *man yamīl ilā tadqīq wa-falsafiyy al-kalām* ("he who inclines towards preciosity and philosophizing expression"), would possess equally the inclination for the sort poetry of crystallized in the œuvre of Abū Tammām. Such an inclination on the part of the audience would be matched by the poet's own, which is to say that each of these tastes would be moved by a conscience *madhhabihi fī al-khurūj ʿan al-ḥadd fī kull shayʾ* ("whose method lies in exceeding the limits in all things").[123] The Modern poet, in an appraisal that al-Āmidī will personally endorse in short

[116] *al-Muwāzana*, II, 238.

[117] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 400.

[118] Ibid., 5-6.

[119] Ibid., 179.

[120] *al-Muwāzana*, II, 381.

[121] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 19.

[122] Ibid., 28.

[123] *al-Muwāzana*, II, 204.

order, *yastakrih al-alfāẓ wa-l-maʿānī* ("abhors words and meanings")—which is to say that he is wont to allow linguistic norms to wither before mental phantoms *allatī tustakhraj bi-l-ghawṣ wa-l-fikra* ("which are extracted by excavation and meditation").[124]

As the *Muwāzana* gets underway, and as al-Āmidī permits his own voice to sound ever more clearly, the critique of character becomes, tellingly, ever more pronounced. The concern always circles back to the notion that Abū Tammām's stylistic defects are explicable only in terms of some Modern tick of the psyche. In the first section of the *Muwāzana*, where al-Āmidī stages a debate between anonymous partisans of each poet, a charge takes shape that al-Āmidī himself will soon adopt: Only *bi-l-ṭalab wa-l-ḥīla wa-l-tamaḥḥul al-shadīd"* ("by straining, sleight-of-hand, and extreme subterfuge") on the part of the exegete is a *mutaʿawwil* ("justification") for the Modernists' objectionable lines to be found.[125] Interpretation as wish-fulfillment by the sympathetic reader only mirrors the force and strain in which the lines had originally been composed. The staged (and, indeed, somewhat stagey) debate over, al-Āmidī consistently casts Abū Tammām's stylistic errors as effects of character and, specifically, as effects of the desirous imagination. Throughout, the *Muwāzana* draws a tight connection between desire and impossibility.[126] Abū Tammām *yurīd al-badīʿ fa-yakhruj ilā al-muḥāl* ("desires novelty and so strays into impossibility").[127] The poet *lā yajhal* ("is not unaware") of the proper *awṣāf* ("descriptions") afforded him by precedent, and, indeed, *yaʿlam anna al-shuʿarāʾ ilayhi yaqṣidūna* ("he knows that the poets mean a particular thing"). Nevertheless,

[124] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 6-7.

[125] Ibid., 28.

[126] Ibid., 230 (for a paradigmatic example).

[127] Ibid., 134.

yurīd an yabtadiʿ fa-yaqaʿ fī al-khaṭaʾ ("he desires to innovate and so falls into error").[128] Not far beneath any of Abū Tammām's departures from the poetic *ḥadd* ("limit") lies, in fact, the overweening compulsion to jettison *al-lafẓa al-mustaʿmala al-muʿtāda* ("normal used expression")[129]—speech of the *nās* ("people"), speech known to the "Ancients" and understood by the educated[130]—emerging from the heart and of themselves in favor of deliberate "innovation." The Modern poet's willful fettering of the unbidden inspiration manifested in the Classical or Classicizing poem is suggested in the very form of the verb that al-Āmidī uses for "invention" and "innovation," namely *badaʿa* ("to begin") in its reflexive mediopassive state. Used by no coincidence in polemics against heresy, the verb *ibtadaʿa*, with intent and self-interest built into its very structure, suggests "to invent for oneself," "to contrive for oneself."

Caprice, will, desire—for the *ṣanʿī* ("artificial"), for what the poet invents for himself—account for the exertion and strain that are constant companions of the Modern poem's *ṭarīq al-istiʿāra* ("way of metaphor"). Imagination and desire, antitheses of the *ṭabīʿī* ("natural") throughout the *Muwāzana*, are the ultimate source of the pathologies of Modernism. *Li-annahu arāda kalimatan* ("Because he wished for a certain word"),[131] figures turn out *baʿīda* ("far-fetched"), syntax *fī ghayr mawḍiʿihā* ("out of its position"),[132] and meaning laughable.[133] Again and again, we are told, this is a poet whose errors are a reflection of an author who *aḥabba al-*

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[128] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 142.

[129] Ibid., 481.

[130] Ibid., 460; 535. *al-Muwāzana*, II, 95.

[131] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 260.

[132] Ibid., 228.

[133] *al-Muwāzana*, II, 95.

ibdāʿ wa-al-ighrāb ("desired novelties and the bizarre") and so who could not help but *istakthara minhā* ("go to extremes with them").[134]

Above all, it is in driving poets down the serpentine path of the Modernists' *ṭarīq al-istiʿāra* ("method of metaphor") that the individuated imagination betrays its worst impulses. While returning intermittently to the posture of neutral arbiter in an agon between Ancient and Modern, al-Āmidī mostly abandons any pretension to impartiality after the "dialogue" of the first section. Nevertheless, the coolly reported summary of absolutely incendiary rhetoric against the Moderns in the *Muwāzana*'s preface—together with the anonymous dialogue of the work's first section—make for a kind of prosopopoiea: Al-Āmidī is simply ventriloquizing what are later revealed to be nothing other than the author's own views. Abū Tammām is, in any case, straight away taken to task for *al-istiʿārāt al-baʿīda* ("far-fetched metaphors") and *al-maʿānī al-muwallada* ("the artificial meanings")[135] that these yield, while the *qurb al-maʾtā* ("nearness of origin") and *inkishāf al-maʿānī* ("transparency of meaning") in al-Buḥturī is said to adhere to the figural language of the ancients. For its part, *al-istiʿāra lā tustaʿmal illā fīmā yalīq bi-l-maʿānī* ("Metaphor is to be used only with what is fitting with respect to meanings").[136] The question, naturally, lies in how this *liyāqa*—"fittingness," "adherence," and "decorum"—is to be understood. Since al-Āmidī speaks often of the *ḥudūd idhā kharajat ʿanha ṣārat ilā al-khaṭaʾ wa-l-fasād*" ("limits which if it [metaphor] should surpass them, it [metaphor] leads to error and

[134] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 256.

[135] Generally, *muwallad* is a near equivalent to *muḥdath* ("Modern"). It "refers to any word, linguistic form, or literary feature that is not found in the classical *ʿarabiyya* of pre- and early Islamic times." More specifically, however, it refers to meanings generated from previous topoi (being thus doubly artificial). Given that al-Āmidī is discussing figural language here, he probably understands it in this second, more technical sense. Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, "Muwallad (2)," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill Online, 2016 [First print edition 1960-2007]).

[136] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 242.

corruption") another way of putting the question is how, exactly, these "limits" are to be understood.[137]

BEYOND RESEMBLANCE:

THE PROBLEM OF "MODERN" METAPHOR

Naturally, it is in a chapter dedicated to *mā fī shiʿr abī tammām min qabīḥ al-istiʿārāt* ("ugly metaphors in Abū Tammām's poetry") that a sense of what al-Āmidī finds most disconcerting in Abū Tammām's use of tropes will quickly emerge. Of the twenty-two examples listed somewhat breathlessly over the course of the chapter, each involves the personification of abstract referents. The first, setting the tone, is a prosopopoeia of *dahr* ("time"): *Yā dahru qawwim min akhdaʿayka* ("O time, straighten your neckveins!"), intones the poet, *aḍjajta hādhā al-anāma min khuruqik"* ("you have aggrieved this human race by your caprice").[138] The other twenty-one involve what Al-Āmidī deems to be similar personifications, often of *dahr*; these are, he tells us, characteristic of Abū Tammām's œuvre as a whole. Taking for granted the *ghathāthat hādhihi al-alfāẓ* ("wretchedness of this [i.e., Abū Tammām's] expression"), Al-Āmidī objects to the reification of what is properly abstract: *Fa-jaʿala…li-l-dahr akhdaʿan* ("so he attributes…to time neckveins") and *yadan tuqṭaʿ min al-zand* ("a hand severed from the forearm"), describing it *ka-annahu yuṣraʿ* ("as though it were possessed"). He makes it *yabtasim* ("smile") in one instant and *yushraq bi-l-kirām* ("choke on the noble") in the next. These are, al-Āmidī says, of a piece with other of Abū Tammām's reifications: In the poet's hands, *zamān* ("time") becomes

[137] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 242.

[138] Ibid., 245. Translation of the first hemistich is Ajami's. *Neckveins of Winter*, 31.

ablaq (“piebald”), *al-ayyām* (“the days”) a steed, and *al-layālī ... ʿawārik* (“the nights…battles”).[139]

Now endowing time with a human face (and so apostrophizing it), now endowing it with the attributes of concrete objects, Abū Tammām goes *fī ghāyat al-qabāḥa wa-l-hajāna wa-l-buʿd min al-ṣawāb* (“to the heights of ugliness, baseness, and remoteness from what is correct”).[140] As he had promised in the *Muwāzana*’s preface, al-Āmidī grounds this rejection in a comparison with *al-ʿarab*, a term properly signifying “the Arabs” but here pointing especially to the Bedouin before Islam. The ethnic weight of the term should not, however, be kept too far out of mind, for the *badīʿ* controversy crystallizes around the poetry of non-Arabs (i.e., Persians). The metaphors of “the Arabs” are, in any case, of an entirely different sort than the recklessly employed prosopopoiea and reifications in Abū Tammām: In a summary statement of the bases of Classical *istiʿārāt* (“metaphors”), al-Āmidī describes the carefully circumscribed categories of *lāʾiqa* (“consonance”) between *al-lafẓa al-mustaʿāra* (“the metaphoric utterance”) and *al-maʿnā* (“the meaning”) in traditional metaphor.[141] Each of these categories is grounded, al-Āmidī says, in types of *qurb* (“proximity”): Meaning and utterance may be yoked together according to *nasab* (“kinship”), the type here closest to the “replacement” or “substitution” metaphor. The next two categories of Ancient *istiʿāra* (“metaphor”) are based on a relationship closer to metonymy: namely, *shabah* (“likeness) between certain *aḥwāl* (“qualities”) or *asbāb* (“causes”) of meaning and utterance. Whatever the type of closeness between the two terms—and this is al-Āmidī’s

[139] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 249.

[140] Ibid., 250.

[141] Ibid., 250.

point—the single criterion of import in Ancient metaphor is that *lāʾiqa* ("consonance") and *mulāʾima* ("harmony") bind the meaning to the element borrowed.

Illustrating this rigorous *qurb* ("proximity") in the figural constructions of the ancients, Al-Āmidī points immediately to a line figuring the night as a camel from Imruʾ al-Qays. The poet talks of a night endowed with an extended *ṣulb* ("spine") and *kalkal* ("chest"), a night galloping interminably with its own cruel inexorability.[142] The line reaches *ghāyat al-ḥusn wa-l-jawda wa-l-ṣiḥḥa* ("the heights of beauty, excellence, and correctness") because it remains at once a description of the qualities of the night and an exemplar of the proper handling of *mawḍūʿāt al-maʿānī wa-l-istiʿārāt wa-l-majāzāt* ("conventional meanings, metaphors, and figures"). With masterful clarity, Imruʾ al-Qays conjures the night's long middle, its oppressive arrival, its relentlessness. The conceit succeeds because it is *muntaẓim li-jamīʿ nuʿūt al-layl al-ṭawīl ʿalā hayʾatihi* ("faithful to all the qualities of the long night as it appears"). The emphasis on a truth phenomenally realistic and accessible to anyone—which is to say on a truth living and breathing outside the poet's imagination—is central to al-Āmidī's defense of most figural language, though (as we will see) this line of defense will often find itself blurred imperceptibly with precedent. The coherence of the metaphoric construction is such that the line would make sense to *man yurāʿīhi wa-yataraqqab taṣarrumahu* ("whomever observes it [the night] and watches its elapsing"). Imruʾ al-Qays gives, then, to the line's proper meaning (the night) an extending mid-section and a flank to be ridden; he gives it a beast's body and chest to elicit menace. Most pleasing of all, he *yastaʿīr* ("lends") a *ṣulb* ("spine") to the night's middle. This makes the spine's spatial extension the equivalent of the night's temporal extension. The *tamaddud* ("stretching") of the night can, then, be justifiably replaced by the verbal metaphor *tamaṭṭā* ("to extend") because both verbs, independent of the line in question, belong *bi-manzila*

[142] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 250.

wāḥida ("to a single abode"). Imruʾ al-Qays is, finally, right to lend to the night's oppressive *ṣadr* ("start") the notion of a heaving *kalkal* ("chest"), since both suggest a burden oppressive in its weight.[143]

The grounding in shared phenomenal experience—one existing entirely apart from the poet's imagination—produces what al-Āmidī calls a metaphor *aqrab…min al-ḥaqīqa* ("nearest…the truth"). Such a figure is motivated by *shiddat mulāʾama* ("stringent harmony") between the proper meaning and that belonging to what is lent it.[144] As the *Muwāzana*'s earlier summary of the types of *qurb* ("proximity") in Classical *istiʿāra* had suggested, the metaphors of "the Arabs" or "the Ancients" follow the rule of sensory resemblance—where the borrowed term is in its *hayʾa* ("appearance") near the meaning it is replacing—with few exceptions. A line from the sixth-century poet Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā employing the genitive metaphor *afrāsu al-ṣibā* ("horses of youthful folly") comes in for special praise.[145] *Ḥasuna an yustaʿār li-l-ṣibā ism al-afrās* ("He [Zuhayr] did splendidly in lending to 'youthful folly' the noun 'horses'), al-Āmidī instructs, since the equivalence is grounded in (and, in turn, brings into relief) the *jamḥ* ("temerity") and *jary* ("rush") of each. *Wa-kānat hādhihi al-istiʿāra* ("This metaphor therefore"), he summarizes, *min alyaq shayʾ bi-mā ustuʿīrat lahu* ("depends upon the consonance of the object with what has been lent it").[146] So too does a line where Abū Dhuʾayb, another early poet (now of the seventh century), lends *manīya* ("death") grasping *aẓfār* ("talons"), the figure conjuring the disquieting ineluctability of life's often unceremonious end. Rigorous *layq*

[143] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 250.

[144] Ibid.

[145] The translation is Wolfhart P. Heinrichs's in *The Hand of the Northwind: Opinions on Metaphor and the Early Meaning of Istiʿāra in Arabic Poetics* (Wiesbaden: Deutsche Morgenlandische Gesellschaft, 1977), 22.

[146] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 251.

("appropriateness") and strict *shabah* ("resemblance"), says al-Āmidī, are nothing less than the *majrā* ("way") of classical metaphor.[147]

In contrast, a rejection of resemblance as the *sine qua non* of figural language produces what for al-Āmidī is the unhappy profusion of grotesque anthropomorphisms and reifications in the metaphors of the Moderns. Of Abū Tammām's *akhādiʿ al-dahr al-abīy* ("neckveins of haughty fate"), where both the noun and adjective attributed "fate" have personifying effects, al-Āmidī asks: *Fa-ayy ḥāja ilā al-akhādiʿ ḥattā yustaʿīrahā li-l-dahr?* ("And what justifies going so far as to lend 'neckveins' to 'fate'?"). Abū Tammām might have spoken of fate as *sahl* ("smooth") or *khashin* ("rough")—or he might have spoken, perhaps, of its *līn* ("softness")—for these can be justified *ʿalā qadr taṣarruf al-aḥwāl fīhi* ("according to how its qualities behave"). Flamboyant prosopopoeia—where *jaʿala li-l-dahr ʿaqlan wa-jaʿalahu mufakkiran* ("he attributed to fate reason and thinking")—jettison resemblance, being little other than *ʿuqbā al-ifrāṭ wa-thamarat al-isrāf* ("the upshot of excess and fruit of exaggeration").[148]

Poetic norm and universal sensory experience are, however, themselves suspiciously congruent in al-Āmidī's decision to praise or blame a given turn of phrase. The definitions of hyperbole and excess will turn less on some self-evident *shabah* ("resemblance") than upon their "distance" from *ṣawāb* ("the customary") and *kalām al-awāʾil* ("the discourse of the ancients").[149] *Istiʿārāt baʿīda* ("far-fetched metaphors") are not so much a problem in themselves, despite al-Āmidī's intermittent appeals to self-evident sensory experience, as is their being *baʿīd al-istiʿārāt…fī ashʿār al-qudamāʾ* ("far from the metaphors...[found] in the poetry of

[147] The two notions are at the center of al-Āmidī's own normative poetics. They are often treated, indeed, as though synonyms. *al-Muwāzana*, I, 255. For more discussion of "Ancient" metaphor, see 253 and 43.

[148] Ibid., 18.

[149] Ibid., 255.

the ancients").[150] Nevertheless, this all-too-smooth interchange between custom and nature involves a causal twist: Metaphors are deemed suspect—catachretic, strained, artificial—in the *Muwāzana* not inasmuch as they depart from nature or truth but, rather, inasmuch as they depart from custom. In critiquing Abū Tammām and other of the *mutaʾakhkhir* ("belated") poets, the *Muwāzana*'s main rhetorical strategy is to endeavor to persuade readers of a line's error by treating poetic precedent and *ḥaqīqa* ("truth") as interchangeable.

A telling instance of the collapse of truth into decorum—into expression *maʿrūf* ("known"), into wording shared by *al-nās jamīʿan* ("the people collectively"),[151] into phrasing attested among the Ancients—is to be found in al-Āmidī's treatment of the Moderns' objectionable description of nature. The *Muwāzana*'s heavily weighted scale is visible from the outset, where it is apparent that al-Āmidī is intervening on behalf of a critical consensus that rejects (at least the excesses of) *muḥdath* ("Modern") poetics for turning the *ṭabīʿī* ("natural") into the *takalluf* ("calculated"), *gharīb* ("grotesque"), and *ṣanāʾiʿī* ("synthetic"). Even in its first pages, the *Muwāzana*'s ultimately indistinguishable interchange between nature and custom is scarcely far from sight: The classicizing agonist against whom Abū Tammām is to be measured meets praise amongst contemporaries because he, *al-buḥturī*, *aʿrābiyyu al-shiʿr*, *maṭbūʿ*, *wa-ʿalā madhhab al-awāʾil* ("al-Buḥturī, is a Bedouin in his poetry [i.e., like his pre-Islamic and early Umayyad antecedents], natural, and in accordance with the method of the Ancients").[152] In a single paratactic breath, al-Āmidī is already giving us a version of the rhetorical strategy lying just beneath his overt argument in favor, ultimately, of al-Buḥturī and the *maṭbūʿūn*

[150] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 256.

[151] Ibid., 464.

[152] Ibid., 6.

("naturalists"). As the syntax has it, making "Arabic" poetry, being "natural," and following the Ancients are something like equivalents, a suggestion that will find further support in al-Āmidī's treatment of *shiʿr al-ʿarab* ("the poetry of the Arabs") and *shiʿr al-qudamāʾ* ("the poetry of the predecessors") as quite explicitly synonymous.[153]

That al-Āmidī is talking about a *ṭabīʿa* ("nature") that is finally a mask for culture and custom is immediately clear from his discussion of the supposed "perversion"—the *ighrāb* ("rendering strange"), the rendering *waḥshī* ("grotesque")[154]—of natural phenomena. No element of nature in the uncareful (or too careful) hands of the Modern poet is cause for more consternation than *rīḥ* ("wind"). And yet, as al-Āmidī's argument and analysis unfold, it quickly becomes clear that it is anything but "wind" itself that is at stake. *Wa-lā aʿrifu li-abī tammām maʿnan jayyidan fī dhikr al-rīḥ illā* ("And I don't know of a good meaning that Abū Tammām has in the discussion of wind save") for a single exception.[155] The measure for the sound and accurate treatment of natural phenomena is, however, never nature itself. Endlessly adducing Classical counter-examples and never passing up an opportunity to argue from grammar and common linguistic practice, the *Muwāzana* ultimately leaves little doubt that Abū Tammām's *ghalaṭ* ("error") is about something quite other than "wind" or nature or reality in themselves. In, for instance, a *muʿāraḍa* ("antithesis") drawn by Abū Tammām between the *ṣabā* and *dabūr*, the "east" and "west" wind, an antithesis seeming to redundantly (and confusedly) employ two synonyms for the "east" wind, the problem has little to do with the elements themselves. The

[153] On the assimilation of the *maṭbūʿ* ("natural") and *shiʿr al-ʿarab* ("the poetry of the Arabs"), see also Ajami, *The Neckveins of Winter*, 25.

[154] The word suggests diction deliberately and obviously out of place. "Uncouth and jarring" is how Heinrichs defines the *waḥshī*, citing al-Jāhiẓ and Ibn Qudāma in favor of a sense of the word as somewhere between "archaic" and "base." Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, "Waḥshī (a) and Ḥūshī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill Online, 2016 [First print edition 1960-2007]).

[155] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 467.

trouble is not that Abū Tammām's line fails to oppose wind blowing from the direction of *maṭlaʿ al-shams* ("the rising of the sun") and its *ḍidd* ("opposite"). Rather, the antithesis fails on account of unhappy grammar—and, especially, the use of the preposition *qabūl* against precedent. The line's use of the preposition notwithstanding, *mā sumiʿa min al-ʿarab "zaydun qabūlaka" bi-maʿnā "muqābilika"* ("'Zayd is before you' in the sense of 'opposite you' is not heard among the Arabs").[156] Abū Tammām's reckless use of *qabūl* edges the line away not so much from reality as from precedent. Referring to *al-ʿarab* ("the Arabs"), al-Āmidī conjectures that unacceptable ambiguity would result *law jāza hādhā fī kalāmihim aw sāgha fī lughatihim aw kāna masmūʿan minhum* ("were this permitted in their discourse, allowed in their speech, or heard from them"). No precedent, so far as al-Āmidī knows, exists for such a use of the word. Again, the problem is simply not one of nature or realism: The trouble is not that the line attempts a description belonging not to nature, but rather that it expresses itself in language not *masmūʿ* ("heard"). *Lā yastajīz an yuʿāriḍ bi-mithl hādhihi al-muʿāraḍa* ("Drawing such an antithesis is not allowed"), al-Āmidī concludes, since Abū Tammām's is wording which is itself *lā yuḥdith* ("not permitted"), *lugha ghayr maʿrūfa* ("language [which is] not known"), and expression which among *al-ʿarab…lam taqulhu wa-lam tanṭiq bihi* ("the Arabs…was neither spoken nor uttered").[157]

A Hermeneutics in Kind:

Imagining Authorial Intent

A parallelism begins to emerge in the rhetoric that al-Āmidī wields against *muḥdath* ("Modern") poetics: Not only does the critic refuse description *khurūj ilā al-muḥāl* ("venturing

[156] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 152.

[157] Ibid., 153.

into the impossible") and so past the *ḥadd* ("frontier") of a truth[158]—this last a guise, finally, for decorous custom—but he refuses "reparative" or apologetic readings that might tease out a logic beneath seemingly problematic expressions. The refusal is of non-phenomenalism and abstraction (themselves measured less against nature than custom) as much in the act of poetic creation as in the percipient's reception of the created poem. Together with paradox and (its unhappy progeny) ambiguity, unacceptable abstraction, as the *Muwāzana* has it, mars the following line from Abū Tammām's *dīwān*:

> al-wuddu li-l-qurbā, wa-lākin ʿurfuhu li-l-abʿadi al-awṭāni dūn al-aqrabi
>
> The (patron's) affection is for his nearest, but his beneficence goes to those whose lands are furthest rather than nearest.[159]

The subject's paradoxical behavior and opaque intention compel al-Āmidī to confront possible explanations for the logic of the line and its author. Dismaying most of all, however, is not the line's abstraction *per se*, but rather the fact that its non-concreteness and ambiguity beckons for excessive, burdensome *taʾwīl* ("exegesis," "unteasing"). The method recurs throughout the *Muwāzana*: Presenting an ambiguous line as offensive to common sense, truth, and (especially) attested precedent, al-Āmidī performs a more or less exhaustive procatelepsis. He then takes the rationalizations' (preordained) failure as definitive evidence of the line's *qubḥ* ("ugliness"). Typically, al-Āmidī constrains himself to philological parsing, explaining the failure of diction, syntax, or trope with respect to a single objectionable line of "innovative" poetry. Now, however, he expresses hostility to the very notion that such parsing should even be necessary. Sifting through the apologetic analyses that the line has occasioned, al-Āmidī fastens upon the explanation that excessive wealth is to blame for the alienation that Abū Tammām is lamenting.

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[158] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 19; 22; 84; 134; 148-9; 234.

[159] Ibid., 167. Translation is van Gelder's.

Al-Āmidī's refusal of this conjecture amounts to, and, quickly and indeed explicitly turns into, a more sweeping refusal of the very necessity of a reading aimed beyond *lafẓ* ("expression," "wording").

The "beyond" in question is of the essence for *muḥdath* ("Modern") poetry more generally: As both detractors and sympathizers acknowledge, the appeal to meanings *ghumūḍ* ("being concealed") and *ighrāq* ("reaching hyperbole") is something like the quintessence of Modern style.[160] Al-Āmidī's concern now, however, lies on the other side of what he often calls the *tarīqa* or *madhhab*, the "path" or "method," of the Modern poem. He is not rejecting the appeal to the capricious imagination beyond the *ḥadd* ("frontier") of wording in the act of poetic creation, though this too, of course, is something that he dismisses more or less uncompromisingly. The critic's concern now, however, lies with audience and percipient, with reception and interpretation. *Wa-qultu lahu* ("And I would say"), al-Āmidī proclaims with respect to the grasping explanation for Abū Tammām's line on alienation: *Wa-kayfa yuʿlam annahum aghniyāʾ wa-laysa fī ẓāhir lafẓ al-bayt dalīl ʿalayhi"* ("How, indeed, is it evident that they are rich when there is no indication in the outward line's expression?").[161] The typical procatelepsis follows. Al-Āmidī has his nameless interlocutor say: *Kadhā nawā wa-arāda* ("Such is what he [Abū Tammām] had intended and wanted").[162]

An unrestrained plea for an austere literalism ensues, one entirely in keeping with the *Muwāzana*'s rejection of abstraction in tropes and of (an overweening) activism in imagination. Embarking now on an excursus on hermeneutics (itself not free of abstraction), al-Āmidī proceeds to distinguish between *maʿānī alfāẓ* (literally, "the meanings of expression") and those

[160] al-Muw*āzana*, I, 6.

[161] Ibid., 171.

[162] Ibid.

meanings purported and conjectured while remaining nevertheless unexpressed. The obverse of these *maʿānī alfāẓ* appears in different guises over the course of the *Muwāzana*. Al-Āmidī is, from the start, keen to paint the Modern style's principal sin—or in sympathetic eyes, he admits, its virtue—in terms of *gharāba* ("strangeness"), *ʿumq* ("depth"), and *buʿd* ("distance"). Now, however, what is really at stake in the estrangement of meaning from the immediately significant penumbra of the utterance (*maʿānī alfāẓ*) comes into clearer view. In response to Abū Tammām's apologists, *qultu* ("I would say"), so far as concerns any conjectured meaning required to make a line's sense somehow "complete" (or coherent), that this is *laysa al-ʿamal ʿalā niyyat al-mutakallim* ("is not the effect according to the intent of the [line's] speaker"). The *niyya* ("intent") at issue is nevertheless emphatically not that of a human speaker and still less of Abū Tammām. The intent that al-Āmidī has in mind is, indeed, itself not of the mind. *Wijhat al-maqṣūd* ("the appearance of what is meant"), *ḥaqīqat maʿnā al-lafẓ* ("the truth of the wording's meaning"), the *qarṭās* ("page") itself—these are the sources of "intent" beyond which the act of interpretation should not be compelled to move.[163] These are, moreover, little ambiguous: This is a non-psychological, non-human "intent," one bound up with a rigorous textualism itself proposed in reaction to the excesses of that active and capricious imagination never far behind the Modern poem. Departing from an intent bound to grammar, syntax, and diction would, al-Āmidī says, lead to hermeneutical relativism. He decries the conjectures of his nameless opponents as not only *fāsid* ("corrupt"), but, far more revealingly, as *tawahhum.*[164] The epithet suggests "fancy," "caprice," and "imagining," the hermeneutical counterpart to the Modern poem's initial composition. Against the *badīʿ* ("innovative") poet's idiosyncratic flight of fancy

[163] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 171-72.

[164] Ibid., 172.

and his audience's rapture in untying its *falsafī* ("sophistic") strangeness, al-Āmidī is trying to de-psychologize "intent," to wrest from both percipient and author a meaning that properly belongs to the edifice of language itself. Were one permitted to attribute (*nasaba*) to any word or deed a *niyya* ("intent") not evinced on the face of the expression itself, one would be invited to journey into something quite other than interpretation. Conjecture and *tawahhum* ("imagining") not adhering *ʿalā mā tūjibuhu maʿānī alfāẓihi* ("to what the wording's meaning necessitates") turn exegesis into conjuring trick, carrying the interpreter towards an "intent" utterly apart from what lies *fī ẓāhir lafẓ* ("upon expression's surface").[165] Refusing the activism and artifice of the Modern poet's *khayāl* ("imagination"), rejecting the chimeric hermeneutics that this phantastic poetics elicits in the percipient, al-Āmidī posits a psychology and *niyya* ("intent") stripped of the (human) psyche. This impersonal intent belongs to nothing less than the commonly felt and experienced stretching back in time to the Ancients themselves.

If *gharaḍ* ("intent," "topos") belongs not to any personal psyche but rather to the surface of the *qarṭās* ("page") giving voice to decorum and precedent, how does the illicit displacement of meaning in the creation and reception of the Modern poem transpire? The crux of the issue is, naturally, the "location" of *niyya* ("intent"), the question being, then, how meaning might come to lose its proper "place" in the works of the *mutaʾakhkhir* ("belated") poet. The *Muwāzana* raises two parallel and equally unwelcome possibilities for meaning's disorientation, each feeding on subjectivism—on private and inward understanding and intent—at the expense of appearance. The first takes place in the *khayāl* ("imagination") of the poet; it bears, moreover, the overwhelming brunt of al-Āmidī's criticism. Here, meaning moves so far from the light of *lafẓ* ("expression"), so deep into the tenebrous imagination of the poet, that the sense of what emerges outwardly is utterly dependent on some concealed meaning reserved for the poet

[165] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 171.

himself. It is not for nothing that al-Āmidī will speak throughout the *Muwāzana* of *ghumūḍ* ("obscurity," "hiddenness") and *ʿumq* ("depth") as the quintessence of "belated" poetics. All of this turns on a "tension between word and object," remarks Stefan Sperl (following Friedrich's work on the Baroque poem), a disunion permitting the construction of "extraordinary entit[ies]."

The draining of "reality" from the poem, however, is less a matter of "language maintain[ing] the upper hand" as it grows ever more involuted (what Sperl terms "semiological mimesis") as it is of meaning entering the private province of its author's mind.[166] Language and *lafẓ* ("expression") itself, as al-Āmidī demonstrates, actually lose relevance as meaning moves ever further from the *qarṭās* ("page"), passing out from under the immediate penumbra of meaning (al-Āmidī's *maʿānī alfāẓ*) and moving instead into an imagination inclined towards the *muḥāl* ("absurd"). No necessary relationship exists, of course, between intent hidden from the page though existing in the author's mind and "impossibility"—the two, however, are tendencies comorbid without fail for al-Āmidī. In any case, the move away from language and towards "non-sense"—towards, that is, meanings liberated by the imagination from the sensual world—is the displacement of *niyya* generating the Modern poem's "failed" tropes.

The imperious *khayāl* ("imagination") can also effect a second displacement of sense from the page. Now, however, the abstraction of meaning from language takes place not in the mind of author or creator but rather in that of percipient or hermeneute. Whenever a line of a *mutaʾakhkhir* ("belated") poet requires searching and strained exegesis, meaning has again shifted from *ḥaqīqat maʿnā al-lafẓ* ("the truth of the expression's sense"), only now it has entered the mind of the beholder. The *Muwāzana* is littered with nameless and rejected defenses of Abū Tammām's failed tropes and unhappy turns of phrase. Al-Āmidī dismisses these

[166] Stefan Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry: A Structural Analysis of Selected Texts (3rd Century Ah/9th Century Ad—5th Century Ah/11th Century Ad)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 159-60.

apologies precisely because their very inference requires a *tawahhum* ("fancy," "conjecture") that should by now be familiar: It is simply the interpreter's counterpart to what the Modern poet had already called upon in the act of creation. The parallelism is, in fact, chiastic: Just as the imagination overtakes the norms of expression in the making of the *badīʿ* ("innovative") line, so must the norms of expression be overtaken in the act of interpretation. This interplay between implication and inference, between making and exegesis in the poetics of the *mutaʾakhkhirūn* ("belated ones") seems plausibly related to developments in hermeneutics outside of poetry. The imagination's eclipse of the written word, "the historical progression of the figural-abstractive process of apprehension in Arabic poetry," is the Modern poet's answer to the allegorical *taʾwīl* ("exegesis") proffered by and then in response to the *muʿtazilī* polemic against literalism.[167] But this is hardly "only" a matter of the erosion of realism in figural language: Poetic will, desire, and imagination—all of which promiscuously exchange throughout the *Muwāzana*—also lead to the corruption of syntax and diction. In that respect, the increasing concern in Arabic *naḥw* ("grammar") with "reconciling" (*tamthīl* and, later, *taqdīr*) surface-level expression with an implicit norm—the concern being at play from Sībawayh's eighth-century *al-Kitāb* onwards—is another natural correlate.[168]

Wantonly, willfully separating expression from a meaning left to exist only in the *ghumūḍ* ("obscurity") of the poet's imagination, the *madhhab* ("method") of the Modern poem demands an exegesis paralleling its creation. It demands phantastic conjecture unjustified by the poem's already disturbed surface-level of expression. Any reparative reading requires this

[167] "We can define *badīʿ* poetry," Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych suggests, "as that which is characterized by the same processes of abstract and dialectical thought that are found in Muʿtazilite exegesis in particular, and, generally, in speculative theology (*kalām*)." Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām and the Poetics of the ʿAbbāsid Age* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 19.

