

# Translations of the Sublime

The Early Modern Reception and Dissemination  
of Longinus' *Peri Hupsous* in Rhetoric, the Visual Arts,  
Architecture and the Theatre

*Edited by*

Caroline van Eck, Stijn Bussels,  
Maarten Delbeke and Jürgen Pieters



BRILL

LEIDEN · BOSTON  
2012

## CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .....	vii
Notes on the Editors .....	ix
Notes on the Contributors .....	xi
List of Illustrations .....	xv
Introduction .....	1
CAROLINE VAN ECK, STIJN BUSSELS, MAARTEN DELBEKE	
I. THE EARLY MODERN RECEPTION AND DISSEMINATION OF <i>PERI HUPSOUS</i>	
The Meaning of <i>Apostrophè</i> in Longinus's <i>On the Sublime</i> (16, 2) .....	13
FRANCIS GOYET	
Longinus and Poetic Imagination in Late Renaissance Literary Theory .....	33
EUGENIO REFINI	
The Sublime and the Bible: Longinus, Protestant Dogmatics, and the "Sublime Style" .....	55
DIETMAR TILL	
A l'aune du sublime : autour du « Parallèle de Corneille et Racine » (1688) de La Bruyère .....	65
PAUL J. SMITH	
II. TRANSLATIONS OF THE SUBLIME INTO THE VISUAL ARTS, ARCHITECTURE AND THE THEATRE	
<i>Orrore, terrore, timore</i> . Vasari und das Erhabene .....	83
HANA GRÜNDLER	

Elevated Twins and the Vicious Sublime. Gianlorenzo Bernini and Louis XIV .....	117
MAARTEN DELBEKE	
“One never sees monsters without experiencing emotion”. <i>Le merveilleux</i> and the Sublime in Theories on French Performing Arts (1650–1750) .....	139
STIJN BUSSELS AND BRAM VAN OOSTVELDT	
The Demosthenes of Painting. Salvator Rosa and the 17th century Sublime .....	163
HELEN LANGDON	
The Longinian Sublime, Effect and Affect in ‘Baroque’ British Visual Culture .....	187
LYDIA HAMLETT	
Figuring the Sublime in English Church Architecture 1640–1730 ....	221
CAROLINE VAN ECK	
Paradoxical Encounters. Eighteenth-Century Architectural Experiences and the Sublime .....	247
SIGRID DE JONG	
Index Nominum .....	269

## LONGINUS AND POETIC IMAGINATION IN LATE RENAISSANCE LITERARY THEORY

Eugenio Refini

### *Introduction*

The history of poetics and rhetoric in the Italian Renaissance still lacks a complete account of the diffusion of Longinus' treatise *On the Sublime*. The critical bibliography is indeed quite rich, but scholars have usually approached the problem from a limited perspective. After the seminal catalogue of first editions, translations and commentaries published by Bernard Weinberg in 1950,<sup>1</sup> the most relevant studies on the influence of Longinus on 16th and 17th century Italian artistic and literary culture are by Gustavo Costa, whose numerous articles skilfully focus on familiarity of some Italian humanists and poets with the treatise *On the Sublime*.<sup>2</sup> Francesco Robortello, Paolo Manuzio and Francesco Porto, who edited the Greek text respectively in 1554, 1555 and 1569, were not the only scholars working on Longinus.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Weinberg B., "Translations and Commentaries of Longinus *On the Sublime* to 1600: a Bibliography", *Modern Philology* 47, 3 (1950) 145–151. Cf. idem, ps. Longinus, *Dionysius Cassius*, in Kristeller P.O. – Cranz F.E. (eds.), *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum: Medieval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries*, vol. II (Washington D.C.: 1971) 27–42.

<sup>2</sup> Costa G., "Paolo Manuzio e lo Pseudo-Longino", *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 161 (1984) 60–77; idem, "Appunti sulla fortuna dello Pseudo-Longino nel Seicento: Alessandro Tassoni e Paganino Gaudenzio", *Studi secenteschi* 25 (1984) 123–143; idem, "The Latin Translations of Longinus' *Peri Ypsous* in Renaissance Italy", in Schoeck R.J. (ed.), *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Bononiensis. Proceedings of the Fourth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, Bologna, 26 August to 1 September 1979* (Binghamton, N.Y.: 1985) 224–238; idem, "Un annoso problema: Tasso e il Sublime", *Rivista di Estetica* 27 (1987) 49–63; idem, "Pietro Vettori, Ugolino Martelli e lo Pseudo Longino", in Russo L. (ed.), *Da Longino a Longino: i luoghi del Sublime* (Palermo: 1987) 65–79; idem, "Storia del Sublime e storia ecclesiastica", *Aevum Antiquum* 3 (2003) 319–350. Cf. Mattioli E., "Gli studi di Gustavo Costa sul Sublime in Italia", *Studi e problemi di critica testuale* 36 (1988) 139–155.

<sup>3</sup> *Dionysii Longini rhetoris praestantissimi liber de grandi sive sublimi orationis genere. Nunc primum a Francisco Robortello Utinensi in luce editus [...]* (Basel, Johannes Oporinus: 1554); *Dionysii Longini de sublimi genere dicendi* (Venice, Paolo Manuzio: 1555); *Aphthonius, Hermogenes et Dionysius Longinus, praestantissimi artis Rhetorices magistri, Francisci Porti Cretensis opera industriaque illustrati atque expoliti* (Geneva, Johannes Crispinus: 1569).

I will first present a synthetic account summarising what we actually know about the diffusion of Longinus' work throughout the Italian Renaissance. The draft will consider the manuscript tradition of the treatise, as well as the diffusion of the text by means of early printed editions; it will then focus on Renaissance translations and commentaries, both published and unpublished, for they help us understand how scholars read Longinus in the 16th and 17th centuries. In the second part of the paper, I will consider – through the case study of Lorenzo Giacomini's *Discorso del furor poetico* (1587) – a particular aspect of the treatise *On the Sublime*, namely the notion of *phantasia*, for it seems to be one of the most attractive Longinian terms, with respect to late Renaissance literary taste. After a close reading of Giacomini's *Discorso*, which is widely indebted to Longinus, I will approach the way Renaissance readers dealt with the notion of *phantasia* as discussed in chapter XV of the treatise *On the Sublime*. Humanistic translations of the text will help us to understand the important connection among *phantasia* and other rhetorical notions such as *ekplexis*, *enargeia* and allegory, which played a key role in Renaissance conceptions of the poetical imagination. In closing, I will call attention to the specifics of Giacomini's "physiological" reading of Longinus, in a cultural context in which – at least from the point of view of literary critics and theory – the originality of the treatise *On the Sublime* was not fully grasped.

#### *Textual tradition and diffusion of Longinus in Renaissance Italy*

Longinus began to circulate among Renaissance scholars long before the mid-16th century printed editions. As Carlo Maria Mazzucchi pointed out in the preparatory study for his critical edition of the treatise, the history of the Longinus manuscript tradition is in fact mainly humanistic.<sup>4</sup> Except for the codex Parisinus Graecus 2036, which dates from the 10th century, all the other extant manuscripts of Longinus were copied during the Renaissance. Their histories are indeed very interesting, for they involve many relevant figures of Italian Humanism such as, among the others, Basilios Bessarion, Janus Lascaris, Niccolò Ridolfi, Antonio Eparco, Fulvio Orsini, Pietro Vettori, Ugolino Martelli, Diego Hurtado de Mendoza.

---

<sup>4</sup> Mazzucchi C.M., "La tradizione manoscritta del *Peri Ypsous*", *Italia medievale e umanistica* 32 (1989) 205–226. Cf. idem (ed.), *Dionisio Longino. Del sublime* (Milano: 1992).

