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The Origin of Longinus "Sublime" and al-Jurjani's "Eloquence": A Comparative Study

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❐ ABSTRACT ❐

The paper investigates the origin of Longinus, the famous author of Peri Hupsous, of ten though not always translated into English as On the Sublime, and comes to the conclusion that the author was the third-century rhetorician and politician Cassius Longinus, advisor of Queen Zenobia of Palmyra. That desert kingdom became in the third century the center of a burgeoning empire and a unique amalgam of sensibilities and poetics such as Greek, Roman, Arabic, and Persian. Peri Hupsous was born in that milieu and shows strong traces which link it strongly to Arabic poetics.

After seven centuries the famous poet and statesman al-Qadi al-Jurjani wrote his famous book Al-Wasata Bayan al-Mutanabbi wa Khusumigi (The Mediation between al-Mutanabbi and his Opponents). Just as Longinus lists five sources of the :sublime: so does al-Jurjani with his concept of the "eloquent". The texts of the two critics are analyzed, and the paper comes to the conclusion that unless new evidence is unearthed the similarity between the two critics must be ranked as one of the rarest in the history of literary criticism and comparative poetics.

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دراسة مقارنة مفهوم لونجينوس "الجلل" ومفهوم الجرجاني "للبلاغة"

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□ الملخّص □

يعالج البحث ظاهرة غريبة وغامضة، فالنص الإغريقي الشهير "في الجلال" مجهول الأصل والهوية والعصر، فلا يعرف لحد الآن على وجه التحديد مؤلفه أو العصر الذي عاش فيه، ولكن البحث يتوصل إلى أن المؤلف هو كاسيوس لونجينوس مستشار زنوبيا ملكة تدمر، والذي قتل على يد الإمبراطور أورليان بعد تدمير المملكة عام 272م. ويعرض لونجينوس في مؤلفه خمسة عناصر للكتابة المبدعة والتي يسميها "بالجلال". وبسبب أصوله العربية وتشبعه بالثقافات المختلفة التي كانت تمج في بلاط زنوبيا كالثقافة اليونانية والرومانية والفارسية والعربية فأن سفره الخالد "في الجلال" يحتوي على عناصر وملامح تدل على تأثره بالروح الشعرية العربية.

وبعد سبعة قرون يكتب القاضي الجرجاني مؤلفه "الوساطة بين المتنبي وخصومه"، ويعرض فيه لخمسة عناصر للبلاغة، وهي العناصر نفسها التي يناقشها لونجينوس. وما لم يثبت البحث العلمي في المستقبل وجود صلة مباشرة بين النصين، فإن التشابه بين النص الإغريقي والنص العربي يعد مصادفة نادرة في النقد الأدبي المقارن.

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Unless there is some kind of direct influence, it would have to be a rare coincidence that Longinus' ideas in Peri Hupsous (On the Sublime) find such close parallels and similarities some seven centuries later in al-Jurjani's al-Wasata (The Mediation). The parallels and similarities have never been noticed or addressed, and the significance is one which leads to greater understanding of cross-cultural affinities between Middle Eastern and Western thought, the origin and dating of the Peri Hupsous, the role of comparative studies in reaching understanding of critical texts, and the content of the lacunae in the Peri Hupsous itself. Since Longinus I refer to is most probably the third-century philosopher and rhetorician, who spent his mature years away from Rome in Palmyra (modern Syria), where he wrote his famous Peri Hupsous. The evidence is that in ideas about the sublime point to a diverse millieu which eventually expressed itself in Arabic criticism through the Persian scholar, al-Jurjani. On the Sublime is both an amalgam and expression of an extremely rich intercultural relationship that most probably occurred in Palmyra. The identification of Longinus as the third-century scholar from Palmyra makes sence, and helps explain the non-Greek elements in Peri Hupsous.

Longinus' Peri Hupsous is one of the anomalies of western literary criticism: There is controversy about the author, when the treatise was written, and even how to translate the title. There are two salient facts associated with the treatise that add to the mystery that surrounds the treatise: There is no explicit mention of the work is irretrievably lost[1]. If its position in western critical tradition is so high, why was the Peri Hupsous so long shrouded in silence? If the manuscript is marred by corruption and lacunae, we can only speculate about the real author or the time of writing, or the content of what has been lost. Evidence of al-Jurjani's treatise should make an understanding of the M.S. clearer.

