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STYLE AS ARGUMENT: IN THE TEXT OF THE *QUR'AN*

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To Aida and Tarik

FOREWORD

This book was created over the course of a decade: I published the first text from this work in 1996 in *Takvim*, the almanac of the Riyaset of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Each following year, I published articles in this almanac, as well as in other magazines in Bosnian and in English, concerning the stylistic interpretation of the *Qur'an*. Of course, the majority of the text appears for the first time in this book.

Although I have built my academic career as an Arabist, and on the topic of Arabic literature, the sacral style had not been the topic of my research until I wrote the first text in 1996. To my knowledge, research on the style of the *Qur'an* as a sacred Text has not been exhausted, although it has been the topic of research ever since the *Qur'an* came into being. This statement appears paradoxical and needs to be elaborated further.

Namely, the *Qur'an* is presented within Oriental-Islamic culture, and Islam as a religion, as supernatural – as a Miracle of the Word. Its language and style have therefore been meticulously studied over the course of somewhat fewer than 15 centuries. To my knowledge, however, stylistic approaches to the Text have been mostly traditionalist, even though it has proven to be quite fit for analyses applying modern stylistic methods, which reaffirm it as the core Text of Oriental-Islamic culture, in its literary merits, as well as ideological aspects. The aim of my book is to point out the necessity of overcoming ossified traditionalist methods and to at least indicate the possibility of opening new horizons in the stylistic examination of a work that has for so long dominated an entire sphere of culture and civilization. My intention will be fulfilled if this book at least draws attention to non-traditionalist perspectives, though I am aware that

the Text is so elliptical and profound that a single book, or a single mind, can hardly grasp it.

During my research on the Text I was constantly confronted with two basic, interconnected conclusions. First, as a sacred text, in terms of style (and stylistics) it is significantly different from non-sacred texts. The points of difference – as I have tried to emphasize and elaborate – are important for literary studies, but could at the same time be interesting for theological exegetic (Tafsir) analyses. My approach is not theological, though at times it might seem to be, and might occasionally even please a theological mind. My stance, nevertheless, is a scientific one. Should the reader ever have a different impression of my work – as an affirmation of theological positions and the value of the Text – I would like to use this foreword to point out that this is so because I have employed an immanent method: I aim at all times to be deeply immersed in the Text, and free from prejudice of any kind, especially ideological a priori attitudes. I also take the intentionality of the Text quite seriously and aim to determine the degree to which its self-descriptions, its claims about itself, are in harmony with its style. The dominant "external" methods which crudely ignore the Text's intentionality are inadequate and unworthy of it. The sacred style demands an approach different from that suitable to profane literary works of art. The uniqueness of this approach is therefore the foundation of this book.

Second, the sacred style pays greater heed to argumentation than the artistic-literary functional style. Marina Katnić-Bakaršić, in her book *Stilistika,* with which I communicate in this work, points out well that in literary texts style not only fulfills a decorative role but also has argumentative aims. To the sacred style however, argumentation is of vital importance: it is beyond the decorative, the aesthetic. That is the key point of difference between sacred and artistic texts. What makes the *Qur'an* immensely unique is the fact that it presents even its own style as an argument in favor of its supernatural origin. It is from this point that the title of my book originates.

As I was working on this project, something very significant and unexpected happened. Namely, during my painstaking and dedicated

immersion in the text, I came to realize increasingly how stylistically incompetent its translations are by a priori forsaking the aspiration to convey the source's greatest stylistic values. The readers of these translations are not aware of how deprived they are. This realization simply compelled me to take up translating, or conveying, the *Qur'an* into Bosnian, as a complementary task parallel to writing a stylistic study, believing that the translations could be significantly improved stylistically, while also knowing that a major part of this aspect of its value cannot be conveyed. This is how my translation of the *Qur'an*, published in 2004, came to be.

When I wrote the first text of this work, I believed it to be merely a digression in my research: at that point I had no intention of dedicating myself to researching the style of the *Qur'an*, let alone doing it for the following 10 years. However, some individuals strongly influenced my decision to continue research in this area, for which I am, to this day, greatly thankful.

By yearly providing me with publishing opportunities in *Takvim,* its editor, Muharem Omerdić, supported me with all of his effort in persistently encouraging me to write these texts, which he found valuable. This gesture of great trust demanded my commitment.

Marina Katnić-Bakaršić – whose expertise in the field of stylistics I immensely value – has also supported me along the way, as a friend and a scholar, in exploring the style of the sacred Text. She read each section of this book while still in manuscript and analyzed it with the utmost competence and openness as a reviewer. For this invaluable support I am enormously grateful.

I would also like to thank the management and scholarly deportment of the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo, headed by its director Behija Zlatar, PhD, for embracing my book as their own project under the working title *A Stylistic Interpretation of the Qur'an*.

I am grateful for the aforementioned support – I hope the gates have been pushed ajar.

I

IN THE GARDENS
OF THE SACRED STYLE

THE INVOCATION *BISMILLAH* AND THE PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATION COMPETENCE

The inadequate replacement of the noun Allah *with the noun* God

There are publications in Bosnian classified as Islamic theological literature containing major translation mistakes which deserve a serious analysis, especially given the fact that they amount to fundamental notions in a literature which aims to communicate with the widest circle of believers, as well as others. The same kinds of mistakes appear even in translations of the sacred Text, as well as in other texts semiotically engendered by the sacred Text of the *Qur'an*.

In more recent translations, which are the topic of this analysis, as well as in older ones, the noun *Allah* is persistently translated as the noun *God*.[1] The "translation" of the noun *Allah* is possible only in rare occasions (though in principle is it not advisable), and persisting with it is a significant mistake with major consequences on various levels.[2]

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[1] There is a great number of such works, making it pointless to list them here.

[2] In this instance, the issue, in fact, is not *translating* the noun *Allah* (which, as a proper noun is not to be translated); rather it is about transferring it, as a very specific sign, into a different sign, with immense consequences, especially in terms of semiotics. In this regard, many people find the fact that Christians in the Arab world use the noun *Allah* for *God* as well (they even have proper names like *Naṣrullāh*) confusing. In their language, the noun *Allah* functions as a common noun meaning *god*. This is, however, not an

1. On the level of linguistic analysis, translating the noun *Allah* as the noun *God* proves unfounded. Etymologically, the noun *Allah* stems from the Arabic root *waliha* (*wilāh*), which means "to feel awe before someone"; "to seek refuge from strong emotions" (fear, grief etc.); "to be confounded by sublimity". This is how the ancient Arabs in awe called the Sun, deriving the word *al-'ilaha* from this root, which later the pre-Islamic Arabs used to collectively denominate their idols. As stated in the authoritative monolingual Arabic dictionary *Lisān al-'Arab*, the initial *w* (wāw) of the root *waliha* became hamza, following the analogy *wishāḥ* > *'ishāḥ; wiğāḥ* > *'iğāḥ*, so that this root, following the rules of linguistic analogies, was transformed into *'ilah* (divinity). How was this noun transformed into the noun *Allah*?

As the definite article *al* was added to the noun *'ilāh*, hamza was elided due to the tendency to shorten and facilitate pronunciation, *al-'ilāhu* (اَلْإِلَٰه) became *'alilāhu* (اَلِلَٰه). The vocal Kasrah from the elided hamza was transferred to the *lām* of the definite article. However, to put it in somewhat simpler terms, though the *lām* of the definite article should have a *sukūn*, it instead took over the Kasrah of the elided hamza. Since this brought two identical consonants next to one another, assimilation occurred – a very powerful process in Arabic – so that the first *lām* shifted into the second, and finally the form *al-Lāh* (اَللَّٰه), was created, or, as it is usually written, *Allāh* (الله).

2. On the "notional" level, "translating" the noun *Allah* proves to be a complex problem with far-reaching consequences.

The noun *'ilāh* (god, deity), as a proper noun, has the plural *'āliha* (gods, deities), that is, *idols* worshipped by the Arabs during the pagan period of their history. However, the noun *Allah*, denoting *only one* very particular God, understandably so, has no plural: it has been lexicalized,

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argument in favor of translating the noun *Allah* with the noun *God*. This is in fact a very complex semiotic process through which the proper noun *Allah*, in the given semiotic space, has brought upon major shifts in these two semiotic signs, since it should be clear that Christians do not consider *Allah* their *God*, the same way Muslims differentiate themselves from all others by believing in *Allah* only. This unusual semiotic process will be addressed in the chapter titled *Semiotic Stylistics of the al-Fatiha* (in the section *God's Speech in Human Language*).

"petrified". It is also a non-derivative name, which means that linguistically nothing can be derived from it, unlike other names – such as *al-raḥmān* or *al-raḥīm*. Linguistic practice has therefore rendered the noun *Allah* definitely unchangeable, which has particularly been determined as such by the *Qur'an* itself, despite the etymology that I have pointed out. The common noun *'ilāh* (god) in contemporary language also gets a definite article: *al-'ilāh*, while *Allah* remains at the same time an independent and unchangeable noun.

Those who "translate" the noun *Allah* into the noun *God* believe that by using a capital G they have expressed the definite article etymologically determined by the noun *Allah*, but the parallel presence of *al-'ilāh* and *Allah* proves them wrong, since *al-'ilāh* and *Allah* are not identical either linguistically or theologically, nor can this substantial difference be "covered" by a capital G. In this regard, the literature in Arabic (for example, *Lisān al-'Arab* and Ibn Kesir's *Tefsīr*) warns, in a very reasonable and well-argued manner, that it is unacceptable to replace the noun *Allah* with the noun *al-'ilāh* (i.e., with the definite article), since the latter is used to invoke idols. Although the noun *Allah* was etymologically created through the transformation of the definite article, it has with time become something much more specific than a noun with a definite article, both in terms of language and religion. Analogously, using a capital G (as a failed expression of the definite article) to replace the noun *Allah* is unacceptable by the same logic: a follower of any religion will designate their god with a capital G, in which case the noun *God* referring to *Allah* is in no way differentiated from deities of other religions, and it is precisely this differentiation that is of crucial importance in Islam. Moreover, Allah himself warns that his name is the most sublime, as it contains all of His characteristics: "He is Allah – the Maker, the One who creates out of nothing, Who gives shape to everything, He has the most beautiful names."[3] Clearly, not only does the word *God* not differentiate *Allah* in His uniqueness from any other god, it also does not contain His other "descriptive" names, nor does it emphasize the unique sublimity upon which He particularly insists by using this unique name.

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[3] *Qur'an*, 59:24.

3. The problem of "translating" the noun *Allah* as *God* becomes extremely pronounced in terms of the basic condition of Islamic belief (Islamic Shuroot), a point upon which the literature that has prompted this study insists upon. Namely, the aforementioned literature insists that *kelime-i şehadet* be "translated" as: "There is no god but God".

It is vital to point out the following.

Through *Kelime-i şehadet* Muslims identify themselves as followers of Islam who determinedly deny the existence of any other deity but Allah. However, this determination and unambiguous identification contained in *kelime-i şehadet* in Arabic cannot be seen at all in this translation. If you *write* to anyone who does not know that you are Muslim, as a declaration of your religious affiliation: "There is no god but God", you have not said anything precisely, other than uttering a proper tautological statement. Your confused interlocutor will offer the same statement expressing his religious affiliation, which is not yours, since of course he would refer to his God with a capital *G*. In this way you will fail to understand each other: you will not find out who practices which faith, since you would have expressed your religious affiliation in an utterly verbally imprecise manner.

The confusion is absolute if you are not communicating in written form and you are actually *speaking* to each other*:* "There is no god but God"; in speech, not even the capital letter manifests itself, so that the written tautological statement in its oral form is rendered absurd; that is, the Islamic Shuroot – extremely precise in Arabic, pronounced in its translation – is incoherent. *Kelime-i şehadet* in the original is formulated so that the statement *There is no god but Allah* removes any ambiguity as to the speaker's religious affiliation, regardless if the statement is in written or oral form.

The statement *There is no god but God* fails to convey another substantial content that it has in Arabic, which has to be expressed in translation.

Namely, on a primarily linguistic level, the statement *Lā 'ilāhe 'illā-l-Lāh* contains the so-called absolute negation *lā 'ilāhe*, there is no god but Allah (with a double negation); there is *absolutely* no god but Allah. Even

the translation commonly used among Bosnian Muslims, the standardized one, does not express this absolute negation, since the translation *There is no god but Allah* does not express the pronounced determination, the exclusivity of the statement in Arabic: *There is no god but Allah (double negation)*, or: *There is absolutely no god but Allah*. Therefore, not even the Bosnian standardized translation captures a significant segment of the negation contained in the Arabic version. There are several linguistic-syntactic solutions in Arabic for the statement *There is no god but Allah,* none of which would include an absolute negation if the translation were to be done in the opposite direction (Bosnian to Arabic), since obviously the wording in Bosnian does not contain an absolute negation.

Two translations of the *kelime-i şehadet* into Bosnian are possible, though they are not equally adequate. One variant is the negative translation of the Arabic wording of the basic Islamic Shuroot: *There is no god but Allah (double negation).* I listed this one first, as the one commonly used in Bosnian, although not quite in the form stated here, because our usual translation does not contain an absolute negation of *no*. I favor the affirmative translation: *Only Allah is god*. This translation requires a brief explanation.

Since the wording in Arabic starts with a negation (a negative particle) meaning *there is no*, translators into Bosnian, led astray by that negation, are likely to have fallen into a trap by losing sight of its other linguistic special feature in relation to the noun following it (in the indefinite accusative form, without nunation), so that finally, in the translation, the *absolute* negation, which is clearly the crucial part of the statement, is neglected. It is, on the other hand, more idiomatic in Bosnian to translate such negative sentences affirmatively: *Only Allah is God*, which at the same time, importantly, clearly emphasizes the resoluteness of the wording in Arabic.

The aforementioned demonstrates that the translation *There is no god but God* is unacceptable.

Adorning the noun Allah *with attributes*

In the three most recent translations of the *Qur'an* into Bosnian the first invocation sentence *Bismillah* – whose main segment is the noun *Allah,* has been inadequately translated.

Korkut has translated *Bismillah* as: *In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Gracious!;*[4] Mlivo as: *In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate!;* [5] and Karić as: *In the name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Gracious!*[6]

None of these three translations can stand the test of serious analysis, although the most resilient would be Karić's translation. Korkut's and Mlivo's translations both contain the same flaws, the first being the translation of the word *al-raḥmān*, which in the first two is translated as *the Merciful.* The adjective *al-raḥmān* (based on the paradigm *faʿlān*) has been amplified to the point of approaching a noun. In that regard the German translation offers a more adequate form: the All Merciful*,* its basic semantic value being that it expresses *universality*, *grace towards all creation*, while the adjective *al-raḥīm*, though of the same stem, does not have such a wide semantic field: it expresses Allah's grace (only) towards believers. The order in which these two words are written is therefore not random: first, al-rahman, *the All Encompassing Mercy,* Allah's grace which encompasses everything and which, due to its universality, is His characteristic alone, followed by a "lower-rank" adjective (*al-raḥīm*), as Allah's attribute regarding believers, which is also a characteristic others might possess.

Linguistic practice also supports these points. Namely, the word *al-raḥmān* is exclusively Allah's characteristic, since only he can be all-merciful, which is why there are no examples in linguistic practice of the use of this attribute for anyone else but Allah. The adjective *al-*

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[4] *Qur'an*, the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo, Special editions VII, Sarajevo, 1977, translation Besim Korkut.

[5] *Qur'an*, Bugojno, 1994, published by the translator, translated by Mustafa Mlivo BSc.

[6] *Kur'an s prijevodom na bosanski jezik*, Bosanska knjiga, Sarajevo, 1995, translation Enes Karić.

raḥīm (merciful) is often and commonly used for people as well: *al-Raǧul raḥīl = Man is merciful*. The difference in the meaning between these two adjectives is substantial and needs to be taken into account in the translation by not presenting them as pleonasms. Karić demonstrates a very good sense of this by underlining his adequate translation in this part and further explicating it in a comprehensive footnote.

However, aside from the aforementioned omissions in the translations, they all have significant difficulties with "splitting" this fluent and pronouncedly homogenous sentence with punctuation.

Namely, there is an inversion in the translation: the proper name is listed first, followed by its two attributes, while all three segments of the sentence are separated by commas. In the original, there is no inversion, since in Arabic it is impossible to inversely state the noun and its attribute. Separating the noun *Allah* and *The All Merciful* is possible, and it serves to emphasize this adjective, though such emphasis is not obvious in Arabic, since the language of the *Qur'an* does not contain punctuation, nor is it otherwise possible to form an attributive phrase using inversion. It is therefore truer to the fluid and homogenous nature of the original, though not necessary, to write this noun and its attribute without separating them with a comma: *In the name of Allah the All Merciful*.

However, the other comma separating the two adjectives, as a "cleft" between the parts of the sentence, establishes a parallel between the two adjectives, which does not exist in the original; the insertion of commas between the two attributes in Bosnian is the consequence of an unjustified subordination of the Bosnian idiom to the Arabic, which belongs to another linguistic family.

Juxtaposition of adjectives, i.e. the parallel listing of adjectives (even more than two) is common in Arabic, without conjunctions or punctuation (there was no punctuation in classic Arabic and even today it is underdeveloped and very unsystematic). The same goes for the *al-ḥāl* category ("accusative of state"). In Bosnian these juxtaposed adjectives, or sequence of "accusative states", are juxtaposed until the last one, which needs to be connected with the conjunction *and* to the penultimate adjective or "state accusative". By separating the two adjectives with

commas they are, among other things, presented as pleonasms, or almost as such, without the emphasis on their deliberate gradation, which we have already addressed. The sequence *Allahu-r-raḥmānu-r-raḥīmu* is therefore an attributive phrase, in this case a subordinate one. Phrases are considered solid semantic and grammatical units, which are not to be pronounced with pauses such as those created by commas. "Installing" an exclamation mark at the end of the sentence raises the tone, which is not felt when believers say the *Bismillah* in Arabic. This punctuation mark transforms an entire sentence with great expressive potential into an exclamation, basically ignoring the enviable equanimity with which a believer says the *Bismillah*.

Finally, since the words *the All Merciful* and *merciful* serve as attributive adjectives of the noun *Allah* – that is, words denoting the quality of the noun they are immediately adjacent to, creating with it a solid grammatical-syntactic and logical unit – writing these attributes in the translation with capital letters is unjustified: they are *natural* or *necessary attributes* that should be written with lower-case letters in the attributive phrase they create with the noun *Allah*. However, when they appear on their own, without the noun *Allah,* they should be spelled with capitalized first letters, just as other attributes that replace this noun.

Based on the aforementioned, a valid translation proposition would be: *U ime Allaha svemilosnog i samilosnoga (In the name of Allah the All Merciful and Gracious).*

Desacralization, or how believer *became* the faithful one

In the translation of the book *The Path of Eloquence* by 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib[7] there is an oft repeated, wrongly translated phrase: *'amīr al-mu'minīn,* which is regularly used next to the names of the Caliphs, or to replace their names. In the aforementioned book it is consistently translated as: *the ruler of the faithful ones*.

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[7] *Staza rječitosti. Govori, pisma, izreke Alije Ibn Ebi Taliba,* Islamska zajednica, Zagreb, 1994, translation Rusmir Mahmutćehajić and Mehmedalija Hadžić.

There is no need for a long explanation that *the faithful* and *believer* are two different signs, and that *mu'min* (as written in the original) rather than *faithful,* means a *believer* belonging to Islam. However, the translation of the word *mu'min* as *faithful* or *the faithful one* warrants an additional warning.

Since it concerns the Caliphs, that is, secular rulers, translating the word *mu'min* with *faithful* means – wrongly when compared to the original – that the Caliph is the ruler of the faithful ones, as in those who are *faithful* or *loyal* to him (the Caliph), rather than those who believe in Allah. The meaning has been distorted in the translation since the *commander of the believers*, that is *the commander of the true believers,* has an entirely different meaning from *the commander of the faithful ones*; the semantics and semiosis of the two translations are substantially different, which makes these translations careless, even incompetent.

Incompetent interpretations and inadequate receptions of the *Qur'an* have been present in the widest context, and among authoritative Orientalists – represented by Francesco Gabrieli, as well as others – nurturing an a priori attitude of ideological repulsion, and consequently, scholarly incompetence in the approach to the Text of the *Qur'an*. This attitude can be illustrated by the following attitude of a resentful French woman.

APPROACHES TO THE STYLE
OF THE SACRED TEXT

Misapprehensions on the part of some Orientalists regarding the literary values of the text of the Qur'an

A resentful French woman attracted public attention in the time before the Revolution by exclaiming, upon her first encounter with the *Bible*: "What an awful tone!"

Such an exclamation over a work that has exerted immeasurable influence on literature in general, especially in western civilization, is not important as a *subjective* and *affective* "evaluation" of a monumental work, but rather owing to its echoes in the works of scholars exploring the literary values of the *Bible*.

Similar denigration was directed much later at the *Qur'an*, this time not from the velvety lips of an idle lady, but from the hard squeaking pen of the renowned Orientalist Francesco Gabrieli.[8]

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[8] In *Arabic Literature* this author, whose attitudes on the *Qur'an* are paradigmatic for an entire current in Oriental Studies, writes that the *Qur'an* is "the most difficult book for the modern western man to understand (spiritually, rather than philologically) (p. 59.); "This text, which to us seems spiritually meager, which repeats a handful of basic motifs ad infinitum, crude and confused in expression, chaotic in its sequence, briefly and honestly put, boring, has been the light and guiding principle to a great part of humanity" (p. 59.); "It makes us even more uncomfortable to find out that for Islamic society the *Qur'an*, the immediate and unfabricated word of God, is not only a code of faith, the primary source of theology, law, manual in practical life, but also a matchless and unique *literary monument*" (p. 60.). (F. Gabrieli, *Arapska književnost,* "Svjetlost," Sarajevo, 1985, afterword and editing: Darko Tanasković.)

The *Qur'an* is, of course, above their non-literary and non-scholarly malicious attacks, and my intention was not to tackle Gabrieli's ignorance in literary history and lack of sensitivity as a critic: I have often encountered such an unfortunate combination of malice and ignorance regarding the Text of the *Qur'an*, whose literary values are so advanced that they exact contemplation and elaboration.

The *Qur'an* as a whole established a very intense relationship with the existing Arabian literary tradition of its time, not only through implied, self-contained literary values, but also through explicit "polemic dialogues" with poets. For example, when the prophet Mohammed is described by his contemporaries as a *mad poet* (shā'irin majnūnin),[9] the *Qur'an* responds in several places that *he has brought only the truth; that the Qur'an is speech revealed to the noble Prophet;*[10] that Allah *has not taught the Prophet poetry, nor would it be fitting;*[11] *it is those straying into evil, who follow them; do you not see that they lust in every valley? And that they say what they do not practice* "[12] etc.

In all of the quoted ayat, as well as others on the same topic, the message of the *Qur'an* is clear. Namely, the *Qur'an* always – in a wider context or through overt explication – judges existing poetry by its "ideological layer," and not poetry in the sense of specific and extraordinary events in language and style. The *Qur'an* therefore does not deny the values of stylized, poetic expression. On the contrary, it itself utilizes it in an optimal manner and with clear superiority to the existing tradition, even challenging poets to a competition (for example, 10:38; 11:13), asserting that they stand no chance, which was proved right at the time, and by literary history.[13] However, by using the inexhaustible capacities of

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[9] *Qur'an*, 37:36.

[10] *Qur'an*, 69:40.

[11] *Qur'an*, 36:69.

[12] *Qur'an*, 26:224-226.

[13] At the time the *Qur'an* was published, Arabian poetry, which at the time had already been brought to technical perfection, experienced sudden stagnation. This was not only influenced by the attitude towards poetry explicitly expressed in the *Qur'an* for poetry also stagnated by feeling inarticulate before the Qur'anic style, which was also addressed by some poets of the *The Seven Golden Odes of Pagan Arabia* (al-Mu'allaqāt al-sab').

language, which it incessantly recreates, and optimally affirming stylized expression in general, the *Qur'an* insists on being the *Truth,* therefore clearly differentiating itself from its contemporary imaginative-ideological "constructs" created as poetry using linguistic and stylistic potentials to lead people into *fallacy* on *an ideological plane.*

Regarding the attitude of the *Qur'an* towards poetry, it is necessary to know that Arabian poets at the time of the appearance of the *Qur'an* were priests (*kāhin* = soothsayer) who used precisely the power of poetic speech to communicate with deities.[14] In other words, poetic language was in the service of magic, forming pagan myths, so that poetry was raised to the level of religious awareness and medium: the magic of the poetic word granted the poet contact with the divine, and at the same time, served as the crucial aid in influencing his fellow tribe members in their relationship to it. The *Qur'an* resolutely denies this *"cognitive"* potential of poetry and *such* power of the word: for the *Qur'an* the Truth suffices. In fact, only the truth matters, rather than the magically blurred power of the word. In this context the full meaning of the Qur'anic statement that *Allah has not taught the Prophet poetry, nor would it be fitting,* reveals itself.

Given the character and ideological status of pre-Islamic Arabian poetry, it does not clearly delineate the subject and the object, since the *kāhin* (the poet-soothsayer) with a word establishes contact with the divine, and it is necessary to point out both that his word is poetically different from that of "normal people" and that he is capable of establishing partial control over the subject (the deity), for they are connected by a single common power – the potent poetic word. The subtle distinction between the subject and object in this case influences the lack of "profiling" and the inadequate emphasis on the authority of either, since both aspire to build authority within imprecisely determined limits. Only the primitive lack of differentiation between subject and object, as present in the Arabian

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[14] Such a status and fate for poetry has long been well known in history – in antiquity in general, not only in the Arabian heroic age. Plato expelled poets from his ideal state (except for hymnic poetry) and even Hegel announced the death of poetry, but not in the sense of the cessation of all poetic production, but rather regarding the cognitive values of poetry in the movement of absolute spirit.

pagan age, in religious and philosophical terms, could raise versification to the level of a magical act, granting the versifier the status of a priest. It is understandable that such an ideological blur does not allow for a high level of communication and that the realm of *emotions* is the only world in which such subjects and objects operate.

The *Qur'an,* which "brings the *Truth* only", reveals radically different attitudes and establishes qualitatively new relations. It primarily separates the "subject and object" in a hitherto unforeseeable manner and precision. The consequences of that separation are tremendous and fundamental, though pointing out all of them is neither possible here, nor my goal.

For the purpose of this study, it is important to point out that the separation of subject and object in the *Qur'an,* the unequivocal establishing of *Authority* and annihilation of the mutually obscure force connecting the poet-soothsayer and his deity, finally bring the magic power and religious status of poetry to an end, although the style of the *Qur'an* itself implicitly confirms and furthers the values of stylized literary expression as such.

Interpreting the *Qur'an*'s attitude towards poetry as a condemnation of any kind of poetry, or of poetry in general, is therefore not based on the *Qur'an* itself, or the historical context in which this attitude was expressed and further developed. Only the kind of poetry which has ambitions – incongruent with reality and devoid of perspective in terms of historical development – to present itself as a source of religious cognition and the Truth is condemned. On the other hand, I also find it important to point out that the tendency to proclaim the affirmation of the literary values of the Qur'anic Text blasphemous is unjustified and unfounded, since in my reading of the *Qur'an*, its literary values are obvious to a degree and in a manner which simply demands attention and thoughtful elaboration. They are not employed by the *Revelation,* since God hardly needs them, rather they are used as a feature which undeniably produces an extraordinary response in humans prone to stylization in general, as well as stylization of speech, and aesthetic pleasure. By addressing this important characteristic of the human, the *Revelation* affirms literary values with its own example, exquisitely cultivating and recreating them in relation to the existing tradition, while categorically refusing their interpretation in the traditional

sense of poetry – as Muhammed's work through which he establishes, just like the poet-soothsayer, a magic, imprecisely defined relationship between god and medium.

At this point, it is necessary to precisely determine the fundamental question to which the previous elaboration has led and offer an answer to it.

Namely, by proving that the *Qur'an*, with its style and structure, exquisitely affirms literary values and outstrips tradition with an obvious and perplexingly convincing superiority, is it possible to reach a conclusion that *the Qur'an is a literary work of art* which has been granted by many in the East and West the authority of a masterpiece?

This central question imposes itself on any elaboration on the literary values of the *Qur'an* – even in a way, negative evaluations, like Gabrieli's, which assert that the *Qur'an* possesses no literary value. It seems that, in the first instance, considerable efforts are invested in linguistic and stylistic analyses of the Text to justify the values of *the Qur'an as a literary work*, while in the latter it is firmly excluded from the realm of *literature*. It is thus, in both cases, addressed from the perspective of literature.

The answer to the said question is as follows: *the Qur'an is not a literary work of art, yet it posseses formidable literary-aesthetic values.*

This seemingly paradoxical response demands further elaboration.

Understandably, the believer a priori refuses to accept that the *Qur'an* is Muhammed's work; for a believer it is the Word of God. It is therefore superfluous to convince a Muslim that the *Qur'an* is not a work of art, since of course no one has accepted their Revelation – no matter who, or which – as a literary work, but I do believe it is reasonable and fitting to point out the literary values of the Qur'anic Text even to Muslims.

On the other hand, I believe that those who do not perceive the *Qur'an* as the Word of God would face insurmountable difficulties in trying to prove that it is merely literature or, to be more precise – they will not be able, through *coherent* literary-historical and critical reflection, to position the *Qur'an* as a mere literary work, especially not as a literary work of art.

The *Qur'an* (as well as *the Bible*, for example) was not created with the intention to serve primarily as a literary work. That was not God's intention (from the believers' perspective or the standpoint of the Text),

nor can it be proved to be Mohammed's goal as postulated by those who would like to attribute the authorship to him. The structure of the *Qur'an* argues in favor of this.

Namely, the integral Text of the *Qur'an*, in terms of structure, testifies that it is neither a continuous narrative, nor a literary work of art in the common meaning of the word. It contains a series of tales, digressions, presentations of evidence on the existence of God, descriptions of the afterlife, elaboration of laws, specifications on rituals, etc. Briefly put, the *Qur'an* is (as necessary as it is, from the point of view of religion) too digressive and dispersed to be unreservedly classed as artistic literature. Those who comprehend the essence of the *Qur'an* this way will be doubly relieved. On the one hand, they will not deem its structure flawed, and at the same time they will not strain themselves through fruitless efforts to demonstrate that it is, or is not, a work of art. The fact that many of its suras, individually, or on the level of stylistic analysis, easily demonstrate exquisite mastery of form, is but one of the characteristics of the *Qur'an* which can easily prompt the poorly informed to try to establish it as a prominent work of literature. If we observe it only from the point of view of literary structure, we are in danger of falling into the trap which, for example, Gabrieli could not or would not avoid. Since I understand that the *Qur'an* was not created primarily as a work of literature, I will not approach it with the goal of evaluating it from that aspect alone, while ignoring the principle of immanence. Such an approach to the *Qur'an* is inadequate in its exclusiveness, which would consequently necessarily render the results of such an analysis wrong. That was the fatal mistake made by Gabrieli and the Orientalists he represents. They mistakenly approach the *Qur'an* as an exemplary literary work whose structure stubbornly resists their approach as they labor toward pronouncing their final evaluations. Instead of adjusting his inadequate approach, as he advances through the resisting material, Gabrieli starts to confuse approaches and perspectives, finally denying the *Qur'an*'s *literary,* as well as *ideological, cultural and religious* values, crowning his "assessment" with an affective statement: the *Qur'an* is, "briefly and honestly put, *boring*" and he cannot understand how it could be the "light and guiding force to a great part of humankind".

The Text itself is not the problem (the fact that it is, after all "the light and guiding force to a great part of humankind" reveals Gabrieli's unfounded attitude to be an expression of primitive arrogance and incompetence), it is rather the author's failure to comprehend the nature of the *Qur'an*, and the combination of a series of divergent methods, necessarily resulting in Gabrieli's galimatias.

The reading of individual suras does indeed strongly prompt the reader's reception of literary values – to the degree that they can at first believe that the entire *Qur'an* is merely a literary work of art, so that once they try to observe it as a literary work of art from a distance in its entirety, they are faced with insoluble difficulties.

It is possible to read the *Qur'an* in a variety of ways, or in several phases. During the first phase, we read the words in a sequence which, as we progress in that "operation" continue to enrich our experience and widen our horizons until we have reached the end of the chapter. Then we have a unit in which all of the constituent parts exist simultaneously.

During the second phase, we begin to "critically examine" it: we are faced with an observable mass of details simultaneously creating a thought-out whole, or structure. During the first phrase we therefore gain certain experiences, while in the second, after having gained them, we are able to achieve cognizance.

Finally, after reading the whole of the *Qur'an* and going through these two phases (from sura to sura), we reach the third phase, which requires us to establish a relationship with the *Qur'an* as a whole. At that point, the reader will have experienced the fact that the *Qur'an* indeed contains digressions, repetitions, topics that have intentionally been "addressed" with lesser literary qualities than others, etc. Only in the third phase do we come to understand that the *Qur'an* was not created with the intention to be primarily or exclusively a work of art, and that the Text compels us to approach it from very different angles.

We finally conclude that the *Qur'an* is not a literary work of art according to our experiences in literature and the experiences of literature

itself, despite the fact that it possesses certain pronounced literary characteristics.[15]

A paragon of stylistic value

Since the *Qur'an* is specific in its ample use of stylistic devices, to which its translations rarely pay sufficient attention, it is useful to point out these values as well. The "trouble" is, however, that such stylistic analyses are possible primarily in the original Text if one wants to execute it in a proper and optimally convincing manner, which deprives readers who do not speak Arabic of complete insight into the values of the original, as well as of the possibility for immediate "control" of stylistic interpretation in other languages.

It is characteristic for of the *Qur'an* that its literary-aesthetic values are connected to the particularities of Arabic to the degree that Arabic necessarily followed the spread of Islam (while Christianity is to a higher degree familiar with the Bible through translations). The translation cannot aspire to completely replace the original, but translators cannot ignore what is *characteristic* of the original either. Since the *Qur'an* insists on the authority of language, and to a great extent on the impressive luxury of formal expression realized in linguistic and stylistic processes, it seems that it is impossible to adequately translate all of the Text's auditory associations, however extremely important they may be for an authentic or adequate linguistic reception. The frequent references in some suras in Arabic, for example, build a texture that simply enters the mental processes of Arabs and those who know Arabic *well*. A translation that justifiably takes into account this insistence of the original on language and form therefore has to occasionally resort to reformulation. However, since this is the *Revelation*, the Word of God, there is a danger that the reformulation

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[15] The highest percentage of stylistic devices in all textbooks on Arabic rhetoric and stylistics comes from the *Qur'an*. The choice of these examples is not so much determined by the authority of the *Qur'an* as God's Word as on account of their literary values.

will yield unwanted and considerable shifts in the semantic field, or even unacceptable divergences from the basic meaning, which is unacceptable when it comes to God's Word. The need for reformulation – in order to build adequate linguistic reception, emphasize auditory associations, and in general affirm stylistic values in the translation – is all the more pronounced (just as the risks we are exposed to through this procedure), since the translator faces a Text which can be parabolic and elliptical.

Responsible translators are thus mostly faced with the following dilemma: when tackling the original, should the translator only pay heed to the language of the common *theme*, or should one take greater risks by not abandoning the common language of the extraordinary *form*? As far as I know, translators mostly attach importance to the special relationship between different signifiers to the signified, which we call transference of meaning; that is, they stay on the level of the common theme. Such a decision cannot be deemed justified, since the translator needs to convince that they have invested an effort adequate to the challenge to transfer also a layer upon which the original insists for very specific reasons. It is not only important for the *Revelation* to convey the meaning or idea – as God's Word it pays great heed to the way or form in which the meaning and idea are revealed.

To illustrate this, I will briefly reflect upon the sura *al-Raḥmān* (The All Merciful), noting that, when looking for the appropriate sura for the purpose of this work, I waver between this and several other suras, since the *Qur'an* contains a series of suras whose formal beauty matches this one.[16]

The *al-Raḥmān* sura contains 78 ayat. It is immediately noticeable that the ayat are quite short. They consist of merely several words – sometimes two or three – the last being the image. In other words, structurally, in this sura, each short sentence and paragraph create a single unit, largely reduced to the most economical expression.

Let us take a look at the beginning of this sura:

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[16] In the chapter titled *"Stylistic value of the Chapter "al-Raḥmān"* I will present a more comprehensive stylistic interpretation of this sura.

Al-Raḥmān. / ʿAllama-l-Qur'ān / Ḫalaqa-l-'insān / ʿAllamahu-l-bayān, etc. – continuing with the same rhythm and tone.[17]

The first line consists of a single word (al-Raḥmān = The All Merciful) which in tajwid articulation anticipates a "persistent" sequence of optimally short sentences-paragraphs.[18] The first line, since it consists of a single word only, lacks even predication.

