

## Chapter 1



# THE DISCOURSE OF EXALTATION (Μεγαληγορειν): CONTRIBUTION TO A REREADING OF PSEUDO-LONGINUS

*Michel Deguy*

Gush, pond, —Foam, roll over the bridge and over the woods; —black sheets and organs, —lightning flashes and thunder, —mount and roll; —waters and sadnesses, mount and raise the floods anew.

—Arthur Rimbaud, “Après le déluge”<sup>1</sup>

In the epilogue, which is perhaps dissimulated by being placed nearly at the center of his great book,<sup>2</sup> Ernst Robert Curtius suddenly raises a plaintive cry over the fortune Longinus has suffered. He emphasizes what one is tempted to call the “absolute” singularity of that work of unknown authorship—for “Longinus” is a kind of pseudonym—Περὶ Ὑψους, which we know in its badly translated title as *Of the Sublime*.<sup>3</sup> To be sure, what Curtius quotes from this work consists in stereotypical formulae on *elevation* and *grandeur*, and expresses nothing other than the pure enigma of grandeur insofar as it remains a mystery. And yet, it is as if Curtius—after all those years of erudition, of the endless quotation of quotations—were to negate his life’s work with a strangely hasty gesture of dismissal: “Across two millenniums we breathe [in Pseudo-Longinus] the breath of life, not the mold of schools and libraries. The appearance of this unknown Greek in the first century of our era has something miraculous about it” (399). However, the anonymous author’s book has remained as good as lost and unread, always in reserve: it “has never found a congenial spirit” (400)—except perhaps in Curtius himself, although he does not explicitly develop his own reading in any detail. The great reconstructive genealogist of the tradition rather incredibly goes on to say: “Longi-

nus' was strangled by that unbreakable chain, the tradition of mediocrity. Is that tradition perhaps the strongest support of literary continuity?" (400)—and to hell with Boileau! Curtius says next to nothing further of this lost book and this unpaid debt. I evoke them here through him as the memory of what is more than simply antiparody but rather the very paradigm of nonparody, a thought in search of *the high*, a thought attempting to draw all thought toward *the high*. But what is *the high*?

The intact originality of a missing or forgotten work such as Περὶ Ὑψους (Curtius speaks of the "conspiracy of silence") is due to the fact that this work has managed to avoid being appropriated and capitalized on, that it has managed to get lost, that it has maintained itself and still maintains itself on the brink of disappearance. Chance and precariousness do not cease to mark its history. Thus, the values of fragility, contingency, and perishability—not the inverse—are present side by side here with a singular species of originality.

Is the antithesis between the base fortune of misrecognition, the hidden life of the book of the *sublime*, and its high purpose, its discourse, which is the "discourse of exaltation" (μεγαληγορεῖν) is this antithesis merely the effect of a contrary chance, a misadventure, or is it a sign intimately related to the very nature of the sublime "thing" itself, a "thing" that would necessarily defy interpretation as the most elevated peak discourages and defies ascent? Obscurity does not simply befall exalted language by chance. Rather, its diverted course, its caricatural deformation, *grandiloquence*, mocking its semblance with a mask, dissimulates it fatally, even more successfully than simple ignorance or forgetfulness, leaving the enigma of its elevation to be resolved, according to Curtius, by *us*.

### *Of the High*

So the author of Περὶ Ὑψους is not the familiar friend of Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, who was put to death. He has become the anonymous: Pseudo-Longinus. Although we know almost nothing of his life, we do know from his book that he lived in the first century, in the de-paganized Roman Empire—Pan was dead and buried—and at a distance of centuries from the Homeric world where, as he nostalgically recounts, there had still been intercourse between gods and men. He was deprived of gods, then, but on familiar terms with Homer. And the question of the *sublime* was doubtless first of all an attempt to measure the decline of the Orient, to measure the author's distance from the time of gods and heroes when nature had still been a temple of living heroic pillars. The *sublime* was the word and the thought with which to evaluate the greatness of Homer, his speech of grandeur or exalted discourse (μεγαληγορεύειν) which had been the first song of humanity. Given that Homer is *the sublime*, what can we modern latecomers do to rival in a mimetic struggle the

Elevated Model, where we will always be worsted, but where our relative greatness will be measurable by the honorability of our defeat?<sup>4</sup>

The sublime measures our failure. If it is a *sacred* relation to the *divine* that constitutes the sublime,<sup>5</sup> then our failure will be equivalent to our distance from the sacred, or to our unbelief, our incapacity to navigate through the straits of the difference (κρίσις) between immortal and mortal.

Is the *sublime*, then, an *aesthetic* category motivated by mere nostalgia? Does it express the wistful longing to remain at least capable of gauging the elevation of the source, of thinking the unity of the measure and the measure of the unity that would permit us to judge the utterances and written works of the ancients and the moderns? Is it a category our extreme distance of twenty centuries ought to make us regard with suspicion, although we admire a belief we nonetheless no longer want and which functions a bit like an alibi?

Perhaps, then, the fascinated relation of Curtius to Pseudo-Longinus (and this was, in my case, the motivation for the reading) is the aggravated repetition (as “homology”) of Pseudo’s relation to Homer. Are we so far from the high origin that we can no longer even read the book *Of the High*, which measured its own distance from the source? How forgetful we have become, derivative, and dispersed!?

We have no choice but to respond in some way to ancient beliefs, to transpose them for ourselves. Pseudo-Longinus is not so much an author who enviously respects the gods of Homer while dissimulating his disbelief, as rather one who looks at the past in order to reestablish through his own discourse some hope of a truly exalted discourse, precisely *for* the generation that follows him: the Treatise *Of the High* is a letter to young Terentianus. The others are not merely those who have preceded us.

In a certain sense, his interest is the “phenomenological” interest in a return to the things themselves, in this case, insofar as they are those things that had a meaning for one’s ancestors, a return which inclines toward what has been and a return which is carried out for the sake of a tradition or a culture by means of a reading of past utterances. Reading him, we pose ourselves the same question he poses himself when he quotes Homer: what is “divine transport”? In doing so, it would be inappropriate for us to despair and to reduce the parameters of our world under the pretext that we no longer believe as they did. Rather, we must simply attempt to translate, through the exertions of our discourse, what can be comprehended of their experience in order to transmit our own.