Robortello's 1554 *editio princeps* and Manuzio's 1555 competing editions of Longinus gave rise to a larger diffusion of the text, which was soon translated from Greek into Latin: Domenico Pizzimenti and Pietro Pagano's translations, respectively published in 1566 and 1572, are not in fact the only ones extant.<sup>5</sup>

Gustavo Costa disclosed the importance of a still unpublished and anonymous Latin translation currently preserved in the Vatican Library, ms. Vat. Lat. 3441 (ff. 12r–31r).<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately we know nothing about the history of the manuscript, except the name of its important owner, Fulvio Orsini (1529–1600), librarian in the service of cardinals Ranuccio and Alessandro Farnese.<sup>7</sup> From his youth and until his death, Fulvio Orsini worked for the Farneses, quickly becoming a prominent figure in their circle, as well as playing a primary role in Roman cultural life in the second half of 16th century. His most important achievement was the establishment of one of the richest private libraries in early modern Europe: Orsini collected manuscripts and rare books, revealing acute skill in selecting precious documents.<sup>8</sup> Based on the palaeographical expertise of Augusto Campana, Costa suggested assigning the translation to Fulvio Orsini himself, who also owned a Greek testimony of the treatise (the current ms. Vat. Gr. 1417).<sup>9</sup> As regards the date, Bernard Weinberg followed the opinion of Giovanni Mercati, who brought it back up to the first half of 16th century.<sup>10</sup> If that is indeed the case, it would mean that the Vatican *De altitudine et granditate orationis* preceded Robortello's *editio princeps* and was therefore the first Latin translation of Longinus ever known.

However, Costa's remarks on Orsini's translation go farther, for he emphasises the affinity between Longinian poetics of sublimity and Michelangelo Buonarroti's masterworks. The reference to the great artist is not gratuitous, by virtue of his relationship with the Farnese and

<sup>5</sup> *Dionysii Longini Rhetoris Praestantissimi liber de Grandi orationis genere*, Domenico Pizzimentiono Vibonensi interprete (Naples, Johannes Maria Scotus: 1566); *Dionysii Longini De Sublimi dicendi genere liber a Petro Pagano latinitate donatus* (Venice, Vincenzo Valgrisi: 1572).

<sup>6</sup> Costa, "The Latin Translations" 224–230; idem, "Pietro Vettori, Ugolino Martelli" 65; idem, "Storia del Sublime" 330. Cf. Weinberg, "Translations and Commentaries" 146.

<sup>7</sup> Nollac P. de, *La bibliothèque de Fulvio Orsini: contributions à l'histoire des collections d'Italie et à l'étude de la Renaissance* (Paris: 1887).

<sup>8</sup> As regards the constitution of Orsini's library, cf. Nollac, "La Bibliothèque" *passim*, which also provides a fundamental biography of the humanist.

<sup>9</sup> Mazzucchi, "La tradizione manoscritta" 214.

<sup>10</sup> Costa, "The Latin Translations" 227; Weinberg, "Translations and Commentaries" 146.

Orsini himself: summing up Costa's clues, the circulation of Longinus in the Farnesian *entourage* during the last years of the artist's life may have played an important role in the predilection for Buonarroti's art, as well as in the interpretation of his artistic experience in terms of sublimity.<sup>11</sup>

Otherwise, the Vatican translation is not the only Longinian document waiting for an exhaustive study and a modern edition. The first Italian translation of the treatise, which is by the Florentine scholar Giovanni da Falgano and dated 1575, is still unpublished and preserved in the National Library in Florence,<sup>12</sup> while a Latin version by Leone Allacci, written before 1631 and followed by an extensive commentary, lies among the humanist's autograph papers in the Vallicelliana Library in Rome.<sup>13</sup> An attentive study of such documents, at least partly philological, would result in a better overview of the first stages of Longinus' diffusion in modern Europe.

As regards scholars' knowledge of Longinus, Gustavo Costa focused on some interesting and important cases. The first one is obviously Paolo Manuzio. If his philological interest in the treatise *On the Sublime* first came to light in the 1555 edition of the Greek text, the editor's acquaintance with the rhetorical ideas expressed by Longinus appeared – according to Marc Fumaroli – in his *Discorso intorno all'ufficio dell'oratore* as well.<sup>14</sup> By contrast, Costa himself retrenched the assumed Longinian frame of the *Discorso*: Manuzio seems in fact to set a limit to Longinus' disruptive conception of *logos* in favour of a more traditional Ciceronian approach.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, as Fumaroli showed in his fundamental book *L'Âge de l'éloquence*, the treatise *On the Sublime* undoubtedly played a

---

<sup>11</sup> Costa, "The Latin Translations" 228–229. I tried to contemplate Michelangelo's possible acquaintance with Longinus: his writings, though extremely suggestive as regards the possibility of an interpretation in terms of longinian sublimity, do not reveal a conscious knowledge of Longinus' categories. Nonetheless, some typical ideas of Michelangelo's conception of artistic creation expressed in his poems and letters deserve, in my opinion, a broader analysis. Even if they mainly go back to platonic components, some interesting analogies with longinian notions are not missing.

<sup>12</sup> *Libro della altezza del dire di Dionysio Longino rhetore tradotto dalla greca nella toscana lingua da Giovanni di Niccolò da Falgano fiorentino in Fiorenza* (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, ms. Magl. VI.33). Cf. Weinberg, "Translations and Commentaries" 150.

<sup>13</sup> Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, ms. Allacci, XXIX.1–8.

<sup>14</sup> Fumaroli M., *L'Age de l'éloquence. Rhétorique et "res literaria" de la Renaissance au seuil de l'époque classique* (Geneva: 1980) 165–167.

<sup>15</sup> Costa, "Paolo Manuzio e lo Pseudo-Longino".

significant role in the composition of Jesuit rhetoric and poetics.<sup>16</sup> From this perspective, the diffusion of Longinian ideas in Jesuit contexts, even if curbed by the typical scholastic approach of the *ratio studiorum*, is surely worth examining.

Among others, Florentine philologist Pietro Vettori stands out for his intimate knowledge of Longinus. As Costa revealed in his study devoted to Vettori and Ugolino Martelli, the two scholars helped each other in supplying and exchanging Greek manuscripts between Rome and Florence. Their letters attest for example, that Vettori asked Martelli to send him a manuscript copy of Longinus in 1559 (moreover, we know that Martelli obtained two codexes of the treatise for his Florentine master). There are no Longinian traces in Vettori's commentary on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (1548), but Longinus appears as an important frame of reference both in the commentaries on Aristotle's *Poetics* (1560) and Demetrius' *On Style* (1562), as well as in later editions of the *Variarum Lectionum libri* (1569, 1582).<sup>17</sup>

However, the most tangible influence of the Longinian notion of the sublime occurs in the late 16th century poetics of *meraviglia*: from that perspective, it is enough to think about Franceco Patrizi's *Poetica*, which is the most Longinian text in Italian Renaissance literary theory, focusing above all on astonishment and wonder produced by the poet. Terms like *meraviglia*, *stupore* and *estasi* become the keywords of an idea of artistic and poetic creation which perfectly fits in with the Longinian notion of the sublime.<sup>18</sup>

#### *A case study: Lorenzo Giacomini's Discorso del furor poetico (1587)*

Despite such a wide circulation, just a few authors throughout the Renaissance explicitly mention Longinus or quote passages from the treatise *On the Sublime*. The particular nature of the treatise, which is not scholastic, as well as the difficulty of the text, limited its diffusion in a

<sup>16</sup> Fumaroli, *L'Age de l'éloquence, passim*; cf. idem, "Rhétorique d'école et rhétorique adulte: remarques sur la perception européenne du traité *Du Sublime* au XVI<sup>e</sup> et au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle", *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 86 (1986) 33–51.

<sup>17</sup> Costa, "Pietro Vettori, Ugolino Martelli" *passim*.