This ayah can be read, understood and translated in two ways. On a linguistic level, as well as semantically, *al-Raḥmān* (The All Merciful) is clearly the subject of a sequence of juxtaposed sentences. Juxtaposing a sequence of sentences in a structure which pays the utmost heed to stylized expression and rhythm is, of course, intentional – it endows the Text with an unobtrusive, yet effective rhythm. Introducing conjunctions between these sentences or resorting to any other syntactic devices for constructing complex sentences would create strong disturbances that would transform these shimmering and effervescent cascades of sentences into a dormant flow of prose monotony. Therefore, a translator who gives up on trying to convey the rhyme and rhythm of the sura, and tries to communicate its meaning alone, can attach this ayah to the following by introducing the predication without any punctuation: *The All Merciful has taught the Qur'an,* etc.[19] In the original, however, structurally there is a strikingly "planted" full stop after the first word-ayah,[20] which a careful translator

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[17] This characteristic auditory structure can be felt even by those who are not familiar with Arabic. This is why here (and elsewhere) I've combined phonetic and phonological transcription, so as to give the reader a better feeling of the rhythmic-melodic value of the Text.

[18] The first five ayat also conspicuously consist only of verbs/predicates whose *subject* is The All Merciful, and nouns/*objects* connected to man. This is one of the characteristics of this sura that works firmly in favor of my previous explication on the division between subject and object in the *Qur'an*, which resulted in peaceful religious contemplation, as opposed to the pre-Qur'anic triumph of emotions in ritual kāhin communication.

The predominant use of nouns and verbs in this sura could be the topic of a separate analysis.

[19] This is exactly what the famous French translator of the *Qur'an* R. Blachère has done. Our translators, on the other hand, take this ayah as a sentence without trying to achieve rhyme and rhythmic harmony with the following, like the original.

[20] In the original this is actually not a full stop, since there was no punctuation in classical Arabic, not even full stops; what "separates" the ayat syntactically are rhythmic unit marks.

needs to perceive as a direct and timely warning that the original insists on rhythm and rhyme: if the translator chooses to transfer only the meaning of the sura in *prose* they cannot put a full stop after the first ayah; if they choose to do so regardless, or to start the translation of the following ayah in the next line, in *verse,* they take on the great responsibility of transferring the mono-rhyme and rhythm of the original. Combining these two options is, for a translation, unacceptable. If we accept the original's strong imperative to follow its brilliant rhythm and mono-rhyme, it is necessary to take the first ayah as a paragraph-sentence which, in such thoughtfully stylized expression can or rather should stand as a sentence with a specific poetic status. It is important to point out that within the given structure it functions both as an integral unit of rhythm and rhyme, which means that the translation of the following ayah needs to take into account the pattern set by the first regarding the rhyme and the distribution of accents within it.

Coming back to the topic of the purposeful economy of the ayah-paragraph, we can notice that the second ayah consists of two words *('Allama-l-Qur'ān* = taught the *Qur'an*), but it shows an effort to keep the suggested economy, by leaving out the first object of the geminated (twinned) II form of the verb: the ayat does not specify *who* the All Merciful taught the *Qur'an*.[21] The third paragraph also consists of only two words, while the fourth is "expanded" only with the pronominal suffix *hu*.[22] Sequencing such short sentence-paragraphs creates an extraordinary rhythm throughout the 78 ayat, a rhythm which, with its short sentence

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[21] I have not been able to fathom why our translators keep translating the verb *taught* and a number of verbs in its vicinity which in the original are in the perfect with the present tense (except for Čaušević and Pandža, and Karabeg).

Leaving out the first object (*whom* he taught the *Qur'an*) not only serves the purpose of making the statement more economical, it also in a way awakens curiosity or tension amplified by the later refrain *O which of your Lord's bounties do you deny,* where in the verb *deny* (dual masculine) the subject is not explicitly stated. Only much further down do we find out that the object of the geminated verb are people and jinn, which are, also later, identified as two implied subjects of the verb *deny.* Therefore, the entire "sura on the bounties" is directed at people and jinn.

[22] I would like to stay at the level of analysis of the *formal* values of the original, so I will place this explication in a footnote, since it pertains to the *meaning/thought* of the

strikes, defies in an utterly unexpected manner the prose mind and prosaic experiences, as well as the poetic tradition of the time as a whole. However, such effective equating of a paragraph with a rhythmic unit is not the only device with which a whole complex of auditory associations is built in this sura, although it could be quite sufficient given our habits and expectations regarding a valuable literary work.

Namely, another device is the consistent rhyme (a homophone in this sura) whose effect is even greater because the last word in each sentence-paragraph at the same time conveys an image. This is because the same effects of mono-rhyme in longer sentences differ from those created by an optimally short rhymed sentence-paragraph: in longer sentences the rhyme is not so obvious to our "mind's eye," or rather to our "aesthetic ear," as it is in shorter sentence-paragraphs. Moreover, it should be noted that the heightened poetic effect brought about by such a rhyme roughly attains that of the so-called "proper rhyme" in the Bosnian language, or one which always ends with a consonant preceded by a long "a". In such a distribution of accented vowels, which are typically short given the brevity of the sentences, we see another effective component in the formation of a harmonious sound structure.

The third prominent device that contributes to the exceptional rhythm of this sura is the sentence-refrain (*Fa bi 'ayyi 'ālā'i Rabbikumā tukaḏḏibān*

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fourth ayah, although this explication has a particular meaning in the widest context of my elaboration.

Namely, the fourth ayah should be translated as: *He has taught him eloquence.* Bosnian translators have carelessly translated this ayah as: *Taught him speech.* The original word *bayan*, means much more than *speech* (*ḥadīṯ*, *kalām*, *nuṭq* etc.): it denotes optimally stylized speech, eloquence, even rhetoric and stylistics. Man was first endowed with speech, and was then taught the stylized expression the *Qur'an* refers to here.

In the context of my elaboration, a proper translation of this ayah is significant for a number of reasons. First of all, this ayah is almost in the immediate vicinity of the first ayah (*The All Merciful*), so that divine instruction in eloquence should be perceived as one of the first expressions of His Grace. Second, the *Qur'an* places high value on stylized expression, eloquence, as an exquisite expression of His All-Encompassing Mercy, which means that it optimally affirms it. Consequently, the obvious affirmation of stylized expression (*al-bayān)* is pointed out precisely in the sura, which itself can serve as an example for teaching a fine manner of expression.

= then which of the Lord's blessings will you deny?), which is repeated 31 times (comprising almost half of the sura). Interestingly, this refrain appears for the first time in the thirteenth paragraph, and then with greater frequency, though it gains a more intense sonic impact after each ayah. Careful reading of this sura reveals that this placement of the refrain has the effect of gradually quickening its rhythm. On the other hand, owing to the refrain's exceptional frequency, its long consonants, and its repeated and uniform distribution of vowels and stresses, the refrain at the same time establishes control over this acceleration, so that it emerges as an anchor throughout the entire poetic sound structure, returning the reader to the primary phonetic theme.

If to all of that asserted above we add that the *Qur'an* is recited (or read) in a particular, incantatory tone, according to the predetermined rules of tajwid, then it is not difficult to perceive the great sonic potential possessed by the sura's structure along the lines sketched out above.

Another point needs to be added with regard to the refrain's function. First, owing to its frequency, the refrain appears with resonance, or as a statement which in the given context acquires universal significance, not only as the rhythmic anchor to the entire sonic structure, but also within its semantic framework. This is the dual and simultaneous function of the refrain: it imposes discipline over the entirety of the rhythm, at the same time imposing a semantic framework.

Put differently, after enumerating God's blessings, it becomes senseless to deny them in their obviousness, and with them their Creator. Because of this, in attaining the "status of resonance", the paragraph-refrain expands itself over not only the entirety of this sura, but in its resonance throughout the entire significance of the *Qur'an* itself. The central purpose of the *Qur'an* is to present the existence of God the All Merciful to Man through God's blessings; hence it is senseless to deny these blessings. This is indeed the exceptional power of its resonance: from a narrow semantic context it expands from the first sentence-paragraph of the *al-Raḥmān* to the last, and by no accident, immediately upon attaining this resonance proclaims: *Tabāraka-smu Rabbika ḏi-l-ǧalāli wa-l-'ikrām* = Blessed be the name of thy Lord, full of Majesty, Bounty and Honor.

Second, the refrain is of interest from a linguistic and syntactic perspective. In grammatical terms, the word *'ayyun* is an interrogative pronoun. Indeed, here it is preceded by the coordinating conjunction *fa,* which influences, albeit not greatly, the character of the degree of its interrogativity. However, the force of the context is so strong here that it gradually and significantly changes the sentential, conventional meaning of the interrogative pronounce *'ayyun*. The conventional meaning of the interrogative pronoun in the first phase, within an expanding context, is transformed, such that the extent of its interrogativity recedes before the disbelief suggested by a negative response. It is precisely within this phase that there occurs a contextual transformation of the basic grammatical function and meaning of the pronoun, leading us by the end of the refrain to no longer conclude with a question mark alone, but an exclamation mark as well (the original text has no punctuation). Further strengthening the context, by the very end of the sura, this interrogative pronoun is even transformed into its own "polar opposite" (of course, in a contextual rather than conventional or grammatical sense): through the context of disbelief the pronoun's interrogativity – however paradoxical it may sound – comes to perform a prohibitive function that ultimately changes the punctuation mark: Do not deny the blessings of your Lord! Only after this transformation can the sura, in both semantic and structural terms, triumphantly culminate in its final ayah, which is grammatically and contextually purely exclamative, coming as a decisive, concluding imperative for all that preceded it: Blessed be the name of thy Lord, full of Majesty, Bounty and Honor.

It is conceivable that a deeper, likely somewhat different analysis could be done for this sura, and I am convinced that such a thorough inquiry into its structure and meaning would only further affirm its exceptional literary value. Put simply, my short analysis and explication reflect exclusively my own subjective "encounter" with the *al-Raḥmān* sura. With its remarkably unmistakable authoritative language and style, it becomes all the more impossible to accept claims of the *Qur'an*'s utter lack of values, literary or otherwise; on the contrary, its "light and guidance to the greater part of mankind" become all the more apparent. When an authentic work

encounters inauthentic criticism, invariably the criticism misses the mark, unworthy of the work; every exceptional work awaits the exceptional event we call the happy meeting of authentic work with authentic criticism.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to again more closely and deeply examine the *al-Raḥmān* sura. Its stylistic value not only appeals to man's aesthetics; its value starkly exposes the dwarfish intellectual stature of Gabrieli and the orientalists he represents.

THE STYLISTIC VALUE OF THE CHAPTER
AL-RAḤMĀN

It is the All Merciful
Who has taught us the Qur'an
He created man
And taught him beautiful speech.

(*Qur'an*, 55:1-4.)

Binary opposition and duality as a supreme value

There are at least two reasons to re-examine the stylistic qualities of the *Qur'an*'s al-Raḥmān sura. First, to engage in a detailed analysis of the al-Raḥmān sura for the sake of interpreting its exceptional qualities, and within my abilities and sentiment, to show the greatness of the *Qur'an*'s stylistic qualities, as well as how a thoroughly successful translation of the *Qur'an* – in terms of fully penetrating its stylistic layers – is extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible. Second, many consider this sura to be the most beautiful in the *Qur'an* for its stylistic wonders, which as the foundation of its aesthetic value, accord exceptionally well with its content, making for truly powerful expression.

Whether this sura is the most beautiful is difficult to say, for as far as I know such a pronouncement is primarily a matter of impression: it would demand an explication of its stylistic qualities and their comparison against those of other suras. There are other suras remarkable for their stylistic

characteristics, especially those of the Meccan period of the Revelation. This is not accidental: the *Qur'an* in this period tamed the Bedouin soul of the Arabs, accomplishing this by necessity through the exceptional strength of its stylistic effects, to which the Arabs were unusually sensitive, and as a result drew attention to itself, to its divine uniqueness, and through that to its message. During the Meccan period especially, the *Qur'an* insisted on its own defamiliarization in a positive sense, on its *stylistic value*, which proved to be effective, for many prominent Arabs accepted Islam listening to how others recited the *Qur'an*; the *stylistic value* of the *Qur'an*, during this fateful period of it spread, first drew attention to the Revelation. If we add to that the fact that Islam is today one of the great world religions, it follows that the stylistic qualities of the *Qur'an*, its stylistic impressiveness, is historically significant, and to my knowledge historically unique, for no other book or belief's success is tied to its own stylistic qualities or the stylistic impressiveness of its message. Hence it is no accident that in this sura – whose stylistic features I would like to examine more closely – the stylistic expression (*al-bayān*)[23] of the first four short lines present one of the first and greatest blessings that Allah granted man: if considered on a macro-semantic plane, the relation between the first four words of the optimally short lines is such that the compassion of Allah manifests itself through his equally valuable gifts, conveying through their equal value their creative interdependence: Mercy – the *Qur'an* – the creation of man – stylistic expression (*al-bayān*). Granting *al-bayān* is tantamount to the divine act of creating man who enriches himself with the *Qur'an*, which – in turn – represents the pinnacle of stylistic expression and at the same time an inexhaustible source of teaching in rhetoric and stylistics. The semantic linking of the word on a supersentential plane is exceptionally compact, and creates a semantic field that is impressively disproportionate to its syntactic brevity. The first four sentences, among others, convincingly and powerfully demonstrate conciseness, or the Arab ideal of *adab*.

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[23] The word *al-bayān* covers a wide semantic field (always emphasizing the beauty, stylization of the expression, the *stylistic value*) – also denoting a special branch of Arabic stylistics. This is why I will continue using the original term, thus always preserving the aforementioned accent.

In terms of composition, it is no accident that the importance of *al-bayān* is emphasized in this sura, whose stylistic miraculousness is exceptional – the sura is marked by a powerful style, and places an explicit importance on stylistic expression, equating its importance with that of the creation of man, such that man's gift for stylistic expression is closely connected back to the *Qur'an*, itself a stylistically supreme Revelation.

With the preceding exposition I wished to achieve two aims. First, it is necessary to dispel the illusion of some Muslims, and occasionally some ulema, that it is strictly blasphemous to speak of the stylistic qualities of the *Qur'an*, because they most often immediately associate this with the intention (in truth, a common one among many orientalists) to lay the ground for an argument that the *Qur'an* is a literary work of art, whose author is Muhammed. I do not share this intention; my text does not imply it. Moreover, ultimately – after my analysis – I will assert that the uniqueness of the *Qur'an* – based upon my understanding of its style – lies in the fact that it is not a work of art.

Second, my work must demonstrate how interpreting the style and composition of the *Qur'an* is a kind of exegesis: revealing these qualities of the *Qur'an* represents a branch of *tafsir,* which allows for interpreting layers of the text which no translation can grasp – at least not to any meaningful extent. Through this approach to the *al-Raḥmān* sura I wish to draw attention to connectors that serve both as stylistic markers and to create linkages within the text.[24]

Among the various aspects of the connections of this text, which are marked by their solidity and multiplicity within its aesthetic and essentially peculiar structure, we can consider rhyme, unique here to the entire sura with very few exceptions, and even in those cases introducing consonants that are very close to a consonant-bearing rhyme (n). These conditional phonetic deviations, precisely through their deviation, serve the purpose of enhancing the phonetic-stylistic value of the basic rhyme, for through

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[24] There are many *stylistic value* connectors in the *Qur'an*, even outside of this chapter. For example, a number of chapters begin with consonants-codes (such as *Kāf-hā-yā-'ayn-ṣād*, etc.), whose meaning, to my knowledge, still has not been deciphered. For more on this, see the chapter titled *The Stylistic value of the Consonant Clusters*.

these occasional deviations an unexpected tone is introduced, which acts to enhance a sense of defamiliarization and to avoid monotony. Hence, at the micro-level, in this chapter among the phono-stylemes that appear I would include the rhyme-bearing consonant n, which acts precisely as a stylistic connector and significantly contributes toward the entire text's organization. Translations fail to signal this very important factor in the text's organization and *stylistic value*.

In addition to this, the reduplication of the conjunction wa (and) is very frequent in the text. Generally, this conjunction in the Arabic language appears at the start of sentences more frequently than in other languages, and serves not only as a styleme but also as a syntactic means of firmly connecting sentences, for syntax in Arabic is not as rich as that of the Bosnian language in terms of the formation of complex (dependent) sentences. However, in the text at hand, this conjunction is distributed throughout such that it appears as a connector that not only contributes to the text's flow, but functions as an intensifier as well: through frequent repetition it intensifies sentiment, among others for the recipient/reciter, who is continually gratified by a sense of the harmonious and symmetrical organization of the text. Lastly, the frequency with which this morpheme appears brings it to the status of a phonetic-phonological figure, or assonance. Korkut in his translation has a good sense of the importance of this stylistic connector, characteristic generally of the sacred style. [25]

Within the text's structural stylistics a central place is held by the refrain "then which of the Lord's blessings will you deny", which appears for the first time in the thirteenth line, and then more frequently, such that in the sura's 78 lines, the refrain appears 31 times. Its stylistic function within the stylistic markedness of the entire chapter (sura), is critical and manifold.

On a phonetic level, this refrain – which accounts for nearly half of the sura – establishes the sonic theme that will dominate the text: it is the Text's phonetic backbone, which ideally accords with its length and

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[25] Dž. Latić has written on the relationship between Bosnian translations of the Al-Raḥmān chapter and the original: Džemaludin Latić, "Stilistička analiza naših prijevoda sure *al-Raḥmān* - 'Milostivi'", u: *Kur'an u savremenom dobu,* Bosanski kulturni centar i El-Kalem, ed. Enes Karić, Sarajevo, 1997, vol. I, p. 609.-643.

uniform rhyme. If we consider it on the micro-level, we will see that every word in it, owing to the repetitiveness of the refrain, occurs in the role of a phono-styleme, and on the macro-level the harmony of these phono-stylemes form the sonic theme of the entire Text.

It is interesting that the refrain appears relatively late – only by the thirteenth line, though subsequently it appears more frequently. This distribution of the refrain reflects *stylistic value*: were it to appear at the beginning of the text in a uniform rhythm, its stylistic effects would run the risk of monotony. As it is, however, the average length and rhyme of the previous twelve lines lead up to the refrain, which is of the same length, and has the same rhyme. Thus it appears at a point where a refrain would otherwise not appear, and we do not know it is a refrain until we encounter it the next time. Through this deviation from the typical placement of the refrain the Text's stylistic value are thoroughly enhanced. Namely, the value of the stylistic device lies in this deviation from the norm, in its unusualness, which draws attention to itself. This is the stylistic purpose of the refrain: contrary to a general rule of figurative expression holding that intensity diminishes with frequency, here the refrain builds its stylistic value precisely through its frequency.

The refrain discussed here has so far achieved a twofold stylistic effect: thus it appears as a refrain, though an unusual one, defamiliarization within the Text's structure; on another level this defamiliarization manifests itself through deviation from the customary deployment of a refrain (in the customary sense of uniform distribution). Lastly, even after its first arrival, the refrain does not appear at completely regular intervals, although it still does frequently; because of this elusiveness (and because it has already formed the sonic theme, we hardly expect it to fail in this task) we continuously expect to encounter it, while not knowing when exactly this may occur. Thus the refrain grows even more unusual, constantly deviating from the norm, however only to a slight degree, and in this way it perfects its stylistic value: the refrain draws full attention to itself, as if to say: Behold, I am even an unusual refrain, one unknown to your tradition! Indeed, it must convey an incomparable aesthetic experience for man, to

whom the All Merciful had bestowed the *al-Bayan,* as the transcendent expression of his all-mercifulness.

The overall rhythm of this sura – as well as the relatively, if irregularly hastened repetition of the refrain – tends toward acceleration. Nevertheless, the refrain quite successfully serves its function: it actually keeps strict control over the acceleration of its rhythm, and despite the irregularity of its frequency, which has already optimally expressed its stylistic value, nevertheless as a refrain it controls too the rhythm of the Text and in turn – ostensibly a contradiction – further draws attention to itself.

In addition to all of this, in this Text's stylistics the refrain has a specific function: it emerges as an extremely successful connector on two levels. On the first, it is a connector that serves the function of recurrence by linking the text through repeated linguistic units;[26] and on the second, it establishes the meaningful linkages of the Text because it constantly repeats a rhetorical question with regard to the blessings of God (Allah) and the punishment for denying His blessings. Furthermore, the connective capacity of the refrain is extremely large and varied – from the connections (unique) of the sonic theme to the semantic connections in the Text; the refrain makes crucial contributions to the phonetic-phonological and semantic saturation of the Text. The refrain here and in every regard is a constructive principle.

If we recall the reduplication of conjunctions which *also* function as connectors (and intensifiers), the rhyme and the numerous connectors in the refrain on both the micro and macro level, we can conclude that there is an accumulation of stylistic value connectors operating simultaneously in this chapter, creating – to use an analogy – an organism of wondrous health and stylistic vigor.

When conducting such analyses of the Text of the *Qur'an* it is useful to bear in mind that the affirmation of the said qualities is strongly supported by *tajwid articulation* (ritual recitation according to a system of specific rules): the qualities of the *original* (and by no means the translation) simply demand that kind of "performance". Namely, the phonetic-phonological values of the Text and the accumulation of connectors I have addressed appear like a sum of intensifiers that continually cultivate the aesthetic

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[26] Compare: Marina Katnić-Bakaršić, *Stilistika*, p. 275.

mood and strongly stir emotions, so as to demand reciting, in fact, a loud "chanting" recitation – as a ritual affirmation of the stated values, whether the recipient/person reciting is articulating the text before an audience, or in the company of his own voice and hearing. Such performance of the Text of the *Qur'an*, dictated by its qualities, is inseparable from its sacral character.

The previous exposition does not capture all the functions of this sentence-refrain. Bearing in mind that the stylistic devices in this chapter are not a mere decoration and form, it would be useful to throw at least a cursory glance at their strong connection with the meaning of the Text. In fact, I believe that the organic connection between the stylistic devices in the *Qur'an* and its meanings, or meaning, is particularly strong and characteristic to its mode of expression. The refrain is very active in this regard.

The refrain ends with the present *dual* (*tukaḏḏibān = you deny*). Aside from the many connecting values of the refrain, its dual form is particularly functional. Careful examination of this chapter shows, when it comes to phono-stylemes, that the dual form of the refrain plays a key role in forming the rhyme: the consonant-bearer of the rhyme is *n* (except for several instances), and the dual forms of the verbs and names in Arabic characteristically end with *(ā)n*. If we add to it the high frequency of the refrain, it is clear how pronounced the phono-stylistic functionality of the dual is.[27]

This is not all. The dual form of the refrain signalizes that one should examine the frequency and the reason for using the dual in this Text in general. Prompted by this, I discovered that the *dual dominates* the Text, primarily in the domain of stylistics, be it in terms of individual words that appear in the *dual form*, or two one after the other, *paired*.[28] The phono-

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[27] Unlike Arabic, Bosnian and English do not possess the ability to build the dual this way (by adding the suffix *'ān* or *ayn* to the noun, or verb), instead they have to use the number *two* next to the noun, or the verb (*two books,* in Arabic: *kitābān; you two deny,* in Arabic: *tukaḏḏibān*, etc.). These two words demonstrate the original's great potential to build rhyme and rhythm; this is why the stylistic value of the *Qur'an* is inseparable from the specificities of the Arabic language whose potentials it uses to the utmost degree.

[28] For the sake of the careful reader I will list the words that appear in the dual form, noting that some of them occur several times in the Text, which indicates the structural-stylistic purpose of the dual's domination:

stylistic value of the dual thus becomes astounding; the dual's connective function in that regard is above all expectations. The dual reveals itself as the Text's principle on the morphological and phonological level. In terms of the meaning and import of the Text, the semantic connection of the dual is also revealed – to the extent to which it phonetically and semantically reinforces the entire structure to an incomparable degree: the dual is the Text's subtopic (the topic being the All Encompassing Mercy, which is developed in gradation, which will be addressed further on in more detail), since the entire argumentation of this chapter, which should testify to the All Encompassing Mercy is, for the most part, developed by using the dual. I have ultimately reached an utterly unexpected conclusion with regard to the dual in this chapter:

Since God's Mercy is the topic of the chapter and can be argued for using truly *dominant duals* (which present themselves as the subtopic), the implied conclusion is that binary and dual qualities are the supreme expression of God's Mercy: the greatest values of the world and Cosmos are binary or dual – just like the stylistic value of this chapter, and should not be denied. That is the message of the present dual form found in the refrain (*tukaḏḏibān*).[29]

The stylistic competition of gradation and the refrain

The *al-Raḥmān* sura is a kind of complex gradation. The general topic of the whole chapter has been determined by its first word-ayah *The All Merciful*. I believe that, precisely in terms of composition, it is

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The *Sun and the Moon* (ayah 5); *the trees and grass* (6); *fruit and palm trees* (11); *grain and flowers* (12); *two easts and two wests* (17); *two seas* (19); *pearl and coral* (22); *Heaven and Earth* (29); *people and jinn* (31); *two jannahs* (46); *two wells* (50); *every kind of fruit in pairs* (52); *rubies and corals* (58); *two dark greens* (63); *two gushing springs* (66); *green cushions and beautiful carpets* (76); *Magnificent and Noble* (78).

[29] I am not competent to comment on the possible referentiality of this *dual* in terms of its meaning, or its meaning in natural sciences (primarily in biology or botany), nor is it my topic, but this perspective would be interesting to hear.

not an accident that this is the only "sentence" in the entire Text which consists of a single word found at the initial position and presented as the topic of the chapter. The topic of the *All Encompassing Mercy* (the word *al-raḥmān* being Allah's attribute) is developed through the following series of sentences – as a peculiar thematic progression – which succeed each other to form a rather complex gradation: *The All Merciful taught the Qur'an, created man, taught him* al-bayān*; the Sun and Moon run their courses according to a fixed reckoning; and plants humbly submit to His will,* etc. Everything happens in relation to the all-encompassing mercy which – as implied – should be explained to people and jinn, made explicit; this topic should be developed convincingly. The gradation is then developed by stating the favors of Jannah (presented through a whole array of complex metaphors aimed at those who "do not deny their Lord's blessings", so that for them Jannah is absolutely the highest expression of Mercy, etc. By placing the all-encompassing mercy at the center of the world – from the gift of *al-bayān* to cosmic order – Islam presents itself as the religion of mercy (except, of course, for the disobedient), so that this short chapter appears as a resonance of the entire *Qur'an*. Without getting into explanations as to how the chapter *al-Raḥmān* could be interpreted in terms of the theme and composition of the entire structure of the *Qur'an*, I would only like to point out that this chapter contains a multifaceted gradation with a pronouncedly argumentative function, and that the complex gradation culminates in the final sentence-exclamation: *Blessed is the name of your Lord, the Magnificent and Noble!*

Since the topic of my work is the functioning of connectors in the *al-Raḥmān* chapter, I would like to shed light on the position of the refrain-connector in the Text's gradation system and the kinds of functions it performs there.

The gradation in that chapter is extraordinarily dynamic, being not just extensive, but also very intensive. It is intensified through optimally short sentence-paragraphs, where each sentence (often consisting of a subject and predicate only) is a new gradation related to the previous one. The redundancy has been reduced to zero.[30] If we bear in mind that these amazing

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[30] This places brevity, the supreme ideal of the *adab*, with its success in relation to tradition and in line with the Muslim faith, in the realm of the supernatural.

dynamics of gradation occur in a relatively long text, *which itself is built of gradation,* a serious structural-stylistic problem as to how to control the gradation arises. Since it aims to overpower the whole chapter, the gradation endangers its stylistic value with the mere fact that (without the refrain) its *monotonous dynamism* would abolish the quality of defamiliarization. If we were to elide the refrain, the Text would suffer irretrievable losses on the structural-stylistic level, despite the dynamic gradation.[31]

In this case, the refrain once again comes to the rescue as a controller – now of the gradation' dynamics. Namely, its relatively common repetitions calm the gradation, temporarily stopping it to draw attention to itself, but also in order to – which is very interesting – endow the gradation with an allure by letting it develop again to a certain degree. The allure lies in their competition. The refrain's goal is therefore not only to draw attention to itself, but also – according to the principles of aesthetic structuring – by referring to itself, to generously further the entire gradation as a compositional device.

This game, this competition between the gradation and the refrain, is almost unpredictable in the wondrous stylistics of the Text. Namely, carried away by the beauty of its own sound, the refrain increases in frequency as the Text progresses (although we have seen how, despite its frequency, it disciplines the rhythm of the Text), aware of its own importance in forming the auditory theme. In its auditory delight, the refrain starts impatiently interpolating itself into the thoughts it cuts into, even in the middle of a grammatical phrase, which is unimaginable in a prose work and even in an insufficiently elevated poetic one. So that "at one point", by the end of the chapter, the whole refrain introduces its auditory theme between the two constituents of the attributive phrase: *And besides these two, there will be* *two other jannahs / Which, then, of the favors of your Lord will you deny? /* *Dark green.*[32] Of course, not only the impressive mastery over the auditory effects matters here, but also – on the semantic level – it is stated that the

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[31] The losses would be irreparable in the semantic field as well, given the strong connection between the stylistic and semantic structures: these irreparable losses would destroy the Text thoroughly.

[32] *Qur'an*, 55:62-64.

jannahs themselves are a divine favor not to be denied, *dark green <u>at that</u>,* all the more reason not to deny them (or reject them).

On the other hand, by "inserting itself" between two words of an attributive phrase (which in Arabic is never broken up by an entire sentence), the refrain achieves a double effect. First, by interpolating an attributive phrase, it draws maximal attention to itself, unexpectedly emphasizing its own stylistic value by disturbing a grammatical norm. Second, the attributive phrase itself, having been unexpectedly broken up by a refrain-connector, is emphasized, defamiliarized. In both cases, the stylistic effects are enhanced quite unexpectedly, approaching a structural-stylistic climax.

Although its stylistic value kept growing to that point, the poly-functionality of the refrain in this Text has not been exhausted with this. I will, further on, demonstrate how the refrain – in my interpretation of the Text – once again, and in relation to the entire Text, manages to deviate from the usual functions of a refrain – indeed, how it manages to expand them. Precisely through this persevering expansion, it not only emphasizes its own peculiarity, thus enhancing its stylistic value, it also increases its connective function.

We have seen how this connector controls the Text's rhythm and effectively slows the gradation. However, something quite unexpected happens in relation to the gradation and refrain. Namely, although the refrain controls the rhythm and gradation, it is strongly influenced by (con)textual forces, so that an almost dramatic process occurs throughout the entire Text in which the refrain and its semantic and phonetic environment interact, which unexpectedly increases the textual dynamics. One of the proofs of this confrontation of the refrain with its environment is its relatively irregular distribution and its cutting into the structure at unexpected points: if the refrain were appearing at strictly regular intervals (as is generally the case in poetry), this would have led to a relative monotony in the Text and the exciting relation between the refrain and its environment would have been deprived of its wondrous dynamism. The refrain understands its obligation as a connector and controller and strives to fulfill it properly. However, its problem lies in the fact that the gradation has its own demands: it needs to

develop until it achieves its set goal, its own climax, reaching the message-exclamation in the last sentence. Those two principles – the principle of necessary gradation and that of disciplining and slowing down the refrain –seem irreconcilable only at first sight, or in a poorly composed text. Here they cooperate exquisitely; they are "collaborating aesthetically".

The refrain manages to fulfill its function as a means of control to a certain degree – we have already seen this. However, the demands of the gradation and the contextual forces are so strong that they aim to impose gradation on the refrain itself – which seems utterly irreconcilable with its basic function – which resists them with all its might by increasing its frequency. The reconciliation of the two basic textual forces has been *achieved* in a unique way, which indeed perfects the style (and stylistics) of the Text, while at the same time turning it into an extraordinarily firm semantic unit.

Namely, the refrain remains the same throughout the entire Text, in the formal, linguistic-morphological sense. However, as the gradation progresses, exerting enormous pressure on the refrain, it adjusts to the gradation to a certain degree (while not losing its basic quality), which furnishes nuance to its contextual meaning. The refrain "craftily" accepts some of the gradation, sensing it is the main goal of the Text. The refrain is therefore contextually subjected to gradation in the semantic field, in the widest sense of the word. When we come upon it in its initial position, we could place a question mark after it.[33] However, as the gradation of the refrain progresses, it gradually transforms from a question into wonder, even bafflement: *How can you deny the blessings of your Lord after the stated argumentation;* after further arguments are listed, again a (baffled) "question" is posed: *Indeed, how can you deny the favors of your Lord after this,* etc. The refrain-question gradually sheds its question mark, so that, at one point of the gradation, we could follow it with "*?!*". This refrain-

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[33] Translators place an exclamation mark, or an exclamation mark in conjunction with a question mark, already in that position. I believe this is the consequence of their *previous* knowledge of the *entire sura;* such punctuation obstructs an extremely important *process* of gradation and the connectors' stylistic effect – a process of great importance in the stylistic and semantic structuring of the Text.

question has at the very end been transformed into a negation, even a prohibition, although none of its morphemes have changed – its *contextual* meaning eventually becomes: *So do not deny the favors of your Lord!*

It should be stated that this behavior of the refrain exquisitely performs another task in the context of the forces of gradation: it not only serves as a formally functional connector, it also plays an important role in semantically connecting the Text. This "additional" connective function of the refrain deserves further elaboration.

Namely, the basic function of this Text as a whole is highly argumentative: the goal of the chapter is to *persuade* believers of divine mercy, of the need to believe (and non-believers of punishment), and to argue it with a wide array of details-arguments. The refrain's task is to support the argumentation: *So which blessings of your Lord do you deny?* In fact, its argumentative function has also been optimized precisely through its "refrain nature": the constant repetitions themselves become arguments *emphasizing* the senselessness of denying God's blessings.

Strictly stylistically speaking, this refrain should be observed as a rhetorical question – a question to which one should neither expect an answer, nor provide one. However, the refrain in that sense too deviates from the common rhetorical question, which further perfects its stylistic value. Namely, in the formal-structural sense, it is a rhetorical question (to which an answer should not be expected), but its cooperation with the context is such – as we just saw – that it *suggests an answer*, so that at the very end, in the widest contextual framework, its frequent suggestions *extract an answer* precisely in the form of an exclamation: *Blessed is the name of thy Lord, Magnificent and Noble!* The connective refrain has thus finally successfully brought the entire gradation and argumentative procedure to a true structural-stylistic and semantic triumph expressed with the last sentence. The effect of the gradation in all its functions and its guidance have been so masterfully harmonized that a clear *answer* to this *rhetorical question* had to appear under the unbearable pressure of their forces.

It is not an accident that I connect these structural-stylistic and semantic triumphs, since my exposition could prompt the question of whether I emphasize the aesthetic dimension of the *Qur'an* so much that I consider it

its primary, or perhaps, only value. This brings me back to the beginning of this analysis and my assertion that I do not consider the *Qur'an* a work of art. A clear statement regarding this question – within the area I am dealing with here – should be made in order to classify the style of the *Qur'an*.

In the previous elaboration I mentioned the argumentative function of the style of the *Qur'an,* which is quite pronounced in this chapter. A literary work of art generally has an aesthetic function, rather than an argumentative one, and is in a rivalry of sorts with so-called reality. The *Qur'an* does not establish such a relationship to reality, which differentiates it from literary works of art. The style of the *Qur'an* is notably argumentative: its primary function is to prove, persuade, promise, admonish, etc. It is thus resolutely excluded from the realm of literary art.[34] The *Qur'an*, however, pays special attention to figurativeness, the defamiliarization of expression. It cares more about its own figurativeness than is usual in functional styles (in this case the argumentative style), but this quality, its stylistic value, *functions as a religious message*. The stylistic values affirm the message, draw attention to it, while at the same time cultivating an aesthetic sense. This careful relationship of the functional style toward stylistic devices suggests one should be careful when defining functional styles in relation to their degree of figurativeness: though functional, the style of the *Qur'an* is overflowing with figurativeness.

If one is to accept the finding that figurativeness overflows in the style of the *Qur'an* (as I hope the analysis of the *al-Raḥmān* chapter demonstrated), the implication is that, even on the macro level, in terms of style definition and functioning, the *Qur'an* is truly defamiliarized and thus worthy of the utmost attention.

I have, however, already stated that stylistic devices in this Text, aside from the argumentative, also play a very important cognitive function; in fact, argumentative and cognitive functions operate simultaneously in the Text, while never abandoning Beauty as its very soul. The simultaneous operation of these characteristics of the Text can be successfully illustrated with the "most beautiful argument" promised to the believers – the lofty *Jannah*.

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[34] The *Qur'an* explicitly, on several occasions, distances itself from literature as an art form, by stating that the *Qur'an* is not a poetic work, nor the Prophet a poet.