### *Homer*

Thus, we are confronted with “Homer.” In the beginning, as at the end, Homer is there, the master as well as the meter of the sublime.

One of the definitions of the sublime tells us (Κεῖται τὸ μὲν ὕψος ἐν διάρματι [XII, 1; 75]) that it consists in the διαίρειν: the ravishment that makes one pass on; a movement of being carried away, traversal, uplifting, transport (of which the Greek word μεταφορά expresses one of the modes). But in the case of Homer, the measure is given by the gods: τὴν ὀρμὴν αὐτῶν κοσμικῶ διαστήματι καταμετρέϊ (IX, 5; 55). The divine is the transport that measures the cosmic diasteme. The cosmos and the impetuous gods measure each other reciprocally. And Homer, chiasmically crossing gods and men, has given to the latter their primordial measure. “When he recounts the wounds of the gods, their quarrels, their vengeance, their tears, their imprisonment in bonds of relation, their passions of all sorts, Homer seems to me to have made, as well as he could, the men who were at the siege of Troy into gods, and to have made the gods into men” (IX, 5; 55–56).

### *The End*

The conclusion of the book furnishes us, as always, with what we ought not to forget in rereading it. It offers us the commencement of our reading.

We ought not to ignore the fact that it is a letter to a precise addressee. The end of this letter is an ethicopolitical end, at the center of whose nostalgic teaching is this: that it is such a shame “when mortal man wonders utterly at his own bloated parts and neglects to develop what is deathless” (XLIV, 8; 230).<sup>6</sup> What does ὑπεράίρω mean: to “exceed,” to overhang all things human (ἀνθρώπινα)? It is a matter of life and death, the gods are “immortals,” and the exhortation to the sublime commits us to establishing a relation with what exceeds all perishing, with what is not mortal.

The place where the most powerful insistence of this thought makes itself felt is in one of those passages where the author reiterates what one must understand by our *nature*:

she [nature] implants into our souls an invincible erotic passion for all that is great [τοῦ μεγάλου] and more demonic [δαιμονιωτέρου] than we. For just this reason not even the entire cosmos taken together can cope with the thrust of human theorizing and perceptiveness, but man’s intentness on perceiving often everywhere goes out beyond the limits of what holds him in, and if anyone gaze around at life in its cycle, he will swiftly understand for what purpose we were born, by seeing how much what is “too much” and great and fine holds more advantage in all things... what is contrary to opinion is over and over again wonderful. (XXXV, 2–3; 174–78)

The *critical*, ultimate pinnacle of the *high* is the pinnacle on which the partition between mortal and immortal is made anew. A “life” that does not revolt against its mortality, seeking instead the figure and flourishing of the nonmortal, is not “worthy of being lived.”

The pinnacle of sublimity to which one must raise oneself in order to get a view (a view “of the whole,” i.e. a symbolic view) is named, among other ways, thus: “Those who are capable of it, are all above the mortal.... The high lifts these men almost to the greatness of mind of divinities” (XXXVI, 1; 181).

To elevate oneself to this *high* which was translated by sublime is to carry oneself to the place from which one can get a view of the “mortal condition,” to this perspective that is *like* the divine. From this light ledge, the *height* of the high, which is *like* a beyond, one can attain a totalizing and “symbolic” view of living-and-dying and find the equivalent of its enigma in a *word*, the *word of the end*, the word for us, the survivors of the arrival of the death that neither hides itself nor shows itself but gives sense (σημαίνει) and *ciphers rhythm* in *numbers* and *formulae*. *Hyperbole* is the movement by which thought ravishes itself to attain all at once this elevated point. Hyperbole is a flight of discourse, as distinct from *amplificatio*, which is the movement of thought dilating itself in order to reunite and to succeed by abundance. A view, a perspective, is always *like* a view, always a quasi view of what is not visible and has only the visible in which to appear (or has only appearance in which to exist). What is sensible (to the view, to the naked eye) is the medium of transport or translation, the place where what is not visible transposes itself. Metaphor is what originally brings to visibility the figure of what is not visible.

### *The Theme, the Thesis: Death and the Sublime*

What do Pseudo-Longinus’s examples talk about? On what, on which themes do they posit their thesis?

In the majority of cases,<sup>7</sup> it is a question of death. The mortal condition and the moment of perishing are always at stake when the *sublime* appears. The sublime is the concentration, the start of the startling that weighs in speech against death. The genre of this speech could be multiplied by a typology: benedictions or maledictions that fall back on the living as they echo off the walls of tombs, hyperboles of the improvised epitaph, defiances, supplications, greetings, oaths, enigmas, execrations, sarcasms, or what the Latins call *de-votio*.

The sublime is the ephemeral immortality of the point gained, adverse speech snatched from death<sup>8</sup> where the totality of becoming-and-passing-away concentrates itself. Sublimity at once belongs to the mortal curve and surmounts it, overhangs it tangentially like a remarkable “turning point” [*point de rebroussement*], a pineal apex where the body is united with and sus-

pends itself in the soul, a utopia of infinitesimal weightlessness as at the labile peak of the highest leap. Nothing remains “in the air,” and the fall away from the sublime is fatal.<sup>9</sup> The dead man inters himself and descends—lost—“from the other side.”

Perhaps the only *present* is at this moment, “snatched from the order of time,” as Proust will say, the present of salvation. In the *Inferno*, all the punished whom Dante visits are rendered contemporaries by virtue of these “sublime” utterances they repeat forever beyond the tomb, fixed in the moment when they chose their damnation. The poet is the witness who passes on the legacy of their eternal final word. The witness—poet, historian, novelist—has heard the supplication at the implacable knees of death. He inscribes its trace on the gravestone of the page.

“Too Heavy,” Porthos cried. “Up to the two of us now...” “*Mehr Licht...*” The moment becomes the final moment by means of the speech of the end as received legacy.

There is always, then, a relation between the sublime and the testamentary. Sublime words are words of the end. And the examples of the anonymous one speak incessantly of death.