<sup>18</sup> Vasoli C., "Schede patriziane sul *De Sublime*", in Casertano G. (ed.), *Il Sublime. Contributi per la storia di un'idea* (Napoli: 1983) 161–174. Such an approach is obviously shared by Baroque culture: 17th century poetics is in fact actually influenced by Longinus, as proved by the *querelle* between Alessandro Tassoni and Giuseppe Aromatari (cf. Costa, "Appunti sulla fortuna dello Pseudo-Longino nel Seicento").

context in which the scholastic approach to literary and artistic theory was predominant.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the notion of the sublime as conceived by Longinus seems to leave a mark in the debate on poetry. As regards the question of style, sublimity is a part of the wider notion of high and noble style treated by other rhetoricians as well. From this perspective, Demetrius' *On Style* and Hermogenes' *On Types of Style* offer an easier and more complete approach to the definition of a sublime stylistic register.<sup>20</sup> However, Longinian sublimity is something more than a simple stylistic notion, for the sublime is first of all a state of mind (as Longinus himself affirms, 'sublimity is the echo of a great soul').<sup>21</sup> Longinus definitely offers an alternative choice with respect to the classical notion of *mimesis* as imitation of nature found in the scholastic readings of Aristotle and Horace.<sup>22</sup> He brings something new because of his different way of looking at poetry. Considering literature as a particular means of communication in which the dimension of emotional involvement of both the author and the reader is the most important one, the treatise *On the Sublime* gives space to an idea of artistic creation which focuses on the extraordinary intellectual profusion of the ingenious artist.

It is therefore interesting further to consider Lorenzo Giacomini's *Discorso del furor poetico*, an important, though marginal and neglected document concerning Longinus' influence on late 16th century debates on the nature of poetry and the poetic imagination. Among the many authors studied by Bernard Weinberg, only Giacomini explicitly mentions Longinus when discussing the notion of poetic ecstasy in his academic lecture devoted to poetic inspiration, which was given in Florence before the Accademia degli Alterati in 1587.<sup>23</sup> Lorenzo Giacomini (1552–1598),

<sup>19</sup> Logan J.L., "Longinus and the Sublime", in Norton G.P. (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. III. *The Renaissance* (Cambridge: 1999) 529–539. As regards the scholastic approach involving the diffusion of Horace's *Art of Poetry* as well as Aristotle's *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, cf. Weinberg B., *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Chicago: 1961).

<sup>20</sup> On the importance of Demetrius and Hermogenes in 16th-century theories on style, cf. Grosser H., *La sottigliezza del disputare. Teorie degli stili e teorie dei generi in età rinascimentale e nel Tasso* (Firenze: 1992); Patterson A.M., *Hermogenes and the Renaissance. Seven Ideas of Style* (Princeton: 1970).

<sup>21</sup> Longinus, *On the Sublime* IX, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Herrick M.T., *The Fusion of Horatian and Aristotelian Literary Criticism. 1531–1555* (Urbana: 1946).

<sup>23</sup> Giacomini L., *Del furor poetico. Discorso fatto ne l'Academia degli Alterati ne l'anno MDLXXVII*, in idem, *Orationi e discorsi* (Florence, Sermartelli: 1597) 53–73. The text is edited in Weinberg B., *Trattati di poetica e retorica del Cinquecento* (Bari: 1972) III, 423–444 (quotations come from this edition). Critical bibliography on Giacomini is quite poor;

who studied classical philology with Pietro Vettori, was very interested in Greek rhetorical texts: he worked on Aristotle's *Poetics*, as well as Demetrius' *On Style*, but he also wrote commentaries on Aristophanes, Euripides and Sophocles.

Giacomini's *Discorso* aims to demonstrate the absurdity of the notion of poetic *furor* as a sort of external inspiration coming from the gods or other superior spiritual beings. If poetry were the result of such an inspiration, poets would not be responsible for their works and poetic art itself would be completely useless. This does not imply the non-existence of *furor* as a fundamental function of poetry. On the contrary, it exists, but it is not a state of mind produced by divine inspiration. In order to reject the idea of divine inspiration, Giacomini turns to the theory of humours:

The man who wishes *to rise to the heights of poetry or of eloquence* or of philosophy has need of temperate spirits, inclining rather towards the cold ones, in order to think, investigate, discourse, and judge [...]; to continue in such operations, he seeks an abundance of humors neither weak nor easily dissipated, but stable and firm, which move through *vigourous and powerful imaginations*; but in order to execute well in conformity with *the idea conceived within himself*, he needs warmth so that the expression may be effective.<sup>24</sup>

Giacomini's idea of poetic inspiration perfectly fits in with the traditional profile of the poet (or, more generically speaking, of the artist) as a melancholic person.<sup>25</sup> Thanks to the theory of humours, Giacomini finally comes

---

lacking of a broad study concerning the different aspects of his cultural profile, cf. at least some useful suggestions in Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 322–324, 523–527; and Siekiera A., “Lorenzo Giacomini Tebalducci Malespini”, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 54 (Rome: 2000) 181–183.

<sup>24</sup> ‘L'uomo che a l'altezza de la poesia o de l'eloquenza o de la filosofia dee salire, per pensare, investigare, discorrere e giudicare, ha bisogno di spiriti temperati che inclinino nel freddo [...] Per continuare in queste operazioni, ricerca copia di spiriti non deboli né facili a risolversi, ma stabili e fermi che muovon con vigorosi e potenti fantasmi. Ma per bene eseguire secondo l'idea in sé conceputa, ha bisogno di calore, acciò che con efficacia esprima’ (Giacomini, *Discorso*, 430; English translations of some passages of Giacomini's lecture are provided by Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism* 323).

<sup>25</sup> An explicit reference to the aristotelian theory of humours arrives a few lines later, where Giacomini skilfully explains in which sense melancholic temperament is the most suitable for poetry (Giacomini, *Discorso*, 430: ‘E di qui è manifesto la melancolia da Aristotele lodata non esser quella parte più impura degli umori che è fredda, secca, grave, grossa et oscura, contraria a l'operazione de l'intelletto; ma essere la melancolia fatta per abbruciamento de l'umore collerico, la quale è calda ma pur men calda de la collera; è pura, sottile, e lucida, perciò accomodata a l'atto de l'intendere molto più de la flemma, la quale di lentezza d'ingegno e di caducità di memoria suole esser cagione più che la collera, che non ha fermezza né sofferenza di perseverare negli studi; più che l'umor sanguigno, il

to a fascinating paradox: aiming to demonstrate that natural talent for poetry is not helpful if devoid of an excellent knowledge of poetic technique, he finally conceives artistic creation as a natural process involving a difficult balance of different humours. Going into raptures ('Estasi, rapimento, furore, smania') is thus the effect produced by warm spirits, as well as the essential condition of poetic creation. When affected by that state of mind, the soul, 'fixed and intent upon an operation, forgets every other object, and does not even remember itself or what it is doing'.<sup>26</sup>

As remarked by Bernard Weinberg, 'the mechanism of poetry is thus essentially a natural one for Giacomini. He explains the power that art has over its listeners or spectators not by an appeal to supernatural intervention but by two natural causes': sympathy ('that movement of the soul by which men identify themselves with the passions of others') and delight ('which comes to men, through their senses, from imitation').<sup>27</sup> In order to stir sympathy and delight, the poet has to master some principles which are the basis of his art. That is why, according to Giacomini's interpretation, even if artistic creation consists of a natural process and is based on physiological dynamics, Art plays a more important role than Nature in the elaboration of a masterwork. This means that, even though a natural aptitude for poetry is important, poets must primarily acquire an excellent knowledge of rhetorical and poetic technique aimed at exploiting and expressing the extraordinary potential of the poetic imagination.

