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Citation

Jonge, C. C. de. (2022). Emotion and the sublime. In M. P. de Bakker, B. van den Berg, & J. Klooster (Eds.), *Mnemosyne Supplements* (pp. 603-618). Leiden: Brill.
doi:10.1163/9789004506053_040

Version: Publisher's Version

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Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3505518>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Emotion and the Sublime

Casper de Jonge

One of the unsolved mysteries surrounding the treatise *On the Sublime* concerns the relationship between emotion (πάθος) and the sublime (ὑψος).¹ It is obvious that emotions play a central role in *On the Sublime*. The author, whom I will call Longinus, invites us to recognize the sublime in Ajax' proud prayer to Zeus on the battlefield (*Iliad* 17.645–647), Sappho's ecstatic love song (fragment 31), Orestes' insane expressions of fear (Euripides, *Orestes* 255–257), and innumerable other emotional passages from archaic and classical Greek literature.² But not all sublime passages are emotional: Longinus tells us that there are many 'sublime moments without emotion' (ὑψη δίχα πάθους) and he offers as an example the attack on the Olympian gods by Otus and Ephialtes:

They yearned to pile Ossa on Olympus, and Pelion, with its waving forests, on Ossa, so that heaven might be scaled. And this they would have accomplished ...³

HOM. *Od.* 11.315–317

What makes these Homeric lines sublime (in Longinus' interpretation) is probably the superhuman undertaking, the inconceivable height of three mountains piled upon each other (i.e. ὑψος in a literal sense), and the suggestion that the attempt might have succeeded.⁴ For Longinus these lines are sublime and great, but not emotional. Likewise there are rhetorical genres, like eulogies, ceremonial speeches, and showpieces (τὰ ἐγκώμια καὶ τὰ πομπικὰ καὶ ἐπιδεικτικά), which have elements of dignity and sublimity, while lacking emo-

1 Previous discussions of the role of *pathos* in *On the Sublime* include Lackenbacher 1911; Bompaire 1973; Pagliarlunga 2004; Halliwell 2011: 327–367; Porter 2016: 124–130. For *pathos* in ancient Greek poetics, see Rendona Moyano 2006. Innes 1995a focuses on the 'low emotions', pity, grief, and fear (*Subl.* 8.2: see below). Translations of *On the Sublime* in this chapter are adapted from Fyfe and Russell (1995). For the date and authorship of *On the Sublime* (irrelevant to the argument presented here), see Russell 1964: xxii–xxx; Mazzucchi 2010: xxix–xxxvii; De Jonge 2012.

2 Longinus, *Subl.* 9.10; 10.1–3; 15.2.

3 *Subl.* 8.2. Translation Murray and Dimock 2015.

4 See Porter 2016: 165–166.

tion (πάθους χηρεύει).⁵ The sublime is not always emotional, then, and not all emotions are sublime: there are indeed ‘certain emotions that are devoid of sublimity and low’ (πάθη τινὰ διεστῶτα ὕψους καὶ ταπεινά), like feelings of pity, grief, and fear (οἴκτοι λῦπαι φόβοι).⁶

And yet, the sublime and the emotional have a very special relationship:

I would confidently lay it down that nothing makes so much for grandeur as genuine emotion (τὸ γενναῖον πάθος) in the right place (ἐνθα χρή): it inspires the words as it were with a fine frenzy and fills them with divine spirit.

LONGINUS, *Subl.* 8.4

This statement, which clearly evokes Platonic ideas on divine inspiration, suggests that it is the genuine emotion (τὸ γενναῖον πάθος) of speakers (or narrators if you will) that can make their words sublime.⁷ This is emotion that is ‘true to their birth’ (hence ‘genuine’), but the word γενναῖος also suggests that the emotion must be ‘noble’ or ‘high-minded’: this idea will indeed turn out to be relevant to the types of emotions that Longinus foregrounds in his treatise. In spite of the strong language of inspiration and possession used by Longinus, the emotional writer can never be in a complete state of irrational and uncontrolled ecstasy. In literary writing emotion must somehow be well-timed: πάθος only works ‘in the right place’ (ἐνθα χρή), and it takes a skilled rhetorician to recognize the right moments. In other words, emotion and cognitive control must cooperate. Elsewhere, Longinus points to the emotions of characters within the narrative (like Ajax or Orestes) and to the emotions that the sublime evokes in the audience. We will see that Longinus presents the listener’s emotions likewise as strong, intense, and extreme, but at the same time as somehow controlled: the audience of sublime texts is said to be ‘almost’ ecstatic (μικροῦ δεῖν), and possessed ‘as it were’ (ὥσπερ, καθάπερ, οἷον).⁸

This contribution will review Longinus’ ideas about the emotions of authors, characters, and audiences. While the treatise *On the Sublime* is the most com-

⁵ *Subl.* 8.3.