The *ultimate* is what is at once failure and promise, abandonment and salvation—salvation, that is, for the others. The dying one who says the word of the end carries it away, into the too-late. He is vanquished, but in passing down a speech that can be taken up again. And so—death, where is your victory?—this is the password, the schema of the sublime. One does battle with a disproportion (Pascal) which is ruinous but nonetheless defeated in being musically transfigured. That which levels us in any case is equalled by a speech which constitutes a work. Under certain conditions, defeat with no tomorrow is not defeat. The “ruinous” relation is reversed, something surmounts the “end” by making it pass on and serve as a recommencement: a sublime point of time of double value. The definitive becomes transmissible. The event requires a witness. The addressee is the witness, and speech is the element in which transmissibility can be transmitted. The witness hears, receives, entrusts to language; he takes up speech “on the lips of the dying,” in order to promise to “realize” it. He will fail to “realize” it and will transmit in his turn to the survivor the transmutation of his failure.

### *Interlude*

I ask myself what one might learn from music about the sublime, what one might learn from the sublime rendered audible.

What does one mean today when one makes use of the category of the sublime? In what consists for example the sublimity of Schumann’s Quintet opus 44?<sup>10</sup> From music one learns yet another sense of the sublime.

It is a *funeral march* with a warmth and a reascending momentum which seem to promise an escape from death; as if these tones led to some way out in the direction of their ascent, although we know well-enough that the summit is a dead end. And so we seek the way out while ascending toward a dead end “summit.” We *act as if* the direction of the summit revealed some way out. The elevated point is that from which I get a glimpse of the *land as promised land*, in complete knowledge of the *as if*. He glimpses the promised land as that into which one does not enter; he experiences “in passing on” the revelation of a liberty that will not come to pass in the form of a possession but rather in the being-“liberated” into the possibility of relating to what there is *as to* the promised land. In their turn, they will understand only by passing this music on in their passing on. “Sublime” music provides a movement, the schema of a movement of revelation. This revelation is not a trap, for it is merely the revelation of the *as*, of relating to what is by means of the *as*. What is is that which appears on behalf of what is.

The sublime work is an *ark* crossing the flood for those—the images of those—who will come after.

*A beautiful disorder is an effect of art*, Boileau once said, summarizing what he thought he had learned from “Longinus” about the *sublime*. The tradition justified the “disordered” character of the *treatise* on the Sublime by means of the homology—itself a theoretical criterion of the sublime—between the thing in question (the sublime) and the question of the thing (the treatise).

The “sublime” has the character of the *same* transgressing *difference*, carrying away the differences, and par excellence *the* difference par excellence, that is, the difference which divides saying from what it says (the difference between λέγειν and τι, to take up the terms of the Aristotelian definition of speech: λέγειν τι κατὰ τινος); the “sublime” has the character of the sameness of the Same, extending resemblance on both sides of the dividing bar<sup>11</sup> now surmounted and floating one more instant adrift. The deluge, the sublime, simulates the origin in reproducing it and reproduces it in simulating the origin, the simplicity of the origin, dissimulating still, reserving the diversity of multiplicity, turning itself “inside out” as it hides and “makes one forget” the division one of whose names is the division between φύσις and τέχνη. The reascension to the postulated sameness can only be accomplished in the *re* (reproduction, repetition), in the knowledge of the difference and the awareness of the *mechanisms* (ruses, turns of phrase and pen: “technique”) for feigning forgetfulness of difference and its differentiations.

How does one repair and heal? How does one render forgotten the unforgettable division, separation, and abstraction of things, things which have “fallen apart” (*auseinandergefallen sind*), as a Hegelian might say, such as—among others—“nature” (φύσις) and art (τέχνη)? In order to pursue this problematic, one would have to develop its homology with the theological (and then moral) schema of the loss of innocence.

The complex, intricate, and digressive aspect of Pseudo-Longinus's text—permeated by differences between the announced plan and the actual composition of these pages in a document that has been ignored by history, and a document the contingent lacunae of which increase *for us* the difficulty of reading—has to do with the obscurity of the matter in question, the matter of σύνθεσις “itself.” Ἐν δὲ τοῖς μάλιστα μεγεθοποιεῖ τὰ λεγόμενα, καθάπερ τὰ σώματα, ἡ τῶν μελῶν σύνθεσις: “above all of that which renders great speech as well as bodies, it is the episyntesis of the members.” (XL,5). Is it possible to reconstitute, describe, and understand this force which, as unification, cuts across multiplicity, fits together the *figural* diversifications of discourse in its individual instances, this force from which proceeds its tropological swarming? Does the sublime summarize this point where a spring (πηγή) is allegorized, the source of the five sources of the ὑψηγορία? Ἐπεὶ δε πέντε, ὡς ἂν εἴποι τις, πηγαὶ τινές εἰσιν αἱ τῆς ὑψηγορίας γονιμώταται... (VIII, 1; 45ff).

In order to summarize the course of the treatise—before insisting on certain points—and to intrigue today's reader, I will adopt the manner of an *exhaustive* list of a chapter's contents from a book out of the eighteenth-century:

*Trope by means of which our natures are given a dose of grandeur. Not persuasion, but ecstasy; the thunderbolt. But is this not innate, without τέχνη? Like Socrates, rather, the Author believes that this comes from a τέχνη, which can be taught. Only art can reveal nature as foundation. It is a matter of avoiding mistakes; speech of the great is not grandiloquence—swollen diction, etc., to be avoided. Diagnosis of the true sublime. Enumeration of sublime things; just as what can be regarded from on high (ὑπεροράω) is not sufficient (a dominating perspective provides the criterion), so for works; psyche can by its nature elevate itself; what elevates it, what its nature waits upon, is τὸ ὕψος; it appropriates for itself what it receives. The sublime is what produces unanimity; thus it is objectivity. There are five sources of the sublime: νόησις, πάθος, πλάσις of the schemas, genuine φράσις, σύνθεσις; the first two are of nature, the three others are of τέχνη. The measure of divine things is in Homer: a reciprocal measure of divine force and the cosmic diasteme—example—ἀΐξις (amplification) is not elevation (δίαισμα). Of imitation—We are the last of the series that leads from the divine inspiration of the Pythian and Homer to the ancients and the moderns—Of images, φαντασίαι, εἰδωλοποιίαι which render visible; their relation to πάθος; the difference between prose and poetry—schemas or figures that supplement the imagination on the oblique path of orators—Reciprocal support of the sublime and figures: a matter of λήθη; examples of intonation as grammatical figure—Of figures: parataxis, apposition, asyndeton, symmory of figures; conjunctions, hyperboles, polyptotes; hypallages; metathesis; periphrases; metaphors. Distinction between quantity (ἀριθμός) and greatness (μέγεθος). Redefinition of the nature of the soul in terms of its love for what is more demoniacal than we; it surpasses the κόσμος. Example of Vulcan. To elevate oneself above the mortal*