Since its publication in Basel in 1554 by the Italian critic Robertello and down to the nineteenth century, the manuscript of the Peri Hupsous was attributed to Cassius Longinus, the third-century philosopher-rhetorician. Then in 1808, the Italian scholar Amati made an important discovery. The author of the manuscript was not "Dionysius Longinus" but "Dionysius or Longinus"[2]. The storm of doubt has raged unabated since that discovery. Characteristically, Saintsbury calls the nineteenth century an era marked by its "mania to prove that everybody's work was written by somebody else...," and the treatise was thus attributed to Dionysius Longinus, a first-century rhetorician[3]. In the twentieth century the list of possible candidates has expanded considerably, and now includes Aelius Theon, Pompeius Geminus, Theodorean Hermagoras, and even Plutarch. Casius Dionysius Longinus, the traditional name associated with the manuscript, is perhaps the most probable author for reasons not related to classical scholarship but to his late years in Palmyra, his exposure to different peoples, and to a different set of literary sensibilities and norms which influenced his aesthetics. This position helps explain many discrepancies and inconsistencies about the author of the manuscript expressed by many classical scholars.

The two main objections leveled against Cassius Longinus being the author are these: critics emphasize that the allusions and quotations in the essay are not later than the Augustan period, which perhaps place the writer in the early part of the first century; second, the essay seems to be directed against the arguments of a certain Caecelius of Calacte and a friend of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a rhetorician who flourished at Rome during the Augustan period, again making it possible to attribute the essay to the first century. Both objections are weak because the evidence could be

used to support rather than to undermine his authorship, as in the famous case of the author's reference to Moses, the "legislator of the Jews". This piece of evidence has been paradoxically used either to support the general claim that it was too late for a third-century rhetorician to refer to Moses, and hence the author was a first century rhetorician; or that "it would have been far more remarkable in a writer of the first century than in a writer of the third"[4]. External evidence does not, therefore, preclude the candidacy of Longius. Besides, there is no validity in asking why he had chosen a first-century[5]. Ancient polemics in rhetoric and philosophy are known to have gone on for centuries. The following rejoinder seems appropriate to this objection:

> Did not seventy years pass before a reply was made, by Origin, to the True Word of Celsus? And on the fiery battle-ground of religious controversy one might expect that polemic would know no lengthy pause[6].

Another comment supports the same conclusion:

> Ancient polemic in rhetorical and philosophical schools knows no such time limits: witness, for example, the heated polemic of Plutarch against the works of the Epicurean Colotes, 400 years old[7].

The arguments of those who favor Longinus as the author of the Peri Hupsous are based either on internal evidence or intuitive literary feeling. The general consideration of the essay is that it is Neo-platonic, written by someone influenced not by Plato's logical or ethical orientation but by a recognition of the emotional impact of poetry on its listeners. Longinus' emphasis on the ecstasy that transports the soul to higher realms is clearly in line with someone like Plotinus' mystical ideas (Plotinus could be called the founder of Neo-Platonism). The Neo-platonic slant of the essay and its aesthetic premises are clearly related to those of the third century[8]. Other critics have argued that placing Longinus in the early part of the first century associated him with Horace, who is totally different from him in temper, aesthetic assumptions, and outlook, If one considers Longinus' reference to Moses and his Neo-Platonism, "one cannot but help feel... that he belongs more to the third century than to the first"[9].

It would certainly help to identify Longinus with more certainly. The following biographical and historical sketch might better help us place him within a certain cultural and aesthetic context. His name was Dionysius Longinus (213?-273), but late in his life he settled in Palmyra, and he might have adopted the Latin name "Cassius" in honor of some powerful Roman patron, as was common at that time in the desert kingdom[10]. He was a close friend of Plotinus, and teacher to Porphyry, the famous expounder of Neo-Platonism. He has been described by Eunapius as "a living library and a walking museum"[11]. It is significant that he spent the latter part of his life in Palmyra both as a tutor and minister. Palmyra was an oasis in the Syria desert, and by the scond century it became part of an important caravan route linking the Mediterranean to Central Asia. The city prospered and became a trade center and "piled high in its market place were goods from China, India, Persia, and Arabia such as textiles, spices, perfumes, jewelry, and precious stones"[12]. Its first ruler was Odenathus (in Arabic "Ochaina"), "the Roman clients sheik..." who was granted recognition as king by the Emperor Gallienus in 265 A.D.[13]. After he was