Giacomini's treatment of *furore* and *estasi* implies a broadened discussion of *fantasia*, which is the actual keyword in the different notions we are dealing with. 'Vigorous and powerful imaginations' representing 'the idea conceived within himself' by the artist are the true constituent elements of poetry. Giacomini insists on the power of poetic imagination, explaining that fixing upon an idea with a strong concentration lets the poet actually see what he is thinking about. Moreover, inserting an underlying

---

quale distrae la mente e l'inchina a' giochi et agli amori et a' dilette degli oggetti de' sensi'). Cf. the classic studies by Wittkower R., *Born under Saturn. The Character and Conduct of Artists: a Documented History from Antiquity to French Revolution* (London: 1963); and Klibansky R. – Panofsky E. – Saxl F., *Saturn and Melancholy. Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (London: 1964).

<sup>26</sup> Giacomini, *Discorso*, 431. Cf. the entire passage, in which the author also briefly describes *estasi*, *rapimento*, *furore* and *smania*: 'E perché l'anima ha una semplice essenza, benché con tanti nomi venga appellata, egli avviene che affisata et intenta ad una operazione di ogni altro oggetto si scorda, né pure si ricorda di se stessa né quello che faccia. Laonde è detta allora patire estasi, cioè star fuori di sé, rapimento quasi che l'oggetto la rapisca, furore e smania perché ardentemente e furiosamente opera senza discorso'.

<sup>27</sup> Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism* 324.

reference to the problem of artistic representation of non-existent objects, he specifies that such mental images can represent something whether it is real or not.<sup>28</sup> Anyway, the author's main concern is the fundamental relation between imagination and the state of mental alteration usually known as *furor*, which is definitely conceived as 'affisamento de l'anima de l'idea' (that is, the total concentration on a particular idea pictured in one's mind). According to Giacomini, such a notion of *furor* implies a process of mental visualisation, that recalls the rhetorical category of *enargeia*: 'it is clear that poet's *furor* occurs when the poet himself strongly figures things as if they were present'.<sup>29</sup>

Following Aristotle and Horace, Giacomini maintains that poets must feel the passions they want to make the audience feel.<sup>30</sup> Sharing a rhetorical frame which is typical of late 16th century *poetica degli affetti*, the Florentine academician favours the dimension of emotional involvement and emphasises the relation between strong emotions and noble concepts: noble, high and marvellous concepts ('concetti nobili, alti e maravigliosi'), as Giacomini says, give rise to an excellent poem, when supported by natural *furor*. A truly experienced emotion lets the poet devise and express concepts which touch the audience by virtue of sympathy. Furthermore, a strong imagination will let the poet re-experience such emotions and express them anew.<sup>31</sup> The role of imagination in such a process is once again pointed out. It is clear that, according to Giacomini, poetry does not aim to persuade listeners by appealing to reason. As such, one of the most relevant of poetic means is *enargeia*, or rather, the ability to convey poetic images as if they were vividly present, indeed alive to their audience. Thus, readers or listeners will be seized, touched and captivated by the poet.

---

<sup>28</sup> Giacomini recalls the example of angels, explaining that there is no difference between a mental image representing an object we previously observed in reality, and the image of something we just pictured in our mind. Cf. Giacomini, *Discorso* 431: 'se alcuno gagliardamente imaginerà angeli, cioè giovani bellissimi vestiti di luce e di splendore, e dimorerà fisso in questo pensiero, intanto inforzerà quell'immagine negli spiriti che la condurrà sino a l'occhio, e sarà tanto quanto se miracolosamente gli vedesse; perché differenza non fa che l'immagine partendo dagli oggetti esteriori a l'occhio pervenga, o che partendo dal di dentro pure a l'occhio arrivi'.

<sup>29</sup> Giacomini, *Discorso* 433: 'ben si conosce questo furore nel poeta [...] aver luogo in quanto fisamente imaginano esser presenti a le azioni raccontate'.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* XVII 1455a 31–34; Horace, *Art of Poetry* 101–102: 'si vis me flere, dolendum est / primum ipsi tibi'.

<sup>31</sup> Giacomini, *Discorso* 438: 'si come il vero affetto fa trovare et esprimere concetti atti a commovere per la virtù de la simpatia gli animi altrui, così la fissa imaginazione costituirà il poeta in affetto, e farà che operi non fingendo e con freddezza, ma quasi di cuore'.

At the end of his lecture, and in accordance with the priority he grants to Art, Lorenzo Giacomini offers some suggestions concerning the way poets can improve their poetic ability; he cites Longinus as a great master of nobility of discourse, who provides some precepts on how to acquire grandeur of spirit and raise the soul towards noble concepts.<sup>32</sup> What Giacomini explicitly derives from Longinus is the importance of following great poets of the past and writing as if they were our judges.<sup>33</sup> There are nonetheless other Longinian traces in his lecture. A relevant one, though quite general, consists of focusing, at the very end of his argument, on the notions of poetic excellence and sublimity in terms which recall Longinus' words. Some ideas more precisely derived from the Greek rhetorician appear elsewhere in the text. Discussing the emotional involvement of the poet in what he is writing about, Giacomini not only mentions Ovid and Archilocus, but he also refers to Cicero and Demosthenes. Even though he does not recall the Longinian comparison between the two orators, for he places them on the same plane, Giacomini turns to the famous images of thunder and lightning, which – according to Longinus – perfectly describe both the style and the moral vividness of the Greek orator.<sup>34</sup> Another Longinian trace may be found in the reference to Orestes seeing the Erinyes: the example of the Greek hero allows the academician to explain that a poet who wants to produce wonder ('maraviglia') must himself engage with the affections ('affetti') he wants to express.<sup>35</sup> Giacomini seems to refer to Longinus even when discussing the relation between age and the poets' grandeur: the comparison between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*,

---

<sup>32</sup> Giacomini, *Discorso* 442: 'Alcuni precetti ne diede Dionisio Longino, gran maestro de l'altezza del dire, per acquistare spirito di grandezza e per innalzare l'animo a nobili concetti'.

<sup>33</sup> Giacomini, *Discorso* 442–443: 'Uno è che venendo in ammirazione di quegli uomini famosi che altamente poetarono, diciamo a noi stessi: "Come direbbe questo Omero, come Pindaro, come Sofocle?"; perché quasi trasformandoci in essi de lo spirito loro ci venghiamo ad informare. L'altro è che imaginandoci questi eroi presenti, incitiamo noi stessi a far sì che a loro possiamo piacere'.

<sup>34</sup> Giacomini, *Discorso* 438: 'Marco Tullio contra Catilina massimamente presente, o contro Marco Antonio suo acerbo nemico, e Demostene per Ctesifonte contra Eschine per la forza del proprio affetto, con maggior forza di tuoni e di fulmini si fanno sentire'. Cf. Longinus, *On the Sublime* XII, 4.