[168] Kees Versteegh, *Landmarks in Linguistic Thought III: The Arabic Linguistic Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 37.

separation of the immediately perceived level of language, its sensory aspect and what al-Āmidī suggests is its penumbra of immediate sense (*maʿnā al-lafẓ*), from what its interpreter imagines had taken shape in its maker's imagination. Al-Āmidī is little relenting in his dismissal of the Modern poet's subjugation of the poetic line (and, most importantly, of decorum and precedent) to fancy and desire. Now, however, the critic is explicitly rejecting the notion that the reader should or even can attempt to salvage a line from ambiguity gone beyond-the-pale into nonsense. Abū Tammām's paradoxical description of unfulfilled *wuddu li-l-qurbā* ("affection for the nearest") requires a weaving in the percipient's mind of connections among abstract substantives that are simply nowhere on the page. A series of explanations for how *ʿurf* ("generosity") might manifest the patron's feelings in reverse is flatly rejected by al-Āmidī, and each according to the same logic: *Hādhā tawahhum minka fāsid* ("This is a corrupt conjecture on your part"), he intones. *Wa-taʾawwul li-hādhā al-kalām ʿalā ghayr wajhihi al-maqṣūd* ("Moreover, it is an interpretation of these words counter to its apparent intent").

INTENT OF NONE:

THE NĀS ("PEOPLE") VERSUS SUBJECTIVISM

The question begged, of course, is where the *maqṣūd* ("intended") meaning of the surface-level utterance is to be found. Dismissive of the imagination as much in the beholder as in the maker of the poetic line, al-Āmidī refuses appeals to the psychology and feeling of either. The line stands or falls on its own, and its sense cannot be left to hazy reconstructions beyond the letter's immediate shadow of meaning. Curiously, however, al-Āmidī's self-evidently "reasonable" descriptions of what can and cannot be *maqṣūd* ("intended") in a given line abound in terms of unambiguously psychological import: These include *niyya* ("intent"), and *gharaḍ* ("intent"), and, of course, *maqṣūd* ("what is meant"). These are mere metaphors to be sure, but

the need to posit an inhuman psyche of the text reveals a larger and more curious issue in al-Āmidī's rejection of meaning too far removed from the *lafẓa* ("utterance").

Impersonal, self-evident *niyya* ("intent") turns out, however, to be further removed from the line's surface than al-Āmidī might wish his readers to believe. The *Muwāzana* regularly begins its analysis of a line's *khaṭaʾ* ("error") with a stagey analysis of grammar. The tactic is evidently meant to suggest that syntax and diction simply speak for themselves, being the *niyya* ("intent") or light of the line in question from which an immediate shadow of meaning is cast. Regularly too, however, al-Āmidī is unable to limit himself to the austere argument from grammar framing his rejection of a line in the first place. The trouble is that he almost without fail finds himself compelled to appeal not to some self-evident, self-sufficient logic of grammar but to something definitionally not self-evident, and something definitely not to be gleaned from the *qarṭās* ("page") at the heart of his initial appeal: It is, finally, history to which al-Āmidī must continually seek recourse. "History" in the *Muwāzana* appears in one of two guises, either in the form of poetic precedent or in the vaguely defined norms of presumably non-poetic speech.

The problem that the appeal to historical norms of discourse poses to al-Āmidī's argument against Modern poetics is not inconsiderable. It reveals much, moreover, about the aporias and necessary blindspots in any effort—in the tenth century or no, in Arabic or no—to persuade readers of literary corruption. Because the *Muwāzana* outwardly grounds its rejection of Modern poetics in the departure from nature, truth, and clarity, it is not a little ironic that almost without fail it is upon the edifice of culture that this same rejection is forced to lean. The problem also has implications for the close connection that al-Āmidī draws between poetic desire and imagination, on the one hand, and unnatural expression and artifice, on the other. As we will see, the natural expression and limpid, inspired speech that al-Āmidī idealizes turn out to be little

more than a series of masks worn not by nature but rather by cultural norms. Moreover, despite the strong accent that the *Muwāzana* means to put on the immediate sense of the line—and this as bulwark against the phantasy and caprice of the Modern poet and his equally fanciful apologists—al-Āmidī's proof of corruption ends up reaching much further (into the past) than an appeal to the intent of a living contemporary might otherwise venture.

The natural, clear logic of grammar as manifest in the *lafẓa* ("utterance") simply is not, as the *Muwāzana*'s argumentation is forced to betray again and again, sufficient of itself for the determination of the *niyya* ("intent") supposed to be embedded in the line. By dint of the nature of grammar alone, *taʾwīl* ("exegesis") is supposed to be unnecessary. *Mā taʾawwaltuhu* ("What I have interpreted") is but the *ḥaqīqa maʿnā al-lafẓ* ("truth of the wording's meaning"), al-Āmidī will insist in discussing the proper meaning of the preposition *dūna* ("rather than"): *Huwa bi-maʿnī balha* ("It [*dūna*] has the sense of 'let alone' [*balha*]"). And this is no matter of interpretation: *Fa-hādhihi maʿnā al-lafẓ* ("For this is the meaning of the expression").[169] The suggestion is clear: The more "interpretation" demanded by the line, the more the line relies on the percipient's imagination to read the mind of its maker, the more its expression has fallen from the ideal of natural and self-evident grammar. Language is ideal inasmuch as it speaks for itself. Al-Āmidī will thus parrot the grammarian's patois—and the rapidly developing *ʿilm al-naḥw* ("science of grammar") after the ninth century CE need be kept in mind—deploying "Zayd" and "ʿAmr" to demonstrate a line's nonsense. *Li-annaka fī hādhā ka-qāʾil qāla* ("It is as though one said here"), says al-Āmidī of *dūna l-aqrab* in Abū Tammām's use, *al-wudd wa-l-māl jamīʿan li-zayd, wa-l-māl li-ʿamr mufradan dūna zayd* ("the love and money both go to Zayd, and money to ʿAmr alone and not to Zayd"). Read in this way, the preposition forms a proposition defying logic, and the statement's impossible claim is a reflection of Abū Tammām's

[169] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 172.

reckless use of grammar. *Fa-kayfa yujmaʿ al-māl maʿa l-wudd li-zayd awwalan wa-yufrad ʿamr bihi dūn zayd ākhiran?* ("For how could money and affection both go to Zayd first only then to be reserved to ʿAmr and not Zayd?"). Interwoven, obviating in their self-evident clarity the need for exegesis, grammar and logic stand for al-Āmidī as the bulwark against imaginative caprice. Naturally, then, *hadhf* ("elision"), that figure leaning upon the imagination and the imagined intent of the author, is to be carefully delimited.

The *Muwāzana* leaves little doubt about the trajectory of *hadhf* from the Ancients to the Moderns. The technique becomes more elliptical, more cryptic, as once more the self-sufficiency of words as they stand must yield to the personal psyche of the author. *Lafẓ hādhā al-bayt mabnīy ʿalā fasād* ("This line's wording is built upon corruption"), al-Āmidī says of the omission of the conditional particle *in* ("if") and the personal pronoun *man* ("who") in a line. The *hadhf* ("elision"), al-Āmidī pronounces, *ikhtalla al-bayt wa-ashkala maʿnāhu* ("ruins the line and disturbs its sense").[170] Most worrisome of all, however, is that *hadhf* seems an invitation to precisely the kind of overweening hermeneutics that al-Āmidī is at pains to forbid. Only where *al-kalām yadull ʿalā* ("the wording bespeaks") the suppressed elements—which remain cast in the immediate shadow of the line and not hidden in the recesses of the poet's mind—is elision allowed.[171] Failing this, the very *taʾwīl* ("exegesis") that clear expression (supposedly) obviates becomes a necessity, and here, once more, the problem of the arbitrary separation of meaning from the utterance as it stands invites interpretative indulgence. And this because the reader or listener must look beyond grammar and logic and attempt, and perhaps vainly at that, to read or listen to the imagination of the poet.

[170] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 181.

[171] Ibid., 182.

Arāda bi-qawlihi ("In saying this he meant") becomes the "belated" poet's *Leitmotiv*, and al-Āmidī regularly shows that the conjectured meaning fails to actually or acceptably reveal itself in the line. Its recovery and reconstruction (akin to what in Kūfa and Basra was being called *tamthīl* and *taqdīr*) must be attempted by the critic or apologist, grudgingly by the author of the *Muwāzana* and with disconcerting eagerness by Modernist sympathizers. *Ikhtilāl* ("disorder") mars the process of creation, the line itself, and the decoding of the poem for the simple reason that what is neither manifest in the expression nor indicated with relative immediacy is an invitation to excessive allegorization (also, remarkably, *tamthīl*). The resulting interpretive disarray is dismaying for al-Āmidī, whose reaction is to anticipate only to then reject out of hand other conjectured elisions. *Fa-in taʾawwala mutaʾawwil hādhā al-bayt ʿalā alfāẓin ukhara maḥdhūfa ghayr al-lafẓ alladhi dhakartahu* ("If an exegete were to interpret this line according to some other elided words besides the words that I've mentioned), al-Āmidī warns, *fa-l-ikhtilāl baʿdu qāʾim* ("then the faultiness would remain still").[172]

Elision's *kathra* ("abundance") in the poetry of the *mutaʾakhkhirūn* ("belated ones") is symptomatic of a more profound loosening of the bond between saying and meaning.[173] The question once more is personal and oblique intent's eclipse of what is actually said. *ʿInd al-ʿarab* ("among the Arabs") elision was restrained, reconstruction of the line hardly calling for interpretation at all. *Wa-l-hadhf la-ʿamrī kathīrun fī al-kalām al-ʿArab* ("For indeed there was much elision in the discourse of the Arabs"), al-Āmidī observes before quickly adding a crucial proviso: but only *idhā kāna al-maḥdhūf mimmā tadull ʿalayhi jumlat al-kalām* ("if the totality of

[172] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 183.

[173] Ibid., 181-82.

the expression bespoke what had been elided").[174] The difficulty, however, in the persuasive efforts of the Modern poet's critics is that the form of a sentence ideally uniting meaning and saying is not self-evidently given by some natural logic of grammar. As their (and al-Āmidī's own) argumentation is consistently forced to concede, it belongs to history, practice, and precedent—to custom and culture, that is, and not to "nature." All of the often intemperate condemnations of the Modern poet for producing experiments against nature—being a *ṣāḥib ṣanʿ* ("master of artifice") compelled by *shadīd al-takalluf* ("extreme artificiality") to produce *mustakrah al-alfāẓ wa-l-maʿānī* ("loathsome expressions and motifs")[175]—find their support in decorum, norm, and little else besides.

The *waḥsha* ("grotesqueness") of diction, the disordered *qubḥ* ("ugliness") of syntax, and the *gharāba* ("strangeness") of meaning for which Modern poetics comes in for condemnation has little to do then with the agon between nature and artifice with which al-Āmidī frames the *Muwāzana.* Truth and nature are, finally, questions not of "reality" but rather of philology. Whenever al-Āmidī dismisses a formulation for its *khurūj* ("deviation"), whenever he proclaims that *hādhā lā mawjūd* ("this does not exist"), the real grounds for the dismissal are always close at hand. *Hādhā lā mawjūd fī al-kalām al-nās* ("This does not exist in the discourse of the people") or in that of the *ahl al-ʿarabīya* ("specialists of Arabic"), which is to say neither "now" nor "three hundred years ago."[176] And the *khurūj* ("deviation") is never from the *ḥadd* ("frontier") of nature or possibility, but rather from the well-trodden *ṭarīq* ("way") or *sabīl* ("path") of philologically adducible stylistic norm. When, in the course of a lengthy

[174] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 181.

[175] Ibid., 6.

[176] Ibid., 169.

condemnation of Abū Tammām's use of *dūna l-aqrab*, al-Āmidī pronounces *fa-hādhihī ḥaqīqat maʿnā l-lafẓ* ("for this is the true meaning of the word"), truth, nature, and possibility turn out to not even be in question, some natural, self-evident logic of grammar being still less relevant. Rather, *al-ḥaqīqa* ("the truth") reveals itself to be *maʿnī 'dūna' ʿind ahl al-ʿarabiyya* ("the meaning of 'instead of' according to the specialists of Arabic"), diction correct and true being no less predetermined by the strictures of precedent than is figural language by *majrī al-istiʿārāt fī kalām al-ʿarab* ("the way of metaphor in the Ancients' discourse").[177] To *nasab* ("attribute") to the language what the Ancients *lam taqulhu wa-lam tanṭiq bihi* ("neither said nor uttered") is, indeed, more than simply not *yuḥdith* ("allowed"):[178] This act of individual fiat tears the inherited fabric of discourse to produce untruth.

Rejecting yet another apologetic reading of *dūna l-aqrab*, one now suggesting that the locution means *faḍlan ʿan al-aqrab* ("instead of the close one"), the author of the *Muwāzana* is incredulous. The explanation is *tawahhum* ("phantastic conjecture") not in the clear light of grammar to which al-Āmidī has appealed, nor even in the somewhat dimmer light shed on the fact that some contemporaries (*al-nās*) may indeed use the preposition in this fashion. Together with the possible (and still indeterminate) use of the preposition, the explanation must be rejected, but this for the simple reason that *faḍlan ʿan* ("instead of") and *dūna* are not synonymous *ʿind ahl al-ʿarabīya* ("according to the specialists in Arabic"). As this uncovering (or refutation) of intent by philology has it, to say *ana arḍā bi-l-qalīl dūna l-kathīr* ("I'm happy with a little and not a lot"), would suggest a use such as, *wa-aqnaʿ bi-qurṣ min shaʿīr wa-lā*

[177] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 253.

[178] Ibid., 153

antahī ilā mā siwāhu ("I'm satisfied with a loaf of barley bread and won't have anything besides").[179]

For all of the *Muwāzana*'s showy insistence that meaning and *niyya* ("intent") are no more than the *wāḍiḥ* ("clear") reflection of the nature of grammar, gleaming lucidly, vociferously asking to be gleaned from the *lafẓ* ("expression") itself, al-Āmidī is consistently unwilling to yield intention to language. The position of the *Muwāzana* with respect to the imagination—whether by the poet or the sympathetic beholder—being fairly characterized as "reactionary," authorial intent as a locus of meaning is out of the question. The nature of grammar itself, however, is taciturn and often equivocal, forcing al-Āmidī to perform a hermeneutics that finds *maʿnā* anywhere but on the "face" of or "proximate" to the text (two of his favored figures for the self-evident nature of "meaning"). In the end, the ultimate source of textual intent for al-Āmidī is a matter neither of grammar or logic but rather of praxis and history. A telling interchange often takes place between the natural world and discursive norm, most notably, for instance, in al-Āmidī's argument for the absurdity of Abū Tammām's figures involving involving *rīḥ* ("wind") and *nabāt* ("flora") on the basis not of nature itself but of poetic precedent.[180] The *Muwāzana*'s argumentation switches between and, in fact, collapses the two incautiously and with regularity, often, indeed, in a single breath. Snatched from the jaws of the imagination, intent is then impersonalized, handed over to precedent and history, even if al-Āmidī endeavors ceaselessly to color this fabric with the pigments of nature and some "natural" grammar.

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[179] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 172-73.

[180] Ibid., 155-58; 464-67; *al-Muwāzana*, II, 108.

DECORUM: BULWARK TO THE IMAGINATION

Whatever the legerdemain between nature and custom, the literary historical term for what al-Āmidī's argumentation leans upon is "decorum." The notion of a context-independent norm (supposedly) bequeathed by the past only to be lorded over contemporary artistic production is at the heart of any Classicizing project. Seventeenth-century French dramaturgy's fixation with the Aristotelian "unities"—these being (typically) wrongly conceived—are the emblematic early Modern example. Still, however, the *Muwāzana*'s "decorum" is of a particularly virulent strain, the unceasing effort to endow norm and grammar with the patina of nature being exemplary in this respect. Al-Āmidī is writing in the throes of Arabic letters' Alexandrian moment, and it is certainly no coincidence that critics are beginning to speak of an *ʿamūd al-shiʿr* ("pillar of poetry") and like ideas, notions of a discursive paragon *ʿind ahl al-ʿarabiyya* ("according to the specialists in Arabic") freshly built upon the foundation of the *qudamāʾ* ("predecessors") and the *awāʾil* ("first ones"). *Anā aqwam bi-ʿamūd al-shiʿr* ("I am the better according to the pillar of poetry"), al-Buḥturī will say, comparing himself to Abū Tammām and suggesting that, by the Ancients' standards, his poetry *lā yasquṭ wa-lā yusafsif* ("does not decline and is not corrupted").[181] Al-Buḥturī suggests in the same breath that the ingenious mind's elevation over language is as much the *forte* of the "Modern" poet as his point of departure from Arabic linguistic tradition. *Kāna aghwaṣ ʿalā maʿānī* ("He is deeper into conceits"), al-Buḥturī says of Abū Tammām. That the question is one of the restraint of ingenuity and mind in favor of deference to poetic norm is already clear in the *Muwāzana*'s exordium. Here, al-Āmidī speaks of al-Buḥturī as a poet who creates *ʿalā madhhab al-awāʾil* ("according the the method of the Ancients") before immediately adding, *mā fāriqa ʿamūd al-*

[181] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 12.

shiʿr al-maʿrūf ("he does not depart from the pillar of well-known poetry").[182] The syntax is critical here, the suggestion being that the "stuff" of the pillar is little other than the limit and norm lain down by the Ancients.[183] The attributive past participle (*maʿrūf*, "well-known") is similarly suggestive, for *ʿamūd* is positioned as invention's opposite, antithesis of the *ikhtirāʿ* ("inventing") and *badʿ* ("innovating") said to lie at the heart of "Modern" poetics.[184]

That from the outset truth, nature, and reality make up particularly loud elements in the *ʿamūd*'s frieze casts not a little light on al-Āmidī's own effort to naturalize custom.[185] *Ḥalāwat al-nafs* ("the sweetness of spirit") of the pre-Islamic poem turns out to be its translucence before nature: It is, in its final form, mirror and not lamp, resting on a notion of *shuʿūr* stripped of imagination. *Shuʿūr* and *shiʿr*—verbal nouns connoting ποίησις and sense-perception all at once—become, as the *Muwāzana* itself attests, the Classicist or conservative's cudgels against an imagination that would interfere with a fundamentally impersonal process by which nature and truth return to themselves in the poem. The antithesis between nature and imagination running

[182] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 6.

[183] The assimilation of norm and *ʿamūd* echoes the first attestation of *ʿamūd al-shiʿr* in an anecdote twice repeated in the tenth-century compendium, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* ("The Book of Songs"). In a comparison of Muslim ibn al-Walīd and Ibn Qanbar (or Ibn Qunbur), two poets working at the turn of the ninth century CE, the first is said to be *ʿinda l-nās fawq ibn qunbur fī ʿamūd al-shiʿr* ("in the people's view superior to Ibn Qunbur with respect to the 'pillar of poetry'"). It is in reference to their respective abilities in *hijāʾ* ("invective"), that most ancient of genres, and (remarkably) their ability to "equal" the *ābāʾ* ("Ancients") that the two poets are measured. Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, vol. 19 (Cairo: Dār al-kutub, 1972), 63. This repeats nearly verbatim the anecdote from vol. 14 (Cairo: Dār al-kutub, 1958), 162. Despite al-Marzūqī's efforts in the eleventh century to define *ʿamūd al-shiʿr* (in an introduction to a work on Abū Tammām's *Ḥamasa*) and some modern critical attention (especially, Ajami 1981), the term itself would remain rather eccentric. It nevertheless crystallizes a sense of decorum appearing (as in the *Muwāzana*) in various and often more diffuse guises. Wen-Chin Ouyang is not incorrect, then, to insist that "*ʿamūd al-shiʿr* is of… importance to the fundamental understanding of medieval Arabic literary criticism." Wen-Chin Ouyang, *Literary Criticism in Medieval Arabic-Islamic Culture: The Making of a Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 155 (amid a broader discussion of of al-Marzūqī and *ʿamūd al-shiʿr*). For an earlier treatment of each, see Mansour Ajami, "*ʿAmūd al-shiʿr*: Legitimization of Tradition," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 12 (1981): 40-48.

[184] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 6.

[185] Mansour Ajami, "*ʿAmūd al-shiʿr*: Legitimization of Tradition," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 12 (1981): 30; *The Alchemy of Glory: The Dialectic of Truthfulness and Untruthfulness in Medieval Arabic Literary Criticism* (Washington, D.C.: Three Continent Press, 1988), 9-11.

through the *Muwāzana* from its very opening, however, is little more than a conceit used for persuasion: The desire and imagination for which the *badīʿ* poet will find himself indicted involves an *ighrāb* ("defamiliarizing") and *safsāf* ("corruption") not of any sort of truth or reality, but rather of a custom, decorum, and *ʿamūd* for which nature is but a flourish or mask.[186]

In making the transgression of custom perforce a transgression of truth, the *Muwāzana* has much to say about the rhetoric of aesthetic corruption. Truth becomes a shadow of custom, and it suffices to note that *hādhā ghayr maʿrūf wa-lā mawjūd fī kalām al-nās* ("this is neither known nor existent in people's speech") to suggest something rather worse than simply "ugly" poetry.[187] The real question is ethical: When Abū Tammām or Abū Nuwās or Muslim ibn al-Walīd—and the *Muwāzana* indicts each repeatedly on this count—takes the liberty to *ighrāb* ("render obscure") topoi treated lucidly by the pre-Islamic poet, he is committing an offense not against "enjoyable" or "pleasing" poetry but against what is possible within nature's bounds.[188] Concern with aesthetic appreciation in the *Muwāzana* is diversionary, and this despite al-Āmidī's rich treasury of epithets for uncomely composition. All of these—from *fāḥish* ("gross") to *qabīḥ* ("ugly"), from *waḥshī* ("repulsive") to *ṣināʿī* ("stilted")—need be read as suggesting not "ugliness" but rather "perversion" and the "grotesque." They commit their true offense not against what may be pleasing to behold but rather against a custom and decorum masquerading as nature. Even though what constitutes the "natural" and "realistic" exists not in some extralinguistic reality but rather buried in the philological record of *al-ʿarab* ("the Arabs"), al-Āmidī anxiously works to convince his readers that it is "nature" and "truth" that Modern poetics

[186] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 5.

[187] Ibid., 169.

[188] Ibid., 200.

in fact holds hostage. Condemning unacceptable metonymy in the *waṣf al-nisāʾ* ("description of women"), al-Āmidī declares, *wa-lafẓ baytihi aqbaḥ…wa-ashnaʿ li-annahu innamā akhrajahu mukhraja l-ḥaqīqa aw mā yuqārib al-ḥaqīqa* ("Indeed, this line's expression is uglier…and more twisted because he has used only the truth [i.e., a literal meaning], or what approximates the truth [i.e., literal meaning]"). *Iḥāla* ("impossibility") where it pertains to *ḥaqīqa* ("truth") is the ugliest kind of hyperbole.[189]

Even where the *Muwāzana*'s dismay at Modern innovation parades as aesthetic—presenting itself as concerned with the beautiful and pleasant—truth and nature cast forbidding shadows. Pleasing language, normal language could have salvaged, al-Āmidī suggests, one of Abū Tammām's many objectionable lines involving wind. Were Abū Tammām to only limit himself to *al-lafẓ al-mustaʿmal* ("normal expression") and *al-alfaẓ al-maʾlūfa* ("customary wording") and then move *ilā mā yushbih al-ḥaqāʾiq* ("to what resemblances true things"), the line would be the rare bright spot in the *badīʿ* poet's treatment of nature.[190]

Fa-qāla ḥulqūm mādhā? ("He said, 'The throat of a what'"), the philologist al-Asmaʿī had asked a century or so before the *Muwāzana*, expressing incredulity at a line comparing an instrument's *watar* ("bowstring") to a *ḥulqūm* ("throat").[191] The line, from Dhū al-Rumma, Bedouin poet and last of the "Ancients," anticipates an error supposedly endemic to Abū Tammām and the Modern poets more generally—cryptic, withholding language, words whose meaning is *laysa bi-maʿlūm* ("not evident") since *lā fī l-bayt ʿalayhi dalīl* ("there is no sign of it [i.e., the meaning] in the line [itself]").[192] The poet's wished for, intended meaning never makes

[189] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 149.

[190] Ibid., 189-90.

[191] Ibid., 186.

[192] Ibid., 175.

it into the line—by which al-Āmidī means its *tartīb* ("structure") and *lafẓ* ("wording")—the result being a dizzying gulf between meaning and saying. A private, idiosyncratic affair, one *ghumūḍ* ("concealing itself") by design, the Modern poet's own mental designs cannot be reached *min ṭarīq al-tartīb* ("the way of the [line's] structure") or *ṭarīqat lafẓihi* ("the path of the its expression").[193] The imaginative hermeneutics required in turn by the line whose intended sense remains only tenuously connected to *wajh al-kalām* ("the surface of discourse") is no less than the pleasure of Modern poetry—and this by Al-Āmidī's own admission. Sympathy for Modern poetics will be found, the *Muwāzana* tells us repeatedly, among those inclined towards *al-maʿānī al-ghāmiḍa allati tustakhraj bi-l-ghawṣ wa-l-fikra* ("concealed meanings which are extracted by submerging and meditation").[194] The strain in the threads otherwise (and ideally) keeping *wajh al-kalām* ("the surface of the discourse") and *fikra* ("thought") in unison, however, is precisely the problem: The decoupling of saying and thinking is an invitation to *iḥālā* ("impossibility," "absurdity").

Iḥālā ("absurdity") in the *Muwāzana* again, however, has little to do with the "nature" that al-Āmidī might have us believe. Rather, the chimeric and absurd issues from the Modern poet's withdrawal of thinking from a shared fabric of discourse uraveling before what is not *masmūʿ* ("heard") and, especially, *mā lam yusmaʿ* ("what *was* not heard").[195] Aesthetics and truth are rhetorical cudgels, at most dim reflections of what is attested and used. The order of a tricolon near the end of the *Muwāzana*'s first volume is especially revealing, for here al-Āmidī will descend from what is *ghayr mustaʿmal* ("not used") to what is *lā maʿrūf* ("not known") to

[193] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 175.

[194] Ibid., 8.

[195] Ibid., 152; 523.

what, finally, is *lā ṣāʾigh* ("not beautiful").[196] In Dhū al-Rumma's comparison of a bowstring to a throat, the poet proceeds *ka-innahu fī niyāti al-qawsi ḥulqūm* ("as though the bowstring, attached to the bow, looked like a throat"). Suppressing the traditional, full form of the comparison, however, the line commits a *khaṭaʾ* ("fault") that will become systematic for the Modern poets. A *watar* ("bowstring") does not of itself justify comparison with a throat. The result is an unacceptably abstract formulation, where *fikra* ("meditation") has once more well overtaken *lafẓ* ("expression"). This is a *fikra* presupposed of the poet and expected of the percipient, the words themselves not beginning to exhaust even the basic sense of the comparison. Vagueness and abstraction—a certain disconnect from, indeed, *ḥaqāʾiq* ("real things")—are to be expected from the Modern poet. *Aṭlaqa al-qawl ʿumūman* ("He expresses himself in general terms"), al-Āmidī says of Abū Tammām, *fa-lā yadull ʿalā al-khuṣūṣ* ("for he does not indicate particularities"). The *khuṣūṣ* ("particularities"), indeed, are withheld, existing only in the poet's mind, and interpreters are left to more or less sympathetically pick up the pieces.

Breaking sense from expression yields little less than the Modern poem's desired effect. Or so al-Āmidī would suggest, for Abū Tammām *aḥabba al-ighrāb ʿalā rasmihi* ("desires, as is his wont, the bizarre"). Ambiguous comparisons, failed metaphors, and other seeming violations of realism are not, however, problematic because of some affront to the natural world. This is not, contrary to what al-Āmidī suggests at the monograph's very outset, some simply delineated struggle between a poet *shadīd al-takalluf* ("extreme in his artifice") and his *maṭbūʿ* ("natural") antagonist.[197] Such formulations are misleading, the *maṭrūḥ* ("overturning") and *radā* ("ruin")

[196] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 523.

[197] Ibid., 6.

wrought by the Modern poem being against not nature itself but, rather, linguistic norm and decorum. The Modern poet loosens the relationship between meaning and expression, between thinking and saying, but the casualty is not a language in unison with nature so much as one in unison with itself. The idea of truth and nature becomes, again, a rhetorical munition in defense of decorum. Dhū al-Rumma's bowstring comparison is problematic because, then, because it is unsupported by the philological record. Typically, however, the *Muwāzana* papers this over with talk about over-abstraction or truth or attractiveness. *Ḥulqūm nughar* ("the throat of a sparrow") and *ḥulqūm qaṭā* ("the throat of a sand grouse") are each suggested to be better—prettier and more realistic.[198] The argument reveals just how far the *Muwāzana*'s sense of beauty and reality alight not from some real existing world but from the poetic canon. *Watar* ("string") and the throat of an unnamed creature form an illicit comparison, but the real problem is not presented as such: Once more and perhaps with a touch of concern about the beautiful and pleasant, it is realism—and resemblance, specifically—that is presented as the violated parameter. "Sandgrouse" and "sparrow" and *naḥwahumā* ("the like") are acceptable because each, we are told, *yushbih al-watar fī al-diqqa* ("resembles a string in leanneness"). *Ḥulqūm fīl* ("the throat of an elephant") or that of an *ʿayr* ("onager") are out of the question. Resemblance *per se*, however is not in question at all: Rather, the comparison fails *li-anna al-ʿarab lā tushabbih al-watar illā bi-ḥulqūm ṭāʾir* ("The Arabs do not compare the string except to the throat of a bird"). Al-Āmidī disposes of the matter with approving (and dainty) examples of the *watar*'s comparisons to the *ḥulqūm nughar* ("throat of a sparrow") from Abū Nukhayla al-Rājiz, a classicizing poet of the eighth century.

That realism for the *Muwāzana* is only decorum's mask emerges especially in al-Āmidī's criticism of hyperbole's role in *badīʿ* poetics. The proper Arabic rhetorical terms for "hyperbole"

[198] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 186.

are *ghulūw* and *mubālagha*, but it would be mistaken to suppose that the *Muwāzana* is concerned with what the Greeks had called "overshooting" (ὑπερβάλλειν) only when al-Āmidī announces that he is addressing "hyperbole." To be sure, al-Āmidī treats the figure discreetly and nearly always with opprobrium.[199] This notwithstanding, the concern with *ifrāṭ* ("excess"), with *isrāf* ("extravagance"), with poets who demur before every opportunity to keep their language within the *maʿrūf* ("known") is one of the *Muwāzana*'s constants. *Wa-huwa kathīr fī ashʿārihim* ("and this is abounding in their poetry"), al-Āmidī notes wearily in an entirely typical refrain, and *mā ʿadala bihi aḥad minhum ʿan hādhā al-maʿnā* ("none of them deviated from this topos").[200] Speaking of Abū Tammām, however, he will continue: *Wa-lākinnahu istaʿmala al-ighrāb fa-kharaja ilā mā lā yuʿraf fī kalām al-ʿarab* ("But he has used strange formulations and so has departed towards what is not known in the Ancients' discourse").[201]

With impressive assiduity, the *Muwāzana* endeavors to make readers believe that the Modern poem abounds in excess unprecedented in both degree and kind. Realism, as ever, is presented as the hapless victim of the Modern poem's systematic semantic and syntactic glut. Expressing incredulity at the "non-necessity" of words frames one of al-Āmidī's favorite indictments, the suggestion being, of course, that natural and proper expression requires no gaudy flourish. Strain, effort, artifice—these are handmaidens of the overweening imagination.[202] Abū Tammām's, after all, is a poetry that proceeds *ʿalā madhhabihi fī al-khurūj ʿan al-ḥadd fī kull shayʾ* ("according to his method of exceeding the bounds in all things").[203]

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[199] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 18; 148-49; 193; 255.

[200] Ibid., 200-01.

[201] Ibid., 200-01.

[202] Ibid., 243; 78.

[203] *al-Muwāzana*, II, 203.

When he describes *wajdī* ("my passion"), for instance, *ka-ṭūli al-dahri fī ʿarḍi mithlihī* ("like the length of eternity squared"), he is engaging in *maḥḍ muḥāl* ("pure impossibility").[204] The explicit equivalence that the line draws between time and space crosses into the absurd, al-Āmidī says, especially since it is a superfluous addition to what is already a quasi-spatial treatment of time. *Qad istawfā al-maʿnā bi-qawlihi "ka-ṭūli al-dahri"* ("He had already exhausted the meaning with his phrase, 'like the length of eternity'") only to enter now *fī l-mubālagha* ("into exaggeration"). Most offensive of all is the line's dint of truth, its pretension to realism—figural treatment of *ḥaqāʾiq* ("real things") being especially perilous[205]—for its hyperbole cannot even be excused as *majāz* ("a figure"). Abū Tammām's formulation does not, that is, sufficiently hedge its bets: His words try to pass for *ṣīghat al-ḥaqāʾiq* ("a formulation of real things"). In contrast, *al-majāz fī hādhā lahu ṣūra maʿrūfa* ("the figural construction here has a well-known form") and is, in any case, limited to *mā lahu ṭūl wa-ʿarḍ ʿalā al-ḥaqīqa* ("what pertains to length and breadth in reality") and to what would be a natural *itmām* ("completing") or *kamāl* ("perfecting") of the sense. *ʿIshnā fī khafḍin wa-daʿatin zamanan ṭawīlan ʿarīḍan* ("We've lived in ease and equanimity for a time long and expansive") would have involved a more restrained (or, rather, better attested) interchange between figures of space and time and a proper meaning. Alternative and acceptable modifications of a concrete proper term with spatiotemporal figures would be, we are told, the more typical genitive constructions *thawbun ṭawīl ʿariḍ* ("a robe long and broad") and *arḍ ṭawīla ʿariḍa* ("land long and broad").

A difference in poetic modesty is what al-Āmidī would like readers to believe distinguishes Abū Tammām's (unacceptable) description of *wajdī* ("my passion") in terms of breadth and the (acceptable) description of *thawbun* ("a robe") in terms of duration. Where Abū

[204] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 187-193.

[205] Ibid., 149.

Tammām heaps one abstract noun upon another, carrying meaning ever further from topoi proper and concrete—*wajdī* ("my passion") and *dahr* ("eternity") and *ṭūl* ("length") and *ʿarḍ* ("breadth") forming threadbare constellations in his œuvre—al-Buḥturī and *al-ʿarab* ("the Arabs") limit their use of spatiotemporal figures to amplify the magnitude of something really existing.

