
Grafting Plato's Shadow Play: a spray can version of metaleptic mimesis

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Abstract: The feel of this text on paper, this page—this “pageantry” is borne on the *mythos* of a logic applied in mute grisaille tones: a lateral drift of shadowy inscription emblematic of the Peripatetic pigeonhole impulse to which it dares chum up, indeed, and retain the asperity resultant from the battles required to keep from being deposed (Fisher 2003). For ‘if darkness implies a lack of visibility, a shadow is surely not something dark. A shadow is what we see without noticing, a trope that operates beneath our attention—a light too long ignored’ (Lock 1998). And yet as the present discussion begins to loom, and as we find ourselves embroiled in scathing disputations long sautéed in rich cultural chauvinisms, let us here anticipate the imminent appearance of the poet of man: that self-churning server of his own soul’s relinquished partings and who covets no concern for anyone’s posterity. And although this agent-of-the-new-generation’s *tack* may be likened to the insurgent graffitist’s, let it here be known that his truest aspiration is the isolation and insinuation of himself *corporeally* within the dampened pigments of this tactile fresco.

1. THE SKIAGRAPHIC PALINODE

Shadow is crucial here in the steamy tropics, these sun-drenched amphiscian climes; especially from the ambler's point of view from which portable shade is readily availed in the guise of dark eyewear and broad UV-resistant parasol. The umbrella though serves an important multi-function, mounting its sombre screen rain or shine, and.... And yet in or out of the Torrid Zone, shadow is received as a given datum, but from who knows where? That's the point. And yet still as a 'datum,' as an abstract entirety, shade emphatically bears disposition, bears chiaroscuro binding of qualia to character in quest of resolution through firm appeal.

2. MAN-MADE DREAMS AS SHADOWS

Is Plato the conflation of *mimêsis* and *mythos*? Do we see his 'man-made dreams' as shadows? Do we see them as shadows whose 'ubiquitous presence and coexistence in the august tradition of Hellenic philosophy have as their point of departure and reflection the allegorical cave?' (Lock 1998).

Shadows shift. The causes are three: the movement of the light-source, the eclipsing substance, and the retina upon which the shadow enjambes.

The earliest conceptions of an authorial voice construe the writer, or storyteller as a copyist of reality 'constrained either within a literary tradition or by the limits of divine inspiration' (Burke 1995, 5). But starting with the late classical period when the tragedian Sophocles added a third actor to the stage (Aristotle *Poetics*, 1449a), the notion of *mimêsis*—routinely rendered "imitation"—took onboard the important dramaturgical nuance of "impersonation" with particular regard to psychosomatic behavioural traits. Yet also at this time the notion of *mimêsis* was adapted to the field of rhetoric too, where it came to

represent an assorted arsenal of tropico-schematic methods and skills for mimicking language and its delivery systems.

3. EDWARD SAID ON ELOQUENCE

Very late in his prolific career Edward Said (2004) offered some appealing notes belles-lettres on the notion of rhetoric as “eloquence in language.” What he had in mind was to adumbrate the sense that eloquence “once conveyed”—that being ‘a distinguished, mainly spoken practice and skill—perhaps due in part to an innate gift—but which still required schooling and development in ways that marked its holder an eloquent person.’ Rhetorical skill, or *rhêtorikê technê* in classical Greek, largely comprised the imitation or *mimêsis* by a public speaker or pleader (*rhêtôr*) of stylistic features and discursive devices known within the canon of style as tropes and schemes. These tricks of the trade had the task or function (Gk. *ergon*) of persuading and bringing ones audience over—and certainly not putting them off. In the later Latin tradition of rhetoric this “eloquence” was defined as a straight up “art,” as *ars oratoria*, “oratorical art”—‘the art of eloquent public speaking,’ and which included elocution, or the ‘refinement of voice and manner of expression.’

But as a truly well-ordered and disciplined practice—as the art that epitomizes eloquence itself—rhetoric remained quite well and alive as late as the eighteenth century in Europe. The Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico regarded eloquence and rhetoric as identical. And writing from his chair as professor of Latin Eloquence at the University of Naples, Vico described eloquence as a ‘faculty of speaking appropriate to persuasion whereby the orator bends the spirit through his speech’ (1711-1741). But when Vico with his orotund, Latinate manner is read today he tends to come across as a relic of antiquity who—perhaps having failed to heed his own good advice—continues to expose himself to new generations of harsh reproof for the hubris and the haughtiness that his misread brand of autotelic pomposity and frivolity regrettably

convey. So let us take pause to quickly sum up. Are there lessons to be learned from any of this? Tentatively three: (i) awing ones audience with virtuoso verbal skill and unexcelled mastery of rhetorical technique is not quite the same as bona fide eloquence and (ii) may well be interpreted as imbecilic drivel; but in any case, (iii) every aspiration for eloquence in language implies a certain likelihood of missing the mark and ‘achieving little more than a baroque verbal performance’ (Said).

4. INVENTIVE CONTINUATION

To the extent that we have all become accustomed to accept and expect of the philosophical project the production of cultural artefacts or “texts” of varied sorts (Gk. *mimémata*), such goods or fetishes will need comply subaltern to the inevitable dominance of *mythos*. And with the assuaging pats of the scholarly fingertips, let there be the likelihood that all falls in line with a range of stencilled and formulaic templates educive of clear-cut specifications; for example, that the ‘sparseness of these sampled grains’ alone ‘compose our lust for a tropological unity’ (Vico; Fisher; Duncan 1957), and further convey in semblance of press—as a memorandum prefiguring quarrel—the gallivant tradition’s waivers of claim that entice transposures of what Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s dialect similarly elicits as “determinate negation”—though rearticulated by McCumber (2004) as “demarcation,” and which still to a certain irreducible degree, exacts, extracts and foreshadows the extension and/or prolongation of any discourse as naturally reliant on discussants thereof either growing tedious of what they’re presently chomping on about and empirically advancing to the next menu item.