THE *JANNAH* METAPHOR

And will reward them for what they patiently endured with Jannah and silk; / They will be reclining therein on divans. They will feel therein neither scathing heat nor bitter cold; / And near above them are its shades, and its fruit to be picked will be lowered in compliance; / And amongst them will be passed round vessels of silver and cups of crystal; / Clear and silver cups of which they have determined the measure; / And they will be given to drink a cup whose mixture is of Zanjabil; / From a fountain within Jannah named Salsabeel;/ There will circulate among them attendants of everlasting youth. If you saw them, you would think them scattered pearls.

(*Qur'an,* 76:12-19)

The cognitive straining of a metaphor

The geography of *Jannah*, through which a multitude of rivers flow, is almost fully material and seems not to differ from that of this world, except that it has been brought to near perfection in the material realm and eschatologically immortalized. Let us take a look at the "props" in the quoted short passage – one of many varying, more or less similar descriptions: believers are donning *silk*; lounging on *divans-ottomans;* there is neither *scathing heat* nor *freezing cold;* they are in *shade; fruit* within arm's reach; there shall be *silver*, *silver and crystal cups* out of which they *drink* Zanjabil*,* and eternally young *attendants*.

If this Text is detached from the wider context and remains on a literal level, it seems that in the afterlife believers will in fact have a sort of a rerun of a perfected version of earthly existence: beautifully attired, reclining on rocking chairs, doing nothing – idle, and even bitter cold and scathing heat, etc., are mentioned. If we add that all of this will last neither more nor less than forever, we could say it is neither particularly interesting, nor in accord with God's omnipotence and all-encompassing mercy that he should bestow such a divinely superb reward upon the faithful.

Many interpret similar common descriptions of the afterlife's physical qualities literally, and criticize the *Qur'an* in this regard, which is why, for example, Mehmed Handžić noted the following:

> *We often hear Islam's enemies, who strive to do it harm, criticize it for promising its followers purely carnal delights in the afterlife, without knowing spiritual pleasures (...). Anyone with however little common sense (...) will realize that no carnal pleasure is possible without a spiritual one, as well as the fact that, for the most part, there are no spiritual delights without carnal ones.*[35]

Handžić basically stays on a literal interpretative level when it comes to the descriptions of *Jannah*, adding to them a feeling of *delight*, or *bliss*, resulting from relatively perfected *physical* comfort.

What is the issue at hand? Is the reasoning of those addressed by Handžić valid, or even the argumentation put forward in his *Tafsir* interpretation of the chapter *al-Ghaashiyah*?

It is most likely not possible to give a definite answer to this question, since the hereafter is not within reach of our experience. My goal is thus to point out one of the primary exegetic questions using examples of literal interpretations of the text of the *Qur'an*, and to clear the way for introducing literary means of interpretation. It is necessary to point out that my interpretation does not aspire to universality; it merely strives to provide a coherent analysis that would demonstrate whether, and to which degree, it is useful to resort to basic literary means when interpreting the *Qur'an*. The interpretations put forward by this work should not be perceived as a fixed closure of the *Qur'an's* ellipsis; rather they point to a dearly needed

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[35] Mehmed Handžić, "Tumačenje sure *el-Gašije*," *Vazovi*, El-Hidaje, Sarajevo, 1943.

methodological orientation in understanding and interpreting the Text, which, as an utterly intricate polyvalent structure, depicts among other things a world (*Akhirah*) that is "known" only through its description in the *Qur'an*, while in fact being beyond all our experiences.

Since the *Qur'an* addresses people, it is understandable that it uses their highest accomplishments in language and literature, which is why it very often uses metaphors, which I will focus on. To be more precise, we will only examine the key metaphor of the *Qur'an*: *Jannah*. We need to bear in mind that it is possible to observe it as an allegory, in the sense of an *extended metaphor*. Allegories are common in sacred texts, where they help present afterlife through comprehensible means familiar to people. However, since I am mostly interested in how the allegory of *Jannah* (i.e. a developed metaphor) came into existence, I will primarily discuss its metaphorical processes and effects.

Very simply put, *Jannah* is a garden. Since the *Qur'an* is closely connected to the requirements of its language - which it standardized and immortalized – at the beginning of this analysis it is necessary to point out the etymology of the word *Jannah* in order to comprehend its complexity.

The main meaning of the stem *ĞNN* (from which the noun *Jannah* is derived) is *to hide*, *to obscure*, so the word that is closest to it is the stem STR, meaning *to cover, to obscure*. However, the stem *ĞNN* always means *to cover, to hide, to obscure* etc. in the sense that something is removed from sight, but also particularly in the sense that it is *protected*. There is a series of variations of this stem: *al-ğanān* = a heart (hidden and protected in the chest); *al-ğunna* = shield (hiding and protecting the chest); *al-ğanīn* = an embryo (hidden and protected in its mother's womb), etc. *Al-ğanna(t)* denotes a garden (which besides trees must contain grapevine and palm trees – otherwise it would be called *al-ḥadīqa*) whose vegetation is so dense that it simply *hides* one in its thicket and *protects* with its deep shade. Many believers are not aware of such nuances in the meaning of the word *Jannah* and its etymology, and we must note that it does not always bring forth such complex associations among those versed in linguistics either.

The *Qur'an* has found in Arabic a word that most aptly describes something so otherworldly and beyond experience through something

tangible, something quite familiar. Using the example of *Jannah*, we will later demonstrate that, in a metaphor, the differences between its constituents are more pertinent than their initial similarities. But before we proceed with that, it is necessary that we temporarily accept the traditional understanding of a metaphor according to which it is based on similarity and comparison. In that sense, the metaphor *Jannah* contains two correlates: that which is compared (Heaven) and that to which it is compared (garden), or rather that which borrows a name and that which lends it. In other words, a future otherworldly experience, being completely unknown, to be presented as the utmost pleasure, is depicted as an extraordinarily dense garden providing life-saving shade (*Jannah*). This comparison is realized with the conviction and strength of a metaphor that both leans on imagination and helps develop it in an optimal manner. The comparison is realized like a metaphor: it does not say Heaven is *like* a garden. If it were a simile (with two explicated correlates and a comparative particle *like*), then it would be a "lower level" comparison, so that even those believers who read the *Qur'an* superficially would understand that Heaven is only *like* a garden, but thanks to the structure of the metaphor, they think that it in fact is a garden. The main characteristic of a metaphor is that one of its correlates and the comparative particle (*like*) disappear, so that one correlate (Heaven) is represented with the name of the other (garden), by taking over what is most important, the very essence of the correlate, whose name is borrowed to emphasize the trait(s) of the other (Heaven). When, referring to a player, I say: *Our falcon is attacking*, that means that the player (who, in this utterance is not visible as a morpheme) possesses the most prominent traits of a falcon (bravery, swiftness, danger, endurance etc.), though he of course is not a falcon. Metaphorical comparisons require a context (ar. *qarīna*) which precludes literal interpretations of the metaphorically used word.

Heaven, an immeasurable sum of the greatest delights and joys, is therefore presented through the metaphor *Jannah* (a garden) by saying that Heaven is a Garden, at which point a correlate and the comparative particle disappear: Heaven is metaphorically represented with the name Garden. A reader who is ignorant and insensitive to literary matters will

interpret this literally, not knowing that every metaphor is placed within a context that prohibits literal interpretations. In this case, an important aspect of the metaphor (its context) points out that it does not make sense, that it is illogical to view *Akhirah* literally as some kind of Bosnian garden or Bedouin oasis which provides immeasurable joys: a garden and an oasis are appropriate for this world, but not the afterlife.

A metaphor aims to express an optimal similarity between different phenomena: this-is-that given the great similarity between this-and-that, a similarity so great that one can be represented with the name of the other. However, logic and reason defy the metaphor, since this-is-not-that after all. *Borrowing a name*, in fact, aims at optimally emphasizing a certain feature (or more), which is possible to comprehend with the aid of a flexible imagination, rather than with a relatively rigid reason. The fact that the *Qur'an* refers to a whole array of otherworldly delights as *Jannah* (a garden) does not mean that *Jannah* is indeed a garden; rather that a literary device has effectively been used most aptly to present the sum of those pleasures/rewards. In other words, the eschatological metaphors in the *Qur'an* – in this case, *Jannah* – constitute a conscious decision not to present something utterly unknown to all our experience and senses using the language of science or lofty rational explication. This metaphor means language has conceded (human language, not God's) to be helpless with regard to something, but, at the same time, this kind of concession (the metaphor) is its greatest defense against helplessness, knowing that only a metaphor, being based on imagination and persistently relying on it, can present something inexpressible in any other language. A metaphor's magnificence is manifested by being both a concession testifying to the helplessness of language and its supreme creation. Ultimately, we can say that *Jannah*, as an extended metaphor in the *Qur'an*, i.e. an allegory (as well as its various gradations and a whole array of secondary metaphors) utilizes tangible phenomena, or particular items, to denote pure abstractions, otherworldly things beyond human experience. The language of a literary work – especially in the *Qur'an,* which possesses extraordinary literary values – describes numerous states, emotions, phenomena, etc., which can only successfully be conveyed through metaphors. A metaphor

also always anticipates an emotional response, which is why the many metaphors in the *Qur'an* which represent the afterlife produce very strong emotions. In fact, the extended metaphor in the *Qur'an*, the allegory, plays a double role: it is, on the one hand, a "literary embellishment" that produces strong aesthetic and emotional effects, and, at the same time, its cognitive role is affirmed as it interprets the metaphysical using a physical phenomenon with its extraordinary reliance on imagination, thus being the only linguistic device capable of it. It can be said that one of the main tasks of a metaphor in general, and in the case of *Jannah* specifically, is to present and convey something out of reach to one's senses. Thus the sum of the greatest rewards bestowed upon the faithful is a Garden (*Jannah*), which in fact means that something as beautiful *as an ideal Garden* awaits them, not an actual garden. Although the metaphor states this-is-that, it actually means this-is-like-that, with the correlate and the comparative particle having retreated before a comparison amplified to the linguistically greatest possible degree, so that even the structure of a comparison has been overcome.

Of course, there is no doubt which constituent (correlate) is "more valuable" in this metaphor whose depths I have been pondering here: an oasis in this world could not reach the qualities of an otherworldly ideal Garden – between the two operate strong and fruitful forces of differentiation.

Why is the sum of delights in the *Akhirah* referred to as *Jannah* (Garden)?

Jannah *presented as an oasis*

Jannah, the grand metaphor, is augmented by an array of sub-metaphors that semantically cooperate with this comprehensive metaphor. Let us consider several examples from the already quoted ayat.

The faithful shall be residing in a *Garden*, reclining on *divans* in *shade*, *fruit* within arm's reach, with *silver* and *crystal cups* to *drink* from, in a *climate* which knows not of scathing heat or bitter cold. So is the metaphor

Garden (through which, according to other descriptions, rivers flow) persistently augmented: this complex metaphor is developed through a series of "props" emphasizing the allure of the Garden; each of the "props" is a sub-metaphor, the purpose of which is a further interpretation of the primary complex metaphor *Garden*. Interpreting this phrasing literally would be a grave degradation of the lavishness of metaphorical language, which manages to describe something indescribable in another way. A believer-reader who is not aware of the various stylistic layers of the *Qur'an*, and stylistic devices in general, may find superficial (literal) interpretations of the Text appealing, while the sophisticated reader has no doubts regarding its metaphorical quality – not only since their understanding of the Text is incomparably more refined, but also since their delicate soul expects a reward in the afterlife surpassing that of lying in the thick shade, glass in hand, etc.

Since *Jannah* is the key metaphor, we may justifiably pose a question as to why this metaphor (*Jannah*-Garden) in particular was chosen to represent the sum of the greatest blessings in the afterlife.

In an effort to offer a reasonable answer to this question, I must go back to the etymology of the word *jannah*, that is, to the stem in whose semantic field all other meanings develop. Namely, the basic meaning of this stem, expanded in all its derivations, is *to hide* (from sight, heat and generally all misfortunes like hunger, thirst, etc.), so that, in a contextualized translation (which is quite loose and prone to interpretation), it could be rendered as: *to shield with comfort and blessing.* To interpret this metaphor it is important to take into account the historical context and natural surroundings of the Arabians, to whom the *Qur'an* was revealed first in their language. Bearing that in mind, we should simply ask ourselves what could have been the greatest desire, the greatest reward elevated to an ideal, to a pre-Islamic Arabian-nomad living in a world scarce with vegetation and water, exposed to pernicious heat during the day and insufferable coldness that makes stone crumble into sand during the night, who due to all sorts of unceasing lethal dangers has been condemned to wander through boundless adversities.

The greatest reward that could be promised to him is everything which *symbolizes the opposite* to his negative experience: a garden overflowing

with all kinds of vegetation; a plentitude that obscures him from view; a thick shade; an abundance of food within arm's reach, with springs and rivers all around, while he, feeling neither heat nor cold, joyfully sips from these rivers and springs. For the Arabians to whom the *Qur'an* was first revealed this is ideal: in the horizon of his experience and world, *an oasis* is an ideal and a symbol of being fully protected and carefree, inhabiting a world of plenty and well-being. If we also add that an image of an oasis is much more effective in every way in a harsh desert environment – *operating under the principle of sharp contraries* – than even the most beautiful of gardens in Bosnia, for example, it is not surprising that the sum of otherworldly rewards (Jannah) is represented like an *oasis*. A garden, as beautiful as it may be, does not have the same value for me, as it did for a pre-Islamic Bedouin. *The Qur'an* has therefore used the *Garden* metaphor to present an array of ideal qualities for a Bedouin using the seductive suggestiveness of a metaphor, in fact – a different, ideal world. If the *Qur'an* had been revealed to another people, in a qualitatively different environment – and I deny there being any hint of blasphemy in this hypothesis, I introduce it merely to underline the metaphorical language of the *Qur'an* – it is highly questionable whether the same metaphors would have been used, including the magnificent representation of the afterlife as an oasis. However, such a representation of the afterlife is a metaphor of an ideal world, and, as soon as we define it so, all apprehensions regarding possible questions and dilemmas as to why Heaven is represented as an oasis, in a manner "most suitable" to Arabians, disappears: the *Qur'an* knows that we too outside of that environment will comprehend its striking metaphor – *Jannah* – precisely as a metaphor for an ideal world, rather than literally.

Therefore, interpreting basic metaphors of the *Qur'an* – and this needs to be reiterated – on a level of understanding expressed by a TV viewer and an "expert",[36] and even of Handžić's defense, as previously stated, remain merely at the very surface of quite a multi-layered structure elusive to definite comprehension. Even some "learned" Arabists (a good example

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[36] In a TV call-in-show a viewer, tangled in a net of literal interpretations of this metaphor, asks a self-proclaimed expert in the studio: Since men are promised in *Jannah* beauties (houris), which pleasures await female believers?

would be Francesco Gabrieli, the author of *Arabic Literature*, whom I have already mentioned as a paradigm of malice and incompetence when it comes to interpreting the *Qur'an*), fail to understand that the diverse and often dispersed materials in the *Qur'an* cannot be so tightly unified by either reason or logic, but instead by a Metaphor that relies upon the immeasurable flexibility of imagination, unknown to rationality and logic. Gabrieli even proclaims that the often used repetitions, which, as a rhetorical device, serve as very functional textual connectors in micro- and macrostructures, are boring – all in all, he demonstrates an astounding moroseness of the spirit and blatant ignorance as to how the Text functions.

We can see how crucial context is to correctly interpret a metaphor and for it to have its optimal effect in general, as well as in the case of *Jannah*, by examining another example in which the term context is broadened to a "poetic" and cultural-historical context that radically changes the semantics of the metaphor. For example, pre-Islamic and even classical Arabic poets, trying to convey their delight with their beloved's beauty, would often describe her gaze with a very common metaphor comparing it to that of a wild cow that has lost its calf (sometimes reducing it to a simile). In our cultural-historical context it by no means has the same meaning, nor would it elicit the same response – quite the opposite. Neither would Arabic poets today use this metaphor (apart from evoking tradition), since the context has changed.

Jannah as a metaphor does not produce such radical shifts when introduced into various contexts, though its intensity is not identical in them: its effects on us do not match those it had on the pre-Islamic Arabians.

Metaphorical similarity in terms of value rather than structure

The metaphor *Jannah* teaches that the sum of divine blessings under that name does not equal a garden in terms of content, or "physical structure": *Jannah* is not a garden with grapes and dates, clear brooks, etc. The intensified metaphorical comparison is based on the similarity

of the two constituents, which lies not in their content and structure, but rather as a *similarity in terms of value.* That is the basic characteristic of the metaphor, which is utterly misunderstood by those who interpret it literally: for them *Jannah* is not a metaphor, but literally a garden; for them, *the houri* (etymologically: *wide-eyed beautiful women*, which makes this both a linguistic and aesthetic metaphor) are not a metaphor for sublime pleasure, but literally sexuality and a projection of human lust; for them silk and all the promised jewelry are not a metaphor for joy, intended perhaps primarily for women, but ornate attire, etc. Imagine us in the next world arrayed in silk, surrounded by wide-eyed yielding houri, holding silver glasses, alongside wells and fountains! This is no doubt quite a pale picture of *Jannah,* and the believer should be asking for much more: something in line with God's endless Grace and Goodness, as He is metaphorically often presented with the names *Grace* and *Goodness*.

Going back to the basic trait of the metaphor, we should point out that *Jannah* is realized by intensifying similarity and difference relations between the constituents in terms of value rather than content: if I say about a woman *My rose has come*, it is clear that the comparison was made according to the value principle, rather than physical composition. For *Jannah* this is not so obvious because of its otherworldly nature, but here the metaphor is also absolutely doubtlessly applied as a principle of comparative relation in terms of value.

Something unusual happened with the *Jannah* metaphor, which further emphasizes the just delineated fact regarding value-based similarity relations. Namely, the previous explication showed that *Jannah*, as a garden, is a metaphor for the sum of otherworldly divine blessings which can only be presented to the human mind as metaphorical images. Its meaning (similarity in terms of value) has been conveyed metaphorically. However, this metaphor has obtained a capital *J*, since it denotes something constant, almost an "eschatological toponym". The term garden has been permanently transferred onto something which is not a garden and whose other name we do not know (except for several synonyms which confirm my assertions), nor can we name it differently since we are unfamiliar with its content. Therefore, the *transferring* or *borrowing* of a name (a

metaphor in Arabic is *'isti'āra* = *borrowing*, rather than *transferring*, which makes a significant difference worth addressing and analyzing) has been immortalized in this instance; onto a daring *fighter* we will transfer the name *lion* to point out some of his traits, although we do know he has just *borrowed* (temporarily taken) another name in order to present himself in a desired manner. In the *Jannah* metaphor this temporariness has been abolished! At first it seemed "an agreement was made" between the two notions to lend/borrow the name, but the borrower has permanently kept it. In representing *Jannah* as an oasis, the meaning has been transferred in one direction, upon which – which makes it particularly interesting – a kind of "metaphorical echo" occurs; *Jannah* (essentially itself a metaphor) is in turn used as a metaphor for earthly beauty: *This grove is pure Jannah* (or even stronger, without predication, juxtaposed and implicit: *We have visited Bosnian Jannah*).

What has happened?

The name of the sum of earthly beauties – *Jannah*, as a garden/oasis, representing in the given historical context and specific geography absolutely the most enchanting thing, has been borrowed in order to represent the nameless beauty of the Akhirah. Given this is a special crown metaphor, we "intuitively know" that what our metaphor (*Jannah*) is trying to capture, the ideal divine, surpasses the borrowed name. Therefore, the borrowed name (*Jannah*) is strongly endowed with the perfection of what the metaphor is aiming to represent (the perfection and immeasurability of divine blessings), so that in this superb process the borrowed word *jannah* (garden), is ennobled and perfected with the content onto which it is transferred, so that, "upon returning from the other world", it is used as a magnificent metaphor for earthly beauty. The return of the *Jannah* metaphor has been accompanied with an additional shift since, when one characterizes earthly beauty as *Jannah*, there is no doubt that it is only *alike*, *close* etc. to the beauty of Akhirah-Jannah. The metaphor has been "reincarnated", unfathomably enriched by borrowing its name; the name *jannah* has been borrowed, as a metaphor for the rewards of the Akhirah, so that, enriched and ultimately imbued with meaning, it returns

to become a metaphor for earthly beauties which – beautifully implied by this "returning metaphor" – *only aspire* to the ideal of the Akhirah.

And finally, moving in the relations *jannah-Jannah-jannah,* this metaphor always expresses similarity in terms of value rather than physical traits, which has hopefully been sufficiently explicated.

Great semantic shifts have happened within the same relations: first when the unknown sum and quality of otherworldly delights and blessings was called *Jannah* (Garden), and a second time when, in turn, the just named sum and quality became a metaphor for earthly sublime values. The semantic triumph of the metaphor is complete.

Let us now go back to the "trick" the *Jannah* metaphor played, which, as I have said, has permanently kept a name that is usually just borrowed.

Metaphors love freshness, since they die from overuse (indeed, who still perceives the phrase *table leg* as a metaphor?), or develop into symbols as astutely noticed by Wellek in his *Theory of Literature*: "An "image" may be invoked once as a metaphor, but if it persistently recurs, both as presentation and representation, it becomes a symbol, and may even become part of a symbolic (mythic) system."[37]

I believe this is precisely what has happened with the *Jannah* metaphor (as well as with numerous other Qur'anic metaphors): the crown metaphor *Jannah* (along with an array of sub-metaphors in various places) is quite often mentioned in the *Qur'an*, essentially always representing the same image of the afterlife, so that it has grown into a metaphor-symbol of the greatest pleasure and order.

Since I am talking here about the functioning of a crown metaphor and the literary values of the Text of the *Qur'an*, in the belief that this belongs to its exegesis, it is also necessary to say something about how the metaphor I chose to analyze fits into the literary tradition, with which the *Qur'an* communicates with great verve and to a significant degree. It is wrong to perceive this conviction as blasphemy since the *Qur'an* adroitly uses literary means (which I would like to make obvious here), because many phenomena can most successfully be presented using means close to the human experience and literary experience in general.

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[37] René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Teorija književnosti*, Nolit, Belgrade, 1965.

First, however, we need to propose temporarily and tentatively translating the word *Jannah* as the word Garden, to emphasize that etymologically it also contains the meaning of *protection*, *seclusion,* etc., which we have already addressed.

In Oriental-Islamic literature the term *garden*, used either metaphorically or non-metaphorically (describing individual, actual gardens), is quite common, to the degree that its common usage has granted it a symbolical status, like the word oasis. This is found in pre-Islamic Arabian literature, and especially in the literatures of Islamic peoples. For example, *One Thousand and One Nights* is full of individual gardens of great beauty in which fateful events for the protagonists typically transpire. We could even say – befitting the work's structure and the tradition(s) in which it was created – that the whole work is a monumental garden. Furthermore, in Oriental-Islamic literature there are endless titles containing the word *garden*.[38] In this literature *garden* is thus almost a generality, a topos of sorts, denoting order, safety and light-heartedness, plenty and delight. The garden is inconceivable without water, which in the Arab world and Islam has been elevated to a cult; *the garden* simply denoted the ideal. Since the *Qur'an* takes into account context (historical, geographic, traditional, etc.), it has taken *the Garden* as a unique topos within a rich literary tradition in order to denote the unknown sum of blessings, the undetermined, but certainly surmised quality of pleasures, blessings, exemplary order etc. – in short, to use this term precisely because of its unique meaning and status within the tradition, to denote the ideal order of beauty.

Jannah is a metaphor realized in another language – and, therefore in another literary tradition – to the specifics of which, as I have already pointed out, the *Qur'an* is inextricably connected. It is therefore justified to examine in what ways this metaphor is perceived: 1) how it is perceived by native Arabic speakers familiar with its etymology; 2) how it is perceived by Arabists, non-native speakers who are nevertheless familiar with the language; and 3) how it is perceived by believers completely unfamiliar with Arabic.

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[38] One of the titles in my book (*U vrtovima sakralnoga stila*) also intertextually communicates with this tradition.

A precise answer would have to be very comprehensive, but briefly put I believe that the responses and perceptions of this metaphor in the three recipient categories are not identical, for when reading a text we direct our attention in two directions: to its conventional meaning, as well as to the special meaning a word has in a given context. This process is particularly complex when it comes to detecting and receiving great metaphors, the complexity being intensified by the *unfamiliarity* with the language in which the distinguished metaphor has been realized (the emphasis is on the words *metaphor* and *unfamiliarity* with the language) and the very complicated requirements of Arabic in which the *Qur'an* was revealed in its entirety and to which it is so inextricably tied.

There are numerous examples aside from this metaphor. Let us take as an example the well-known exclamation *Allahu 'akbar!* If a metaphor is understood in the widest sense, as a general transference of meaning, then this exclamation can be interpreted as a metaphor of sorts always translated, as far as I know, as *Allah is the greatest*. This translation is neither incorrect, nor entirely precise, since it fails to capture an important meaning (perhaps even the primary one) of the root KBR from which all other forms are derived. Granted, KBR does carry the meaning of huge, magnificent, divinely towering over creatures. But before this essentially Tafsir translation, the root KBR contains another meaning not encompassed by the quoted translation: on the linguistic plane, *Allahu 'akbar* means, or rather means primarily, *Allah is the oldest*, meaning that He is absolutely primal, that nothing existed before Him. This also makes Him the greatest, Someone Who is distinguished (above everything) by His primordial, primal nature.

This poses the question of whether it is better to translate the *Qur'an* with emphasis on Tafsir or linguistic concerns, or both.

But let us return to our supreme metaphor.

The *Jannah* metaphor, as well as other Qur'anic metaphors, is characterized by a specific quality of resonance – spreading irrepressibly to other parts of the Text, encompassing "marginal meanings", as well as the Book as a whole. Noticing this resonance enables valid understanding of the *Qur'an* as an utterly meaningful and compact structure – in spite of the

prosaic minds and intellectual malice of some Orientalists. This is why our translators generally do not translate *Jannah*. I do not think any translation would be successful: all translations would deprive the original word of a considerable share of its meaning. The *Jannah* metaphor strongly resists substitutive interpretations: it is impossible to find an adequate replacement for it, which makes a complete translation impossible; the metaphor is "paraphrased" by an immeasurable array of sub-metaphors (*houri*, *rivers*, *fruits,* etc.), each demanding further interpretation while resisting substitution. This, however, does not absolve us from the obligation to explicate and interpret the *Jannah* metaphor exegetically. And finally, this linguistically superb metaphor has moreover become established in the Bosnian language, though we need to point out that our language did not follow how *jannah* (as a garden/oasis) first became the metaphor *Jannah* (sum of otherworldly blessings and delights), only registering its "returning" function and meaning: *jannah* is a metaphor in which earthly beauty borrows the name of the other-worldly ideal existence (*Jannah*). In Bosnian this is regulated by the use of capital letters, but since Arabic does not differentiate between capital and lower case letters, the meaning of this word is possible to fathom only according to its context.

Overall the metaphor does not produce the same responses in different readers: the intensifying of certain characteristics (which is the goal of the metaphor) is relativized not only in proportion to the reader's imagination and sensibility, but to a great degree in proportion to the familiarity with the language in which the metaphor is realized. Experience shows, however, that many believers interpret the *Jannah* metaphor in the *Qur'an* literally: although they do not know the literal meaning of the word *jannah*, at the very mention of that word they think of a garden and its waters and greenery, often not moving past that first association. If sub-metaphors are added to that reception, such as the one according to which believers would be reclining in swings, bearing in mind the fact of immortality, this lazy perspective could rather be taken as a punishment than a reward. Believers indeed do have the right to hope for something much more substantial.

From a theological position, what matters most is the ultimate effect of the reception of this noun-metaphor – strengthening one's faith. This

theological position could, however, be enhanced by the suggestion that this faith should be ennobled, cultivated, so as to reveal the numerous meanings of the *Qur'an* layer by layer, since stylistic interpretation of the Text of the *Qur'an* enhances its aesthetic values to believer and non-believer alike.

Literary analysis of the Text of the *Qur'an*, being immanent, is capable of revealing inherent values theological expertise cannot reach, but could use to its own ends. The Text realizes its own context, which actively "cooperates" with other contexts creating an entire universe. The fact that the *Jannah* metaphor operates in two contexts – the earthly and the eschatological, which we have just addressed, is a testimony to the great power of the context in which this sacred Text is realized.

The specific use of the elative, with which the second degree comparative is built, and that of the superlative, testifies to the contextual forces operating in the text that largely shift meanings, and to the functioning of some basic grammatical categories. Furthermore, those very forces succeed, indeed miraculously, in transforming a rigid morphological form (the elative) into a luxurious metaphor with great cognitive tasks. This process needs to be examined.

THE STYLISTIC POTENTIAL OF THE ELATIVE IN THE *QUR'AN*

Rendering the Text more dynamic by introducing the elative

The *Qur'an* uses the potential of Arabic so expertly that it necessitates defining the relationship between the formal and stylistic values of this Text and the specific qualities of Arabic as inseparable.

The creative uniqueness of the Text of the *Qur'an* rests on the fact that it enriches the experience of Arabic in a unique and unpredictable manner. With the authority of unexpected creativity, defamiliarization, it masterfully relativizes and renders the relatively strict norm of Arabic flexible in terms of morphology and even syntax, as well as the Arabic standard in general, so as to leave the reader surprised by this ability, which incessantly cultivates their aesthetic wishes. The *Qur'an* simultaneously realizes several important goals: pointing out its own great linguistic dedication to a language that it actually standardizes while unpredictably perfecting it; it utilizes language quite adeptly, achieving optimal expressiveness, stylistic value; and in this way finally capturing the attention of careful readers and scholars despite the passage of time.

As an illustration of the aforementioned characteristics of the Text of the *Qur'an*, I would like to analyze the specific grammatical use of a single morphological form-paradigm and a root subsumed by it. Namely, the *Qur'an* uses the paradigm *'af'alu* in a specific manner. This paradigm could only tentatively be qualified as an *elative*, since it does not fully correspond to the elative in European languages.[39] I decided to examine

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[39] In some languages the elative denotes a quality in a very high degree, without comparison (in Bosnian it is expressed with a positive and adverbs such as *very, quite, exceptionally* etc.; in Russian, for example, *добрейший)*.

the root *'lm* (to know) in relation to this paradigm, although I could have chosen another, for example *KBR*, in the expression *Allahu 'akbaru.*[40] In other words, I will dedicate my attention to the expression *Allahu 'a'lamu* alone.

This analysis demands that we dwell briefly on the morphological and syntactic specifics of the form *'af'alu*, though the final goal of the analysis is to determine the stylistic value of this form in the Text of the *Qur'an*, that is, the stylistic defamiliarization of one of the fundamental morphemes in the language. It is worth examining how this morpheme is miraculously transformed into a styleme.

The Arabic elative form *'af'alu* is peculiar compared to the elative in general, since the paradigm not only serves to express the absolute superlative ("very big") – depending on the reactions and various syntactic solutions – it primarily serves to form the comparative and the superlative. The fact that positives based on this paradigm are not rare (*'ağdabu* = infertile; *'aḥmaqu* = ignorant etc.) also testifies to the peculiarity of the Arabic elative in comparison to other languages. Generally, the elative *'af'alu* (we can refer to it as an elative after this brief explanation of its peculiarities) serves to express relations, that is, to form the comparative and superlative.

Here we need to point out that the form *'af'alu* is peculiar, since it contains two cases, and is neither marked for *indefiniteness* (nunation), nor for *definiteness* (the definite article). It is primarily considered to be definite in terms of *meaning*: its definiteness is implicit and stems from the very fact that something/someone is being compared, that is, it is derived from the fact that its quality is intensified. On the other hand, in the comparative and superlative it exerts influence on the genitive, and is considered determined.

Whether the elative *'af'alu* is used to build the comparative or superlative, in the comparative it is followed by the preposition *min* (from) and the *secundum comparationis,* and in the superlative by the genitive in relation to which a trait is being emphasized. This genitive accompanying

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[40] The common translation of this expression is *Allah is great*, or *Allah is the greatest*. Regarding the meanings of this expression see more in the chapter *the Jannah Metaphor.*

the elative represents the whole domain in which the comparison is being made. Therefore, generally and in stylistically unmarked texts, the elative *does not appear isolated* when used for comparison.

Here we need to point out there are a number of adjectives that use the form *'af'alu* which are not elatives, but simply adjectives denoting an intensified quality (*'aḥwaru* = with big and intensely black eyes; *'ash'aru* = very hirsute etc.). They, as well as those like *'aḥmaqu* = ignorant, are mere adjectives, though leaning on the elative paradigm: the existence of their feminine form *fa'lā'u* and the plural *fu'lun* goes in favor of their being classified as adjectives. In that case, they are simply lexemes, isolated and with no comparison.

The *Qur'an,* however, often uses the elative *'a'lamu* with the noun *Allah* (the frequent elative *'akbaru*, in *Allahu 'akbaru,* has the same status), which different translators treat differently.[41] Although some translations are open to discussion, I would not dare label any of them as truly *incorrect.* Each of these meanings is founded in something – grammar or context – but it seems important that they *together* reveal more about the interpretative nature of translation, rather than testifying to the translators' adherence to the style of the original.

To the reader unfamiliar with Arabic, the different translations of a single lexeme or phrase should indicate issues in the original, perhaps its polyvalency, that is, it should signal a problem in the translations-interpretations. Few readers notice this and naturally, not knowing the language, they are incapable of making sound conclusions regarding the relationship between the original and the translation.[42]

On the other hand, a careful reader of the original will certainly notice something quite unusual regarding this elative, which translations utterly

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[41] Let us look at the Bosnian translations of this elative, within a single ayah, (sura 68., ayah 7.): Karabeg and Pandža-Čaušević: *Najbolje zna (He knows best);* Korkut: *Dobro zna (He knows well);* Karić: *Dobro znade (He knew well);* Mlivo: *Najbolji Znalac (The Greatest Sage).* The lack of uniformity is constant.

[42] I do not perceive such dilemmas regarding Bosnian translations as an insufficient mastery of the language, or even style of the original; indeed, I think that even a reader unfamiliar with Arabic could reach a useful conclusion, or at least assumption, regarding the ambiguity of the original based on these inconsistencies.

fail to convey, often even suggest, despite their general inventiveness. This once again emphasizes the inextricable bond between the stylistic values and expressive power of the original and the Arabic language.

Namely, examining this elative in the *Qur'an* (*Allahu 'a'lamu* - Allah knows better; Allah knows best; Allah knows very well – for now I will postpone offering a final translation), I have noticed several significant and challenging signals:

1. If this is a comparison, the lack of explicit partitivity is indicative, as well as the absence of the preposition *min* (from), and a reactive genitive in relation to which a quality is emphasized (for example: *Allahu 'a'lamu minkum* or *Allahu 'a'lamukum*). The elative therefore occurs in isolation, as a predicate, without a *secundum comparationis;* it is elliptical: in comparison to whom does Allah know better or best?

In other words, if we assume that this elative serves to form a comparative or a superlative, its defamiliarization is achieved through its isolation and surprising grammatical indifference toward the genitive.

Granted, though the isolated elative does not occur in the *Qur'an* only (for example, in everyday language: *al-shamsu 'arḥamu binā* – the sun is very graceful towards us), I consider it a specificity of the Text, due to its insistence on using it in isolation, thus achieving a specific stylistic effect. On the other hand, I consider it specific given its stylistic value in the sacred context. The explication of that specificity is the goal of this work.

2. The elative *'a'lamu* cannot be considered – at least not primarily and outside of the text of the *Qur'an* – an intensive adjective occurring independently as a lexeme (like the aforementioned adjectives *'aḥwaru* or *'ash'aru*), since the intensified meanings of *sage*, *the omniscient*, *the one who knows well,* etc. are formed using the root *'LM* with other paradigms.

I have already stated that translating *'a'lamu* with the elative, that is, the absolute superlative ("knows quite well") is not wrong either, but since it is uncommon that the intensified form of the root *'LM* is built upon the paradigm of the elative *'af'alu*, this means that the *Qur'an* has sent a particularly strong signal to the reader and interpreter with such a defamilarization.

3. The *Qur'an* in this case did not use the common grammatical and syntactic means for comparison, thus solving the dilemma whether the elatives *'a'lamu* and *'akbaru* are intensive affective positives, comparatives or superlatives.

Such variations on the morphosyntactic level in the Text of the *Qur'an* leads one to ponder their purpose.

The defamiliarization of the elative – which is usually specific, polyfunctional and polysemic in the Arabic language – should on the one hand be viewed as a means of rendering it stylistically marked, as its stylistic value. On the other hand, in the domain of meaning and optimal semantic lending nuance to such a use of the elative proved effective and polysemic.

The unusual nature of the Arabic elative *'af'alu* has long been noticed. Its formation and function – the elative on the level of morphology and syntax – have been studiously analyzed on multiple occasions. Among the many works on this topic I would like to point out Hans Wehr's exquisite study published half a century ago.[43]

However, to my knowledge, no attention has been dedicated to the stylistic value of this elative. This is why I consider studies on the morphosyntax of the Arabic elative, which I appreciate immensely, only a foretaste of the wondrous stylistic functioning of the elative.