The question is, not, however so quickly dispensed with. Does Abū Tammām's use of space and time necessarily suffer from more *maḥḍ muhāl* ("pure absurdity") than the examples that al-Āmidī cites? Once again, in the evaluation of the *badīʿ* poet and his Classical and classicizing counterparts the *Muwāzana*'s scales seem weighted indeed. Existential absurdity—the mishandling of those *ḥaqāʾiq* ("real things")—is less offensive and, in fact, less relevant than the violation of epigonic decorum. One rather overt indication that the stakes are concerned less with *muḥāl* ("impossibility") or *mubālagha* ("hyperbole") in any ontological sense than with what belongs to the norms of language use is built into al-Āmidī argumentation: The critic will declare a formulation unrealistic only to then argue unhesitatingly not from nature or reality but from discursive norm. Appeals to *al-alfāẓ al-maʾlūfa* ("the usual wording") and *alfaẓ muʿtāda* ("customary wording") regularly follow indictments for impossibility.[206] The seventh-century poet Tamīm ibn Muqbal can, then, break a line into two consonant but independent images—the first describing the wind *khababan* ("surging") across the land, the second the ruler's authority taking hold across *ʿarḍa al-bilādi* ("the expanse of the territories")—without crossing into unacceptable reification. Not so, in contrast, with an expression such as, *maḍā la-nā fī al-khafḍ wa-l-daʿa dahr ṭawīl wa-kāna ṭūlahu ka-ʿarḍihi* ("A lengthy period of time passed for us in ease and equanimity and its length was like its breadth"). This, says al-Āmidī, is *lam yajuz* ("not allowed") because *hādhā tartīb ka-annahu waṣafa al-ashyāʾ al-mujassama* ("with this

[206] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 481.

construction it is as though he were describing corporal things"). As where Abū Tammām likens the length of *wajdī* ("my passion") to its breadth, the syntax of this hypothetical line leaves its audience expecting attribution of space not to time but to something concrete: *Fa-kāna bi-hādhā al-lafẓ ka-annahu yadhraʿ thawban aw yamsaḥ arḍan* ("For with this expression it is as though one were 'measuring clothes' or 'surveying land').

Syntactical norms, not semantics and still less *ḥaqāʾiq* ("true things"), lie at the heart of al-Āmidī's critique. Not only does Abū Tammām produce an anacoluthon by likening time to space in a structure suggesting an (acceptable) line that would compare length to a concrete entity, but the poet fails in to engage in the syntax of figural language. That is, he does not explicitly note the predication as figural and so, in al-Āmidī's reading, both reifies and exaggerates time. Semantic excess or hyperbole *per se* is not, then, the true target of the *Muwāzana*'s objection to the promiscuous interchange between a proper concrete noun and an abstract figure in the *badīʿ* poem: That Abū Tammām *arāda an yubāligh fī ṭūl wajd* ("wanted to exaggerate the length of the passion") felt by the line's restless speaker is not of itself problematic. Rather, the real problem for al-Āmidī is a matter less of *maʿnā* ("meaning") than of *lafẓ* ("wording"). Again and again he returns to the gratuitousness and superfluity that Abū Tammām commits in likening time to *ʿarḍ* ("breadth") in order to amplify the solitude and desire of the line's speaker. The idea already being clear enough, *mā kānat ḥājatuhu ilā al-ʿarḍ* ("there was no need for [the notion of] 'breadth'"). The problem is not, then, the "wrong" kind of figural language or predication but rather too much of each: It would be to press a strained case indeed were one to argue that, say, the genitive metaphors attributing *ṭūl* ("length") to "desire," figures to which al-Āmidī grants explicit approval—figures, that is, like *ṭūl shawqī* ("length of my yearning") and *ṭūl gharāmī* ("length of my ardent love")—are finally more semantically

problematic than a similar idea involving "breadth." Gratuitousness, redundancy, and self-indulgence on Abū Tammām's emerge as the true culprits.

THE STILL HEART OF "MODERN" POETICS

If self-indulgence—here, the addition of excess verbiage to an already tenuous idea—is the black heart of poetic corruption, the *Muwāzana*'s analysis of Decadence turns, finally, on "an argument from morals."[207] Mirror neither of nature's appearance nor of the *qalb*'s ("heart's") genuine inspiration, the poetic line of the Moderns works its disorder in the end upon neither *maʿnā* ("meaning") nor *lafẓ* ("expression"). These are symptoms of an ethical disarray in Modern poetics whose centrality to al-Āmidī's analysis accounts for the *Muwāzana*'s unfailingly partial fixation with psychology. Indeed, there is something especially fitting about the outsized space that al-Āmidī devotes to the alleged hyperbole of *wajd* in a single line from Abū Tammām's *dīwān*: For it is from little other than *wajd* ("passion")—or from what al-Āmidī suggests as possible synonyms, *gharām* ("ardent love") and *shawq* ("longing")—that the aberrations in Abū Tammām's poetry are supoosed to pour out. Like the *mutaʾakhkhirūn* ("Moderns") of which he is held by the *Muwāzana* as a synecdoche, Abū Tammām can scarcely conceal *al-radhl min alfāẓihi wa-l-sāqiṭ min maʿānīhi wa-l-qabīḥ min istiʿārātihi wa-mustakrah al-mutaʿaqqid min nasjihi wa-naẓmihi* ("the baseness of his expressions, the corruption of his meanings, the ugliness of his metaphors, and the knotted hideousness of his verse and composition").[208] All of this strong language on al-Āmidī's part only refers to a surging to the surface of something gone more fundamentally awry.

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[207] Gordon Williams, *Change and Decline: Roman Literature in the Early Empire* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1978), 49.

[208] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 243.

Unlike *al-ʿarab* ("the Arabs"), unlike the Classical poet (or his epigones), Abū Tammām and the *mutaʾakhkhirūn* ("Moderns") draw their creative energies from a different well. The source from which the poet draws is precisely the figure that al-Āmidī uses to describe the psychological and ethical difference behind the supposedly dramatic gap between a virtuous style and its *fāsid* ("corrupt") counterpart. *Lā yastaqī illā min qalbihi* ("He draws only from his heart"), al-Āmidī says of *al-aʿrābī* ("the Bedouin [poet]"). *Lā yaqūl illā ʿalā qarīḥatihi* ("He speaks only according to his inner genius"), he reiterates.[209] On the line are sincerity, truth, and reality all: *Li-anna al-lisān yakdhib, wa-l-qalb lā yataḍamman illā al-ḥaqīqa* ("Because the tongue lies, while the heart embraces only the truth").[210] Out of this singular difference in the source of poetic will—this difference in ethics and motivation—radiates every stylistic quality or disorder that al-Āmidī will encounter.

The psychologies of creation behind the Ancients' poem and its *mutaʾakhkhir* ("late") and frankly *fāsid* ("corrupt") descendant are so different as to be irreconcilable. The question begged in al-Āmidī's formulation is how the essence of *qarīḥa* ("genius"), *salīqa* ("talent"), and *qalb* ("heart") and the source from which the poet *yastaqī* ("imbibes") are to be conceived. Moreover, in light of the superficial sense that each emerges from within the poet, how precisely is *qarīḥa* ("genius") different from the "will" behind Modern poetry's unhappier developments? The *Muwāzana* ascribes these last variously to *ṭalab* ("desire") and *ḥubb* ("attachment"), to *arāda* ("wanting") and *mayl* ("inclination") on the poet's part. The antithesis in question, one emerging ever more distinctly over the course of the *Muwāzana*, should by now be familiar indeed: It has a leading role in every account of Decadence touched upon in this dissertation. Rhetors of decline, those endeavoring to persuade readers of the misfortunes afflicting the verbal

[209] Ibid.

[210] Ibid., 238.

arts, consistently draw an antithesis between natural talent, what Tacitus in the *Dialogus* calls *ingenium* (14.2-3; 16.1), and the desire or caprice supposed to be its opposite.

The trouble is that genius and will are apparently "subjective" each, belonging at least in their inception to the inner world of the poet. Al-Āmidī's resolution of the matter is to suggest that *qarīḥa* ("genius") is not simply itself *ṭabīʿī* ("natural" and "inborn") and not simply itself productive of a *ṭabīʿī* ("natural") poetic style, but that it is, in a sense, nothing less than the voice of *ṭabʿ* ("nature") itself. Issuing from nature, working through the poet's *qalb* ("heart") in the form of talent or genius, this natural force produces a poem itself a fragment and mirror of nature. This uninterrupted, unmediated circuit of a natural force—from nature, into the poet by *shuʿūr* ("intuitive perception"), and, in the act of *shiʿr* ("making poetry"), once more into the natural world—is the condition for al-Āmidī's confident and repeated assertions of the Classical poem's translucent quality: The poem is nature returned to itself by grace of the poet.

Poetic Modernism involves for al-Āmidī an interruption—one which he unhesitatingly characterizes as "perverse" and "artificial"—of the unmediated flow of nature back to itself through the deferential and passive heart. Unlike the *qarīḥa* ("genius") and *qalb* ("heart")—finally, only conduits for nature—the source of creation for the *mutaʾakhkhirūn* ("belated ones") is a desire that not belonging to the natural world can neither serve nor reproduce it. The terms by which al-Āmidī treats this desire are "psychological" and, indeed, pathological in a manner quite at odds with his discussion of the Classical poets. Being normal, the motives and morals of those dutifully treading *tarīqat al-ʿarab* ("the way of the Arabs") simply go uncountenanced. Al-Āmidī will speak, then, of Abū Tammām as *ṭalaban min* ("wishing for") and *maylan ilā* ("inclining towards"), as someone who *yuṭbaʿu ʿalā* ("has a tendency towards").[211] And to what,

[211] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 234.

precisely, do these impulses fasten? To *al-ighrāb wa-l-ibdāʿ* ("the bizarre and the innovative"); to *waḥshī al-maʿānā wa-l-alfāẓ* ("a grotesqueness of meanings and expressions"); to *qawālib* ("molds" or "forms").[212] Each of these consists in an *ifrāṭ* ("excess") carrying the poet up to and beyond the *ḥadd* ("frontier") of the natural world. Divorcing and transporting language and poem away from nature, their source is utterly alien to the real, natural world so lucidly revealed by *al-shuʿarāʾ al-maṭbūʿūn* ("the natural poets"), which is to say by those bards and seers before Muḥammad whose intuitive, nearly unconscious perception of their world lingers still in the sense *shiʿr* and *shuʿūr.* Now, in the tenth century, al-Āmidī speaks of a poet who *yuʿāb ashadd al-ʿayb* ("is to be condemned in the strongest terms") should he *qaṣada bi-l-ṣanʿa sāʾir shiʿrihi* ("aim at making all his verse by means of artifice"); should he by force of imagination subdue *mujāhadat al-ṭabʿ* ("the working of nature"); should he compel *mughālabat al-qarīḥa* ("the dominance of genius") to cede to a *taʾlīf* ("composition") itself overcome by *sūʾ al-takalluf wa-shiddat al-taʿammul* ("the calamity of mannerism and the extremity of belaboredness").[213]

Suffocating, shuttering nature and genius through *maḥrij* ("constraint"), the desire that fastens itself to *qawālib* ("molds"), *ṣanʿa* ("artifice"), and *takalluf* ("mannerism")[214] has to be different in essence from the source from which that *wāḍiḥ* ("limpid") and *inkishāf*[215] ("illuminating") poem of the Ancients had poured forth. The ethical and psychological difference, al-Āmidī suggests, is between non-will and will, between ingenuousness and ingenuity, between an active imagination and one that feels and receives and then reproduces *ḥaqāʾiq* ("true things"). The motivation behind the belated and, indeed, lamentable developments

[212] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 234.

[213] Ibid., 244.

[214] Ibid.

[215] Ibid., 6.

in the Arabic poem is a grotesque reflection of the Classical poem's genius. In a sense, al-Āmidī speaks as though motivation or desire are entirely inapposite, anachronistic even when talking of those *shuʿarāʾ al-maṭbūʿūn* ("natural poets"). Relative to their successors and save for their epigons, these poets lacked individual and idiosyncratic psychological motives. The absence of private will on the part of the Ancients explains al-Āmidī's decision to spare both the Classical poet and his classicizing counterpart (here, al-Buḥturī) the language of diagnosis and pathology. This (not unexpected) imbalance in the *Muwāzana* could lead readers to a hasty and misguided conclusion, namely that the ethical difference between the Classical and belated poet lies in the difference between a motivation sound and pure on the one hand, and a perverse desire for *qawālib* ("forms") on the other. This is not, however, the correct antithesis for al-Āmidī. Rather, the difference is between the absence of will, desire, and motivation—the absence of a discrete, inner psychic life—and their abrupt presence and assertiveness. This is why, across the hundreds of exempla from *jāhilī* poets adduced over the course of the *Muwāzana*, motive and state-of-mind not only remain unindicted, they go largely unacknowledged at all. The emergence of poetic desire, the crystallizing of the active imagination, cuts nature off at its source. The *badīʿ* poem may offer synthesis and invention—and these phantasms take place quite apart from the *qalb* ("heart")—but nature can no longer *saqī* ("give to drink").

Remains of the poet's and even the *kāhin*'s ("seer's") vatic function likely color al-Āmidī's understanding of *shiʿr* ("poetic creation") as a matter of soul and heart and not mind, for here the bard assumed the role of passive wellspring of impersonal truth, apophthegm, and augury. To accuse the mantic poet of indulging in an activism of the imagination, to accuse this poet of invention and "fabrication," would be to reject what he was given to *shuʿūr* ("perceiving") as mirror not of a concealed though natural truth but instead of personal and

unnatural fancy. Conveniently and with little ambiguity, the Qurʾān provides a view of how the difference between the ingenuous and the ingenious in verbal creation was to be understood. Muḥammad finds himself impugned by critics precisely for not being the passive recipient of impersonal truth but instead for exercising his inner faculties on the invention and fabrication of something quite apart from truth. *Bal huwa shāʿirun* ("But he is a poet"), critics pronounce in the fifth verse of *Sūra* 21, not a prophet but a maker who *iftarā* ("has invented") chimeras according to personal fancy. *Sūra* 21 links verbal artistry to casuistry, but above all to the imagination and individuated, subjective inspiration. Taking exception only to its applicability to Gabriel's interlocutor, the Qurʾān clearly assents to the critique of poetic creation as giving life to little but creatures of the mind.

For al-Āmidī and other post-Classical critics of the "belated" style, the difference between prophet and inventor has simply resurfaced in another guise, namely that between a vessel for words *ṣaḥīḥ* ("sound") and *ḥaqīqī* ("true"), words forming a mirror for natural truth, and a maker of words *ṣanīʿ* ("synthetic") and *waḥshī* ("grotesque"), words responding to personal fancy and little else. The difference turns on the absence and presence of an inner will cut off from forces beyond the poet. The question is one of a displacement of autonomy. Fount of imagination and invention, subjective desire, once it succeeds in eclipsing inspiration, transforms the poet from medium into mediator. In "belated" composition, *ṭabʿ* ("nature") and *ḥaqīqa* ("truth") may no longer rush of their own accord into the poet and finally out into the poem, using their speaker as a mere means to their own end of self-revelation. *Muḥdath* ("Modern") poetics deprives them of this right. Now instruments and tools, they are turned into objects to be manipulated by the active imagination. And manipulated they are: Critical

opprobrium cannot restraint *waṣf* ("description") from growing ever more phantastic and allegorical after the Umayyad period.[216]

Just as it does for the *Dialogus*, a sea-change in ethics and psychology spells the difference between these modes of creation in Arabic for decorum's self-styled defenders. Tacitus's Maternus had called the difference one between a poetry of the *pectus* ("heart") and *natura* ("nature") on the one hand, and one of the *repertus* ("invented object") on the other (12.3; 31.1). The difference is between a poet—and it is not for nothing that Maternus talks of *vates* ("seers") and *poetes* ("poets") in a single breath—content to speak as nature *influxit* ("flowed into") and then out of the heart and one whose sentiment, passion, and cupidity has eclipsed all else besides (12.4). Al-Āmidī characterizes this ethical turn as one from the passive *qalb* to a rapacious imagination fixated on *ikhtirāʿ* ("inventing") and *ibdāʿ* ("innovating") for a pleasure all its own.[217] The turn is not necessarily one from an objective to a subjective poetic lens, for, especially in its *nasīb* ("exordium"), the Classical *qaṣīda* is rarely shorn of sentiment and affect. Rather, the turn is from an object of description, one which can well be imbued with feeling, to one where the object becomes "little more than an excuse for the poet to display the kaleidoscope of his imagination."[218] Object, *maʿnā*, topos—whatever the poet sets his sights upon resurfaces in the poem as a reflection of the mind's eye.

The implicit psychology running through the *Muwāzana* distinguishes between the ingenuous heart and the ingenious imagination. *Qalb* and *nafs*, "heart" and "soul," are repeatedly

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[216] Sperl, *Mannerism in Arabic Poetry*, 159; Akiko Motoyoshi Sumi, *Description in Classical Arabic Poetry: Waṣf, Ekphrasis, and Interarts Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 194; A. Arazi, "Waṣf." in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill Online, 2016 [First print edition 1960-2007]).

[217] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 6.

[218] Gustave E. von Grunebaum, "The Response to Nature in Arabic Poetry," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 4, no. 3 (1945): 149.

connected with *ṭabʿ* and *ḥaqīqa*, "nature" and "truth," and these are, in turn, watchwords all for the poetry of the Ancients.[219] *Khayāl* and *ṭalab*, "phantasy" and "desire," are, in contrast, consistently set up as their antitheses.[220] In, for instance, a (typically approving) bit of commentary on a line from al-Buḥturī, al-Āmidī distinguishes *nafs* ("soul") from *khayāl* ("phantasy").[221] Immortal and substantial, bearing an intrinsic connection to truth, the *nafs* belongs to God. The *nafs*, as al-Āmidī makes clear with a citation from the Qurʾān (S39: 42), is that part of the psyche returning to the divine after death: *Allāhu yatawaffā al-anfusa ḥīna mawtihā wa-allatī lam tamut fī manāmihā* ("God takes in their sleep those souls that have not died"). The *nafs* bears no likeness to the imagination: *Fa-l-nafs ghayr al-khayāl…fa-laysa l-nafs min al-khayāl fī shayʾ* ("The soul is, then, other than the imagination…. In no way, it follows, is the soul rooted in the imagination"). The first is naturally, indeed preternaturally true, so real that even at death it does not perish. The second, in contrast, is false and synthetic, locus of the invented chimera. An "apparition," a "phantom" even, the *khayāl* is essentially distinct from truth and reality. *Fa-idhā nāmat raʾat khayālāt al-ashyāʾ allatī tarā ḥaqāʾiqahā fī al-yaqaẓa* ("And if the soul is asleep, it sees images of the things whose true forms it sees while awake"). The relationship between *khayālāt* ("images") and *ḥaqāʾiq* ("real things") is tenuous indeed, for, as al-Āmidī quickly adds, *tatamaththal li-l-nafs fī ḥāl yaqaẓatihā wa-in lam tarahā al-ʿayn* ("it [the imagination] gives to the soul in its waking state representations even though the eye has not perceived them").[222]

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[219] a*l-Muwāzana*, I, 243; 495-96.

[220] Ibid., 238; 512; *al-Muwāzana*, II, 33; 187.

[221] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 371.

[222] Ibid.

If the soul belongs to God, the *khayāl* belongs to the individual and the individual alone. Artifice, Eros, ghost and apparition (*ṭayf*)—these are the stuff of *khayāl*, the space in which subject and poet turn away from the outer world to something of their own making. The self-indulgence and the solipsism of this subjective turn is what, for al-Āmidī, is so distressing about *muḥdath* ("Modern") poetics. He rejects the creation of *maʿānī* ("meanings") and the coinage of would-be topoi so divorced from shared phenomenal experience that they make sense only as figments of a private imagination. These are the *ʿamīq* ("deep"), *gharīb* ("strange"), and *ghāmiḍ* ("concealed") meanings whose centrality to *mutaʾakhkhir* ("belated") poetics is just about the only admission offered by critics and admirers both. Al-Āmidī rejects the hyperbole, the excess description, the vain pursuit of a strained parallelism. Most of all, however, he rejects the ethical and psychological condition of which these are only symptomatic, and that—and he is unambiguous here—is a perverse and unnatural desire within the poet.

Al-Āmidī consistently figures this poetic egoism and its attendant rise in subjectivism as involving a constraining and even suffocating of nature. This is the nature supposed to run freely, spontaneously through the poet into a style so natural that its language, far from obscuring the world, disappears into it. The *mutaʾakhkhirūn* ("belated poets") purposefully and, as al-Āmidī's increasingly polemical diction has it, wantonly interrupt nature's return to itself through the poetic medium. Like other critics of post-Classical Arabic poets, al-Āmidī describes the Modern poem as *takalluf*, a gerund that suggests "constraining" and "binding." *Kulaf*, for instance, can refer to "clasps" and "buckles." As an adjective, *kalif* suggests excessive attachment or desire *bi-* ("to") a person or thing.[223] This semantic network is nearly al-Āmidī's argument in miniature, for it is for nothing other than the emergence and then dominance of overweening egoism and desire that the *Muwāzana* indicts the *muḥdath* ("Modern") poet. Not from nature and so perforce

[223] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 244.

opposed to a *maṭbūʿ* ("natural") style, this desire is attracted to its kind, affixing itself to *qawālib* ("molds" or "forms"), to *ṣanʿa* ("artifice"), to the *gharīb* ("grotesque"). As the unnatural imagination pursues and fastens upon the unnatural potential of language—to the potential for an *ifrāṭ* ("excess") in *maḥāsin* ("figures") and *istiʿārāt* ("metaphors")—it asphyxiates *qarīḥa* ("genius") and so natural inspiration. Al-Āmidī repeatedly describes the desire that seizes the poet and inhabits the imagination, the desire that shuts out natural inspiration, in terms of force and violence. It is, indeed, something very like the desire which brings to life the chief villain in Tacitus's *Dialogus*, the desire which starts the mechanical heart of *lucrosae huius et sanguinantis eloquentiae* ("this greedy and bloodied eloquence") drowning out the ingenuous *pectus* ("heart") and *vis* ("passion") by which verbal artists *sic oracula loquebantur* ("used to speak like prophets," 12.1-4; 31.1). For it is this pathological desire—the *muḥdath* poet, it cannot be too much emphasized, being alone in receiving the *Muwāzana*'s "psychoanalysis"—that coaxes the poet into forcing *tajnīs* ("parallelism") that does violence to sense, to subject common topoi to an *ighrāb* ("defamiliarizing") that leaves them unrecognizable,[224] and, worst of all, to break the limits of figural language. *Li-anna li-kull shayʾ ḥaddan* ("There is a limit in all things"), pronounces al-Āmidī, and the distinguishing characteristic of *muḥdath* poetics is, indeed, the compulsion to in all things cross the limit, not least that ensuring the *qurb* ("proximity") of the *comparanda* in figural language. Hinting at the exertion and force involved in this poetics of *takalluf* ("binding"), Al-Āmidī favors the "instrumental" gerund: In forcing infelicitous comparisons, the author of the *Muwāzana* speaks of *istikhrāj* ("extraction"), *istikthār* ("rendering excessive"), *istikrāh* ("abhorring").

[224] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 200.

Baiting, beckoning the imagination to break the natural world apart, figural language as such is an object of a suspicion unrelenting throughout the *Muwāzana*. The sin of the *mutaʾakhkhir* ("belated") poet lies in taking an invitation addressed to the "perverse" and unnatural private will—that part of the human psyche to which al-Āmidī opposes *qalb* ("heart") and *qarīḥa* ("genius")—and using it to break the limits of resemblance. The connection between figural language and a desire at once uninspired and unnatural is implicit in al-Āmidī's refusal to speak of metaphor without mentioning "limits" in the same breath. Limits presume risk, and al-Āmidī suggests that figural language, even when contained, involves nonetheless the beginnings of a shift away from truth, inspiration, and genius towards artifice, will, and desire. Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd, in a citation from the *Muwāzana*'s start (where impartiality remains, however fleetingly, still a pretense), sums up the issue in a formulation that al-Āmidī will ultimately endorse with enthusiasm: *Abū tammām yurīd al-badīʿ fa-yakhruj ilā al-muḥāl* ("Abū Tammām desires novelty and so ventures out towards impossibility").[225]

Ḥudūd ("frontiers"), *sabāʾil* ("pathways"), and *ṭarāʾiq maʿrūfa* ("well-trodden roads") will soon feature prominently in al-Āmidī's description of the proper use of metaphor. What becomes clear, however, is that these paths are more serpentine and treacherous than al-Āmidī's confident declarations to the contrary would suggest. This is evident in the seemingly arbitrary approval (or, rather, apology) for metaphors of al-Buḥturī hardly less *baʿīd* ("strained") than any of the Modernists'. The *Muwāzana*'s defense of al-Buḥturī's description of the *lawn* ("color") of a glass so resplendent that it is as if transformed into something solid (a *qāʾima*, "foot") should not necessarily be taken on its face.[226] Nor should his insistence upon the soundness of a line—

[225] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 19.

[226] Ibid., 320.

one so syntactically ambiguous that critics disagree on how the hemistichs even correlate—likening *ruʿūd* ("thunder") to the sky's generosity (i.e., "rain") necessarily be accepted with too much confidence. The instant that ambiguity and abstraction in the epigon appear to go too far, al-Āmidī justifies al-Buḥturī's objectionable line not so much with empirical evidence as with appeal to precedent: *Wa-hādhā jahl* ("And this is ignorance"), he says of critics' objections to the phrase, of *maʿānī kalām al-ʿarab* ("of the topoi in the discourse of the Arabs [i.e., the ancients]").[227]

The slippage between ontology and precedent is so constant in the *Muwāzana* that much of the text would unravel under the effort to distinguish between the two. The interchangeability is nevertheless particularly striking here: *Al-raʿd muqaddimat al-ghayth* ("Thunder precedes rain"), pronounces al-Āmidī in a statement obviously false if taken empirically.[228] What he means is that al-Buḥturī intended *raʿd* to be a metonymy for *ghayth* and so to then justify the description of *ʿaṭāyā* ("gifts") in the first hemistich. His blustery dismissal of a hermeneutics forced to unlock meaning by appeal to authorial intent—his rejection of a need to engage in precisely the kind of salvage-work demanded by al-Buḥturī's line—cast temporarily aside, al-Āmidī quickly jettisons empirical or psychological appeals for precedent. Whatever the case, *akhadha al-buḥturī al-maʿnā min qawl bashshār* ("Al-Buḥturī has taken the topos from the poetry of Bashshār"). Even this somewhat surprising citation from very recent history—the eighth-century poet Bashshār ibn Burd hardly being known as an exemplar of the *ṭarīqat al-ʿarab*—seems to suffer from less ambiguity than the line upon which it is supposed to cast light: *Waʿdu l-jawādi yaḥuththu nāʾilahu/ ka-l-barqi thumma l-raʿdi fī atharih* ("The generous man's promise precipitates his bounty/ like lightning then thunder on its heels"). Explicitly marked as a

[227] *al-Muwāzana*, I, 362.

[228] Ibid., 362.

simile, Bashshār's line makes no claim of equivalence (metaphor) or even connection (metonymy) between rain and thunder. Here, the "promise" of rain brings with it the "profit" of rain, just as "lightning" brings with it "thunder." The equivalence is based on succession or order, not on some unlikely likeness of *nāʾil* ("profit") and *raʿd* ("thunder"). The appeal to precedent to make sense of the ambiguity in al-Buḥturī's meteorological description does not,in any case, stop with Bashshār.

Both poets, al-Āmidī conjectures, borrow the topos from al-Aʿshā, the sixth-century poet used as yardstick of Classical good sense throughout the *Muwāzana*. Now, the ambiguity seems even less: *Wa-l-shiʿru yastanzilu l-karīma ka-mā stanzala raʿdu l-saḥābati l-sabalā* ("And poetry makes a generous man descend (with boons), just as a cloud's thunder makes a torrent descend"). Syntactically lucid and built around an explicitly marked simile, al-Aʿshā's line avoids any of the metaphorical claims in al-Buḥturī's. In contrast to the prosopopeia and reification of al-Buḥturī's first hemistich, where *ḍaḥikāt* ("laughter") is attributed to *ʿaṭāyā* ("gifts") whose *comparandum* is unclear, al-Aʿshā's first hemistich describes an actual person. Moreover, it is joined to the next hemistich by a strict simile. Where al-Buḥturī's first hemistich requires the second to form a complete thought, even where it remains unclear whether the *ʿaṭāyā* ("gifts") in question are "rain" or "thunder," al-Aʿshā's hemistichs are semantically independent. Each has its own finite verb, and each forms a concrete description—one of the laudandum, the other of nature—casting a mutual light upon each other but involving none of the tangled substitution for which critics chide al-Buḥturī's line.

Nature, realism, and clarity are, in the end, little more than red herrings in the *Muwāzana*. Al-Buḥturī gets away with *ighrāb* ("defamiliarizing") each in a fashion every bit as dramatic as Abū Tammām but is excused for the simple reason that he on the whole adheres more closely to

precedent. The unnatural desire that moves the *muḥdath* poet to, as al-Āmidī suggests, interrupt the return of nature to itself does not compel a move against nature at all: Its target is precedent, custom, and norm, the interruption that it performs being on that of the very stuff of culture. All of the *Muwāzana*'s rhetoric aiming to persuade readers of the "unnatural" essence of the *mutaʾakhkhir* ("belated") conceals an effort to convince the audience of the "uncultural" essence of the Modern poem. The recurrent image of a rapacious imagination suffocating natural genius turns out to conceal an activism of the imagination, yes, but one that eclipses not the voice of the natural world or eternal truth but that rather of society and norm.

CHAPTER VI

REBIRTH OF LANGUAGE:

DECADENCE FROM SUHRAWARDĪ TO ṢĀʾIB

Among the great ironies of Persian literary history is the rejection by nineteenth-century "Modernizers" of a pre-colonial poetics that has more in common with Modernism than either Qajar classicism or the "romantic nationalism" of the turn of twentieth century. The formal experimentalism hastened by the *shiʿr-i naw* or *Būf-i kūr* (1937) should be understood, as this chapter endeavors to show, not as a "Westernizing" innovation but as a (perhaps unwitting) reawakening to a Decadent tradition that has little to do with European influence and still less to do with chronology. The traditional account of "Modernism" as an import[229]—an account corroborated by the models of literary "diffusion" offered variously by Fredric Jameson, Franco Moretti, and Pascale Casanova[230]—is due for reconsideration, as is the "stadial" and "historicist" notion that Modernism is merely the function of (often Eurocentric) time.[231]

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[229] Julie Scott Meisami, "Iran: The Age of Translation and Adaptation (1850-1914)," in *Modern Literature in the Near and Middle East, 1850-1970*, ed. Robin Ostle (New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 1991); Kamran Talattof, *The Politics of Writing in Iran: A History of Modern Persian Literature* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 19-65.

[230] Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text* 15 (1986): 69; Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," *New Left Review* Jan/Feb (2000): 58; Pascale Casanova, "Le Méridien de Greenwich: Réflexions sur le temps de da littérature," in *Qu'est-ce que le contemporain?*, ed. Lionel Ruffel (Nantes: Éditions Cécile Defaut, 2010).

[231] Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Historicism and its Supplements: A Note on a Predicament Shared by Medieval and Postcolonial Studies," in *Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World: The Idea of 'the Middle Ages' Outside Europe*, ed. Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

If Persian literary "Modernity" in the twentieth century required "compromise" (Moretti) with "western machineries of representation" (Jameson), then this is best understood as an anamnesis: Persian letters had already known "Modernity." It had already, that is, borne witness to an attitude towards language and verbal creation inherent to any "Modernity" of the verbal arts. The question begged, of course, lies somewhere at the threshold of semantics, chronology, and geography: By what right, namely, is the term "Modern" displaced and "untimed," wrenched from its use starting (only) in the sixteenth century in reference to the "current," the "present"[232] and made to refer instead to spontaneous, autonomous developments in the history of the verbal arts? Moreover, is the term a formal, content-neutral category, one which would be relative through and through, or does it point, rather, to some "thing" with recurrent features all its own?

"Yes" would have to be the maddening answer to each of these questions. "Modern"—*novus et recens* for Tacitus's Aper (*Dialog*., 8.1), *muḥdath* for Ibn Rashīq in the eleventh-century,[233] *naw* for the Safavid lyricists—is merely "Decadence" emptied of opprobrium. It is often, that is, the epithet adopted by those favoring a vision of verbal creation more regularly called "Decadent." And yet, as we have seen, "Decadence"—or, in its more ethically positive guise, "Modernity"—is no "empty signifier": Time and place seem to little change how literary decline is countenanced and understood, for again and again "Decadence" is seen as the condition of language where speaking and thinking have too far drifted apart.

[232] "modern, *adj.* and *n.*" Oxford English Dictionary Online. March 2016. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[233] Renate Jacobi, "Mukhaḍram," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill Online, 2016 [First print edition 1960-2007]); Geert Jan van Gelder, "Muḥdathūn," in ibid.

Literary "Modernity" is little other than the effort to officiate the end of this break's traditional stigmatization. Invention over discovery, calculation over feeling, ingenuity over ingenuousness, "Modernity" is marketing jargon for private meaning's eclipse of the shared linguistic fabric, and especially the notions of decorum and nature woven deep therein. This dissertation has so far constrained itself largely to voices in reaction, to observers, that is, chary of language and verbal art burnished too obviously into a mirror for personal will. The Safavid lyricists are, in many ways, the ideal case study for voices from the stigma's other side, for voices, that is, only too content to herald and hasten its weakening. Theirs is a view of verbal creation where every impersonal norm—of language, of decorum, of nature—is meant to yield and bend, to abandon itself altogether, before private intent. The endgame to this subjectivism is an utterly "realist" view of language, one where words turn into servants working to immediately realize their speaker's mental designs. Well before Mallarmé will invite the stigma's dissipation with the suggestion that poetic "Modernity" lies in this ontic and performative "philosophy" of language,[234] the Safavid poets are already making similar statements, already outlining a position where expression, truth, and even divinity have become shadows cast by the mind.

Nevertheless, no matter how much ʿUrfī, Fayḍī, and Naẓīrī—three of the great lyricists active at the Mughal court in the late sixteenth century—profess their stylistic radicalism, these are poets feasting at a table that they did not set. The disentangling of word and thought, the eclipsing of language and world by mental design, the idolizing of inner truth—these had already been a central concern (an objective, indeed) of certain elements within the speculative theological tradition. These elements offer more or less systematized philosophies of discourse grounded in *anā l-ḥaqq* ("I am the Truth"), that sentiment of inner dominion for which Manṣūr

[234] Mallarmé, "Crise de vers," in *Poésies et autres textes*, ed. Jean-Luc Steinmetz, 345-61 (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2005).

al-Ḥallāj was executed in Baghdad in 922. Suhrawardī, the eleventh-century polymath who "set the agenda for later Islamic philosophy,"[235] is a central figure in this story. The *shaykh al-ishrāq* ("Master of Lights"), as Suhrawardī would come to be called, converts "truth" into self-revelation, turning language into a tool for the remaking of the non-psychic world and so foreshadowing the "realism" of the Safavid and Mughal lyricists. Mullā Ṣadrā, to whom I turn secondly, would four centuries later draw upon Suhrawardī's doctrine of truth as self-presence to explicitly imagine the possibility of a human appropriation of the divine illocutionary: With sufficient desire, Ṣadrā proclaims, the imagination's inner discourse can reach beyond the psyche. Fallen into a prison of matter though it may be, the human subject, in the accounts of both Suhrawardī and Mullā Ṣadrā, can with sufficient will remake the world in the present. Moreover, the intensification of the will is for Suhrawardī and Mullā Ṣadrā available to the human simply by virtue of his possessing a mirror of the divine—which is to say a human psyche willing and able to turn the world into its personal reflection. Such is the hubristic optimism buried deep in the heart all Decadent (or "Modern") poetics.