*condition—metaphor, repetition, hyperboles, ἀντίδοσις—the fifth part or σύνθεσις; rhythm or harmony, music of words, melopoëia. Attention to abjection; of political liberty, of the debasement of morals, conclusion.*

Pseudo-Longinus treats not the relation between rhetoric and persuasion but the relation between the “stupefying” (θαυμάσιον) and “ecstasy” (ἔκστασις). There is a power of discursive abduction that overcomes all obstacles,<sup>12</sup> all ἐφ’ ἡμῖν (I, 4; 9), all that “which depends on us.” The question is whether there is an art of teaching this access to the dimension of βάθος and of ὕψος (of the profound and the elevated), a τέχνη, a μέθοδος (II, 2; 12). Thus, Pseudo-Longinus interweaves two main threads: (1) he reminds his reader that the sublime exists, that there is this *high* in things to the level of which the λόγος of a Being who is “by nature *logical*” ought to elevate itself, and (2) he teaches his reader how this *can* be done.

The sublime is what provokes unanimity—and Paul Valéry is faithful to the spirit of Pseudo-Longinus when he has M. Teste say: “the sublime simplifies them.” Power in speech (τῷ λέγειν δύναμις) (VIII, 1; 45), poorly translated in Lebègue’s French as “oratorical talent”) is that which is capable of harmonizing speech with sublime things, of raising the psyche up to its natural place, which is at once the high and the profound, traversing and surmounting differences and diversity. The relation of the sublime to the “Whole” (διὰ παντὸς καὶ πᾶσιν), which our classics will subsequently call the universal and which characterizes our “innate disposition” or our “nature,” is realized through and in the λόγος, and it is teachable. The text remarks the connection between the constitutive passivity of a nature (γενναῖον πάθος) and the megalegical, the “great-in-discourse” (μεγαλήγορος). Πάθος, our affectable nature, our “sensible intuition,” can achieve the *great* in its speech, provided that τέχνη, categorical activity, ally itself synthetically with this pathos, (re)producing elevated discourse through the *schematism* of figures: the sublime thing attains to speech and takes place in the “poem.”

The order of figures or the figural is a *schematism*: it lends figure to that which would otherwise have no figure; it con-figures speech with that which is spoken. To speak of *schematism* is to speak of a principle of *unification* of the manifold, a mode of unfolding of unity, but of a unity that cannot be thematized apart from the play of contrasted manifoldness in which it unfolds. To speak of schematism is to speak of a *constitutive* activity: not of an easy classification after the fact, but of what makes both speech and the thing to be spoken attain speech—in *dia-llek*; it is with this highest possibility of gathered-gathering speech, as rare as it is, that the norm—i.e., excellence—manifests itself, and it is the “inferior” rest which is the exception, not the inverse.

The high (ὕψος) is a question of (re)ascent. That to which thought (re)ascends is indivisibly the origin, unity, the elevated. The problematic of

(re)ascension is a problematic of *logic* or, as one will later say, reason (which always asks itself how it got where it is, that is, always begins in an experience of disappointment, deception, profusion, and the will to understand the inextricable through that which has “caused” it). This problematic overvalues what comes before it, longs for it nostalgically, wants to relate itself to it, both in order to understand and in order to reproduce by “imitation” its inimitable eventuation. The passage from the multiple to the one—gathering—is analogous to the passage from the low to the elevated. The view from on high (μετεωρολογία) is synoptic. The problematic of (re)ascension or “the origin” schematizes or figures itself in accordance with the image of the *high*, the return to the source, the (re)unification of the manifold. The *high* is what dominates by gathering, holds gathered from above and “behind.” Images of the source of the river or of the fire above (volcano). Unity, anteriority, and height—or synthesis, a prioricity, and elevation—are held together, maintained as co-conceivable, by the configuration which compares them reciprocally: schematization by images. Unification, ascension, and palingenesis say one another (not in parallel but) in *dia-llel* metaphors.

The main difficulty of the text resides in the question of the articulation or σύνθεσις (“synthesis,” a recurrent term, bears the burden of this theme) of the “autogenous” with the artificial (τέχνη). The modulation of the schemas (τῶν σχημάτων πλάσις), or the plastic schematism, is this technical supplement, this leavening of the innate disposition which makes speech rise to the ecstatic (ἔκστασις) heights of the sublime. The difficulty of the text has to do with this: that at each subordinate level of the analysis, there is a local synthesis which is always already implicated in a more radical or “general” synthesis. For example, the “schematism” includes the original utterance (γενναία φράσις), which can be analyzed into the choice of nouns and tropical lexis, of which, in turn, there must therefore also be a synthesis (VIII, 1; 45–50).

### *Synthesis*

Let us start again.

There is multiplicity or manifoldness; hence, there are ingredients, components, compositions of parts for and in a whole. And yet no part, none of the components, ought to be valid or to validate itself for itself. One must indeed speak of each separately, analyze it in order to understand and reconstitute it, but—and this is the paradox—the (necessary) part is not sufficient if it is “self-sufficient,” if it believes itself to suffice (to itself).