assassinated, he was succeeded by his son Wahaballat (in Arabic "given by goddess Allat") frequently referred to in Latin as "Vaballathus" and in Greek as "Athenodorus". His mother was Zenobia (in Arabia "Zainab"), who became regent to her son. She soon became queen and rapidly conquered and ambitiously took over "Syria, Egypt, Arabia, and part of Asia Minor"[14]. No one before queen Zenobia had thus challenged Rome with such success. The Roman Emperor, Aurelian, could not tolerate her final act of defiance proclaiming her son "Augustus" in 271 A.D., and thus making him by title the equal of the Roman emperor himself, Aurelian finally decided to move, and took command of the army. After two major battles, he besieged Palmyra. Zenobia in a final, desperate bid for independence slipped through the siege lines and headed for Euphrates, but was captured and brought before Aurelian. In August 272 A.D., Palmyra capitulated. Aurelian spared the life of the queen, but put to "death a selection of the leading citizens, including Cassius Longinus"[15]. Traditional sources such as Edward Gibbon and Zosimus blame Zenobia for the death of Longinus because to save her own skin she put the blame on him as the prime instigator for breaking away from Roman rule[16].

In an atmosphere of intrigue, assassination, independence, war, and opulence Longinus acted as tutor, advisor, and minister to both Odenathus and his wife roughly from 250-272. There is no record of how long Longinus stayed in the court, but we can be certain that he was there for at least twelve years, although it would be more likely that he was in Palmyra for a longer period of time, since the twelve years would be only restricted to his official duties as educationalist and statesman. Longinus' mother was from Emesa (present-day Homs), not far from Palmyra. Zenobia is reputed to have gathered about her scholars, poets, and artists. If her court welcomed poets and scholars from East and West, it would be reasonable to assume that Longinus was witness to a strange mixture of aesthetics, values, and literary traditions such as Hellenistic, Aramaic, Persian, Syrian, and Arabic[17]. Such a blend of sensibilities would have deeply influenced Longinus, whose literary values and traditions were Greek. Longinus may have been particularly sensitive to all these influences since his mother was Syrian and he has been noted to have spoken Syriac. If both of Longinus' patrons (King Odenathus and Queen Zenobia) were Arabs, and at least partially products of an Arabic culture, it is reasonable to speculate that he was more interested in knowledgeable and of his patrons' literary norms and preferences than has been acknowledged.

ii

There is no record of Arabic poetry from Zenobia's court. In fact, there is no record of Arabic poetry written down until 700 A.D. But Pre-Islamic poetry is of such technical complexity that even

> the earliest known poems are so highly developed that one can assume poets have been composing and reciting their verses for several centuries previously[18].

One of the strangest phenomena in literary history is the suddenness which is associated with the appearance of Arabic poetry – an appearance which is marked by its maturity, technical perfection, and highly stylized conventions, as Charles Tuetey says:

> The earliest records of Pre-Islamic poetry present a fully developed achievement, with a standard idiom, a complex system of prosody, and recognized conventions. This is evident already in Imrulkais,

> who clearly marks the culmination of a long development that has gone unrecorded[19].

The famous Pre-Islamic poet Imrulkais is one of the earliest poets in recorded Arabic literature, and he "is almost universally reckoned the greatest of the... poets"[20]. If Imrulkais, who shows the perfection and technical complexity of Arabic poetry at its best, was born around 500 A.D. and died around 550, then it is certain that two centuries earlier Arabic poetry, although it "has gone unrecorded", was forming and taking its final shape. If Longinus was a witness to such a probable rich and varied cultural ambience, then some traces of that influence could easily find their way into his Peri Hupsous. There traces appear in the importance he attached to the emotional impact of poetry, his glorification of the reader's responses, and his interest not in the work as whole (a trait predominantly but not exclusively Hellenistic) but in the portative and which expresses itself in his enterest in the single line of poetry (a trait predominantly associated with Classical Arabic poetry) as opposed to a whole poem.