The philosophy of mind and language at work already in Suhrawardī and Mullā Ṣadrā means not that the *sabk-i hendī* is less radical than its practitioners (and detractors) claim—but that it is, indeed, less revolutionary. Their *shanīʿ* ("twisted") poetics—to use Ṣādeq Ḥedāyat's scathing epithet[236]—is anything but *ex nihilo*. Born in Tabriz but, like his predecessors the previous century, leaving Safavid Iran for the Mughal court, Ṣāʾib gives in his *dīwān* a "mature" or "strong" version in verse of what the legatees of al-Ḥallāj had already wrought in prose. Like

[235] John Walbridge, "Suhrawardī and Illuminationism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 201.

[236] Riẓāqulī Khān Ḥedāyat, *Majmaʿ Al-Fuṣaḥāʾ*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Chāp-i pīrūz, 1957), 9-10; Iraj Parsinejad, *A History of Literary Criticism in Iran* (Bethesda: Ibex Publishers, 2003).

Suhrawardī and Mullā Ṣadrā, Ṣāʾib marries a distrust of appearance with an utter confidence in the human ability to reach truth—and this, once more, from within. The poet explicitly sets himself the project of renewing banal and everyday discourse (poetic or no) by refracting language through his inner world: In toying with the *sīāhī-ye sokhan* ("blackness of discourse") and manipulating *maʿnā* ("meaning"), in exploiting the *ḥosn-i taʿlīl* ("phantastic aetiology") and the poetic syllogism,[237] the poet can use language to break the spell of a mystifying and fallen outer world.

SUHRAWARDĪ: LANGUAGE AS PSYCHIC MIRROR

Everything that alarms critics about the "Indian" poets—the fixation with inner meaning, the wantonness with language, the disregard for the empirical world—is presaged by Suhrawardī and the *ishrāqī* project.[238] As we will see, these very "vices" are the stuff of the *sabk-i hendī*'s "Modernism," for literary "Modernity" depends on a changed conception of the use and value of language: Discourse becomes less a means to represent the phenomenal world buffeting the individual than the means by which the individual attempts to impart "inner," noetic meaning to the surrounding world. This privatization of discourse is reflected in the Baroque and Metaphysical *concetto* (where, as Samuel Johnson censoriously puts it, "[t]he most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together"), again in the post-Symbolist turn towards what Baudelaire calls *la majesté superlative des formes artificielles*, and yet again in prose narrative's turn towards *innere Bewegungen* in the species of free-indirect discourse.[239]

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[237] Aziz Ahmad, "The Formation of *Sabk-i Hindī*," in *Iran and Islam: In Memory of the Late Vladimir Minorsky*, ed. C.E. Bosworth (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971), 6.

[238] Walbridge, "Suhrawardī and Illuminationism."

[239] Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets* (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1781), 8-10; Quoted in M.H. Abrams, "Coleridge, Baudelaire, and Modernist Poetics," in *New Perspectives in German Literary Criticism*, ed. Richard E. Amacher and Victor Lange (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), 167; Erich

Suhrawardī sets the stage for the rise and audacity of the poetic syllogism—the breaking, that is, of phenomenal representation—in the later Safavid and Mughal poem. The interiorizing of truth at work throughout the *shaykh*'s œuvre is especially manifest in his notion of self-consciousness as efficient cause. The philosopher explicitly advertises his revelation of reflexive thought's causal supremacy in the account of his conversion from Avicennan Peripateticism to something more Pythagorean.[240] Obscured by an emanationist cosmology and his theatrical moniker *shaykh al-ishrāq* is the fact that Suhrawardī does not intend by "light" an object of understanding. No sense can be made of his project if this basic point is lost from sight. Neither extrinsic to consciousness nor an entity that some independent awareness can come to know, light *is* consciousness. Indeed, the entirety of Suhrawardī's rhetoric of illumination can quite justifiably (even preferably) be seen as a metaphor for self-understanding.

"Light" is emphatically not transitive for Suhrawardī: One entity does not in any usual sense "light" another. Rather, "to light" implies "to illuminate oneself," "to become conscious of oneself." This crucial collapsing of presence to self and presence to light is immediately clear from the start of *Kitāb ḥikmat al-ishrāq.* Suhrawardī pronounces: *Kull man kāna lahu dhāt lā yaghfulʿanhā fa-huwa ghayr ghāsiq li-ẓuhūr li-dhātihiʿindahu; wa-laysat hayʾat ẓulumānīya fī l-ghiyar* ("Whatever would possess an essence is not ignorant of itself when not in the dark as to the manifestation of itself to itself; and the entity is not one of darkness [and so] in chaos").[241] The atemporal circularity is crucial to Suhrawardī's project: Becoming aware of *dhāt* ("self") is what secures and substantializes that self in the first place. Self-knowledge cannot, Suhrawardī

Auerbach, *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur*, Tenth ed. (Tübingen: A. Francke Verlag, 2001 1946]), 500.

[240] Walbridge, "Suhrawardī and Illuminationism," 202.

[241] Suhrawardī, *Œuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1952), 110.

tells us, emerge from any external source: *Fa-yajib an yakūn idrākuha lahā li-nafsihā ka-mā hiya* ("Knowledge of it [the self] must be for itself as it is").[242] Suhrawardī proceeds to call the "associates" of the entity that self-illuminates—the entity possessing *anāʾīya* ("subjectivity")—the other lights of the world. In contrast, the *ghāsiq* ("concealing") and the *barzakh* ("isthmus")[243] is, by definition, deprived of self-awareness. "Ténèbre pure,"[244] the *barzakh* is for Suhrawardī actually closer to its sense in the Qurʾān than in Ṣūfī thought after Ibn ʿArabī. *Wa-min warāʾihim barzakhun ilā yawmi yubʿathūna* ("And beyond them is an isthmus until the day they are resurrected"), *sūra* twenty three instructs (100). The sense of the *barakh* in question—one corroborated by the Qurʾān's two other, topographical uses of the word (25: 53; 55: 19-20)—seems to be nothing other than "the grave," the temporal world blocking the reunion of divinity and soul until God finally *yadʿū* ("summons") the latter as *khalqan jadīdan* ("a new creation," S17: 42). For Suhrawardī too, *barzakh* signifies the antithesis of actualization and form: *Al-barzakh khafīy li-nafsihi ʿalā nafsihi* ("the isthmus is concealed to itself because of itself"). The difference—and here he departs markedly from the Qurʾān's account—is that the *barzakh* can be countered and overcome by autonomous will in the here and now. Resurrection becomes, that is, a project of self-recreation.

The deepening of presence to self and the autonomy of consciousness in Suhrawardī can and should be historicized. The discomfort with a "passive imagination" is, indeed, precisely what leads the philosopher to jettison the Peripatetic account of cognition and faculty psychology in general. Immaterial form does not "subsist" in a material psyche; rather, that psyche is itself

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[242] Suhrawardī, *Œuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, vol. 1, 112.

[243] Salman Bashier, "Barzakh, Ṣūfī understanding," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Third Edition*, ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Brill Online, 2016 [First Print Edition, 2007]); Christian Lange, "Barzakh," in ibid.

[244] Henry Corbin, *Histoire de la philosophie islamique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), 296.

immaterial insofar as it is united directly to the paracletic light: *Wa-hādhā l-rūḥ…mutabaddad fī jamīʿ al-badan. Wa-huwa ḥāmil al-quwā l-nūrīya* ("This spirit is, then…suffused into all of the body. And it is the seat of the faculties of light").[245] Suhrawardī's discomfort with faculty psychology—*al-ḥawāss al-bāṭina ghayr munḥaṣira fī l-khams* ("the inner senses are not limited to the five")—lies in the disconnect and division of formal consciousness that it presupposes.[246] He rejects the notion that the individual's *wahmīya* ("speculative") and *mutakhayyila* ("imaginative") capacities are clouded by virtue of their placement in the body. *Al-ṣuwar al-khayālīya* ("the imaginary forms") are not, that is, relegated to and *makhzūnā fī l-khayāl* ("stored in the imagination").[247] Instead, Suhrawardī prefers to imagine the pneuma "suffusing" the body, seating itself in the heart, and only then inspiring images in the mind.

Against the "preserving" and then obfuscating of immaterial knowledge in the *quwā badan* ("bodily faculties"), Suhrawardī resuscitates Platonic anamnesis. Knowledge once forgotten cannot reside in the physical (and obscure) body; rather, it remains entirely in the immaterial world of light: *Fa-laysa hādhā alladhī yadhkuruhu bi-ʿaynihi fī baʿd quwā badanihi* ("That which one remembers is not in any of the bodily faculties"). This is because *laysa l-tadhakkur illā min ʿālam al-dhikr* ("there is no recollection save for from the world of remembrance"), for there *sulṭān al-anwār al-isfahbadīya l-falakīya* ("the ruler of the celestial lights of Isfahbad") forgets nothing.[248] The "light of Isfahbad" is the divine psyche in corporal

[245] Suhrawardī, *Œuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, vol. 1, 207.

[246] Ibid., 208.

[247] Ibid., 209.

[248] Ibid.

form.[249] The remembrance of true knowledge—the act producing "self-illumination"—is an act immanent with light. And it is this extraordinary increase in the power and prestige of the human mind that explains the *shaykh*'s refusal of the notion that non-human entities have ideal counterparts above the sublunar world.

Rejecting faculty psychology in favor of a direct connection with an immaterial light itself produced by self-knowledge has monumental implications for the place of the individual—and of the poet. The key shift is to a mystical empiricism of sorts, one that affords "inner" experience ultimate authority. Not dialectics but *amr ākhar* ("something else") becomes the true criterion of truth.[250] This *amr ākhar* is *tajarrud*. If "oneness with self" or "radical aloneness" is, as Suhrawardī says, truth's real condition, then this is but the dramatization of an epistemology that has already redefined knowledge as self-revelation. Suhrawardī (falsely) attributes to Plato declarations from the Plotinist *Theology of Aristotle*: *Raʾaytu ʿinda l-tajarrud aflākan nūrānīyatan* ("In the state of self-revelation I saw luminous bodies"). "Plato," Suhrawardī recounts, *yarā fī dhātihi l-nūr wa-l-bahāʾ* ("saw within himself the light and luminosity").[251] The priority of inner certitude over phenomenal experience is also at play in Suhrawardī's postulation of a psychic version of the physical senses at once among the supralunar bodies and within the human *sensorium*: The philosopher describes a *samʿ ghayr mashrūṭ bi-l-udhun, wa baṣar ghayr mashrūṭ bi-l-ʿayn* ("a hearing not dependent on the ear, and a vision not dependent on the eye").[252]

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[249] Henry Corbin, *En Islam iranien: Aspects spirituels et philosophiques*, *II: Sohrawardî et les Platoniciens de Perse* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 124; 136.

[250] Suhrawardī, *Œuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, vol. 1, 162.

[251] Ibid.

[252] Ibid., 242.

Suhrawardī's conversion of truth into self-revelation is the condition for all literary "Modernity." It is also doubly optimistic: The world may be fallen—or the light may be scattered amidst dark bodies—but direct connection with the ultimate guarantor of truth is always available. And the age of revelation is only just beginning: *Infataḥa bāb ḥuṣūl al-barakāt* ("The door to the reception of blessings is opened").[253] The directness of this connection is, as we have seen, one of Suhrawardī's capital points of departure from Peripatetic hylomorphism and its more skeptical epistemology. So direct is the connection with the light of self that, in principle, *baqiya atharuha fī l-dhikr…ṣarīḥan* ("its traces remain in the psyche…clearly"): So *ṣarīḥan* ("clearly"), indeed, that *lā yuḥtāj ilā taʾwīl wa-taʿbīr* ("hermeneutics and interpretation are unnecessary").

The optimism of Suhrawardī's project is essential for coming to terms with its distinct "Modernity." Not only is direct connection with truth possible, but this connection is withheld, it seems, from nearly no one. The *shaykh* offers, that is, a relatively democratized truth. In this spiritual egalitarianism lies the promise of a nearly universal salvation. Near the end *Kitāb ḥikmat*, the reader encounters a brief genealogy of enlightenment—one reaching well beyond the Abrahamic prophets. Suhrawardī cites Plato and Hermes and Muḥammad, but then apostrophizes his readers as if to say that they too are capable of such self-presence. Such knowledge is available to anyone who turns away from *shawāghil ḥawass al-ẓāhira* ("the sensory cares of the extrinsic"), dies to the *ghāsiq* ("darkness"), and looks instead to the divine already within, which is to say to *al-nūr al-isfahbad* ("the light of Isfahbad"). [254] Perseverance is the only quality required.

In democratizing truth, Suhrawardī also democratizes what we might call the "poetic

[253] Suhrawardī, *Œuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, vol. 1, 236.

[254] Ibid.

function." Everyday inner experience emerges as that "something else" granting a light towards which apodictic reasoning can only dimly gesture. The source of prophecy and aesthetic experience are now the same: *ʿālam al-ashbāḥ al-mujarrada* ("the world of abstract apparitions") is the source of *nubūʾa* ("prophecy") but also *al-ajsād wa-l-ashbāḥ al-rabbānīya* ("the divine bodies and apparitions").[255] In fact, *al-manāmāt wa-l-kahānāt wa-akhbār al-nubūʾāt* ("dreams, divinations, and prophetic messages") are all subsumed into a single category.[256] Once self-presence and self-revelation are achieved, the clouded imagination of man is cleared.[257] The psyche can now come to realize *umūr mughayyaba* ("concealed things")—these being not, Suhrawardi suggests, "veiled" per se, but concealed only by man's banal and appetitive desires.[258]

Suhrawardī's conception of αἴσθησις—perception by the inner "senses"—desacralizes and "liberates" experience otherwise reserved for the vatic recipient. The "veil" shrouding the psyche from light is not "out there"; rather, it is a veil belonging entirely to the mind and, therefore, one whose removal is within the mind's grasp. Suhrawardī categorically refuses to limit revelatory αἴσθησις to prophecy: Indeed, by the end of *Kitāb ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, far more than just *manāmāt* ("dreams") have been grouped with prophecy. All aesthetic experience opens the door to union with light: *Umūr mughayyaba* ("concealed things") can be manifest *fī asṭurin maktūbatin* ("in written lines") and *bi-samāʿ ṣawtin* ("by hearing a sound"). They can present themselves in *ṣuwaran...fī ghāyat al-ḥusn* ("forms of extreme beauty") *and ka-l-tamathīl ṣināʿīya*

[255] Suhrawardī, *Œuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, vol. 1, 234.

[256] Ibid., 238.

[257] Ibid., 236.

[258] Ibid.

fī ghāyat al-luṭf ("as artistic representations of extreme grace").[259] All "sensory" data received in dreams—and in the dreams, Suhrawardī suggests, of anyone with the will to self-presence—are *muthul qayyima* ("autonomous representations"): This includes *al-jibāl wa-l-buḥūr wa-l-araḍīn wa-l-aṣwāt al-ʿaẓīma wa-l-ashkhāṣ* ("the mountains, seas, countries; the great sounds and the people"). All of these the individual can access *dūna ḥaraka* ("without moving") because this is a geography—like truth or self-presence themselves—already contained within.[260] The connection with discourse will ultimately be unavoidable: Language, private and idiosyncratic, will become the means by which the self-present mind reaches outside of itself. Discourse will be "realist," then, inasmuch as this imagination will tolerate less and less a separation between denomination and performance.

Mullā Ṣadrā and Illocutionary Will

Not until Mullā Ṣadrā, however, does Suhrawardī's inner αἴσθησις—an inner authority increasingly democratic and desacralized—emerge at the absolute center of dialectics. With respect to the history of Islamic thought, the elevation of inner perception as the source of salvation in a world concealed by linguistic delusion (the *iʿtibārī*) must be considered the counterpart to the *maʿnā-ye tāze* ("fresh meaning") of the "Indian" poet. Mullā Ṣadrā radicalizes Suhrawardī's "self-presence." An entity exists only to the extent that it knows itself, and this self-knowledge produces essence. One problem that this presents, as Mullā Ṣadrā himself anticipates, is that this substance-producing self-knower begins to resemble *dhāt al-wājib* ("the necessary being"). Mullā Ṣadrā's response is that the human soul differs from the entity of pure self-knowledge only in degree: The human exists and knows itself less fully, even as the soul

[259] Suhrawardī, *Œuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, vol. 1, 240.

[260] Ibid.

remains "linked" to the necessary being. The soul becomes the point of "necessary"—divine, causal—intervention in the world of becoming: "It is the first of non-necessary things with respect to essence in the world of becoming; it is the last in the order of beginning."[261]

In its creative and active force, the psyche in Mullā Ṣadrā's thought takes on a soteriological role only hinted at by Suhrawardī. This (essentially Modern) confidence—which will lead to what Corbin calls *un optimisme facile*[262]—is largely the result of Mullā Ṣadrā's effort to reduce what he sees as an unacceptable dualism in Suhrawardī's thought: The *barzakh* ("isthmus") and "dark bodies" are merely "weak" existents. The psyche's role, then, is to use the not-yet-awakened particularities in which it finds itself surrounded "to realize its perfection."[263] That Mullā Ṣadrā conceives of a psyche increasingly independent of the "necessary" cause is revealed in the parallels that the philosopher draws between the psychic faculties and cosmology: *L'obéissance des anges à l'égard de dieu est semblable*, he tells us, *à l'obéissance des faculties sensibles a l'égard de l'āme*.[264]

That a discursive realism is the ideal state to which the perfected psyche can return is revealed quite explicitly towards the end of his *Taʿlīqāt* on the *Kitāb ḥikmat*. Ṣadrā approvingly cites a *khabar* on the privileges of paradise according to which the "eternal living" shares with the posthumous soul the capacity to speak objects into existence. *En vérité je dis à une chose: sois, et elle est*, proclaims Ṣadrā. He continues: *Voici qu'aujourd'hui je fais de toi quelqu'un qui*

[261] *Le livre de la sagesse orientale*, trans. Henry Corbin (Lagrasse: Éditions Verdier, 1986), 486. Ṣadrā citations in English are my translations from Corbin's French rendition of *Taʿlīqāt*, these last having not yet been edited and published in full.

[262] Ibid., 489 (Note b).

[263] Ibid., 465.

[264] Ibid., 501.

peut dire à une chose: sois, et elle est.[265] A similar commentary from Muḥammad is then summoned as corroboration. It is misleading to think that this collapsing of the phenomenal world into discourse (or into illocutionary command) is a special condition to which the actualized psyche can attain. Rather, Ṣadrā admits no difference between psychic actualization and illocutionary force: The soul is perfected insofar as it can submit the phenomenal world to itself by discursive fiat. Totally unrelated to communication or denotation, this linguistic creativity falls squarely within that species of the "performative" that J.L. Austin would call the "illocutionary." It is, moreover, intensely private and individualized, stemming from personal and inner desire. *Chaque être humain est dans le paradis un univers complet en soi*, Ṣadrā instructs: *Tout ce qu'il veut et tout ce qu'il peut désirer, présence d'un être human aussi bien que d'un cheval, d'un breuvage, de nourriture, houris, châteaux, jardins, cours d'eau vive, etc., tout cela est présent aussi rapidement qu'un clin d'œil ou un battement de cœur.*[266] For the actualized soul, the empirical world is little more than the function of desire.

The unbounded psyche involves, like so much of Mullā Ṣadrā's project, a desacralization of sorts, It is, in fact, a "secular" theomorphosis. The voice of Ibn ʿArabī speaks ever louder throughout the *Taʿlīqāt*, and it is, indeed, with his voice (and not Ṣadrā's own) that the glosses conclude. The human wishing for "perfection" must meditate on what prevents him from "making being."[267] The force of imagination, we are told in the commentary's final paragraphs, is *pareil à la volonté de Dieu en efficacité*. Moreover, *la volonté créatrice de l'homme est une volonté créatrice de Dieu*. The capacity to submit the outer world to inner will is not to be

[265] *Le livre de la sagesse orientale*, 663.

[266] Ibid., 662.

[267] Ibid., 664.

understood as a "gift" bestowed by God upon man.[268] "Incarnation" or "theomorphosis" more aptly conjure the shading of human into "necessary" cause that Ṣadrā has in mind. Ibn ʿArabī describes an indissolubility of human and divine will in the act of bringing desire to phenomenal fruition: *La volonté créatrice de l'homme est la volonté créatrice de Dieu*.[269] Indeed, Ibn ʿArabī is merely giving more "poetic" voice to what Ṣadrā has already announced in apodictic terms earlier on. Through the "active imagination," the actualized soul will perceive the concrete correlate to what it imagines.[270] Once the soul departs from the world, the *faculté imaginative*, which is the *faculté guardian du sensorium*, loses all *virtualité, déficience, and imperfection*. The result is precisely the inside-outside inversion that Ibn ʿArabī had promised in paradise: Sense data no longer flows into the psyche from the phenomenal world through "hearing, taste, smell, and touch." Rather, the "different organs" registering sense data from the outside are all replaced by that faculty which can build multisensory worlds within the psyche: That is, "the living and imagining soul." The active imagination's domination of the psyche and its subjugation of the outwardly gathered sense data is emphatically not an "inner" affair. The "imagination itself becomes sensually concrete," coming to reduce the ontically "weaker" existents of the non-psychic world to a shadow of imagination and desire.

Nor is the ability to speak and think desire to life a condition granted the soul only after death. It may be the case that the banal *wahm* of the unactualized soul traffics in images deprived of existence. Insofar as the psyche is ontologically "intense" or realized—which, we will recall, always implies self-presence—these images are not destined to remain within the modest

[268] *Le livre de la sagesse orientale*, 668.

[269] Ibid., 669.

[270] Ibid., 647.

confines of the inner *sensorium*. While "the general case" is that the psyche lacks the intensity to bring its imaginings into existence, "the knower creates something existing beyond the seat of this faculty." The *wahm* by itself is powerless to break through the inner *sensorium*: Instead, it is through the *himma* that this creation takes place. The difference is between imagination and desire, between "ambition" and "aspiration."[271] With Ṣadrā's doctrine of "ontological intensity" comes also an "ontic force": The more realized the psyche, the more it can make being in the here and now. "The imagination," he tells us, "is a light penetrating into non-being which it organizes in giving it being."[272]

The greatest proof of the elevation of psychic life over the phenomenal world in Ṣadrā's thought is the recourse to non-apodictic experience at the expense of dialectics. Critics often (and wrongly) see this as an effort to synthesize Avicennan Peripateticism with Ṣūfī intuitionism.[273] A more persuasive reading would reconcile itself to Ṣadrā's effort to ground *kalām* and dialectics in an inner experience whose relationship to "divinity" is rather faint. "Their knowledge and conclusions are not grounded in apodictic or probable syllogisms," writes Ṣadrā of the "the knowers." He continues: "No, the totality of their knowledge rests on repeated direct visions and many discoveries within."[274] Ultimately, Ṣadrā will elevate inner "proof" or "truth" over demonstration, reducing the latter to a propaedeutic for those (as yet) unable to perceive form independent of matter. Like Suhrawardī himself, Ṣadrā tends to either introduce or conclude

[271] Edward Willian Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1863), 3045; Suhrawardī, *Le Livre de la sagesse orientale*, 663.

[272] *Le livre de la sagesse orientale*, 659.

[273] Sajjad H. Rizvi, "Mollā Ṣadrā Širāzi," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater et al. (New York, N.Y.: 2005).

[274] Sohravardi, *Le livre de la sagesse orientale*, 565.

argumentation with appeals to personal experience (*une sollicitude divine*[275])—often his own—beseeching readers to take dialectics as only an entry point to inner certitude. And (tellingly) like Suhrawardī, he is taken with the inner "ascent" of "Plato" in the *Theology of Aristotle*.

That Ṣadrā is offering a relatively desacralized version of intuitionism is evinced in his epistemology. The phenomenal world for Ṣadrā is never experienced in itself. Partly, this is due to his Peripatetic heritage: Matter is unknowable by its very essence. Ṣadrā's solution, however, offers something rather different than the orthodox Peripatetic epistemology. While the latter always returns to the intellective dissolution of the hylomorphic phenomenon through the abstraction of form from matter, Ṣadrā offers what Corbin calls *une phénoménologie authentique*.[276] Rizvi is also right to use "pan-psychicism" to describe Ṣadrā's thought. Essentially, Ṣadrā's solution to matter's inaccessibility consists in reducing the intellected object to extrojection or displacement of the psyche. The light that the psyche projects onto the non-psychic object produces a "form which is at once the sensible object and the organ perceiving the sensation."[277] As Ṣadrā explains it, "what is essentially the visual object of perception for the soul is the form emitted from the soul to the sensible faculty."[278]

This epistemological loop, one where sense-perception simply mirrors a projection of the intellect, has little to do with the reception of some supralunar "light." It is a matter once more of personal and private meaning, one that—together with the doctrine of ontological "intensity"—

[275] *Le livre de la sagesse orientale*, 567.

[276] *Œuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, 519 (Note b).

[277] Ibid., 1, 519.

[278] *Le livre de la sagesse orientale*, 559.

necessitates relativism and perspectivism, what Christian Jambet calls *[l]a vie comme perspective…une vision plurielle, monadologique, de l'être de l'étant*.[279]

Nothing in either Ṣadrā's or Suhrawardī's hierarchy of self-realization suggests determinism or fixity: Every human being meets the minimal condition for deeper self-presence simply by virtue of possessing the immaterial light that is the soul. This spiritual egalitarianism is a reflection of the personal and anthropocentric view of the universe. The human soul, after all, is "the greatest proof of God": "Human forms and the paths leading to perception and consciousness with which they are provided are the greatest proof of God."[280] With divinity internalized—and "sacred" experience collapsed into self-knowledge—no human is exempt from the possibility of salvation. This is, moreover, a democratic optimism of the here and now. And this is precisely where the notion that humans can appropriate the divine illocutionary word—the phantasy of linguistic realism—is at play. With sufficient inner will, the imagination and the otherwise hidden forms of *ʿālam al-mithāl* can come into existence: "For if man had a sufficiently strong imagination, if the desire (*himma*) in his heart were sufficiently intense…all that he desired would be present, in a perfect presence."[281] That Ṣadrā's narrator ends his journey in *al-Asfār al-arbaʿa* by moving to remake the earthly world is explicable only in light of this ontological optimism ascribed to inner discourse and will.[282]

Ṣāʾib: A Linguistic Resurrection of the World

As perhaps its most illustrious practitioner, Ṣāʾib demonstrates the *sabk-i hendī*'s dependence on the "unveiling" (or invention) of discourse's capacity to breathe new life into a

[279] *Le livre de la sagesse orientale*, 477 (Note b).

[280] *Œuvres Philosophiques et mystiques*, 656.

[281] Ibid., 1, 621.

[282] Rizvi, "Mollā Ṣadrā Širāzi."

fallen world. Metapoetic statements throughout Ṣāʾib's *dīwān* point with remarkable consistency to this "realist" conception of language. Before turning to the poetry itself, however, let it be clear that the realism of later Safavid and Mughal lyric is by no means *sui generis*. The inclination to see the Indian style as emergent only in the sixteenth century, only in Mughal India, and only under the spell of Navāʾī or Fighānī—a view espoused by Wālih Dāghistānī, ʿAbd al-Bāqī Khān, and (more or less) Shiblī—touches upon only a part of the story.[283] Coming to terms with the *sabk-i hendī* requires a more historically generous account, such as that of Aḥmad, who rightly finds in the Indian style a "deepening [of] ingredients…there almost from the beginning." Already in the Ghaznavid court of the eleventh century, that is, the ghazals of Nakatī and Masʿūd Saʿd Salmān show "a trend towards complicated and 'unexpected' imagery."[284]

The history of "realism" in Persian letters runs far deeper than a singularly synchronic approach to the *sabk-i hendī* would let on. Indeed, the premonitions of the *sabk-i hendī* depend on an undoing of self-effacing denominative discourse—one grounded in tropes of metaphor and resemblance[285]—as the ontic effects of language come increasingly to the fore. This is the unfettering of language from the empirical world that Bausani sees in the Indian style's erosion of "homoeomorphy in comparison." The Romantico-affective and Classical (extrinsic, empirical) bases of mimesis will, that is, find themselves displaced: With respect to affect and sincerity, poets will abandon the (relatively) "emotionally…intense"[286] and "simple and direct"[287]

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[283] Ahmad, "The Formation of *Sabk-i Hindī*," 1.

[284] Ibid., 2-3.

[285] Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 205.

[286] Ahmad, "The Formation of *Sabk-i Hindī*," 3.

expression found at the advent of New Persian. With respect to objective mimesis, there is little question that what Fouchécour terms *l'irréalisme* and the tendency towards the *image outrée où le naturel est dépassé et paraît déplacé* is presaged in Samanid and Ghaznavid verse—and loudly.[288] The basis, then, for the total refraction of the empirical world through the transcendent and objectifying mind's eye (*les schémas mentaux*[289]) is already taking shape in the eleventh century. This is the case even if we are not yet ready for the routine "*telescoping* into a single image [of] a variety of emotional states" or the ascent of "cerebral artifice…pushing familiar images to unfamiliar and unexpected lengths" found in a Fighānī or an ʿUrfī.[290] Fidelity to the empirical world and sincerity are not yet fully jettisoned. (Both of these, it can hardly be sufficiently emphasized, are to be understood as historicized concepts, tethered to contemporaneous standards of decorum.)

Rūdākī, in a well-known exordium to a *qaṣida* praising Sīstān, draws explicit attention at once to the sincerity and simplicity of his *lafẓ* ("expression"), even while acknowledging the increasing unfashionableness of his *āsān* ("bare") style:

> īnke madḥī chonānke ṭāqat-i man būd
> lafẓ hame chūb o-ham be-maʿnā-ye āsān[291]
>
> This is an encomium made to the measure of my powers,
> its expression at once sound and of simple meaning.

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[287] F.C. de Blois, "Rūdakī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995).]

[288] C.-H. de Fouchécour, *La Description de la nature dans la poésie lyrique persane du XIe siècle* (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1969), 239-42.

[289] Ibid., 233.

[290] Ahmad, "The Formation of *Sabk-i Hindī*," 6-7.

[291] E. Denison Ross, "A Qasida by Rudaki," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 2 (1926): 223.

The self-conscious conservatism of Rūdākī's style calls attention to the fact that the twisting of nature through what Shiblī terms "the intemperateness of the imagination" would soon leave a poetics of the *khūb* and *āsān*, the "sound" and the "bare," in isolation.[292] Nevertheless, the tendency in Farrukhī is still to *trait[er] plus nettement pour eux-mêmes* the *thèmes de la nature*. The *tendance au réalisme* in Manuchihrī continues to exert itself. And ʿUnsurī still *sait décrire une réalité*.[293]

The unmaking and then remaking of the outer world—or its eclipse by a poet-made language—involves inversions of temporality made possible by an imagination that sees language as ontically productive. In rhetorical terms, metaphoric description based on resemblance gives way not merely to catachresis—to the willful and idiosyncratic assertion of predicates missing what Wolfhart P. Heinrichs calls a "substratum"[294]—but to the metaleptic reconceiving of causation itself. Private, personal, and idiosyncratic, this move depends on the substantializing of inner will enshrined in Suhrawardī's and Mullā Ṣadrā's "intuitionist" dialectics. It is, indeed, part of a humanizing and democratizing of truth.

As the history of Persian dialectics after Suhrawardī suggests, the poetic internalization of reality resembles Ṣūfī pietism precisely not because these are (as Saljūqī has it) "inspirations issuing forth from the firmament of Ṣūfism." Nor is it the case with the *sabk-i hendī* that "this style can be observed in every poet to the extent of how deep he is in Ṣūfism."[295] Quite to the contrary, the domination of nature by the ascendant inner will—and by means of a "realist"

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[292] Quoted in Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, "A Stranger in the City: The Poetics of *Sabk-e Hindi*," *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 19 (2004): 15.

[293] Fouchécour, *La Description de la nature dans la poésie lyrique persane du XIe siècle*, 236-37.

[294] Wolfhart P. Heinrichs, "Metaphor," in *The Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, ed. Julie Scott Meisami; Paul Starkey (New York: Routledge, 1998).

[295] Faruqi, "A Stranger in the City: The Poetics of *Sabk-e Hindi*," 23.

discourse—is a laicization of "mystical" gnosis. What Navāʾī calls "this night in which there is no shining sun"— the "decline" (or "Modernizing") of the Persian poem in the Safavid-Mughal age—relies on the ascent of the "imagic argument (*mithālīya*)," of the "complex conceit," of "'cerebral' artifice." This is the formal consistency of literary Modernism: The "later poets," as Annemarie Schimmel notes, appear to "have observed only the passing shadows of the world and not the permanence behind it."[296] But this sense of the fallenness of appearance and of what Faruqi calls "the inadequacy of…language"[297] is belied by a full-throated confidence in poetic discourse. That is, the vacuous and banalized language of the everyday, a language which keeps us addicted to and mystified by outer appearance (Peripatetic "matter" or the dark *barzakh* of Suhrawardī), can be swept away and remade by a language connected to inner ingenuity. Once more, this is the Modernist optimism in the utterly human capacity to resuscitate the world.

The absolutely crucial point is that the Modern confidence in the ability to undertake Baudelaire's *essai permanent et successif de réformation de la nature* depends on a realism of discourse, for it is through language that the self-present will of Suhrawardī and Mullā Ṣadrā reaches outside of itself.[298] To transmute *zamīn* ("earth") into *āsmān* ("sky"), to displace the withered paradise of "reality" with *gul[hā]-ye kāghedh* ("paper roses"), to reduce the outer world to *ṣad hazār āyīne* ("one hundred thousand mirrors") of the mind (all from Ṣāʾib)—requires the realist (and Modernist) confidence that discourse and *khīsh be tadbīr* ("rightness in deliberation") produce ontic effects. Breaking the outer world according to the will of the mind requires, however, that this *tadbīr* ("deliberation") be *bīgāne*, "alien" and "defamiliarizing." In particular,

[296] Annemarie Schimmel, *A Two-Colored Brocade: The Imagery of Persian Poetry* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 298.