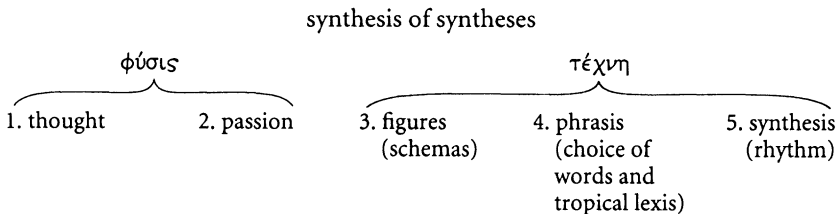
The whole: the relation of the sublime to the whole characteristic of our innate disposition or *nature* accomplishes itself in the λόγος, and as we have seen, this is teachable. However, it is *transport* which, “carrying the whole away,” somehow grants being to *the whole*. The sublime in discourse, the dis-

course of exaltation, will have the form of the carried away, of rapture. The goal (the excellence to be attained) is in general *to resolve* all the parts through a movement, a carrying away that renders their unity heard and understood anew—through a τέχνη, therefore, that gathers together φύσις and τέχνη. The “whole,” which exists only through its composition, is at play in each of its parts, in each of its levels. The whole is at stake in each part, the part includes the whole.<sup>13</sup> For the anonymous author, then, it is a matter of contriving a (re)unification of complementary opposites in each “moment.”

There are five sources of ὑψηγορία, chapter VIII instructs, and the fifth, which encloses all the others within itself, not being a part like the others, is synthesis: ἡ ἐν ἀξιωματι καὶ διάρσει σύνθεσις (Lebègue translates this as “organization in view of the dignity and elevation of style”; one could translate it: synthesis in judgment and elevation). Forty pages further on, in chapter XXXIX, we read: the fifth of the parts which are “syn-telic for the High” is ἡ διὰ τῶν λόγων αὐτῶν ποιὰ σύνθεσις: synthesis across the λόγοι. Here it will be a question of harmony and rhythm, of what Ezra Pound will call μελοποιία (XXXIX, 3; 196–98).

*Locally*, that is, as “fifth part,” synthesis will be characterized as a question of rhythm, but at the same time, synthesis is *in general* the unification of all parts, including the fifth. Fatally, the author appeals here to the organic comparison: what makes for greatness (μεγεθοποιεῖ) in verbal matters is, as with bodies, “the episyntesis of the members.” Unity is unity of proportion, “the completion in a system of each by the others” (πάντα δὲ μετ’ ἀλλήλων ἐκπληροῦ τέλειον σύστημα, XI, 1; 73)—and not at all, of course, in the sense of quantitative extension but rather of *proper measure*. This is why *rhythm too* should not be heard “on its own”; it ought not to uncover itself, or more precisely, it ought not to tap out a cadence without concern for the matter at hand or, as we would say, for the “sense.”

The general construction can be divided into two levels: the level of the five ingredients (one of which is the synthesis that is immanent to this level) and the level of their synthetic ordering as union of φύσις and τέχνη.



There is always a φύσις-τέχνη synthesis to operate. On the subordinate level, at the level of each component and its articulation—for example, in No. 3 the synthesis of νοῦς and σχῆμα, or in 5 the synthesis of ῥυθμός and πρᾶγμα—there is the danger of a scission, a fall back into disunion. On the

other hand, it may be that unity, or the totalization of the whole, is as effectively made manifest by the tearing asunder of synthesis as by junction and rapprochement.

The sublime is the movement that transposes the cohesion of all the constituents into a mimesis of the model unity which is "Nature." And just as Nature (XLIII, 5; 217) has hidden that which is low or base (excretion), suggesting thus that one ought not to allow abjection to show itself, so the *natural* in the speech of the great consists in hiding the technique of the high (I return to this in speaking of *λήθη* below).

### Φύσις *and* Τέχνη

It is a matter of acquiring the innate. The innate is to be educated. Sublimation (elevation to the sublime) is education itself. The author asks himself if there is a *τέχνη* of the high-and-deep. One cannot just *let nature do what it will*. Rather, there is a method, spur and restraint for making the fullness of culture (the sublime) proceed to the accomplishment of *its* nature, that is, to the "psychic" nature which is also *logical* and made for the *beyond* (*ὑπέρ*). To procure a "discernment" (*διάγνωσις*) capable of purifying the "logic" of the sublime of its flaws is a preliminary part of the task.

The elevation to the sublime is a strange operation. It is a matter of reattaining the ground, of raising up and carrying away—what? Culture (*τέχνη*; *διδασκτικός*) leads back to nature (*φυσικός*; *γενναῖος*) on condition that nature—for example, the gift of innate eloquence (a person is by nature a being of logos)—is conceived as a movement of self-surmounting.

Nature is attained as ground only if upheaval (*ἔκστασις*) makes it (re)ascend. "Persuasion" cannot accomplish this, but only the sublime, which is a transport.

An important passage says:

what one admires in art (*ἐπι...τέχνης*) is the most painstaking (*τὸ ἀκριβέστατον*), and in works of nature (*τῶν φυσικῶν ἔργων*), greatness (*μέγεθος*). But by nature (*φύσει*) man is of-the-logical (*λογικόν*)...in discourse one seeks that which surpasses human things (XXXVI, 3; 182–83).

Technique, then, applied to the natural, contrives painstakingly, cunningly, *in the smallest detail*, what is fit to transport nature to the point of recognizing itself in its "logical" grandeur: i.e., in the discourse of exaltation. The two errors to avoid are, on the one hand, forgetting "the exalted," in the sense of the trans-human, and on the other, neglecting attention to minute details in the preparation of the artefact.

The sublime in speech—speech in harmony with things “which surpass” the human in elevation—exploits all resources, all artifices (among which are the figures, or σχήματα), and grounds them (synthesis) in a “solar” unity which *dissimulates*<sup>14</sup> them.

### Images, Rhythms, Figures

Did Pound take his famous distinction between *phanopoeia*, *melopoeia*, and *logopoeia* from Pseudo-Longinus? Perhaps.

Pseudo-Longinus speaks similarly of images (ειδωλοποιία), rhythm (άρμονία), and schematic tropology.

In chapter XV (1; 87), he speaks of images (φαντασίαι) in relation to μεγαλληγορία and calls them ειδωλοποιίαι, which Lebègue translates as “mental figuration,” apparently in intimate proximity to what Pound translated into pseudo-Greek as *phanopoeia*: “something in the mind” (έννόημα παριστάμενον) capable of “engendering” (γεννητικόν) “discourse” (λόγου). A topology which refers to two different “intentions” (βούλεται), that of the poet and that of the orator, differentiates two types of images, and this distinction seems sufficiently radical to separate the poetry of the poets from the rhetoric of the orators.