iii

Al-Qadi Ali bin Abdul Aziz al-Jurjani, born in Jurjan in Persia at an unknown date, most probably died in 1002 A.D. He was a poet, a critic, a historian, a statesman, and a judge (hence his surname "al-Qadi"). He is the author of half a dozen books, the most important of which is Al-Wasata Bayan al-Mutanabbi wa Khusumihi (The Mediation between al-Mutanabbi and his Opponents). The title of the book indicated that it is an attempt to reconcile the pros and cons regarding one of the most celebrated poets in the history of Arabic poetry: Al-Mutanabbi. But the book is much more than. It is also study of the mistakes and pitfalls into which great poets have fallen and of the most effective means of employing rhetorical figures. It also treats of a host of other issues such as the sociological considerations of the diction used by poet of the cities and against Al-Mutanabbi.

Al-Jurjani identifies five sources of eloquence:

> The Arabs used to give preference in terms of excellence and beauty to those poets who show dignity and correctness of meaning, compactness and integrity of expression, and gave precedence to those who describe and were successful [in their description], and who compare and were faithful [in their comparisons], to those extemporize copiously on the spur of the moment, and to those whose poetry abounds in maxims and unifque verses[21].

Longinus also identifies five sources of the sublime:

1. The ability to form grand conceptions.
2. Powerful and inspired emotion.
3. The proper formation of figures of thought and figures of speech.
4. Noble diction.
5. The total effect resulting from dignity and elevation[22].

Despite the obvious differences of terminology and nomenclature arising out of a different culture and language, careful consideration reveals that the contents of the

two lists are close to each other. The general purpose of each is also different, since Longinus was writing to a friend – advising and teaching – whereas al-Juruani was mediating between two belligerent camps, showing both the strengths and weaknesses of the poet he was discussing, but affirming at the same time that those weaknesses did not prevent the poet al-Mutanabbi from achieving excellence and eloquence. A cursory examination of the development of ideas in each work indicates the affinities.

The first consideration has to do with "grand conceptions". These concepts are presented in images produced by words. Longinus' "grand conceptions" or, in the words of another translator, "the power of conceiving impressive thoughts" is a gift which Longinus calls "nobility of soul"[23]. Such images as Hesiod's description of Trouble cannot be powerful:

> Rheum was running from her nostrils.

Longinus says that this is far from being effective since it is "offensive". Al-Jurjani's "dignity of meaning" is also associated with nobility of expression and mind. He never tires of criticizing poets for their "low meanings". For instance, he censures a famous poet for making the subject of his panegyric "sometimes a bucket, a plow, a rope and a dragon or a fiend" (p. 69). Al-Jurjani also defines eloquence (which is tantamount to Longinus' sublime) as not merely a trait associated with words and recognized by the ear, but a characteristic recognizable by the heart (PP. 52 and 412). In other words, the elements that constitute verbal excellence do not only reside in the words, or their arrangement in the sentence, but rather in the emotional response elicited by eloquent passages. Sublimity and eloquence are thus associated with the ennobling of the audience's souls or hearts.

The second source of the sublime, "powerful and inspired emotion", is problematic. Longinus does not discuss this aspect in the Peri Hupsous and several theories have suggested to account for its absence from the treatise[24]. Then to further investigate this matter is beyond the scope of this study. Suffice it to say that for Longinus, unless the emotion expressed is strong enough to touch the hearer, the poetry is not sublime. Strangely enough, al-Jurjani also does not discuss the role of emotions, but associates excellence and eloquence with simplicity and avoidance of craftsmanship and rhetorical complexities, which upon recitation of poetry "shall cause such ecstasy that you will be carried away from yourself" (p. 27). Sometimes, al-Jurjani's yardstick for effective poetry and how it moves its hearers is "how quickly the heart responds to it" (p.32). At other times, he reminds his readers that is "close to the heart and pleasant to the ear" (p.52), implying that the music of poetry or the harmony of words and their emotional impact lead to a sense of exultation, a position not far from Longinus's emphasis on ecstasy and transport.

The third source of the sublime according to Longinus lies in figures of thought and speech, but they should be used cautiously and sparingly since

> The unconscionable use of figures is particularly subject to suspicion, and engenders impressions of hidden traps and plots and fallacies (127).