But in the case of “tradition” it is a bit more interesting. And displacing if I may McCumber’s ‘demarcation’ with my own preferred “continuation,” I shall tersely exhibit its two instantiations, and thereby—drawing on a stark though expedient polarity—disclose how “tradition” in the specific sense of ‘something that assures a seamless discipular genealogy’ (Joyce 1939, 1.5.112) transfigures its gestures of

“continuation” by means of either kissing the teacher’s ass or kicking the teacher’s ass.

It was Aristotle’s response to his teacher’s aporia on the rise of literacy in sixth century Athens and ‘the need to rethink its functions and consequences’ (Harris 2000) that established the orthodox Western assumptions on the momentous nature and role of *mimémata* or “mimetic goods” in the arenas of art and rhetoric. And this reign would last for a lengthy two millennia until Alexander Baumgarten (*Metaphysica* 1773) finally dared to critique and stare down the logic that had come to sustain the near archetypal view of *mimêsis*—a perspective that hinged on two critical points: (i) the cheapening of sense and (ii) the dichotomous partitioning of art from genuine things.

Yet between these two our mammoth culture-heroic duo, the notion of *mimêsis* as “imitative theory” accorded little scope to “authorial inventiveness” (Burke, 6). And one really wonders ‘why’ when for tens-of-thousands of years already the human species had exercised its near neurological need to traffic and trade in dramatic narrative text—this folk re-threading of the mundane yarns of peoples lives into compact frames (Mckee 2000) eliciting heroes, villains and fools—and bicycle riders and their bloodied victims—all shuttled and pressed to the rhythmic beat of the passions loomed in pursuits and their reprisals.

So why would a storyteller still be regarded as a ‘copyist of reality constrained within a literary tradition’—or otherwise simply ‘beside himself’—a “maniac” in Plato’s text (*Phaedrus*, 244a-5b)? For are these not two (or three) clearly incongruous proposals here? If ‘tradition’ requires that a writer give form to the repetitive fragments of everyday life ‘in a way that has a clear-cut beginning, middle and ending—well, this is plainly at odds with reality and truth already’ (le Carré 1996) that is, the ‘so-called’ reality, the ‘so-called’ truth, to which ‘tradition’ feebly construes it constrains one.

5. PERIPATETIC LOGOS, MYTHOS

Peripatetic *logos*, or let us just say logic, is an explicative and/or descriptive gesture or phraseology that applies to all genres of art (Gk. *technê*). Its avowed objective, its “superobjectivity”—which is the knowledge (*epistêmê*) of truth/reality/actuality (*alêtheia*) as a ‘work in progress’ (*entelecheia*)—claims to be a demonstrative, transparent “account,” as subtly nuanced from ‘narrative.’ *Logos* alleges to be a fully rational procedure that is furthermore and crucially always open to debate. The truth of *logos* is therefore a protocol in a state of interminable negotiations, a deal that is never sealed.

With *mythos* however, or let us just say myth, veracity is never a bastion concern, but—together with such universal abstracts as *ontos*, *aisthêtikos*, the good, and the just—a ‘conscripted’ protagonist’s superobjective impinged unbeknownst by tragedian peel—an instantiation of suspended disbelief. Here we have truth as just another “myth” repotted or respun as the dramaturge’s ploy, and with verification and refutation her chief determinate antagonists as she plots us on by dip and turn to each the troika’s deemed resolution: *tres persona in una substantia*. Thus in a single tragic episode logic is seen to encapsulate, indeed, be the product of its own ongoing and reincubating “narrative,” as subtly nuanced from ‘account.’

But how to pick apart between *logos* and *mythos* as each correspond to the fashioning of this story, as each in its own individual sense exfoliates, re-self-generates, extends and disperses its neurological imprint, only stripped to a more archaic plane where the *mythos* of *logos* is conspicuously mythological.

And what do *logos* and *mythos* actually do? *Mythos* aims (i) to produce and effect an overall impression and/or (ii) to convey a message through the cogent composition or artistic arrangement of its given data-set, and further, (iii) to arrive us to a packaged product or experience—be that in the form of tragedy, epic, poetry, painting, sculpture, installation, musical score, film sequence, text on screen, you name it.

Logos, again, aspires for transparency, and therefore neutrality. *Logos* thereby constrains itself to factual statements, to ‘affairs of the present tense’—i.e. ‘to evidence, argument or testimony that is producible here and now’ (McCumber, 22, 9). And this is why the *epistémê*-driven myths of history and science plot as their superobjective tasks the knowing of real or factual things.

Mythos, by contrast, as both embodying and being an analogue to fiction—be it tragedy, comedy, poetry, novel, and the rest—waives such pretensions of “non-fictional ontology” and grants free reign to authorial voice—even though this voice be unidentifiable (McLeish 1998, 47). But in factual practice, vis-à-vis Aristotle’s *Poetics*, say—a manual devoted to presenting theories for the production of ‘performance texts’ (Gupt 1994)—the unified action or praxis of the tragedy (romance, dramatic tale, what have you) is transparently indifferent to the conventions of truth. Instead, the *mythos* of tragedy entrusts itself to the workings of *mimêsis* (L. *imitatio*), to the graphic art of ‘representation, depiction, replication, simulation, translation,’ etc., while faithful to the knowledge that its retail goods are emphatically fictive and essentially lies. ‘The transparency of *mythos*, then—indifferent to the truth of science—shadows instead the cinematographic *technê*, or expertise, in its comprehensive strategy to portray human dealings in embellished idiom and stylised beat’ (*Poetics*, 4).