The former seek έκπλησις, “terror” or the striking, and tend to “transmythologize” (μυθικωτέραν) to exceed the credible (XV, 8; 93). But the latter, the orators, seek ένάργεια, clarity and evidence of exposition.

Pseudo-Longinus passes from images to λογοποιεία by means of this difference of will or intent characteristic of poetry and prose (eloquence), respectively. Fantasy shows, makes one see—too much; its images eclipse *evidence*. The imagination must therefore be relayed and restrained by figures that are schemas of logos and not “projections of view on the mental screen,” as Pound had said. No longer ειδωλοποιία (“you’ve got crazy ideas; you’re living in a movie” [*tu te fais des idées; tu fais du cinéma*] as one might say in [French] slang today) but λογοποιία, tropology. Demosthenes is the example here: *he does not make us see* directly, the author tells us, but *suggests* in accordance with a figural schema of the imagination, which we could call grammatical and which is, in this case, *apostrophe*.<sup>15</sup>

What we would call in our schools *grammatical analysis* represents language as if it were purely objective, without discourse, subject, “orator,” or rhetoric: *schemas* are forgotten. (I mean that a student of the lycée practicing grammatical analysis is not supposed to remark the “figures of rhetoric” because the objectified statement is not referred to the intention of the speaker.) But “back in those days,” the grammatical structure (an interrogation, an exclamation) was understood as a rhetorical figure, as the schematic disposition of the sentence with respect to its intended message. Further, far

from being reserved for orators, this tropology, even more than “images,” is for Pseudo-Longinus the site of the poet’s true genius. A crucial passage (X, 6; 68) shows that Homer’s sublimity consists in his poems’ conjunctive force. The author glorifies Homer for having known how to force and forge in the ἔπος of λόγος a turn by which the poem “imitates” in *its* way the pathos of which it speaks: grammatical “representation.” Specifically, he solders together separate prepositions (the Greek says: *asynthetic prostheses*). Compressing ὑπό and ἐκ into one (ὑπὲκ θανάτοι), his versified speech itself *performs* at this moment (like) what it speaks about. By constructing portmanteau words (τῇ δὲ τοῦ ἔπους συνθλίψει), Homer has fashioned (ἀπεπλάσατο) fear in this passage where he is describing a shipwreck; he has “represented” it, that is, he has imprinted on his locution the proper character (ἰδίωμα) of “danger.” *The poem does what it says*, as modern poetics will insist thousands of years later.

But none of these constituents should be there “for its own sake,” to serve itself and to be self-sufficient. Not even logos in its tropical λογοποιία, which is in the service of things to be said, “exalted things.” The constituent should render itself forgotten in order to enter into σύνθεσις: λήθη and the auxiliary character of λανθάνεσθαι are conceived here as the condition of the possibility of synthesis. In order to understand this, let us make a detour by way of rhythm, the third element which, as I remarked above, Ezra Pound translated by μελοποιία.

### Of Rhythm

φθόγγοι κιθάρας οὐδὲν ἀπλῶς σημαίνουντες... “The guitar, taken in itself, signifies nothing at all (XXXIX, 2; 196).”

If it is taken alone—on its own, *asynthetically* (not *asyndetically* for *asyndeton* augments the fusional temperature of the sublime mixture), bereft of all alliance or grounding in the reunification the ingredients of which Pseudo-Longinus treats exhaustively as the catalysts of the whole—rhythm—this corybantic rhythm that “constrain[s] the listener to move rhythmically” (XXXIX, 2; 196)—runs away with itself, lets fall its sense, communicates only the trepidations of trance, traceless of sense. As opposed to those votaries of the frenetic, the “crazy” rockers of today, Pseudo-Longinus takes the risk of risk itself. Sense too comprises the tie and medium. Hence, the comparison with the organic: unity of the body and of the body with what is not itself, soul or sense; “gathering” which is supposed—indeed, herein consists its sense—to transport the whole to the border of non-sense, hovering above the abyss of the question why. Thus, the gathering is at once oriented toward an end (the unity of which is conceived in terms of affinity), and endless. The *sublime* as reunification (πάθος, νόησις, schemas, rhythm) is the name of the unity that

renders forgotten its constitutive elements, the operators of the unity. This unity is related not simply to humans, to artifice (work, “production”), but also to that of which human work is an *ἀνάλογον*, to that of which one of the names is “nature” (φύσις). And the god is one “creator” among others; he too is caught up in the world (κόσμος) of which he is one of the tensors or extensors (see the section on Homer above).

### *Figures (Resumed)*

At the center of the question of “discourse of the high” (ὕψηγορία), there is a relation of reciprocal complementarity, of mutual assistance (of *dia-llel*, or βοήθεια) between the sublime (ὑψος) and figures (σχήματα): “that by nature in a certain sense the schemas struggle with the high and in return they receive from it marvellous competition” (XVII, 1; 104–5) (συμμαχεῖται; the *high* allied with figures in a single combat). Secret alliance: the figure, that “puerile” artifice, should hide itself in the sublime which is its best hideout. For figures, Pseudo-Longinus tells us, are “first of all” suspect like ruses—like Ulysses. Ulysses πολύμητις is the allegory of the schematism. The high does not raise itself without the support of the low, of what is underneath; height can only hold by rising in a pile from the low, which renders itself forgotten in the service that is “naturally” its own, specifically, to support like a slave that in which it consists and into which it disappears: the high. Figures comprise the ladder—or the flight machine, if one prefers—up which “we” (that is, ψυχή) can climb to this natural site, this *elevated site*, from which one no longer sees them, because they permit the one who has flown or fled (ὑπερβολή, for example) to see something else: specifically, exalted things. As we have already read, the most high is in fact the point closest (ἐγγύτερον) to our nature, by which it comes into contact with the superhuman, the nonmortal. Τέχνη transports the soul in raising it up to its nature (φύσις), which is “logical” (λογικόν); logos measures the “high-deep” (μέγα-βαθύ)—as Homer’s “divine horses” measured the entire span of the cosmos.