⁶ *Subl.* 8.2. On the status of these low or ‘tragic’ emotions in *On the Sublime*, see Innes 1995a; Porter 2016: 126 n. 167 and 166. Fear is in fact an emotion that is portrayed in several of the examples cited by Longinus (see below on Orestes in *Subl.* 15).

⁷ The transportation of rhapsodes in Plato’s *Ion* is similar to the ecstasy that the author experiences according to Longinus’ *On the Sublime*: see De Jonge 2020: 149–150. For similar metaphors of inspiration and enthusiasm, see *Subl.* 13.2; 15.1; 32.7. Cf. Russell *ad loc.*

⁸ See *Subl.* 3.5; 8.4; 16.2; 39.2. Cf. Halliwell 2011: 330; De Jonge 2020: 154–155.

plete and most influential account of ὕψος in antiquity, the relationship between emotion and the sublime is also discussed in other ancient texts.⁹ One intriguing example comes from Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who reports what he experienced when reading one of Demosthenes' speeches:

... I am transported (ἐνθουσιῶ) and I am driven over here, over there (δεῦρο καὶ κεῖσε ἄγομαι), feeling one emotion (πάθος) after another—disbelief, anguish, terror, contempt, hatred, pity, goodwill, anger, envy—experiencing in succession all emotions (ἅπαντα τὰ πάθη) that can rule over the human mind (ὅσα κρατεῖν πέφυκεν ἀνθρωπίνης γνώμης).

D.H. *Dem.* 22.2–3

As we will see, Longinus likewise uses the language of 'being moved', 'transported', and 'ruled' when characterizing the emotional impact of the sublime.¹⁰ Dionysius' reading of Demosthenes sounds like a rather enervating experience; can readers really feel such an extended series of strong emotions without pause, or would they also need moments of relaxation?¹¹ In this respect Longinus' approach is perhaps more nuanced, as he focuses on specific moments within a poem, speech or story—the highlights of a narrative that have a strong emotional impact. Longinus draws attention to the emotional impact of such moments of the sublime, but he does not suggest that readers are continuously ecstatic while reading Homer's *Iliad* or Demosthenes' *On the Crown*.

Unlike narratologists of our day Longinus distinguishes neither between author and narrator, nor between audience and narratee.¹² But his criticism is certainly relevant to narratology, as most of the literary examples that he cites and examines are short passages from narrative discourse in Greek epic, drama, rhetoric, and historiography. In his interpretations of these examples Longinus offers an intriguing perspective on the role of emotion in the sublime moments

9 Scholia identify the emotional effects of (sublime) Homeric poetry: see Nünlist 2009: 139–149.

10 Porter 2016: 178–381 examines theories of the sublime in other critics and rhetoricians. Longinus seems to be unique in assigning such a central role to emotion in his concept of the sublime, but his views on the ecstatic emotion of audiences are anticipated by Gorgias, *Helen* 17 and Plato, *Ion* 535b–e: see De Jonge 2020: 149–150.

11 Several scholia point out that Homer allows his readers to relax now and then: see Nünlist 2009: 151–153.

12 For Longinus the audience of a text is primarily a 'listener' (ἀκροατής, ἀκροώμενος): see *Subl.* 1.4, 3.5, 10.1, 12.5 etc. We should however realize that the normal way of reading in antiquity was out loud, so that reading was also listening; and hence that ἀκούειν can also mean 'to read' (cf. Schenkeveld 1992).

(or immersive ‘highlights’) of narratives: in a short moment of sublime communication the narrator and the narratee may feel emotionally connected with each other and with the characters in the story.¹³ Before turning to the emotions of the three parties involved in sublime writing—author, audience, and characters—I will first discuss the position of πάθος as one of the ‘sources’ of the sublime in Longinus’ treatise, and ask which emotions are relevant to the sublime.