Since the best way to conceal the artificiality of those figures is to make them natural, "a rhetorical figure would appear to be most effective when the fact that it is a figure is not apparent" (p.127). Then Linginus deals with specific rhetorical figures such as asyndeton (chapter19), asyndeton combined with anaphora (ch.20), polysyndeton (ch.21), hyperbation (ch.22), and other rhetorical issues such as the use of the plural for the singular (ch.23), the present (ch.25), the imaginary second person (ch.26), etc.

Of particular interest to us is Longinus' insistence that these rhetorical devices are used to increase the emotional impact on the reader, leading eventually to the sublime:

> Rhetorical figures are all means of increasing the animation and the emotional impact of style, and emotional effects play as large a part in the production of the sublime... (p.138)

Al-Jurjani also lists many rhetorical devices such as paronomasia, hyperbole, similes, overstatements, etc. Like Longinus, al-Jurjani emphasizes the drawbacks of excessive use of rhetorical figures because

> They reach the heart only after exhausting the mind, tiring the wits, and overburdening one's natural disposition. If one were to be successful [in arriving at the meaning], he would be so after so much fatigue, exertion, and exhaustion. A condition neither conducive to ecstasy and enjoyment, nor to the appreciation of niceties. (p.19).

It is noteworthy that al-Jurjani not only condemns the excessive use of rhetorical figures because they block the flow of emotional response, but he also warns that they undermine any advantages and merits a poet may have. To substantiate this claim, al-Jurjani cites Abu Tammam, one of the most celebrated poets of his time and well-known for rhetorical complexity and craftsmanship, and obtuseness "resulting in ugliness in many of his poems" (p.19).

The fourth source of sublimity for Longinus is noble diction, this is how he views the issue:

> Words finely used are in truth the very light of thought. Yet it would not do to use such grand diction all the time, for to apply great and stately term to trifling matters would be like putting a big tragic mask on a tiny child. (p.139)

Longinus' discussion of diction is colored by his interest in the thought it expresses. Diction by itself cannot elevate a composition, but if used inappropriately, leads to a grotesque effect. Conversely, appropiateness of diction imparts to a composition beauty and grandeur.

While al-Jurjani does not discuss the importance of diction and its relationship to thought as Longinus does, he gives numerous examples where vulgar words and lowly meanings become causes for "poor and corrupt composition" (p.59). like Longinus, al-Jurjani claims that nobility of expression does not lie in the words themselves, nor on the level of diction alone. Nobility lies in the thought, and this becomes apparent when poets violate rules. That is, rules are violated when a poet commits mistakes in prosody (pp.62-63), uses inappropriate diction (p.54), makes grammatical mistakes (p.61), has wrong uses of relative pronouns (p.95), plagiarizes (pp.187-206), commits inaccuracies in geographical locations (p.77), and even gives false etymological information (pp.79-81). Then, alJurjani raises a thorny issue, the

issue of the poet's creed, or what is called in modern critical thought "poetry and belief". In this issue, al-Jurjani must be ranked as one of the few earliest critics to separate poetry and its nobility unequivocally form creed. He denies any relationship between what a poet believes in and the quality of his poetry. Furthermore, he contends that if we were to censure and ban poets whose creeds are different from those that are accepted, hundreds of poets from our literary heritage would have to be ignored, and their names obliterated from the history of poetics (p.84).

The fifth source of the sublime includes word order, rhythm, and euphony. Longinus does not detail these topics, since he tells us that he has written two books on these subject (p.150). Longinus, however, discusses the psychological effects of rhythms, and associates that effect with we might call in psychoanalysis "identification":

> New composition is a kind of harmony of the words which are implanted in man at his birth... and it is my belief that it brings out manifold patterns of words, thoughts, deeds, beauty, and melody, all of them originally born and bred in us... Moreover, by the blending of its myriad tones it brings into the hearts of the bystanders the actual emotions of the speaker, and always induces them to share it. (pp.150-151)

Al-Jurjani also discusses the psychological effect of harmony on several occasions. If Longinus defines "a kind of harmony of word", then al-Jurjani associates grandeur and elevation in poetry with four factors: the first two, disposition and mature, are innate; and the last two, knowledge and craftsmanship, are acquired. If a poem enjoys these characteristics, then it is "grand, elevated, and eloquent" (p.17). To illustrate how these elements work, al-Jurjani gives numerous examples from a "natural poet" (as opposed to a poet whose main concern is craftsmanship). Here is his comment on part of a love poem:

> Examine it carefully: Do you see any hackneyed word or overused diction? Or do you see any craftsmanship and excessive rhetoric? Or do you see any concern for minute details or an interest in the remote? Then meditate on what happens to you when you recite it, and examine the feeling of relief that overcomes you, or how ecstatic you become when you hear it. If you do that then you will remember your own love standing in front of you, and fully pictured in front of your eyes. (p.27).