6. FABULATIONS OF LOGOS

Now despite and in spite of a bold disregard for empirical reality on the part of *mythos*, it is nevertheless *mythos*-driven “tragedy” that writes resolution into the template of its entelecheian quest. And again this is not the truth of *logos*-driven “science,” but the baffling truths of the fey equations that persistently elude understanding. For it is *mythos*—not *logos*—that insists that the crimes of your own *energeia* be unravelled and revealed, and that the facts that these foreshadow be confronted. Now the father of the Peripatetics was himself abundantly aware of this

systematic oddity, and in his account (Poetics 9) he crafted the claim that ‘poetry—though clearly a fictive genre—is more philosophical and a higher art than scientific writing, as it tends to express the universal, while factual writing the contingent (after Butcher, cited in McLeish, 40).

Now, given the august weight of this standard we should not like some succumb to the somewhat rash perplexity of McCumber (20), say, vis-à-vis the likes of Michel Foucault when the Frenchman rather unabashedly remarked, “I am fully aware that I have never written anything other than fictions. [And f]or all that, I would not want to say that they were outside the truth. It seems plausible to me to make fictions work within truth, to introduce truth-effects within a fictional discourse, and in some way to make discourse arouse, ‘fabricate’, something which does not yet exist, thus to fiction something” (Foucault 1979, 75).

Pursuant of a truth that is essentially *mythos*, either in its abstract or contingent form, the project of philosophy—if borne on the fabulations of *logos*—becomes, and indeed inescapably IS—in this very moment—an instantiation of that tragic property or peculiarity (idiom) that goes by the name of “suspended disbelief.”

7. IS PHILOSOPHY AN INVENTIVE ENDEAVOUR?

According to the Aristotelian songbook or ‘canon’ (from L. *cantare*) the medium of tragedy is storytelling, i.e. the telling of a story midst the setting of the scene (Gk. *skene* ‘tent,’ cognate of *skia* ‘shadow, shade’). Thus tragedy “shows” while history “exacts.” Drama reveals while science alights on. Or in other words, physics is given to factuality, poetics to artefactuality. Permitting this dictum, the following question nearly asks itself: What is the medium of philosophy?

Now another crucial question appears in our midst. This question furthermore insists on an answer. Science thus has no stock in it. Let the appearance of this fundamental query mark a flourishing ‘twist’ in

this present set of knickers; our protagonistic point of no return. Is philosophy an inventive endeavour or not?

Should we democratise the project and employ Robert's Rules? Shall we table the motion and take a vote? How about a little campaign analysis? Fine. As a yes vote victory risks upsetting certain segments that would fain consign such pretence and hubris to the school of dainty arts, a shadow so cast would additionally risk subjecting oneself to the insensitive charge that one is doing 'travel writing' rather than 'philosophy' (Critchley 2001, 60); or perhaps even worse, trying to turn philosophy into a sumptuous aesthetics. But why should the yes voter even care? The present authorial voice doesn't care. In fact, it greets such bracing charges with affection and—firmly ensconced in the yes vote camp—is moved to tears to determinately negate, demarcate and continue philosophy as an inventive *techné* and *ars* put together.

Thus philosophy is, or rather “represents”—vis-à-vis our growing concern, which is *mimêsis* (“inventiveness”)—its own self-reflexive basis or “property,” which entails self-grilling and auto-critiquing tendencies. This indicates further intensive testing through deep exploratory ponderation vividly alert to an instrumentation that always stands in need of replacement, adopting its consoles, lamps and tropes as a tactical set of surface marker buoys and other equipment plunged beneath the sea—*avec un penchant fétichiste pour le creux de ton oreille...un murmure...renvoie toute chose à son étrangeté*—as it tracks the pursuit of keeping up with data with a hermeneutics of resilience and inking, floating through the layers of bubbly veils to impasto sands and the sound of breakers booming on the shoreline: salt-foam splashing at her knees and thighs, footprints left near the half-buried boat as to de-self-centre once and for all her intentions, her believers, her vatic voice in the abyssal whirr of an ear shell's venting, adequating all in its strangeness.

8. OUR TROGLODYTIC HERITAGE

Laterally prefigured, this tacit source is the default question of a shadow misperceived—a man-made dream, a lucid particle, a singular datum frail in resolve—threadbare and tentative in a textual promiscuity as ubiquitous as the shadows of the opening focus of our troglodytic heritage. So as far as those obsessive leaps of virtuoso intellectual-bravado go, they should rather be read as the symptomatics of a shrewdly sampled critical mass expressly aimed at deflecting notice away from certain core-deviations. Or to come to the point: it's a guy thing. And that the tragedy, rather than dampen ones zeal, is but an intravenous petrol drip for stoking the adamant cerebral fire. It is therefore imperative to assess the given set in its full array of hypersensitivities, devastating manias, marked disinclinations to accommodate any form of insolence—to adroitly make no sense, etc., as this brusque “sweeping stuff under the rug” routine has by now become particularly worrying; reappearing as it were to the choral accompaniment of well-waxed and well-honed meta-verbal signatories vigorously expounding the sound of one hand clapping.