Emotion as a Source of the Sublime

In chapter 8 Longinus states that there are five most productive ‘sources’ (πηγαί) of the sublime. The first one is ‘the power of grand conceptions’ (τὸ περὶ τὰς νοήσεις ἀδρεπήβολον); the second one is ‘vehement and inspired emotion’ (τὸ σφοδρὸν καὶ ἐνθουσιαστικὸν πάθος). These two sources are for the most part ‘congenital’ (αὐθιγενεῖς), that is, they must somehow be present in the ‘nature’ (φύσις) of the author. The other three sources of the sublime are a matter of ‘art’ (τέχνη) and therefore could be learned and trained: figures of thought and speech, diction, and word arrangement.¹⁴ The importance of emotion to sublime writing is clear from this *partitio*: πάθος comes in the second place and is only preceded by ‘greatness of mind’ (μεγαλοφροσύνη), with which it shares the important characteristic of being inborn and natural. Everyone could go to a rhetorician or writing coach in order to learn how to use hyperbaton, metaphors, and rhythmical patterns, but inspired emotion is something that authors will have to find within themselves.

Longinus’ formal presentation of the five sources of the sublime sounds misleadingly clear and well-ordered, as if it would indeed be possible to write a straightforward ‘handbook of the sublime or emotion’ (ὑψους ... ἢ πάθους τέχνη).¹⁵ While the list of five sources roughly corresponds to the structure of

13 On ‘immersion’, see Allan, De Jong, and De Jonge 2017; on immersion in Longinus, see De Jonge 2020, 170–171. Toolan 2012 examines the factors that contribute to ‘emotionally-immersive passages’ in short fiction: his concept of ‘high emotional intensity’ echoes Longinus’ concept of the sublime: see De Jonge 2019. See also the contributions of Allan, and Van Gils and Kroon, in this volume, and, for a brief overview, the Introduction.

14 *Subl.* 8.1.

15 *Subl.* 2.1: Longinus asks ‘whether there is an art of the sublime or emotion’. But note that πάθος is a conjecture by Upton, which is adopted by Russell in Fyfe and Russell 1995 and by Mazzucchi 2010. Russell 1964 keeps βᾶθος (MSS), which however could not have the meaning that Alexander Pope assigned to the term in his *Peri Bathous* (1727). See Russell 1964 and Mazzucchi *ad loc.*

Longinus' treatise, there is a problem, as the following overview of *On the Sublime* (chapters 1–44) demonstrates:¹⁶

- 1–2 preface; criticism of Caecilius of Caleacte; what is the sublime?
- 3–5 faults, misconceived attempts at the sublime
- 6–7 characteristics of the true sublime
- 8 five sources of the sublime:
- 9–15 great thoughts (source 1)
- 16–29 figures of thought and figures of speech (source 3)
- 30–38 noble diction (source 4)
- 39–43 composition (source 5)
- 44 dialogue on the current lack of sublime talents

Where is the section on emotion (source 2)? Three answers have been proposed.¹⁷ First, the discussion of emotion may have been lost in one of the six long lacunas of codex Parisinus 2036.¹⁸ Although this is certainly possible, we must observe that there is no lacuna between chapter 15 and chapter 16, where we would expect the section on emotions: Longinus smoothly moves from great thoughts (source 1) to figures (source 3).¹⁹ Second, one could argue that emotion is not treated separately, but in close connection with the other sources. There are indeed many passages, like the discussion of Sappho fragment 31 (chapter 10), where it is suggested that emotion works together with other sources of the sublime.²⁰ The notion that πάθος was discussed throughout the treatise rather than in one specific section would indeed be plausible, if Longinus had not explicitly told us that he reserved a specific place (i.e. a section or book) for it.²¹ One final option remains, namely that the section on

16 On the structure and unity of *On the Sublime*, see Innes 1995b.

17 See Bompaire 1973; Russell in Fyfe and Russell 1995: 149. Porter 2016: 125–127 argues that '[s]ublimity is often nothing if not an emotion (or feeling), a *pathos*, that invades a subject (whether the writer or the reader) in the form of possession or enthusiasm.' The word 'often' is crucial here. There are also sublime moments without emotion (see above), so I cannot agree with Porter (2016: 126–127) that '[t]he fact that emotion receives no separate treatment in *On the Sublime* is plainly a false problem that needn't delay us any further here'.

18 See Russell 1964: xlix–l and Mazzucchi 2010: xxxix–xliv.

19 The lacuna following *Subl.* 9.4 could have contained a discussion of emotion. In that case the first two sources of the sublime were apparently presented as closely intertwined.

20 See Porter 2016: 125.

21 *Subl.* 3.5: πλὴν περὶ μὲν τῶν παθητικῶν ἄλλος ἡμῖν ἀπόκειται τόπος. 'However another place has been reserved in which the emotional will be treated.'

emotion was postponed to a separate treatise. In the final words of chapter 44, Longinus announces that he will now 'pass on to the next topic' (ἐπὶ δὲ τὰ συν-εχῆ):

and that topic was the emotions (τὰ πάθη), on which I previously undertook to write a separate treatise (ὑπομνήματι), for they seem to me to form part of the general subject of literature and especially of sublimity ...