<sup>35</sup> Giacomini, *Discorso* 439: 'Però chiunque brama operare cosa degna di quella maraviglia che dal poeta si aspetta, trasformisi negli affetti che esprimere intende, o sian le furie di Oreste o la disperazione di Elettra o l'ira di Achille o l'alterezza di Agamennone; e riempia l'animo di concetti tali'. Cf. Longinus, *On the Sublime* XV, 2 and 9.

focusing on the fading of passions in the latter case, is in fact a sort of summary of Longinus' remarks on the Homeric epic poems.<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, Lorenzo Giacomini adheres more to the notion of poetic imagination in Longinus. Even while rethinking its dynamics in terms of natural physiology, he dwells on that fundamental notion, emphasising the relation between *phantasia* and *enargeia*. The humanist does not mention the second term, but in discussing the first (as well as its synonym *immaginazione*) he pays special attention to its actual effect, which is the vivid representation of poetic images by means of verbal discourse.<sup>37</sup> The accompanying example actually fits in with Longinian poetic imagery, and it is emblematic of an idea of literature which favours the striking version of *meraviglia* as a primary component: in order to describe a frightening tempest or a bloody and formidable battle, it is useful to have actually experienced such events. Hearing about them is in fact not enough, for only a direct knowledge of fearful things allows us to imagine and picture them forcefully.<sup>38</sup>

#### *Poetic imagination and the Longinian notion of phantasia*

When Lorenzo Giacomini refers to 'fantasmi gagliardi', 'vigorosi e potenti fantasmi', as well as to 'imagine', 'immaginazione' and 'fantasia', he is dealing with notions which play a very important role in Longinus' treatise *On the Sublime*. According to the Greek rhetorician, *phantasia* figures among the *aretai* ("virtues") of speech and functions as a complement to the two primary sources of the sublime (*megalophrosyne*, "magnanimity", and *pathos*, "passion"). He discusses such a notion at length in chapter XV:

Another thing which is very productive of grandeur, magnificence and urgency, my young friend, is *visualisation* (*phantasia*). I use this word for what some people call *image-production* (*eidolopoia*). The term *phantasia* is

<sup>36</sup> Giacomini, *Discorso* 442: 'maggior altezza troverai ne l'Iliade che ne l'Odissea, parto de l'età inchinante a la vecchiezza'. Cf. Longinus, *On the Sublime* IX, 11–14.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Giacomini, *Discorso* 442, where – according to Aristotle – *enargeia* and the representation of emotions are considered as the main components of poetical discourse ('quando l'animo a poetar si dispone, colmisi di concetti nobili, alti e meravigliosi, et infiammisi di quel furore di cui di sopra parlammo. Al che conferirà lo insegnamento datone da Aristotele, lo immaginarsi quanto è più possibile, lo avere le cose presenti e ritrovarsi ne l'affetto da esprimersi').

<sup>38</sup> Giacomini, *Discorso* 442: 'Al bene descrivere spaventosa tempesta di mare o sanguinosa e fiera battaglia marittima o terrestre, gioverebbe l'essere stato presente et avere miglior prova che di udito. Ma da cose simili potrai formare immaginazione e ritratto efficace').

used generally for anything which in any way suggests a thought productive of speech (*ennoema gennetikon logou*); but the word has also come into fashion for the situation in which enthusiasm and emotion make the speaker see what he is saying and bring it visually before his audience (*yp'opsin tithes tois akouousin*).<sup>39</sup>

The meaning of *phantasia* in Longinus is at once simple and complex: as the usage of *eidolopoia* confirms, the word means in this context “image”.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, *phantasia* is also the process involved in the production of mental images as Aristotle defines it in *De anima* III, 3, 427a 15–429a 9.<sup>41</sup> Longinus explicitly connects the term to the ability to bring what the poet is saying before the listeners. For this particular construal of the word, Russell suggests that it be translated into “visualisation”.<sup>42</sup>

In order to understand how Renaissance scholars conceived the Longinian notion of *phantasia*, the modern reader has briefly to forget the romantic and post-romantic implications of the term, and instead try to place its meaning in the original context. First editions and commentaries may help us compensate for the lack of a full explanation in Longinus.

In chapter XV, for instance, it is interesting to remark that Pietro Pagano (1572), translating *phantasiai* into ‘cogitata ac mentis sensa’, favours the intellectual side of the imaginative process. Otherwise, he makes the iconic side come to light when he translates the term *eidolopoiai* into

<sup>39</sup> Longinus, *On the Sublime* XV, 1–2.

<sup>40</sup> According to Plato, *eidolopoia* means image-making as in mirrors (*Timaeus* 46a), but also the reproduction of painted images (*Crit.* 107b). As Martano remarks, the word *eidolopoia* gradually meant ‘fantastic imagination’, that is, image-making started by productive *phantasia*, and not by the simple storing of real objects images. Cf. Martano G., “Introduzione”, in Longinus, *Del sublime* (Bari: 1965) 34 n.122. In confirmation of this interpretation of the term, cf. Quintilian, *Inst. or.* VI, 2, 29; Iamblicus, *De Myster.* 2–10, 3–28.

<sup>41</sup> As regards the notion of *phantasia* from Plato to Plotinus, cf. Fattori M., “*Phantasia* vel *imaginatio*?” and Camassa G., “*Phantasia* da Platone ai Neoplatonici”, both in Fattori M. – Bianchi M. (eds.), *Phantasia – Imaginatio* (Roma: 1988) xi–xxx, 23–55; more recently cf. Follon J., “La notion de *phantasia* chez Platon”, Labarrière J.-L., “Nature et fonction de la *phantasia* chez Aristote”, Lefebvre R., “La crise de la *phantasia*: originalité des interprétations, originalité d’Aristote”, in Lories D. – Rizzerio L. (eds.), *De la phantasia à l’imagination* (Louvain: 2003) 1–14, 15–30, 31–46. The complex interpretation of *phantasia* in Aristotle is addressed by Linguisti A., “Immagine e concetto in Aristotele e Plotino”, in Cristante L. (ed.), *Phantasia. Il pensiero per immagini degli antichi e dei moderni* (Trieste: 2005). See also the excellent work by Manieri A., *L’immagine poetica nella teoria degli antichi. Phantasia ed enargeia* (Pisa: 1998). Useful remarks concerning Longinus in Watson G., *Phantasia in Classical Thought* (Galway: 1988) 66–68.

<sup>42</sup> Russell D.A. (ed.), Longinus *On the Sublime* (Oxford: 1964) 120: ‘Visualisation, though an ugly word, is preferable as a translation to “fantasy”, “vision”, or “imagination” – all of which have too many associations’.

'imaginationum repraesentationes'.<sup>43</sup> Gabriele De Petra (1612), who more cautiously shies away from translating into Latin the Greek word *phantasiai*, provides a more illuminating circumlocution for *eidolopoiiai*: 'interiores formarum fictiones et repraesentationes',<sup>44</sup> which seems to focus on the various implications of the term. Besides, probably conscious of the ambiguity of the passage, De Petra himself suggests a comparison to Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* VI, 2, where the Latin master, after saying that the speaker has first to feel himself the passions he wants to represent, shows what could help the speaker in seducing his listeners:

The person who will show the greatest power in the expression of emotions will be the person who has properly formed what the Greeks call *phantasiai* (let us call them "visions"), by which the images of absent things are presented to the mind in such a way that we seem actually to see them with our eyes and have them physically present to us. Some use the word *euphantasiotos* of one who is exceptionally good at realistically imagining to himself things, words, and actions.<sup>45</sup>

The result of a sharp use of imagination is thus *enargeia*:

The result will be *enargeia*, what Cicero calls *illustratio* and *evidentia*, a quality which makes us seem not so much to be talking about something as exhibiting it. Emotions will ensue just as if we were present at the event itself.<sup>46</sup>

As we have already seen, the notion of *enargeia* is fundamental in Longinus too. His major source is of course Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, where the philosopher deals with *pro ommaton*.<sup>47</sup> The topic is introduced by Longinus in the second paragraph of chapter XV, when he has to define the difference between the rhetorical *phantasia* and the poetic one:

<sup>43</sup> Dionysii Longini De Sublimi dicendi genere liber a Petro Pagano latinitate donatus, f. 18r.

<sup>44</sup> Dionysii Longini Rhetori praestantissimi liber de Grandi, sive Sublimi genere Orationi, Latine reditus [...] a Gabriele de Petra (Geneva, Johannes Tornaesius, 1612) 78.

<sup>45</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* VI, 2, 29–30 (transl. Russell); cf. the latin text: 'Quas phantasiai Graeci vocant (nos sane visiones appellemus), per quas imagines rerum absentium ita repraesentantur animo ut eas cernere oculis ac praesentes habere videamur, has quisquis bene ceperit is erit in adfectibus potentissimus. Quidam dicunt *euphantasiotaton* qui sibi res voces actus secundum verum optime finget'.