And so again, what distinguishes—what picks apart—the movement of logic from myth? Is it the *logos* of philosophy, of philosophy qua philosophy? Or is it the *technê* of *epistêmê*—that “special art” that amounts to an “understanding,” a “buoying,” a subliminal levity that doffs all follow-ons in sceptical disownment of the very feasibility of ever bringing this arraignment to conclusion. Is it this that ‘sifts,’ that ‘conspicuates’ itself for an immanent and everlasting truth—but in tandem with pathetic bootleg reproduction limbering—in tandem— itinerant tracks as waivers incised over mustard fields of discourse ‘somehow parallel to each other’ (Correia 2001), the lighter ‘left’ penumbrally opening the way for the dim-witted, half-witted and nitwitted ‘right’—as *ontos* absolving *epistêmê*'s tragic bind?

Her faith in the boy is truly unshakable, despite his numerous delimiting factors: his cultural derangement, his terpsichorean lameness, his faulty choice of media—his *austérité-fixe*.

‘But for the hand to be able to clap alone, Being is undoubtedly the one that counts. Might it thus be at all possible to ontologise these in order to adequate additional things’ (Correia) from the knicker-twisting ground of nescient being? I don’t think so. For the absents of being surely ‘adequates’ already; and in any case, adding ‘things’ will never reach it any way. —Fine. But if fundamentally ‘there is no being’ then adding things to what will never reach what?’ —Correct, and which is also ‘why the final word on philosophy, ontology, epistemology and apophatic discourse has got to go further than words can go’ (Srinivasan 2000b, a). Such is the levity of sensitive intellect lingering at the crossroads of paradox and sublimity.

9. THE SUGGESTION!

It is mere presupposition that truth is sought, and that its seeking is truthful and based on truth. Or ‘that the left hand knoweth not the’—Who, say ‘what?’—because scholarship simply hasn’t anywhere to go with that. You’ll just get harangued for staking out a privileged position, lighting incense, promulgating a cult mentality, or being womanish. The suggestion! As if truth were bereft of those pretty shades that lurk in the alleyways of apophatic discourse. Who exactly curates the current installation?

10. TRACKING PHILOSOPHY’S ESSENTIAL MYTH

Tracking philosophy’s essential myth is the natural task of its auto-plot discernment console. Here the protagonist/questioner/inquisitor begins self-seeding her personal conclusion through responding to a registry of obvious questions; though knowing the inquisitors will never be content and that she’s fated to a barren, unrelenting search that only comes to closure with the hushing of authorial voice. Here we have the concept of self-liquidity: preconscious freedom without direction—though not to be mistaken for a psychic dimension, neither a wily deduction of thought.

Why? Wholly unconfined and devoid of direction...this is just the reason why it's not a happening, neither a result. It is the unreasoned aftermath of personal liquidation without any trace, and whose function as a cryptic dramaturgical figure is concealed in its own inner private sub-philosophy. This naturally includes a rule-ensemble that we trust metaleptically yields all essentials averred through the Vedic conception of *mandala* ('seed receptacle'). And in this way the play/act/object of the tragedy prompts the whole bazaar—indeed 'calls' the entire permeated public space 'to prayer,' to diaphanous regions of aesthetic sensibility where, bathed in the thus-pierced-springs of exfoliation, one resigns to the hand of a force far beyond—one dances to a score that is normally not perceived by the standard apparatus of cartilage, flesh and minuscule bone. Here prospects of returns get thoroughly impeached, as does the very notion of taking leave. All that remains is the naked utensil reduced to its unadorned simplicity and beauty—a living *mythos* retrieved from the sun, let us say.

Shadow is to light as echo is to sound. Tone is both visible and audible shade.

11. PLATO'S SUPERBIA

So with *mythos* there will always be hyperthetic reach towards resolution's unknown zone, as the cinematic project's superobjective robustly demands a teleological winding up. Here we have suspended disbelief twice over as the inquirer resists and inadvertently forfeits any basic sense of reflexive perspicacity. However this is not acquiescence to the myth of truth alone, but to the 'jealously hidden fraudulence' (Vogel 1974) of her own reflexive pronoun, as well; that is, to the myth of personal egoity—to her own private agency as wilful chooser in pursuance of the myth of truth, and which effectively amounts to the scoring a hat trick of suspended disbeliefs, the third cede going to the myth of choice. But on the other hand, the "myth of choice" in itself bears consequence only to the "myth of *logos*," and patently not to the "myth of truth." For in the

myth(os) of tragedy, according to Aristotle, the protagonist's predicament is not to be caused by personal mistake or wrongful choosing—neither by 'vice or depravity'; but rather, it is caused by a 'flaw of tragic judgment' (*Poetics* 13). Therefore its function sharply diverges from any set notion of 'decisive will.' *Poetics* explains this as an 'error brought about by external and/or internal forces,' by influences 'destined, preordained.' Here we have the lynch pin—the pin of this grenade called "the truth of *mythos*" bit by the smirking teeth of insurgency plying state design with havoc. I allude to the vision of Greek *hamartia*, the antagonist's 'extra-volitional flaw,' which evokes a sense of dramaturgical "action" as that of an 'impersonal causal agency where characters themselves are devoid [hence relieved] of causal role' (Husain 2002, 59, 62, cited in Halliwell 2002). This defining key philosophical principle is elicited twice in Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus Rex*, a work to which *Poetics* alludes ten times. Indeed, Aristotle found in Oedipus 'the man' the best disposition for the finest tragedy—'for hearing such a story causes men to be horrified' (14).