Adjectives based on the elative paradigm with an intensified meaning (such as *'ash'aru*, *'aḥwaru*), or usual adjectives (such as *'aḥmaqu*, *'aǧdabu*) are not as reflective of stylistic value as *'a'lamu* and *'akbaru* due to an unequal intensity and because gradation is achieved differently. Moreover, their isolation, the common predicative occurrence of the two latter elatives (in the statements *Allahu 'a'lamu* and *Allahu 'akbaru*), makes them distinctive enough to be characterized as stylistic value. We should point out that such a use of the elative is *characteristic* of the *Qur'an*, so that grammarians state that only in the *Qur'an* are elative

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[43] Hans Wehr, *Der arabische Elative*, Franz Steiner, Wiesbaden, 1953. Also see: W. Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, 3rd edu. Translated from the German of Caspari, Librairie du Liban, Beirut, 1974.

forms contextually translated with (absolute) superlatives.[44] Such an interpretation is a consequence of the understandable need to grant the characteristics expressed with the elative superlative distinction: God's qualities and eschatological phenomena are differentiated from earthly existence through contextual superlatives, despite the morphology. This is one way of characterizing the sacred Text as such, while simultaneously developing its stylistic value, which (in the instance of this unusual comparison, or rather, distancing), for the most part, if not entirely, remains confined within the self-sufficient original. The translations are hence incapable of conveying the peculiarity of the Arabic elative, so they resort to using other means in their languages through which the stylistic value of the original is significantly diminished.

An important question poses itself: why is the distancing of eschatological from earthly phenomena performed via the elative, rather than the standard superlative form?

The "common" comparison, established using the genitive or attributively, rests on establishing relations and gradations. So, if I were to say *God knows better than us,* that would mean we know too, but that ultimately, He knows better after all. Our knowledge, *not isolated by the elative,* is brought into a relation, a comparison with Divine knowledge, which is – from the viewpoint of the Revelation – inappropriate; the relation emphasized by the reactive genitive is inappropriate given God's distinction in His absolute qualities. At the same time, a comparison in this statement (a partitive one, with a genitive, or an attributive one) would defeat the ultimate intention of the statement: to express something ideologically exceptionally important, one of the fundamental messages of the Revelation, in a stylistically peculiar way. The superlative essentially expresses the same *relationship*, regardless of the gradation: the statement *God knows best* clearly indicates a (superlative) competition of sorts, so that this plurality appears even more unfortunate when it comes to emphasizing the divine absolute: someone knows less, someone more, and God the most. The Text of the *Qur'an* simply refuses to establish grammatical relations; He is beyond the relations established by partitivity

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[44] Teufik Muftić, *Gramatika arapskog jezika*, Ljiljan, Sarajevo, 1998, p. 423.

or a *secundum comparationis*. Using an isolated elative, the *Qur'an* carefully hinders the relativization of common comparisons, since both degrees of comparison, in the stated form, are essentially relative, unless the absolute nature of one or the other has been emphasized by very particular syntactic devices. The *Qur'an* has opted to use the elative, which is grammatically indifferent to the genitive or partitivity that we would expect. In the semantic domain, this grammatical indifference engenders unfathomable effects: the other member/members of the comparison are resolutely excluded, despite our "grammatical habits", so that the elative appears as an absolute. This, understandably so, significantly furthers its stylistic value. If we add here the earlier observation that such use of the elative is *unique* to the *Qur'an*, then further deliberation leads me to the conclusion that this utterly pronounced stylistic value of the elative is one of the dominants of the sacred style (the *Qur'an*, to be more precise) in which contextual forces – with ease, and to the pleasure of aesthetically sensitive readers – have broken the resistance of rigid morphology, thus enriching the experience of language itself.

The reasonable distancing of the *Qur'an* from regular comparison, as a device to which relativity is immanent, can further be substantiated by its favoring positives that function as absolute or affective positives, or even as excessives (such as *Allahu samī'un baṣīr* = Allah absolutely hears and sees; Allah hears and sees too well). On a morphological level, these are undoubtedly positives, but no one would even think of interpreting or translating them as "regular" positives; in the context of the *Qur'an*, they have pronounced nuances that are unforgettably different, nuances which place remarkable emphasis on the positives' stylistic value, which cannot be recognized by those unfamiliar with Arabic, since the translation can objectively not signal this stylistically wondrous struggle between the morpheme-positive and the contextual necessity that they produce different meanings. However, this stylistically marked use of the positive in the *Qur'an* could be the topic of a separate deliberation – my current topic is the stylistic value of the elative – but even such a cursory examination of the preference for the use of positives in the *Qur'an*, which constitute stylistic value *in the sacred Text,* goes in favor of my interpretation

according to which the style of the *Qur'an* consciously and effectively avoids standard comparisons when it comes to God's qualities, since their immanent relativity is inappropriate.

The issues with the translations – regardless of how successful they are – begin to emerge here. Namely, Bosnian translations fail to convey the very frequent positives from the original by using positives in their own language, according to the demands of the context, in a way that would express a superlative meaning and through which eschatological phenomena and notions would be strongly distanced from earthly ones. Propelled by contextual forces, translators use different means in their own language to convey the contextual meanings of the positive. The translation of the aforementioned example *Allahu samī'un baṣīr* (and there are indeed many such in the *Qur'an*, so that, given their frequency, they also represent certain stylemes) – such as *Allah hears and sees everything*, *Allah hears and sees (too) well,* etc. – is both right and wrong; it is problematic. The words in the original *samī'un baṣīr* are true positives, so the expected translation would be *Allah hears and sees*. However, this would fail to provide the necessary distancing that I emphasize here, which is why translators resort to various solutions that *express the context*, at the expense of the text. Their translations are contextually correct; they are, in fact, interpretatively true to Tafsir. In terms of linguo-stylistics, or rather, stylistics, they are wrong, since they translate a whole array of stylistically quite functional positives using other means, failing to transfer the exquisite stylistically marked quality of the original. The interpretative translations of the elative and positive are actually clear admissions of the translators' sense of helplessness in the face of the original's stylistic value, and I am not sure an adequate translation is possible; the translations still remain a mere necessary *substitute* for the original.

Going back to the elative, I would once again like to point out that it is characteristically used for expressing intensity (because in Arabic the elative paradigm is so often used to build intensive adjectives, which we have already addressed), so that it has been perfected in the Text of the *Qur'an* – on the morphosyntactic level and in terms of contextual functionality – to such a degree that it proved to be the only device capable

of expressing the absolute nature of a quality. In this way, its stylistic value is indeed emphasized, which I believe in no way exhausts the development of the stylistic potentials of the elative: its stylistic markedness shows a tendency for unforeseeable constant growth.

In order to elaborate on some other stylistic features of such isolated elatives, I need to emphasize the already stated fact regarding the importance of using isolated elatives in general.

Namely, by isolating the elative, or by excluding the other elements of the comparison, an important effect in the semantic domain is achieved, an effect unnoticeable at first sight. It does not appear banal, but truly subtle and, therefore, stylistically effective.

Individualization is strengthened by isolating the elative in the context of the *Qur'an*.

The "candidates" for comparison are not personalized: people, the jinn – anyone from the spiritual world; they have been excluded, so that the subject (Allah) is absolutely "distinguished" in terms of a quality through the predicative use of the isolated form; His individualization in this sense is unlimited, so that gradation, or any possible rivalry in that domain is unimaginable and immaterial; a given quality is *inherent* to Him and absolute. The position of the Speaker in relation to this quality is pointed out in an optimal, absolute manner, and His individualization is in proportion and harmony with the resolute exclusion of other elements of comparison. It is of the utmost importance that the elative is used in isolation, without the reactive genitive, and predicatively rather than attributively: attributive use would once again imply gradation, while predicative use does not necessarily imply it – the predicatively used elative has a specific ability to be absolute, while attributive use would render the inherency problematic.

Consequently, a grammatical norm, which the Text acknowledges by deviating from it reasonably and deliberately, has been used in order to optimize its stylistic value. At the same time, it is utilized to achieve a very important ideological nuance, as I do not perceive the Revelation as a work of art with a primarily aesthetic function, but rather with an ideological and argumentative one.

Rendering a quality inherent – in this case the root *'LM* which I tentatively translate with the infinitive *to know*, and upon which I will elaborate at the end of this chapter – in the way it is done in the *Qur'an* through the use of an isolated and absolute elative, ultimately leads to deliberately emphasizing a given quality as something *through which it is acted*. This absolute elative thus expresses a strong adherence of a quality to the subject. Having been used absolutely, in isolation, only at first sight (on a morphological and syntactic level) does it seem like something that would *also* be subject to comparison. However, its morphological-syntactic structure has been integrated into a wide context so that, effectively and on a higher plane of understanding, the content of the elative (and perhaps its quality) has in a pronounced fashion been defined as something through which (divine) action is taken and in relation to which *secundum comapartionis* is inappropriate. The divine *'ilm*, used this way, has been presented as a *leveling* (or acting) *principle*, so it can only tentatively be translated as the word *knowledge*. In fact, on this level, the elative statement I have been examining can be interpreted as a specific value judgment.

As I feel the need to summarize the advancement of the elative from seemingly harmless play with the principles of morphology and the experience of syntax towards rendering the content of the elative inherent and emphasizing something through which it is acted, it is necessary once again to point out the extremely complex nature of the use of elative in the context of the *Qur'an*. This interests me particularly in terms of seeking to grasp the final bounds of its stylistic value. Namely, even if I were to keep the analysis on the level of relative morphological and syntactic defamiliarization, there still would be ample reason to emphasize its stylistic value and elaborate upon it. However, my experiences attest that with its unique form the *Qur'an* not only offers aesthetic pleasure, but also hints at unique content beyond the horizon of its thoughtfully arranged form. In terms of its use of the elative, my own understanding of the Text helped me determine its – at first unfathomable – ability to operate in the domain of content. In other words, my initial positive sensitivity to the defamiliarization achieved by the elative (we should again point

out the peculiarity of the Arabic elative in general), even my tempestuous delight over the strength of the contextual spite of the elative against the morphologically frowning paradigm have almost been forgotten at this advanced stage, as I determine the elative's effect in the domain of content. I believe that, from this perspective, the morphological intention of the elative (comparison) proves to be a "useful trick" of sorts, since it eventually transpires that comparison was not the ultimate goal. Although the elative is used, the elimination of comparison serves to achieve something completely different in importance within the ideological realm. Understandably, the behavior of the elative that I am examining here furthers its stylistic value. If we were to examine it in ever widening contexts, I am convinced we would, without fail, and with increasing frequency, confirm that it does not serve as a mere comparison, but rather for rendering a "quality" through which it acts inherently, or as an acting and leveling principle. By following the behavior of this elative, I discover how its seductive stylistic effect takes me into ideological realms, revealing its illustrious surprise. Observing from a distance, I see how all of the previous phases, precisely through the lure of their aesthetic effects, purposefully led me to the surprising reality of the ideological purport. Indeed, something unexpected happened, since the elative finally "transforms" into its opposite: it has prompted us to observe a certain "quality" in comparison – be it an absolute one – but in context the comparison turns out to be inappropriate. Its stylistic value has thus made such a tremendous, at first unthinkable, step. Consequently, this means that the elative statements *Allahu 'a'lamu* and *Allahu 'akbaru* do not have comparison or an aesthetic function as their ultimate goal – in their quite wide context they are *significantly cognitive*, without serving an adjectival purpose. Their stylistic value will culminate as they eventually truly miraculously transform into a kind of trope.

The climax is in sight.

The elative as a trope with cognitive potential

From the morphological level of observing the statement *Allahu 'a'lamu* and *Allahu 'akbaru* we have reached a state where tropes have been entrusted with the complex task of expressing sublime content, that is, when some content can most successfully and sometimes only be expressed figuratively.

I have already pointed out that the said expressions do not function comparatively, which means that they should be understood as absolutes. In other words, these statements are excessives, in a way. I am constantly forced to resort to terminological analogies in order to maximally help the reader unfamiliar with Arabic understand this interesting phenomenon. The expressions I am examining could tentatively be termed excessives (in Bosnian: "predobar" (too good), "prevelik" (too big), etc.), since they express quality degrees that are excessive and cannot be compared. In Arabic they are not morphological excessives in the strict sense of the word, since they are not built with a prefix, but are elative paradigms. In any case – and this is what matters now – we are dealing with a very meaningful endeavor of the Text to express something unique and absolute, but we must never forget that it is expressed via an elative that is used to build both degrees of comparison. No matter how we translate the expression *Allahu 'a'lamu* – Allah knows better; Allah knows best; Allah knows too well – the subject is endowed with a quality which in the translation fails to elude gradation, and only qualities based on similarity can be compared. A crucial question poses itself: wherein lies the similarity between God's knowledge and ours?

From the viewpoint of the Revelation (as it is stated in several places), nothing is like God, so we cannot expect His "knowledge" – according to strict contextual requirements – to be similar to human knowledge. Since the Revelation resolutely emphasizes that Allah is unlike anything else, then His "knowledge" in terms of its structure, range, etc., is understandably unlike our knowledge, even though it may be expressed by an absolute superlative or excessive. We now therefore discover that the *Qur'an* uses something inherent to humans ("knowledge", taken as a lexeme or insight

into something) to express and depict something that is in fact beyond description: God's "knowledge", which the *context prevents* from being like human knowledge. There is no doubt now that we are in the realm of very subtle and utterly unexpected figurative language. Something otherworldly and thus incomprehensible to us is represented through something specifically human. This is figurative speech or, I would say, metaphorical, since one name is used to replace another, accompanied by a unique sparkle which can only be produced by the fusion of the aesthetic and cognitive in grand metaphors. The expressions *Allahu 'a'lamu* and *Allahu 'akbaru* are, in fact, essentially tropes.[45] It would be naïve to take these statements literally; such an interpretation would stand no chance in a confrontation with the contextual forces of the Revelation.

Of course, in this trope (let us take it as a very peculiar metaphor) we would like to find out what the other constituent of the metaphorical statement is, what its *content* is. We are familiar with the *means* with which it is expressed – "knowledge". What is it that God so singularly possesses that he aims to convey with the word *knowledge?* Furthermore, since in metaphor differences are more pronounced than similarities, the assumption that this unexpressed constituent, its *content*, is indeed significantly different from the *means* through which it is depicted is logical (the differences here are much bigger than, for example, that between the constituents in the metaphor *pearls of the night* used to denote stars).

Since I have already demonstrated how this peculiarly employed elative, specific to Arabic, is used to render a *quality through which it is acted* absolutely inherent*,* which means that this metaphor consists of knowledge as a *means* and a specifically human experience as one constituent, and the *content*, inherent in Allah, indefinable and incomprehensible, as the other. However, the relation between these constituents – based on the understanding of metaphors in general – does offer some kind of insight

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[45] I am here addressing the aforementioned statements as tropes only. However, we need to at least point out that especially this first statement – given its relative frequency and formal-structural consistency – is also a specific figure of speech in terms of comparison, the creation of rhythm, connection, etc. in the macrostructure, so that we can observe it both as a trope and a figure of speech.

into the unfathomable *content*. Namely, since the metaphor is formed based on the initial similarity of the constituents, upon which strong forces separating them begin to operate, I believe that the similarity here lies in the fact that *knowledge* is humans' highest and most valuable possession, through which they act and bring things and their world in order, and with the help of which they progress, etc. This can be compared to God's (remarkable) "quality" through which He (divinely) acts, arranges, acts according to, etc. This similarity shows us something we otherwise could not fully comprehend, since the differences between the constituents start operating (human actions based on knowledge and Divine actions based on "knowledge") which are, probably, in proportion to the differences between human and divine actions in general, to an incomprehensible degree. The endeavors of this metaphor are now obvious, though not entirely sufficient: we understand the principle, but not the individual details; the meaning of this metaphor rests in its exertion, in the tension between its constituents.

The fact that our elative insists on being used in isolation in the context of the message of the *Qur'an* once again proves important. Namely, if it had been used in one of its more common morphological or syntactic functions (as a positive, partitive, or attributive), the final aim of the statement would have been defeated, as I have pointed out: we could not interpret it figuratively, only literally. A proper comparison works against a metaphor preventing it from developing, since such a comparison lacks *means* and *content*, so that it of course lacks the vast and precious arch between them. In the case of this statement, if the elative were not isolated, the message of the Revelation would have been considerably degraded, or even altered. The statement *God knows better*, or *God knows best* leave no place for the development of the tremendous potential offered by the metaphor: there are no *means* and *content*, but simply a single quality being compared and nothing else; the trait is, in principle and essence, identical in both cases in terms of *quality*, it is only subject to comparison. If we were to understand this statement in such a banal way, we would consequently fail to grasp its very essence with its high cognitive value.

In other words, it is necessary to point out that this metaphor – emerging from the elative – is pointedly cognitive, and not just aesthetic; it has

gradually and significantly shifted away from the domain of comparison the way a metaphor does: its goal is to impart vital knowledge, by using the limited similarities as a means only. The aesthetic joy of this trope, which I introduced at various stages of the development of its stylistic value has finally fully calmed and grown solemn in the cognitive sphere. In fact, I could say that the distancing of this metaphor from its exclusively aesthetic effect is in line with the aforementioned perception of the function of the style of the Revelation as significantly argumentative, rather than artistic. This is how the elative *Allahu 'a'lamu* has evolved from a seeming comparison, as implied on the lowest level by its morphological form, into an exquisite metaphor, wondrous also because it is uncommon for metaphors to be built from forms which morphologically *already express* comparison. In fact, the peculiarity of this metaphor lies also in the fact that it is not a "shortened comparison" the way a *simile* is. It arises unexpectedly from a comparison of the *comparatio* type*,* while the comparison, through a very complex procedure, is transformed into its very opposite. The stylistic effects are in line with the complexity of the procedure and the suddenness of its ultimate results.

After all, one cannot ignore the question: How should one translate these statements?

Given the peculiarities of the Arabic elative, comparative or superlative translations cannot be fully discarded as wrong, but I would favor the use of the absolute superlative or excessive (*veoma dobro zna – he knows very well; predobro zna – he knows too well* etc.), since the comparative and superlative strongly imply a relativization unknown to the original. I am aware this solution is not entirely satisfactory. Namely, the translator here cannot escape the deep frustration over the fact that neither solution (comparative, superlative, absolute superlative, excessive) offers a glimpse of the stylistic values of the original, as discussed in previous pages.

And finally, other questions pose themselves:

After having analyzed the elative and recommending that it be translated with an excessive, we need to examine where the superlative is "positioned" in the Text – what are its stylistic potentials, semantic expanse and possible translation solutions?

THE STYLISTIC GROWTH
OF THE SUPERLATIVE

Using the superlative to express gradation

While examining the stylistic potential of the elative in the *Qur'an*, I pointed out the great stylistic potentials of this morphological category which develops into an absolute superlative, and also how, at the very end of the stylistic defamiliarization, the elative shines like a metaphor, as bright as only a metaphor in the sacred Text could be.

The analysis of the elative has shown how through its isolation, by excluding the *secundum comparationis* (that with whom/which God's quality is being compared), the establishment of relations is precluded, which emphasizes the absolute nature of God's quality to which it would be inappropriate to attach a *secundum comparationis* in a sacred text.

However, in the *Qur'an*'s descriptive universe – entrusted with the task of representing incomprehensible otherworldliness and eschatological "reality" – a lavish gradation is built using a comparison. This comparison, precisely through this lavishness, aims to represent to the human mind (as well as the human heart, since the mind's capacities are limited) something which in its otherworldliness is utterly incomprehensible if we were to overlook the cognitive values of the *Qur'an*'s metaphorical nature. Namely, along with the elative, the *Qur'an* amply uses the morphological superlative, in which the *secundum comarationis* is paradigmatically explicitly stated, in the sense that the other "possessors of quality" in relation to which God's quality is seemingly being compared are present. As a representative of such a superlative I will here examine the phrase *'arḥam*

al-rāḥimīn ("the most merciful"), although any superlative comparison built using this morphological form would be possible to analyze.

I am offering the term *najmilostiviji* (the most merciful) as a translation of this superlative, but only tentatively, since analysis will show how the translation fails to convey the cognitive riches and stylistic value of the original phrase.

In this superlative, the other "quality owners" are explicitly stated, which implies that God brings his quality into a comparative relation with a quality possessed (also) by someone else.

How can this linguistic fact be brought into line with the assertion, expressed while examining the elative, that introducing other participants into comparison with God's qualities is inappropriate, since it is natural to expect that the *Qur'an* would insist on Allah's incomparable divine nature?

Granted, the wide sacred context manages to present the highest, superlative "measure" of God's quality in its incomparability, but I would like to demonstrate how, even on a lower contextual level, this morphological superlative in fact operates in a way which is not comparative. The *Qur'an*'s careful choice of a particular morphological form cooperates exquisitely with the context in order to achieve the resolute semantic shift of this superlative, revealing the deceptive and unreliable nature of its morphological plane and ultimately – and especially important for my analysis – a very significant stylistic defamiliarization alongside the strong aesthetic pulsations of the Text within which its cognitive values lie.

However, we first need to look back at how the elative managed to achieve the optimal stylistic value in its isolated state, excluding the grammatically necessary partitive *than* (*knows more than...*), but this justifiably poses the question as to why the *Qur'an* uses the real, morphological, superlative at all – if we observe this need in the context of the Text's general aspiration to accomplish stylistic and cognitive effects.

There are two morphological ways to build the superlative in Arabic. The first way entails stating a noun and an adjective form (abiding by the rules of attributive congruence), for example *the most worthy man* (al-raǧul al-'afḍal). This morphological form is close to the Bosnian language,

so that this translation would be adequate, imbued with meaning. I will refer to this form as an *attributive superlative*.

However, another morphological form of the superlative is also commonly used in Arabic, which, transferred into Bosnian, seems lacking in terms of content. This superlative is formed through the grammatical category of annexation, a genitive bond, so I will refer to it as a *genitive superlative*. It can be illustrated with the aforementioned example (*'arḥam al-rāḥimīn*).

In order to note the peculiarities of this superlative, we should point out that the literal translation of this annexation would be *milostiviji od milostivih (more merciful than the merciful)*. This translation makes it seem more like a comparative rather than a superlative; since Bosnian leaves us with no other choice than to translate it as an attributive superlative, although in the original there is a difference between the two morphological comparisons, as my analysis will show.

The *Qur'an* prefers the genitive superlative and this is a strong signal we need to follow: why is this form preferred over the attributive superlative?

The genitive superlative, unlike the attributive, is truly rich with gradation. The first member of the phrase-annexation is actually an elative, a form which morphologically already is a second degree comparison. We should bear in mind our previous elaboration that this form, in isolation, operates as an absolute superlative. As such, even annexed, *not isolated*, it never forgets its potential in that regard. If we add here that the elative achieves an annexation (*status constructus*) with the other phrase element (other elements – this is a plural) in relation to which it emphasizes its superiority, then the superlative nature of this elative "represented" by God is doubly emphasized: on the one hand, by the very nature of the elative, on the other it has simultaneously been emphasized by the very nature of the *annexation*. Among *the merciful* already implicitly contains a kind of gradation due to its plurality and this implied gradation is confirmed with the definite article. In further comparison it is annexed to the elative in order to engage it in a contest in which it stands no chance. This, however, does not put the gradation to rest.

In terms of both stylistic value and gradation we need to emphasize the fact that the example does not contain a noun at all, and that both members of the annexation have an attributive function. Strictly speaking, they are both adjectival (*more merciful than the merciful*), although the second annexation constituent morphologically strongly leans towards becoming a noun; in its present morphological form it simply yearns to triumphantly transform its adjectival nature into the constancy of a noun. The point is, however, that ultimately both members of the annexation have been derived from the *same adjective*, within the same semantic field. The interpretation of the example would be that [God] *is more merciful than all the merciful*, since the use of the definite plural – aiming to emphasize the totality in relation to which God's quality is more pronounced – emphasizes the extreme dimensions of God's quality, in fact His immeasurability.

The gradation that has so far been established in this example, or rather its strong inertia, has vigorously been transferred from the domain of morphology into that of the syntactic. Because we are dealing with an *annexation*, its first element has a special relation to the second, or vice versa: [God] *is merciful to the merciful*, or – again through annexation: *the merciful belong to the merciful*. These translations of course have to remain tentative, since this is after all a superlative. I am deconstructing the annexation in order to indicate the sources of its unfathomable gradations (gradation potentials), from which I will later also derive other conclusions. I am currently pointing out how this annexation rests upon the relations established among its constituents, relations which can only be presented with an interpretation of this annexation and cannot fully be grasped by any translation.

Namely, this phrase means not only that God is more merciful than the merciful, it also means that He is *merciful toward the merciful*. The phrase therefore does not only state that He is *the (most)merciful of all the merciful,* but also that He is the one who is – remaining at the level of the superlative comparison – *merciful toward the merciful*. This is how this phrase exquisitely accelerates the gradation: precisely because He is *the (most) merciful of all the merciful*, He is capable of being merciful toward all of them, or, inversely: since He is merciful toward all the merciful, He is,

naturally, *absolutely* the most merciful; their mercy is in the *domain* of His mercy, so that, in this lavish gradation, God's mercy is endlessly advanced. Thanks to the rich gradation, the initial establishing of relations with this particular genitive superlative has introduced us to an incomparable quality which needs to be capitalized. In other words, the explicit morphological gradation (the superlative paradigm) has, through the implicit gradation I am currently exploring, developed into a quality of unimaginable intensity that ultimately surpasses comparison. Understandably, the sacred context and the general semantic environment allow for such an interpretation of the use of the genitive superlative in the *Qur'an*.

The fact that the exemplary phrase does not contain a noun as the second element of the annexation works in favor of intensifying the gradation, as I have tried to demonstrate. This fact, however, at the same time emphasizes God's inherently absolute quality, which ultimately means it is inherent to God to a degree which is not and cannot be compared. Namely, if instead of the plural adjectival participle (*milostivi – the merciful*) any *specifying* noun had been introduced, the previous richness of the gradation, overripe and thus outside of the comparative domain, would have been significantly reduced: God is merciful toward (or more merciful in relation to) anyone who could possibly possess the said quality – humans, the jinn, the *malaa'ikah*...

This plural reactive genitive (*al-rāḥimīn = the merciful*) has been derived from the adjective rather than the noun. Thus it does not represent a certain type, or types specified by the noun, but an entire area, the *quality as such* – in its entirety in which all the quality owners partake, though placed into an inferior position in relation to the preceding elative.

I would like to point out that I understand the use of the genitive superlative in the example in terms of its specific eschatological dimension. This superlative is, in fact, ambiguous inasmuch as it means that God *is* endlessly merciful toward all phenomena of this world, but also that He *shall be* endlessly merciful in the Other world; this superlative also offers vital information on something important regarding the Otherworldly since, according to the instructions of the *sacred context,* His mercy is related to both dimensions of existence.

It is obvious that the attributive superlative does not nearly possess the great potential of the genitive superlative in any domain, and particularly this one, which has been "deprived of its noun". The attributive superlative cannot adequately convey the richness of the initial relations (mostly on a morphological level), the gradual and cognitive quality: it is morphologically and syntactically overly explicit, non-elliptical and more closed in relation to the genitive superlative – it is *finite;* the definite nature of the attributive superlative and the introduction of a specifying noun does limit the intensity of a quality, even if it reaches the highest degree.

The analysis of the superlative shows how one seemingly common morphological paradigm (the morphological superlative) has been defamilarized to an unexpected degree. This confirms its great stylistic value, commensurate to our knowledge regarding the tenacity of its gradation, or rather commensurate to our surprise that this is not an "ordinary" superlative and that there are particular reasons why it is preferred by the *Qur'an*.

However, I believe that the development of the exemplary superlative into a grand sacral styleme does not stop at this. An utter surprise awaits us in its illustrious transformation into something different, a different kind of word, through which optimal defamiliarization is achieved.

The transformation of the superlative into a noun

In order to explain this process, it seems necessary to sketch in several lines the characteristics of the example I have so far deliberated on in detail. On the morphological level, this is, without a doubt, a superlative. Furthermore, both constituents are essentially adjectival, so that as such they create an adjective in the third degree of comparison which – as I have demonstrated with regard to its structure and semantics – occurs as a non-comparable superlative. Since we are dealing here with a superlative that ultimately precludes comparison, it proves to be an exceptional styleme. I have examined it in all stages of defamiliarization as an adjective, but

my ultimate conclusion is that the whole phrase has quite successfully and unexpectedly posed itself as a noun, which has advanced its stylistic value, worthy of such a mighty Text.

How did this happen?

First of all, by favoring the genitive over the attributive superlative, the *Qur'an* has precluded the possibility that all stylistic and semantic potentials of the adjective be exhausted in its attributive quality, and for it to remain an adjective without the possibility of "mutation" and transformation. Since this phrase has obviously overcome its own adjectival nature, proving to be essentially incomparable, the question poses itself of how we can categorize it, or what it has stylistically spectacularly transformed itself into.

In trying to define this phrase, we need to bear in mind that it ultimately denotes a quality inherent to God with a superlative that has been surpassed, or in the state of God's absolute. This means that it is no longer an adjective in its attributive role, but essence itself: the superlative here has grown into a substitute adjective, or into a special kind of adjectival noun, so that in the sacred context it ultimately poses itself as a noun. Therefore, the phrase *'arḥam al-rāḥimīn* is a superlative on a lower grammatical level only, or within the framework of rigid morphological laws, which are quite firm in Arabic, almost mathematically precise. But in terms of its subtle and tenacious gradation, as well as within its semantic environment, it has graduated into a noun. It is enough to say *'arḥam al-rāḥimīn* without stating a single noun (God, Allah) for it to be clear – within the context and outside of it – that one is talking about Allah. The fact that, in the *Qur'an*, superlatives of this type occur as predicates rather than attributes speaks in favor of this (*Wa Huwa 'arḥam al-rāḥimīn*).

Listing all the ways in which this superlative (now already a noun) has been defamiliarized seems barely possible. Namely, to affirm its stylistic value, we need to point out how neither phrase constituent is a morphological noun, but are instead both adjectives. They, however, establish such relations between each other and with their environment that these qualities develop almost boundlessly, to the point where the phrase has been transformed into a noun that is, indeed, capitalized. Two

adjectives annexed, so as to appear as a superlative, have created a noun realizing the *Qur'an*'s tremendous stylistic reaches. On the other hand, observing this creatively wondrous and accomplished adjective-noun relation, we need to bear in mind that, in Arabic, the genitive relation (our example being a typical one) is created by two annexed *nouns* (exceptions occur only in the so-called false genitive relation, while our example is a *proper* one). The genitive relation (that is, the superlative), which I have been examining, was created from a name with an adjectival meaning, so that the *Qur'an*, by favoring such a phrase to create a "superlative", has ensured the possibility of its constant stylistic re-creation and marking.

Since the *Qur'an* has standardized the Arabic language, and is extremely careful when it comes to grammatical rules, the use of this phrase can also not be considered arbitrary, but rather *intentional;* there are no reasons to possibly claim otherwise. All the more, this phrase – given the morphological, grammatical and syntactic authority of the *Qur'an* – enhances its own stylistic value precisely by drawing attention to the general rule according to which genitive relations are established between nouns and not adjectives; by deciding to favor the creation of a superlative/ noun through this kind of genitive relation, the Text significantly furthers its own stylistic value and expressiveness.

Using the same morphological means in other functional styles would not yield the same results that the (*Qur'an*'s) sacred style does; I believe that the sacred Text possesses a specific ability to build stylemes in a way that other functional styles do not.

This can be supported by briefly pointing out the gradation status of the positive in the *Qur'an*, although I have already addressed it in the previous chapter. The *Qur'an* overflows with adjectives in the positive, for example *samī'*, *baṣīr* etc. meaning *The one who hears*, *The one who sees.* However, I believe it would be inappropriate to translate them with positives: precisely the context demands that gradation be used by adding intensifiers to the said positives such as *good*, *very good*, *too good* etc., since in the *sacred* context it is inappropriate to say for Allah only that he is *grand*, *he hears*, *he sees* etc. They should instead be translated with excessives: *Too-great*, *All-seeing*, *All-hearing* etc. Though these are morphological positives,

the sacral context translates them into excessives, thus creating strongly marked stylemes. The same procedure through which I explained how the *Qur'an* elative *'a'lamu* transforms into a magnificent cognitive metaphor can be used to prove that these positives are ultimately grand metaphors, since God does not have ears with which he hears, or eyes with which he sees, etc. The procedure which demonstrates this was quite obvious in the elaboration regarding the metaphorical nature of the elative *'a'lamu*, so that further elaboration in the case of positives stylistically functioning as excessives is not necessary.

Instead, I would like to summarize the discussion on adjectives in all three degrees, establish the interrelations between them and analyze their interaction in the Text, since I have already demonstrated the stylistic potentials of each.

Grammatically, the *Qur'an* acknowledges all known morphological forms of comparison, being by far the greatest authority in the history of the Arabic language. However, since the *Qur'an* is a grand authority in the domain of stylistics, it subtly defamilarizes these forms, as well as an array of others and renders them stylistically marked. Their defamiliarization, relatively modest on the morphological level, creates unfathomable semantic shifts that constantly enrich the semantic context, which thankfully enriches them in turn. This is the superior manner through which the *Qur'an* overcomes the traditional form–content dichotomy, in which sumptuous form was mostly endowed with inadequate content.

When it comes to these adjectives, the stylistic unexpectedness of the Text of the *Qur'an* is based on the fact that their real intended meaning starts to swell beyond the borders that morphology and grammar would like to impose on it, beyond borders which these forms would most likely not be able to traverse in a context that were not so pronouncedly stylistically marked. Namely, all three forms (the positive, comparative and superlative) are used as an absolute superlative, or excessive: the positive possesses excessive qualities; the isolated elative (the comparative), precisely in its isolation in relation to the *secundum comparationis*, has grown into an absolute superlative; the genitive superlative, in its quest for the loftiest content, has even been transformed into a noun.

By using all three morphological forms, the Text demonstrates that they are equally capable of carrying the loftiest meanings and how even quite rigid morphological forms can successfully be filled with superb metaphysical content while they, quite unexpectedly, take on the cognitive function of the metaphor.

Just as in the analysis of the elative, we need to point out here that the types of metaphors superlatives develop into are not based on a "likeness" of the *simile* type, as would be expected, since a metaphor can be created where two "objects" share a common trait. The allure of the metaphors in the *Qur'an* lies precisely in the fact that they seem to rest on a comparison of the *simile* type, while it ultimately becomes clear that we cannot talk about a similarity between wisdom and knowledge, or senses like vision and hearing, etc. in terms of God and humans. These metaphors have grown out of a *comparatio*-type comparison, in which God's qualities – and this is where a pronounced defamiliarization occurs – through a metaphor grown cognitively more serious, finally surpass quantitative comparison and comparison in general.

One could pose the question why the Text uses all three forms to express God's "qualities", which are so excessive that these forms should be understood figuratively, rather than literally.

Since these three forms aim to express loftily incomparable content differently, it seems impossible, or at least ill-advised, to observe them in isolation. In fact, they first need to be analyzed independently, but the results of such analyses should prompt the analysis of the remaining two and how they interact.

There are significant nuances between these forms, although in general they all express something to an extreme degree. It is known that the same form, or even the same syntactic unit, repeated in a different environment, does not have the same meaning. Moreover, since these forms are not identical, they do not invest the same "effort" in expressing the given content. This significantly enhances the Text's nuance and expressiveness: it is hard to even imagine how impoverished the Text of the *Qur'an* would be if it used only one form to express the absolute superlative.

Encountering one of these forms in the Text and grasping its depth, or its stylistic value, necessarily directs us to the two other forms so that, ultimately, we can compare them. Each is therefore stylistically so striking that it could be self-sufficient, but in the stylistic unpredictability of the sacred Text it simultaneously draws attention to the other two forms/ stylemes, which further enrich its beauty and stylistic importance: the aesthetic cooperation of these stylemes is outstanding. Only after these forms /stylemes have been grasped as a whole can we enjoy their attributive orchestration into the Text. Adding to them God's ninety-nine *attributes*, called God's "beautiful *names*", would create an unforgettable effect.

The greatest importance of these forms lies in the fact that they raise the recipient from the descriptive realm – which essentially emphasizes the distance – and seeming comparison into the sphere of morphological cognition. This way, the gradation of adjectives and their gradual effect imparts knowledge on the very essence of Otherworldliness, enabled by the authenticity of metaphorical representation, rather than comparatively.

Once again, the style of the Text of the *Qur'an*, through affirming the aesthetic dimension, gains an argumentative one, due not only to the comparisons in the *Qur'an*, but its language in general.

The grammar categories in this sacred Text constantly strain to express something special, something worthy of its pathos and significance. Even personal pronouns used to refer to Allah in the Text can be used as an unexpected example for it. We need now to examine how their stylistic defamiliarization is achieved.