[297] Faruqi, "A Stranger in the City: The Poetics of *Sabk-e Hindi*," 56.

[298] Charles Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne* (Paris: Éditions Mille et une nuits, 2010 [1863]), 64-66.

the poetic syllogism, the mode by which the imagination breaks the spell of fallen and banal reality, requires an undoing of normal causation. Ṣāʾib could hardly be more explicit on this point:

> gar tavānī hamcho mardān az sabab pūshīd chashm
> ʿālamī dīgar be-ghayr az ʿālam-i asbāb hast.
>
> If to causality you can close your eyes like certain men,
> There is another world alien to the world of causes.

That the world beyond normal causality is not beyond the grasp of language is precisely what Ṣāʾib is at pains to prove in his *dīwān*. The reason for the accessibility of this "other world" is that, as Suhrawardī and Ṣadrā are at pains to argue, it is not supralunar or governed by some inaccessible divinity. Rather, it is "another world" contained within the mind, one which can radiate outwards through the discovery of language's otherwise concealed ontic force. It is the duty of the self-present mind (as Suhrawardī and Ṣadrā have it) to unlock this world-renewing force in discourse:

> agar ḥayāt-i abad khāhī az sokhan mogoḏar
> ke āb-i khiḍr nehān dar sīāhī-ye sokhan ast.
>
> If you wish for unending life, do not pass over discourse,
> For the water of Khiḍr (i.e., of life) is concealed in the blackness of discourse.

Extracting the "blackness" of discourse is little short of the overriding concern of Ṣāʾib's project. This "blackness" is, indeed, language's ontic force utterly occluded by "normal" discourse and poetic cliché, both of which again correspond to the Peripatetic world blinded by matter and dead (as Suhrawardī would have it) to self-presence. The first task, then, is to strip away the banal and fallen expression of the everyday. Only the poet—and only the especially skilled poet—can even begin to achieve this extraction. Ṣāʾib talks of the toil he suffers from "untying" but a single knot of discourse:

az pīch o-tāb reshte-ye jān mī-shavad gere
tā yak gere az zulf-i sokhan bāz mī konam.[299]

The thread of my soul becomes a knot from the twisting and turning
As I undo a single knot of discourse.

The aim, Ṣāʾib tells us, must always be a *maʿnā*—a topos or signified—concealed by the false world of causality. The *maʿnā*, that is, must be *bīgāne* ("alien") to appearance, for only then can language surpass nature. Indeed, Ṣāʾib depicts himself throughout his *dīwān* as party to an unending *agon* between those blind to what lies beyond banal appearance and an individual capable of conjuring this hiddenness. *Dar molk-i ṣūrat nīst mārā gūshe-ī ṣāʾib*, ("in the world of appearance there is no place for us"), Ṣāʾib reminds himself. This is a world where the *chashm-i ṣūrat* is blind to *ḥosn-i maʿnā* ("excellent meaning").[300]

Critics err in seeing the Safavid poets' self-professed fetish for novelty as primarily a function of rivalry, either with their predecessors or with one another. Quite to the contrary, poets of the *sabk-i hendī* unrelentingly ground the *bīgāneh* meaning in a theory of being clearly drawn in the shadows of theology and philosophy. Indeed, the *sabk-i hendī* abounds in what Ibn al-Muʿtazz identifies in his *Kitāb al-badīʿ* as *al-madhhab al-kalāmī* ("philosophizing discourse").[301] Ṣāʾib will thus talk of *ʿālam-i ījād* ("the world of existence") and *ʿadam* ("inexistence), of *hastī-ye moṭlaq* ("unconditioned being") and *ʿaql o-hūsh* ("reason and intellect").[302] This is less empty philosophizing than acknowledgement of a debt to broader developments in the history of ideas. Moreover, the poet's solution to *zandān-i ʿadam* ("the prison of non-being") reprises Suhrawardī's and Ṣadrā's: Only a discourse emanating out of

[299] Ṣāʾib, *Dīwān-i Ṣāʾib-i Tabrīzī* (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Negāh, 2004), 2782: 3.

[300] Ibid., 311: 17; 281: 3.

[301] Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *Abū Tammām and the Poetics of the ʿAbbāsid Age*, 9.

[302] Ṣāʾib, *Dīwān-i Ṣāʾib-i Tabrīzī*, 1205: 7; 376: 2; 609: 9.

forūgh-i del ("the light of the heart") and *del-i roshan* ("the heart of light") promises a reconstruction and resurrection of reality.[303]

That the truth of which the outer world is deprived happens to be not out of the individual's reach—and far from it—is the very promise of Modernism. If "Western" Modernity is for Weber and Heidegger a function of the withdrawal of the horizons of non-knowability, literary Modernity is the promise that this withdrawal owes itself to the force of *private* language. The twist, however, is precisely that this is not "known" or "ordinary" language, reinforcing as the latter does banal and taken-for-granted truth. Rather, this is a language that is utterly subjective, utterly dependent on inner will and imagination. Ṣāʾib, in a manner far more radical than, say, Ḥāfeẓ, describes truth beyond appearance—the truth that will manifest, for instance, in a new topos or *maʿnā*—as an inner event. The parallels with the Stoic cult of inner truth and self-cultivation, another Modern moment and another moment indebted to a laicized mysticism in Platonism's shadow, are telling, as τὸ ἡγεμονικόν ("the [inner] hegemony") of Marcus Aurelius should recall *ishrāqī* self-presence .[304] So paramount is *shoghl-i khod sāzī* ("the job of self-building") says Ṣāʾib, that *marā khāne sāzī bāz dāsht* ("it kept me from house-building").[305] Like the "fallen" or banal discourse that seduces us ever further into *zandān-i ʿadam* ("the prison of non-being"), the body is the soul's prison. Ṣāʾib imagines his pre-existential *khod*, before falling into *zandān-i badan* ("prison of the body"), as at once *tajarrod* ("radically alone") and the hegemon of its own kingdom: *Dar iqlīm-i tajarrod pādeshāh-i vaqt-i khod būdam* ("in the country of inner freedom I was a king of my own time").[306] Liberating the

[303] Ṣāʾib, *Dīwān-i Ṣāʾib-i Tabrīzī*, 1205: 7.

[304] Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, II: 2.

[305] Ṣāʾib, *Dīwān-i Ṣāʾib-i Tabrīzī*, 962: 3.

[306] Ibid., 2651: 8.

rūḥ ("soul") from this *jesm-i moḥāl* ("impossible body") is not a posthumous event:[307] Ṣāʾib promises an unchaining of the will in the here and now—and through the renewing power of the poetic word.

The withdrawal into the self—and the conviction that ultimate meaning pertains to the psyche—unfolds into an elaborate rhetoric of nomadism in Ṣāʾib's œuvre. So much closer to truth than existence is Ṣāʾib's soul that the poet has no need of company. Recalling Suhrawardī's promise of a journey through an inner world *dūna ḥaraka* ("without moving") and announcing that he has no need of *sayr o-dawr* ("travel and roving"), Ṣāʾib proclaims, *vaḍʿ-i jahān az noqṭe-ye del dīde-am tamām* ("I've fully seen the situation of the world from the core of my heart").[308] The result, however, is a desperate anomie with which any species of the Modern is conversant: *az bī-kasī bā ṣūrat-i dīvār mī-zanam ḥarf* ("out of isolation I talk with an image on the wall").[309] Others bring with them an exhausted and meaningless discourse. In a remarkable line, Ṣāʾib likens his own alienation to the novel and invented meaning beyond ordinary language:

> ānchonān ke az lafẓ gardad maʿnā-ye bīgāne dūr
> man az vaḥshat dar sawād-i shahr ṣaḥrā-ī shodam[310]
>
> Like the strange meaning that turns far from its expression,
> I out of fear became a traveler in the blackness of the city.

How, precisely, does this cult of individual truth relate to language? Ṣāʾib answers the question with a question:

> che lāzem ast barāyam az khīshtan Ṣāʾib?
> marā ke har kaf-i khākī jahān-i dīgar shod.[311]

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[307] Ṣāʾib, *Dīwān-i Ṣāʾib-i Tabrīzī*, 1970: 10.

[308] Ibid., 2813: 4.

[309] Ibid., 2492: 1.

[310] Ibid., 2683: 4.

[311] Ibid., 1610: 10.

Why would I need to leave myself, Ṣāʾib,
Me from whose every handful of earth another world is made?

Ultimately, the conviction that fallen discourse is renewable by the mind's ingenuity results in the proliferation of tropes grounded less and less in phenomenal resemblance. These figures and the often jarring images that they permit the poet are based instead on what Suhrawardī had called *amr ākhar* ("something else"), which is to say on subjective and private experience. The specialists in *ʿilm al-badīʿ* ("the science of figures") characterize these tropes answering to nothing but inner sense as exempla of *ḥosn-i taʿlīl* ("phantastic etiology") and *tajāhhol al-ʿārif* ("feigned ignorance").[312] More broadly, they should be seen as species of the pathetic fallacy, impossibly remaking the outer world according a reality that is neither of this world nor "out" of this world—but instead radiating from *noqṭe-ye del* ("the core of the heart").

Figural analysis (whether contemporary or contemporaneous) is hardly necessary to demonstrate that the transmuting of nature into psychic reflection is among the chief concerns of the Safavid and Mughal practitioners of the *sabk-i tāze* ("innovative style"). Ṣāʾib himself is unambiguous on the point. Indeed, in a manner entirely in keeping with Suhrawardī and Mullā Ṣadrā, Ṣāʾib aims to make self-presence and self-realization the gathering of force for a remaking of the non-subjective world. *Khosh ān gorūh* ("sweet are those"), Ṣāʾib tells us, who *zamīn-i khīsh be tadbīr āsmān sāzand* ("with contemplation build their own ground into a sky").[313] Through thought ingenious and industrious—thought that "constructs" (*sākhtan*), thought that twists language into something *bīgāne* ("foreign") to existence—the poet performs a Lazarus trick on a dying world. *Chūn āftāb* ("like the sun"), says Ṣāʾib, *fekr-i man āfāq-rā gereft* ("my

[312] Geert Jan van Gelder, "A Good Cause: Fantastic Aetiology (*Ḥusn al-Taʿlīl*) in Arabic Poetics," in *Takhyīl: The Imaginary in Classical Arabic Poetics*, ed. Geert Jan van Gelder & Marlé Hammond (Exeter: The E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2009).

[313] Ṣāʾib, *Dīwān-i Ṣāʾib-i Tabrīzī*, 1569: 1.

thought captured the horizons"). Again, inner thought realizes a reality effect only through the *ḥosn-i gharīb* ("defamiliarizing beauty") of discourse: *ḥosn-i gharīb zūd jahāngīr mī-shavad* ("defamiliarizing beauty rapidly conquers the universe").[314]

Ṣāʾib's desire to collapse thought and the empirical world in an act of soteriological heroics accounts for much of the (often cosmic) hyperbole in his *dīwān*. *Fekrash* ("his thought") becomes *kawkabhā* ("stars" or perhaps "flowers"). The poet himself transforms into *rawshanī bakhsh-i zamīn o-āsmān* ("a light-giver of earth and sky").[315] He shifts shapes into a *kūhsār* ("mountain") that wryly laughs.[316] The imperious optimism of these hyperboles, however, only attains its fullest expression in the *ḥosn-i taʿlīl* ("phantastic etiology"), where multiple hyperboles hang together by fiat of the imagination. As a rule, these impossible scenes depend on the displacement of human desire onto the natural world.

> az shawq-i ham-i āghūshī-ye ān qāmat-i mawzūn
> golhā hame āghūsh o-kenār ast be-bīnīd.[317]
>
> Out of the desire for the full embrace of that graceful figure,
> See how the flowers all are now bosoms and chests.

Not simply have the flowers in this *bayt* been endowed with human desire for a human form, but this desire transforms them into precisely the sorts of libidinal fragments of the body ("part-objects" in psychoanalytic terms) that would race through the desirous lover's heated imagination. This desire for the power to transmute and alchemize and remake (*sākhtan*) by nothing but will allegorizes—at once acknowledging and disavowing—the primary desire behind all of the controversial scenery of Ṣāʾib and his fellow "Indian" stylists: The desire, that is, to

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[314] Ṣāʾib, *Dīwān-i Ṣāʾib-i Tabrīzī*, 1991: 8.

[315] Ibid., 9.

[316] Ibid., 352-3.

[317] Ibid., 1344: 10.

reduce outer world to shadow of the imagination—and all through a discourse recognizing no distinction between denomination and performance.

CONCLUSION

The "discovery" (really, the invention) of *la langue comme…aptitude à présentifier la notion pure du 'il y a'* is central to the story of literary Modernity.[318] Moreover, this second-order conception of language can emerge in milieux not determined by the three-headed engine of post-1500 Europe, being little related, that is, to the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution. The attitude towards discourse emergent in Europe after the sixteenth century depends, as the Foucault of *Les mots et les choses* has it, on the withdrawal of language from a "nature" precipitated by this very separation: *Un espace sombre apparaît qu'il va falloir progressivement éclairer*, he tells us. And, *c'est là qu'est la 'nature' et c'est cela qu'il faut s'employer à connaître*.[319] Once split from nature, language becomes a tool promising the psyche a total knowability of the non-psychic world. Literary "Modernity" consists, Foucault concludes, in the subject's reconciliation to and even pleasure in the fact that discourse is "real," engendering as it does ontic effects.

The ascent of language over nature—and the blinding promise of total knowability that this ascent offers—may indeed be central to the story of poetic Modernity, but Suhrawardī, Mullā Ṣadrā, and Ṣāʾib suggest that this account remains incomplete. For language to become "real," for it to be conceived as a thing bringing imagination to life, it must first be felt to be broken from nature and divinity, felt contingent and internalized, and, above all, felt private and

[318] Alain Badiou, *Petit manuel de l'inesthétique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998), 43, 39; Martin Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977 [1950/1960]).

[319] Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 69.

democratic. Language must, that is, be conceived in the psyche as a tool for self-revelation and self-realization. The ascent of language over nature is, then, really the eclipse of the non-psychic world by private will. This is the subjective story of literary Modernity, and it is the moment of psychic intensity allowing Mallarmé to say: *Je dis: une fleur! Et, hors de l'oubli* the thought-object *musicalement se lève.*[320]

Discursive realism should be conceived as flowing from an elevation of private meaning that is more (secular) subjective than "mystical." We should be wary, in fact, of any effort to cast *ishrāqī* thought or the *sabk-i hendī* as efforts to synthesize pietism and dialectics, mysticism and poetry. A more compelling explanation would see this conversion of language into a private "performative" more as an effort to desacralize and democratize Ṣūfī intuitionism. The connection to divine or supralunar meaning is faint and often difficult to reconcile with a view of the imagination's ability to reach outside itself without any kind of paracletic assistance. Once "untimed" and revealed to be neither particularly recent nor particularly "Western," pre-Modern Persian literary Modernity suggests just how much work remains to be done. The "realism" implicit in Suhrawardī, Mullā Ṣadrā, and Ṣāʾib's accounts of language and imagination is no hapax or fluke. The Middle Persian and Avestan corpuses are, as chapter I has begun to show, rich in moments (whether "nascent" or no) of precisely the realism at stake in any moment of the verbal arts' Modernity. Indeed, the indissolubility of speech, thought, and action in the Gāthās are suggestive in this respect, threatening to shatter any last relic of "stadial" or "historicist" Modernity: "Poetic thought," Yasht 19 tells us, produces "brilliant lights."[321]

[320] Mallarmé, "Crise de Vers," in *Poésies et autres textes*, ed. Jean-Luc Steinmetz (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2005).

[321] *Zoroastrian Texts*, trans. Prods Oktor Skjærvø, 12.

CHAPTER VII

MIRROR OF *Ψυχή*:

DECADENCE, PHANTASY, AND POST-CLASSICAL FICTION

S'il était donné à nos yeux de chair de voir dans la conscience d'autrui, on jugerait bien plus sûrement un homme d'après ce qu'il rêve que d'après ce qu'il pense.

— Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*[322]

MISMEASURING THE NARRATIVE IMAGINATION

The history of prose fiction, some would have us believe, is the story of a gradual and grudging reversal of Aristotle's dictum in the *Poetics* that character is secondary to plot: ἀρχὴ μὲν οὖν καὶ οἷον ψυχὴ ὁ μῦθος τῆς τραγῳδίας, δεύτερον δὲ τὰ ἤθη ("The principle and really the soul of tragedy, then, is plot, whereas character is secondary," 1450b1).[323] Only with the triumph of realism in the long eighteenth century, with the works of La Fayette, Richardson, Fielding, and Goethe, do writers begin to present us with truly "round" characters, personalities whose depths might be explored through the now rapidly developing techniques in the narration of consciousness.[324] Before narrative's "inward" turn, we are told, before the preoccupation with the subjectivity and psychology supposed to be the modern novel's hallmark, writers are confined to the surface of things. Thus can Erich Auerbach proclaim that Homer *kennt keinen Hintergrund* ("knows no background") and that only with the novel after the eighteenth century *haben die äußeren Vorgänge überhaupt ihre Vorherrschaft eingebüßt* ("have outer events at all lost their dominance").[325] Mikhael Bakhtin concurs, arguing that the ancient novelists starting

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[322] Cited in E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), 102.

[323] Aristotle, *De arte poetica liber*, edited by Rudolf Kassel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

[324] Deidre Shauna Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 4.

[325] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur*, Tenth ed. (Tübingen: A. Francke Verlag, 2001 [1946]), 6-7; 500.

with Chariton fail to develop their characters in the slightest despite the melodramas that the latter are made to live through. Nor are the novelists much able to give expression to their characters' personalities or thoughts other than through public pronouncements trapped within rhetorical academicism, all wholly without reference to how they might actually have talked (whose approximation by the author Northrop Frye calls "decorum").[326] "In general," concludes Bakhtin, "the ancient world did not succeed in generating forms and unities that were adequate to the private individual and his life."[327] Indeed, as one critic puts it, there is a "tendency to see the ancients as incapable of characterization altogether."[328]

The conviction that characters remain more or less cogs in the machinery of plot and that interiority and psychology remain beyond the skill, interest, and awareness of the pre-Modern author is not restricted to critiques of Western literature. Mocking Henry James's call for the "objective realism" at play, say, in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881)—"It was very simple; he despised her; she had no traditions and the moral horizon of a Unitarian minister," imagines James of Isabel imagining the "deep" feeling of Osmond[329]—Tzvetan Todorov lauds *Alf layla wa-layla* (*1001 Nights*) as "un cas-limite d'a-psychologisme littéraire."[330] In *Alf layla wa-layla,* Todorov finds a text that suppresses psychology in favor of action disclosing little about the actors involved, thereby avoiding the supposedly naïve individualism of modern literature. Other critics—with less of a *Tel Quel*-style partiality—have similarly compared the lack of

[326] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 268-9; M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 109.

[327] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 109.

[328] Augustus Taber Murray, "Plot and Character in Greek Tragedy," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 47 (1916): 51.

[329] Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* (New York, N.Y.: Bantam Books, 1987), 380-1.

[330] Tzvetan Todorov, *Poétique de la prose* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980), 32.

psychological realism in pre-modern Western literature with the latter's "non-Western" counterpart. Thus can a prominent Orientalist, arguing for *Alf layla wa-layla*'s debt to the Greek novel, reiterate the commonplace that "[t]he modern novel is chiefly interested in human developments, the Greek novel in events." He continues: "This attitude recurs in the AN [*Arabian Nights*]. Both in the Greek and the Arabic stories the principal consequence of this approach is a certain vagueness in the characterization of the heroes, who are little more than the media in which a preconceived chain of happenings materializes."[331]

Must we really wait until the eighteenth century for the appearance of "round" characters?[332] Is it really the case that the pre-Modern author, not yet armed with more mimetic techniques in narrating consciousness (such as free-indirect discourse and the interior monologue), remains unable to present us with characters possessing the sort of "inner" life seemingly faithful to our own experience of subjectivity? The answer to both of these questions, if we are to heed the critical consensus, would have to be in the affirmative. Is it nevertheless possible that we have been too hasty in assessing the general absence of psychological realism in pre-Modern fiction? Is it at least conceivable that we have been searching for signs of a concern with character and psychology in the "wrong places"?

Subjectivism and Literary History

Modern observers have scarcely begun to exhaust pre-Modern fiction's concern with the "inner" life of characters. The assumption, moreover, that narrative before the seventeenth century suffers from a monolithic blindness to psyche produces its own kind of haziness: It leads, namely, to a neglect of compelling evidence belying any view of the mind, psyche, or character

[331] Gustave E. von Grunebaum, "Greek Form Elements in the *Arabian Nights*," in *The Arabian Nights Reader*, edited by Ulrich Marzolph (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006), 144.

[332] E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Mariner Books, 1955 [1927]), 67-82.

as plot's unchanging handmaiden in pre-Modern fiction. *Ethos* and action, psyche and deed, affect and nature are, quite to the contrary, locked in a lively interplay throughout the history of prose fiction. More than that, the history of the dialectic between the two reveals that fiction after the seventeenth century holds no monopoly over the collapse of plot into psyche, one supposedly presaged by the appearance of free-indirect discourse in La Fontaine and Madame de La Fayette's promise of a novel *où l'essentiel était tout entier dans l'analyse des sentiments et dans la peinture d'un caractère.*[333] Not merely is the melting of plot into affect, desire, and feeling—the inversion, that is, of Arisotle's *ethos* and *muthos*—attested in pre-Modern narrative, but, where it occurs, its profusion is symptomatic of a shift in the hierarchy of moral and aesthetic values redolent of Modernity's own.

The inward turn of Modern fiction is no illusion. And that is precisely the point. Where ψυχή overtakes μῦθος, as it seems ever more poised to do in the Sophistic novel and later Arabic fiction, narrative seems to be offering its own answer to imagination and ingenuity's inflation in other of the verbal arts. The insinuation of (increasingly unremarkable, frankly banal) subjectivism into plot seems, more deeply, to evince a democratized individualism, indeed, an ethical deterioration of character. This is what Northrop Frye would call the replacement of the relatively noble, mythic and high-mimetic protagonist by the feckless, perfidious low-mimetic and ironic personality. The stylistic counterpart to these matters of personality lies in the gradual loosening of the *genera dicendi*, namely that separation of styles which, as Erich Auerbach reminds us, otherwise ensures a consonance among assiduousness of writing, gravity of plot, and nobility of character.

Prose fiction, it stands to reason, should not be exempt from the same overgrowth of imagination, the same inflation of ingenuity and invention's value and prestige, so dismaying to

[333] Quoted in Terence C. Cave, Introduction to *The Princesse de Clèves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 13.

as much to Arabic critics of *muḥdath* ("Modern") poetics as to Greek critics of excessive *enargeia* and Roman critics of *oratio*'s conversion into *spectaculum.* The historical record, it turns out, is hardly silent on the matter. Prose fiction of the Second Sophistic and the post-Saljuq periods in Arabic bear equal witness to tendencies to render *muthos* a shroud for affect and desire. The shroud's shape, as it were, is determined by the various species of the pathetic "fallacy." The Greek novel and *Alf layla wa-layla* do not, *pace* observers insisting upon the technique's historical specificity, show no ignorance of the allure of free-indirect discourse. Other, less obtrusive species of the pathetic "fallacy" are, however, more favored. Appropriately enough given the hard knot that Hellenistic and Imperial rhetors tie among imagination, ekphrasis, and *enargeia,* these species of the fallacy include what might be called the "first-person" ekphrasis, sustained description, that is, from a character's vantage point in the service of feeling's illumination. The oneiric episode (and, really, all phantasy, diurnal or no) is a close relative of this sort of ekphrasis, a technique employed once more to dramatize desire unmanifested.

The increase in the use of the ekphrasis of sleeping-life is measurable and marked in the Imperial Greek romance relative to phantasy's modest and restrained role in epic and tragic poetry. The *Iliad* features three dream episodes, the *Odyssey* (a work whose overly imaginative quality is already criticized by Longinus) twice that number, and Longus's *Daphnis kai Chloē* at least ten (last bieng likely representative of the novels, extant or no, from the early Christian centuries). The *qaṣīda* and even the epic cycles (e.g., *Antar*, *Banū Hilāl*) likely also exploit dreams with a rather sparing wariness, while *Alf layla wa-layla* features the oneiric in seventeen of its cycles and, indeed, as the central event in several.[334]

[334] Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen, *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 542-43.

Stagier, bolder, increasingly respectable, phantasy in prose fiction of the Imperial and Mamluk periods evokes a development to which rhetors of decline—from Sophism's antagonists to wary observers of *mutaʾakhkhir* ("belated") Arabic poetry—continuously return. Narrative's starker reliance on the pathetic fallacy is evinced by the qualitative (not quantitative) change in the sort of vision and phantasy suddenly proliferating, namely, one not prognostic or hortative and issuing from without (from, indeed, the gods), but one desirous and "psychological," emanating from (indeed, manufactured by) the mind. Speaking of poetry and oratory (or, as is Tacitus's wont, failing to distinguish the two), rhetors of decline from previous chapters have already begun to tell the story, even as they pass over prose narrative—a form whose swelling prestige and swelling subjectivism may itself reflect similar tastes that the critics themselves already perceive "Decadent" poem's cult of ingenuity. The turn is from inspiration to imagination, from innocent, ingenuous vision to ingenious phantom of the mind.

True visions sparingly, carefully deployed, and only then to pull the action forward, seem worlds away from the phantasies at work in the Greek novel and *Alf layla wa-layla*. Ekphrasis, dream, psychonarration—each a species of the pathetic fallacy in narrative—abound, now with the more or less overt intent of providing what Joyce might call "vivisections" of the psyche. Dreams become windows opening, for instance, onto the absurd combination of avarice and faithfulness of "the man who became rich again through a dream," or onto the neurotic ornithophobia of the princess in *Ardashīr wa-ḥayāt al-nufūs*. It simply is not (or is no longer) exclusively the case that "[t]he dream in medieval Arab fiction was a storyteller's device, used to foreshadow what is going to happen—and, as such, a special form of literary adumbration or prolepsis."[335]

[335] Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 193-94.

Being, meanwhile, comedies concerning the frustration and then fulfillment of (more or less conjugal) desire, each of the five extant Greek novels should provide naturally fertile grounds for the sorts of pathetic fallacy previously reserved for "lyric" poetry. That, however, is just it. These are narratives whose strained, rote action sequences are ever more overshadowed by the characters' inner psychic lives. In the context of Ancient narrative, poetic or otherwise, this is of itself remarkable enough. It is in the technique, though, that this overweening interest on often banal romantic desire can truly shine forth. Again and again, *Daphnis kai Chloē* and *Leucippē kai Kleitophōn* turn to the ekphrasis, to the phantasy sequence, and, indeed, to the summary of inner speech (free-indirect discourse) to cut into and cast light upon consciousness and feeling for no end other than to render affect palpable to the reader.

An unashamed, even gratuitous focus on the everyday desire of characters themselves beginning to reflect the "everyman" is, of course, familiar to the Modern reader, for perception and subjectivism of the "low-mimetic" individual is the very stuff of the Modern novel. The latter is hardly alone, however, in heralding "the study of the isolated mind, the story of how someone recognizably like ourselves" is caught "between the inner and outer world, between imaginative reality and the sort of reality which is established by social consensus."[336] That the redolence is mutual, that each is the narrative counterpart to increasingly "inventive" poetics—concrete, imaginary, ingenious—suggests as much about the European novel after the seventeenth century as it does about pre-Modern narrative's answers to "Decadent" poetics.

Psychological realism is, then, a function of the loosening of the *genera dicendi* and the separation of styles, together with the ethical deterioration of character: Certainly, Pindar or Imruʾ al-Qays is already breathing psychic life into his protagonists, even if the *laudandum*'s

[336] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 39.

feats are given mainly pragmatographic treatment[337] and even if "a categorical elimination of…subjective lyrical experience" can justly be observed in the classical Arabic *qaṣīda.*[338] The fact nevertheless remains that only with the growing tolerance for an often still highly "Gorgianic" prose in the Second Sophistic[339] and the quasi-poetic *sajʿ* of post-Umayyad exposition does there emerge greater (non-comedic) interest in what Frye would identity as "high-" and then "low-" mimetic characters. These fallen personages of inaction—characters whose earnest treatment in an "assiduous" style is the *sine qua non* of literary Modernism—require a substantially more generous conception of what counts as worthy of recounting before they can enter the scene. This is the ethical explanation for the heightened concern with affect in the Greek novel and perhaps also in *Alf layla wa-layla*: Like their modern counterparts, these are exempla of a (relative) democratization of literary and quasi-literary prose.

The inflation of the psyche in pre-modern narrative—the proliferation of the insignificant dream and other species of the pathetic fallacy—is, of course, not *sui generis*. It cannot be simply accidental that the psychically revelatory phantasy, generally ignored in classical Greek and Arabic fiction, both surface in precisely the milieux likely to be especially conducive to the rise of literary individualism: Namely, urban settings beset by expanding (mercantile) luxury and atomizing relationships.[340] Without moving too far towards "extrinsic" variables, I will note that the Greek novel's fixation with affect has been suggested to reflect a mid- to upper-brow

[337] Andrew M. Miller, "Inventa Componere: Rhetorical Process and Poetic Composition in Pindar's Ninth Olympian Ode," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 123 (1993): 110.

[338] Jaroslav Stetkevych, "The Arabic Lyrical Phenomenon in Context," *Journal of Arabic Literature* (1975) VI: 72.

[339] George Alexander Kennedy, "The Evolution of a Theory of Artistic Prose," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Vol. I: Classical Criticism*, ed. George Alexander Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 199; Andrew Laird, "Approaching Style and Rhetoric," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel*, ed. Tim Whitmarsh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[340] Frye, 38; 59.

readership in the increasingly urbanized cities of western Asian Minor now under Roman rule.[341] A similar and similarly subtle "downward" shift is central to the history of post-classical Arabic narrative and "lyric" in societies more and more marked by what Marshall Hodgson calls an "urban, mercantile cosmopolitanism."[342] With respect to *Alf layla wa-layla,* it has been noted that "cities supply the audience or readership of stories. They reflect the concerns of the urban elite and the relations of the population with the authorities."[343] The democratization is more dramatic in Arabic (and Persian) poetry, where the erosion of the *qaṣīda*'s prestige in favor of more molecular forms of lyric—often anacreontic and affect-obsessed—likely reflects the taste of "petty" elites.[344]

Concern with the psyche in the insignificant dream emerges, then, against a Classical backdrop where phantasy functions primarily to propel the action of the narrative. Given the near total absence of insignificant or psychological dreams in early Arabic and Greek literature, it is remarkable that with the emergence of relatively "popular" literary forms we are suddenly confronted with a proliferation of precisely such phantasies. The increased number and prestige of the psychological dream—the dream as fulfillment of a wish and thus the vivisection of consciousness—marks, then, a dramatic turn toward characters' inner desire relative to the latter's place in preceding literary forms. The erotic novels of the Second Sophistic, insofar as they invariably revolve around characters' desire (for one another) and the ways in which that desire is stymied by and finally triumphant over the vicissitudes of the external world, support

[341] For a summary of debates over readership, see Ewen Bowie, "The Ancient Readers of the Greek Novels," in *The Novel in the Ancient World*, edited by Gareth Schmeling (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 87-92.

[342] Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods, The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), 507.

[343] Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen, *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia*, 524-5.

[344] Julie Scott Meisami, "Genres of Court Literature in Persian," in *General Introduction to Persian Literature*, 233-269, edited by J.T.P. de Bruijn (New York: I.B. Taurus, 2009), 237.

Frye's connection of individualism and a lower literary mode. The conflict between characters' inner desire and the non-psychic world becomes increasingly prominent, that is, as literature moves from the mythic to the ironic. Like the erotic novel, *Alf layla wa-layla* often dramatizes the conflict between personal desire and a world preventing that desire from its full realization. We need look no further than the woes of Shāhryār and Shāh Zamān, the two monarchs, brothers, and cuckolds whose betrayal and then rage occasions the *Nights* in the first place.

Psychological Realism, Theory of Mind

The blindness to those episodes in pre-Modern fiction whose subjectivism might compete with that of the European novel after, say, La Fayette is exacerbated by a misunderstanding of the techniques of psychological realism. The pathetic fallacy, affect's displacement onto nature, is the genus to which any species of this sort of "realism" belongs, the "magical" eruption of a character's silent inner "speech" being but one of the fallacy's guises. Even if it were the case that the (impossible, imaginary) vocal harmony between narrator and character is absent from pre-Modern fiction (and it is not), the stakes would be rather low in any event. The pathetic fallacy of speech, the free-floating emission of characters' unsaid thoughts (failing which not a few Modern and, especially, Postmodern novels would be so many blank pages), turns out to be a rather weak version of the fallacy. Free-indirect discourse and its sister techniques presuppose the stagey artifice of silent speech. As such, they require that the character be sufficiently aware of the affect at hand so as to at least render it verbally, though with sealed lips.[345]

More profound yet technically subtler versions of the pathetic fallacy are available. These, indeed, are what pre-Modern narrative's counterpart to "Decadent" poetics readily exploit. The phantasy, the dream, the ekphrasis recounted from a character's perspective—each of these involves the bending of the natural world into the shape of desires of which the character

[345] Cohn, *Transparent Minds*, 14.

him or herself need not be conscious. And it is hardly by chance that Huysmans's *À Rebours* (1884), gospel of *fin-de-siècle* Decadence, exploits each even more than free-indirect discourse, intent as its Jean des Esseintes is to turn his world into a lifeless chimera as synthetic as his imagination. Non-verbal species of the pathetic fallacy are essential to the designs of the "objective" realism of Henry James. "What is character but the determination of incident?" he asks in *The Art of Fiction*. "What is incident but the illustration of character?" Balzac's external and "metonymic" rendering of character should also come to mind, most notoriously in the narrator's description of the Maison Vauquer and its mistress: *[S]a personne explique la pension, comme la pension implique sa personne*.[346] This type of external ethopoeia is a reminder that "environments...may be viewed as metonymic, or metaphoric expressions of character."[347]

Phantasy, dream, and (perspectival) ekphrasis, techniques where *die äußeren Vorgänge…dienen zur Auslösung und Deutung* ("the outer events…serve the releasing and interpreting") of *innere Bewegungen* ("inner emotions"), are more pervasive and influential at certain moments in the history of prose fiction.[348] The keenness of *Alf layla wa-layla* and the Sophistic novel for these species of the pathetic fallacy suggests that the shading of action into *innere Bewegungen* emerges as the narrative counterpart to precisely the kind of synthetic ingenuity to which "Decadent" poetics bear witness. A clear index of narrative's slide from μῦθος to ψυχή lies in the type of oneiric episode to which authors are more apt to seek recourse. Naturally, the more "subjective" a tale's orientation, the more likely it would seem that dreams might fall into that oneirocitical category of the "insignificant" vision, namely the dream failing

[346] Quoted in Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 471.