This interesting passage sounds suspiciously like an extension of Longinus' argument. If Longinus emphasizes the importance of diction and warns against the dangers of excessive craftsmanship, al-Jurjani also reiterates the same idea. Longinus also emphasizes the psychological effect of poetry, and how it leads to identification in the sense of an audience sharing a poet's experience. Al-Jurjani at least seems to have discovered the same phenomenon. He claims that a love poem will exert a cathartic effect on the reader because of the joy that accompanies it. What is even more important is the feeling of identification which will remind you of your love, or when

that love is materialized in front of you. In other words, your imagination will give concrete form or body to your ecstasy, which is the outcome of harmonious words and rhythms.

iv

The similarities and parallels between the two critics extend beyond the five elements of what they considered to be a yardstick of excellence or eloquence. Longinus for instance states:

> the highest genius is very far from being flawless, for entire accuracy runs the risk of descending to triviality, whereas in the grand manner, as in the possession of great wealth, something is bound to be neglected. (p.143)

similar to that is al-Jurjani's statement:

> Poetry neither appeals to heart by close examination and argumentation nor by analogy and debate... [Some poems on the one hand] may be technically perfect, but they are neither pleasant nor appealing... [On the other hand] they may be good, though not elegant and charming. (p.100)

Al-Jurjani's following observation is also similar:

> The least fortunate poets are those whose main concern is correct prosody, accurate grammar, and impeccable language. Their whole aim is to find the embellished word and the decorated statement packed with paronomasia, pun, rhetorical figures... (p.413)

Longinus states explicitly that a mediocre poet will aim at perfection, since that seems to be a short cut to genius. To overcome mediocrity, a poet will attempt technical perfection so that he compensates for lack of genius. Longinus stops the argument here and proceeds to give examples of Homer's faults. Al-Jurjani echoes the idea just where it was left. The mediocre poet, al-Jurjani contends, will rely on rhetoric, craftsmanship and technical dexterity to impress his readers, but he remains "unfortunate" because technical perfection leads to "affectation and dryness" (p.52).

Another observation which is an extraordinary parallel between the two writers is Longinus' interest in quotations of single lines of poetry or small sections of prose. He neither deals with whole poems nor with complete extracts. Arabic criticism for more than a thousand years has been concerned primarily with the single line of poetry. In fact, the yardstick for the preference of one poet over another has been mostly attributed to a single line. Common literary verdicts are similar to the following impressionistic statement, "This line of poetry is the most poetic line the Arabs have ever uttered", or when comparing two great poets, the critic might make a claim such as "the poet A is better than B because he has a line of poetry which is so and so"[25].

In other words, the emphasis on the single line or on the part rather than the whole has been a specific characteristic of Arabic criticism. If Longinus' Greek education were similar to his contemporary critics, he would have been interested in the totality of the work of art, rather than in a particular line of poetry. He would have emphasized other aspects of the literary work as Aristotle does in his Poetics, or even like Plato whose interest also lies in the morality of the whole rather than the part.

At this point it be pertinent to note two curious facts: First, Longinus' Peri Hupsous is neither concerned with Aristotle's aesthetics nor with Plato's markedly moral bent. In fact, the peri Hupsous does just the opposite, as if the aesthetic background from which Longinus' ideas come are not solely based on Graeco-Roman literature. This curious fact has been previously noticed, and for the modern critic it represents a mystery[25]. D.F. Kitto's Greek Tragedy discusses this point, and more recently Stanley Hyman has noticed that

> What Aristotle elevates in tragedy Longinus seems to disagree with. Even the model tragic work that Aristotle keeps on referring to (Sophocles' Oedipus Rex), Longinus brushes aside, and cites instead another tragedy, namely Euripedes' Medea, which Aristotle would have objected to for several reasons[27].