THE DIVINE USE OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Stylistic markedness emerges from seemingly disordered grammar – the Text's creative powers

The use of various personal pronouns to express the first person has evolved over time in different cultures. We should sketch the varieties of the use of personal pronouns for the first person singular and plural, so that we can contrast it with the use of personal pronouns in the *Qur'an* even more clearly, since the *Qur'an* constantly cuts into tradition and human experience in general, both in order to be understood more easily and to demonstrate its dominance over traditional experience.

In the western cultural tradition, the *authorial "we"* has been used for quite a while, allegedly to emphasize the author's modesty *(nos modestiae).* It has, however, been well noted that the use of this pronoun can sometimes be understood as the author's desire to hide "behind a more 'powerful' plural form, so as to impart more gravitas to what they have written (as if their claims were shared by a whole group of like-minded individuals), which is essentially an artificial technique."[46] The use of the *authorial "we"* can also contain a veiled desire to relativize or reduce potential authorial accountability for what has been written. The pronoun *I* has been gaining ground in academic texts and seems natural, non-artificial and unaffected, and truly *authorial*. The affectedness of *we* as a *modesty topos* is also found in speech in expressions such as *my humble self,* which is inappropriate and appears unseemly with regard to individuality or necessary authorial personality. The fact that such an inadequate use of

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[46] M. Katnić-Bakaršić, *Stilistika*, Ljiljan, Sarajevo, 2001, p. 248.

the pronoun distorts the relation between the first person-speaker and the listener/recipient, or that it presents them as already distorted, needs to be further examined.

In the western cultural tradition the so-called *royal "we"* was used*,* probably to emphasize the royal distance, in addressing one's subjects.[47]

In the Oriental-Islamic tradition these pronouns are used differently.[48]

The authorial "we" never took root in that tradition. It mostly uses the *authorial "I"*, always and in many ways imbued with truly necessary modesty, which was in no way artificial or affected.[49] The *authorial "I"* in that tradition has been differentiated from the (divine) *creative* principle and shrouded with several layers of genuine modesty:

1. In the Oriental-Islamic tradition authors would only state their name in the invocation (a *preamble* of sorts). The author's name would never appear as the first piece of information of the book (which became common later): the name was built into the text, into its depths, so that one would sometimes have to make an effort to unearth it, and – very importantly – it is mentioned following the obligatory invocatory praise and expression of attitude to Allah, the blessing of the Prophet, etc.

2. Thus built into the text, the author's name was without fail coated with soft attributes expressing modesty: *wretched and poor*, *humble slave,* etc., attributes which were genuine since they emphasized the author's *wretchedness* and general *dependence* in relation to Allah's *creative power*:

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[47] For more information see: Ibid., p. 249.

[48] In Oriental-Islamic culture in general, and especially in Arabic culture, not only was using the pronoun *we* for a first person speaker uncommon, so was addressing one's interlocutor with the formal *You*: plural pronouns are rarely used for singular persons. Nowadays, however, under the pervasive influence of western culture-civilization, the *formal You* is being introduced. Instead of the *formal You,* Oriental-Islamic culture used to employ (and still does) a wide array of attributes whose lavishness can linguistically be transferred into western culture, but not culturally, since it "feels" uncomfortable in this new environment; this *attribution* is significantly more natural than the use of the *formal You* and is capable of conveying more meaning and to express the complexity of relationships in a more accomplished manner.

[49] For more information see: Esad Duraković, *Arapska stilistika u Bosni. Ahmed Sin Hasanov Bošnjak o metafori*, Orijentalni institut, Posebna izdanja, XXIII, Sarajevo, 2000, p. 37.

creation belongs to Him, and *creative endeavors* to man, whose name cannot be placed before proper expression of gratitude to Allah and praise for His Prophet.[50] There is another special reason why the author could not use the pronoun *we*: only Allah can use it for Himself as a singular pronoun, so that the author's appropriation of it would be sacrilegious. God's use of the pronoun *we* will be addressed further on.

I can now introduce a deliberation on the way in which Allah uses personal pronouns in the *Qur'an* to refer to Himself, or to the noun *Allah*, with which I would like to demonstrate several things:

1. The way first person pronouns are used in the *Qur'an* differs from their use in both cultural-civilization circles and in relation to said cultures' general experiences;

2. Through this way, first person pronouns – used in the *Qur'an* as referents to the noun *Allah* – proved to be defamiliarized in relation to the general experiences of that tradition, at the same time becoming stylistically marked to such a degree that the word *defamiliarization* fails to convey this outstanding markedness;

3. Such use of first person pronouns is tightly related to the idea/ representation of God's creative power or God's "authorship" over the Universe;

4. I would like to show here, as already hinted, how curiously common grammatical categories are transformed into grand stylemes, which eventually gain cognitive value, since the stylistic interpretation of the *Qur'an* always leads me to the conclusion that it is a revelatory argumentative creation, rather than a work that reaches its limits in the aesthetic sphere.

There is probably not a single reader of the *Qur'an* who has not been perplexed with the manner in which Allah uses personal pronouns for Himself. Allah occasionally uses the first person singular (*I*), then first

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[50] To this we should also add the fact that the authority of tradition was always tremendously respected, so that the authors also expressed their modesty in relation to it. At later stages, the genuine nature of this topos grew greatly blurred.

The use of *authorial modesty attributes,* instead of pronouns, shows how successfully Oriental-Islamic culture expressed relations using attributes instead of pronouns.

person plural (*We*); of course, he uses the third person singular (*He*), but not the third person plural, for reasons I will later explain. The *Qur'an* abounds in this shifting of pronouns and their noun, often within a small space and without an obvious system. This technique not only confounds us at first reading of the Text, it also always draws our attention as we go back to the Text: we always wonder why the pronouns change at that point, at that place and in that manner. Thus, the first effect is achieved: the defamiliarization is optimal; such use of pronouns indeed seems perplexing. At the same time – not accidentally – our maximal attention and the defamiliarization is tied to God's Being, since such shifting of pronouns is not used for any other being. The reader therefore wonders why the different pronouns are used for Allah only.

Malicious, as well as uneducated and insensitive readers, especially among Orientalists, use this synonymy as an important argument in favor of their assertion regarding the *Qur'an*'s alleged linguistic, stylistic and even logical lack of order.[51] However, since there are numerous prominent elements testifying to the *Qur'an*'s stylistic and general structural orderliness, the following question reasonably poses itself: where does this quite sudden shift of pronouns referring to a singular noun come from? The examples are numerous, but for the sake of this analysis I will use only the following.

In sura number 25, between ayah 45 and ayah 55 there is an exquisitely dynamic shifting of nouns and their pronouns:

45. Have you not seen how your <u>Lord</u> spread the shadow. If <u>He</u> willed, He could have made it still – then <u>We</u> have made the sun its guide.

46. Then <u>We</u> withdraw it to <u>Us</u> a gradual concealed withdrawal.

47. <u>He</u> is <u>the One</u> <u>Who</u> <u>makes</u> the night a covering for you, and the sleep (as) repose, and the day to rise

48. <u>He</u> is <u>the One</u> <u>Who</u> sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before <u>His</u> Mercy, and <u>We</u> send down pure water from the sky

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51 See for example, the chapter "Kur'an", in: Frančesko Gabrijeli, *Arapska književnost*, Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 1985, trans. Milana Piletić i Srđan Musić.

49. That <u>We</u> may give life thereby to a dead land, and <u>We</u> give to drink thereof many of the cattle and men that <u>We</u> had created;

50. And indeed <u>We</u> have distributed it amongst them in order that they may remember the Grace of Allah, but most men refuse and accept nothing but disbelief

51. And had <u>We</u> willed, <u>We</u> would have sent a warner into every town -

52. So obey not the disbelievers, but strive against them with the utmost endeavour

53. And <u>He</u> is <u>the One</u> <u>Who</u> has let free the two seas, one palatable and sweet, and the other salt and bitter, and <u>He</u> has set a barrier and a complete partition between them;

54. And <u>He</u> is <u>the One</u> <u>Who</u> has created man from water, and has appointed for him kindred by blood, and kindred by marriage - your <u>Lord</u> is Ever All-Powerful

55. But they worship rather than <u>Allah</u> that which does not benefit them or harm them, and the disbeliever is ever, against his <u>Lord</u>, an assistant

The reader can simply not finish this part of the Text without being astounded by the synonymy of the shifting grammatical persons and nouns. The drama of the forces in the Universe – of which these ayat speak – is accompanied by the utterly unexpected shifting of pronouns and nouns, so that it is precisely this shifting, or rather the synonymy of persons, that becomes an exquisite device for engendering the tension of the linguistic and stylistic drama; the stylistic excitement of the Text vastly overcomes all expectations, all the more since it cooperates remarkably well with the representation of the content.

Introducing the shifting persons and nouns in the ayat above which do not refer to God into this deliberation of synonymy would enhance the drama, but my goal here is to follow the synonymy of persons and nouns referring to Allah only.

The quoted Text is meaningfully arranged, consistent and logical, so that in such a Text the shifting of persons cannot be chaotic, only clear and logically consistent. The fact that the grammatical persons do shift in a peculiar way signals that one should examine the purpose of this

technique. The synonymy in fact emphasizes the content of the Text and its ideological layer, while stylistically marking the whole Text tremendously. The careful reader is in fact confronted by the recognition of the *sacred* in which the synonymy of nouns (*the Lord, Allah*) and their pronouns (*He, We, Himself, His etc.*) functions so splendidly and *intentionally*. If only one noun or pronoun were used in this fragment, the Text would not have demonstrated the same degree of stylistic value, nor would the same level of drama be engendered by the synonymy of all these grammatical persons for a single noun, and the reader would not have been in a position to wonder, *perplexed*: What is hiding behind this synonymy; what is this Lord like, who uses for Himself all of these nouns and pronouns? The sacred nature of the Text would have obviously been significantly reduced. On the other hand, it is unthinkable for a so-called typical, non-sacred text, originating from a human pen, to be using nouns and their pronouns in such a manner and to be considered coherent. I would like to say that this is a special factor used to build the sacred style with which the *Qur'an* strongly and necessarily differentiates itself from general traditional experience, as well as in relation to prophetic texts; its uniqueness here is obvious.

From a wide array of synonyms in the *Qur'an*, I would like to mention two adjacent ayat in which this grammatical drama is played out within a very small space in order to achieve optimal stylistic value, since it is clear that in such a short Text the frequent shifting of persons and nouns cannot be the result of negligence or chaos:

> 10. *He created the heavens without pillars that you see and has cast into the earth firmly set mountains, lest it should shift with you, and dispersed therein from every creature. And We sent down rain from the sky and made grow therein plants of every noble kind.*

> 11. *This is the creation of Allah. So show Me what those other than Him have created. Rather, the wrongdoers are in clear error!* (*Qur'an*, 31:10-11).[52]

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[52] As in the previous excerpt from the *Qur'an*, here we see a remarkable concentration of grammatical persons and nouns (bearing in mind all of the persons, pronouns and nouns in this short Text) which – with their density and shifting, wondrous precisely due to that density – create a remarkable tension; the accumulation of grammatically defamiliarized subjects and predicates is too extensive, almost without any relaxing appositions and

Since the Text of the *Qur'an* is in fact ordered quite well (as prose with carefully thought-out rhyme and rhythm), the shifting of nouns and pronouns here is only a (seeming) deviation, on the one hand aiming to draw attention to the beauty of the Text's order, while on the other focusing precisely on the synonymy as something which at first sight disturbs the general order and harmony of the Text. It is something to make sense of, since the stylistic value is actually born in the constant "struggle" between order and disorder. In this case the synonymy of nouns and pronouns denoting Allah and their unexpected shifting function on two levels of stylistic value: on one level, it immediately points out the environment's stylistic order, on another, higher level, it brings to light their stylistic value, which is even more pronounced, being unexpected, constantly demanding that we search for its purpose, and by being fully defamiliarized within the general traditional experience.

I hope I have demonstrated how this unusual shifting of grammatical categories has developed into a strong stylistic marker of the sacred Text. I have, however, previously noted that stylistic value is not the ultimate goal of this use of pronouns and nouns (referring to Allah), and that behind it stands a certain cognitive value worthy of this Text and its level of defamiliarization. We should add that this final phase – when the synonymy of nouns and persons gains cognitive value – does not put an end to their stylistic growth; on the contrary, it culminates in this very phase. But before commencing this final deliberation, another observation regarding the use of personal pronouns for Allah needs to be explained.

Searching for a meaning and a system behind such use of personal pronouns, I have noticed an important rule. Namely, Allah only uses the first person plural (*We*, *Us* etc.) when he speaks of His "activities", His "relationship" to man, precisely on the relationship between God and man. Allah, therefore, in strictly determined situations addresses man from a *plural position,* and, since pronouns are generally situationally determined and used to refer to a noun, the context makes it quite clear that this is a *singular* (Allah), which is of decisive importance for the whole Text. This

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descriptions, so that the Text has grown heavy with grammatical information rendering it dramatically dynamic.

way we reach a phase marked by an exquisite stylistic defamiliarization of pronouns.

However, when speaking about the quality and complexity of the reverse relation (man – God), the *Qur'an* does not use the plural pronoun, which could perhaps potentially raise doubts as to Allah's Unity: Allah never says, for example, *Worship Us*, but: *Worship Me; Worship Him* etc. In no context is it possible to say, referring to Allah: *We worship them*, or *We were ordered to worship them,* etc.

I have already said that the shifting between grammatical persons in the *Qur'an* is unexpectedly frequent – we can even see it within a single ayah – and that the system according to which these shifts function is not noticeable at first sight. However, once the fundamental rule I have just pointed out is observed, the astounding consistency with which these pronouns in the *Qur'an* are differentiated is revealed: in what at first sight could have appeared chaotic, careful analysis shows a remarkable system, as I will demonstrate further on.

Plural pronouns affirm God's Singularity

The *Qur'an* actually affirms Allah's Singularity and underlines his Unity and Uniqueness by unmistakably differentiating the use of pronouns in the *singular* and *plural,* as explained. It is brilliant that the *Qur'an* affirms God's Unity not only through numerous explications and imperatives like *Say: Allah is one,* but with the help of the highly unusual use of pronouns. The effects of this support are all the greater coming from an unexpected place: the seemingly unsystematic use of pronouns among which Allah often uses the *plural* pronoun. Allah's singularity is affirmed through the use of the *plural* pronoun, which is consistently differentiated from singular pronouns, which are also used to denote God's Being. This is quite astounding! The pronouns' stylistic value here surpasses any expectations and is, as far as I know, outside of any traditional experience.

To summarize this aspect of the stylistic value of pronouns used to refer to Allah in the *Qur'an*, I would like to underline two things.

First of all, the use of personal pronouns in the *Qur'an* – despite the plural forms and the occasional impersonality – affirms the *Qur'an*'s fundamental principle: *monotheism*.[53] The greatest sin in Islam is assigning a companion or partner to Allah (*shirk*) – this, in fact, removes one from the faith – since, of course, the basic goal of the Text of the *Qur'an* is to argue in favor of monotheism. Until I started analyzing the use of these pronouns (to which I was prompted by their unusual shifts), I could not even imagine how wondrously they work toward the same goal with the entire Text.

Second, in my deliberation so far, I have used the borrowed term *synonymy of persons* for a phenomenon that I have been examining, finding it fit for my previous discussion.[54] However, the term *synonymy of persons* proves only temporarily appropriate for my analysis.

At one stage of the analysis of the pronouns Allah uses for His Being (*I*, *We*, *He* etc.), it seems we are dealing with genuine synonymy and that the choice of a pronoun at a given place was actually irrelevant, since they always undoubtedly pointed to Allah. However, the just established fact on their differentiation with regard to the relations of God–man and man–God, that is, with regard to their functioning in terms of the affirmation of (Islamic) monotheism, demonstrates that ultimately these pronouns were not truly synonymous, since their unsystematic shifts, or changing positions, would lead to ideological or semantic chaos; their optimal semantic weight lies precisely in the fact that, from the positions they are situated in, they substantially participate in the construction and affirmation of the main Idea of the Text – monotheism. And finally – and seemingly paradoxically – what initially seemed to be a synonymy has been transformed into a differentiation: they function only if they remain on stable, precisely determined positions in the Text; they must not be confused.

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[53] The impersonal or passive forms in the *Qur'an* are common, although the context undoubtedly points to a Person, for example: *... And who believe in what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you...* (2:4).

[54] M. Katnić-Bakaršić, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

We are once again faced with defamiliarization: as soon as we think we have reached the end, a new landscape of stylistic value appears. We need to make the final step in that direction.

Linguists have traditionally defined pronouns as situationally used words, in the sense that they can only follow a term they refer to: independent and outside a given situation, they have no meaning, and even when they gain one, by being introduced into a situation and following a stated noun, they themselves are not the term but are used to refer to it.

The use of these personal pronouns in the *Qur'an*, however, achieves different effects and expresses special content. In the Text of the *Qur'an* we are faced with a unique situation in which a single Subject uses for Himself both singular and plural pronouns. I do not believe that a final and entirely comprehensive answer to the question why this is the case can be offered, but a possible answer could be summarized: the quite defamiliarized use of grammatical persons referring to a single Subject aims to indicate that this Subject is in fact *elusive* to grammatical persons. When referring to people, the only coherent way is to consistently use a chosen pronoun to adequately and fully convey the term to which the pronoun refers: *I, we* or some other pronoun, bearing in mind the degree of conventionality, is always capable of replacing a certain noun, fully expressing it as a pronoun. However, in the case of Allah – unlike any other noun – these grammatical categories are incapable of conveying/replacing the Essence of His Being, which is impossible to encompass. Precisely this use of pronouns aims to point out how Allah is in fact neither *I*, nor *We*, nor *He*, but all of them together and, at the same time, something beyond it; He is neither clearly singular nor plural in a way we are used to in terms of pronouns expressing the human singular or plural. In other words – and precisely bearing in mind the previous elaboration of the functioning of these pronouns as a special argument in favor of monotheism - Allah is one, but his Oneness is not the same as the oneness in the known world – it is different to such an extent that grammatical persons are incapable of conveying it. Therefore, such use of personal pronouns not only argues in favor of monotheism, it also attests that Allah's uniqueness is impossible to fully convey in language. The described use of grammatical persons in

the *Qur'an* (that is, the nouns that are the topic of my deliberation) offers "paragrammatical" information.

The effects of such dynamizing of grammatical categories, which I have previously referred to as tense dramatic dynamics, are twofold.[55]

In a way, the recipient/believer is first, through God's will, placed at a distance from God's Being, but at the same time – as paradoxical as it may seem – Allah draws him to Himself using the "human" pronoun *I*.

Second, it is obvious that such use of pronouns produces an emphasis of sorts, which greatly enriches the stylistic value of this sacred Text, while testifying both to man's insignificance *and* importance in relation to God.

And finally, a solution needs to be offered to the implied question as to how personal pronouns in the *Qur'an* function in terms of traditional linguistics according to which they have no independent meaning and only refer to the preceding noun. The entire previous analysis indeed allows for the possibility that this linguistic approach can be relativized – of course, when it comes to the sacred Text that is the object of my analysis.

If the Text of the *Qur'an* used a single personal pronoun – as is the case in the works of the human mind and spirit – the aforementioned linguistic definition would be adequate. However, the delineated use of personal pronouns relativizes the aforementioned definition since, thanks to the fact that these pronouns appear as a *surprising sum*, they gain independent meaning precisely as a *sum*, but, of course, in a much wider context – the context of the *Qur'an*. Namely, when we notice this shifting of pronouns within a single ayah, or several consecutive ones, they eventually allow the absence of the noun, precisely since these shifts occur within a defamiliarized *sum*. It is clear that only God can speak like this. These *pronouns* occurring as a defamiliarized sum aim to present themselves as the *term* itself, and not its pronoun, which they would be in a non-sacred Text.

The sacred Text always requires great effort: to argumentatively speak of God's Being to humans who cannot fully grasp Him with their knowledge and experience; to exist in a language incapable of fully expressing the lofty content of Otherworldliness; to achieve all of this with a style that

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[55] Cf.: Roman Jakobson, *Lingvistika i poetika*, Nolit, Beograd, 1966, p. 72.

would capture the attention of readers and believers, or even the reader and believer as a single person. Such a Text has a twofold effect: it gives the reader joy by pointing to its own stylistic luxury, and if the reader is also a believer, joy through knowing the divine origin of the Text with which he manages to establish a positive and exhilarated communication.

The analysis of the functioning of personal pronouns in the *Qur'an* shows that it communicates with general human experience in a multitude of ways, and that its contextual nature, as an important prerequisite for comprehension, is always impressive. The said communication, however, always reveals its superiority in relation to the previous experience, whose boundaries it keeps expanding, even with unexpected means.

This adapted work, the *Qur'an* as a whole, as it was delivered to human beings with all of its unexpected beauties, is probably a pronoun of sorts for the beauty of the Absolute Original on the *Well-Guarded Tablet,* the *Lawḥi-Maḥfūz.*

The stylistic defamiliarization of the Text is achieved unexpectedly even in its "basic units" – as if trying to emphasize there is no end to the stylistic improvements of the Text. Twenty-nine suras of the *Qur'an* start with puzzling consonant clusters whose meaning people have pondered for ages, with varied results.

THE STYLISTIC VALUE
OF CONSONANT CLUSTERS

The "minus-device" as a strong position of the Text

A significant number of suras in the *Qur'an* begin with enigmatic consonant clusters, or with a single isolated consonant. Although they generally represent a single ayah, these consonants do not constitute a lexeme, that is, they are not words filled with meaning: the consonant clusters gain special meanings only in a wide context. It is unlikely they are abbreviations, since abbreviations cover a certain meaning more or less conventionally; neither is it likely they are codes, for their meanings have not yet been uncovered. It may be that these consonants convey symbols in such an unusual way as to encourage their deciphering. In any case, these parts have drawn attention since the revelation of the *Qur'an*, and commentators have offered different interpretations, occasionally with a feeling of uncertainty.

Twenty-nine suras in the *Qur'an* begin with mysteriously clustered or isolated consonants such as ṬSM, YS, ḤM, Q, N etc.[56] Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian translations of the *Qur'an* (as well as many translations into other languages) state the names of these sounds, or rather letters of the alphabet: ṬĀ-SĪN-MĪM, YĀ-SĪN, etc. Such naming of consonants in translations cannot be deemed wrong, but is open for discussion that should draw attention to the sensitivity of this phenomenon from the very beginning. The original Text does not state the consonants the way

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[56] The following suras begin this way: 2, 3, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 36, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 50, 68.

translations do – in the original we only find the consonants, but not their names: they are stated in the *Qur'an*, for example, such as طسم (transcribed as ṬSM), and not as the names of letters ميم / سين / طاء (transcribed as: ṬĀ-SĪN-MĪM). It should, in fact, be pointed out that translations confuse orthography and pronunciation. In the original orthography there are only connecting consonants (ṬSM) which are spelled ṬĀ-SĪN-MĪM; by connecting, they point to their unrealized aspiration to present themselves as lexemes, thus fully adjusting to their linguistic surroundings. Faced with the complexity of this phenomenon, translators generally deviate from the original by transferring the pronunciation of the consonants as part of the alphabet into *orthography*. Given the enigmatic nature of this phenomenon, it could be expected that translators would convey the consonants authentically (ṬSM), or – even closer, since the Arabic script does not differentiate between capital and lower case letters – as a firmly connected form ṭsm. On the other hand, one should be understanding of such translation approaches, since translations are generally intended for readers who are unfamiliar with the language of the original, so it is natural that such readers would spell – let us say, the consonants ṬSM – according to their alphabet, or phonetic system: *Te-eS-eM*. This would be a major deviation from the original, since they would no longer be the same consonants, as *they do not belong to the same language,* and do not carry the same meaning; this would amount to changing the code. It could therefore be concluded that the customary translation practice, being necessary, is acceptable. Yet by questioning such solutions I would like to point out something important for examining these tentatively called consonant enigmas. I would primarily like to point out the fact that the complexity of the original, here manifest in the joint effect of the orthography-pronunciation-meaning, cannot be fully captured by any translation: since the Text of the *Qur'an* is inextricably interwoven with the conditions of the Arabic language, every translation is bound to lose some of the original's riches "along the way". On the other hand – and I repeat this to make a point – the previous lines have already clearly demonstrated that optimal defamiliarization in the original is achieved through these short segments of the *Qur'an* and that good translations,

though incapable of ideally conveying the original's polyvalency, also point out this stylistic markedness, even its striking quality. This is why I think it would be interesting to stylistically analyze all of these unique stylemes in order to see what kind of results that endeavor would yield.

As far as I know, most commentators agree that the original uses these consonants to indicate that the *Qur'an* was created with the same letters of the alphabet as that of the Arabians, but that its supernatural quality is obvious in spite of this fact At the same time, these comments often leave an ephemeral impression, since the elliptical nature of the *Qur'an* leaves open the possibility that these mysteriously clustered and individual consonants represent codes which would, at some point in the future, reveal their miraculous meanings.

This interpretation, though it cannot be dismissed, seems fairly limited, and it needs to be adequately explained from the viewpoint of stylistics and structural functionality as a whole. At the same time, I would like to point out that my approach, although an interpretative one, does not exclude other solid and coherent interpretations. Thanks to the initial stylistic defamiliarization triggered by the isolated consonants unexpectedly dwelling outside of the realm of lexemes and language, this analysis should show how they at first sight appear to have no meaning, let alone a substantial one – and are there to astound us with their optimal defamiliarization of the Text. However, on a higher plane of understanding, introduced into certain contexts, they unexpectedly reveal a meaning of the highest order, all the more significant given that it was initially imperceptible.

In 29 suras and 30 consonant enigmas (there are two such stylemes in the forty-second sura), 74 consonants are used in often repeated combinations (13). I have not discovered a strict regularity in the shifts of combinations, but it does seem relevant for this analysis to point out that, by adding up the consonants, I have noticed that 14 appear in different combinations in the sum of 74. I see the import of the number 14 in its being the exact midpoint of the Arabic alphabet.

Although this might initially seem like a digression with regard to examining the numeric dimension of the consonant enigmas, I should once

again draw attention to something that I pointed out when examining the sura *al-Raḥmān*. The stylistic approach to the observed phenomena is as functional as it is coherent, which is why possible objections regarding the speculative nature of my thesis do not concern me. Namely, discussing the *al-Raḥmān* sura, I emphasized how it was dominated by a grammatical dual that emphasized the universal quality of the duality principle as one of the supreme manifestations of the Lord's grace and that – precisely as such – duality triumphs as the ultimate meaning of Beauty. Arabic possesses a special capacity – one of those distinctive features of the language in which the *Qur'an* was revealed – to express that duality (is this not an exquisite cooperation between language and the content revealed through it?) in a manner whose functionality even those familiar with the language are often unaware of. Namely, it builds dualities of nouns, adjectives, finite verb forms, etc., through very simple morphological laws, without using the number *two*. The dual is therefore the "natural state" for all of these parts of speech, inherent to each, so that the *affirmation of the dual* in the *Qur'an* – as divine wisdom in the ordering of the world and, accordingly, as an expression of his Grace – is therefore achieved in a much more effective and "natural" manner than in the translations.

Analyzing the consonant enigmas I first noticed *halves*, which once again brings to light the sense of duality upon which the *Qur'an* generally insists, and often *evenness* as a fundamental principle of existence and beauty. At the same time, that duality – stylistically amply augmented and pregnant with meaning – emphasizes Allah's singularity through the force of constant contrast.

Namely, adding up these suras and the consonant combinations within them, etc., shows that all of the combinations consist of 14 consonants, which, as I have pointed out, corresponds exactly to *half* of the Arabic alphabet. In only in one sura are there *two* consonant groups, and even this fact indicates duality. These consonants are found in identical semantic environments.

This emphasizes the fact that divine and human speech/text, though created by the same consonants, are not equal. A question poses itself as to why this warning was thus presented: it could be expected that in the sum

of 74 letters the *Qur'an* would state all 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet; or that when referring to the Arabic alphabet, usually the names of the first two letters according to which the whole system was named ALIFBA /الف باء)) are mentioned.

The *Qur'an* here surprises in a multitude of ways. First, it does not refer to the alphabet the way people do – the distancing here is intentional and purposeful. Second, it does not state all the letters of the alphabet, but exactly half. This increases the initial defamiliarization twofold: the deviation from human nomenclature is in line with the main goal of emphasizing the uniqueness and divine supremacy of Speech over human speech, which makes a riddle out of the fact that precisely half of the alphabet is introduced. Although it is possible that there is an undiscovered meaning behind these numbers, in this instance I find it stylistically very effective, since people continue to wonder why precisely that number occurs, beyond any experiences and practice. This constantly enhances defamiliarization, since the very numerical value I have mentioned is an instance of stylistic value.

The use of the consonant enigmas initially seemed random, such that on that level their stylistic value appeared insignificant. Propelled by the need to explicate my own impressions, I started searching for a system, for general and common characteristics of the consonant enigmas in their textual environment. It turned out that there are common characteristics and a certain regularity in their use, with minimal deviations, whose goal is – as in many other cases in the *Qur'an* – to free the Text of automatism and to emphasize regularity precisely through these deviations.

I will here examine general characteristics and regularity in the use of the consonant enigmas.

1. All consonant enigmas are found at the beginning of the sura and compose a single ayah, except in the forty-second sura, in which *two* consonant enigmas are found in *two* proper ayat. This is the only exception, albeit a partial and functional one, serving to confirm the general rule that both clusters are built by consonants out of the same pool from which all other consonant enigmas were built. The deviation is therefore partial and as such is a warning of stylistic value. It abides by the general rule

according to which consonant enigmas are placed as first paragraphs in the suras and are built out of the same consonant pool.

It is worth mentioning again that the suras originally did not have titles (people assigned them titles at a later point; the titles of the suras did not originally belong to the Revelation). It is commonly accepted in stylistics that titles are texts' *strong positions*. Since the suras did not have titles, it is precisely their absence – as a minus-device – that is the text's *strong position*. In one phase of the comprehension of the text, amidst the general confusion regarding their place in the structure and their meaning, these consonant enigmas could appear as a motto of sorts, although that is not the case. The fact that they are placed as the first ayat in texts without titles, they appear as the Text's *strong positions*, only strengthened by the absence of titles: we simply feel their high impact. If the consonant enigmas were placed somewhere in the textual depths of the sura, they would not have as strong an effect.

This interpretation however is not exhaustive, since it fails to point out the stylistic value of the aforementioned technique: it is also necessary to shed light upon a "commentator fact" from a stylistic viewpoint. This fact, in its relative accuracy, can be presented as considerably more fascinating, since emphasizing the distinctiveness of the Text in such a unique way is stylistically effective. The stylistic value of the consonant enigmas continues to develop.

2. All consonant enigmas – except in *two* instances, again so that the Text can resist automatism through its exceptions – are found at the very beginning of *longer* suras. One should bear in mind that longer suras generally consist of longer ayahs, so that their formal characteristics (rhyme and rhythm as characteristics of this Text in general) are not as noticeable and effective as in shorter ones. This means that consonant enigmas have the goal, in addition to the aforementioned stylistic potential, to enhance the stylistic value of longer suras, which are not as stylistically marked as their shorter counterparts.

It is possible this is not the ultimate goal of these consonant enigmas, but determining their *other* functions does not exclude the stylistic functions revealed by my reading.

3. Following each consonant enigma – with *two* exceptions (suras 29 and 30) – are words synonymous with the *Qur'an:* in one instance it is the noun the *Book*, in another *ayah*, the *Admonition*, the *Revelation,* etc. This is undoubtedly a strong argument in favor of the aforementioned conviction that the consonant enigmas convey that the *Qur'an* was revealed in the same script and sound system people use, but that it is divinely superior.

4. The noun *Qur'an* and its other names following the consonant enigmas are always accompanied by attributes from the same semantic field: *the clear*, *the truthful*, *the one not to be doubted*, *the wise*, *the illustrious,* etc. Such a consistent attribution in the environment of the consonant enigmas demands certain conclusions.

It is primarily interesting that the consonant enigmas – which appear defamiliarized even at first encounter precisely since their meaning is at that point is impenetrable – are followed by constant attributions to the Book as something *clear*, *unquestionably true* or *authentic,* etc. This obvious and direct opposition of consonant enigmas and their immediate textual surroundings enhances the stylistic value of the consonant enigmas anew, leaving the reader wondering: how clear is the Book if at the very beginning of the Text we are faced with an enigmatic sum of consonants, and why is the clarity or authenticity of the Book consistently emphasized precisely in these places? As soon as the reader embarks upon discovering the Text, following the surprise from the consonant enigmas, the Text returns the reader to them by oppositional attribution, which, with its subsequent defamiliarizing effect, unexpectedly emphasizes the stylistic value of the consonant enigmas.

Consistent deliberation poses the question of how to interpret such an establishment of relations between a symbolized alphabet, the Book with all of its other names in these positions and the aforementioned attribution principle.

It is inherent to a book – that is, a book of a non-divine origin that I will spell with a lower-case "b" – to be "untrue", "inauthentic", "unwise", but always in the sense that it does not contain Truth as the Revelation, that it is inauthentic with regard to Absolute Divine Originality, etc. I would also like to emphasize that the word book should not only be interpreted

literally and that *book* here also denotes *speech* (*speech* is a synonym for the *Qur'an*), *telling*, *narration*, and not only what has been written down and bound in a book as we know it. What is, in fact, immanent to a book as a human endeavor is that is also possesses something false, inauthentic. This is particularly true in the cases of books (meaning: *narrations, telling, speech*) of a prophetic nature with the ambition of presenting themselves as the bearers of Absolute Truth; only such books are worthy of dialogue and disputation from the *Qur'an*.

Since a book is generally subject to doubts, as a product of an imperfect human spirit or mind, the *Qur'an* consistently adds an adjective to each of its synonyms to distance it determinedly from any book as such. This resolution is universal and eternal. However, it is useful also to bear in mind the context in which the *Qur'an* was revealed.

Namely, at the time when the Qur'an was being revealed, an Arabian poet (*book* or *narration author*) was a priest (*kāhin*) who used precisely the poetic word to communicate with pagan supernatural forces. From the viewpoint of the *Qur'an* this is an extreme expression of the inauthenticity and falseness of a book /speech; this is why the *Qur'an* so strongly insists on the attribution I have mentioned. Along with poets, whose narration is essentially magical, there were other books of a religious and other nature which have prompted this approach in the *Qur'an*. Using a number of synonyms for the *Qur'an* from the same semantic field, this Text actually indicates that it is not actually a book, or not a book in the regular sense of the word, although it has been created using an alphabet or a system of sounds that is used to create books, or narrations.

This position reveals the extraordinary function of consonant enigmas, since it is precisely they that lead us into dual contexts.

They first introduce us to the wider context of the *Qur'an*, signaling that it was created by the letters/sounds of the human alphabet or system of sounds.

Second, the consonant enigmas introduce the whole Text of the *Qur'an* into the widest context – into a relation with all texts, and the written word/speech experience in general, in order to demonstrate its own divine exquisiteness. Thus, introducing the Text of the *Qur'an* into tradition – by

emphasizing the equal "starting position" of the fact that the *Qur'an* uses the same alphabet and sound system people do, as the basic prerequisite for communication in general – the *Qur'an* emphasizes its superiority over tradition, as well as its divine purity and wisdom in relation to any book, or any speech as a human act or creation. Along with all of these effects of the consonant enigmas, one needs to bear in mind that they are stylistically strongly marked in the *Qur'an,* which aims to demonstrate its stylistic superiority over human literacy in general. The consonant enigmas in the *Qur'an* have therefore achieved a stylistic feat in order to ultimately present themselves in a fully affirmative persuasive role: starting with a seemingly indecipherable code, thanks to the hints of stylistic defamilarization, we have reached a conclusion that these consonant enigmas point to the very essence of the *Qur'an,* its divine origin, and that they in this context can be observed as the *Qur'an*'s trademark of sorts. The consonant clusters that initially seemed indecipherable or blurry have transformed into their own opposite, since their goal is clearly to persuade in a reasonable and well-argued manner of the *Qur'an*'s divine superiority, which is emphasized as Clear and Authentic in relation to any other book or narration.

The previous deliberation does not exhaust the stylistic values of the consonant enigmas.

Namely, such a defamilarized placement of the consonants in the Text cannot be subsumed under any known stylistic category, or any figure of speech. Already this knowledge marks them in an unexpected way, because indeed they cannot be *fully* reduced to any figure of speech, although they simultaneously perform the functions of several.

The consonant enigmas are not graphostyleme in the full sense of the word, among other things, since they do not function only visually, or even primarily visually: they have been revealed orally and then for a long time dwelled in comfort and safety within the hearts and minds of people, *unwritten*, in *oral* tradition, having been written down at a much later period.

They are not phonostylemes, anagrams or monograms, nor are they epigraphs. They contain some alliteration and assonance traits. It should be pointed out that these consonants are repeated in identical or nearly

identical combinations.[57] In this way they contain elements of assonance, as well as alliteration.