<sup>46</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* VI, 2, 32; cf. the latin text: 'Insequetur *enargeia*, quae a Cicerone *illustratio* et *evidentia* nominatur, quae non tam dicere videtur quam ostendere, et affectus non aliter quam si rebus ipsis intersimus sequentur'.

<sup>47</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* III, 1411b 24–1412a 10.

It will not escape you that rhetorical visualisation has a different intention from that of the poets: in poetry the aim is astonishment (*ekplexis*), in oratory it is clarity (*enargeia*). Both, however, seek emotion (*pathetikon*) and excitement (*sygkekinemenon*).<sup>48</sup>

The distinction between *ekplexis* and *enargeia* does not mean, as modern scholars have shown, that poetry has nothing to do with *enargeia* or vice versa. Moreover, the following remarks concerning emotion and excitement, reveal that both poetry and oratory deal with a sort of irrational involvement of the audience.

It is therefore interesting to look at early Latin translations of the term *ekplexis*, for such a detail lets us detect changes in taste during late Renaissance. In Orsini's manuscript we find the simple 'stupor',<sup>49</sup> while Pietro Pagano, some years later, prefers to particularize the term, translating *ekplexis* into 'admiratio et stupor'.<sup>50</sup> Pagano's choice aims at focusing on the dimension of *meraviglia*, revealing an approach which will be taken in and deepened by early 17th century readers: Gabriele De Petra, for instance, translates *ekplexis* as 'terror et consternatio',<sup>51</sup> two emotions that recall the effects produced by Lorenzo Giacomini's frightening tempests and bloody battles.

Evidence suggestive of this kind of approach is offered by Francesco Porto's commentary, which remained unpublished until Zacharias Pearce edited it in 1733.<sup>52</sup> Commenting on chapter XV, he explains that whereas in oratory *phantasia* aims at 'orationem illustrare' (that is, a clear circumlocution for *evidentia*), in poetry it aims to upset human souls ('percellere animos').<sup>53</sup> An important corollary of this affirmation concerns the different nature of rhetorical and poetic *phantasiai*: in order to persuade, oratory must have recourse to probable and likely images ('probabiles'); in

<sup>48</sup> Longinus, *On the Sublime* XV, 2. A separate paper would be needed sufficiently to illustrate the difference between *enargeia* and *energeia*. For the moment, just see the treatment of this complex topic in Manieri A., *L'immagine poetica* 97–105. Cf. also Kemmann A., "Evidentia, Evidenz", in Ueding G. (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* (Tübingen: 1998) IV, 33–47.

<sup>49</sup> *Dionysii Longini De altitudine et granditate orationis*, ms. Vat. Lat. 3441, f. 18v.

<sup>50</sup> *Dionysii Longini De Sublimi dicendi genere liber a Petro Pagano latinitate donatus*, f. 18r.

<sup>51</sup> *Dionysii Longini Rhetori praestantissimi liber de Grandi, sive Sublimi genere orationi, Latine reditus [...]* a Gabriele de Petra, 78.

<sup>52</sup> Porto F., "In Longinum commentarius integer", in Pearce Z. (ed.), *Dionysii Longini de Sublimitate commentarius* (Amsterdam: 1733) 279–360.

<sup>53</sup> Porto, "In Longinum" 315.

contrast, poetry, which seeks emotional involvement, deals with fabulous images ('fabulosae').<sup>54</sup>

Early translators and commentators thus show an approach to the Longinian notion of *phantasia*, which perfectly fits in with late 16th century taste for astonishment produced by wonder. In such a context, Renaissance rhetoricians could find similar statements in other Greek texts. Among them, Demetrius' *On Style* and Hermogenes' *On Types of Style* offer a large amount of fundamental remarks. Just to give an example, I suggest focusing on what Demetrius says about the use of allegory in the section of his treatise devoted to the magnificent style. After stressing the importance of the so-called "active metaphor" that is based on *enargeia*,<sup>55</sup> he explains that

any darkly-hinting expression (*to yponooumenon*) is more terror-striking, and its import is variously conjectured by different hearers. On the other hand, things that are clear and plain are apt to be despised, just like men when stripped of their garments. Hence the Mysteries are revealed in an allegorical form (*en allegorais legetai*) in order to inspire such shuddering and awe (*pros ekplexin kai phriken*) as are associated with darkness and night. Allegory also is not unlike darkness and night.<sup>56</sup>

The notions Demetrius is dealing with are the same that we find in Longinus: most interesting is that *ekplexis* is here explicitly connected to allegory, which is mentioned as a code for interpreting poetic images in chapter IX of Longinus' treatise as well. Discussing those high concepts which make a sublime poem, the rhetorician dwells on frightening images, explaining that they need to be interpreted allegorically.<sup>57</sup> Otherwise, it would be difficult to accept them because they do not respect conventions.<sup>58</sup>

The topic is controversial, for it deals with the problematic notion of poets' freedom. Still in chapter XV, the author clearly explains that human nature is very sensitive to external influences that appeal to emotions. Looking at the implications of Aristotelian *opsis*,<sup>59</sup> Longinus extends them to *phantasia*:

<sup>54</sup> Porto, "In Longinum" 318.

<sup>55</sup> Demetrius, *On Style* II, 81: 'In Aristotle's judgment the so-called "active" metaphor is the best, wherein inanimate things are introduced in a state of activity as though they were animate' (transl. Rhys Roberts).

<sup>56</sup> Demetrius, *On Style* II, 100–101.

<sup>57</sup> Longinus, *On the Sublime* IX, 6.

<sup>58</sup> Longinus, *On the Sublime* IX, 7. I will quote this passage later.

<sup>59</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* VI 1450b 16–20; XXIV 1460a 12 ff.

Now our natural instinct is, in all such cases, to attend to the stronger influence, so that we are diverted from the demonstration (*apo tou apodeiktikou*) to the astonishment caused by the visualization (*eis to kata phantasian ekplektikon*), which by its very brilliance conceals the factual aspect. This is a natural reaction: when two things are joined together, the stronger attracts to itself the force of the weaker.<sup>60</sup>

Knowing that men are struck by strong feelings, Longinus confirms that image-production aims at the emotional involvement of the audience (*to kata phantasian ekplektikon*: where *phantasia* and *ekplexis* are again explicitly connected).<sup>61</sup>

### *Final remarks*

Using Jean Starobinski's brilliant observations on the history of the idea of imagination, we can say that one of the major achievements of Longinus is the strong delimitation of a human field – that of literature – which of course has a relationship to the real world, but deals at the same time with an independent communication code. Literature has the power to create many other realities in which the only generation principle is *logos*.<sup>62</sup>

Relevant here is the way Longinus thinks about the process of poetic imagination and, in consequence, about *mimesis*. As Starobinski notes, *mimesis* is unable to bypass imagination, and we might add that in the Latin etymological tradition the words *imitatio* and *imaginatio* are related.<sup>63</sup> We could instead ask ourselves whether it is possible for imagination

<sup>60</sup> Longinus, *On the sublime* XV, 11.

<sup>61</sup> Among other passages concerning the rhetorical means to be employed by the poet in order to make visible what he is talking about, cf. Longinus, *On the Sublime* XXVI, 1–2, devoted to the *prosopon antimethesis*: 'Urgency may also be conveyed by the replacement of one grammatical person by another. It often gives the hearer the sense of being in the midst of the danger himself. [...] Do you see, my friend, how he grips your mind and takes it on tour through all these places, making hearing as good as seeing? All such forms of expression, being directed to an actual person, bring the hearer into the presence of real events'.

<sup>62</sup> Starobinski J., "Jalons pour une histoire du concept d'imagination", in idem, *L'oeil vivant II. La relation critique* (Paris: 1970) 174–195.