It was thus as a kind of 'pre-emptive effort to demolish the threat of insurgency's exclusive and totalising control over the social, civil and political situation' (Naddaff 2002, 6, cited in Krajewski 2004) that certain kinds of dramaturgical forms and theories were to face the countervailing threat of expurgation, whilst their authors and their theorists (their fan bases too?) irrevocable expulsion from Plato's Superbia (*Republic* X). Though important here to note that such celebrated artists were not to be 'expelled from this city-state island just because they fashioned unpleasant poetry—explicitly not. For as Socrates' dialogist has him declare: 'the more superlative the artist, the more seditious his art' (3.387b, adapted from Grube). And yet all the same in this utopian vision, such poets of matchless impersonating brilliance would need not harbour any fear of coercion or mistreatment by the state: 'for we shall do him every reverence as before someone wondrous and sweet' (declares the text), 'we shall anoint his head with myrrh, crown him with

wreaths, and send him away to another city' (3.398a; trans. Grube, 409, emphasis added). (Though wonders what would happen were no other city willing to receive the banished bard.) Here censorship of content together with its conduit is brought to the point of seething ebullience, as it overflows with the tragic force to scald the very verve of the literary outlook. Here 'recognition' (*anagnôrisis*) and 'turn of events' (*peripeteia*) conjoin to chart that crucial point from where a happy ending becomes impossible. Like Hamlet when he kills Polonius by mistake. Now he's a murderer too, just like uncle Claudius. Here we have the crucial "point of no return" where *mimêsis* morphs to imbue wary character and spawn Plato's added sense of "masquerade." Though in doing so, Plato, knowingly or not, effectively invents his own chief antagonist, his own darkest *nemêsis*—his own most beautifully painted screen (*skiagraphêin*) or "shadow picture."

12. SUFISTIC FORMULATION

When we carefully examine the Peripatetic corpus we discover that *mimêsis* poetically-aesthetically designates something more at "representation" (depiction, replication). This 'representation' is not just of life, not just of nature, but more specifically 'of the tragic view of life itself' (*Poetics*), and of eloquent persuasion (vis-à-vis Rhetoric). For Aristotle *mimêsis* specifically applies to the active arena of "human dealing" ('activity, work, goals, drives'; cf. Sanskrit *karman*), called in classical Greek *ergon*. To be precise, *mimêsis* functions as the 'imitation of the essential spirit, passion and nature of human life in such a way that its products (*mimêmata*) are made to seem real in themselves' (Kennedy 1980, 116-17).

To elaborate further what was touched on earlier; as applies to *ars rhetorica*, the 'art of persuasion,' *mimêsis* connotes a range of senses from the uncomplicated aping of verbal idiosyncrasies, to the studied emulation of linguistic patterns and the assimilation of discursive models and techniques (Corbett 1971, 243-50). In the general Platonic/Neo-

Platonic sense, however, *mimésis* contrastingly adopts a metaphysical frame. This draws on three to five—depending how you parse them—points: (i) an apparent noumenal-phenomenal dichotomy between (a) the contingent world of sense perception and (b) a centreless, far-flung sphere of perfection; (ii) the human faculty of apperceiving this ultimate, unchanging reality or being, (b) above; and (iii) the added capacity for ‘sharing’ these apperceived sublimities with fellow inhabitants of the mundane world (Kennedy, 117). In fact, Plato’s idea of a realm of being that is crystalline in character and infinitely centreless would later contribute to the Sufistic—i.e. Central Asian / Silk Route—formulation of the Persian arabesque, i.e. as an enigmatic instrument of extension, infiltration and absorption—a disaggrative frond-like link and line to the very fore structures of that far-flung sphere.

Beyond this, however, the Platonic corpus exudes equivocation with regard to the notion of *mimésis*. For while clearly on the one hand preserving the ancient view that the poet’s work is that of nature’s copyist (Burke, 5), Plato’s new classicism problematically characterized nature-in-itself as a ‘phantom,’ indeed, a ‘shadow’ displaced from the realm of reality. And as mentioned before, it would take two millennia before this view was properly critiqued, and its hypothesized dichotomy between mimeticistic artefacts and genuine things rejected out of hand as wholly insufficient to the needs of getting real. It was thus that the likes of Alexander Baumgarten and others of the early German aesthetic tradition choreographed their radical departure and established “aesthetics” as a separate discipline whose focus was the sensitive investigation of “mimetic goods” as typifies the modern academic sense of Fine Arts (Sörbom, 20). Yet Baumgarten’s denotation of aesthetics is still something far beyond a mere philosophical scrutiny of the meaning beauty and art. It is ‘a theory,’ writes Hammermeister (2002), ‘that substantiates the epistemological relevance of sensual perception based on a gnoseological faculty, and which in turn produces a distinct type of knowledge.’ Yet furthermore ‘unwilling to regard sense data as merely the stimuli for higher and more advanced cognitive processes, he

founded a science of sensual cognition independent from cognition itself (Sörbom, 4, 8). And in doing so, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten strikingly stands as the first critical thinker in the conventional history of Western philosophy to present a vigorous and sustained defence of the up-till-then dispossessed vision of the poet-artist. Through depreciation of the goads of logic in favour of the refined calibration of the senses rinsed of reason's vague ambitions, these daring exponents of a tantalizing science disclosed, dismayed and rejected out of hand the pooled presumptions and historical affixations of Europe's two principal cultural progenitors, between whom had furnished more than all put together the essential setting, pace and décor of Western philosophical rumination.