However, given the relatively frequent distribution and repetition of the same combinations of the consonant enigmas, these microstructures introduce a rhythm to the Text that it consistently carries through. They are also a special kind of *connectors* – the Text's "connective tissue", with an at least twofold effect: they reinforce the Text on the formal-structural level, while at the same time strongly reinforcing it semantically, given the already explicated persuasive function and ideological potential of these stylemes.

And finally, since this analysis and its topic deal with literacy, the B(b)ook and S(s)peech, it is not surprising – except as an unforgettable stylistic effect – that the last consonant enigma (NUN, in the sura 68.) is followed by the ayah: *By the Pen and what they inscribe!*

Namely, following the previous suras, which, as interpreted, speak of the alphabet, literacy, the book, etc., Allah swears by the Pen, and He only swears upon cosmically significant things or phenomena. This means that the Pen is of cosmic importance, in the same way that the *Qur'an* is cosmically important.

I believe that this ending in the structure of the *Qur'an* achieves the most effective arrangement of the consonant enigmas, crowned with a sublime meaning and endowed with an unexpected instance of stylistic value.

Here it seems appropriate to introduce a hadith from Ibn Kathir's *Tafsīr*, which is so *aesthetically* functional that I changed my initial intention to confine it within a digressive footnote.

According to that hadith, the consonant NŪN is the inkpot (we should write it here using Arabic orthography, since ن resembles an ancient dell whose arc serves to preserve the precious content – the ink, or the points written with it):

The first thing that Allah created was the Pen, and then he created NŪN, and NŪN is the inkpot – goes the Prophet's saying on the NŪN.

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[57] For example: two times in a row ALIF-LAM-MIM, three times ALIF-LAM-RA, seven times HA-MIM, etc.

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After my research on the stylistic value of the consonant clusters, I happened to discover that the researcher Lutvo Kurić had been conducting mathematical analyses of these clusters with very interesting results. After reading Kurić's well-founded work, I was faced with a seemingly unsolvable question: how can one explain the fact that two kinds of poetics are simultaneously at work in this Text – literary and mathematical – since they are realized in entirely different languages and through different devices; their languages are divergent in a connotative sense. The numerical values of the consonant clusters and their analysis conducted by Lutvo Kurić present themselves as undeniable, exact results.

After some deliberation, I hope I have managed to determine how these two poetics – and the two different languages – operate synthetically in the same Text. I have written a text on this point, *The Literary and Mathematical Poetics of the Qur'an*: *Synthesis as an Argument.* The Text was published in the book Kurić and I jointly wrote, which analyzed the consonant clusters each from the viewpoint of his own field.[58]

What follows is the text on the synthesis of the two poetics, though I am aware that it is generally not recommended to transfer texts from one book into another: I am convinced that this book also needs the text dearly, since it speaks of the polyvalence of the sacred Text, and that it can show how such a major Text can be interpreted from different aspects that are essentially not divergent, although they might appear so at first sight.

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[58] Esad Duraković and Lutvo Kurić, *Kur'an – stilsko i matematičko čudo*, Svjetlostkomerc, Sarajevo, 2006.

THE LITERARY AND MATHEMATICAL POETICS OF THE *QUR'AN:* SYNTHESIS AS AN ARGUMENT

The Miracle of the Text in the Culture of the Word

The Text of the *Qur'an* caused an explosion in Culture, exactly in the sense Lotman was referring to when speaking about that phenomenon.[59] On an ideological level, this explosion amounted to a force that would reshape the world, and today, long after the revelation of the *Qur'an*, the effects of this historical event are already known. One needs to bear in mind that the process is not finished yet, and is still quite dynamic, with a clear perspective of its effect continuing well into the future. However, the especially strong and creatively dramatic explosion of this Text occurred in a culture that it broke into a nearly boundless "world of shards"[60] which for centuries have continued orbiting around the Text as the core of a semiosphere. In the literary tradition, as the most thoughtfully arranged world of that culture – until the emergence of Islam, the Arabians were at the forefront of literature – the Text broke the established systems so thoroughly that they remained in poetic silence, creatively disheartened by the utter poetic turnabout the Text brought. For several decades their poetic creativity nearly withered in wonder before the Text revealed to them as a divine incursion into a self-sufficient tradition. It made an immeasurably

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[59] The following works of Lotman have been very inspiring *Kultura i eksplozija*, ALFA, Zagreb, 1998, trans. Sanja Veršić, i *Semiosfera. U svetu mišljenja. Čovek – tekst – semiosfera – istorija*, Svetovi, Novi Sad, 2004, trans. Veselka Santini i Bogdan Terzić.

[60] I borrowed the word *shard* from Lotman's work *Culture and Explosion*.

important step, collectively leading out of a decaying polytheism into the perfect monotheistic system, from paganism into a civilization that would impress and conquer a great part of the world with an unprecedented force. In literary tradition – this being the topic of my interest here – it has made equally major steps: the Text has transformed the comparison – which had been dominant in that tradition, making it quite descriptive and distanced – abruptly and forcefully turning it into the most sublime Metaphor, just as it had destroyed the reified polytheistic cults with a life-saving monotheistic transcendence. The Text has therefore led an entire culture out of a cold distant state expressed with the Comparison – which should here not only be perceived as a figure of speech, but a cultural dominant – into a state of dynamic and effervescent processes and tensions of the Metaphor. One should also bear in mind that the metaphor in the Text is not a mere poetic decoration, but that it possesses immense cognitive potential, thus outgrowing tradition. This shift, better than any other, demonstrates that those who liken the metaphor with a shortened comparison fail to comprehend its very essence. The *Qur'an* has, at the same time, totally prevailed over inductive Arabian poetics with its deductive nature: it shows how impossible it is to achieve authenticity by imitating existing patterns (inductively), instead revealing metaphysical content in a language and form (deductively) whose effort to comprehensively convey them has been filling both believers and scholars with admiration for centuries. Tradition was entirely dedicated to form, while the Text focuses on content which is revealed using an adequate form. Thanks to such a relationship between content and form, the Text has, on the one hand, shed light on the traditional centrifugal forces operating from the lowest level to the highest, while on the other, with its poetics, emphasizing the effect of centripetal forces. The existing literary tradition was entirely preoccupied by overcoming centrifugal forces until the *al-Mu'allaqāt* (an exemplary corpus of this literature from the 6th century), where the relative multitude of topics in each poem illustrates the totality of the effects of centrifugal forces unbridled by any single meter or rhyme: their couplets keep breaking away from that loose bond, shift positions in the poem or even, orally transferred, settle in other poems, etc. The Text, in contrast, affirms the centripetal forces by

being optimally focused on content. For example, a close reading of the first sura, *al-Fātiḥa*, clearly shows that it represents the whole Meaning of the System, that the System is its topic and that, ultimately, the whole Text could be boiled down to the meaning of this sura. The same goes for the sura from the other end *al-Muṣḥaf*, the sura *al-ʾIḫlāṣ*, for example. The Text could therefore be reduced to its very core – the *al-Fātiḥa*, *al-ʾIḫlāṣ* or even the *Bismillah*. The rhyme, as a form-related factor, also operates centripetally here with a much more striking cohesive effect than the one achieved in the *al-Muʿallaqāt*.

The shifts in the Text are so major and consequential that they can be referred to as an Explosion in the positive sense of the word: rearranged by the Text the elements of the broken culture are forced to revitalize and re-systematize in the new semiosphere. By compelling tradition to revitalize and re-systematize, the Text has enriched it immensely, helping it reach unforeseeable levels.

Even several centuries after the "explosion" of the Text, the elements of the broken tradition were trying to re-systematize, but in the literary domain they failed to "stick" to the Text, instead forming new shapes in its "orbit". Throughout the epoch of the Umayyad (661.-750.), the first Islamic dynasty, lyric poetry blossomed, in particular lyric poetry about love, since it was precisely this kind that was least likely to "lean onto" the prevailing contemplative nature of the Text. Yet, as time passed by, the shards of culture kept transforming, aiming to establish special relations with the Text as the center of the semiosphere, and special forms developed – all the way into the deep vortices of Sufi poetry. In other words, the systems of the broken culture did not forget their origin, abruptly and relatively forcefully renewing and transforming in the new space instead, so that it would be wrong to conclude that pre-Qurʾanic culture completely disappeared: its shards had reorganized and assumed new paths. Also, due to the effect of the forces of the Text, the new space in which the remnants of the broken culture were moving did not turn into chaos, but a cosmos whose order is proportionate to the forces of the Text at its center. Due to all of this, the primitive Arabian Bedouins, whose monotonous horizon always ended on the edge of the desert or meager pasture, were able to

conquer, so to say over night, an enormous part of the world significantly more civilized than they had been before the Revelation. It is important to bear in mind the undeniable fact that they could not have conquered a world of that size with their sharp sabers – they did it with the help of the incisive forces engendered by the explosion of the Text in the Culture: at first their spirit was changed so that it gained power with which they could easily overcome the resistance of other cultures, since they, in fact, immersed themselves into an "alien" space with a certain curiosity, building a true universe with parts of the new culture.

For hundreds of years – since its appearance – the Text has filled minds with admiration regarding its various effects and never fully revealed layers of meanings pointing in the same direction, in which the literary values of the Text and its exquisite poetic order hold a prominent place. It was precisely these values that caused shock and bewilderment in the tradition.

Among all of the Arabian cults, the largest was essentially the Cult of the Word manifested in magnificent rhetoric and poetry. The *Qur'an*, however, most convincingly overcame precisely this cult, signaling with style and poetry its own superiority and incomparability in the Culture of the Word. This is what convinced many scholars of its incomparable and inimitable nature, though it is important to emphasize that they did not base their beliefs only, or even primarily, on the "irrationality" of faith, but on the demonstrated incomparability of the Text with tradition. In other words, examining the language and style of the *Qur'an* has for centuries been the primary focus of many minds, creating a vast multitude of studies of an area into which it is hard to introduce something new, although the Text is open to linguistic and stylistic studies and interpretations at all times. Tradition shows that the Text invites constant linguo-stylistic interpretations, as well as interpretations of a markedly theological nature. This conviction has become generally accepted and undeniable to such a point that one could speak of its intolerant stance toward any different approach or method of analysis. The Text here aims to assert that, since the Text has shown its supernatural quality in terms of language and style, novel approaches are unsuitable to it. It is precisely this conviction that is

a testimony to the fact that the elements of Culture the Text had broken into shards are not prone to forgetfulness. Namely, since the Text initially appeared in a culture that is eminently a Culture of the Word, its remnants have kept a memory of the whole aiming to establish it as a Cosmos of the Word. This constitutes a special kind of resourcefulness on the part of culture, its craftiness directed at preserving its fundamental values and "instincts". One therefore often hears from the so-called authorities in the Islamic world – especially and not accidentally in its Arabic part – that recent mathematical approaches to the study of the Text are a novelty with all the negative connotations of the word. However, this Text would not be exalted if it allowed for such arrogance to bar it from interpretation. Quite the opposite: it turns out to be too strong and meaningful, and causes a restructuring of systems and their positions in the said semiosphere, demonstrating how constant movement and transformation around it is necessary, and that there is no finality in that world but the finality of change. It is therefore puzzling that the so-called authorities are unaware of their own relativity and the futility of such an attitude in relation to the general and historical strength of the changes permanently engendered by the Explosion.

Studying the language and style of the *Qur'an* has reached an inviolable status in a tradition whose self-confidence was based on the Text itself and the universe in which it operated. However, in modern times there have been attempts to affirm an utterly different approach that will obviously not back away before traditional methods, since it has itself gathered much confidence in examining literary works in general. I am here referring to exact mathematical analyses of the Text.

Pointing out the numerical values of texts has been part of the Arabic-Islamic tradition since ancient times and has manifested itself in a variety of ways – from determining the numerical values of the alphabet (*abjad*), to numerical symbols and introducing metaphysical content into certain numbers in the Text. There have been such attempts in the interpretation of the *Qur'an*, or some of its parts. (The frequent mention of the number *seven*, for example, is interpreted in different ways.) However, modern-day computer analyses of the Text of the *Qur'an* differ significantly

from metaphysical or even cabalistic interpretations of the mathematical language in the *Qur'an*, aiming to transition into the world of mathematics as a science. Generally, the aim of such research is precisely to use the exactness of mathematics, its precise language of science, to eliminate the symbolical haziness of former interpretations of the Text's numerical layer. Although in both instances numbers from the same Text are examined and interpreted, modern computer processing, which has only revealed a glimpse of formerly unthought-of possibilities, caused an utter shift: by insisting on mathematics, computer analysis presents the Text as utterly denotative and non-suggestive, while traditional interpretations of numerical values are exactly the opposite – suggesting their connotative nature and extremely high suggestiveness. The consequences of such opposing principles are tremendous. The symbolical and suggestive value of the "numerical system" in traditional interpretation is very great and cooperates best with traditional interpretations of the Text's literary values. For example, the reader who has any experience regarding authentic literary texts will never take statements in the *Qur'an* on the creation of *seven* firmaments[61] or the creation of the world in *six* days[62] literally in a mathematically non-redundant denotative sense. Or when the *Qur'an* states that God's day, as a time unit, lasts as long as 50,000 years,[63] it is clear that these measures are extremely relative units with symbolical values; they are pregnant with connotations. This way, certain mathematical expressions are transformed into their opposite: their numerical value turns into a symbolical one, and the exact and non-suggestive meaning they possess in the field of mathematics is translated into a tremendous suggestiveness, expressiveness typical of poetic rather than mathematical language. One should consequently draw a conclusion regarding the tremendous poetic function of numerical values utilized thus. Precisely since they are transported from the world of mathematical non-suggestiveness and denotation into the world/Text of optimal expressiveness and connotation, these values acquire the status of extraordinary stylemes in a Text of immense literary value. Two seemingly

[61] *Qur'an*, 67:3.

[62] *Qur'an*, 7:54.

[63] *Qur'an*, 70:4.

irreconcilable languages – the language of mathematics and the language of poetry – have established exquisite cooperation in creating the universe of the Text. The traditional interpreters of the Text of the *Qur'an* can be satisfied. This interpretation, however, remains on the level of mathematical signs as symbols. More comprehensive and complex computer analyses of the Text still seem inappropriate to traditionalists since modern computer analyses of the Text use the language of mathematics to bring it closer to mathematics as a science with seemingly different intentions that upset traditionalists. Using the language of mathematics, such analyses aim to determine patterns in the Text that should demonstrate clearly the divine excellence of the Text. These researchers mostly do not care about the literary values of the Text: they neither deny them, nor affirm them with the findings of their methods and scholarly inquiry. A problem arises here. Namely, two diametrically different languages and methods are present in the same Text, suggesting their simultaneous and independent operation. Some people even believe them to be mutually exclusive, or that there is a significant dose of mistrust between the two. I will offer an answer to this uneasy simultaneous operation further on – as a poetic synthesis of the two languages and the two poetics. However, several more characteristics of the two approaches need to be pointed out.

Namely, since Muslims believe that the *Qur'an* is the word of God, they have always examined it for arguments in favor of its divine origin. The supernatural and inimitable style of the *Qur'an* has always been singled out in that regard, but arguments from the so-called positive or natural sciences were also looked for. The fact that the Revelation fourteen centuries ago pointed out that everything sails in space,[64] the universe is expanding[65] and that God has created life from water,[66] etc., was used as an argument in favor of its divine origin. There are many such examples and they all belong to sciences which are not in disagreement with the high stylistic values of the Text. On the contrary, they cooperate on the same task with its style – to demonstrate its supernatural origins. This provides

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[64] *Qur'an*, 21:33.

[65] *Qur'an*, 51:47.

[66] *Qur'an*, 21:30.

constant and optimal emphasis on the non-artistic character of the Text: it is, in accordance with this, identified as the work of God, who has always known everything, and not as the work of an illiterate Arabian from the pagan seventh century. In a nutshell, argumentation as a principle has always been affirmed by the *Qur'an*, be it within the domain of its style or that of positive sciences. Bearing that in mind, a reasonable question poses itself as to why the results of modern mathematical analyses of the Text are met with a dose of mistrust. As a matter of fact, the natural expectation is that their findings would be welcome – as fresh additions in line with constant striving to achieve the aforementioned argumentation.

The problem of readers' and interpretative *habits* is always present and significant. Due to its generality I will not address it here, but rather dedicate my attention to factors eddying strongly beneath the surface.

A computer approach to the Text has been the consequence and demand of the modern age. It would be incredible if information technology had not achieved meaningful contact with a Text that speaks of its divine origin, its openness to all times and worlds. The results of such research have so far not been so complex as to be referred to mathematical science in the highest sense of the word, although the consistently employed *language* of mathematics suggests that in the future much more complex mathematical findings should be expected in that domain. We are living in an age of scientism whose development is causally connected with the rapid development of modern technologies, so that nowadays we cannot even dream of the discoveries that will be made in fifty or a hundred years, unless humankind precipitates a possible utter collapse of values. Computer analysis of the Text is also part of this general spirit of scientism. This innovation is significant and fundamental, and, as such, is viewed with suspicion by many traditionalists from the comfortable position of habit. They are even ready to qualify it as a *novelty* – something close to blasphemy. An important "argument" in the position of traditionalists is that computer analyses of the Text, as I have already mentioned, do not cooperate with stylistics, in the sense that mathematicians do not deem their findings relevant for the stylistic markedness of the Text, which has been pointed out for hundreds of years as its extraordinary quality.

The verbalized scientific argumentation of the Text (I have illustrated it with statements on the universe) is in no way opposite or indifferent to the high stylistic values of the Text, while the language of numbers and mathematical tables is presented as a system outside of these values. At the same time, researchers examining the Text using computer technology show no interest in traditional methods and their achievements: they do not deny them, but – to my knowledge – they do not feel the need to interpret the relationship of their results and traditional ones. Their actions might be the result of excessive pride in their methods and scientism, due to their feeling insufficiently competent to synthetically include traditional and modern methods. In any case, as these noticeable parallel endeavors increase, so will the need for synthesis: only achieving it would overcome the mutual opposition. For example, the booklet *The Qur'an – the most perfect miracle* by Ahmed Deedat awoke the interest of a wide readership due to its remarkable interpretation and universalizing of the number nineteen in the *Qur'an*.[67] I am, indeed, not familiar with *authoritative* public evaluations of this work, but the number of Bosnian editions (nine, since 2002) demonstrate how great the interest in it is). Deedat's findings are surprisingly positive, but the author makes no effort to overcome his conviction of being totally independent and his research self-sufficient. The reader, therefore, though probably impressed while reading the text, eventually gets the impression that the message is that the *Qur'an* can fully be reduced to its mathematical dimension, which is wrong and diminishes the full effect of the text.[68] There are indications that the ulema responded to Deedat's text negatively.

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[67] Ahmed Deedat, *Kur'an najsavršenija mudžiza*, El-Kalem, Sarajevo, 2002, prev. Hajrudin Dubrovac.

[68] The poor structure of the book, the beginner's textual presentation of mathematical analyses and its general stylistic deficiencies hinder the book from achieving its full effect. The author is unaware of how much more thoughtful composition would have improved his work. This is not about me being oversensitive, but about abiding by elementary demands of academic literacy. Even the title is problematic: *the Qur'an* is the Prophet's only mudjiza, that is, a (supernatural) miracle that is fully an argument in favor of its divine origin. Being the only one, there is nothing to compare it with, and even if there

In 1982, Zulfikar Resulović published a text in Bosnian titled *The Numerical and Position Values of Initials in the Qur'an*[69] in which he numerically interprets the consonant enigmas at the beginning of certain suras (Alif-Lām-Mīm, etc.). Resulović's effort to articulate the consonant clusters sank into silence, since he was also not met with approval from the contemporary ulema. It should be pointed out that Resulović unfortunately also failed to express the need to take precaution against the self-sufficiency of his method, at least so as to trick the conservative ulema, which is why his work also leaves the (negative) impression that the phenomenon of the Text is being enclosed within the language of mathematics.

As I was writing the piece on the stylistic value of the consonant enigmas, I sensed that the consonant clusters possess special numerical values, but I did not analyze them at that point. However, independently and without my knowing it, Lutvo Kurić, who presented his work to me due to unusual coincidence, examined the numerical value of the consonants. Delighted by Kurić's exact analysis, which also neither denies nor affirms the stylistic value of the consonant clusters, I was faced with an unexpectedly considerable task: accepting the findings Kurić reached using the strongly denotative language of mathematics, a problem arose as to how I could reconcile them with my own connotative stylistic analysis.

Kurić determined the numerical value of the consonants he refers to as *consonant clusters* (a mathematical term for consonants at the beginning of some suras, which I also refer to as *consonant enigmas*). Based on the numerical values, he determined an array of mathematical patterns in the higher structural units. The results of the research are mathematically precise and regular, which indicates the extraordinary and intentional value of the Text as a system. In other words, Kurić's research reveals a

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were, it does not make sense for humans to judge the degree of perfection of something beyond their capabilities.

[69] Zulfikar Resulović, "Brojčane i položajne vrijednosti kur'anskih inicijala", *Glasnik Vrhovnog islamskog starješinstva u SFRJ*, br. 1., Sarajevo, 1982, p. 35.-37.

The same author has published a text titled "Inicijali (skraćenice) u Kur'anu", *Preporod*, br. 5, Sarajevo, 1981.

special system in the Text. At the same time – and that was the researcher's point – his work shows two very important things.

First, analyzing the Text using the language of mathematics does not belong to the kind of mathematical or statistical literary work analyses – a discipline in its own right – which determine the *relative* regularity in the author's choice of lexemes or phonemes, for example, in choices that are not mathematically intentional, but rather the result of other authorial intentions – primarily stylistic and aesthetic ones. In such texts a statistical method that is essentially based on approximation is effective; it cannot be upheld in terms of unconditional mathematical precision.[70] So the essence of Kurić's approach is that he does not develop mathematical poetics the way scholars who treat literature as an artifact do. Kurić discovers the language of mathematics and the operation of mathematical laws in the Text implying their self-sufficiency, or independence from the aesthetic; scholars specializing in poetics use some mathematical methods only to affirm the stylistic or aesthetic values of the text.

Second, Kurić's method aims to prove, as I have already mentioned, authorial intentionality, the divine origin of the Text. Namely, Kurić aims to show how the Author of the *Qur'an* created the Text according to certain mathematical principles, showing His superiority over the work of man, whereby all of the mathematical procedures used and the results prove to be absolutely true since they aim to realize argumentativeness as their ultimate goal using the authority of accuracy. Bearing that in mind, approximation would work against the authority of argumentation.

The aforementioned strongly supports the conviction that the *Qur'an* is not a work of art, since precisely its mathematical intentionality testifies to its priorities. Since a mathematical approach to the text, here in relation to the numerical value of the consonant clusters, reveals its mathematical precision, the implication is that the argumentativeness of the Revelation is its primary goal. Meanwhile in artistic texts the aesthetic "effect" is the

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[70] The list of scholars who have employed mathematical analyses on literary-artistic texts is substantial. Here I would like to single out a book that will refer the reader to an abundance of literature in that area: Solomon Markus, *Matematička poetika*, Nolit, Beograd, 1974, trans. Borislav Krstić i Dragan Stojanović.

ultimate goal, so that mathematical or statistical patterns are examined to reveal it, in which case total precision is undesirable since a work of art is realized precisely in that constant tension between abiding by certain, even very broad, rules and overcoming them by which a work escapes automatism.

The mathematical approach is in fact a process of formalization and creation of logical models that reveal structures in the text that are invisible at first sight. Once presented, they seem relatively independent from the text with regard to context. Reading the *Qur'an* for hundreds of years people have been impressed by its "second" layer (the first being the ideological one), that is, its style and literary-aesthetic values in general, failing to notice its "third" layer – the language of mathematics. It is possible the reason behind this is the fact that the Revelation was initially aimed at the Arabians, who have always cherished the Cult of the Word, as I have mentioned, or maybe also due to the fact that the *Qur'an* on several instances invites the reception of its literary-aesthetic values.

I have so far pointed out the parallel literary-aesthetic approaches to the Text, that is, the insurmountable differences between the poetic and mathematical languages, this being the reason behind the mutual mistrust of the two groups of researchers, or the lack of interest for the results of the research of the other group. Before conclusions are reached, the contrasts of the two research approaches need to be highlighted. The characteristics of the poetic language that I will state here are almost generalities; it is nevertheless necessary to sketch them in order to present a contrast with the language of mathematics.

1. The poetic language is endowed with a wide array of affective elements. It is therefore no wonder that readers often intensely experience the *Qur'an* in precisely that way.

2. This language is at the same time highly suggestive, such that given its high suggestiveness it is natural that people interpret it differently in many aspects, and that an entire discipline about it has developed – exegesis. Since the metaphor is its stylistic dominant, it is an inexhaustible well of suggestiveness, regardless of the metaphors' miraculous epistemological feats.

3. Consequently, the language of the *Qur'an* is essentially connotative, and in proportion to the tension in the metaphorical arch between the elements of the metaphor; in fact, its connotative quality is boundless since it manages to present through linguistic devices something utterly transcendental. This indeed reflects a great power.

4. The poetic language of the *Qur'an* builds a context of immeasurable importance to the affirmation of its stylistic values. The literary artistic text is realized contextually. All the stated qualities of the poetic language are realized in a context whose forces are so strong that they give the same words, phrases, etc., different meanings and imbue different contexts with different expressive potential. That primary context implies secondary or external ones, such as readers' expectations, their position in the ideological and cultural milieu, or simply what we refer to as different times. The meaning of the context is therefore polysemous and enduring; based on this, one rightly speaks of the openness of the work.

5. The poetic language in a literary work is highly individual: a work of art's value is proportionate to its degree of individuality in terms of language, style and structure.

6. Due to the aforementioned reasons, one speaks of a literary work of art in terms of its reception, which entails a certain degree of subjectivity, or – to be more precise – the impossibility of it being received scientifically. The most a literary work of art could expect is an intersubjective value judgment from which its position in the system of values depends.

When it comes to the language of mathematics, it distinguishes itself in the following manner.

1) In terms of its affective quality, the language of mathematics is completely neutral; strictly speaking, as a language of science (being a scientific language of the highest order), it is indifferent toward the affective since it neither contains it, nor expects such responses.

2) The highly suggestive nature of poetic language is completely unknown to the mathematical, since the language of mathematics possesses conceptual functions; given that, it does not allow for various interpretation options which, in the poetic language, are unpredictable

and never-ending. The language of mathematics does not need metaphors since their cognitive function is inappropriate to it.

3) I have already stated that the language of mathematics is highly denotative: it carries no connotations, always having the same meaning regardless of the context into which it is introduced. Such precision is the ideal of many natural and social sciences, but it is unimaginable in literature, whose soul lies in connotation and suggestiveness.

4) The language of mathematics pays no heed to the context that for literature is a vital process within which an artistic work survives. The mathematical sign always carries the same meaning, regardless of the mathematical structure into which it is introduced, while in poetic language the sign is constantly transformed under contextual forces.

5) While literary values are contained within what is unique and individual, the language of mathematics knows no individuality, raising everything to a level of generality operating on a plane transcending the individual. In other words, it has conquered synthesis and formalization, while achieving – which is of particular importance here – an unreachable degree of universality. While poetic language is realized in terms of the individuality of a work in a natural language (let us say Bosnian), or traditionally, leaving endless opportunities for the realization of other individualities in other natural languages and their traditions, there is also the opportunity for the creative realization of individuality through translation efforts, which represent the constant and deliberate elusiveness of generality. At the same time, the language of mathematics fully realizes the principle of universality: it is identical for all individuals in the world and needs no translation. The ideal of universality and scientific generality is at its highest level here.

6) There is no subjectivity in mathematics. Since the language of mathematics expresses the optimal ability for synthesis and formalization, it is universal, equal for all people. In contrast to the intersubjectivity of a literary work, mathematics expresses full objectivity, so that in relation to the literary work, one can speak of a mathematical, "cold" scientific nature. Understandably, given the aforementioned, one cannot speak of value judgment in mathematics: its structures are general and

exact, completely outside of the influence of our impressions, contextual interpretations, etc. For example, Kurić's mathematical findings can only be discussed from the viewpoint of their mathematical accuracy, and by no means in the context of traditional interpretations of the *Qur'an*, a human understanding of the Text, the validity of such a methodological approach, etc. Only one question is possible here: can Kurić's analysis and results be mathematically disputed? The possibility of employing a mathematical approach to other structures of the Text does not negate Kurić's results – if we were to accept them as true, and I have not found a reason not to. In fact, other possibilities confirm Kurić's implicit conviction that those structures are open to such analyses as well. That relentlessness of mathematics leaves any subjectivity helpless, a priori prejudicial attitudes futile and the narcissism of tradition shaken. We are faced with something new and important; it posits itself before us with the rigidity and orderliness of mathematical language, and is indifferent to our affective and subjective nature, the same way it had been indifferently enclosed in the Text for hundreds of years. The problem is therefore not in that novelty as such, if it is mathematically consistent and accurate, but rather in how we deal with it: are humans, so prone to prejudice and misconceptions, capable of absorbing the quality of the novelty while harmonizing it with tradition and practice?

I will reformulate this question in the following manner:

Is it possible to establish a lively connection between the two layers, the two different poetics, of the Text – the literary and mathematical? Are they divergent, mutually exclusive, or are they coherent and collaborative?[71] Unless they work together, is their parallel operation in the same Text sustainable in terms of the special nature of their languages, and therefore in terms of how informative they are? Is it even necessary to determine whether there is a relationship between the two poetics and what the nature of this relationship is?

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[71] I think I can tentatively use the term *mathematical poetics*, by which I mean, as evidenced by the previous elaboration, affirming mathematical laws and structures in the Text of the Revelation.

The literary poetics of the *Qur'an* are self-sufficient. The centuries-long admiration of it by a significant part of humanity undoubtedly testifies to its self-sufficiency. Evidence in this regard can be found in the vast abundance of literature created since the Revelation.

Mathematical poetics – a field in which significant endeavors are yet to come – also feels self-sufficient because it has yet to seek the support of literary poetics of the literary-aesthetic values of the Text, and presents itself as sufficiently consistent and coherent. The possibility of their parallel employment is evident in methodologically sound approaches and receptions.

Understandably, this conclusion provides a negative answer to the question of whether the two poetics are divergent. Regardless of all of the stated contrasts between the poetic and mathematical languages (literary and mathematical poetics), one cannot come up with a conclusion – bearing in mind the previous statement – on their being contradictory or mutually exclusive, since neither undermines the system and the meaning of the other, and each affirms their own. Their affirmation, even though they may be operating in parallel, tremendously perfects the principle of polyvalence and openness. Precisely since they are built on principles of different languages and their disciplines (one is of the highest literary order and the other of the highest scientific order), conflict between them is prevented, leaving the possibility for parallel operation.

However, I believe it is possible to talk here about two languages and two poetics operating in the same general direction. Consequently, they are aware of each other and cooperate in an unexpected way. The Text thus reveals its extraordinary function.

As a starting point to elaborate this, I will use a declaration asserted multiple times in the *Qur'an*, even as a categorical statement, that it is not a work of art. This is the key.

Namely, the principle of such explicated intentionality may not be neglected in the interpretation. No serious researcher may ignore the fact that at multiple occasions the Text categorically warns about its non-artistic character and the fact that, at the same time, it employs the highest means of literary expression. Since this concerns the very essence of the Text

(because it says: I am superior when it comes to using literary devices, but I am not a work of art), a researcher who fails to see that cannot even be called a researcher due to a fateful mistake they consciously make, which will inevitably distort methodology and engender abominable results. In that regard it is utterly irrelevant whether they are a researcher, whether they accept the Text on an ideological level – in any case they must know they are faced with a sacred Text with all of its peculiarities, and they cannot ignore its authorial intentionality.

The researcher is therefore faced with a sacred work which refuses to be accepted as a work of art. This also leads to a series of consequences related to the Text's poetics. Among the first and more important is the perception of reality and the relationship toward it. In a peculiar way, a work of art starts off in reality and ends up in the sphere of fiction. This sacred Text intentionally avoids the world of fiction, staying firmly bound, through faith and god, to reality, though an eschatological one; it does not transpose reality but, staying in it, persists in re-creating it. In order to be completely efficient at it, this sacred Text has to be argumentative in all of its phases and structures: it is of crucial importance that it persuades using arguments, rather than creating aesthetically pleasing self-sufficient fictions. This is precisely why it has placed its literary-aesthetic values on the level of a strong argument, proving the supernatural quality of its style and structure. In that regard its mathematical language, that is, its mathematical poetics, has a strong effect. It is effective in the domain of reality, underlining its importance, but also the divine order of reality, through its exactness by using the highest language of science – the language of mathematics. The reality of the Text is thus optimized and its intentionality in refusing to be interpreted as an "aesthetic object" in the domain of fiction emphasized. This defeats fictionality as an ultimate goal. The literary and mathematical poetics here cooperate towards the same goal: the former uses literary means (a special sort of human spiritual *reality*) to present reality which has not been transposed, while the latter uses mathematical means, employing the highest language of science, to present the most stable and obvious form of that reality. Despite the differences I have pointed out, both poetics are systematic and orderly

(without which they would not have been poetics at all), so that they, from different poles, keep building upon the Text's aspiration to affirm its own exquisite orderliness and the orderliness of the world it represents. It is therefore a Text that submerges us into an absolute reality of space and time, even eschatological phenomena, using bipolar human experiences – both poetic and mathematical language and their poetics. Ultimately, such a strong general insistence upon reality functions very efficiently as an argument that *faith* (I am not saying *reli*gion, but *faith*) is not a matter of fictions, aesthetics or anything of the sort, but rather the most essential reality. From the viewpoint of the sacred Text this is a thunderous argument. Furthermore, it is becoming obvious how a careful and dedicated reader – one capable of escaping prejudice – is simply incapable of escaping argumentativeness. Science and literature in their most sublime forms cooperate here remarkably well, and it is hard to imagine at this point a more efficient synthesis of these two seemingly incompatible areas.

Understandably, argumentativeness is thus constantly underlined as the essential goal. By constituting the two poetics, the Text engages the two greatest forms of potential of the human spirit. By engaging human primordial sensitivity to the poetic, the Text has for hundreds of years provided satisfaction to that sensitivity, even cultivating it; thus nurturing and enchanting the *soul*. Mathematical poetics, whose ultimate achievements are still not in sight, aim to satisfy the other side of the same person, the one that has been developing progressively in the modern age – to satisfy and stimulate their *mind*; the human *spirit* finds solace in their simultaneous effect. The soul favors connotation and the mind denotation: the presence of both – so suggests the Text – represents divine harmony and life-saving balance.[72]

Understanding one side of the poetics in the *Qur'an*, or perceiving one of its layers, achieves quite specific effects and does not interfere

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[72] This invokes an association with Pierre Guiraud, who in a different context and in a different manner has written on *understanding* and *feeling* – as different and "competing" functions in a work of art. In the Text of the *Qur'an* these functions are in fact complementary and harmonizing. (see: Pjer Giro, *Semiologija*, BIGZ, Beograd, 1975, trans. Mira Vuković, p. 13.)

with its self-sufficiency. However, the simultaneous reception of the two poetics achieves an incomparably more comprehensive *argumentativeness* and provides significantly more intense *satisfaction*: it equals the feeling of a sudden but absolute completeness and fullness established between seemingly opposite poles.

For example, my research on the (textual) stylistic value of the characteristic consonant clusters at the beginning of some suras in the *Qur'an* has revealed their unexpectedly substantial stylistic value, so that they can even be referred to as "stylistic signs" of sorts, or stylistic points of reference for the entire megastructure. Their seemingly enigmatic quality has been converted into an unfathomable stylistic value. However, Kurić's mathematical article on the same consonant clusters sheds new light on the structure and provides insight into its hitherto unknown dimension, so that the former, which has already been the subject of research, seems even more appealing and valuable: they are not mutually exclusive, or even parallel, but they affect the subject simultaneously and are thus even stronger. In other words, their simultaneous effect tremendously furthers the stylistic value, by revealing the dual functionality in one beyond all expectations. This achieves two important and intentional effects among sensitive and wise persons. On the one hand, the revelation of the mathematical dimension of the text prolongs the feeling of satisfaction although the interpretation of stylistic value has already engendered it to a high degree. At the same time – and this is important – I here underline the word *satisfaction* which, as an affective state, is essentially not immanent to mathematics, which I have already addressed. Therefore, a miracle has happened: here the language of mathematics, contrary to its nature, cooperates with all of the effects produced by the Text's stylistic value, meaning that it enhances and prolongs the reader's satisfaction through simultaneity and synthesis. On a certain level, it shows that the two languages and two poetics are not incompatible and that, on the contrary, they cooperate excellently.

On the other hand, the language of mathematics at no point abandons its basic task in the Text of argumentativeness: it constantly draws attention to authorial intentionality and its own potential, which prevents the Text from sinking into the world of artistic fiction.