<sup>63</sup> Among the many examples, cf. at least Cecchini E. – Arbizzoni G. (eds.), Uguccione da Pisa, *Derivationes* (Florence: 2004) 606–607: '*Imitor* -aris, idest sequi; unde *imitator* et *imitatorius* -a -um, dignus imitatione vel qui imitatur aliquem; et hec *imago* -nis, representatio alicuius rei, et dicitur imago quasi imitago, quia imitatur rem cuius est in corporalibus liniamentis et dispositione partium: aliter non proprie dicitur imago. Unde *imaginarius* -a -um, quod pertinet ad imaginem vel quod percipitur umbratiler et quadam imaginatione; et *imaginor* -aris, rem absentem percipere vel imaginem rei absentis; unde hec *imaginatio*, scilicet vis anime qua qui comprehendit formas cum materia, re absente; sed hec aut est

to bypass *mimesis*. The answer, quite easy in light of the Romantic turn, is obviously “yes, it is”, but things were different in the 16th century and above all during the second half of the century, when Ariosto’s marvellous poetic creations and Michelangelo’s revolutionary paintings were often under accusation because of their lack of verisimilitude.

Longinus, as well as Demetrius, offers 16th century readers interesting suggestions about the power of poetic word. As he maintains in chapter XV, 8, poetry is the kingdom of marvellous and incredible things, and this is possible because of the suggestive power of words.<sup>64</sup> As Aristotle said, what we see has a strong effect on us (cf. the notion of *opsis* mentioned before), but this power decreases if what we actually see is not probable. Poetry, however, is able to make visible through words what we might often refuse in actuality. Figurative arts, to be appreciated and accepted, have to deal with the imitation of real things, and the pleasure we gain is proportional to the degree of resemblance the artist achieves.<sup>65</sup> This means that figurative arts, as they are *technai*, require a high competence in material execution; on the contrary, when poetry aims at the sublime, it is just concerned with nature. *Logos*, as Longinus says, is natural, and this seems to imply that sublime poetry actually bypasses the usual mimetic process:

It has been remarked that the failed Colossus is no better than the Doryphorus of Polyclitus. There are many ways of answering this. We may say that accuracy (*to akribestaton*) is admired in art, and grandeur (*to megethos*) in nature, and it is *by nature* that man is endowed with the power of speech (*to logikon*); or again that statues are expected to represent the human form, whereas, as I said, something higher than human is sought in literature. At this point I have a suggestion to make which takes us back to the beginning of the book. Impeccability is generally a product of art; erratic excellence

---

recordationis aut imitationis aut confectionis: recordationis cum eandem rem imaginamur que prius subiecta fuit nostro sensui; imitationis, rem similem, non eandem’.

<sup>64</sup> Longinus, *On the Sublime* XV, 8: ‘The poetical examples, as I said, have a quality of exaggeration which belongs to fable and goes far beyond credibility. In an orator’s visualisations, on the other hand, it is the element of fact and truth which makes for success; when the content of the passage is poetical and fabulous and does not shrink from any impossibility, the result is a shocking and outrageous abnormality. This is what happens with the shock orators of our own day; like tragic actors, these fine fellows *see* the Erinyes, and are incapable of understanding that when Orestes says “Let me go; you are one of my Erinyes, / You are hugging me tight, to throw me into Hell” (Euripides, *Orestes* 264–265), he visualises all this because he is mad’.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. the distinction between tragedy and epic poetry in Aristotle, *Poetics* XXIV 1460a 12 ff.

comes from natural greatness; therefore, art must always come to the aid of nature, and the combination of the two may well be perfection.<sup>66</sup>

Sublimity does not necessarily coincide with perfection, which consists in the ideal combination of art (which helps us in avoiding faults) and nature (which is the main source of sublime). In the meantime, Longinus reveals the wonderful power of *to logikon*, comparing it to figurative arts: while statues are expected to have human form (that is, more generally, to reproduce reality), sublime literature looks for something higher than realistic imitation.

The opposition between *phantasia* and *mimesis* thus comes to light, recalling the famous passage from Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* on the power of imagination,<sup>67</sup> as well as the Platonic distinction between the art of making likenesses (*mimesis eikastike*), and the art of making appearances (*mimesis phantastike*),<sup>68</sup> which played a fundamental role in late Renaissance debates on poetry. Nonetheless, 16th century readers of Longinus could hardly embrace such a 'modern' idea of literature, for the classical notion of *imitatio* imposed by scholastic readings of Aristotle, Cicero and Horace maintained a strong primacy over other kinds of approach to literary imagination.

With regards to this trend, considerable evidence is offered by Pietro Vettori's commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics*: explaining a passage devoted to incredible subjects in poetry, Vettori appeals to Longinus' remarks on allegory in order to legitimise poetic licence.<sup>69</sup> In such a context, Lorenzo

<sup>66</sup> Longinus, *On the Sublime* XXXVI, 3–4.

<sup>67</sup> Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* VI, 19: 'Imagination (*phantasia*) [is] a more skilful artist than Imitation (*sophotera mimeseos demiourgos*). Imitation (*mimesis*) will create what it knows, but Imagination will also create what it does not know, conceiving it with reference to the real. Shock (*ekplexis*) often frustrates Imitation, but nothing will frustrate Imagination, as it goes imperturbably towards its own appointed purpose'. As regards the notion of *mimesis* in Philostratus also cf. *Life of Apollonius* II, 22. For a plain discussion of these passages, cf. Manieri A., *L'immagine poetica* 60–67.

<sup>68</sup> Plato, *Soph.* 235d–236c.

<sup>69</sup> Vettori P., *Commentarii in primum librum Aristotelis de arte poetarum* (Florence, Bernardo Giunta: 1560) 295. Vettori visibly refers to Longinus, *On the Sublime* IX, 7: 'terrifying as all this is, it is blasphemous and indecent unless it is interpreted allegorically'. A very similar approach is to be found in late 16th century readers of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (who legitimated the poet's fancies, interpreting them allegorically), as well as in the debates on Michelangelo's "unrealistic" paintings. As regards the latter, cf. the dialogue by Comanini G., "Il Figino, overo del fine della pittura" (1591), in Barocchi P. (ed.), *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra Manierismo e Controriforma* III (Bari: 1962) 237–379, where the author appeals to allegorical interpretation in order to justify Michelangelo's licences (351–352).

Giacomini's *Discorso del furor poetico*, which is one of the very few rhetorical treatises of the Italian Renaissance that explicitly quotes Longinus, focuses on the role of poetic imagination. Differently from his colleague and correspondent Francesco Patrizi, who pointed out the connection between *fantasia* and *meraviglia* to be discerned from chapter XV of the treatise *On the Sublime*,<sup>70</sup> Giacomini does not appeal to the Greek rhetorician in order to support the idea of the poet as a wise prophet endowed with supernatural inspiration. Placing imagination in its natural and physiological ground, as well as refusing the idea of supernatural interventions in poetic inspiration, Giacomini unveils a reading of Longinus which tends to emphasise the human dynamics of literary writing from the point of view of both the poet and the audience.