The pieces of evidence we have considered fit snugly into the puzzle of who the author was, where he lives, why no ancient writer refers to him, etc. The accumulated pieces of evidence lead to a tentative conclusion, that the Peri Hupsous owes much to a different tradition of poetics. An ancient writer so different, even opposed to a canonical figure such as Aristotle, a writer living in Palmyra, in Zenobia's court, a court teeming with different cultures and sensibilities, encouraged Longinus to come up with his unique formula of the sublime.

Secondly, nearly a century ago, William Rhys Roberts noticed that Longinus' writing in Peri Hupsous does not reflect a direct knowledge of Rome, and also shows concern with problems that happened much earlier:

> In certain respects the Nile (to which he refers with admiration) seems to be near to him than Rome itself. He sometimes writes as if, when writing, he knew of things in the capital by hearsay rather than by actual experience. He can speak in general terms of Roman vices, but he does not appear... to possess the knowledge of a resident with regard to definite, though perhaps trivial circumstances, such as the confinement of the Pygmies[28].

To these questions, queries, and inconsistencies one could offer the simple fact that Longinus was at Palmyra and not at Rome, and his residence in Palmyra not only changed the course of his life but also colored his aesthetics by the many cultural elements present in the court at Palmyra. Longinus spent his mature years first in Alexandria and finally in Palmyra, and he was away from Rome for almost thirty years. This absence may account for Longinus's lack of personal knowledge of simple facts and incidents which took place in Rome while he was away.

If we look at the problem from a different perspective, that is from Longinus' time and life at Palmyra, no written record of Arabic literature has reached us. It is also true that by the time Arabic poetry first made its appearance, it was perfect in terms of technicalities and prosody. It is difficult not to believe that at Palmyra, Arabic poetry must have been recited, heard, and appreciated by the court, first by King Odenathus himself, then by Queen Zenobia, his wife. If Longinus was such an influential figure academically and politically (both tutor and counselor), it is reasonable to assume that he was exposed to that poetry, that he must have seen the interest in the single line of poetry and its emotional effect upon its hearers, and perhaps even knew the language or learned it there (his own mother, we remember, was from Hums). If that is so, then it might also be possible make even a bolder claim: In the Court of Palmyra Arabic sensibility and Arabic poetics, though still unrecorded, found their way to Longinus' Greek sensibility and education. Traces of this influence are found in Longinus' concern with the glorification of emotional excitement, the interest in the part rather than the whole (that is, the interest in the single line of poetry), and finally in the comparative method to which he appeals, and which could be explained by the presence in the court of intermingling cultures. The comparison of the Peri Hupsous with al-Jurjani's Al-Wasata, while of a later date, is close enough to indicate either a working knowledge of the Peri Hupsous, or such a close sharing of the values passed down in another culture (one which was drawn on in the making of the Peri Hupsous) that there could even be a common source. A comparative approach to the question of the Peri Hupsous thus lays a foundation for further understanding of that work, the origins of our own theories of art, further evidence of the importance of Middle Eastern cultures to Western European thought, and a substantiation of the importance of comparative studies.

Notes

1- The only exception is John of Sicily, the eleventh-century rhetorician who twice alludes or seems to allude to Longinus. For more details see D.A. Russell, Longinus' On the Sublime (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), pp. xxv-xxiii, and M.J. Boyd, "Longinus, the 'philological Discourse', and the Essay 'On the Sublime", Classical Quarterly, Vol. 51, 1957, pp.39-46.

2- The best introduction to the MSS. and author is still W. Rhys Roberts' Text and Translation" Longinus "On the Sublime" (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1899), "Introduction", pp.-22.

3- George Saintsbury, A History of Criticism and Literary Taste in Europe, Vol. I, Classical and Mediaeval Criticism, 7th impression, (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1961), p.152.

4- R.A. Scott-James, The Making of Literature (London, 1936), Ch.VII, "The First romantic Critic", p.81.

5- J.W. Atkins, Literary Criticism in Antiquity, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: cambridge Univ. Press, 1934), p.216.

6- W. Rhys Roberts, Longinus, p.8.

7- Donals A. Russell. "Greek Criticism of the Empire" in George A. Kennedy, ed., The History of Literary Criticism (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), p.309.

8- R.A. Scott James, pp.80-94.

9- Vernon Hall, Jr., A Short History of Literary Criticism (NY: New York Univ. Press, 1963), p-16.