I believe it is possible to take another bold step from this point.

Namely, computer processing of the Text of the *Qur'an* has so far been conducted at a very basic level. The future will show whether it contains even more complex mathematical operations and structures. But the given level shows a lack of complications, mathematical "plots". This leads me to two further conclusions on the complementary nature of the two poetics.

First, the relative simplicity of the mathematical language in the Text, the ease of its structure bordering on delight in ("stanzaic") tables, without excessively complicated endeavors, led me to label it with a name that seems as dearly needed as it is unusual - *mathematical lyricism*.[73] If we add to it the fact that the Text is very poetical (with an abundance of rhymes and refrains, tropes and figures), the closeness of the two languages and two poetics once again reveals itself.

Second (and precisely related to the former), mathematical analyses conducted by Kurić demonstrate that the *Qur'an* does not aim to fully explain the Universe using the most complex mathematical language and operations. I believe that humans at this stage of development would not be able to comprehend such a thing, nor is it the goal of the Text. Its aim is to adequately emphasize the authority of mathematics in the creation and comprehension of the world, using very simple operations integrated into the Text. This leads to two significant conclusions:

a) The mathematics here, situated on that level, is presented as a *metaphor* of sorts for the incomprehensible mathematical order of both universes. In other words, the language of mathematics here presents itself as suggestive, hinting at the regularities in the Text, as an *absolute reliability* (with the goal of achieving argumentativeness), as something we are not capable of entirely rationally comprehending.

b) In the final consequences, on the highest level – if we accept that in this regard that mathematics has a metaphoric and suggestive quality, and I see no reasons not to – the language of mathematics has been fully

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[73] It is possible to offer the term *lyrics in mathematics*. Often causing some frustration, literature has traditionally used terms from natural science for its own ends, but, at the risk of causing offense, the reverse projection is also possible.

transformed here: leaving its elementary denotative quality it becomes highly connotative.

Since it is widely known that poetic language is highly suggestive and connotative, we are positively surprised by the knowledge that the language of mathematics on those levels also acquires suggestive and connotative aspects, thus exquisitely cooperating with poetic language. What initially seemed incompatible – when I at the beginning of my exposition mentioned the different characteristics of poetic and mathematical language – seems to have been overcome: the two languages and two poetics fully cooperate. They are thus not mutually exclusive, but viewed in terms of their parallel effect, both are significantly impoverished. However, the establishment of the synthesis I have just presented reveals another incomparably impressive quality of the Text.

Namely, it has achieved a feat worthy of its position in the past and future: two languages and poetics have been brought into full harmony and cooperation, through which they strongly affirm each other. They do it so unobtrusively, however, that their cooperation in its full capacity had for centuries passed unnoticed, and was done so discreetly that even today traditionalists are unable to accept their subtle ties and forces. Yet, of course, the Text is in no hurry.

The Text is precisely now in a position to draw attention to its "explosive" nature. It has already caused an explosion in history, of which I spoke at the beginning, and the fact that modern methods and technologies have access to it shows that one should count on its trans-historical explosiveness, since it asserts itself as a divine miracle revealed to all people and for all times. This depth endows it with the strength to keep itself topical, which demands permanent poetic reinterpretation.

This is another strong argument from the position of the Text that defeats prejudice.

ELEMENTS OF REPETITION
IN QUR'ANIC TALES

Repetitive textual structure: chaos or a particular organization

I will return here to F. Gabrieli and his claim that the *Qur'an* is "a text that seems to us spiritually impoverished, (...) endlessly repeats a handful of basic motifs, is coarse and confused in its expression, chaotic in its actual design, short and in all truth *boring*."[74]

Among these alleged chaotic repetitions are the Qur'anic tales. Careful examination of the repetition of these tales – to be precise, the repetition of some elements or motifs – shows that their deployment deep within the Text may seem random or chaotic only to a malicious mind or reader whose knowledge of literature is so destitute as to miss the constructive principle of the Text and its aesthetic function. Indeed, what to Gabrieli (who is not alone) seems incoherent repetition or redundancy functions in this Text unexpectedly and extraordinarily as a structural principle of the Text, as the basis for its connections and strong stylistic markers; for the reader who comprehends the *Qur'an* as a stylistically neutral message and aesthetically indifferent, the essence of the Text is incomprehensible, for the Text is fully devoted to the aesthetic shaping of its message.

The first tale I will analyze is no way different in substance from the majority of Qur'anic tales in terms of the repetition of its motifs deep within the Text and its simultaneous efforts to constitute meaning: after determining the structural patterns of Qur'anic tales in general, I decided to illustrate the pattern with the tale of the prophet Moses.

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[74] Francesco Gabrieli, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

However, it is important to mention two things at the outset.

First, the *Qur'an* does not tell these tales solely for the sake of entertainment (the *Qur'an* develops many tales from sacred history, and decidedly not for the sake of uncontrolled repetition: such would be an incomprehensible detraction of God's Divine gravity and the rationality and purpose of His Revelation. Namely, it should be noted that here that the *Qur'an* explicitly, even imperatively, states the purpose of its stories: *(...) Such is the case of the people who deny Our signs. Narrate this history to them; they may haply reflect!*[75] The tales are argumentative and not meant for entertainment; each is a symbol and a divine argument for the necessity of orthodoxy, as well the inevitable doom the rejection of this argument would entail. In essence, the tales affirm the essence of the Revelation. This is in keeping with the centuries-old general definition of a tale in the literature of the Oriental-Islamic tradition – as something educational and not 'art for art's sake'; literary products have the task of teaching, of educating and elevating. This is the why the concept of *adab* (literature) included all of the natural and social sciences that served the purpose of educating or elevating. However, because the purpose of the *Qur'an* supersedes tradition, its tales transcend the educative-elevating function, or that of *adab* generally, and are ordered according to their revelatory nature and mission: the tales need to present the arguments of God. Because of this, even the greatest artists in this tradition do not consider themselves artists in terms of creation *ex nihilo;* even the Arabic word *'ibdā', 'ibtikār,* etc., which is used for artistic products, neither means *creativity* nor *creating*, but solely *deriving-something-new-from-what-exists;* this is *invention*, not *creation*.[76] If we add to this the word *fann*, which is used for *art*, yet indeed does not mean *art* in the sense of Western culture, but rather *artifice, téchnē,* then the nature of "art" and "creativity" in this tradition becomes clear: the "torment of creation" wherein man

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[75] *Qur'an*, 7:176.

[76] This is a terminological distinction, which here expresses the essence of things, and can be observed within another context: this is primarily the consequence of the Qur'anic definition of *creating* as an exclusively Divine act, but to a great extent it addresses the relationship of individual creation to the authority of tradition, in which traditionalism is exceptionally powerful.

competes with God does not exist, rather "only" the enthusiasm and joy of discovery in a world created by God alone, in which God alone creates.

Second, repetition in literary works can be conscious or unconscious. Naturally, literary works are opposed to chaos and incoherent repetition – such entropy is unacceptable. Thus unconscious repetition gravely undermines the sense of a work and ruins its beauty. However, it is necessary to try to determine how repetition functions in the Text and how it achieves its various aims; this must be discussed with great care and intellectual responsibility. This is all the more the case because the *Qur'an*, as Gabrieli says, furnishes for a great part of humanity a guiding idea, the meaning of existence and death, and especially in this context, for that part of humanity a linguistic-stylistic and compositional miracle.

The *Qur'an* intentionally introduces repetition, and the Book itself is even characterized by it: *God has sent down the very best discourse – a Book fully consistent within itself, repeating each statement in manifold forms, which make all of those who fear their Lord, shudder (...)* [77]

Thus, the careful reader, and especially the scholar, whose poise must be optimal and continuous, cannot miss the Book's signaling of its own structure, which means it would be absurd for a Book of such significance to introduce *repetition* and *similarities* chaotically, for it introduces them consciously. The poised and erudite reader will also notice something else: all of this is mentioned within the context of the *Qur'an*'s characteristic as divinely vertical rather than dialogic (forms of the verb *nazala* used

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[77] *Qur'an,* 39:23.

The word *mutashabih* I translate as: *that whose parts are like one another,* but it must be said that the same word can mean blurred or indistinct places in the *Qur'an* – and which brings up a serious problem in translating the *Qur'an:* the translator is always subject to the risks of interpretation or the choices which interpretation requires. Through this I wish too to raise a characteristic of the Arabic language, which plays a critical role in the stylistics and general structure of the *Qur'an*. Namely, in the Arabic language lexemes and meaning are derived from a single root, paradigmaticaly like an arabesque, wherein these meanings are not opposed. On the contrary, in keeping with this principle I believe that these two meanings of the word *mutashābih,* are in fact, "a ring within a ring": for a likeness of something implies certain degrees of ambiguity, just as in the "realization" of likeness (through metaphors, stylistic figures generally, or repetition thoroughly structural in function) there always remain "shades" of contrast.

in the Revelation always express the vertical, or descent). Namely, this verse states how a Book of such features presents *the most beautiful words* (speech), which means that the likeness and repetition in certain parts are *constructive elements of its beauty* – as we read in the following verses – because its beauty is constituted by those elements *which make all of those who fear their Lord, shudder.* In short, in line with a very simple and universally accessible understanding of this verse, I assert that the *Qur'an* stresses the meaningulness of repetition and likeness in its own Text as elements of *beautiful speech* (here: *The most beautiful Speech*) and that *such* Speech serves to make the penitent shudder, meaning, regarding the point more closely – and it is truly masterful – that *beautiful* Speech is God's *argument in itself:* Revelation works not only on an ideological layer, but through beauty as well, through an aesthetic layer proportionate to its aim – the extent to which the penitent shudders. Accordingly, Revelation does not act on reason alone, solely serving to expound some type of rational argument, rather it works through beauty on emotions and the imagination as important means of grasping the divine beyond. It is hardly possible in so limited a space to unpack the complex origin, significance and the range of beauty of this verse, but it is surely a signal, indeed an imperative, to attempt to identify the ways in which likeness and repetition of specific parts of the *Qur'an* contribute toward the formation of its beauty capable of making *the penitent shudder*. Every judgement must be argued.

Through these elements of repetition, the tale of the prophet Moses pointedly confirms what I have previously asserted regarding the *Qur'an,* and what the *Qur'an* itself points out. The story is well-known and it is unnecessary to recount it here in its entirety. Nevertheless, it would be useful for my analysis to divide it into several motifs, the way the *Qur'an* treats them:

> Moses as a newborn in the river; Moses as a child with the Pharaoh; Moses in Midian and his marriage; God sending Moses to the Pharaoh; Moses' dialogue with God (the pulverizing of the mount and his receiving the Tablets); the dialogues between Moses and the Pharaoh; the duel with the magicians (the throwing of the staff and the coming forth of the white hand from the chest); the deliverance of the Israelites and their ingratitude; Moses urging the Israelites to enter the promised land, their refusal and damnation to spend 40 years wandering; the Golden Calf of Israel.

It would be possible to divide the story into further segments and arrive at a different order of motifs, but I believe this would hardly alter the essence of what I wish to assert.

The elements of the tale of Moses appear in different combinations – structured differently, but never contradictory in terms of fact – in nineteen places in the *Qur'an*. In some places it is difficult to tell which verse begins, and which verse concludes elements of the tale: woven into the context, the outlines of some elements are at first just noticeable but begin to merge with it; as such the number of verses only tentatively demarcates the elements of the tale. [78]

The tale is not told in a way in which we are accustomed to hearing or reading one: *continuously* and *linearly*. Its basic segments and motifs are placed in an unexpectedly large number of places, such that they form a whole only after reading the greater part of the *Qur'an*, or – if we are reading it for the first time – it would seem only after reading the entire *Qur'an*. This approach affirms a structural principle dominant in Arabian (and later in Arab-Islamic) culture known as the arabesque. Much will be said about this principle later on, but at this point it must be noted that the dominant mode of arabesque poetics in Arab-Islamic artistic expression is a conception of time that is not linear (ar. *al-zaman al-'ufuqī)*, as in Judeo-Christian culture, but circular or cyclical (*al-zaman al-dā'irī*), consisting of a large number of connected sequences, similar to mosaics or arabesques. Therefore, the tale of Moses, as an event that occurred in a historically important age, *does not unfold*, rather it is parcelled out through its key motifs and dominant details, which are very similar, and sometimes

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[78] The elements of the tale are placed at the following points: 2:54-75; 2:92-93; 2:108; 4:153-162; 5:20-26; 7:103-157; 10:75-93; 14:5-9; 17:101-104; 18:60-82; 20:9-99; 26:10-68; 27:7-14; 28:3-48; 40:23-50; 43:46-55; 51:38-40; 61:5; 79:15-26.

A number of works have been written on the miraculous significance of the number *nineteen* in the *Qur'an* (74:30). It is not a point of interest in this text that the number of times the elements of the tale of Moses appears (I have identified *nineteen* places) coincides with *nineteen,* which computer analysis has revealed to have a remarkable significance through the entirety of the Book. For a numerological interpretation of the Text see: Esad Duraković and Lutvo Kurić, *Kur'an – stilsko i matematičko čudo*, Svjetlostkomerc, Sarajevo, 2006.

identical, to that expressed in other "rings" of the Text, which gives the impression of its emergence even from different sequences of time which, again, lie within a greater temporal unit – the Pharaonic age (but in God's time) whose duration is never specified, but which seems very expandable with regard to the fateful significance of these events within history, as well as with regard to the significance of the tale for the Text of the *Qur'an*. Namely, the exceptional importance of the tale both historically and for the Text of the *Qur'an* is reaffirmed by its being distributed in the depths of history and the Qur'anic Text. This kind of "narrative" is in harmony with the culture from which the *Qur'an* emerged and that culture's conception of time (which would later expand into an Oriental-Islamic culture); it is formulated not solely as a *story*, but also *para-historically*. This kind of "narrative", moreover, eludes familiar schemes of (human) storytelling, and the terms of *tale*, *story*, *narrative,* etc., I use with qualifications with regard to the vertical plane on which the tale exists: rather than *happening*, or *stating*, or *narrating*, it *conveys* in a segmented form arranged with in the Text according to its argumentative and structural *requirements.* Earlier I mentioned how the Arab-Islamic literary tradition *(ar. adab = education) has* a didactic rather than purely aesthetic function. The *Qur'an* transcends this heritage and its traditional norms: it has endowed its stories with the value of supreme arguments.

Nearly every motif of the tale of Moses is repeated several times, in parts with identical wording, and hence in other parts with different wording. These repetitions produce specific effects within a microstructure, as well as within a macrostructure, and my primary aim is to mark these repetitions and their functions at both levels. To this end I could have taken any motif from the tale of Moses – any would serve this purpose – and by chance I have taken the motif of the Golden Calf: the miraculous event in which the Israelites, as Moses led them out of slavery in Egypt, at the first chance showed a hypocrisy which in the *Qur'an* becomes an archetype, by rejecting any evidence of the existence of God (and with it the immeasurable mercy with which God veritably showers them), and forging a Golden Calf as their god.

The motif of the Calf appears six times in different places (it is unnecessary here to be precise in numerical terms, but rather regarding the basic function of the motif's repetitiveness). Nevertheless, it is interesting that this motif, just as any other I could have chosen for analysis, always appears amid different textual surroundings, and as such, naturally, their function varies in different contexts, while at the same time the insistence on similar elements has its own specific purpose. Namely, it is generally known that identical parts that are "repeated" do not function equivalently when occupying different positions in the text, and that such elements bring different parts of the text closer to one another, at the same time highlighting the differences among similar elements.[79] Indeed I believe the important word *mutashābih* (39:23), which I referred to at the start of this discussion, is particularly relevant here. The judgment of mindless repetition or alleged chaos is countered by the fact that the repeated motif – in addition to invariably emerging within new contexts – in each iteration is at once enriched with new details. In this way, the repeated elements of the composition distinguish themselves through their ever-changing position, even when lexically or syntactically identical: they are differentiated positionally, and through this steadily accumulate semantic capital. At the same time, this manner of repeating of these elements not only works toward aesthetic effects, but through it a particular concentration of thoughts is created, insistently marking the idea represented in the motif which, through this frequency of repetition, establishes it as a guiding motif. The story of Moses contains motifs that are repeated through complete sentences (sometimes with more or less different elements), such that, in fact, in this story repetition and parallelism occur not at the lexical or sentence level, but rather exist on a scale large enough to be called "textual parallelism", while such overlaps still do not mean these are identical texts owing to their contrasting positions and different elements. I am inclined to believe that this repetition is proportional in its frequency and extent to the complexity of the text – of course, to the point at which its excess would detract from its aesthetic purpose and approach a tautological repetition

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[79] Jurij Lotman, *Struktura umetničkog teksta*, Nolit, Beograd, 1976, trans. Novica Petković, p. 186.

– improving the concentration of the thought and imbuing it with greater gravity and substance. For instance, we may take Moses' dialogue with the magicians (more or less characteristic to other motifs of the tale as well), where we find a series of textual parallelisms.[80] However, in order to more easily chart its appearance, I will concentrate on the motif of the Calf and show the points of "repetition":

- *You [the Israelites] took the calf in his absence, and you did wrong* (2:51);
- *Although Moses had come to you with evidence of the truth, you chose the calf in his absence, and you transgressed* (2:92);
- *Even then they made the calf, when clear signs had reached them, still we forgave them* (4:153);
- *In the absence of Moses his people prepared the image of a calf from their ornaments, which gave out the mooing of a cow. Yet they did not see it could neither speak to them or guide them to the right path. Even then they took it for a deity and did wrong* (7:148);
- *Surely those who have taken the calf (as a god) will suffer the anger of their Lord* (7:152);
- *Then Sameri produced the image of a calf which mooed like a cow. And they said: "This is your god and the god of Moses whom he as neglected." Did they not see that it did not give them any answer, nor had it power to do them harm or bring them gain?* (20:88-89).

The events connected to Moses have – from the perspective of literature and history – both epic significance and serve as a kind of epic fount, and this motif serves as one of the "joint" parts of the tale. And yet, against expectation, this motif is presented in a very economical paragraph, perhaps even too economical given the epic character of the events. In all six places there is a central object – the calf – around which other elements of the tale are subordinated. It is fairly easy to observe that the repetitions are not redundant, as each paragraph that mentions the calf brings with it a burst of information, adding new details and situating it within a different context. It is clear that the repetition, which may at first seem gratuitous

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[80] 7:106-103 with 26:31-38; 7:120-125 with 26:46-50. It is important to note that no parallelism can be discerned in any translation, but only in the original Text.

and from the perspective of mere information redundant, in fact transforms it into precisely the opposite, and is exceptionally stylistically marked; "repetition" indeed, yet one that draws attention to itself constantly and significantly, preventing a sense of automatism or impoverishment relative to the frequency of repetition.

In the first paragraph the reader learns that the Israelites have accepted the calf as a deity, and in doing so commit a violent act (of course, committing violence against the Truth is the highest form of violence). The second paragraph bears almost all of the same elements as the first, yet enriches them with an important "detail": they accepted the calf in spite of the fact that Moses had brought them a *sign*. In the third paragraph we learn that God had *forgiven* the Israelites for accepting the calf, in spite of the fact that Moses had brought them a sign, in other words evidence of the existence of God, for that God's grace is manifest even in such a case is the basic principle of the Revelation and its rule over the world. The fourth verse states important things about the calf: *it mooed* (in that it was made in such a way that air passing through its central cavity produced a sound like mooing). This verse, which is overcrowded with meanings, decidedly asserts the violent depravity, or perhaps more to the point, the obstinacy of the Israelites in their mistaken belief, going so far as to unreasonably mistake this whistling roar of air through the hollow figure of the calf as proof of its divinity.[81] Of course, this strongly supports earlier statements of how their acceptance of the calf was violence toward the truth; a similar statement on violence comes at the end of this motif, enriching the rhetorical questioning of the lifelessness and complete uselessness of

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[81] While it is not the subject of my present work, it would be interesting to consider *Calf-gold-mooing-deity* from the perspective of a parabolic narrative or metaphorical arc which applies even to our age, with its flourishing demons of economy and profit (*gold*), the production of basically usesless and deceptive goods (*mooing cavity*), excessive and ultimately illusory profits, the acceptance of which represents a violation of both Truth and Value, and which would elicit the wrath of God, the only outcome of which – for God does not get angry baselessly – can be cataclysm.

The *Qur'an* abounds with metaphor, and the acceptance of its stories *also* as (sacred) parables is not a contradiction with its being based on sacred history; this approach is legitimized by the verse I cited when I began: *Therefore – tell the tale so that they may reflect.*

the calf. The novel, important information shared in this verse is that the Calf is constituted of ornaments. The fifth verse warns of God's anger with calf worship, for to reject the existence of God despite clear evidence is, in terms of Revelation, the greatest sin. Finally, in the sixth paragraph the reader learns, alongside some repeated information, that the calf is the work of Sameri and that the Israelites tried to claim its divinity to Moses.

Careful analysis and expansion of the semantic field of each element of this motif – requiring the immediate context, then the broader context of the tale and finally the entirety of the *Qur'an* – reveals how with these repeated elements, whose meanings we have already adopted, from paragraph to paragraph new details appear which – and therein lies the point – are no less important than those mentioned before, and moreover appear as details which for the story emerge as precious information and which now become crucial *structural elements.* (Recall that the same governing principle applies to the entirety of the tale and that for the sake of economy I have analyzed only one motif). Each of these elements has its own place and meaning. One must be alert to another interesting occurrence with regard to the principle of "repetition". Namely, the elements of a given motif (as with elements of the entire tale) are not cited in the chronological order of the events as they occurred themselves, nor are they arranged thus within the Text of the *Qur'an*. The reader simply does not know where the tale begins. Precisely put, the chronology of the life of the prophet Moses is well-known, yet its chronology in the *Qur'an* is "dispersed" in such a way that the reader is unsure where the "thread begins" so that they may unwind the "coil". In the tale as we find it in the *Qur'an*, there has been a very aesthetically conscious "encapsulation" of the motifs and fundamental ideas as the work interweaves and enhances them; sometimes one motif is imposed upon the composition, or a group of motifs, while other times they are only subtly present or withdrawn, left aside to highlight the dominance of other motifs. They act in the same way in relation to other structures: they often emerge from their textual surroundings, or imperceptibly disappear into it; at first glance they may seem independent, but they are never *severed*.

It seems significant to me to analyze the structure of the tale, because this arrangement in fact emphasizes the fragmentation and elementality of the motif's elements, while their positions serve to constitute their entireties. This treatment accords with my thoughts on the *arabesque* structuring of the tale, of which I spoke earlier in terms of Oriental-Islamic conceptions of the "structure" of time (cyclical time composed of a series of "points" that comprise a whole) and in connection with the similarly-rooted poetics of Oriental-Islamic art. The elements of the motif, namely, as well as their sum, are not presented in series, linearly, but rather are arranged "circularly" and in a sense their identity derives from repetition. It seems to me – with deep respect for the immutable Word of God – that the arrangement of the elements of the motifs I outlined could be transposed into a different order, and even more, this still would not affect any changes on two basic levels: first, the principle of fragmentation would not only remain intact but would be affirmed, and second, the meaning of the Text would remain precisely the same. Thus, the restructuring of these elements would be possible if the tale were somehow extracted from the megastructure of the *Qur'an* as a distinct whole, though of course such an attempt would have certain consequences for the structure of which it is an integral part, as well as for the *separate* tale.[82] Yet something else would be altogether impossible: omitting the elements themselves. If any element were omitted, the structure would be seriously undermined and the significance of the message significantly impoverished, exactly in accordance with the explication of how each new element arrives as a burst of meaning and is ordered as an element of the structure and the message it carries. Moreover, the elements would function differently if the tale were related *in continuo* and *linearly*. It should be clear that the conclusion that follows is inescapable.

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[82] I know of no other use in the literature of the term *megastructure*: the usual terms are *microstructure* and *macrostructure*. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this work the term *megastructure* is indispensable. Specifically, the terms *microstructure* and *macrostructure* I use in their conventional sense – from the phoneme, lexeme and syntactical elements, to the tale as a whole (macrostructure). Because the tale as a macrostructure functions exceptionally within a structure larger than itself, I use the term *megastructure* to refer to the *Qur'an* as a whole.

The arabesque structuring of tales

The tale is structured according to the principle of the arabesque. I believe that this principle consistently manifests itself, from the microstructure of the Qur'anic Text to the megastructure of the whole of the *Qur'an.* If one accepts this – and to me it seems obvious – then the repetition of elements, which to the superficial "observer" seems random and needless, serves as a constructive pinciple of the Text and the backbone of its meaning, because in arabesque the repetition of elements, from sequence to sequence, leads to a *whole,* which acts impressively with its form and the meaning it bears. Nowhere else does repetition so triumphantly overcome itself as in the arabesque: repeated elements are perfectly integrated into the suddenness of form, forgetting their own likeness.

The poetics of the arabesque dominate Islamic art – from the *al-Mua'llaqāt* and poetry generally to music – and in the *Qur'an* I believe it is both perfected and overcome, just as I asserted before that the *Qur'an* employs the experience of tradition so that it can clearly and in an instructive way surpass it, and "ends" in the sphere of argumentation, not artistic effect. Is it not obvious how in these specific verses, which superbly demonstrate the charms of arabesque structure, there lies an exceptionally important message and lesson – which in fact is their ultimate goal?[83]

The *Qur'an* insists on the continuity of time, and on tradition as continuity, with which it holds a variety of dialogues and a competition with tradition. I am unaware of any work in Islamic literature that so brilliantly establishes the postulate of its poetics while at the same time succeeds in introducing meaning that transcends the aesthetic function of the Text. Tradition is optimally affirmed in order to be overcome in a unique way.

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[83] When I use the term *arabesque*, I refer to a specific structural and aesthetic principle, and not to the arabesque as a type of Islamic *ornamentation*. Moreover, I believe that the principle governed the Arab-Islamic tradition, and in fact its art, well before the well-known historical affirmation of this principle in the arabesque ornamentation of the 9th century: in Andalusia the arabesque was solely a special expression of the triumph of one aesthetic principle that until then had long evolved and brilliantly manifested itself in other forms of expression.

The degree of suddenness achieved by the constitution of these tales is great because the dispersion of their constituent elements and motifs is so intense and profound in relation to their treatment in other segments of tradition (for example, in traditional Arabic poetry based on the requirements of normative poetics, or in *al-Mu'allaqāt*, which the *Qur'an* encountered as the greatest and truly highest form of literary artistic creativity) that it seems at times that the fragmentation of the tale, its chaotic dispersion, is beneath the traditional level of creativity. However, the moment when this fragmentation becomes clear to us within the depth of the Text we notice the full meaning of this segmentation, which then shows us that the arrangement is highly controlled and purposeful; the fragmentation and arrangement bring us just to the edge of our ability to comprehend them in their full meaning. This degree of estrangement is extensively developed, contributing to the continuous refinement of the structure and the enhancement of semantic potential. It is necessary to keep in mind above all that the tale/tales of the *Qur'an* are indeed constituted thus, although I cannot without serious consequences for the megastructure tear them from their progressively wider contexts – I would say even from the context of the rings "encircling" the microstructures, which have a kind of harmonious relationship in their positions within the universe of the *Qur'an* as a totality. I believe that this is a consistent and coherent way of presenting the entirety of the *Qur'an* (there are other possible interpretations and presentations), and that this leads to the conclusion that it is structured according to the same principle, as far as we know, as the Universe itself. The similarities between the two seem to me profound.

The estrangement which I have discussed earlier arises largely from the Arabic language itself. If one carefully examines the verses, it is evident that they are bound through the same types of conjunctions: *after*, *and*, *then*, etc. Some of these are repetitive. At first glance, because these are *conjunctions*, they are in the domain of syntax and serve to establish connections between the elements of the tales bound according to the principle of arabesque structure. There would seem to exist a distinct tension between the purpose of a conjunction and fragmentation as a governing principle in structuring tales. The conjunctions partly achieve their goal, as

the stories in the end are whole, but they do not succeed in overcoming the guiding structural principle because the fragmentation has greater resources at its disposal and we are astonished by the dynamics between the intention of the conjunctions and the powerful structural principle. Moreover, the conjunctions act in two ways, further estranging the Text.

In fact, however peculiar it may seem, the conjunctions themselves participate in the fragmentation of the motifs and tales; they link the Text with an *apparent looseness*, though not in a way that precludes the principle of *arabesque structure.* One must know that these conjunctions in the Arabic language coordinate (sometimes they are translated differently, according to the demands of foreign syntax) rather than subordinate. This means that they connect two relatively *independent* syntactical units. Although seemingly paradoxical, these conjunctions – which only coordinate relatively independent syntactical units (most often between independent clauses) – emphasize the temporary self-sufficiency of given units, which are, of course, enriched with new clauses. In other words, these conjunctions stress the *parallelism* of the syntactical units and in this way, strangely and very powerfully, contribute to an arabesque structure. Everything in this Text – from conjunctions to its enormous structure – work in concert to the same end. I must now expand upon my earlier assertion that this derives from features of the Arabic language.

Namely, I have said that in the lexical domain meanings spread arabesquely out of the Arabic triliteral root, creating a rich "layering" in a barely discernible semantic field: the Arabic language in this regard is exceptionally rich and surprisingly regular. In addition, classical Arabic (modern Arabic is slightly altered, largely owing to the influence of foreign languages, though its essence is unchanged) because of the predominance of coordinating conjunctions, though not solely because of this, is often characterized by compound independent clauses. I state all of this because I believe that the poetic postulate of parallelism in Arabic art – above all in the verbal arts, because it is eminently a culture of Words and Speech – have their origin in the very essence of the Arabic language, and how it as such in a multitude of ways supports and affirms the principle I am asserting in my interpretation.

In addition to conjunctions, there exist other means which emphasize parallelism. Namely, juxtaposition is one of the characteristics of the language: words about one another without conjunctions, and because classical Arabic had no punctuation, the juxtaposition is all the more evident. In the Arabic language it is possible – and is even a source of pride – that in one series, in one sentence, several adjectives or several *accusatives of circumstance* (al-ḥāl) are juxtaposed to form an entire sentence. The verb *qāla* (said, told) in classical Arabic, and especially in the *Qur'an*, is frequent enough to present a genuine stylistic test for the sensitive translator; this verb, as with extremely repetitive connectors, actually juxtaposes long series of sentences in complete parallel construction, without the syntactical subordinate relationship usually expressed in dependent compound clauses.[84]

Thus, parallel construction is a feature of this language and its speakers have noticeably brought this feature to perfection, a result of which is a propensity for juxtaposition, the relative scarcity of dependent compound sentences, and the baroque grandiloquence of Arabic expression, which manifests itself in parallel sequencing attributes, the accusative of circumstance, parallel construction, and others, all of which contributes to the great expressive possibilities of the language and its ability to hold enormous emotional potential. The aesthetic principle of fragmentation in parallel construction is one of the reasons – meaning there are other reasons – why Aristotle's *Poetics* remained almost unknown, and in fact unrecognized in Arab-Islamic culture, especially in Arabic as its source – despite the fact that Aristotle's philosophy was well-known in that culture. In Arab-Islamic poetics, self-sustained and proud, Aristotle's famous rule that a literary work needed a beginning, middle and end was unacceptable. Arab-Islamic literature emphasizes the relative isolation and discreteness of fragments (*bayt* in content and form is usually reduced to an independent unit, and hence it is not appropriate to call it a *couplet*), and it is possible to transpose these fragments without endangering the artifact. With this in

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[84] This verb does not have the same stylistic value and therefore cannot have the same "treatment" in translation as, for example, it would in *One Thousand and One Nights* as opposed to the *Qur'an*, for style functions differently in the two works.

mind, it is clear why Arab-Islamic culture – in the titles of an endless series of works and their content – is dominated by *necklaces*, *thread,* etc.: this image beautifully expresses an essential concept, for only when pearls are strung together in parallel series do they impart the meaning of a necklace.

The most important works in the Arab-Islamic tradition, both before and after the *Qur'an*, were composed in accordance with the poetics of the arabesque. To mention only two, which in this regard are very similar works: the *Kalilah wa Dimnah* of Abdullah Ibn al-Muqaffa (died 759) and *One Thousand and One Nights.* Literary works of this kind – and they are truly among the greatest achievements of this tradition – evince an extraordinary and unique type of "narrative deception" which delights, rather than annoys the reader. Namely, in the first several stories the reader is captured by a "narrative longing" to reveal the story's end, but soon understands that the work consists of a multitude of stories each with its own end, and is entirely self-contained. Thus the importance of the end of the narration in the entire work, a significance born of unravelling, is effectively relativized, just as the narrative longing – although it is not banked – is in a very specific manner smoothed, "parcelled out". Even when the reader finishes reading these works, it becomes crystal clear that the point lies not in the conclusion of the work, but rather that their charm derives from the *journey* through "narrative landscapes"; their charm is in "narrative dreaming", and not in its resolution.

The *Qur'an* in a remarkable way employs every means put at its disposal through the entirety of the experience of tradition, as well as all of the possibilities of the language in which it was revealed, with the important caveat that the experience of this tradition, in poetic terms, is translated beyond the normative, for it has defined itself in it as something that neither repeats, nor is repeatable, and it has perfected the implied linguistic capacities to a degree that, to my knowledge, has not been thoroughly investigated.

Repetition in the tale of Moses, which I have now discussed through registering at different levels – from the microstructure to the macrostructure – has stylistic values that must be emphasized in order to demonstrate how style and poetics in this Text combine in such a way as to make them inextricable.

In phonetic-phonological terms, repetition in these specific quotations from the tale of the Calf are obvious and numerous. First, the frequent distribution of conjunctions builds specific figures of repetition, among which assonance generally dominates – there occurs a phonetic-phonological harmony that from a stylistic perspective makes laughable the Gabrielian "judgment" of chaotic repetition in the *Qur'an*. The conjunctions *then*, *as*, *and*, *then*, *though*, *so* etc., clearly function as figures of repetition, but I wish to stress that these figures also have the function of connectors: emphasizing this function seems to me significant with regard to the specific (arabesque) structure of the Text discussed here. Other figures of repetition in the Text on different levels interest me foremost as connectors, and therefore as elements in the Text which "signal contextual inclusion", especially as elements connecting the Text.[85] Highlighting the function of connectors strikes me as a priority first owing to the claim of a fragmented Text approaching chaos, and second that they demonstrate the means and extent of connections within the text with regard to its arabesque structure.

Thus, repetition of certain letters or words, as connections at the most basic level, are specific here inasmuch as they establish a relatively loose connection in the Text, while at the same time these elements create a relatively strong harmony throughout the whole of the Text, contributing to the tonality of the whole of its structure, and highlighting through stylistic means its coherence. If we keep in mind that connectors on the same level are frequently distributed throughout the whole of the tale of Moses, as well as the motifs that are the subject of this analysis, then it becomes clear how the Text strains with its stylistic means to connect the whole, although for quite specific reasons the tale is fragmented and arrayed based on the depth of the Text. In addition, it must be said that these figures-connectors on this level are characteristic of the sacred style (especially the repetitive conjunction *and*), which means that throughout the entirety of the Text's tales, and throughout the entirety of the *Qur'an*'s megastructure, there exists a particularly strong "unified stylistic perspective". In other words,

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[85] Cf.: Josip Silić, *Od rečenice do teksta (teoretsko-metodološke pretpostavke nadrečeničnog jedinstva)*, SNL, Zagreb, 1984., p. 61.

elements are at work that help construct the Text as an aesthetic whole, regardless of how unusual the whole, or – speaking from the perspective of stylistic markers – they construct the Text as an aesthetic whole all the more valuably by doing so in an unusual way.

Through this stylistic unification of the Text in a strongly pulsing aesthetic whole an entire series of connectors on higher levels take part. On a syntagmatic level, in specific short parts of the Text one notices the syntagm *after him* [after Moses], repeated three times, and repetition of the word *signs*; with *signs* twice comes the verb *to come*, or *to bring* (in the Arabic language this is the same verb, the meaning of which is changed only by a preposition).

Syntagms that are repeated – in a somewhat different context, as this Text, of course, resists automatic tautology – have the role of a connector: they *connect* different contexts through their own likeness, indicating precisely through this likeness the different contexts and the structural principle. At the same time, because the repeated syntagms are based on the same phonemes, phonetic consonance is further developed and raised to a higher level – from the phoneme-conjunction level to a syntagmatic level.

Sentence-level repetition is also present – to the fullest extent. The sentence *Accepted the Calf* is even repeated five times: it is the semantic core of the Text, its etymon. It is followed by the sentence *did wrong* three times, which is also an essential part of the message.[86] The statement on the acceptance of the Calf is twice followed by the sentence *it mooed.* Finally, there are sentence-rhetorical questions that recur, slightly modified and expanded by different elements: *Why do they not see it does not speak, nor guides them?* (*Did they not see that it did not give them any answer, nor had it power to do them harm or bring them gain?*)

Of course, this works consistently on the basis of euphony, for the repeated sentences are based upon the same phoneme; elements repeated at different levels are tonal and tectonic elements of the Text.