Subl. 44.12

The last words of the surviving text of *On the Sublime* again underline the close relationship between emotion and the sublime. The text in the manuscript breaks off after these words, and there is some doubt about the authenticity of the words cited here, which are written in a later hand.²² It would be a surprise if Longinus had postponed the entire subject of emotions to another treatise. For he complains that his predecessor Caecilius of Caleacte, the writer of an earlier treatise *On the Sublime*, had omitted some of the five sources, 'one obvious omission being that of emotion' (ὡς καὶ τὸ πάθος ἀμέλει).²³ We would expect Longinus not to repeat the mistake that he finds unacceptable in the work of his colleague.

Longinus himself has certainly not omitted emotion. The place of his section on πάθη must perhaps remain an open question, but in *On the Sublime* emotion is everywhere. The emotions that are most relevant to the critic's concept of the sublime are enormous joy and exaltation, erotic passion, extreme fear, and enthusiastic possession. What these emotions have in common is that they are closely related to the dislocating or ecstatic impact (ἔκστασις) of the sublime:²⁴

What is beyond nature drives the audience not to persuasion but rather to ecstasy (οὐ γὰρ εἰς πειθῶ τοὺς ἀκρωμένους ἀλλ' εἰς ἔκστασιν ἄγει τὰ ὑπερφυᾶ). Invariably what inspires wonder (τὸ θαυμάσιον), together with its power of amazing us (σὺν ἐκπλήξει), always prevails over what is merely

22 See Russell 1964 and Mazzucchi 2010 *ad loc.*

23 *Subl.* 8.1. For Caecilius' *On the Sublime* (Augustan Age), see Woerther 2015.

24 On ecstasy in *On the Sublime*, see De Jonge 2020. On dislocation as a guiding notion in Longinus' treatise, see also Too 1998: 187–217. The term dislocation can refer both to the language of a sublime text and to the experience of the audience: both are 'moved' in a certain sense. Characteristic of a sublime style are words that are placed out of order (i.e. through hyperbaton or elevated word arrangement) or used in unexpected ways. Listeners are 'dislocated' in the sense that they are 'carried away', experiencing some form of mental transportation. Longinus' treatise suggests that there is a connection between these forms of spatial displacement: displaced language moves the minds of the audience.

convincing and pleasing. For our persuasions are usually under our control, while these things exercise an irresistible power and mastery (δυναστεῖαν καὶ βίαν), and take control over every listener (παντὸς ἐπάνω τοῦ ἀκρωμένου καθίσταται).

Subl. 1.4

The emotions that interest Longinus most are indeed those excessive feelings that we experience when we *seem* to have lost all control: we are *himmelhoch jauchzend* or deeply afraid of dying. Such ecstasy may not only affect the listener, but also the author and the characters in the story. Some remarkable examples can illustrate the prominence of these intense emotions throughout the treatise. Longinus tells us that when we hear something really sublime, our soul is filled with ‘joy and pride’ (χαρᾶς καὶ μεγαλαυχίας).²⁵ In a passage that Longinus cites from Homer’s *Iliad*, the sea parts its waves for pure ‘joy’ (γηθo-σύνῃ) when Poseidon is approaching.²⁶ Sappho ‘never fails to take the emotions incident to the passion of love (τὰ συμβαίνοντα ταῖς ἐρωτικαῖς μανίαις παθήματα) from its attendant symptoms and from real life’: fragment 31, which we owe to Longinus, displays not a single emotion, but a whole ‘concourse of emotions’ (πάθων σύνοδος).²⁷ Death is nearby when Sappho refers to her ‘shivering’ (τρόμος 31.13); this shuddering experience is echoed a short moment later in Longinus’ treatise, when the sailors in a Homeric storm ‘are trembling’ for fear (τρομέουσι, *Il.* 15.627).²⁸ Both Sappho (or the lyrical subject²⁹) and the sailors are deeply afraid of dying. Euripides is said to be very successful in presenting two emotions in particular, ‘madness and passion’ (μανίας τε καὶ ἔρωτας), specifically in his ‘visualizations’ (φαντασίαι) of Iphigenia and Orestes.³⁰

This incomplete overview serves to demonstrate that Longinus is not so much interested in modest emotions like amusement, pleasure, sadness, boredom or contentment; the emotions of the sublime are exaltation, great surprise, manic fear, and deep confusion. For Longinus, emotion is indeed ‘a violent movement and commotion of the soul’ (φορὰ ψυχῆς καὶ συγχίνησις).³¹ Narrators can use that state of mind when constructing their narratives; this may

25 *Subl.* 7.2. Cf. De Jonge 2020: 165; see below.