[347] René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*, Third ed. (San Diego: HBJ, 1977 [1942]), 221.

[348] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 500.

to impart anything other than personal desire. Concern with "psyche" and exploitation of the "insignificant" dream (and of other, non-oneiric types of phantasy) are, as later Arabic fiction and the Sophistic novel suggest, natural bedfellows. Moreover, the relative subjectivism of these techniques belongs by no means to some anachronistic evaluation.

The distinction between the desirous phantasy and the prognostic or hortative forms the point of departure from which traditional Greek and Arabic theories of oneiric phantasy commence. As in Greek (ὄναρ or ἐνύπνιον ἰδεῖν),[349] dreams in Arabic are "seen" and not "had," the verb for perceiving a dream (*raʾā*, "to see") and the noun for "dream" itself (*ruʾyā*) both stemming from a Semitic root denoting sight (*r-ʾ-y*). The Qur'ān prefers to introduce dream-visions simply with *raʾā* in the imperfect tense, leaving readers to glean from context that what is "seen" is somehow different from the usual objects of the verb. Thus the Pharaoh and his two fellow-prisoners in *sūra* 12 (36-49) submit their dreams to Joseph for interpretation simply by reporting *arā* ("I see") followed by the dream's content: *arānī aʿṣiru khamran* ("I see myself pressing wine"), begins one of the prisoners. The two other common nouns for "dream," the first of which is generally the object of the verb *raʾā*, are *manām* and *ḥulm*. The first is a noun whose morphology suggests "place of sleeping" and which can also mean "somnolescence."[350] The Qurʾān will, then, describe Abraham's reception in a dream of the command to sacrifice Isaac: *yā bunayya innā arā fī l-manāmi annī adhbaḥuka* ("O, my son, in a dream I see that I slaughter you") (S37:102). A third means to describe dreaming is with the noun *ḥulm* and its verb *ḥalama*, both of which are largely (and tellingly) avoided in the Qurʾān for their negative and erotic connotations. One of the appearances of the word occurs in *sūrah* 21, when the objections to

[349] Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, 105.

[350] John C. Lamoreaux, *The Early Muslim Tradition of Dream Interpretation* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 4-6; Fahd Toufic, "Ruʾyā," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. P. Bearman et al. (Brill, 2011).

Muḥammad's prophetic ability are reported: *bal qālū aḍghāthu aḥlāmin bal iftarāhu bal huwa shāʿirun* ("but, they said, '[this revelation] is a farrago of dreams which he has invented; he is but a poet,'" S21:5). *Aḥlām* (plural of *ḥulm*) is given the epithet *aḍghāth*, which denotes "mixture" and is characterized as something that a "poet" might "forge." The point of this critique is to paint Muḥammad's prophecies—which begin with a series of dream-visions—as the stuff of fiction, conveying not the will of God but rather that of the poet himself (or worse, that of some daemon). The effort to distinguish potentially legitimate visions from Gabriel in *ruʾyā* or *manām* from the fictionalized *aḥlām*—dreams stemming from the desire not of God but of the poet—is underscored by the libidinal connotations of *ḥulm*. The original sense of the verb *ḥalama* was likely "he came to virility," and both *ḥalama* and the more reflexive *iḥtalama* can "signify [the *dreaming of*] *copulation in sleep*" and therefore also the "*experiencing* [of] *an emission of the seminal fluid*; properly, *in dreaming*."[351]

The sharp distinction between visions emanating from some external and divine source—and thus containing useful information that can be acted upon—and those arising from the desires, "passions and preoccupations of the soul" is equally ubiquitous in Hellenic oneiromancy.[352] This distinction, presupposed by those in *sūrah* 21 who doubt the divine provenance of Muḥammad's visions, is described explicitly by Homer. Near the end of book 19 of the *Odyssey*, Penelope comes to bid goodnight to Odysseus, home but still disguised, when she finds herself moved to confide to him a dream and to request its interpretation: ἀλλ᾽ ἄγε μοι τὸν ὄνειρον ὑπόκριναι καὶ ἄκουσον ("But come listen and explain the dream for me," 535). By the reading of the "stranger," the dream, depicting the massacre of twenty geese

[351] Edward William Lane, "An Arabic-English Lexicon in Eight Parts," Volume 2, (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1968), 632. Italics are Lane's.

[352] Toufic, "Ruʾyā."

by an eagle, predicts the vengeful return of Odysseus. Penelope, for her part, doubts the vision's predictive accuracy—dreams are ἀμήχανοι ("impenetrable") and ἀκριτόμυθοι ("garbled," 19.560), she avers—and proceeds to offer the distinction between "significant" dreams (those of external provenance) and "insignificant" dreams (those which are no more than fictitious wish-fulfillment, 19.560-5). She is convinced that the dream of her husband's return and restoration is of this second type and therefore no more than the fulfillment of desire. On the dubiousness of the dream she could hardly be clearer, using the optative to connote the desire for her husband's safe return against all likelihood: ἦ κ᾽ ἀσπαστὸν ἐμοὶ καὶ παιδὶ γένοιτο ("Ah, but it [Odysseus' return] would be welcome to me and my son," 19.569].[353] Naturally, "significant" dreams in both Arabic and Hellenic oneiromancy receive the bulk of the attention for the simple reason that they contain information supposed to be useful. In the *Oneirocritica* (second century CE), Artemidorus distinguishes the ἐνύπνιον, the predictive dream, from the ὄνειρος, the dream manifesting passions of the soul.[354] His interest lies in providing a systematic treatment only of the former, for those manifesting fear and desire are not only useless but apt to mislead the dreamer, who may mistake them for significant dreams. This same distinction is portended etymologically in Arabic by the distinction between the *ḥulm*, the dream tied to (often sexual) desire, and the *manām* and *ruʾyā*, these last two being visions likely to contain some sort of divine message. As al-Masʿūdī notes in a major exposition of medieval Arabic oneirocriticism, the virtuous are never misled by desirous dreams.[355] Just as in the Hellenic tradition, dreams manifesting the soul's passions are passed over in Arabic oneiromancy and dismissed as

[353] *Homeri Opera* IV: *Odysseae libros XIII-XXIV continens*, edited by Thomas W. Allen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1919).

[354] Dodson, *Reading Dreams*, 45.

[355] Toufic Fahd, "Les Songes et leur interprétation selon l'Islam," in *Les Songes et leur interprétation*, *Sources Orientales, Volume II* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959), 134-7.

fictitious and even sinister insofar as they, of dubious and perhaps infernal origins, can be mistaken for divine omens.

SHAHWA *("DESIRE"), PHANTASY, THRONE: ABŪ L-ḤASAN'S WILL TO POWER*

A closer look at *al-Nāʾim wa-l-yaqẓān*, a cycle whose dissolute antihero is twice duped by a disguised Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd into believing that his dream of being caliph for a day is realized, reveals a definitive and sustained example of a pre-modern narrative overwhelmingly concerned with *ethos* (character) at the expense of *muthos* (plot). That a phantasy staged as a dream is the vehicle by which inner consciousness and desire are put on display only suggests how much our discourse-centered accounts of psychological realism have blinded us to pre-modern narrative's exteriorization of the psyche in more indirect ways. The overriding psychological concern of *The Sleeper and the Waker*'s "dreams" lies in the fact that the latter are, unlike most of their counterparts in pre-modern fiction, "insignificant": They function in the cycle not to precipitate some subsequent action (through the revelation of a divine command, for instance) but rather to expose and explore the wishes and desires of Abū l-Ḥasan.

The (historicizable) link between dreams and wish-fulfillment is made explicit on the debauched first night spent between Hārūn al-Rashīd and Abū l-Ḥasan, when the caliph finds a would-be victim and drinking partner in the *khalīʿ* ("wag") already enjoying himself on the banks of the Tigris. Arriving disguised and ultimately securing an invitation to continue carousing in Abū l-Ḥasan's home, the caliph finally turns to his host to ask whether he has a *shahwa* ("desire") that he yearns to see manifested. The realization of this *shahwa*, the term itself having unmistakably libidinal connotations, will form the basis of the cycle's action.[356] The caliph wants to know the desire *fī khāṭir* ("within the mind") of his host, intoning repeatedly, *qul lī mā fī khāṭirika* ("tell me what is in your mind"). To this Abū l-Ḥasan claims to desire *fī qalbī*

[356] Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* 8 vols., vol. 4 (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1968 [1872]), 1614.

("in my heart") nothing other than the power to make manifest the contents of his mind: *wa-llāhi mā fī qalbī ḥasra illā annī atawallā al-amr wa-l-nahy ḥattā aʿmala mā fī khāṭirī* ("By God, there's no desire in my heart other than to seize the power and authority to effect what is in my mind"). Specifically, he continues, *atamannā ʿalā allāhi taʿālā ḥukm yawm wāḥid* ("By God most high, I wish for rule for a single day").[357] The caliph replies in the jussive, proclaiming "let God give you what you demand!" And so begins the phantastic materialization of Abū l-Ḥasan's desires—the "stuff" of the cycle, as it were.

That the dream-sequence in *The Sleeper and the Waker* is a set-piece and pretext for the narration of Abū l-Ḥasan's inner world is evidenced by the allusions in the story itself to the oneirocritic category of the "insignificant dream," the dream supposed to reflect passions of the soul and not the will of God. The distinction is drawn explicitly in the Qurʾān when Muḥammad's accusers insist that the latter's visions are little more than *aḍghāth aḥlām* ("a farrago of reveries") forged at whim (S21:5). This very expression is repeated twice in *The Sleeper and the Waker*, first by Abū l-Ḥasan's mother and then by the caliph, the verb *ḥalama* being repeated by his mother to dismiss what takes place as mere phantasy. A recurring motif both in the story and in Arabic oneiromancy is that dreams manifesting the often forbidden desires of the soul take place with the intercession of daemons. The tendency to d(a)emonize such dreams is reflected of course in the Western tradition of the succubus. Accordingly, the morning following her son's first day as "caliph," when Abū l-Ḥasan's mother finds the young man calling out the names of courtesans in his sleep, she assumes that she has happened upon her son in the throes of an erotic dream. She wakes him, explaining, *anta taḥlumu* ("you are dreaming"). When he explains what he has seen, she assures him that he has received *aḍghāth aḥlām* from Satan: *Al-shayṭān yalʿabu bi-ʿaql al-insān aḥyānan bi-sāʾir al-ḥālāt* ("Satan

[357] *Alf layla wa-layla*, ed. Anṭūn Ṣāliḥānī, 4th ed., 7 vols., vol. 2 (Beirut al-Maṭbaʿa al-Kāthūlīkīya, 1956), 221.

sometimes plays with a man's mind in many ways").[358] The notion that the fulfillment of Abū l-Ḥasan's desires comes to pass with a satanic assist is repeated by the caliph when they meet at the bridge the second time.

However light-hearted, the story's naturalism (in the sense of *les frères* Goncourt) is unmistakable: Abū l-Ḥasan's fundamental inability to function in society by curbing his appetites is suggested not only by his profligacy, but also by his status at the margins of Baghdad society. He is rejected by his friends and, more importantly, harassed for his dissolute lifestyle so constantly by the nearby *shaykh*s that his major decree as caliph is their humiliation. The fact that Abū l-Ḥasan's character remains constant is played for comic effect in the story's second episode, where he devises a scheme to con the caliph for money and where, even after being found out, he shamelessly asks the caliph for payment. The caliph does so gladly, evidently finding in Abū l-Ḥasan a source of endless amusement. It is, indeed, Abū l-Ḥasan's romantic temperament that so endears him to the caliph, whose adoration for the young man is immediate and seems only to grow: Abū l-Ḥasan becomes his closest friend and even (or especially) after the con in the second episode, his allowance is only increased. What delights the caliph especially is the ease with which Abū l-Ḥasan is duped by the sudden realization of phantasy. Only when he seems on the verge of total madness does the caliph reveal himself, announcing that he is "dying" of laughter. The regressive innocence of his new friend, the ease with which he slips into a world governed by phantasy and desire, something which the caliph seems to glean at once from Abū l-Ḥasan's love for wine and poetry, seduces Hārūn al-Rashīd from the outset.

If the "dream"-sequences are rigged, staged as an entertaining dramatization of one man's foolish and passion-driven character, then the caliph emerges as an allegory for the narrator. Each is a *metteur en scène* constructing a scenario meant to instruct and entertain. More

[358] *Alf layla wa-layla*, ed. Anṭūn Ṣāliḥānī, 226.

than sharing the same objective, each relies extensively on dramatic irony, building a phantasy in which Abū l-Ḥasan's foolishness might play out, only to withdraw from sight to watch carefully as events unfold. Both are omniscient (how did Hārūn al-Rashīd know just where to find his "victim"?), or at least know a great deal more than the character in their phantastic scenarios, and only are we (thanks to them) let in on the contrived nature of what has been set in motion. The importance of voyeurism in the story is not to be underestimated: As his first day as caliph reaches its climax, Abū l-Ḥasan withdraws *fī l-jinān* ("into the garden"), where he proceeds to "play" with the courtesans. The caliph, watching intently, is described as "rejoicing" (*yatafarraju*) at the sight.[359] And, of course, the story's naturalistic take on human nature presupposes the immutability of Abū l-Ḥasan's character; owing to his innate difficulty in submitting his passions to reality, he is *a priori* the perfect victim for the rigged dream. The close relationship between the caliph and narrator is a useful reminder that all dreams, at least insofar as they are "insignificant" (i.e., emanating from desire), are necessarily staged (even in the absence of an allegorical stand-in) as dramatizations of a character's inner nature.

Abū l-Ḥasan's complicity in this misrecognition of phantasy and reality, the sense that he "let the devil in," suggests not simply that we (and he) are beholding dramatizations of desire, but that the very ease with which he succumbs to this flight from reality is an illustration of inner character. When Shahrzād introduces Abū l-Ḥasan with the epithet *khalīʿ*—as in "Abū l-Ḥasan the dissolute"—she is giving us a name that, as Wellek and Warren would note, allegorizes character from the outset. *Khalīʿ* connotes "indulgence," "lack of self-control," and someone "cast off" by society for the inability to follow its rules. The dream-sequences are then set up as the protracted illustration of an immutable inner character resistant, as it were, to the "reality" principle and the negative profit of Symbolic compromise. Aside from the fact that the "dream"

[359] Maximillian Habicht, *Tausend und Eine Nacht* 12 vols, vol. 4 (Breslau: Josef Max & Comp., 1828), 159.

is quite explicitly the fulfillment of his wish, Abū l-Ḥasan invites the caliph into his house not once but twice. That this should be taken as an act of succumbing to the temptation of a demon is made clear when he calls the caliph *shayṭān* ("Satan") on their second encounter by the Tigris.

Demon, caliph, or both, whatever it is that feeds and plays upon and finally stages Abū l-Ḥasan's inner world is only a reflection of the character's mind. Within the narrative and without (as in the tradition of the succubus), these stand-ins for desire are parasitic on their victim's complicity. Abū l-Ḥasan never suggests that the phantasy of being able to make manifest his every whim is anything but accurate. His second stint as caliph is particularly enlightening: Even in the wake of a month-long incarceration following the madness brought on by his first stint as caliph, Abū l-Ḥasan rejoices at what he acknowledges may be an empty restoration. The courtly entourage in whose midst his "soul" (*rūḥ* or *nafs*, depending on the redaction) so delights to once more find itself may, he admits, be little more than the work of demons; no matter, he decides, as he begins to "softly laugh" (*yaḍḥaku qalīlan*).[360]

Collapsing into a nihilistic mania, Abū l-Ḥasan yields to inner will entirely and, in a climax to the episode expunged from some versions and translated only euphemistically by Burton, the counterfeit caliph strips naked, exposes his genitals, and dances amidst the courtesans: *khalaʿa Abū l-Ḥasan thawbahu wa-baqiya ʿuryānan…wa-huwa yarquṣu...baynahum wa-huwa ʿuryān wa-makshūf al-ʿawra* ("Abū l-Ḥasan stripped off his clothing and stood there naked…and he danced…among them naked and exposing himself").[361] The chaotic dance with which the episode ends occurs only after Abū l-Ḥasan has asked a young Turkish slave to bite his hand and ear. Causing him to shriek in pain, the bite nevertheless fails to rouse him from the "dream." It is at this point that he submits eagerly to the phantasy, renouncing the ability to

[360] Ṣāliḥānī, *Alf layla wa-layla*, 224.

[361] Habicht, *Tausend und Eine Nacht*, 169.

distinguish dreaming from waking-life. So he strips down, exposes himself, and begins cavorting with the girls; that the latter bind his hands only heightens the scene's sexual charge, further symbolizing a regressive surrender and return to what the early Lacan calls "un désarroi organique originel."[362] Up to this point, the "dream"-episodes had been manifestations of Abū l-Ḥasan's desire to the last detail. There is little reason to interpret this climax otherwise. It is the apotheosis of Abū l-Ḥasan's romantic and narcissistic wish to reduce the world to an the extension of his own will. The Arabic could hardly be clearer in this regard: *wa-llāhi mā fī qalbī ḥasra illā annī atawallā al-amr wa-l-nahy ḥattā aʿmala mā fī khāṭirī* ("By God, there's no desire in my heart other than to seize the power and authority to effect what is in my mind").

Lyrical epitomes scattered throughout the narrative, together with a tale that Abū l-Ḥasan recounts to the caliph about a dissolute wag who dissemblingly exploits puns to purloin food, point to the theme of the (wished for) fragility of appearance and identity. The total erosion of the non-phantastic and of identity itself in the orgiastic finale belongs, as Lacan (following Melanie Klein) would have it, to *l'imaginaire*, that topos of psychic life where objects remain tenuously surrounded by the aura of personal significance. Manipulating in *son identification primitive une série d'équivalents imaginaires*, the subject, Lacan tells us in the first seminar, *ébauche des identifications avec certains objets, les retire, [et] en refait avec d'autres*.[363] As the topos of the *narcissique* and the *spéculaire*, the Imaginary, as late as the twenty-second seminar, remains the space of *la jouissance du double, de l'image spéculaire.*[364]

The imperialism of first-person perspective, however displaced, in the psychologically "real" text calls for analysis at the threshold of narratology and psychoanalysis. Bending and

[362] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits I* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1999 [1966]), 115.

[363] Lacan, *Le Séminaire, I: Les écrits techniques de Freud,* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975), 115.

[364] Ibid., *Le Séminaire, XXIII*: *Le Sinthome* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2005), 56.

remaking the non-self in the image of the *Ideal Ich*—retreating from the symbolically given *Ich Ideal*—the vivisected psyche of the "real" character colors the outer world in a transferential pathetic fallacy. *The Sleeper and the Waker*'s increasingly chaotic game of identification and disidentification, both answering to Abū l-Ḥasan's phantasy of omnipotence (and omnipotent phantasy), is an obvious symptom of the story's inflation of the Imaginary. Arranging the "dream"-sequence before his drugged guest comes to, the caliph is emphatic in instructing the palace entourage to interpellate Abū l-Ḥasan as "caliph": "Say to him that you are caliph," Hārūn al-Rashīd tells the slave-girls. Once roused, Abū l-Ḥasan is greeted by an attendant who calls him *mawlānā* ("our master") and then by a servant who addresses him with *yā amīr al-muʾminīn* ("O prince of the believers"). Moving from one servant to another, he makes each repeat the interpellative act: *"man huwa anā…anā amīr al-muʾminīn?" "naʿam...anta fī hādhā al-waqt amīr al-muʾminīn"* ("'Who am I? Am I prince of the faithful?' 'Yes…you are at this time prince of the faithful'"). Sure enough, the "dreamer" is soon able to repeat the title inwardly to himself: *jazama fī nafsihi anā amīr al-muʾminīn* ("He declared to himself [lit. 'within himself'], 'I am prince of the believers'").[365] So entirely is this *Ich Ideal* foisted on a secretly complicit Abū l-Ḥasan that, when woken by his mother the next day, he is unable to recognize the woman before him and to desist from proclaiming himself caliph.

Only after a month of lashings in the *mārestān* (asylum) does the "prince of the believers" agree to call himself "Abū l-Ḥasan" once more. And only upon his "restoration" to power in the second dream episode is Abū l-Ḥasan able to reconcile himself to the extrojected quality of the scene: Lucidly "dreaming," the hapless wastrel recognizes his seat on the caliph's throne as only the effect of a wish. The recognition of the imaginary displacement as such is too much to bear. Meeting and observing his "Ich Ideal," he loses grip as much on œdipalized

[365] Ṣāliḥānī, *Alf layla wa-layla*, 219.

identification as on the willful extrojection to which he is witness, collapsing helplessly into a mad frenzy.

Pre-modern narrative favors the transferential pathetic fallacy—the non-discursive "first-person"—in dramatizing the psyche, the oneiric displacement being only one neglected species of this technique in realism. Ekphrasis from a character's perspective is another, and, as might be expected, these vivisective displacements tend to cluster: The psychologically real text is likely to be so in more ways than one. *The Sleeper and the* Waker is no exception, with its unsparing ekphrases that refract the "dream"-world quite explicitly through the "dreamer's" eyes. *Wa-fataḥa ʿaynayhi* ("and he opened his eyes") and *naẓara ilā* ("looked at") his surroundings, as the narrator recounts through his regard that *duhinat ḥīṭānuhu bi-l-dhahab wa-l-lāzaward* ("its walls were painted in gold and trefoil"), *saqfuhu munaqqaṭ bi-dhahab aḥmar* ("its ceiling striped with red gold"), and the *awānī dhahab wa-ṣīnī wa-billawr wa-farsh* ("golden vases, porcelain, crystal, and carpet") that redound within.

Marking a definitive turn away from what Genette calls *la focalisation zéro* towards *la focalisation interne*,[366] these ekphrases within an imaginary dream are precocious moments of the extrojective narcissism that will become the lifeblood of the modern novel. In the development of prose fiction, psychological realism will finally and in due time be realism's undoing (compare *Le Père Goriot* [1835] to *Du côté de chez Swann* [1913]), an irony that Auerbach himself seems to recognize in his disdainful take at the end of *Mimesis* on Woolf's subjugation of *äußeren Vorgänge* to the mind. Already, the inversions of mimesis through phantasy and ekphrasis in *The Sleeper and the Waker* present in miniature the similarly paratactic and fetishizing descriptions of nineteenth-century Decadent prose. As in J.K. Huysmans's *À rebours* (1884) and in Jean des Esseinte's efforts to reduce the physical world to a

[366] Genette, *Figures III*, 183-211.

reflection of disoriented will and inventive artifice, the hope of sublating "outer events" into a permanent pathetic fallacy is, of course, the very content of Abū l-Ḥasan's *shahwa* ("lust") announced at the cycle's start.

The clustering and intertwining of non-discursive displacements of first-person perspective in dream and ekphrasis reveal *The Sleeper and the Waker*'s own view of the psyche. Not only is waking life haunted by "unknown knowns"—here, Abū l-Ḥasan's dream of miraculous self-fabulation—and not only can the withheld mind be countenanced only at the risk of madness, but the seemingly non-subjective reveals itself to be more bound up with the psyche than it initially appears. What blinds literary historians to much of pre-modern narrative's psychological "realism" is precisely the non-discursive and specular nature of the "outward" forms in which the psyche appears. If the Freudian *Traumwerk* is disavowed affect's imagistic translation, the *Sleeper and the Waker* suggests that these artificial displacements may also pervade waking life. Abū l-Ḥasan's world transforms into a counterfeit dream that he is unable to recognize as such. That these displacements are registered and recounted by ekphrases in the first-person—ekphrasis being the technique *par excellence* of invention's verbal translation—only heightens the narrative's theory of a specular psyche withholding itself from direct, indirect, or "free-indirect" discourse. If Abū l-Ḥasan's fevered dissection of palace artifice—only the most flagrant symptom of a world built by desire—anticipates the Decadent and then Modernist refraction of the outer world through consciousness, that is because of the close relationship between psychological realism and narcissism. What Baudrillard, in his reading of the myth of Narcissus, calls the *nostalgie diabolique de se perdre dans [d]es apparences* themselves only a reflection of the self is the extreme towards which any psychologically "real" text more or less bends. The difference between the modern novel and *The 1001 Nights*, however, is ethical:

However gently and however comically, the eclipse of the outer world by the psyche in Abū l-Ḥasan's case is ruinous.

Epiphanies of Eros:

The Inner World of the Sophistic Romance

Like each of the erotic Greek novels, *Daphnis kai Chloē* centers on two beautiful youths, their love for one another, and the vicissitudes that they must endure before this love is consummated. In Longus's story, Daphnis and Chloe are abandoned in the countryside by rich urban parents only to be discovered and then raised by goatherds and shepherds. The youths' first encounter is precipitated by a "double dream" in which their adoptive fathers, Dryas and Lamon, concurrently receive an identical vision: ὁ Δρύος καί ὁ λαμων ἐπί μιᾶς νυκτὸς ὁρωσιν ὄναρ τοιόνδε τι… ("On the same night, Dryas and Lamon saw the following dream…" [1.7.1]).[367] Shown to both men are the Nymphs handing Daphnis and Chloe over to Eros, the god himself being (proleptically) described as παιδίῳ μάλα σοβαρῷ καὶ καλῷ ("an exceedingly forceful and beautiful boy") possessing πτερὰ ἐκ τῶν ὤμων ("wings upon his shoulders") and holding βέλη σμικρὰ ἅμα τοξαρίῳ ("a slight arrow with a slight bow" [1.7.2]). This double-vision, an instance of which appears once in *Alf layla wa-layla* in *The Man who became rich again through a dream*, is a classic "significant" dream. It includes what both Dryas and Lamon take to be a divine command—namely, that their children are to be goatherds and shepherds—which they at once follow. That the figure giving these commands is none other than the (ineluctable) theomorphosis of longing and desire presages the passionate dreams to come. The appearance of Eros in the novel's very first dream anticipates the shift from the significant to the insignificant dream, the latter being, of course, the scene of "Eros in action."

[367] Citations are to Longus, *Daphnis et Chloe*, edited by M.D. Reeve (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1982).

So Daphnis and Chloe spend their adolescence together, he herding goats and she sheep. The two are inseparable, but their friendship remains untouched by desire until Chloe sees Daphnis bathing unclothed for the first time. As he strips down, Chloe's reaction is registered in psycho-narration: Ἐδόκει δὲ τῇ Χλόῃ θεωμένῃ καλὸς ὁ Δάφνις, ὅτι δὲ τότε πρῶτον αὐτῇ καλὸς ἐδόκει τὸ λουτρὸν ἐνόμιζε τοῦ κάλλους αἴτιον ("Daphnis seemed beautiful to Chloe as she gazed, though since he seemed beautiful for the first time she thought his bathing the reason for this beauty" [1.13.2]). Typical of the psycho-narration throughout the novel, the passage conveys feeling that neither character could pronounce to the other. Nor is this sentiment that could be convincingly registered in quoted monologue (internal soliloquy), since Chloe does not seem to be consciously aware of the attractiveness that she suddenly perceives in her nude best friend. The narrator is, in fact, explicit in pointing out that Chloe remains entirely mystified before her sexual attraction to Daphnis. Chloe thinks that her eye has simply been caught by the youth's wet figure. The jarring attraction that she is unable to articulate consciously drives her to nevertheless massage Daphnis's body and (discreetly) her own: Καὶ τὰ νῶτα δὲ ἀπολουούσης ἡ σὰρξ ὑπέπιπτε μαλθακή, ὥστε λαθοῦσα ἑαυτῆς ἥψατο πολλάκις, εἰ τρυφερωτέρα εἴη πειρωμένη ("And as she washed his shoulders, his supple flesh gave way, so that she secretly touched herself over and over, attempting to see whether she were the softer" [1.13.2]).

The narration of Chloe's feelings as she touches herself surreptitiously hints at the subliminal and unconscious workings of Eros and desire. The sentence begins clearly from Chloe's point of view, describing what she sees and, in particular, what she feels upon her fingers as she moves them over Daphnis's back. And as Chloe begins to covertly massage her own flesh, the focus shifts towards Genette's "focalisation zéro." The dramatic irony is obvious: We know that she is touching him and touching herself out of sexual desire. In a holistic sense,

she too of course "knows" that she is exceedingly drawn to Daphnis—she volunteers, after all, to help him bathe and then begs him to do so again the next day. This passion is something that drives Chloe even while remaining beyond the ambit of her conscious awareness (and hence remaining inarticulable). In fact, the sudden appearance of free-indirect discourse in the indirect question (εἰ τρυφερωτέρα εἴη πειρωμένη) the third-person narration of what passes through Chloe's conscious mind—suggests the less-than-conscious nature of her erotic feeling.

It is obviously inaccurate, or a half-truth at best, that Chloe touches herself in order to compare the feel of her own skin to that of Daphnis. Who, then, speaks indirectly in the subordinate clause? It has to be Chloe herself, as the narrator has already established, in an act of knowing dramatic irony, the fact that we, and he, and Chloe (somatically and unconsciously), know that it is nothing other than lust that motivates her enthusiasm for the bathing. The reason, however, for this piqued interest remains unarticulated by Chloe, even while finding itself registered nevertheless in psycho-narration. It is by means of the latter, by means, that is, of the third-person vivisection of a character's thought, that Chloe's "desire" to see him the next day is conveyed: Δάφνιν ἐπεθύμει λουόμενον ἰδέσθαι πάλιν ("She yearned to see Daphnis bathing once more" [1.13.3]). The voice that surfaces in the subordinate clause, assuring us that its speaker is simultaneously massaging both Daphnis's body and her own, is none other than Chloe's, vainly offering an explanation, however unconvincing, for her actions. The opposition between free-indirect discourse (narrated monologue) and psycho-narration highlights the tension between Chloe's conscious effort to explain away her disconcerting attraction, and her disavowed longing for the young man's body, a longing which we know from the third-person (psycho)narration of her feeling.

Eros belongs not to the realm of direct or even free-indirect discourse, but to the realm of psycho-narration, which is to say that he belongs to that topos of the psyche manifesting itself subliminally and conveyable in the narrative only by means of third-person exposition and the externalization of feeling (the reverse mimesis assumed by the pathetic fallacy). It is entirely fitting, then, that the place where Eros most often materializes in the novel and the place where unarticulated erotic desire works is in that narrative set-piece straddling psycho-narration and metaphoric and metonymic characterization through incident (externalization of feeling). Thus, by the time that Daphnis too has been afflicted by erotic passion, he, like Chloe, is unable to articulate what he feels. The youths are, in an extraordinary conceit, supposed to be unaware of the very existence of sexual desire. Even when they learn about the wiles of Eros from Philetas, a local farmer, they are both too awkward and too mystified to manage to indulge their mutual lust, let alone consummate it.

Through dreams, however, the youths can do in sleep what Longus denies them in waking life. These oneiric episodes become νυκτερινὸν παιδευτήριον ("nocturnal pedagogy") [2.9.1]: καὶ ὅσα μεθ᾽ ἡμέραν οὐκ ἔπραξαν, ταῦτα ὄναρ ἔπραξαν: γυμνοὶ μετ᾽ ἀλλήλων ἔκειντο ("Whatever they didn't do during the day, these things they did in dream: They would lie down naked with one another" [2.10.1]). That these almost-sex dreams emanate from a part of the psyche to which Daphnis and Chloe do not normally have access is demonstrated by the fact that their heavy petting in waking life only progresses in imitation of a "nocturnal pedagogy." Eros must speak to them, in other words, through the unconscious, for even when lying awake at night trying to uncover a way to slake their passion, they are at a loss (2.10.1). Only in dreams, where the mechanics of intimacy gradually (and then only partly) reveal themselves, are they able to go further. When, in the throes of a passionate kiss, Daphnis falls over onto Chloe, both experience

a sudden anamnesis: What had already been acted out in their dreams suddenly surges into their awareness during waking life, and they reconcile what they are doing and must do with what they have already "done": Καὶ γνωρίσαντες τῶν ὀνείρων τὴν εἰκόνα κατέκειντο πολὺν χρόνον ὥσπερ συνδεδεμένοι ("And recognizing the image from their dreams, they lay down for a long time, as if chained together" [2.11.2]).

A particularly remarkable use of the dream-episode to expose unarticulated desire and to throw into relief the disjuncture between subliminal phantasy and the external world takes place when Daphnis shows up on Chloe's doorstep in the dead of winter. Having scarcely seen Chloe since the fall—the work of harvest and herding having ground to a halt—Daphnis is driven by Eros across the snow to Chloe's house, driven to act in dire weather but failing to concoct even the barest pretext for his interruption of the family's dinner: ἔρωτι δὲ ἄρα πάντα βάσιμα, καὶ πῦρ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ Σκυθικὴ χιών ("For by Eros everything is passable, even fire and water and Scythian snow" [3.5.4]). The adolescent suitor is nevertheless greeted warmly and invited to join the repast and stay the night. Sleeping in the same bed with Chloe remains, of course, out of the question, so while she pairs off with her mother, Daphnis is left to sleep with Dryas, father of his erstwhile girlfriend. This sleepover yields the most remarkable dream-episode of the novel. Affording himself a κενὴν τέρψιν ("empty pleasure"), Daphnis passionately kisses and caresses Chloe's father, all while "dreaming" that he were doing this to Chloe herself: Δάφνις δὲ κενὴν τέρψιν ἐτέρπετο. τερπνὸν γὰρ ἐνόμιζε καὶ πατρὶ συγκοιμηθῆναι Χλόης, ὥστε καὶ περιέβαλλεν αὐτὸν καὶ κατεφίλει πολλάκις, ταῦτα πάντα ποιεῖν Χλόην ὀνειροπολούμενος ("Daphnis rejoiced at the empty pleasure: For as he thought it delightful to sleep even with Chloe's father, he at once embraced and kissed him repeatedly, dreaming that each of these he were doing to Chloe" [2.9.1]).

With respect to the narrative, this "displaced" reverie is an unmistakable use of a dream that has no "significance" whatever aside from showing the extent to which erotic desire has consumed Daphnis's inner psyche, just as it had earlier in the evening driven him through nearly Scythian snow. So completely has Daphnis's unconscious world been taken over by lust that the young man's dreams become the place of wish-fulfillment twice removed: Not only is the dream a substitute for desire frustrated during waking life (for Daphnis has hardly done these things with Chloe herself), but the dream becomes the phantastic space where what he is actually doing (making-out with Dryas) can be converted, translated, and displaced into a sex-scene more consonant with his real desire.