13. PLATO'S QUALMS

Thus Plato's qualms, his "fits of sickness," stem in large from the article of faith that 'acquaintanceship with the higher, non-sensible Forms is attainable only through disinterested, rational inquiry (*logos*)' and that 'complete, true knowledge can only come to light when the soul (Gk. psyche, viz. 'the mind'), or perhaps more naturally "the self" (Gk. autos), is "*autê kath' hautên*," 'completely denuded of all but itself' (*Phaedo*, 65a-d). However added quandary is seen to arise from Plato's insistence that this elevated praxis be the sole proprietary pursuit of philosophers and wholly unbecoming the rhapsodic bard. And with an air of disquietude he sternly counterindicates any possibility of the poet accessing such lofty realms, dismissing them rather as 'those who are incapable of apprehending the eternal, but lose themselves and wander (dis-course) in the region of the many and the variable' (*Republic*, 6.484b). And it is here Plato grabs for the tissue of fable and launches an assiduous battle to install his high born lot of truth-seeking theorists as the 'futuristic city's elite corps of guardians' (Naddaff, 12) otherwise known as "philosopher-kings," and whose superobjective—whose philosophic *technê*—is deemed that ultimate knowledge or *epistêmê*

resultant from the reasoned and single-minded tracking of ‘ideal Forms, the only true realities,’ the most important Form of which is the Form of the Good. Now helpful to observe that ‘ideal forms,’ in being above all else “ideals,” are plainly things ‘other’ more-or-less than “real.” For ideals as derived from classical Greek *eidólon*—and similarly related to our notion of “idols”—are clearly figures of an insubstantial nature and, in so being, “non-empirical.”

Now a certain reading of Republic—say, Naddaff—accentuates the grave trepidation and distrust on the part of its own authorial tradition with explicit regard to mimetic genius. Such power in the hands of inventive poets who could ‘cause men to apprehend dreams when awake’ (Plato *Sophist*, 266c) dangerously intensified the poignant sway their impromptu pastiches and tropic manoeuvrings could wield in the recombined processes of social formation and manipulation. ‘We become like what we imitate,’ would tersely sum up Plato’s stance on how misleading depictions submissively believed ‘become as our nature and settles into habits of gesture, speech and thought’ (*Republic*, 3.395d1-3). In other words, we identify with and configure our lives on vicariously experienced man-made dreams—an emotive-laden staple fare consumed throughout our lives, and which sets and sustains the derivative impressions not only of our heroes, but of our very own sampled sense of who we are, as *mimésis* secretes metonymies of fraud.

14. LUSH PERMUTATIONS OF A SMUGGLED METALEPSIS

Perhaps the most overlooked rhetorical figure ever marked is metonymy. From Greek *metónymia* to Latin *metonymia*, “The Law” is the commonplace example of this trope in its switching of “the cops and the courts combined” for the fascist sense of “state decreed rectitude” adapted in the passé neo-realistic style. Now its being ‘most overlooked’ is due in large to a dreadful poverty in academic valour, and to the gross

insufficiency and out-and-out blandness that reduces this figure to a filled in form.

“It works by contiguity,” it is tirelessly repeated, even though ‘contingent proximity’ has managed to nudge in more than metaphor’s vapid simulacra. And so metonymy really just denotes ‘transference’—not of ‘qualities’ per se, but obliqued more exactly through associative properties, or “props” if you will, and which are probably non-core to the theorematic object patiently obliging unnoticed contemplation. Now the immanent force of this unassuming trope is most delectably toned when its substitutions or consubstantiations are both transumptive and indexically smidged together—“*immutationes nusquam crebriores*” (Cicero *De Oratore*, 3.54.207.94)—that is to say, through the lush permutations of smuggled metalepsis arraigned as “nature’s master trope” (Wilson 1997) recanting all anterior linguistic pacts as tamped down sundry re-illumed tinges, erasures, abrasions and grafted slips into cracks overlaid with raked abhorrence and topped with the grace of incendiary acid: these skilfully measured elliptical placements of players and things up near to that which the artist wants either to link or affect. Indeed, and through the intimations and insinuations that abide in these objects sent to the pitch to extend and reshape the emotive schema that distinguishes exquisite tragic text, ‘the psychotropic nature of the mind is incited—*metaballomen ... tén psuchên*—throughout the course of listening to this recital’ (*Politics*, 8.5, 1340a); and all in a manner that accordingly cedes no intrinsic/extrinsic or authorial/auditorial dichotomy (vis-à-vis Halliwell 2002), but scores to insight participatory responsiveness. No wonder the domain of ancient theatre was under the protection of Dionysus, god of change (McLeish, 11).

By grafting mythic metaphor to allegory’s prolonged fabulation, Plato twigged how ‘man-made dreams could be used in so many different ways, for different reasons, and in vastly different contexts: religious, educational, political, commercial, purely diversional and naturally pornographic; and with each and every application based once again on

the Academic notion that ‘within the field of human senses there resides a certain mimetic capability to see and hear remarkable things when no such things are actually at hand’ (Sörbom, 26). Thus, all the more reason why Plato’s fair-metropolis must even ‘forbid the truthful portrayals of wicked actions and malevolent personae upon the amphitheatric stage’ (Grube, 497-8).