26 Hom. *Il.* 13.29, cited in *Subl.* 9.8.

27 *Subl.* 10.3 on Sappho fr. 31.

28 *Subl.* 10.5. On shuddering in the ancient world, see Cairns 2013: 85–107, who focuses on θάμβος and φρενὴ.

29 For the distinction between author/performer Sappho and lyrical subject in her poems (and its consequences for interpretation), see Lardinois in this volume.

30 *Subl.* 15.3.

31 *Subl.* 20.2: see De Jonge 2020: 157.

lead to an extraordinary (dislocated) text that features characters with similarly extreme (and noble) emotions; and this again will have a great impact on the audience. Let us now look at the sublime emotions of authors, audiences, and characters.

The Emotions of the Author

Longinus often refers to the emotions of the authors whose texts he cites and examines. One of the most prominent writers in his treatise, perhaps the most sublime of all, is Demosthenes. In the fascinating comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero (*On the Sublime* 12.4–5), Longinus assigns all the typical elements of the sublime to the Greek orator, whose violent style ‘burns’ everything like a flash of lightning or a thunderbolt. Demosthenes’ sublimity (ὑψος) is contrasted to Cicero’s ‘diffusion’ (χύσις): while the Greek orator uses an abrupt, rapid, and forceful style, the Roman orator composes long sentences that impress by their amplification and persistent energy. The right moment for Demosthenes’ sublimity comes ‘in his vehement emotions (τοῖς σφοδροῖς πάθεσι) and in passages where it is necessary to amaze (ἐκπλήξαι) the audience.’³² In the brief description of Cicero’s style no such strong emotion is mentioned. Longinus’ reference to Demosthenes’ forceful emotions echoes his definition of the second source of the sublime (τὸ σφοδρὸν καὶ ἐνθουσιαστικὸν πάθος):³³ this intratextual allusion underlines that for Longinus Demosthenes, not Cicero, is the archetype of sublime writing.

In his analysis of Demosthenes’ famous Marathon oath (*On the Crown* 208), Longinus points out that the orator seems ‘as if suddenly inspired by a god and as it were possessed’ (καθάπερ ἐμπνευσθεὶς ἐξαίφνης ὑπὸ θεοῦ καὶ οἶονεὶ φοιβόληπτος γενόμενος).³⁴ The words καθάπερ and οἶονεὶ indicate that Demosthenes is not really carried away—he is still master over his feelings and artfully composing his text, by combining his natural, well-timed emotion with his superb technical skills. Demosthenes’ controlled ecstasy has a great impact on the text, which itself becomes loaded with πάθος: the orator ‘has transformed the nature of the argument into a passage of transcendent sublimity and emotion’ (τὴν δὲ τῆς ἀποδείξεως φύσιν μεθεστακῶς εἰς ὑπερβάλλον ὕψος καὶ πάθος). Longinus’

32 *Subl.* 12.5. On Longinus’ comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero, see De Jonge and Nijk 2019.

33 *Subl.* 8.2: see above.

34 *Subl.* 16.2. See Porter 2016: 133–134.

analysis suggests not only a close connection between sublimity and emotion, but also a relationship between Demosthenes' state of mind and the remarkable sentence that he has produced, with its unusual and extraordinary oath:

I swear it by our forefathers who bore the brunt of warfare at Marathon, who stood in array of battle at Plataea, who fought in the sea-fights of Salamis and Artemisium, and by all the brave men who repose in our public sepulchres, buried there by a country that accounted them all to be alike worthy of the same honour ...³⁵

DEMOSTHENES, *On the Crown* 208

Apart from Plato, Homer is the only author who can compete with Demosthenes in Longinus' treatise.³⁶ Homer, too, is characterized as driven by emotion: Longinus quotes three Homeric lines about Hector (*Il.* 15.605–607), but by integrating the citation into his own text Longinus makes Homer himself (instead of Hector) the grammatical subject of the Homeric sentence. Thus Homer replaces Hector, who is in his turn compared to Ares and to fire: 'he stormily raves (μαίνεται), as when the spear-wielding Ares or destroying fire stormily raves (μαίνεται) on the hills ... and foam encircles his mouth.'³⁷ Longinus' switcheroo suggests that Hector's firm and fierce way of fighting somehow mirrors Homer's inspired state of mind when composing the *Iliad*.