Just as in *The Sleeper and the Waker,* the ekphrasis is another strategy used, now by Longus, to direct our attention to something seemingly removed from the lives of our characters, but which, on closer inspection, distills and condenses sentiment and emotion.[368] The notion that the object of an ekphrasis is a microcosm whose inner detail can be teased out and put into words, the sense that this surface embellishment contains far more than meets the eye, and the feeling "that the referent must always lie beyond the medium of the words that describe it"[369] is nothing less than the conceit setting *Daphnis kai Chloē* into motion in the first place. The narrator in the proem claims, after all, to have seen an εἰκόνος γραφήν ("painting of a scene") containing an ἱστορίαν ἔρωτος ("erotic story"), the εἰκόνα turning to out to be little painted depictions adumbrating the plot to come. This is, of course, circular, the "logos" of *Daphnis kai*

[368] I use the term in the sense given it as early as the earliest Homeric scholia (and later enlarged in the progymnasmata), which is to say as any description with *enargeia* as its object. Ruth Webb, "Ekphrasis ancient and modern: The invention of a genre," *Word & Image* 15: 1 (1999): 11.

[369] Shadi Bartsch and Jaś Elsner, "Introduction: Eight Ways of Looking at an Ekphrasis," *Classical Philology* 102: 1 (2007): vi.

Chloē being nothing less than an effort to ἀντιγράψαι ("respond to the scene in writing" [praef., 1-3]).

The use of the ekphrasis to uncover and narrate sentiment displaced onto some external and often artificial object frequently occurs in Longus in the description of elements of (a carefully curated) nature—elements which turn out to capture feeling that the characters themselves are not yet able to "think." This occurs first in the ekphrasis of the natural imitation of young lust, but even more strikingly in Philetas's description of the appearance of Eros in his garden. The scene begins with a detailed appreciation of the garden as bearer of unlimited fecundity: θέρους μήκωνες καὶ ἀχράδες καὶ μῆλα πάντα, νῦν ἄμπελοι καὶ συκαῖ καὶ ῥοιαὶ καὶ μύρτα χλωρά (In the summer [there are] poppies and wild pears, and all [sorts of] apples, and at present vines, fig-trees, mulberries, and green myrtle-berries [2.3.4]). We hardly need Bosch (or Genesis 3, for that matter) to remind us of the desirous and often erotic charge with which fruits are wont to find themselves imbued. Eros himself, having suddenly appeared in the midst of the garden, takes credit for the fecundity in no uncertain terms: Διὰ τοῦτο καλὰ καὶ τὰ ἄνθη καὶ τὰ φυτά τοῖς ἐμοῖς λουτροῖς ἀρδόμενα ("It's on account of this that the flowers and plants are beautiful: They have been watered by my baths" [2.5.5]). From the moment of his appearance, Eros insinuates himself into the scene, picking up and holding the fruits just described, as he ἔπαιζεν ὡς ἴδιον κῆπον ("played, as though the garden were his own"). Philetas is immediately taken by the γυμνὸς ("naked") and στιλπνός ("glistening") boy, and, desperate for a kiss, pursues him (in vain). Ultimately, Eros himself speaks up to declare that he is "shepherding" (ποιμαίνω) and "leading together" (συναγάγω) Daphnis and Chloe. The analepsis done, Philetas turns to the two youths before him to explain that Eros has taken an interest in uniting them and that the morbid lovesickness bound to ensue can only by sex be cured (though his euphemistic language

does little to help the young lovers). The farmer proceeds to explain that once in Eros's sight, there is no resisting, for over all of nature Eros exercises an immanent and inexorable hold: Δύναται δὲ τοσοῦτον ὅσον οὐδὲ ὁ Ζεύς. Κρατεῖ μὲν στοιχείων, κρατεῖ δὲ ἄστρων, κρατεῖ δὲ τῶν ὁμοίων θεῶν….Τὰ ἄνθη πάντα Ἔρωτος ἔργα: τὰ φυτὰ πάντα τούτου ποιήματα, διὰ τοῦτον καὶ ποταμοὶ ῥέουσι καὶ ἄνεμοι πνέουσιν ("Even Zeus is not so powerful as this. He rules the elements; he rules the stars; and he rules his fellow gods.... All the flowers are the work of Eros, all the plants his creations, and through him both rivers flow and winds blow" [2.7.2-3]).

The entire point of the ekphrasis had been to offer a verbal exegesis of imagery—imagery of sumptuous gardens and an impetuous god—that had condensed and distilled the nature of love. Like oneiric description, this first-person ekphrasis is a version of the pathetic fallacy, projecting Philetas's theory of desire (and his own lust at the epiphany's sight) onto the natural world. More subtly, however, the ekphrasis offers an ontological justification for the collapsing of plot into psyche and desire in the psychologically real text: Eros emerges as a ubiquitous and even suffocating force from which none of existence can hope to escape. Whatever Philetas's intention, the ekphrasis works as a demystification and a depersonification of love as embodied in the images in the novel's proem that had first invited the "speaking out." We have little reason to believe that Longus was interested in piling yet another layer of naïve mythology onto the memory of some hoary divinity so much as he was in treating Eros in a vein similar to the god-concept's treatment in Plato's *Symposium*. The dialogue was, after all, very much in vogue during the Second Sophistic and likely a main intertext for the erotic novels all.[370] If *Daphnis kai Chloē* approaches love much as the idea is approached in the *Symposium*, then Philetas's ekphrasis moves in a direction rather at odds with the pagan zeal for the anthropomorphic.

[370] Froma Zeitlin, "Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel*, edited by Tim Whitmarsh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 102.

Rather, we are looking at a rationalization, a movement away from imagistic concept (one so marvelously united in the PIE radical for "idea") to verbal description. We are looking at an "unpacking" of the workings of love as they had been condensed into the icon of a haughty child who toys with geriatric pederasts (the terms by which Eros taunts Philetas). So what does this depersonifying ekphrasis tell us about the nature of Eros? Perhaps above all, Philetas's description suggests a force felt immanently and beyond the confines of conscious life. He begins with an already lusty description of the garden's various fruits and its overall fecundity. Suddenly, Eros appears, intertwined with the growth of the garden. As it turns out, all of the life in the garden is little more than an out-growth—a metonym—for a god who proclaims himself the "watering" force that gives life to everything. By the end of Philetas's speech, Eros has become a kind of prime mover, governing his fellow gods, governing even the inanimate world, and this up to and including river and wind. Causing and inhering in kinesis *per se*, Eros emerges as the impetus through which potentiality actualizes, the universal force in which the particularities of existence must subsist.

In a characteristically malevolent tone, Achilles Tatius also exploits ekphrasis as much to paint sentiment onto nature as to depict Eros as an ineluctable force shadowing all of existence. The votive painting admired by the narrator of *Leucippē kai Kleitophōn* upon his arrival in Sidon depicts the rape of Europa, replete with rictus-wearing chorus girls watching as their sister is hauled off to Crete on the back of a bull (Zeus metamorphized). Only at the end of the ekphrasis, as if arriving at some final cause, does our narrator mention Eros: Ἔρως εἷλκε τὸν βοῦν...μετέστραπτο δὲ ὡς ἐπὶ τὸν Δία καὶ ὑπεμειδία, ὥσπερ αὐτοῦ καταγελῶν, ὅτι δὶ αὐτὸν γέγονε βοῦς ("Eros dragged the bull. He had turned and so was smiling slightly at Zeus, as if

mocking him since he [Zeus] had become a bull on his [Eros'] account" [1.1.13]).[371] The description complete, the narrator finds himself again returning to the image of the child: ἔβλεπον τὸν ἄγοντα τὸν βοῦν Ἔρωτα: καὶ, "οἷον," εἶπον, "ἄρχει βρέφος οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης" ("And I watched Eros leading the bull: 'Such an inphant,' I said, 'rules heavens, earth, and sea'" [1.2.1]). And at precisely these words Clitophon enters, promising a story to illustrate the ὕβρεις ("cruelties") that he has by Eros suffered.

The suggestion that some underlying and libidinal force drives, carries, and subtends existence is everywhere in Achilles Tatius. Clitophon likens his father's bid to marry him to Calligone (and not Leucippe, his true love) to a "battle" between "duty" and "nature," "Eros" and "my father" (ἀνάγκη μάχεται καὶ φύσις.…Ἔρως ἀνταγωνίζεται καὶ πατήρ [1.11.3]). Clitophon does not hesitate to wager on a victory for Eros. And then, like clockwork, just as he and Clinias are "philosophizing about the god" (Ἡμεῖς μὲν οὖν ταῦτα ἐφιλοσοφοῦμεν περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ [1.12.1]), a slave enters to announce that Charicles, Clinias's lover, has been trampled to death by a horse. The slave proceeds to offer a gory recollection of the scene. Predictably, the description of Charikles's effort to ride the out-of-control steed is sexually charged. More significant, however, is that the horse, in an allusion back to the proem's ekphrasis, operates as a figure for an indomitable Eros. The violent death of Charikles takes place in order to confirm Clitophon's prediction, only just proffered, that any effort to oppose the god would end in disaster: Ἂν ἀπειθήσω...αὐτῷ, κάομαι τῷ πυρί ("Should I disobey…him, I'll burn up from the fire" [1.11.3]).

Further cultivating the sense of the inescapable and suffocating grasp that Eros holds over nature, Achilles Tatius includes, just after Charicles's funeral, an ekphrasis of a garden and the

[371] Citations are to Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, ed. Ebbe Vilborg (Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell, 1955).

ὁμιλία ("intercourse") of its flora: Ἔθαλλον οἱ κλάδοι, συνέπιπτον ἀλλήλοις ἄλλος ἐπ᾽ ἄλλον, γείτονες αἱ τῶν πετάλων περιπλοκαί, τῶν φύλλων περιβολαί, τῶν καρπῶν συμπλοκαί: τοιαύτη τις ἦν ὁμιλία τῶν φυτῶν ("The branches were thriving; one by one they were falling into one another. The intimate interlacing of leaves, the embracing of flowers, and the intertwining of fruits: Such was the intercourse of the trees"). This tendency to move from love towards ontology, and, indeed, the tendency to collapse the two, is everywhere in the *Symposium* (and not merely in Socrates' consultation with Diotima). Eryximachus sums up what might justly be called the dialogue's "thesis" (186a): Eros is οὐ μόνον ἐστὶν ἐπὶ ταῖς ψυχαῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ("in not only the souls of men") but in τοῖς τε σώμασι τῶν πάντων ζῴων καὶ τοῖς ἐν τῇ γῇ φυομένοις ("the bodies of all living creatures and in what in the earth grows"). The being of Eros is, Eryximachus will conclude, "ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς οὖσι" ("in all, finally, that exists].

Like *al-Nāʾim wa-l-yaqẓān*, *Daphnis kai Chloē* is concerned before anything else with an original dissociation of will and world, of desire and reality, and with the ways in which this desire works to manifest itself, inexorably and subliminally. In this respect, Longus's is a synecdoche for the novel of the Second Sophistic more generally. These all being comedies, each ends with a reconciliation of dream-world and waking life, a last act in which the latter inevitably bends and submits to the characters' inner will. Abū l-Ḥasan's dream of omnipotence, we will recall, comes true in a nearly literal sense: For a day and a half, his "dream" of controlling the caliphate is actually fulfilled, and the *shaykh*s who had harassed him for his dissolute lifestyle are punished and expelled from Baghdad permanently, regardless of the seeming unreality of the one-time wag's assumption of power. Moreover, even when the "dream" is up, he finds himself integrated into Hārūn al-Rashīd's entourage, spending the rest of

his days in gilded dissolution (and with a wife as devoted to indolence and debauchery as he). The *shahwa* ("desire") that he had confessed to the caliph during their first encounter actually does come true by the cycle's end: Abū l-Ḥasan becomes omnipotent for a day so as to rid himself of one of the two major obstacles to his enjoyment of life (the *shaykh*s) and, this accomplished, gets to live out his life with the second obstacle (lack of funds) permanently at bay. This integration and resolution of a will that had been unrecognized, isolated, and sublimated into waking-life and reality, of a will that had been expressed to us as readers largely through the device of the dream-scene and the "first-person" ekphrasis, marks the finale of all five of the Greek erotic novels. Fittingly, *Daphnis kai Chloē* ends not with a wedding but with a post-nuptial scene in which what had only been "done" in dream can finally be done awake: They have sex, while their shouts of joy and pain are drowned out by the peasants' chants outside their bedroom.

Inner feeling, unfulfilled desire, and alienation—of unconscious and consciousness, of will and world, of self and society—this is the stuff of *al-Nāʾim wa-l-yaqẓān* and the Greek novel, narrative responses to the "Decadent" poem's cult of imagination. This is also the stuff, in Aristotelian terms, of *ethopoeia,* the development and exposition of character, something to which *muthos* (plot) in both of these texts is unmistakably subordinated. Because each of these stories is concerned with the contours and limits of unrealized phantasy—and what can possibly be "deeper" than the unconscious, however it be conceived across time?—and the resolution of phantasy with waking-life, the progression of *muthos* is collapsed into the development and exploration of character itself. This development, the exploration of unrealized desire, takes place through dream and phantasy sequences, strategies in the narration of thought somewhere between psycho-narration and the externalization of feeling. Where, finally, the species of the

pathetic fallacy seem ever more wont to chase plot and action from center stage, mere narrative "sophistication" is hardly the issue. Rather, the very sense that a more full-throated psyche is the mark of narrative "sophistication" begins to light the path to understanding the significance of post-Classical fiction's moments of "strong" psychologism. "Sophisticated" because redolent of Modernity's own narratives of imagination and desire (read: the modern novel after La Fayette), the pre-Modern world's narratives of pathos flow from the same source that waters the concrete artifice and stillborn chimeras of their contemporary poetics.

CHAPTER VIII

DECADENCE AND MODERNITY

According to the revisionist history of the Decadent that our critics have been telling—one where the Promethean imagination disentangles itself from the voice of nature—the reduction of the world to Baudelaire's *état plastique* is not even half of the story.[372] Whatever Decadent verbal creation does to "nature" is a mere anamorphosis of what it has first visited upon language. The temporal world becomes, then, an ontologized mirror of a deeper and primary phenomenal experience with a language itself become democratic, accessible, profane—and then a mirror of private and vulgar will. Withdrawing thought from speech, turning away from the shared fabric of discourse, breaking from words in unison with nature, the private imagination can finally engender the metalepses at the heart of Decadent phantasy. The Decadent disruption of nature can, then, be de-ontologized, read backwards to reveal a more primal scene with language itself. This work of backward-reading is necessary to make sense of literary Modernity's aberrant streak—namely, its naturalization of the very literary norms that the idea of Decadence is (as we have seen) everywhere born to suppress.

When Stefan George writes that *mein garten bedarf nicht luft und nicht wärme/ Der garten den ich mir selber erbaut*, is he in actuality presupposing and concealing some primary linguistic scene? Are the *vögel leblose schwärme* and the *dunkle große schwarze blume* that populate this *höhle*, in an important sense, mirages of a more fundamental lifelessness or decay of the word itself? And can the same be said of Novalis's "garden…consisting of metal plants and crystal trees, hung with varied jewel-blossoms and fruits," despite the poet's (problematic)

[372] Baudelaire, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, 15, 65.

association with Romanticism?[373] I return momentarily to this question of how the anamorphosis of nature in Decadent poetics can be rightly perceived—and de-ontologized—only by glancing back to the Modern experience of language as human invention. "Decadence" of meaning, the conversion of language into mirror of psyche, is, as will become clear below, really a distorted picture of a language first turned into a non-sacral tool for the everyman.

DECADENCE AND THE ROMANTIC HIATUS

The Novalis question, however, must be addressed. How might Decadence be said to have a force all its own (as a "concept") apart from its nineteenth-century namesake (the "period")? Just how much "untiming" or periodic violence can and should be gotten away with? Quite a bit, I would suggest. At the most basic level, Decadence can be conceived as one of the orientations that verbal creation must adopt, however loudly or unwittingly, with respect to its surrounding world.[374] The main limitation to this approach is that it runs perilously close to thematic paraphrase: It only scratches the imagistic surface of verbal art, including one that might be said to bend towards the Decadent. The paraphrase would be simple enough, in any case: The Decadent work attempts on the world something like what des Esseintes attempts on the carapace of his freshly-arrived tortoise:[375] Cold-blooded rearrangement of its parts in defiance of however it was that they were (i.e., a historicized temporality). Nevertheless, this obviously "diegetic" or narrative-based approach to the verbal arts (i.e., every text contains a surplus story about its relationship to the world) has considerable strengths. It sheds much light

[373] Novalis, *Henry of Ofterdingen: A Romance* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge Press, 1842), 155.

[374] Hayot, *On Literary Worlds*, 44-45.

[375] J.-K. Huysmans, *À rebours*, 127-30.

on the history of European literature after 1500 or so—on literature, that is, of the "Modern" (and not just the "Modernist") period.[376]

For instance, it allows us to properly see that Romanticism is a digression of sorts. The *ewige Einheit* heralded in *Das älteste Systemsprogramm des deutschen Idealismus*, the "reconciliation" promised by Coleridge's Secondary Imagination,[377] the lust for nature-synthesis of some "autonomous soul seeking its own salvation"[378]—these presuppose and fail to arrest the deepening of a chasm between mind and nature, between thinking and speaking perceived first in the sixteenth century, threshold of the Modern age, only to find itself gradually (and astonishingly) assimilated to the norms of verbal creation.

To see Romanticism as a digression between the Baroque and then the "palaeo-Modernism" of the *fin-de-siècle* is to both agree and disagree with Frank Kermode's insistence upon a continuity between the poetics of Wordsworth and Coleridge, on the one hand, and Modernism itself on the other.[379] A throughline runs, in fact from the seventeenth-century rhetorical innovations of Tesauro to the Postmodern "Language" poetry of Charles Bernstein. This continuity is precisely what allows M.H. Abrams to find in the Metaphysical "local" and "meditative" poem the predecessor of the great Romantic experiments following Coleridge's admonition: "A poetic Heart & Intellect should be combined, intimately combined & unified, with the great appearances in Nature." It is this throughline that allows Paul de Man and Roland Barthes to see in "the pre-Romantic period" a literature (de Man mixes narrative and "lyric" with

[376] The periodization is Peter Osborne's. Cited in Hayot, 11.

[377] Abrams, "Coleridge, Baudelaire, and Modernist Poetics," 157-59.

[378] Harold Bloom, *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry*, Revised and enlarged ed. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1971 [1961]), xviii.

[379] Cited in Abrams, "Coleridge, Baudelaire, and Modernist Poetics," 150-55.

abandon) not beset by the illusion that some inartificial bridge between mind and nature can be constructed. Nineteenth-century Romanticism is, for de Man, a hiatus between two periods with "similar allegorizing tendencies,"[380] between the period that witnesses the writing of, say, a *Candide* or a *Tom Jones* or a *Tristram Shandy* and the period that begins with the Decadent and Symbolist poetry of Baudelaire and Mallarmé. Barthes similarly sees the nineteenth-century as a hiatus between *l'euphorie d'une liberté* of the two preceding centuries and then the start, with Flaubert, of a (Modern) literature where language *se suspend devant le regard comme un objet*.[381]

Conceiving of the nineteenth century as a break between two periods of similar bents (i.e., earlier Modern and Modernist) misses the point. It obscures the throughline that runs from the sixteenth century and simply never relents. The trouble is that the Romantic symbol's promise of a coincidence between "substance" and "image" or the effort in, say, Balzac or Zola to self-naturalize into "reality" (*il* était *language, c'est-à-dire transparence*, writes Barthes) are really normative efforts to heal a break between thinking and speaking.[382] Romanticism and Realism are, that is, responses to the problem of Decadence. The nineteenth century, then, is an interruption only insofar as it sees efforts emerge to mask—with imagery of a mind-nature synthesis and narratives reading like reportage—this deeper shift in the relationship between word and mind. This shift involves thinking's withdrawal from nature, its withdrawal, especially, from a language that had been more or less naturalized: As the mind pulls into itself, as private meaning takes on unprecedented prestige, it pulls language with it, turning language into a personal retreat from the world and a reflection of the individual psyche. One consequence of

[380] De Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," 205.

[381] Roland Barthes, *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture (*Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972 [1953]), 80; 11.

[382] Ibid., 10.

this is the emergence of discourse as artificial object with no necessary relationship to the inartificial world.

The disintegration of the trinity of word, mind, and nature being the animating force of the Decadent, no "Modern" literature can be said to be unmoved by it. Romanticism and Idealism are less interruption than failed reaction: They try to de-reify language by investing it with mantic power and necessary truth and by insisting that it can be re-assimilated to nature. Coleridge says as much. "To Nature" finds the poet more or less explicitly conceiving of the poetic act as the sacred re-naturalizing of artifice: "So will I build my altar in the fields,/ And the blue sky my fretted dome shall be." Inspiration comes from the insight that nature is uninterrupted synthesis and flow: "I/ Essay to draw from all related things,/ Deep, heartfelt, inward joy that closely clings." This economy of mutable but "inexhaustible" energy—what Schelling declares to be the "electromagnetic orgasm"[383]—is what the re-sacralized poet is supposed to perceive. This is the "Ideal" (Schelling's "inner, heavenly germ") behind the mechanized, artificialized appearance of the Modern age that the Romantic poet is supposed to perceive.

Language for the Romantics is emphatically *not* supposed to be the tool by which this Ideal is disclosed. Coleridge wants it to be little more than the servant of intuition (of "phantasy") which can be unburdened of "fixities and definites" and "intimately combined & unified, with the great appearances in Nature."[384] The effort is finally an eleventh-hour attempt to de-artificialize and de-concretize language, to escape "the shape of formal Similes" and press the

[383] Quoted in Martin Wallen, "The Electromagnetic Orgasm and the Narrative of Primordiality in Schelling's 1815 Cosmic History," in *Schelling Now: Contemporary Readings*, ed. Jason M. Wirth (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, Ind., 2004), 123, 26.

[384] M.H. Abrams, "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric," in *From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle*, ed. F.W. Hilles et al. (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1965), 547.

signified back into "the sweet fragrance that the wild flower yields." Obviously doomed from the first, the effort fails before the nineteenth century is up. Language quickly becomes more artificial, concrete, and formal than ever. It becomes, as Barthes says, a *Forme-Objet*.[385] Moreover, it is an artifice conceived as such, emphatically unbound by any pretension to coincide with "Nature" or the empirical world. The failure of the linguistic disappearing act of the Romantics is invaluable: It suggests just how artificialized and technicized—how broken from nature—language had already become.

Decadent Modernity or Modern Decadence?

The story of the failure of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reactions to those "allegorizing tendencies" of the early Modern period is really the story of the seemingly irreversible erosion of the opprobrium surrounding Decadence.[386] The Romantic promise of a poem that would conjure and then vanish seamlessly into nature, the Realist promise of a novel that would with photographic fidelity capture the mœurs and motives of Modern society—these are reactions to the "theatricalization…allegorization, ultra-refinement, and charismatic exhibitionism" of the early Modern verbal arts.[387] Belated and futile, their failure is evinced by the fact that the nineteenth-century's end sees the triumph, enshrinement, and then normalization of a mode of verbal creation given over, as in the Baroque period, to "a flourish of forms and a play of perspectives."[388]

Why, though, is the period after 1500 so propitious to the collapse of the opprobrium surrounding language wantonly jettisoning the pretension of a disappearance into nature? The

[385] Barthes, *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*, 10.

[386] De Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," 205.

[387] John Beverley, "Going Baroque?" *boundary 2* 15/16.1 (1988): 32.

[388] Roland Greene, "Baroque and Neobaroque: Making Thistory," *PMLA* 124.1 (2009): 150.

answer may be "extrinsic" to the verbal arts altogether, lying, that is, in the unglamorous, brute interaction between medium and mind, language and the senses—and that even bruter, even more unglamorous relationship between language and its mode of distribution. The typographic "revolution" of the sixteenth century may have opened the gate to a more or less permanent *Formentriebe*.[389] The early Derrida was much taken with the idea that literary Modernity involved a confrontation between mind and the materiality of language (he occasionally calls the latter *une écriture première*).[390] What should be added is that the typographic revolution seems to have encouraged a sense of personal mastery over language.

Individual and democratic at once, vertical and horizontal at once, this sense of mastery over language was felt in the Lutheran conversion of scripture into a private communion of mind and word. And it was felt horizontally, movable type permitting rates of literacy and access to the written word on scales without precedent. The spiritual and then political egalitarianism that would come to define the Modern age was nourished by this uneasy combination of personal and fraternal dominion over language. A fraternity of reading would form the affective bond of the nation-state, that bond that Benedict Anderson would famously call the "imagined community."[391] Certainly, the rate of change after 1500 is impressive: Before the century's turn, 20,000,000 books had been printed in Europe, that figure then rising perhaps as high as 200,000,000 by 1600.[392]

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[389] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Vom Barockstile," in *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in fünfzehn Bänden*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 1980 [1878]), 437.

[390] Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967), 16.

[391] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Revised ed. (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]), 37.

[392] The numbers are Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin's. Cited in Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 37.

If an initially technological change at Modernity's threshold was to change the most basic and basically sensual relationship between the individual and language, coaxing the mind of the common individual to feel itself apart from and above a language ever more accessible and banal, the verbal arts would soon offer their own testimonial. This testimonial would do much to explain the remarkable fact that Modern letters are the product of an age where that set of norms meant to prevent Decadence—a set of norms as bulwark against thought's drifting too far from language—all but evaporates. In its immediacy and ubiquitousness, in its (increasing) commonness and disposability, the written word after the sixteenth century nourishes the sense of verbal creation not as an utterance beholden to nature and truth (and still less the divine), but as an entirely banal event. Anderson himself notes that the loudest victims of this linguistic vulgarization were, indeed, the "truth-languages" (i.e., Latin in Europe), dependent as these were upon "the non-arbitrariness of the sign."[393] The norms ensuring that language remained more or less given, more or less entangled with thought and nature, give way as verbal creation becomes a quotidian event, the volume of written text ever more massive and ever more instantly worthless than before.[394]

A devalued verbal art will involve the ethical deterioration of character and the collapse of the *genera dicendi*. Modern prose (and, as Montaigne shows, not just prose *fiction*) vanishes ever more into reflection of every apparition of the imagination, subjectivism and the pathetic fallacy (in the guise of free-indirect discourse) coming finally to swallow the novel whole. In poetry too, that meeting of a "flourish of forms"[395] and impossible phantasy in the Baroque poem

[393] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 37.

[394] Ibid.

[395] Greene, "Baroque and Neobaroque: Making Thistory," 150.

depend upon this combination of banalization and subjectivism. There is much, indeed, to the thesis—one supported by Austin Warren, Louis I. Martz, and Terence Cave—that early Modern poetics is a reflection of post-Tridentine devotionalism, that the Metaphysical and Baroque marriage of phantasy and form mirrors the cenobitic exercise of the imagination popularized in the "emblem" book (starting, perhaps, with Alciato's *Emblemata* in 1531). The *Ecercitia spiritualia* of Loyola and the *Libro de la Oracion y Metitacion* of Luis de Granada, each an effort to cast an orthodox veneer over deeper currents trying to keep up with a privatization of faith, beckon the individual mind to sense itself supreme over language and image.[396] Ever more influential after the sixteenth century—because published in the European vernaculars—devotionalism invites the mind to look beyond outer form, beyond image and beyond (eventually) language in order "to see with the eyes of the imagination."[397] The result is a "sanctification of the devout wit," an "art of devout ingenuity," the imagination finding itself "invited to see, hear, smell, taste, and feel the outward lineaments of that which it contemplates."[398]

Again and again, subjectivism appears comorbid with allegory, the assertion of the imagination with wariness of phenomenality. The reaction to *muḥdath* ("Modern") poetry in the early Abbasid period, a reaction refusing in a single breath tropes of the *khayāl* ("imagination") and excessive *taʾwīl* ("exegesis"), is instructive on their enduring connection. As the Arab critics had (rightly) perceived it, that combination of subjectivism and allegory involves a disentangling of mind from the language of nature, as discourse and natural world alike become things to be

[396] Terence C. Cave, *Devotional Poetry in France*, *c. 1570-1613* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 4-7.

[397] Quoted in Louis I. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century*, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1972), 28.

[398] Austin Warren, *Richard Crashaw: A Study in Baroque Sensibility* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan Press, 1957), 68-71.

surpassed by a mind alighting to a truth accessible only to it. Truth's individuation, its displacement from language and nature into the mind, is little other than what has historically elicited opprobrium as "Decadent."

With the norm against the imperialism of the *oculus mentis* on seemingly permanent hiatus, European letters after the sixteenth century offers an enduring lesson on the nature of Decadence. Resistance to the division of imagination and language is threatened by technology promising cognition full and easy access to a discourse become brute material. To make words appear to the mind as mere structure—and, especially, as mere man-made structure—is to invite *la mort* or *l'essouflement de la parole.*[399] The fall to earth of the transcendental signified, the *subordination* [of the word] *dans une structure dont elle ne sera plus l'archonte*, is the sign of (literary) Modernity.

The demystifying, desacralizing of language—the reversal of Socrates's ideal of a language οὐ ἀνθρωπικὸν ἀλλὰ θεῖον ("not human but divine," *Soph*. 268e)—is little other than the calamity that the idea of Decadence is conceived to prevent, the sacral aura of language being the tie that binds mind, word, and nature. Where technology democratizes and humanizes language, promising its beholder an artificial and man-made mode of making sense of nature, it is the "extrinsic," non-discursive driver of Decadence. Where the critics themselves perceive thought as too far withdrawn from the language of nature, they may also be perceiving developments in the τέχνη of language permitting that break in the first place. The "chirographic turn" at the dawn of the Classical period in Greece may, that is, have played a central role in allowing Gorgias's

[399] Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, 18.

παιγνίον—uncannily (and tellingly) close to Barthes's Modern *Forme-Objet* of the seventeenth century—to emerge in the first place.[400]

The desacralizing of language seems also to spell a desacralizing of nature, an arbitrary and entirely human verbal creation coaxing the mind into chasing the last shadows of unknowability out of the natural world. Where, that is, discourse becomes an object subordinated to the mind's eye, nature is likely not far behind. This is one way of understanding the historically durable connection between a poetics of the concrete and a poetics of the phantastic, the first phenomenal, the second ideal, one a manipulation of the word as unholy, man-made object, the other of the "non-linguistic" world as apparition and shadow of the mind. Private, profane subjectivism forms the common bond uniting each. The *Entzauberung der Welt* ("disenchantment of the world") or, indeed, Hölderlin's *entflohene Götter* ("fled gods") is precisely what the idea of Decadence is meant to prevent. [401]

Disinhibition of human optimism—that optimism of knowing without which Modernity would never have come to pass—is the flip-side to the spread of a profane and vulgar language. This is a blinding knowability whose "naïveté" is historically (before, that is, the Modern age) the source of abiding anxiety for the critics of literary decline. An increasingly proud epideixis is dangerous, Plutarch warns in a typical formulation, because of its capacity to ἀποπλανᾶσθαι ("seduce," 16c) the mind into taking ὁμοιότητα τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ("semblances of truth," 25c) for sacred knowledge itself. Virtually without exception, theorists of Modernity see the period after 1500 as marked by the withdrawal of the horizons of non-knowability. This universality, it is also generally agreed, issues from a cognition capable of suspending the world in a moment of

[400] Ong, "Writing is a Technology that Restructures Thought," 43.

[401] Max Weber, "Wissenschaft als Beruf," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre* (Tübingen: Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr, 1922 [1918]), 554.

non-phenomenal abstraction. Hegel had insisted on "the spatiality of the equation of identity itself," and there is the sense that the possibility of imagining a universal space depends upon an astonishingly confident projection of homogeneity over the world. The result is Spinoza's nature that is the same everywhere, or what Chakrabarty has called the "ontologically singular."[402]

Nevertheless, these descriptions of the universal singularity of the Modern world only beg the question: What transpires in the sixteenth century that makes possible the collapse of temporality and invisibility before an omniscient cognition in the first place? The question cannot be seriously answered without taking account of what had begun to transpire between speech and mind, for the universal and universalizing cognitive scheme that reduces every particularity to one more spirit to be banished by the light of mind turns out to bear suspicious resemblance to the changing appearance of discourse itself. Ever more democratic, ever more banal, the written word after the fifteenth century encourages a gap between thinking and speaking—for it encourages the mind to look beyond language for a truth as easily accessible as the written word itself.

PARTIAL PORTRAITS: HEIDEGGER AND FOUCAULT

The early Heidegger talks of the "the conquest of the world as picture" as "the fundamental event of the modern age."[403] This is partly a sensory reorientation. No world picture exists before the Modern age, because the world remains to be made into an "object-sphere" knowable to an autonomous human subject (the "subjectum"). Heidegger's is also the account of the concentration of truth: The entirety of the "object-sphere" is knowable to the individual and

[402] Fredric Jameson, "The Three Names of the Dialectic," in *Valences of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 2009), 68; Hayot, *On Literary Worlds*, 100-07; Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007 [2000]), 15-16.

[403] Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *"The Question Concerning Technology" and Other Essays* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), trans. William Lovitt, 134.

the individual alone. No longer, that is, are there objects whose existence depends on their being "known" by non-human forces. Everything becomes an object that flashes before the mind's eye. This is Heidegger's "almost absurd" paradox of modernity, the field of being becoming object-like to an unprecedented degree, even while that very objectness depends first on a refraction through subjective consciousness: "The more objectively the object appears….the more importunately does the subject rise up."[404] The Modern world-picture is a *Gebild* whose structure is given in advance by the objectifying human mind: "[T]he plan of an object-sphere is, for the first time, built into whatever is."[405] Only later does Heidegger begin to see that this objectification is primarily a verbal reification, and this implicit recognition will be addressed later in this chapter. For now, however, I want to emphasize that Heidegger's Modernity as "projection" of a "World picture" is very much in line with the consensus that Modernity depends on the mind's ability to conceive of every particularity of the non-psychic world as wholly predictable, easily conceivable—and then subject to mastery.

Foucault also, in *Les mots et les choses*, depicts *l'âge moderne* as the endgame to epistemic mutations begun in the sixteenth century: These ultimately yield a fixed and grid-like matrix to which *les choses* of the world rigorously conform. Nothing escapes sight or cognition. Gone by the Baroque period is the richly interwoven fabric of existence whose mysterious opacity had allowed for crevices of unknowability. For Foucault it had been precisely in these glimmers of darkness that the mysterious connections among the things of the world interacted and unfolded. It is here, for instance, that the homeopathic connects ailment and antidote, and it is here that alchemy promises splendid transformations through materials linked according to some secret signature. Beset by blind spots, a natural world begins to emerge that invites a

[404] Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," 133.