But the diversity of figures is considerable. And it is not my intention here to comment on them or even to restate the list Pseudo-Longinus treats. One might imagine that the tradition up to our own times had collected the names of these schemas and fixed their definitions. Curiously, this is not at all the case. And one observes with surprise, by simply confronting the “Longinian” onomastics with today’s “dictionaries of poetics and rhetoric” (for example, the Morier or the Gradus—but of course, not the Lausberg, which lets nothing escape), that such and such a fundamental “schema” in the text, *symmoría* (the schema of schemas), or *polyptoton* or *antimetathesis*, does not even appear by name in our taxonomies, or that certain others (*hyperbaton* or *enallage*) don’t have the same definitions, as if the lists had no memory of their origins.

For example, if Henri Lebègue profits from it—on page 32 of his edition, in a specious note—when he (re)introduces the traditional (if not very clear) distinction between *figures of thought* and *figures of style*, he does so because *this distinction does not appear in Pseudo-Longinus's text*. But Lebègue nonetheless claims that the enormous lacuna of the “archetypal” manuscript—four pages—contains—“perhaps”—the famous distinction which has been “announced by the anonymous author in chapter VII.” This is not sufficient reason for us to introduce it. Rather, if in chapter XXX (1; 147) the text informs us that we are leaving the νόησις τοῦ λόγου in order to enter into the consideration of φράσις, which is the *fourth part* announced by the enumeration of chapter VIII (1; 45-50), it is because we were in the third, which is called both τῶν σχημάτων πλάσις, “the announcement of the plan” (VIII, 1; 47) and νόησις τοῦ λόγου, “the recapitulation” (XXX, 1; 147). It is not the suspect parenthesis of page 10 of the Budé edition (δισσα δέ που ταῦτα, τὰ μὲν νοήσεως, θάτερα δὲ λέξεως, which Lebègue translates as: “there are two sorts of figures, those of thought and those of words”) which will arrest our attention: the fashions of schemas (πλάσις τῶν σχημάτων) cannot be divided—there are only figures of thought.

Logopoeia, too, will induce its own oblivion. For example, just like the other figures, hyperbole (XXXVIII, 3; 189–90) is supposed, under the pressure of pathos (ὑπὸ ἐκπαθείας), to refer in consonance (συνεκφωνῶνται) to some greatness of circumstance (μεγέθει τινὶ...περιστάσεως). The figures render themselves forgotten if something other than saying-for-its-own-sake mobilizes them. Hence, hyperbole ought to issue from the matter at hand through the mediation of pathos, not the inverse. What “surpasses the human” and takes it beyond itself ought to cut back across it and make it begin anew. The same thing goes, if you will, for names (δνόματα): they are the light of the spirit (Φῶ...τοῦ νοῦ) as long as they do not relate to trivial concerns (μικροῖς πραγματίοις) (XXX, 1; 148). The νοῦς would be what adjusts words to things within the occasion (καιρός) (XXXII, 1; 152), that is, within the relation to others.

The force which contains everything always makes in a certain way (τρόπος) “the whole” be, in the form of rapture, and here we are as in the deluge, in re-fusion, in the συνενθουσιᾶν.

### *The “syn”*

The play of the sublime as a whole is itself a gathering; a unification; a seal of πάθος, λέξις, and νόησις, and the reference or circumstance of the great: in the imminence of *mortal* danger, the power of pathos and the lexis which is of sufficient stature to mobilize all resources (τέχνη), that is, in general the antagonism of conjunction and disjunction in order to *express*—as will be repeated across the centuries—the ordeal of this danger. The synthesis of the



multiple can either take the “weak” form of hyperbaton, a ruse of disorder which *renders* in a certain way the power of conjunction which is at work, or it can bring the entire charge of speech to bear on one point of the discourse: and this is the *symmory* (or *synody*) of the figures which makes the asyndetons, anaphoras, diatyposes, and so on play into one another (XX). Pseudo-Longinus’s example on this point is that of a counsel’s plea in the matter of a brawl: as if the advocate’s discourse could report what could not be reported by the injured party. In the heat of the action (or passion), the subject submerged by what he is suffering cannot bear witness. But the (descriptive) *plaidoyer* permits one to see in the place of the offended party and to understand him. The speech which replays the events has the power to reveal their truth, by acting on the judges “like the aggressor.”

### *Mimesis*

If the “natural” is the instance and event of pathos-laden, disordered discourse *this* side of the “rhetorical” situation—that is, in action or real dialogue —, then correspondingly, art as μίμησις consists in the controlled reproduction of this situation, a retelling which reflexively places into figures (hyperbaton) themselves set apart from the vividness or naturalness of the “real” situation.

Mimesis is a representation of what has come before by means of a special effort of retrospective preparation, *as* “at the beginning.” For to be sure, it is the great and the pathos-laden which are at the beginning. One of the insistent key terms of Περὶ Ὑψους is *rapprochement*. For example:

Therefore...the passions and the heights of discourse, which lie nearest to our minds [ἐγγυτέρω] through a sort of natural kinship and through their light, glitter of their own radiance before the figures, whose art they throw into the shade and as it were keep in concealment. (XVII, 3; 105–6)

Figures favor a general *rapprochement* of the before and after, of natural and artificial. In short, the reorganization and reunification of all that is separate. The condition of this *rapprochement* is that figures themselves—having become “abstract” (detached, distant, etc.) through historical, cultivated abuse as through the lie of their cunning polyvalence—be refinalized, reunited, raised up and justified anew in “the sublime”—in the transport of the utterance that serves exalted matters. Thus, the illumination their light favors covers figures over again with the very shadow of their “brightness” (κατακαλύψει) (XVII, 3; 106).

There is *literature* (for Pseudo-Longinus: tragedy, epic, lyric poem, oratorical discourse) which, by means of a special *situation* (reading, recitation,

representation, tribunal, agora), becomes *in life as life*: i.e., *imitates*. Such literature is a part of the whole which represents the whole and without which the whole would not be *represented* or “reflected.” Metonymy works for the symbol; a situation which “imitates” what is coming to pass...when it does not take place. *Imitation* speaks of this relation of inclusion-exclusion from the λόγος, which adds (τέχνη) to what exists (φύσις) its representation.