Longinus prefers the *Iliad* over the *Odyssey*, considering the latter poem a product of Homer's old age.³⁸ The comparison of the two epic poems (*On the Sublime* 9.11–15) brings out several differences; one of them is that the *Iliad*, unlike the *Odyssey*, has a 'flood of emotions, one following close after another' (πρόχυσιν ... τῶν ἐπαλλήλων παθῶν). Getting older, Homer apparently moved from πάθος to ἦθος, as 'in the greatest prose writers and poets declining emotional power passes into character portrayals' (ἡ ἀπακμὴ τοῦ πάθους ἐν τοῖς μεγάλοις συγγραφεύσι καὶ ποιηταῖς εἰς ἦθος ἐκλύεται).³⁹ While the *Iliad* has more emotion, it is also more 'dramatic' (δραματικόν) and 'involving' (ἐναγώνιον), whereas in the *Odyssey* the 'narrative mode' (διηγηματικόν) predominates.⁴⁰ The latter words do not imply that narrative cannot be emotional; Longinus rather means

35 Translation Vince 1926.

36 On Homer and the sublime, see Porter 2016: 360–381.

37 Longinus *Subl.* 9.11 cites *Il.* 15.605–607 and makes Homer himself the grammatical subject of Hector's actions. See Hunter 2018: 188–189.

38 *Subl.* 9.13.

39 *Subl.* 9.15.

40 *Subl.* 9.13. On the semantics of ἐναγώνιος, see Ooms and De Jonge 2013.

to say that the audience of the *Odyssey* is enjoying the pleasant stories of Odysseus as belonging to a different world, whereas the listeners of the *Iliad* are always on the edge of their seat, completely drawn into the exciting events. The *Iliad*, one could say, is more immersive than the *Odyssey*.⁴¹

Among the emotional authors of sublime texts we should of course also mention Sappho, who knows how to select the emotions from real life and how to bring them together in one unified poem, and Euripides, who is an expert in presenting madness and passion.⁴² There are however also writers who are less successful. According to Longinus one important cause of stylistic failure is misplaced emotion (πάθος ἄκαιρον): this is what Theodorus (possibly Theodorus of Gadara, teacher of emperor Tiberius) called the ‘pseudo-bacchanalian’ or ‘affectation of style’ (παρένθυσος).⁴³

For writers often behave as if they were drunk (ὥσπερ ἐκ μέθης) and give way to outbursts of emotions which the subject no longer warrants, but which are private to themselves and consequently tedious, so that to an audience which feels none of it (πρὸς οὐδὲν πεπονθότας ἀχροατὰς) their behaviour looks unseemly. And naturally so, for while they are in ecstasy, the audience is not (ἐξεστηκότες πρὸς οὐκ ἐξεστηκότας).

Subl. 3.5

Longinus deems it crucial that there is a communicative connection between author and reader—only well-timed and well-placed emotion will produce the right emotion in the audience too.

41 Cf. Porter 2016: 360. On Homeric immersion, see Allan, De Jong, and De Jonge 2017. Compare also Allan in this volume, and—on immersion in general—the observations of Van Gils and Kroon, and the brief overview in the Introduction.

42 See *Subl.* 10.1–3 and 15.3 (both cited above). Longinus cites several examples from Euripides’ messenger speeches in his chapter on φαντασία (visualization), which is closely connected with the emotion of the author: ‘through frenzy and emotion (ὕπ’ ἐνθουσιασμοῦ καὶ πάθους) you seem to see what you describe and bring it vividly before the eyes of your audience’ (*Subl.* 15.1).

43 Cf. De Jonge 2020: 155. Note that the authors who fail to achieve sublimity are said to be ‘drunk, as it were’ (ὥσπερ ἐκ μέθης), whereas successful authors are ‘possessed, as it were’ (see above on *Subl.* 16.2).

The Emotions of the Audience

The sublime carries the reader or listener out of themselves, as we have seen. What kind of emotion is this ecstasy that the audience may experience? It can feel like ‘pride’:⁴⁴

For our soul is naturally elevated by the true sublime: uplifted with a sense of proud exaltation, our soul is filled with joy and pride (πληροῦται χαρᾶς καὶ μεγαλαυχίας), as if it has itself produced what it just heard (ὥς αὐτὴ γεννήσασα ὅπερ ἤκουσεν).