15. DISINTERESTED RATIONAL INQUIRY (LOGOS)

Further corpus fusion, confusion and conflation, emerges with the *Ion* where the poet’s cousin, the rhapsodic bard, is conferred—though likely ironically—a semi-divine eminence and described as a passive yet ecstatic agent of a splendidly gifted data. Indeed, Ion “is beside himself” in Socrates’ words, and in the metaphoric “god inspired” enthusiasm of the moment imagines he is actually present at the scene of the Homeric episode he presently recites (Plato 535b7-c3). Two defining points emerge from this reading. Here we have a poet (a *rhapsode* or bard) who is acknowledged to have (i) gained ‘acquaintanceship’ with the Higher non-sensible Forms,’ and (ii) employed a methodology that is independent of ‘disinterested rational inquiry (*logos*).’

But what about the subsequent segment of this promise—specifically, that ‘complete, true knowledge only comes to light when the soul becomes most truly itself (*autê kath’ hautên*)? Transculturally assessed, this Platonic approach, as tersely dialogued in *Phaedo* (65a-66a), is analogous to that of the Sceptic’s *ataraxia*, i.e. a psychosomatic state of composure achieved through ‘resolving the anomaly of *phainomenon* and *nooumenon* (Sextus *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, 1.29) and where participation in the world of the senses—particularly cognitive participation—becomes as it were quiescently suspended and appears to have stopped altogether. This naturally alludes to the Platonic state of the philosopher’s soul (or self) when it or he ventures to ‘employ pure, absolute reason in the hunt for the pure and absolute essence of things, by withdrawing himself, in so far as that is possible, from his senses and their objects.’ Or in brief,

by withdrawing himself from ‘his entire body’ as he feels ‘the affixation to the corporal frame disturbs the soul and hampers it’s acquaintanceship with truth and wisdom’ (*Phaedo*, 66a).

This furthermore finds companionability to the “perfect aloof-ness” of the Sāmkhya school and its provision of *kaivālya* as the exalted state of “self-isolation” of the *purusha* (Sanskrit ‘person’) from material and metempsychotic existences, conclusively. Beginning with the strategy of *prāṇāyāma* (‘breath regulation’) this strikingly hiero-philosophical praxis, first attested in Patañjali’s *Yoga Sūtras* (ca. turn of the 1st cen. CE), entails the subsequent fixing of the mind on an object of sense, to be followed in turn by ‘the abstract withdrawal and eventual freeing of the senses themselves from the domination of external sense objects’ (*pratyāhāra*). In Patañjali the unqualified state is itself termed in Sanskrit *kaivālya-mukti* and may best be rendered as “supreme self-sufficiency.” But while *kaivālya-mukti* here is tersely presented as an analogue to Plato’s far-flung sphere (and thereby the ethical goal that is sought), still the actual praxis—the hiero-ascetico approach itself—is the way of *pratyāhāra* or ‘sense withdrawal,’ as readily corresponds to what the Sceptics describe as ‘resolving the anomaly of *phenomenon* and *noumenon*’ and what Plato explains as ‘disinterested rational inquiry (*logos*).’

16. AFTER DEATH

But does Plato ever offer any clear indication that this goal is attainable by any caste of man?—or indeed, of even more crucial importance, attainable by any man at all? If ‘sensible’ things are never to be known—in fact cannot be known by man (*Phaedo*, 65a-d), then how on earth are the higher, ‘non’-sensible things ever to be known? Plato never offers an account of the “how” with regard to reaching his far-flung sphere, only cryptically remarks through the mask of Socrates that the “actual realities” will “probably” be known “after death ... rest assured ... I have great hopes” (63b-c). “Such aspiring thoughts among men who love...wisdom need always be reiterated” (67b).

17. A PASSIVE RECEPTOR OF FREELY GIVEN DATA

If the essence of the acquaintanceship of the higher non-sensibles is rooted in the fact that the soul is somehow “nobly akin” or “of connate substance” (*sungenês*) to the higher Forms (McCumber, 15-16), then two revealing points naturally follow: (i) every soul irrespective of caste, creed, occupation or gender has at least got a shot at getting acquainted with higher non-sensible Forms, and (ii) the trademark “wait-and-see” logocentric strategy together with its endless rounds of negotiations denies ipso facto any eventuality, any “process in time”—any shadow of a chance—that logic-driven science can ever arrive to any conclusive claim whatsoever. In other words, it is the nature of *logos* (in contrast to *mythos*) to sceptically interdict confirmation or closure ON or OF anyone’s account, as its tactical protocol effectively precludes all conclusive claims to anything whatsoever. Succinctly, it is the incontrovertibly sceptical basis of the scientific method’s aspiration for precision and lucidity that properly constrains its *loci classici* to the given indications of the bare here and now, to the looming grain of shadow and shade.

Logos-driven science then, in and of itself, sceptically denies any ultimate account of “the tenebration in which we are cast” (Lock 2000); or more lucidly expressed, refutes that any sensible discourse on ultimate objects or things “beyond time” can even poke up when embedded so deeply in the succulence of its own Ionian roots. By re-describing man as ‘essentially choiceless’ and redefining datum as ‘a given component,’ both the Platonic and the Peripatetic protocols apparently regard the poet-artist as a passive receptor of freely given data, the provenance of which is a separate reality perfect in form and function.

And yet, until we can derive from Plato’s fabulations an account of the sense of ‘disinterested rational inquiry (*logos*)’ and where in high heaven that’s supposed to lead us, we will never understand what the Platonic plot is on about. And so the phantom author has got to tell us plainly, “Is the body a hindrance or not?” (*Phaedo* 65a).