### *The λαυθάνεσθαι*

The hypothesis is that *artifice* does not reign “*at the beginning*.”

But that something like a *crisis* has—always already?—taken place, constituting a second beginning, or rather a beginning after “the origin.” A separation takes place, or has taken place, in such a way that rhetorical reflexion can “now” distinguish, on the one hand, the strictly indescribable “norm” of speech-without-figure and, on the other hand, artifice, procedure, and excess, the threat which discursive procedures bring to bear upon speech. Finally, reflexion, or synthesis (yes, already here, there is “synthetic sublation”), miming in a way the origin, separates art from the cunning of figures in order to *render itself forgotten*: this is indeed a lethal event (λήθη), the simulation of a primordial, exalted state of language, *the rhetorical operation of which would render itself forgotten in the exaltation it—lethargically—procures*.

*Myth of the origin of speech*: at the beginning there is an exchange, an anti-dosis, between these two: the high and figures. Pathos, that which affects and troubles, transports and unbridles, must take part in the struggle, but as integrated, controlled, enlisted, and mastered; it must be brought back into the picture as excess. But how does one make the a-logos enter into the logos? By the *secret* action of artificial figures, as chapter XVII (1; 105) spells out: “Further, the best of figures dissimulates that it is a figure.” But how does one hide the figure; how does the orator (δῆτωρ) bury away (ἀπέκρυψε) the figure (τὸ σχῆμα)? Δῆλον ὅτι τῷ φωτὶ αὐτῷ. Manifestly by its brilliance, its light itself. Figures support (and in gathering enable) speech in the light of the “sublime and pathos” which consumes, subsumes, and assumes them: for the *rapprochement* of our *psyches*. Psyche desires to be brought closer to what is natural to her, to height and light: figures aid<sup>16</sup> her in this *rapprochement* by lending scintillation to the *sublime* that lives on their “technique.” The “Sun” they have helped cause to glow can thus, by illuminating, keep them in the shadows. (Is this the way royalty works in general?)

The height of art consists in dissimulating one’s artifices, in covering up one’s twists and turns, in rendering nonapparent one’s figures, one’s unacknowledged ruses: the fire of the sublime, founding all of its components, transports the listeners (readers) into ἔκστασις, to the point where they see nothing but fire. Let us hear in this that their disdain with regard to the proce-

dures and turns of rhetoric is transported, submerged, and deafened by the elevation to the sublime, as if the thing itself appeared each time in its brilliance thanks to the light of speech, of discourse, eclipsing, suppressing, and absorbing the conditions of its apparition, the undergirdings and supports, the multiplicity below, the “inferior” diversity.... There must be a *swoning syncopation* in the listener—in all listeners, including the speaker—or a loss of knowledge, in order for the rhetorical moment to be *identified* with the moment of natural perfection; a *λανθάνεσθαι*, or “over-looking,” a *λήθη*, as the condition of the utterance of the “truth” (*ἀλήθεια*): *ἀλήθεια* in *λήθη* and thanks to *λήθη*, which *renders forgotten* (unremarkable) the contradictory conditions, the *paradox* of the striking utterance of an “exalted truth.”

What happens when, in *Britannicus*, Burrhus tells us that he will speak with the frankness “of a soldier who knows ill / How to disguise the truth”? He uses the figure of the *captatio benevolentiae*, the *excusatio*, the emphatic humility of the “nonorator” who is incapable of all...but truth! As simple as that—or rather at the point of confusion of the greatest presumption and “naïveté.” And he says this in verse, Alexandrines no less, that is, as nobody in the world actually, “naturally,” speaks: the height of *disguise* which makes the naked truth *appear*.

The proper is a figure, the denegated figure, the figure of the denegation of figure.

The figural—rhetoric, which is what one is always dealing with, the place within which all lexis takes on form—deforms the straight path “denuded of artifice,” which itself does not exist, but by whose phantom all of our “expressions” are haunted. The road is and is not the road.

It remains to comprehend what is at stake in the difference stubbornly maintained between, on the one hand, the “naïve ones” (*naturalists*) who believe in the simple—*dual* and natural—difference between the proper (direct) and the figural (tortuous) as a situable, controllable difference<sup>17</sup> and, on the other hand, the twisted ones, the “Ulysseans,” who—from Pseudo-Longinus to, say, Paulhan—want to reveal the lethargic syncopation, want to make us understand the turns of figuration, the *paradox* of the cunning utterance of the “undisguised” statement, to insist on machination, to reject the *proper* and *natural* as impossible and treat it as a figure. What must the incessantly desired and invoked *natural* be in order for figural language—distorted beyond distortion, “polymetic,” anti-economical with respect to a “more proper” mode of speech—to be constantly suspected, accused, in need of “dissimulating” itself? One must dissimulate simulation, feign ignorance of figuration. Once the turn is unveiled, known as such, one exposes oneself to the accusations of treachery and trickery, of the *original sin* of lexis—but against the background of what postulated radical innocence?<sup>18</sup>

In general and radically, it is, as “people” say, “words,” speech, or discourse, that are suspect; and they will always be suspect because the same is

the milieu of the truth and the lie (*verum index sui*). What the audience grumbles about is “being duped by pretty words.” An insurmountable fear, and the swindler is the one who spices his own discourses with the grumblings of this fear itself, in order to cleanse them of the suspicion of being nothing but words. It is a paradox that has been definitively reflected upon at least since Gorgias’s *Encomium of Helen*: words are forever ruses, and it is only in and through words that what one desires will appear, the (in)credible salvation, which is other than words, the other of words, and which one calls *silence*. Discourses are for making silence, and Pseudo-Longinus himself does not escape from the topos of silence where words abolish themselves.<sup>19</sup>

It is thus in words insofar as they *render themselves forgotten*, insofar as they appear as wordless! What I am telling you is not (a) telling. Do not think that what I am telling you, which consists only of words, is only an expression of my intentions. Is *denegation* inscribed in the very heart of speech? As a kind of “performative” constitutive of eloquence? This negativity of a *work against oneself*: a sort of self-destruction at work in the heart of “words” and of the poem? Poetry annuls the poem which annuls itself in poetry (consumes itself there in favor of what surpasses it and which is itself?).