Subl. 7.2

This is a remarkable form of ecstasy: while listening to a sublime passage we may be so carried away that we believe that we ourselves have written the lines—for a moment we *are* Homer, we *are* Sappho, or we *are* Demosthenes. The ‘joy and pride’ that the audience experiences could be described as a triumphant exaltation that collapses the borderlines between author and audience. Again, we should not forget that this is just an illusion (‘as if’). Cognitive control will bring us back to reality, and we will soon realize that we are not Homer, Sappho, or Demosthenes after all.

Not all texts will have the ecstatic impact that Longinus is looking for. He is well aware that rhetorical language, like the use of figures of speech, can actually have the opposite effect: audiences may be annoyed when listening to an orator employing asyndeton, hyperbaton, and rhetorical questions in order to impress them. Therefore, figures must be concealed, and here again emotion can help us: ‘sublimity and emotion (ὕψος καὶ πάθος) are a wonderfully helpful antidote against the suspicion that accompanies the use of figures’.⁴⁵ If the writer or orator uses obvious artistic figures of speech that are not hidden by a display of genuine emotion and sublimity, the judge (κριτής), tyrant (τύραννος), king (βασιλεύς) or ruler (ἡγεμὼν) might develop emotions that are rather different from proud exaltation:

He is promptly indignant (ἀγανακτεῖ) that he is being treated like a silly child and outwitted by the figures of a skilled speaker. Construing the fallacy as a personal affront, he sometimes turns downright savage (ἀποθη-

44 See also De Jonge 2020: 165.

45 *Subl.* 17.2.

ριούται); and even if he controls his feelings (καὶν ἐπικρατήσῃ δὲ τοῦ θυμοῦ), he becomes conditioned against being persuaded by the speech.

Subl. 17.1

Is Longinus here thinking of a Roman emperor who might be annoyed by the tricks of a skilled rhetorician? The irritation (ἀγαντακτεῖν) of the tyrant stands in sharp contrast with the ecstatic emotions that Longinus is aiming at in his treatise. This passage makes it once more clear that the sublime could never be a matter of ecstasy and irrational possession alone: the art (τέχνη) of the rhetorician is needed to conceal itself (*ars est celare artem*). Ecstasy must be controlled by the sophisticated skills that we can learn by studying Longinus' treatise.⁴⁶

The Emotions of Characters

Longinus believes that in a successful act of sublime communication the genuine (but still somehow controlled) emotion of the author will have an ecstatic impact on the audience. Both author and reader can be inspired by the characters within the narrative, whose emotions they can adopt or mirror. Among the emotional characters of narrative passages cited in *On the Sublime* Ajax is perhaps the most sublime one. This Homeric character appears twice in chapter 9, where Longinus discusses greatness of mind as the first source of ὕψος. First Longinus refers to Ajax's silent response to Odysseus (significantly without citing the Homeric text, thereby 'silencing' it):⁴⁷

The sublime is the echo of a noble mind (ὕψος μεγαλοφροσύνης ἀπήχημα). And so even without voice (i.e. without being spoken) the bare thought often of itself wins admiration for its inherent grandeur (τὸ μεγαλόφρον). How grand, for instance, is the silence of Ajax in the Summoning of the Ghosts, more sublime than any speech (παντὸς ὑψηλότερον λόγου)!

Subl. 9.2

Greatness of thought cannot be separated from emotion here. It is Ajax' irrepressible anger, shame, and indignation that cause him not to answer Odysseus' questions. Ajax' silence (famously echoed by Dido's silence in Virgil's *Aeneid*)

46 Halliwell 2011 interprets the tradition of ancient literary criticism (including Longinus) as a dialogue between 'ecstasy' and 'truth'.

47 *Subl.* 9.2 on Hom. *Od.* 11.563–565. See Porter 2016: 94–97.

is 'more sublime than any speech', I suggest, because the audience can almost feel his anger, which has not yielded since he committed suicide.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, his emotion is also collected and controlled. Indeed, 'nothing makes so much for grandeur as noble emotion (γενναῖον πάθος) in the right place'.⁴⁹

The second moment of Ajax' emotional sublimity mentioned by Longinus is his prayer to Zeus when the battlefield is hidden in the darkness of the night: Ajax desperately but also proudly asks Zeus to bring daylight instead of darkness.⁵⁰ Longinus' commentary highlights Ajax' πάθος:

These are the true feelings of an Ajax (ἔστιν ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸ πάθος Αἴαντος). He does not plead for his life: such a prayer would demean the hero: but since the disabling darkness robbed his courage of all noble use, therefore, distressed (ἀγανακτῶν) to be idle in battle, he prays for light on the instant, hoping thus at the worst to find a burial worthy of his courage, even though Zeus be ranged against him.