10- Prominent Palmyrene citizens began to add Roman names to their own. The city itself took on a new appellation. One family had "Septimius" prefixed to its Semitic name, indicating its receipt of citizenship under Serrerus and probably in recogintion of services rendered in the struggle against Parthia.
Philip K. Hitti, History of Syria Including Lebanon and Palestine, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1957), p.391.
Also compare the following observation:

> Unlike other Hellenized and romanized Arabs in the Orient, the Palmyrenes kept their Arabic names even when they added a Roman one, as when Hayran added Septimius. The Arab character of Palmyra was stronger than that of the Emesa of the Severi.

Irfan Shahid, Rome and the Arabs: A Prolegomenon to the study of Byzantium and the Arabs (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1984), p.38.

11- Willmer Cane Wright, trans., Philostratus and Eunapius: The Lives of the Sophists (London: Heinemann, 1921), p.38. On the relationship between Zenobia and Neo-Platonism, see Shahid, Rome and the Arabs, pp.41 and 154.

12- Fritz M. Heichelheim and Cedric A. Yeo, A History of the Roman Empire (N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p.399.

13- Ibid., 399.

14- Frank C. Bourne, A History of the Romans (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1966), P.522.

15- Iain Browing, Palmyra (London: Chatto &. Windus, 1979), p.47.

16- The classic account of Zenobia's court and her ill-fated advisor is Edward Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Decline and Fall of the

roman Empire, Vol. I (Philadelphia: Claxton, Romsen, 1872), Chapter xi, pp.330-365.

A detailed treatment of Zosimus' account of Zenobia is offered by Shahid, Rome and the Arabs, pp.117-118.

17-Fdritz M. Heichelheim and Cedric A. Yeo, A History, p.403; lain Browing, Plamyra, p. 48; Bermard Lewis, The Arabs in History (London: Hutchinson, 1966), pp.26-27, and Philip K. Hitti, History of the Arabs, 8th edition (London: Macmillan, 1964), p.76.

18-Omar Pound, Arabic & Persian Poems (London: Fulcrum Press, 1970), p.11.

19-Charles Greville Tuetey, Classical Arabic Poetry: 162 Poems from Imrulkais to Ma'arri (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p.30.

20-Reynold A. Nicholson, A Literary History of the Arabs (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ.-Press, 1910) p.105. also note the following observation:

> We have now to consider the form and matter of the oldest extant poems in the Arabic language. Between these highly developed productions and the rude doggeral of Saj' or Rajaz there lies an interval, the length of which it is impossible even to conjecture.
>
> The first poets are already consummate masters of the craft. (p.75) (Emphasis added).

21-Al-Qadi Al-Jurjani, Al-Wasata Bayn al-Mutanabbi wa Khusumihi (Beirut: Al-Asria, N.D.), p.33. Futher references to this edition will be cited parenthetically. All translations are mine.

22-T.S. Dorsch, "Longinus: On the Sublime" in Classical Literary Criticism (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p.108. Further references to this edition will be cited parenthetically.

23-D.A. Russell, 'Longinus' On the Sublime (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p.xii. It would be interesting to investigate the stylistic variations of different translations, since a particular set terminology or Linguistic preferences of the translator do not only reflect a different world view but also an ideological slant. For further details see Ian Mason, "Discourse, Ideology, and Translation" and my "The translation of Style", in Robert de Beaugrande, Abdulla shunnafq, and Mohamed Helmy Hiliel, eds., Language, Discourse and Translation in the West and Middle East (The Netherlands and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1994), pp.23-34 and 65-72.

24-For more details, see D.A. Russell, Longinus, pp.xiii-xiv.

25-Ihsan Abbas, History of Literary Criticism Among Arabs (Beirut: Dar al-Thaqafa, 1971), p.45. and my "Toward an Analytical Approach in Arabic Criticism", Education & Science, 13, 1993, p.25. Both references are translated from Arabic.

26-See, for instance, David Daiches, Critical Approaches to Literature, second ed. (London: Longman, 1981), p.46, Atkins, p.210. and William K. Winsatt, Jr. and Cleanth Brooks, Literary Criticism: A Short History (N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), p.97.

27-Stanley Edgar Hyman, Poetry and Criticism: Four Revolutions in Literary Taste (N.Y.: Atheneum, 1961(, pp.26-37.

28-W. Rhys Roberts, Longinus, pp.21-22.

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