[405] Ibid., 124.

chasing away of the shadows: *Un espace sombre apparaît qu'il va falloir progressivement éclairer*, Foucault writes. *C'est là*, he continues, *qu'est la 'nature' et c'est cela qu'il faut s'employer à connaître.* Modern *connaissance* accepts the invitation, and by the seventeenth century a blinding visibility spreads over the earth: *Maintenant une enumeration complète va devenir possible*.[406] The world morphs into a *tableau* of discrete and visible parts whose rules of interaction are perfectly (empirically) discernible and (rationally) predictable—and hence, as in Heidegger's *Gebild*, wholly graspable by the imagination.

Foucault characterizes the history of discourse after the sixteenth century as a devaluation, a reduction to mere instrument, a breaking from reality. This splitting is precisely the moment that inaugurates the *immense réorganisation de le culture* with which *Les mots et les choses* is concerned: *Les choses et les mots vont se séparer* as *[l]a profonde appartenance du langage et du monde se trouve défaite.*[407] Instrumentalized, *language ne sera rien de plus qu'un cas particulier de la représentation.* Foucault is describing the disentanglement of language from being: *[L]a souveraineté du Semblable* guaranteed the essential belonging of form and content, of sign and reality—these being little other than anachronisms for what *s'entrecroisaient indéfiniment*. *Les mots et les choses* is unable to account for causation here (and elsewhere), one symptom of this failure being Foucault's suggestion that *de Hölderlin à Mallarmé, à Antonin Artaud*, literature forms a *contre-discours* refusing the demotion of language to *la fonction représentative ou signifiante*. The error lies in failing to see that this return to concrete and non-denotative discourse—*à cet être brut*—is merely the endgame: The technicizing and objectifying

[406] Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines*, 69.

[407] Ibid., 57-59.

of language at the dawn of Modernity is precisely what allows in the first instance for the reduction of language to *le fonctionnement de la représentation.*

Where Foucault's account of epistemology's history after the fifteenth century succeeds is in granting the individual's linguistic experience causal force. Historicized conceptions of semiology (the verbal fashioning of meaning) exert throughout Foucault's "archeological" period a determining influence on how the non-verbal world materializes. He will provide a link, insufficiently attended to by Heidegger, between the world's objectification and a more primal experience with language. Where Foucault's connection between linguistic experience and ontological reality begins to fray, however, is in its being, in a sense, insufficiently phenomenological. *Les mots et les choses* tends to limit discursive experience to second-order theorization of language—to *énoncés* with language as their object—at the expense of the naïve interaction between the subject and discourse. It is nevertheless in the crucible of practical, non-theoretical experience that Foucault's *immense réorganisation de la culture* begins to forge itself—for it is here that language begins to make itself felt as arbitrary, human, and banal.

MATERIALISM'S INADEQUACY: HARDT AND NEGRI

A similar account of Modernity as the recasting of the world as wholly knowable—as space to be filled by the unbounded, non-temporal consciousness—is central to the Hardt and Negri trilogy. *Empire* argues pointedly, for instance, that the Modern unfolds in architectonic terms. Citing the opposition of natural and civil order in Hobbes and Rousseau, the authors suggest that Modern sovereignty is "conceived in terms of a (real or imagined) territory and the relation of that territory to its outside."[408] As a master metaphor for Modern thought, the inside-outside ratio determines not just the differentiation of the civil and natural spheres, but also the post-Westphalian notion of statehood, and, ultimately, the very conception of the psyche. The

[408] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 187.

topographical model of early psychoanalysis, for instance, understands the non-ego as a space displaced from external nature.

As prophets of an "Imperial" period succeeding Modernity, Hardt and Negri describe a gradual disintegration of the inside-outside heuristic: "The striated space of modernity constructed places that were continually engaged in and founded on a dialectical play with their outsides. The space of imperial sovereign, in contrast, is smooth…." The non-inside becomes increasingly incoherent as a concept, as nature itself is internalized—or, as they say explicitly, artificialized. The centuries after 1500 already involve a simultaneous destruction of transcendent *and* natural non-knowability (the two are constant bedfellows). Knowledge becomes democratic and "immanent"—"a doing, a practice of transforming nature."[409] The next phase (indeed, the "Imperial" phase) emerges when the bounds of artifice come down: The inartificial simply becomes inconceivable. Body, instinct, and nature are no longer seen as merely susceptible to artificial rectification—they are, rather, increasingly little more than figments of human invention. Citing Jameson's remark that "[P]ostmodernism is what you get when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good," Hardt and Negri offer an update: "In a postmodern world all phenomena and forces are artificial…."[410]

The description of this total eclipse by nature by human invention is compelling, but the causal forces in Hardt and Negri's account of the world's artificialization remain opaque. In *Empire*, for instance, they approvingly cast the later Foucault's project as a regrounding of the old Marxian superstructure in concrete, material, and somatic experience (linking architecture to the interests of power and economy would be paradigmatic here). They remain, of course, chary of any base-superstructure distinction, opting ultimately to follow Deleuze and Guattari's lead in

[409] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 74.

[410] Ibid., 189.

splicing what may be causal factors together: They describe "a new [Imperial] machine, a new economic-industrial-communicative machine." This is at least one hyphen too many, and it comes as a relief that by *Commonwealth* they have granted linguistic experience more autonomy. Indeed, language and communication constitute much of what they call "the common," a space made up of "knowledges, languages, codes, information, affects, and so forth." "Language," they suggest, "is for the most part common."

Hardt and Negri paint a half-complete portrait of the withdrawal of the inartificial from the world—or its collapse into thought. They even toy with the term "Decadence" itself in the opening to *Empire*, only to find its normative accent too strong. Surely, however, there is hardly a proclamation that would better please Jean des Esseintes than the statement that "culture makes bones." And hardly a better epitome of the Decadent imagination could be found. The trouble, as always, is how this comes about in the first place. Insofar as ontological decadence—where the world takes shape as plastic thing—depends on a primary and primarily phenomenal experience of words elided from thought, Hardt and Negri's account is only partly satisfying. Very schematically, one might say that they are synchronically right but diachronically wrong. On the first point, they convincingly describe the effects of "the informatization of production" upon the production of mostly communicative "immaterial goods," and on the ensuing effects: "Interactive and cybernetic machines become a new prosthesis integrated into our bodies and minds," they write in *Empire*.[411] *Commonwealth* takes this further. The authors now talk of a "plasticity and mutability of nature" collapsed into the same "common" housing communication. In order for the "common" to expand so as to include the inartificial, however, the means already have to be in place for nature to be reduced to plastic thing. What transpires in the "common" is

[411] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 290; *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011 [2009]), ix.

that a semblance of nature or an already artificialized nature becomes object of labor. A "potentially vertiginous loop" emerges because there is no longer "a transformation of the object through labor" or "an engagement of the subject with nature" but a transformation only of what is already an effect of culture and communication (the "biopolitical"). The "loop" appears vertiginous, however, only because Hardt and Negri are still trapped in a materialist teleology. Describing in *Empire* the supposed shift from real to formal subsumption, they argue that it is "[t]hrough the processes of modern technological transformation [that] all of nature has become capital." As a result, production becomes reflexive: Labor can only set upon what has already been produced ("machine-made nature").[412]

The error—and this applies to all materialist analyses of Modernity—is that Hardt and Negri assume that real subsumption and the artificialization of the artificial is an effect of changes in the modes of production. Our present, they insist, is determined by a "tertiary" mode of production heir to the agricultural and then industrial moments. Industry being supplanted by "services and information," we are living now through "a process of economic postmodernization, or better, informatization." The result is the "vertiginous loop" of self-subsuming τέχνη in the "common." The result is also unconvincing: It posits a sudden and autonomous "loop" where a drawn-out spiral which began turning well before the tertiary moment of production seems more accurate. The conditions for the Modern artificializing of nature and then the Postmodern artificializing of nature's specter emerge throughout history and without any necessary relationship to the moment of production. Efficient causes generally have little place in historical analysis, but the horizon of possibility for conceiving of the world as artifice has far more to do with a primary experience of language as τέχνη. Historical vanity ("presentism") and the ghosts of materialism conspire to create an impression that the destruction

[412] Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 173; *Empire*, 272.

of the inartificial is some apocalyptic endpoint. It is not. It has transpired elsewhere and otherwise. And it is always more a matter of linguistic technology than the forces and modes of production. The early Modern (but decidedly pre-industrial) verbal arts—to which Modernist and Postmodernist "concrete" poetics, no less than the failed Romantic reaction, owes its parentage—bear witness to the primacy of this meeting of language and technology.

Τέχνη, *Concept, Utopia*

No less a prophet of Modernity than Weber himself lends considerable support to the notion that the period after 1500 is a definitive moment in thought's elision from the language of nature. Before turning to Weber, it is worth pursuing briefly just how far the imagination will come to chase the last vestiges of the inartificial world. This is especially crucial insofar as images of nature tend to invite re-phenomenalization as images of language. What becomes of the natural world, for instance, in Thomas More's *Utopia*, a work that Jameson notes is "almost exactly contemporaneous with most of the innovations that have seemed to define modernity"?[413] It is almost literally reduced to the architecture of Utopus's society: The "island" of Utopia, Raphael reports to the author, was "no island at first, but a part of the continent."[414] The founder of this society for the shipwrecked, however, had it in his mind to construct a space "separate from the continent" for his people's protection. He wanted "to bring the sea quite round them." Initially, the gulf between the image of a nature perfected into a fortress and the actual state of the land provokes only mockery: There were those "who at first laughed at the folly." Defying "men's expectations," however, Utopus proceeds, ordering "a deep channel to be dug, fifteen miles long." A mental scheme is impressed on the earth, and Abraxa (the area's

[413] Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future* (London: Verso, 2005), 1.

[414] Thomas More, *Utopia* (London: Cassell, 1805), trans. Gilbert Burnet, 69-70.

original toponym) is, like its "rude and uncivilized" indigenous inhabitants, "subdued," brought under "politeness" and "good government."[415]

More remarks that the island's coast is fortified "both by nature and art"—but it turns out that the "nature" in question is already a matter of little other than "art." Abraxa has now been refigured into a symmetrical crescent with a topography perfectly suited as much to commercial as martial interests. "The island," writes More, "holds almost at the same breadth over a great part of it, but it grows narrower towards both ends."[416] Disrupted by "no great current," the new bay meets "one continued harbor," even as its channel has at its perfect middle a single rock dividing hidden shallows and the deeper way in. Now a realized phantasy of civil planning, the land itself—in its symmetry, in its malleable amenity to social needs—is simply an extension of the island's fifty-four cities. Like the island itself, they are "contrived" according to the imagination. "[T]he whole scheme of the town was designed at first by Utopus,"[417] we are told. None of these is a civil center, unevenly emerging and organically taking shape: Each is instead the perfect mirror of a mental image, and each is the nearly perfect mirror of the other. "He that knows one of their towns knows them all—they are so like one another," More's traveler recounts. Each is "contrived…in the same manner," and each shares identical "manners, customs, and laws."[418]

The Utopian undoing and remaking of nature, acts which struck the natives "with admiration and terror," issues from the inner "design" of an imagination under the spell of

[415] More, *Utopia*, 69-70.

[416] Ibid., 68.

[417] Ibid., 76.

[418] Ibid., 74.

τέχνη.[419] And inner τέχνη is precisely what, for Weber, allows for the rise of "modern science." It is what allows Kant to posit a totally spatial, totally non-contingent "formalism" of cognition. And it is what allows Kant to insist that the sublime is graspable only when nature is "seen" as architecture: "We must…consider the sky…as a wide vault" and "the ocean" as a "transparent mirror."[420] Imagination under the spell of τέχνη is what Weber calls "the concept."[421] He rightly notes that it is only by the light of the "concept" that "modern science" can chase the shadows of the "irrational" out of the world. Weber explicitly contrasts this inner τέχνη with the extrinsic "laboratories" and "statistical filing systems" that the Romantics wrongly suppose to be the source of "modern science." The "calculations" of science are "fabricated" subjectively: They are "personal experience."[422]

How did the imagination of the individual scientist come to be the space of the "concept"? Weber's answer is remarkable: The "concept" of the modern scientist is merely a late and powerful form of what appears "for the first time" in Plato: That is, the "idea," the promise of an "*eternal* truth that would never vanish as the doings of the blind men vanish."[423] As Quintilian's and Demetrius's wariness of *enargeia* and the *oculus mentis* suggests, the relationship between the "concept" or "idea" and the natural world is *the* drama of Decadent phantasy. The agon is between the calculated stasis of mental form and the indomitable movement of matter. Plato says as much. The fissure between form and matter is none other than the fissure between space and temporality. Form is fixed, unchanging, eternal; matter

[419] More, *Utopia*, 70.

[420] Quoted in de Man, "Kant's Materialism," 126.

[421] Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Routledge, 2009), trans. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, 141.

[422] Ibid., 135.

[423] Ibid., 141.

metamorphosis, imbalance, flux. Only when form enters the sublunar or material world must it endure time's vicissitudes. Most importantly, matter and temporality are unknowable; they are ἀμυδρόν ("obscure"), as Plato characterizes the *khôra* in the *Timaeus*, ἀνωμάλως πάντῃ ταλαντουμένην ("unevenly swaying every which way," 52e). Only by dint of the degraded light of form can the incessant turning of matter be arrested—and then only temporarily, for hylomorphism always threatens to dissolve back into the opaque chaos of the temporal world.

The invention of the Platonic idea is for Weber the original τέχνη that will father finally the "concept" of modern science. He is very nearly correct. The concept or idea endows consciousness with the fixed and rigid forms that make matter and the temporal world perceptible. Twice can nature then be reformed: First in the very act of cognition and then as material cause, as in the "terrifying" impression of Utopus's mental designs upon the earth. In both cases matter and movement are frozen into plastic objects. Their cognition and manipulation require first a reification. The concept grows into a science that provides "the tools and the training for thought" and "contributes to the technology of controlling life by calculating external objects."[424] In colorful and sympathetic terms, Weber relays the end-point of the "concept" from the Romantics' perspective: "[T]he intellectual constructions of science constitute an unreal realm of artificial abstractions"; they are "derivatives of life, lifeless ghosts, and nothing else."[425] Weber makes much of the irony here: What begins in Plato as the promise wherein the human mind can assimilate itself to the spatial and eternal forms of the supralunar cosmos ends with a total deformation of nature. This is, however, emphatically not a contradiction for Weber: The "artificial abstractions" of Modernity are simply a high-point in the

[424] Weber, "Science as a Vocation," 145.

[425] Ibid., 141.

long and not necessarily linear history of the domination of time by the non-temporal imagination.

In placing industry and the extrinsic refabrication of nature as always secondary to the "inward" and "personal" technology of the concept, Weber begs the question: What structures cognition in terms of formal fixity, in terms of the graphic and the spatial, in the first place? My answer is that the concept and the cognitive space that is precipitates—and the artificializations of nature to which it leads—come from a primary encounter with language as τέχνη. The formulation "language as τέχνη" is, however, ambiguous. In a sense, language is always and necessarily an invention founded on denotative agreement. It always and necessarily involves the spatial artificialization of temporality, and it is precisely this that allows Derrida to insist that *écriture* and *espacement* precede communication of any sort. Diachronically, however, another aspect of the problem becomes more urgent: Namely, that linguistic experience is subject to greater technologization. The invention of inscription and then chirographic culture at the end of the pre-classical period in Greece is surely a turning point in this respect. But there is yet more parsing to be done: The technologizing of linguistic experience involves not merely the invention or availability of extrinsic technologies (systems of inscription, say), but the conception of language *qua* technology. The reshaping of cognition by inscription involves, as Havelock and Ong suggest, a recalibration such that thinking assimilates the properties of the text: Its sequential orderliness, its reliance on the "law" of non-contradiction (suggested by graphemic separation), its collapse of sight and comprehension. Thinking, then, becomes a shadow of artifice and invention. The most fateful consequence may be the "objectivity" that this induces: The graphic form of the word produces an idea and concept that seems as fixed and unchanging as its denotative mark. That this is the precondition for Platonic formalism—which ontologizes

the meeting of sight and meaning in the "thing seen" into a supposedly non-phenomenal "idea"—is persuasive, and this perhaps even because of its irony.

The influence of τέχνη on linguistic experience is not limited to whatever mode of inscription is insinuating itself into cognition and into the "concept." Discourse is technologized *to the extent* that it is seen and conceived as human invention. This may be the fundamental axis: To what extent is the word experienced naively, self-present and consonant with thought? Language is lived naively to the extent that it goes unseen, eluding externalization and thus retaining the patina of nature. Where the word is experienced as unproblematic and commensurate with reality, it also tends to be understood as a given or sacred gift. Only where the word is conceived as a human problem and human tool does the linguistic experience that becomes Decadence become possible. The "artificial abstractions" and "lifeless ghosts" of Modern science that leave the natural world (say the Romantics) unrecognizable are just that: Reifications that can only materialize and command attention insofar as language itself has been experienced as fixed form and invention.

Realism and the Devaluation of Language

Portraits of Modernity remain half-complete insofar as they focus only on Decadent phantasy. They focus on the enthusiasm for the "life-alien," the *besoin de surpasser la nature*, the "geometrization" of the world. The double technologization that linguistic experience undergoes in the sixteenth century goes unappreciated in its full causal force. Not only does the sixteenth century inaugurate an unprecedented democratizing of meaningful access to the inscribed word: It heralds a renewed attention to language *as* invention and technology. Anderson goes some way in connecting the most basically technological moment here (the typographic revolution) to the Modern disruption of non-linear and non-contingent conceptions

of temporality: The simultaneity of imagined communities of readership at the national and later the planetary levels conspires with the ephemerality of information to yield Benjamin's "empty, homogeneous time." This should be pushed further, however: The unglamorous banality of a text experienced in simultaneous spatial conquest of the world surely lurks behind Modern "universality": It would help to explain a "theory of worldedness…that it most commonly calls the 'universal'" and a nature that begins (as Spinoza would have it) to be "always the same and everywhere one."[426] The emptiness, homogeneity, and contingent interchangeability of Modern temporality is for Charles Taylor precisely "the mark of modern consciousness." It also marks a certain spatialization of time, the latter becoming "an indifferent container of…human and historical events."[427]

The indifferent, arbitrary, and fungible conception of the Modern world-space, however, is incomprehensible without reference to changes in linguistic experience—changes encouraging the ascent of "time-obviating"[428] imagination and changes lying most deeply in the ability to view discourse as *tekhnê*. This involves a devaluation: Once a sacred given and meaningful in their very phenomenality, the "truth languages" are now translatable, salable, objects for private contemplation.[429] The devaluation involves, however, much more than Latin's vulgarization: The historical norm limits inscription overwhelmingly to texts of juridical and sacral import. By the sixteenth century changing dramatically. Trafficking in disposable and even random information, the dailies of the period must be given their due in promoting a sense of the arbitrariness to the word. Literary history is also instructive: By the sixteenth century the *genera dicendi*—whose

[426] Quoted in Hayot, *On Literary Worlds*, 107.

[427] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 22-26; Taylor, *A Secular Age*.

[428] Ong, "Writing is a Technology that Restructures Thought," 38.

[429] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 37-44.

disintegration into "realism" is precisely the subject of Auerbach's *Mimesis*—definitively give way to the serious treatment of quotidian vicissitudes of often popular life. The very method of Montaigne's *Essais*, as Auerbach points out, is the treatment of *die beliebigen zufälligen Lagen seines Lebens*, of *Beliebigkeit* and *Wahllosigkeit* with absolute seriousness (*Ernst*).[430] Elizabethan theater shows a similar widening—and, indeed, a democratization and egalitarianism—of description: *Shakespeare mischt Erhaben und Niedrig, Tragisch und Komisch*, there being none among the bard's tragedies *in dem eine einzige Stillage von Anfang bis zu Ende durchgehalten wäre*. Also central to this story of the demotion of discourse is the rise of narrative fiction, which happens also to be the rise of the *kritikfreie und problemlose Heiterkeit in der Darstellung des alltäglich Wirklichen*.[431] The line between reportage and the early novel, it must be emphasized, is not at all clear. The issue is not simply the fact that much of Georgian "literature" appears beside trivia, gossip, and political commentary in periodicals such as *Tatler* and *The Spectator*. The very characters that come to inhabit the novels of Fielding and Richardson (to say nothing of the Penny Dreadfuls) descend more or less directly from the quasi-fictive "character" studies first included in periodicals.[432]

The invention of Modern "realist" literature should not be taken as a sign of the elevation of previously insignificant or non-literary content and information to the status of the "literary." It is a sign rather of the devaluation and demotion of language itself. This is tacitly admitted in the sweeping accounts of European literary history in Bakhtin and Frye—and perhaps even by Auerbach. Discourse is "novelistic" for Bakhtin to the extent that it is disentangled from reality

[430] Auerbach, *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur*, 294.

[431] Ibid., 342.

[432] Deidre Shauna Lynch, *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning*, 6.

and perceived as an object in and for itself. Where consciousness takes for granted the "power of the direct word," where language goes unseen and unthought, "novelistic" discourse is precluded. Only when language is disentangled both from cognition and from reality—when it flashes before the mind's eye as concrete object—is something like "novelistic" discourse possible. Bakhtin describes what happens to language as a splitting and reification: What emerges is a "word *about* the [empirical] object that in the process becomes *itself* an image." Expelled from consciousness and disentangled from the temporal world, the word invites contemplation and then ironic manipulation—the act of bricolage that is the novel's throughline from the Menippean satire to the "pathetico-psychologic" novels of the seventeenth century. Cognition now "constitutes itself *outside* this direct word and outside all its graphic and expressive means of representation."[433]

The demotion of language to object and tool disintegrated from the natural world is similarly central to Frye's account of what the verbal arts undergo in the "intensely individualized society" of the Modern age.[434] The story of Modern literature is the story, as Frye would have it, of the turn towards the "low-mimetic" and "ironic" modes (the first leads into the second). These two modes should be understood as analogous to Bakhtin's "novelistic discourse" and Auerbach's realism, as literature now sees fit to cover the trivia of everyday life. Discourse now "takes life as it finds it."[435] Frye and Auerbach share the same trouble, however: They struggle to explain how the demotion of the verbal arts to reportage ultimately leads to the artificializing of nature. If "the documentary naturalism" of Balzac and Zola is connected to the

[433] M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1981), 50-61.

[434] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, 58-61.

[435] Ibid., 41.

"low-mimetic" mode of literature, what are we to do with a theory of the "symbol" that increasingly views the latter as artifice?[436] This is, of course, the missing link between *fin-de-siècle* poetics, the concretization of prose in the early twentieth century, and finally narrative's (and, of course, poetry's) flight into the fabulous. Frye intuits but does not quite make the connection. He suggests, for instance, that "the ironic fiction-writer is influenced by no considerations except craftsmanship."[437] Mallarme's method, moreover, involves "cutting" and "juxtaposition." Of greatest import, however, is Frye's connection of this formalization of the symbol—its separation from cognition and temporality—with the subjugation of the natural world: Modern literature marks a shift "from a reflection of external nature to a *formal organization of which nature was the content.*" Nature can be shattered and remade only in the image of a primary remaking of language: Only then does the mimetic "dianoia" of art give way to "the Logos, a shaping word which is both reason and…praxis." Postmodern "metafiction" would be unthinkable without this "shaping word." What Frye misses, however, is that discourse can assimilate its "formal organization" to nature only when language has itself been demoted to fabricated object of "craftsmanship." Inasmuch as Modern "realistic" fiction begins as a shadow of reportage, this demotion of language to informatic tool is already well underway in the sixteenth century: The intertwining of periodical and serial depend on it.

The lugubrious bluster with which Auerbach ends *Mimesis* suggests an unwillingness to face the deep and paradoxical connection between "realism" and what he calls the *undeutbare Symbolik* of twentieth-century fiction (he nods also to poetry): Each is less *ein Spiegel des Untergangs unserer Welt* than a mirror of a decline of language itself. The precondition for "realism" is the denigration—the democratization and equalizing—of language so as to cover

[436] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*,116.

[437] Ibid., 58-61.

demotic trivia. The downgrading of the matter and content to which discourse must yoke itself in its "realist" or "novelistic" or "low-mimetic" modes is possible only when language itself is no longer a given reserved for prestige functions (i.e., sacral and juridical oaths and notation). For this to happen language must show itself as disintegrated from extrinsic truth and the natural world—and it must be conceived as a tool and τέχνη for the artist as craftsman. Once language is "liberated" into τέχνη and instrument—into Flaubert's *chaudron fêlé* and Mallarmé's thing for the *retrempe*[438]—few barriers remain to prevent "realism" from slipping quickly into *etwas Verwirrendes oder Verschleiertes.* Auerbach sees this as a sign of *ein verbissener und radikaler Zerstörungsdrang*. He may, in truth, be seeing more than he lets on, for he explicitly names Flaubert as a "realist" for whom reality is already coming undone at the hands of linguistic form. Moreover, he is also explicit in linking this *Zerstörungsdrang* to *den subtilsten Stilmitteln, die die Kultur geschaffen hat*.[439]

The hidden throughline connecting a "realist" discourse emergent in the sixteenth century with the "hostility" towards that very reality (*etwas der Wirklichkeit, die sie darstellen, Feindliches zeigt sich häufig*) remains so only if analysis confines itself to ontology. Within the confines of being's representation, the connection between the low ("realistic") mimesis of the early novels and the disfiguring formalism of the *fin-de-siècle* poem—a formalism which determines the course of the following century's prose—is incomprehensible. Phenomenal and linguistic experience, however, suggest a different story. This is a story where the graphic and visual representation of discourse becomes an apparatus of cognition to an extent uncountenanced before the typographic turn. It is the story of the reconception of the world in the image of a language which now appeals to the mind's eye as spatial, cheap, and artificial.

[438] Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary* (Brussels: UltraLetters, 2013), 180; Mallarmé, "Crise de vers," 348-50.

[439] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 512-13.

And its ubiquity is *imagined*, a process failing which Modern universality would be inconceivable. Above all, language becomes a thing of human invention. First it is a tool for instant communication of instantly worthless ephemera, then it is a tool itself to be refabricated according to the private (artistic) will. The representation of being—or "reality"—does not go unaffected by the treatment of language: In many ways, it assumes its characteristics. It too becomes graphic, spatial, and manipulable. Gradually, as Weber suggests, the temporal world is frozen into "artificial abstraction" in the image of a "concept" itself a reflection of written discourse. It is sublime, Kant tells us (in a formulation that would make Longinus faint), only insofar as it is understood as architectonic (and already by a universal architectonic cognition). It too becomes arbitrary and homogenous—Spinoza's nature that is the same everywhere. And it too becomes like Mallarmé's *idée…qui se fractionne* like the signifier itself.

The deep history of the artifice and formalism that swallow "post-Symbolist aesthetics" whole is found not in the representation of reality but in a linguistic experience that precedes the breaking of mimesis. Before non-referential form can become the object of poetics, and before this taste for the "life-alien" can bleed into the phantastic remaking of nature in Pynchon or Rushdie, discourse must first be "revealed" as artifice. It must become, as Charles Bernstein has it in "Dysraphism," "unintegrated, fractured/ fragmented, fanciful, ornately stylized, rococo,/ baroque." Or—"chrome." Derrida rightly characterizes *l'histoire du devenir-littéraire de la littéralité, notamment dans sa "modernité"* as the "discovery" *of la strate purement graphique dans la structure du texte littéraire*.[440] The history of literary Modernity is the history of the word's accretion of the characteristics of graphic object, an *Objet-Forme* to be "fractured/ fragmented"—and it is in its shattered image that the idea and all of the inartificial world begin to appear. No "discovery" at all, this is only the invention of (language as) an invention, the

[440] Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, 87.

liberation of an ever more disinhibited imagination from the "mere" surface of discourse. And with this, the revolution is complete, thought and speech in Modern and then Modernist poetics disintegrating before yet another avatar of Gorgias's παιγνίον—only now the critical chorus, in an aberration of literary history, is unable to see the μηχάνημα in the first place.

CONCLUSION: THE HISTORY OF A TABOO

A paradox surely lurks throughout the preceding study. Only hygienic precaution against morality and ethics has allowed for one of the most enduring filaments of culture to show itself with crystalline clarity. So abiding, so enduring that observers might be forgiven for mistaking it for nature itself (many critics indeed do), this iron filament is the taboo against verbal creation too far "ranging within the zodiac of…wit," too "brazen," too enamored of "forms such as never were in nature."[441] Language, space, and time warp the taboo with astonishingly little success. At the second millennium's end, it shapes the Avestan elegy for a language untwisted and wholly natural, one unharmed by lying and the grotesque forms borne by the self-interested speaker's tongue (chapter I). In fifth-century Athens, it shapes the polemic against rhetoric and the Sophistic παιγνίον ("plaything," *Helen*, 21).

In post-Augustan Rome, the taboo shapes the rejection of oratory and poetry siphoned too far from the lifeblood of the world, too far from *pectus* ("heart") and *ingenium* ("natural talent"), too far from *utilitas* ("usefulness"), *veritas* ("truth"), and *vis* ("force," "passion"). Failing it, the (often ignored) unanimity of Tacitus's *Dialogus de oratoribus* on the roots of literary decline in self-interested invention would be unthinkable (chapter II). It gives form, now even more starkly, to the non-specialist reaction to the sensibilities of the Second Sophistic, as Plutarch works to salvage the useful from the wreckage of (essentially) perfidious poetic language, and as Marcus Aurelius dreams of falling into paranoid muteness (chapter III). For the Hellenistic and Imperial specialists themselves, the taboo makes the moral heart of their treatises. Demetrius and Quintilian are wary of excessive invention, as much in excessive ornament as in phantasy *verbis*

[441] Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry (or the Defence of Poesy)*, Third ed. (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave, 2002 [1595]), 85.

depingitur (“by words painted”), the mind falling victim to its perennial *vitium* (“vice,” *Institutio oratoria*, 8.3: 63; 6.2: 31).

Elsewhere, later, and—most important of all—*independently*, the taboo appears undiminished. It is the *ḥadd* (“limit”) without which the whole of the polemic against *badīʿ* (“innovative”) poetics in the early Abbasid period would simply evaporate (chapter V). It preserves *tabʿ* and *nafs*, nature and soul—whole and indissoluble, holy still in their empyrean incomprehensibility[442]—from the depredations of an imperious *khayāl* (“imagination”) and *ṣanʿ* (“artifice”). Perversely, the taboo insinuates itself deep into the poetics of its supposed transgressors. Gorgias’s mad glee in pronouncing discourse παιγνίον (“plaything,” *Helen,* 21), θέαν ἡδεῖαν (“pleasurable spectacle,” 10), a language concerned neither with ἀλήθεια (“truth,” 13) nor τὰ ὄντα (“what exists,” *On Non-Existence*) derives from the very act of protest (chapter VI). His non-normative discourse is clearly not the norm, a state of affairs borne out less by Plato’s dismay than by the efforts of the rhetor’s own followers to “walk back” these pronouncements by replanting language in the soil of ethical education (Isocrates, *Against the Sophists*, 15-17). The taboo has been internalized too by the Persian speculative theologians after, say, al-Ghazālī, and poets after the Timurid period, only theirs is a view of language and world that would now (probably wrongly) be called “Modern” or “Modernist.” Devoid of sense and fallen though word and world may be, by the right measure of individual *wahm* (“imagination”) and *himma* (“desire”) both are renewable, perhaps in a single breath.

The same, seemingly invulnerable taboo that had already compelled Longinus to dismiss the *Odyssey* as too unreal, too much an affair of the psyche of an author ὑποχωροῦντος εἰς ἑαυτὸν Ὠκεανοῦ (“turning into himself like the ocean,” 13), is by no means static. It recedes

[442] Approaching and evaluating the *qarīḥa* (“genius”) of sound poetry is, suggests al-Āmidī, an affair of the initiate. al-Āmidī, *al-Muwāzana*, I, 389.

where the *genera dicendi* are loosened, which is to say where the *spes inanes* (*Inst. orat.* 6.2: 30) of the common individual begin to receive assiduous, earnest treatment by less-than-vulgar literature. "Extrinsic" or non-literary variables are of the essence for coming to terms with subjectivism's challenge to the taboo, for literary history reveals an enduring interplay between a literature of feeling and mind, on the one hand, and urban, mercantile milieux, on the other. It is in the Imperial πολις,[443] in the trade capitals of Khorasan and the Levant, [444] that the narrative of desire (the "erotic" novel) proliferates as a major literary form,[445] that the urbane and equally erotic tales of the *Nights* emerge and circulate,[446] that the anacreontic concerns of the *ghazal* supersede the deeds, acts, and praise of the *qaṣīda*, the *ghazal* itself becoming more inward-oriented and "devotional."[447]

The conversion of μῦθος to ἦθος, of πρᾶγμα to ψυχή through the species of the pathetic fallacy—all means for illustrating inner fancy, phantasy, and desire—is testament to the assertion of a more democratic subjectivism (chapter VII). This is, indeed, the "intensified formation of conscience," the fixation with the "'inner world'" that Norbert Elias finds at Modernity's threshold.[448] Democratic subjectivism is no more unique to Modernity than psychological "realism." It emerges wherever the taboo against contrivance and phantasy too little patient with

[443] Ewen Bowie, "The Ancient Readers of the Greek Novels," in *The Novel in the Ancient World*, ed. Gareth Schmeling (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 90-92.

[444] Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods*, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), 507.

[445] Froma Zeitlin, "Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel*, ed. Tim Whitmarsh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 97-98.

[446] Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen, 2 vols., vol. I, *The Arabian Nights Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 524-5.

[447] Paul E. Losensky, *"Welcoming Fighānī": Imitation, Influence, and Literary Change in the Persian Ghazal, 1480-1680* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 317.

[448] Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983 [1969]), 257.

nature is shaken. “Modern” is not the name, of course, that seemingly intemperate fancy has generally worn over the course of literary history. Rather, as this study has aimed to show, it has been called “Decadent,” and with little hesitation at that. The fading of the taboo in recent history, a fading shown as an epithet pointed at (indeed, internalized by) a single movement in the nineteenth century has yielded to a non-normative name for the present (“Modern”), is without parallel in its extent. And yet, the extent and sweep of the taboo’s own history—as that iron filament of a (literary) culture seeking to preserve its idols in a crystalline garden—assures us that it is never far from regeneration.

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