Subl. 9.10

The emotions of Ajax are analysed as heroic and noble. Ajax' prayer for light resonates with God's creation of light in *Genesis* 1 (*fiat lux*), a paraphrase of which Longinus offers us in the section immediately preceding the Ajax example.⁵¹

Heroic and noble emotions connect sublime characters with the sublime authors in Longinus' text, like Homer and Demosthenes. This becomes especially clear in Longinus' discussion of a passage from the *Iliad*, where Hector angrily encourages the Trojans. Longinus' analysis suggests that Hector can scarcely be distinguished from Homer himself:⁵²

Ἑκτωρ δὲ Τρώεσσιν ἐκέκλετο μακρὸν αὐσας
νηυσὶν ἐπισσεύεσθαι, ἐὰν δ' ἔναρα βροτόεντα
ὄν δ' ἂν ἐγὼν ἀπάνευθε νεῶν ἐθέλοντα νοήσω,
αὐτοῦ οἱ θάνατον μητίσσομαι.

HOM. *Il.* 15.346–349, cited in *Subl.* 27.1

48 On this passage, see also De Jonge 2019; De Jong 2021.

49 *Subl.* 8.4. See above.

50 Hom. *Il.* 17.645–647 cited in *Subl.* 9.10.

51 *Subl.* 9.9. On the connection between the examples from Homer and *Genesis* in chapter 9, see Usher 2007.

52 The same passage is also discussed in the scholia (schol. A *Il.* 15.346 Nic.; bT *Il.* 15.347a ex.) and in Ps.-Plut. *Hom.* 57. The scholiasts debate whether the speech begins in line 347 or 348. See Nünlist 2009: 105.

Hector lifted his voice and cried afar to the Trojans
 To rush back now to the galleys and leave the blood-spattered booty.
 Whomsoever I see of his own will afar from the galleys,
 Death for him there will I plan.

Longinus cites this passage as an example of a specific grammatical figure, the ‘change of person’: the writer suddenly turns and ‘changes into the character himself’ (εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ πρόσωπον ἀντιμεθίσταται).⁵³ In modern terms this would be called an ‘unmarked transition’ from narrator-text to speech; Irene de Jong has proposed to interpret this figure as a form of *metalepsis*.⁵⁴ Longinus supposes that Hector’s direct speech starts with ὃν δ’ ἄν ἐγὼν (line 15.348), and remarks that the direct speech is not introduced by a phrase like ‘Hector said so and so’. Listeners therefore may understand that the author/narrator is still speaking, when they are in fact listening to Hector himself. In Longinus’ interpretation Homer has thus momentarily changed into Hector: author/narrator and character merge in a short moment of sublimity. Longinus tells us that a figure of this kind is ‘a sort of outbreak of emotion’ (ἐκβολή τις πάθους). Is it the poet’s emotion or Hector’s emotion? The best answer is probably ‘both’, as narrator and character have become one.

Conclusion

Emotion deeply informs Longinus’ ideas on sublime narrative. There are sublime moments without emotion, to be sure, but nothing is as sublime as ‘genuine emotion’ (γενναῖον πάθος) that is well-timed. We have seen that the term γενναῖον on the one hand suggests that an emotion must naturally belong to the person expressing it; on the other hand it evokes a certain superhuman nobility and grandeur, which characterizes Homer and Demosthenes as much as Ajax and Hector. Although Longinus describes the authors, audiences, and characters of sublime narrative in terms of overwhelming ecstasy and confusing dislocation, an element of cognitive control is never absent. Sublime narrators are possessed ‘as it were’, but they can use their artistic skills to choose the right moment and to find the proper words. Readers experience a moment of proud exaltation when they are carried away by a poem or passage, up to the

53 *Subl.* 27.1. See also De Jonge 2020: 163–164.

54 De Bakker and De Jong 2021: 10. For the ancient scholia on ‘unmarked transition’, see Nünlist 2009: 102–106.

point that they strongly identify with the author of the text they have read; but this is an illusion that lasts for only a short moment. Even a character like the Homeric Ajax shows that in his proud anger he has ultimately controlled his intense feelings of shame and frustration: his silence is a noble display of emotion and grandeur.

In several passages of his treatise Longinus suggests that a sublime text may facilitate the intersubjective communication between authors, audiences, and characters. Vehement emotions like great joy, fear, and anger are, as it were, stamped into the text, from where they connect all parties involved in the narrative. Longinus teaches us that emotion is a source of the sublime not only for writers like Homer, Demosthenes, and Sappho, but also for characters like Ajax, Hector, and Orestes, and most of all for us, readers of classical literature.

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