---

<sup>70</sup> Patrizi stands out among Renaissance interpreters of Longinus by virtue of his attentive reading of the chapter devoted to *phantasia*. On the basis of two passages (*On the Sublime* XV, 2 and 9), he emphasizes the connection between imagination and astonishment, as well as the power of *meraviglia* in order to touch and strike the audience. Cf. Vasoli, "Schede patriziane" 167–169.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

- Aphthonius, Hermogenes & Dionysius Longinus, praestantissimi artis Rhetorices magistri, Francisci Porti, Cretensis opera industriaque illustrati atque expoliti* (Geneva: Johannes Crispinus, 1569).
- CECCHINI E. – ARBIZZONI G. (eds.), Uguccione da Pisa, *Derivationes* (Florence: 2004).
- COMANINI G., “Il Figino, ovvero del fine della pittura”, in Barocchi P. (ed.), *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra Manierismo e Controriforma* III (Bari: 1962) 237–379.
- Dionysii Longini De altitudine et granditate orationis* (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, ms. Vat. Lat. 3441).
- Dionysii Longini de sublimi genere dicendi* (Venice: Paolo Manuzio, 1555).
- Dionysii Longini De Sublimi Dicendi Genere Liber a Petro Pagano latinitate donatus* (Venice: Vincenzo Valgrisi, 1572).
- Dionysii Longini Rhetoris Praestantissimi Liber de Grandi Orationis Genere, Domenico Pizimentione Viconensi Interprete* (Naples: Johannes Maria Scotus, 1566).
- Dionysii Longini Rhetoris praestantissimi liber de Grandi, sive Sublimi genere Orationi, Latine reditus... a Gabriele de Petra* (Geneva: Johannes Tornaesius, 1612).
- Dionysii Longini rhetoris praestantissimi liber, de grandi, sive sublimi orationis genere. Nunc primum a Francisco Robortello Utinensi in luce editus...* (Basel: Johannes Oporinum, 1554).
- GIACOMINI L., *Del furor poetico. Discorso fatto ne l'Academia degli Alterati ne l'anno MDLXXXVII*, in idem, *Orationi e discorsi* (Florence, Sermartelli: 1597), 53–73; cf. Weinberg B., *Trattati di poetica e retorica del Cinquecento* III (Bari: 1972) 423–444.
- JONES C. (ed.), Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (Cambridge: 2005).
- Libro della altezza del dire di Dionysio Longino rhetore tradotto dalla greca nella toscana lingua da Giovanni di Niccolò da Falgano fiorentino in Fiorenza* (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, ms. Magl. VI.33).
- MAZZUCCHI C.M. (ed.), *Dionysio Longino. Del sublime* (Milano: 1992).
- PEARCE Z. (ed.), *Dionysii Longini de Sublimitate commentarius* (Amsterdam: 1733).
- ROBERTS W.R. (ed.), Demetrius, *On Style* (New York: 1979).
- RUSSELL D.A. (ed.), Longinus, *On the Sublime* (Oxford: 1964).
- (ed.), Quintilian, *The orator's education* (Cambridge: 2001).
- VETTORI P., *Commentarii in primum librum Aristotelis de arte poetarum* (Florence: Bernardo Giunta, 1560).

### Secondary Sources

- CAMASSA G., “Phantasia da Platone ai Neoplatonici”, in Fattori M. – Bianchi M. (eds.), *Phantasia – Imaginatio* (Roma: 1988) 23–55.
- COSTA G., “Paolo Manuzio e lo Pseudo-Longino”, *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 161 (1984) 60–77.
- , “Appunti sulla fortuna dello Pseudo-Longino nel Seicento: Alessandro Tassoni e Paganino Gaudenzio”, *Studi secenteschi* 25 (1984) 123–143.
- , “The Latin Translations of Longinus' *Peri Ypsous* in Renaissance Italy”, in Schoeck R.J. (ed.), *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Bononiensis. Proceedings of the Fourth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, Bologna, 26 August to 1 September 1979* (Binghamton, N.Y.: 1985), 224–238.
- , “Un annoso problema: Tasso e il Sublime”, *Rivista di Estetica* 27 (1987), 49–63.
- , “Pietro Vettori, Ugolino Martelli e lo Pseudo Longino”, in Russo L. (ed.), *Da Longino a Longino: i luoghi del Sublime* (Palermo: 1987) 65–79.

- , “Storia del Sublime e storia ecclesiastica”, *Aevum Antiquum* n.s., 3 (2003) 319–350.
- FATTORI M., “*Phantasia* vel *imaginatio*?”, in Fattori – Bianchi, *Phantasia – Imaginatio*, XI–XXX.
- FOLLON J., “La notion de *phantasia* chez Platon”, in Lories D. – Rizzerio L. (eds.), *De la phantasia à l’imagination* (Louvain: 2003) 1–14.
- FUMAROLI M., *L’Age de l’éloquence. Rhétorique et “res literaria” de la Renaissance au seuil de l’époque classique* (Geneva: 1980), 165–167.
- , “Rhétorique d’école et rhétorique adulte: remarques sur la perception européenne du traité *Du Sublime* au XVI<sup>e</sup> et au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle”, *Révue d’histoire littéraire de la France* 86 (1986), 33–51.
- GROSSER H., *La sottigliezza del disputare. Teorie degli stili e teorie dei generi in età rinascimentale e nel Tasso* (Firenze: 1992).
- HERRICK M.T., *The Fusion of Horatian and Aristotelian Literary Criticism. 1531–1555* (Urbana: 1946).
- KEMMANN A., “Evidentia, Evidenz”, in Ueding G. (ed.), *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* (Tübingen: 1998) IV 33–47.
- KLIBANSKY R., PANOFSKY E., SAXL F., *Saturn and Melancholy. Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (London: 1964).
- LABARRIÈRE J.-L., “Nature et fonction de la *phantasia* chez Aristote”, in Lories – Rizzerio, *De la phantasia à l’imagination*, 15–30.
- LEFEBVRE R., “La crise de la *phantasia*: originalité des interprétations, originalité d’Aristote”, in Lories – Rizzerio, *De la phantasia à l’imagination*, 31–46.
- LINGUITI A., “Immagine e concetto in Aristotele e Plotino”, in Cristante L. (ed.), *Phantasia. Il pensiero per immagini degli antichi e dei moderni* (Trieste: 2005) 69–80.
- LOGAN J.L., “Longinus and the Sublime”, in Norton G.P. (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. III. The Renaissance* (Cambridge: 1999), 529–539.
- MANIERI A., *L’immagine poetica nella teoria degli antichi. Phantasia ed enargeia* (Pisa: 1998).
- MARTANO G., “Introduzione”, in Longinus, *Del sublime* (Bari: 1965).
- MATTIOLI E., “Gli studi di Gustavo Costa sul *Sublime* in Italia”, *Studi e problemi di critica testuale* 36 (1988) 139–155.
- MAZZUCCHI C.M., “La tradizione manoscritta del *Peri Ypsous*”, *Italia medievale e umanistica*, 32 (1989) 205–226.
- NOLHAC P. de, *La bibliothèque de Fulvio Orsini: contributions à l’histoire des collections d’Italie et à l’étude de la Renaissance* (Paris: 1887).
- PATTERSON A.M., *Hermogenes and the Renaissance. Seven Ideas of Style* (Princeton: 1970).
- SIEKIERA A., “Lorenzo Giacomini Tebalducci Malespini”, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 54 (Rome: 2000) 181–183.
- STAROBINSKI J., “Jalons pour une histoire du concept d’imagination”, in idem, *L’œil vivant II. La relation critique* (Paris: 1970) 174–195.
- VASOLI C., “Schede patriziane sul *De Sublime*”, in Casertano G. (ed.), *Il Sublime. Contributi per la storia di un’idea* (Naples: 1983), 161–174.
- WATSON G., *Phantasia in Classical Thought* (Galway: 1988).
- WEINBERG B., “Translations and Commentaries of Longinus *On the Sublime* to 1600: a Bibliography”, *Modern Philology* 47, 3 (1950) 145–151.
- , *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Chicago: 1961).
- , “ps. Longinus, Dionysius Cassius”, in Kristeller P.O. – Cranz F.E. (eds.), *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum: Medieval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries. II* (Washington D.C.: 1971) 27–42.
- WITTKOWER R., *Born under Saturn. The Character and Conduct of Artists: a Documented History from Antiquity to French Revolution* (London: 1963).