18. 'THOSE STARK CALABRIAN VILLAGES'

Questo ombromanie—"this play of shadow"—is an elusive idea for those oppressed by the theses of contemporary science, which explicate the nature of light as something thrown on a canvas of insipid texture, and which furthermore accord it the attribute of speed—even clocking it at 700 million miles per second. But in the absents of shadow there could be no vision of a surface far brighter than any could stand, and the emotive apple cart gets upturned; hence the shadow plays dimming the unbearable harshness of this Requiem with gypsy kids filching the spill.

A shadow is the tracing of the motion of the sun. A shadow is a trope here cast as data upon the dial of the page as a pageantry in tropic delight of lengthening shadows adumbrating splendour in the dimming glow as the earth turns back to the shadows of night... There is no true light and dark in nature, but variegated shrouds of dimmed concealment: dream-like chiaroscuro veils of enchantment brushing mute across phosphorescent sands.

And though shadow be the opening focus of philosophy, *logos* works best in the torrid light of noon, in the midday amphiscian sun with its shadowless light that always reflects the facts of the matter. Or does it?... Then *logos* is a cloud-sized aquiline vantage, the shadow of the wingspan circling high above the cordoned-off crime scene. It's time to bag the body. The decomposed body in the shadows of Mount Etna exhumed near the lava flows of Santa Maria di Licodia.

Mythos, then, demands a more diaphanous light, a 'light suffused through a glass of Chianti, a light that is robed in the shadows of Ravenna—the light that paints those stark Calabrian villages' (Witmer 1990). On the outskirts of the town he sketched old men sitting on porches near amber-hued street-lamps swarming with insects; scabby dogs in the garish shadows sniffing round uncollected garbage-heaps. The winding road eventually narrowed and slowed considerably as they geared down, ascending toward the lip of the volcano...

19. THE SHADOW PLAY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Ploy rose first the following morning: a beam of light through a chink in the shutter... Is it light or substance that casts the shadow? Or neither? What is the sense of ‘cast’ here? Has it metaphoric meaning of ‘shift’ or ‘transpose’? Or faintly the trope of metalepsis—the shadow of a net to entrap perceptions of the veritable mannequins, the animated ghosts, the profound amnesiacs lost in the shadow play of a consciousness entombed in a brain in a body. And yet nothing, surely, nothing substantial is caused to actually alter its position in this. The object before the shadow isn’t moved: neither the light as projected upon it. Unless, that is, we presume it has speed and that it’s constantly trying to get somewhere. But the more primmediate frame refutes this, asserting its pre-eminence stable. Her clean silhouette as projected at the sink by the sun through the morning kitchen window. Her sultry voice disjoined from its shadow as cast upon the fridge through the bidi smoke. Have we dwelt too long in the shadows of existence? ‘Is man [indeed] but the shadow of a dream (*skias onar*)?’ (Pindar *Odes*, 8.95). Then how are we to plot this *mythos* of *skia*—*il mito de schermo*—when diffused as filtered light through screen as scenic blind on the canopied stage at the threshold of this theorematic spectacle. *Che ombromanie*.

20. LA SCRIPTA PUELLA

Now *rere regardant* (Joyce 1922, [Proteus] 2430) the silent nature of our hesitant subject [looming on the screen] as specifically regards poetic arts, though other mimetic genres too: throughout the long history that dramatics has enjoyed there have always been those who felt uneasy with the fact that narrative accounts and recounts invariably involve deception (McKee 2000). And Plato, as we’re seeing, represents a very early tendency in this highly sceptical regard, having harboured great suspicions in the fictive machinations upon which art and poetry depend. ‘For ‘tis the queer disposition of mimetic activity to mirror vague

impressions of reality and truth (Gk *alétheia*) whilst remaining far removed from its ideal province, that makes the poet's replicas—his forgeries and thefts—only seem to be what he claims them to be' (*Republic*, 10.598c). And the venerable founder of the Academy adjudged such trickery perturbing, indeed perverse and a peril to the state, this curious mismatch of imminent plots, this deceptively 'elastic scattering of attention' across the procedure-divulging field (Fisher). And it's here we see *mimêsis* as filmy phantom, impalpable form—the attempt to reconstitute that which formerly shone in the mind as appearances, idols, 'those silent images (*eidôla ta apbôna*) that lead the heathen astray' (I *Corinthians* 12:1). This is hushed reproduction—*simulacra muta*—in view of our use of skiagraphic scraps and the fact that a shadow is a shadow of a shadow of a strewn about chiaroscuro mass of equivalence settled like twigs in chance arrangement of her sun bleached hair over gold flecked brow as to shade or to camouflage love induced pause: as she blinks sitting up in the morning light refracted through a pane over crumpled linen, dust motes casting round her kiss bruised face. This is *mimêsis* as screened metaleptic figure—typos of "mature mark fracture" (Fisher) foreshadowing metaphor's extenuated fresco of which she proclaims herself director of tropology, and also why we always see her fingering the frieze making wet notations with sticks and things, "oozing and spilling from trope to trope" (Lock 2000) in total disregard for the paying audience: *la scripta puella, la filosofia bella*.

Then comes the actual dimensioning of the film: its theorematic movement of thrown filtered light with recumbent, virgin-like rococo tags that brazenly expose her own aesthetic affairs. And though the painter's choice of mediae—and their ardent applications—may be likened to those of the inner-city vandal, one should never misinterpret these forceful gestures as a meagre fondness for defacing public space: these cursive swipes that trash fiasco. And we actually do find it rather Twombly-esque this spray can version of chalk on Roman distemper (Hughes 1994) as our self-absorbed audience finds itself remodelled on

the curtly drafted skiagraphic palinode—screened from attention by the broad umbrella—this folio notation on the out of touch getting unceremoniously touched over.

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