Sentential repetition in this Text is of the nature of a connector – sentences connect segments of the motifs of the Calf. In fact, the Text is

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[86] I aim to translate the Text of the *Qur'an* here so as to achieve optimal syntactic similarity with the source text, since this kind of analysis is only possible using the original.

rich with repetitive stylistic figures that are at the same time connectors. This enumeration is inexhaustible – which I will show below.

Namely, in the aforementioned Text there exist a series of grammatical and syntactical parallelisms, whether they are considered homogeneous sentence components, or as entire equivalent sentences. The sentences *They accepted the Calf* forms a parallelism, as well as other sentences that I have mentioned as repeated elements in the motif. This is syntactic recurrence, but there is a series of grammatical repetitions: repetition of the perfect, object, use of the non-finite active participle (*ẓālimun*) and so on. Earlier I mentioned the ability of the Arabic language to use derivation and inflection based on paradigms, so as to exceptionally enrich the lexical possibilities of this Text by allowing the use of grammatical parallelisms, which enormously enlarges the source for stylistic value.

Here I must refer to the previous explication of features of the Arabic language which I identified as an ability to paradigmatically, using the triliteral root, greatly enrich the lexicon. This, along with the juxtaposition of syntactical units, enhances the parallelism in a literary *arabesque* structure: it is now time to draw a conclusion from this point.

Namely, with regard to this pronounced ability of the Arabic language, one may conclude how parallel construction, on the levels that I have pointed out, translates into a crucial aesthetic principle that could be called *parallelism*. An entire series of elements in this language indeed tends toward parallelism, according superbly with the poetics and aesthetics of its own tradition: they are the creature of the same language and its culture. It is useful to bear in mind something else significant in this tradition.

In general, parallelism is dominant in poetic language – in poetry they are particularly at home, contributing toward the truly poetic function of language and the aesthetic value of the work. To be sure, parallelism can be widely noted in literary prose works, but in poetic works its distribution is different – it is more common and regular. If one takes into account the general strategy of the Arabic language in expressing parallel construction and its translation into aesthetic parallelism, it is easy to understand why poetry is indeed dominant in the Arab (and Arab-Islamic) tradition, and that the language is so given to ornate expression, which it achieves through

a veritable accumulation of parallel lexical and syntactical elements. In a unique way the *Qur'an* employs these tendencies of the Arabic language, cultivating a grand strategy for constructing parallelisms. At the same time, the *Qur'an* has prepared a surprise in this regard. In fact, it is not an abundance of parallelism transformed into a poetic work, because it is always distanced from the realm of poetry because of its magical origin, yet owing to, among other things, its own parallelisms the *Qur'an* is not a prose work either: it has used the experience of tradition and the potential of the Arabic language optimally, at the same time exceedingly enriching both. Therefore it is not odd – if we consider all of these features of the Arabic language – that Arab culture, as I have mentioned, is a culture of the Word, a culture of Speech; in Islam there are neither miracles nor saints, but one generally acknowledged miracle – the miracle of the Word: the supernatural quality of the language and style of the *Qur'an* is unquestioned by speakers of Arabic. May God help its translators!

In marking in the motif of the Calf repeated elements that act as connectors in the Text and which some have deemed incoherent and chaotic, I raised the question: what remains of this short Text if we remove the accumulation of homogenous connectors, especially repetitive figures? In other words, is it not because this repetition creates an excessive degree of redundancy?

In searching for an answer to this reasonable question, we must determine which functional style belongs to the Text, and hence to which genre it belongs; the answer to the first questions leads to that of the second. To my understanding of the Text, therein lies its greatest surprise.

The rhythmo-melodic purpose of repeated elements

In truth, for the reader of the tale of Moses who approaches it as a prose narrative, its repetition is genuinely redundant. However, if the reader regards the *Qur'an* as a megastructure written/revealed as *sağ'* (rhymed and rhythmical prose) then the reader will discover that *sağ'* are elements of that structure. The reader of the Qur'anic Text may note with casual ease

the rhyme and rhythm at the end of each verse, or by the relatively uniform brevity of the short suras from the Meccan period of the Revelation; it can be seen at first glance. Nevertheless, the *Qur'an* is remarkably consistent in preserving the "unity of its genre perspective": and we discover this where we would least expect it – in the tales, in all of their motifs and in the segments "dispersed" in the depths of the Text, such that the rhytmo-melodic function of the greater part of the elements of these motifs, and particularly the motifs themselves, are unclear at first glance into the depths of the Text. The wisdom of this structure is exceptional. Its stylistics largely evade many readers.

It is unexpected that a tale of sacred history would be related in rhymed and rhythmic prose, but it is done here, even if the story is not told in a single block, *in continuo*: its task is very complex because it must, conveyed in this way, serve a variety of purposes. If it were told in plain speech, then the accumulated repetition, as in the motif of the Calf, would constitute redundancy. However, it is commonplace for repetition that is redundant in terms of vernacular to function differently in stylistically pronounced texts: they are formative aesthetic factors. Because of this, repetition in this motif is not redundant, but rather aesthetically and structurally purposeful; repetition here is not chaotic, but reflective of stylistic value.

I believe that it is clear that the figures of repetition in this text create euphony, a melodic harmony. Moreover, the repetition of larger units – syntagmatic and syntactical – builds the rhythm of the Text, bearing the tale away from its prosodic narration. However, the Text analyzed here is unique in that, beyond all expectation, this same rhythmic principle, like a powerful echo, flows deep within its structure. In fact, repetition extends not only to the fragments of the motif, but to the motifs themselves (as with the motif of the Calf) within the Text's deep structure, and in places we would hardly expect. Of course, these return us, surprised, to the basic theme – to be more exact, they return us multiple times to the basic themes: of monotheism and paganism as the central themes of the Book on an ideological level, on the one hand, and simultaneously on the other they return us to the basic phonetic-phonological and structural theme, alerting us to the Text's straining to consistently create melodic harmony

and rhythm throughout its own entirety. Thus, the tale of Moses shows its stylistic distinctiveness not only in terms of its parts, which are rhythmic and in several places rhymed, for whole sentences are repeated, but also in the overflowing of its stylistic intensity – into the depths of the structure, for repetition is arrayed according to the tale's depth.

Yet here we must also bear in mind something else significant to the brilliant rhyme and rhythm of the Text: the repeated motifs and their repeated segments construct in a *twofold* manner the general formal value of the Text. Namely, up to now I have demonstrated the role of repetition in rhythm and stylistic value solely in the motifs, and following that in the tale and macrostructure. However, one should bear in mind that each of these segments (every ayah) at the same time very actively contributes toward the rhyme and rhythm of the sura in which it is found. The sura in which these segments of tales are found have different rhymes, differ in the meter of ayat which themselves vary in length within the sura, such that each segment of the motif adapts to its location, and not only adapts but exists both as a constitutive element and agent of the rhythmic-melodic qualities of the given sura. This reveals the miraculous power of the Text.

At this level of analysis it becomes clear that repetition – from conjunctions-phonemes to complex sentences – functions as a means of connection. However, I believe the current explication leads to the conclusion that *entire motifs which are repeated are in fact connectors.* This means that in the sacred Text motifs exist as connectors at a level above that of sentences. Motifs repeat in the depth of the megastructure, always within a different context, as conjunctive elements of the tale and Text in its entirety with regard to its genre specificity and form, which enables me to speak of these motifs in *Qur'an* as connectors. These add another dimension to the development of repetition.

The motif-connector has an important rhetorical role in addition to its rhythmic-melodic function; figures of repetition as connectors "not only have an aesthetic function but an argumentative one as well".[87] Namely, one of the aims of repetition is to draw attention to the repeated motif. Through

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[87] Marina Katnić-Bakaršić, "Figure kao konektori u tekstu", *Radovi*, vol. XII/2000, Philosophy Faculty, Sarajevo, 2000, p. 62.

repetition, the motif draws attention to itself in two ways. On one hand, it draws attention to its aesthetic function, its connective significance, while on the other it proclaims its argumentative function in complete accordance with the sacred style. Indeed, it is time that I return to the persistent claim that the *Qur'an* cannot be viewed as a work of art and that it exists not in the aesthetic sphere, but rather the argumentative. Accordingly, the repeated motifs of the Calf perform a number of functions that successfully build the literary-aesthetic value of the Text, yet its ultimate aim is ideological: it offers arguments against idolatry, and in favor of (Islamic) monotheism, and warns of the consequences of ingratitude toward God. This owes to the very essence of the *Qur'an*, to its basic message and purpose, which is emphasized through repetition in proportion to its significance. The nearly immeasurable poetic and stylistic instruments employed toward this ultimate purpose of using the work's miraculousness and quality to enrich and cultivate beauty, for the *Qur'an* in many places *explicitly* draws attention to the beauty of its own expression. It affirms this beauty as well *implicitly*, immanently: my text here should demonstrate this. Nevertheless, beauty is not an end in itself, and its ultimate task is to lead the way to God.

Even the fact that the *Qur'an* tells the tale of Moses and the sinful Israelists expresses precisely what I have stated above. Namely, the reader may ask: Why does the *Qur'an* "tell stories" (I put these words in quotes because they connote less instruction than entertainment, which is not the intention of the *Qur'an*) to the prophet Muhammed regarding events which occurred long before him? What do such tales as that of Moses have to do with us today?

The "narrative" of the tale exists for two basic reasons, and neither concerns entertainment, but are both of an argumentative nature. The first reason is that the tale *argues* for the continuity of history and the continuity of Islamic monotheism within it. The second reason is that the dramatic events in history show the dire consequences of ingratitude toward God. The ultimate goal is to impart a lesson, and not entertainment; the healing quality of argumentation owes to the enrichment of the aesthetic means.

Therefore – tell the tale so that they may reflect, commands the *Qur'an*.

THE SEMIOTIC SPACE IN THE QUR'ANIC TEXT

The types of settings in which the Text works

The *Qur'an* is the Word which, in its very essence, is preoccupied with space. I highlight *word* and *space* because here I will address the semiotic space in the *Qur'an* which – not by accident, and importantly in the given context – in several places calls itself *the Word*.

In one sense, the *Qur'an* is immersed in space, in the world by the very act of its revelation: the most frequently used word in the Text used for its own immersion in the world, especially with regard to its revelation, is the verb *nazala* in different forms and in different verb types, though in each case it essentially means *to descend/descending*, which is, obviously, a linguistic marking of space, or spatial relations. From this it can be seen that an important feature of the sacralization of the Text is to place it within vertically structured spatial relations: lowering not only entails the binary opposition of *higher-lower*, it also emphasizes it. This opposition, strangely, is not realized through antagonism, but rather through the effort to reestablish *relations*, towards a particular communicationally functional harmony. Using the marker *nazala*, which is often unjustifiably and inadequately translated as *to reveal*, the *Qur'an* exceptionally and from its very start establishes a system of values in the world: descending can only be accomplished from *above*, which means that whoever lowers something must be preeminently exalted, while to whomever something is lowered is placed *lower* – depending on who performs the lowering and the need for its lowering; this does not necessarily entail degradation, although this very positioning creates the preconditions – both semantic

and semiotic – to be degraded, while the chance remains, of course, still for a vertical soaring upwards, in an ethical rather than literal sense; ascent is its ultimate goal and ethical endeavor. In any case, it is situated at the lower part of the vertical whose ends/poles realize their full significance through communication. This communication is religious or ethical in nature. To be sure, the *Qur'an* uses other words with meanings relatively close to this one (e.g. *to reveal - wḥy*), but by choosing the sign *to lower* as the most frequent instance in this field we are faced with a particular stylistic process with a whole series of connotations that could be the subject of a scholarly field constituted as semiotic stylistics.[88]

In another sense, the *Qur'an* has a crucial purpose – to present a unfamiliar space to such a degree that its unfamiliarity conveys that of the Next world, and therefore to present something that utterly transcends human experience and lies beyond the world and space. It seizes space on another plane: Heaven and Hell are (eschatological) spaces, as well as the As-Sirat bridge, the classing of souls of the Day of Judgment is performed in a space, etc. Both world/space are represented by the same means – the Word, which represents a series of signs in the semiotic sense. Hence it is understandable that the representation of two *utterly different* worlds – proportionate to the almost unimaginable gulf between this world and the next – leaves the very Word to confront enormous temptations and demands: it expresses "content" which in the extra-experiential beyond cannot be culturally mediated. Therefore, on one hand, the Word confronts a task before which, in this regard, no semiotic system exists – it must denote an extra-experiential world – and on the other, Man is left ultimately in the difficult position of comprehending the sometimes unreachable senses of the Word in all of their aspects, and to gain experience of the Next world, which of course will not be fully disclosed until the Day of Judgment.[89]

The preoccupation of the Word with space, then, is complete and manifests itself by encompassing both worlds. It is natural that the semiotics

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[88] See: Marina Katnić-Bakaršić, *Stilistika*, Ljiljan, Sarajevo, 2001, p. 27.

[89] Of this exceptional position of the Text, as well as that of its recipient, Allah states: *If we had sent down this* Qur'an *upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and coming apart from fear of Allah.* (*Qur'an*, 59:21.)

of space in the *Qur'an* manifests itself across all of its "lower levels" as well, establishing its own syntax and paradigm within this global semiotic space and forming distinctive semiotic stylistics by selecting certain signs, among which the majority, given the sacred estrangement of the Text, have ample connotative layers. It would be impossible to enumerate these and to explain the semiotics of each, nor is this the purpose of this work, yet it is critical to name some of the signs that could be considered characteristic of the Qur'anic semiotic space. In addition, in pointing to several signs I wish to demonstrate a paradigm and suggest a relevant methodological approach to the Text, an approach that offers great opportunities for exploring the stylistics of the Text and its cognitive potential. First, I will point out the semiotics and semiotic syntax of a small group of signs for different types of human settings, and the space/spaces in which humans act in one manner or another, because in this Text humans *not only live* in a space, but rather always *act* within spaces, transforming both themselves and the space, either through their own actions or God's intervention, which is, again, caused by human actions.

In the Text there is frequent use of the sign *qarya,* which is inconsistently translated, suggesting it is often not understood properly. I will address its different translations later. *Qarya* in its primary, natural sense signifies a *village*, with the etymological core of *hospitality*. However, in this Text, after careful analysis, I have come to the conclusion that in it significant shifts have occurred from the denotative to multiple layers of connotative meanings, and hence the stylistic value of this sign is quite abundant. Namely, *qarya* in the text never means *village*, nor a *city*, but generally means *a human community* inhabited in some unspecified space of indeterminate location, for *qarya* is a sign for space. For a community that is not situated explicitly in space the Text uses the word *'umma*, *qawm*, *sha'b*, *'ahl,* etc. *Qarya* in the Text is always that through which God communicates with the World: he sends messengers to the *qarya* – neither to the city nor the village, but solely to the *qarya* – and when God destroys a community because of its unworthiness, he neither destroys a *city* nor a *village,* rather a *qarya* as a human community in some space. It follows that *qarya* is a sign for the intermediary space between heaven and earth,

between God and the active human community. In spatial terms, as I have said, *qarya* is completely nonspecific, and in terms of time is infinite – to be precise, it lasts as long as God communicates with man. Nevertheless, because the Text emphasizes the binary opposition between *higher-lower*, which I began by discussing as vertical, *qarya* is positioned as a space with a twofold moral value: it has the duty to conduct itself morally and faithfully – otherwise it will suffer destruction at the hands of God, as the Text states in numerous places. Thus it is clear that God neither addresses – either in the form of mercy through messengers, or punishment in the form of destruction – a village nor a town, but rather the *qarya*, the human community in an unspecified space in an indeterminate time. Nonetheless, the sign *qarya* does not lose its primary meaning of *hospitality*: in the wide spaces of wasteland where prophets appeared (and in spiritual wastelands, to which the prophets were sent) *qarya* has a special value and meaning – it offered an oasis-like value and because of that conveyed the full sense of hospitality, which must be expressed in relation to the direct action of God – of accepting His message. Perhaps the reader expects that I would propose a translation/suggestion for the sign of *qarya*, but as I made a point of demonstrating previously that translations of these signs should not be used, as their connotations are developed in the Arabic language, and with this sacred Text in the Arabic language it is impossible to translate the sign of *qarya* and succesfully convey all of its meanings.

It is interesting at this point to raise the syntactic relationships introduced by the signs of *madīna* and *balad* as spatial signs.

Madīna has the basic meaning of *city*. Etymologically, the accent of this sign is always on urbanity, on urban organization, even civilization, and it is used in this sense in the Text. Thus the difference between *madīne* and *qarya* is large and in this way the Text expediently distinguishes between the two. Since the sign of *madīna* has an emphasis on urban organization and civilization in this sense, it is significantly more closely connected with space than the sign of *qarya* in the sense I have intrepreted it to have: *madīna* has already been definied as a type of setting, one more significantly spatially (and temporally) specific, almost circumscribed, such that it would be incongruous for God to send prophets to a city in the

sense of an organized urban space. The space for His acts is significantly wider. In the same vein, the Text speaks of how God, because of human unworthiness, destroys the *qarya*, and not the *madīna,* because his aim is not to destroy an *urban center,* a settlement as such, and to destroy order, but rather that of morally wayward humanity in space. To be sure, in certain places the Text speaks of the destruction of certain cities, and even emphasizes their grandeur as the object of God's wrath,[90] yet this is not the rule, and moreover these organized settlements are the object of God's wrath only when they represent human arrogance towards God, and not as organized settlements as such.

Balad is, again, a spatial sign that is not necessarily tied to human community, and especially not to the kind of cultivation suggested by the sign of *madina.* The sign of *balad* in the Text is very frequent and means land, especially in terms of a region or district, although the semantic origin of this word derives from *dust* or *untouched land* (soil). This sign in the Text is used the closest to its primary meaning, while the previous two signs carry much more connotative meanings.

In basic language, these three signs lack the same meaning which they have in the Text and in which they receive their additional meanings: in this system their vernacular meanings are encoded in addition to their literary meanings, and as such their connotation reveals various layers, variously remote from their vernacular meanings. For example, *qarya* is the richest in meaning, to the extent that it is even an abstraction (as a sign of the mediation between Heaven and Earth), yet the Text still successfully retains this sign in semiotic space as *qarya*, a specific space that furnishes the setting for the actions of the human community, as well as the missions of the prophets and Divine intervention.

Madīna and *balad*, as I have said, have fewer layers of connotative meaning, yet at the same time, through a strikingly interesting treatment in the Text these semiotic signs attain an inverse relationship to their own vernacular meanings. In the vernacular, on a basic level, *qarya* (village) is the smallest "spatial unit", followed by *madīna* (town), and lastly *balad*

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[90] *Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with 'Ād / With Iram in which were lofty pillars / The likes of which had never been created…* (*Qur'an*, 89:6-8.)

(region). However, on a different level, that of literary organization, the Text indeed establishes them in reverse order: the broadest space for God's act is neither *madīna* (town) nor *balad* (region), but rather *qarya,* whose vernacular meaning is *village*, though it would be a crucial mistake to understand it so literally, as this wouldn't allow for the grander meaning of the Text and its organization on this higher level. This means that the Text has fashioned something utterly unusual and far removed from the sign's supposed vernacular meaning. In other words, we find in the Text a masterful stylistic treatment in the domain of semiotic space: the actual hierarchy of *village-town-region* in the Text is very successful and purposefully modeled, and so unusual that it proves itself critical to be interpreted from the perspective of semiotic stylistics.

Yet the wonders do not end here. Namely, unlike a literary artistic text, which further organizes language, introducing it into another code, while this Text is literary it is not artistic. The space it represents is conveyed by literary means, owing to the structure of the Text and its semiotic system, and in one that is above that of the vernacular. At this level precisely the stylistic estrangement that I have mentioned is made. However, the *Qur'an* is not an artistic work in the sense that it culminates in the sphere of transposition, rather it is a work that always through its own semiotic system represents *reality* and not *fiction*. The representation of hell in Dante or the works on al-Maʿarrī are in no way the same as that of the *Qur'an*. Therefore, the semiotic markers of space are concerned with realism: the *qarya* of which the Text speaks lies not in the realm of fiction, but rather in the reality in which God and his prophets act. Thus, in contrast with the artistic work that is encoded on two levels (on the primary and one above), the sacred Text is encoded on two levels employing all of experience and the magic of literature, yet upon these further encoding through a return to the primary (realistic) meaning, which ultimately cannot be the same as before. Language (the Word) is a process that may fashion the miraculous; and so testifies to those miraculous stresses and temptations of which I spoke from the start. The stylistic marvels of literary artistic works are considerable, yet they are "one-sided", while the marvels of the literary experience of sacred Texts is even greater because they are "twofold".

This is because, regardless of the fact that the Text represents reality and not fiction, we are habituated to the literary and so accept the resultant (literary) encoding, which is clearly because the Text insists on its own literary organization: using a persistent abundance of literary-aesthetic means (from rhyme to the most complex tropes), the Text simply does not allow itself to be read as aesthetically neutral information – to the contrary. Otherwise, the Text as Scripture could have been lowered to *qarya* in the form of a kind of constitution – in the form of chapters and paragraphs – which would be inconceivable, however vertical the communication, i.e. a truly vertical hierarchy for it is very aesthetically enriched and directs its least expected stylistic means toward reality. The Word has lived up to the task.

The paths between spatial units

Space in the Text is connected by different paths. The sign of *ṭarīq* is more denotative; at times it is used in a literal sense (*path*), and sometimes in a negative metaphorical sense – as the path to Hell.[91] Nevertheless, it seems important that it is reserved primarily as a sign for horizontal space. The sign *sabīl* is rich in connotations – up to the point that it often does not mean *path* but rather *way*. A similar connotative richness can be found in the sign *hudan*, although this sign is often transformed from *the right path* into the metaphorical sense of *guidance*.

Yet in the semiotic space, which is organized in the Text both vertically and horizontally, a special place is given to the sign *sirat*. Namely, *ṣirāṭ* is a privileged sign of the spiritual path. Even in the first sura, in *al-Fātiḥa*, this sign is repeated twice, and both times precisely with this meaning: *Guide us to the straight path, the Path of those whom you have favored*. The spiritual path – *ṣirāṭ* – is a vertical path precisely because it is spiritual;

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[91] *Indeed, those who disbelieve and commit wrong [or injustice] - never will Allah forgive them, nor will He guide them to a path. Except the path of Hell; they will abide therein forever. And that, for Allah, is [always] easy. (Qur'an, 4:168-9.)*

it reaches the highest ethical values, those of God himself. The strong support offered the semiotic sign of *ṣirāṭ* – unlike that given the other sign for *path* – is apparent from the fact that the Text frequently associates it with *al-mustaqim*. This attribute emphasizes the vertical path, but in terms of value, in an ethical sense. Thus it has been shown often how every translation misses the crucial connotative nuance of this attribute and its syntactical relationship to the noun *ṣirāṭ*. The relevant translations of the *Qur'an* in the Bosnian language convey the syntagm *al- ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* as *the Right path*, from which the sense of strict verticality is not obvious: the right path may be straight and largely horizontal. Yet the Arabic word *al-mustaqīm* disallows this possibility because the active participle means: *one who stands up*, *who raised himself to his feet and stands upright*, etc. Of course, standing (on one's feet), in an upright position, connotes an entire series of positive meanings: legitimacy, validity, dignity, especially positive activity, etc.

Thus, the markers in the Text for *path* differ greatly, both in terms of their semiotic-syntactical function and their wealth of connotation, such that their deployment according to these features is a significant stylistic technique in its semiotics of space.

For general orientation in space the Text uses two more signs: *yamīn* (right) and *shimāl* (left). Here one cannot help but note the duality or binary opposition which the Text affirms throughout. Let us recall briefly that there are two worlds, of which there are two main spaces – Heaven and Hell; where people will be classed into two groups, etc. This binarity – thus opposition – always is an expression of the ethical opposition of *good-evil*, *exalted-degraded*, *blessed-damned,* etc.; this persistent affirmation of binarity in opposition serves the purpose of continuously emphasizing ethical contrasts, and of course the vital importance of religious virtue.

Thus, in the semiotics of space in the Text, on the level of general orientation, two essentially contradictory signs are repeated: *high-low*, *right path-stray path,* etc. It is important to bear in mind that these series of connotations ultimately lead to the establishment and affirmation of the binarity of *good-evil*, the basis for the entire sacred Text. Of course, the opposition of these principles, or poles, is specific insofar as the principles

realize themselves through opposition. One cannot exist without the other: *high* cannot exist without *low;* and what the *right path* really is we can only know from *the stray path*, such that the ultimate result is that the beauty and appeal of virtue is reinforced by the malevolence of evil, while the blessings of Paradise emerge only from the infernal wrathfulness of Hell, etc.

From the right comes the light, from the left light dwindles

It is in this sense that the Text uses the signs of *right* and *left*. When the Text depicts a future in which both good and evil will be deemed so on the Day of Judgment it states: *And those on the right side – what are the companions of the right?*[92] There follows a detailed description of the blessings of heaven and the absolute indulgence granted those on the *right side*. A little later in the same sura the Text states: *And those on the left side – what are the companions of the left?*[93] and follows this with a description of the torments of Hell and the sufferings of those on the *left side*. In this same eschatological space, the good, the true believers, will be given the Book in their right hand, and will be saved: *The day will surely come when We shall summon each community with its leader. Those who are given their books in their right hands will read their recorded doings, and shall not in the least be wronged.*[94] Yet those who will be given the Book in their left hands will be hideously punished: *But he who is given his Book in his left hand will say – "Would that my book were not given to me, / Would that I knew nothing of my account! / Would that my death had ended all."*[95] In another place the Text describes people as *treacherous* because they came from the right side and brought evil, although it is obligatory to come from

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[92] *Qur'an*, 56:27.

[93] *Qur'an*, 56:41.

[94] *Qur'an*, 17:71.

[95] *Qur'an*, 69:25.-7.

the right side, that is, to bring good: *indeed, you used to come at us from the right*.[96]

Thus, the Text consistently uses the right side as a mark of the good, and the left as a mark of evil. In keeping with this, it is likely that Heaven and Hell, in the eschatological space, are established on this principle. Not only in the Text, but in Islamic culture generally the right side is always given priority, because it always represents good.[97] It is possible that this has some higher meaning of which I am unaware, but to the extent of my knowledge – as one Text and one Culture – I can say that this is a system that can be coherently explicated from the perspective of spatial semiotics. Therefore, one cannot speak of randomness in terms of the choice of the left or right side: since these are words for space in the Text and in Culture, they are ordered consistently and coherently – as a complete order. In the Text, in addition to the quotes above, there is frequent use of these semiotic signs, always with the same meaning. Moreover, the Text – as a feature of Arabic script – is written from right to left, as books are read from right to left. The ritual ablutions that precede prayer – in wudu – always begin with the right side of the body. On a human's right shoulder an angel inscribes one's good deeds, and on the left shoulder an angel inscribes one's bad deeds. Ultimately the books written will be given in the right or left hand – depending, I suppose, on the volume of work by each of these angels. In every case, the Text and its Culture organize ("horizontal") space according to *right and left*. In doing so they convert it into a value – positive or negative – such that the entirety of the *sacred space* becomes in fact a space of value. It is a spiritual ethical space.

In terms of the sign of *shimāl* (left/right) one strikingly interesting fact emerges which, on the level of language and spatial dimensions, underlines the universal malevolence of evil.

Namely, the sign of *right* in the Text consistently uses the linguistic root of *YMN*; I will not address this specifically here. However, for *left*, or

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[96] *Qur'an*, 37:28.

[97] According to the Tartu semiotics school, there is a well-known preference for the right side in the Old Russian language, and in Slavic culture generally. Its preference in Islamic culture (with a strong emphasis on the *Islamic* faith), especially in the *Qur'an*, is absolute.

the left, the language has two roots: *SHML* and *YSR*. The root *YSR* in the Text is not used to distinguish between the signs of *left/the left*, rather it is used in forming that sign in profane texts, especially in modern Arabic; the sacred Text always uses the sign derived from the root *SHML* and so selects the development of its connotation and stylistic value.[98] How does it achieve this?

Only on solely a semantic basis, the root *SHML* carries a series of negative meanings that I would like to point out: *north* as a mark for *frigid*, or as an (negative) opposition to south; to be exposed to the *cold* north wind; to have a *bad opinion* of something; *bad omen,* etc. In contrast to this is the root *YSR* which also performs the linguistic signs for *left/the left/ left hand,* etc. However, the root *YSR* has a wealth of positive meanings: *light*; *successful*; *relief*; *progress*, etc. After overviewing the semantic sources of both roots, it is clear why the Text uses *SHML* for expressing the negativity of the left side, and not *YSR*, which would, with regard to its prevailing positive meaning, obscure the contrast crucial to the Text as a potent agent of binary opposition.

My thoughts on the Text are grounded in the original language – in the Arabic language – because it works with such a layered system that this Text cannot be replaced by its translations, especially if they are the work of careless translators. Specifically, analysis of the semiotics of space in the Text shows how the Word imposes a difficult task, as well as how it enriches the final realization of this task. Although semantics is a universal science, as is semiotics, and in recent decades has been on the rise, there exist certain semantic characteristics in each language and semiotic connections to these. It will suffice here to offer two examples that will be focused upon in this analysis. The noun/sign *qarya*, which clearly, although one cannot completely replace it with a noun/sign in the Bosnian language, would mean: *village, settlement, town…* The original in the Text performs a very complex task enabled by the social and cultural milieu, the original

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[98] To be fair, the Text in one place, unexpectedly and where it had persistently used the root *SHML*, introduces the lexeme *mash'ama* (= to be unhappy) as synonymous in meaning with *SHML*: *and those on the right side – what are the companions on the right / On the other the unfortunate ones – and who are the unfortunate ones?* (*Qur'an,* 56:8-9.)

semantic beam through which the third level of reading the Text transforms to a significant degree its own primary meaning. Similarly, the noun/sign *shimāl:* in the Bosnian language *left hand/left* lacks important connotations possessed by the Arabic sign of *shimāl*. Even in spatial semiotics, *left/left hand* does not indicate a space on the same level and with the same crucial nuances as does the sign *north*; these connotations are never divested from the sign *shimāl,* which cannot be translated otherwise but as *left hand*. Therefore it is a reasonable comprehension for every translation of a Text with such powerful and complex systems. It is necessary to briefly point out the translations of several signs that I will analyze here, not because I wish to criticize the translation, but rather to demonstrate special features of the semiotics of the original Arabic. A critical representation of translations of the Text largely reflects the immaturity of the critic, and as such underestimates the polyvalency and breadth of sources of the Text, for a *critic* approaches it from the position that he should have the last word. Hence my attitude towards translations should always be taken as a dialogue, and not as criticism.[99]

Korkut translates the sign of *qarya* as *town*, just as Karić. Pandža and Čaušević translate this sign descriptively, as well as many others, with much interpolation, such that their work actually hedges between translation and interpretation; as such it cannot be included among the corpus of translations analyzed here.[100] Yet in many other places Karić is notably more successful, with a greater sensitivity to style and language in his translation of the Text. For example, for the derivatives of the roots which illustrate the semiotic markers *right-left* he primarily uses the signs in the Bosnian language *right-left*, which is of crucial importance for Qur'anic spatial semiotics and semiotic stylistics. Also valid from this perspective

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[99] I also translated the *Qur'an* into the Bosnian language (Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 2004.). However, in writing this stylistic interpretation of the *Qur'an*, I have sometimes come upon new insights and previously unnoticed stylistic values of the Text, and feel the strong desire to correct my own translation.

[100] The translation of the *Qur'an* from the pen of Čaušević and Pandža appeared in 1937 and went through many editions. It was a truly precious translation and played an essential role in the culture of South Slavic languages, but has ultimately been superseded.

is Karić's translation: *You have, pretendedly, come at us from the right.*[101] However, Korkut in all of these verses with the semiotic signs of *right-left* consistently replaces their connotations: *fortunate-unfortunate.* Such a translation is inadequate for several reasons. First, the reduction of this sign which has more connotations than the one he ascribes to it is unacceptable for reasons that are so obvious I needn't extensively explain them here. Second, translating *right-left* as *fortunate-unfortunate* ignores spatial semiotics, and thus greatly diminishes the stylistic richness of the original. Finally, those on the *right/left* sides are not *fortunate/unfortunate* in terms of critical aspects of Tafsir and religious aspects generally. This is because *to be fortunate* implies certain favorable circumstances that fall outside the power and influence of the one who is fortunate: good fortune comes to us, so to say, from beyond our actions and merits; it is random and irrational. However, dividing people on the Day of Judgment into those of the right or left side arises not from any principle based upon their fortune, rather it is the *result* of their faithful or transgressive actions; for their entire lives they struggle for virtue (which is the meaning of their life) and precisely for that reason they are placed on the right side, which is for them – and this is critical – promised, hence they receive it neither by accident nor by chance, but as an acknowledgement.[102] It should be noted from the perspective of the Text, in its semiotic stylistics, that the opposition of *right-left* is not a stylistic figure or a sign that can be transformed or reduced to a single layer of meaning: the consequences would be great, for the Text does not exist solely in the world of (artistic) fiction but in the world of our reality and eschatology.

For readers who are not believers, the Text is an artistic work. For believers, however, it is not an artistic work, but the Word of God. It is a question of the human reader's right to choose. Yet even those who are not believers should not ignore the Text's insistence that it is a work of art: in the dialogue between the reader's consciousness and the reader's experience with the Text it would be irresponsible to ignore something

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[101] *Qur'an*, 37:28.

[102] In the same way Korkut inadequately translates the sign *yamīn* (right) in 37:28: *You have deceived us*, instead of: *you have come at us from the right.*

the Text insists upon. This does not mean, of course, that every reader of the Text must be or must become a believer (this would be one means of negating the Text's ubiquitous binarity), but insisting on the Text's basic position is critical for understanding all of its systems, and for the functioning of the Text's megastructure.

In terms of distinguishing between the Text and art, it should be said that its argumentation is based not – especially not in the traditional understanding of art – on an expression of reality, but rather represents reality and creates it simultaneously. Art is, to paraphrase Lotman, a space of freedom, because it brings freedom to those spheres that lie outside of reality; it makes possible not only the forbidden but the impossible.[103] In this Text, however, this type of freedom does not exist; to the contrary, everything is fixed firmly in obligations and laws. The Text furnishes an illusion of modelling. To be more precise, it models and encodes on two levels, as I have already shown: on a vernacular level and through that of literary signs. However, the principle and ultimate purpose of its functioning do not remain at the level of artistic modelling, which means it both employs masterfully and surpasses, but rather after this twofold encoding returns to its own inartistic reality. That is why this sacred Text transcends the literary-artistic text: its encoding is multiplicitous and complex, for it is a Text with literary value of the highest order and as such constructs an exceedingly complex system.

From this nature of the Text emerges a specific relationship between the ethical and aesthetic. In artistic literature aesthetics hold priority to such an extent that sometimes it represses or ignores the ethical. Of course, this relationship in essence is much more complex, given that works of art represent a space of freedom – returning to Lotman – and artistic literature cannot entirely ignore ethical values even if its chief plane is composed of aesthetic values.

Rather, in this Text the relationship is inverted: it ultimately results in an ethical space. Aesthetic value in this Text is critical (it insists on both its explicit and implicit poetics), yet its ultimate goal does not involve values of this kind, but instead those from an ethical space, a space attained

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[103] Jurij M. Lotman, *Kultura i eksplozija*, p. 177.

through the vast and opulent spaces of linguistics, stylistics, semiotics, etc. In the Text there is no rivalry, ignorance, or indifference – aesthetics and ethics are in perfect harmony. In fact, it is the unique and exquisite space of the sacred Text.

II
AL-FĀTIḤA: THE GATE
OF INFINITE STYLISTICS

STYLISTIC PRELUDE

It should come as no surprise to the reader of this book that I will occasionally, albeit briefly, return to some of its basic themes. In this section the theme is the contextualization of the Qur'anic Text, particularly its literary-aesthetic actualization in the tradition within which the Text is found and which it in turn reshaped. My occasionally returning to this basic theme arises not from a lack of research focus, but rather is a function of research consistency – all the more so because I am aware of this process and what I see as a kind of demand the Text makes on the researcher of its style and its general literary-aesthetic value. This is because the virtue of this Text is that nearly all of its own value is realized in a context which the Text continuously constructs, demonstrating a compelling and relentless superiority in the sense that it presents itself as the most dynamic and most creative Text in its cultural universe.

In the prologue to the second part of this book – which is entirely devoted to research into the stylistics of only one introductory Qur'anic verse, widely known as *al-Fātiḥa* – I wish to show the unique way that the *Qur'an* corresponds to its literary tradition, and at the same time how it satisfies an innate human need for optimal stylized expression which the *Qur'an* clearly respects and in a unique way enriches. In other words, with an "approachable" stylistic analysis of the "key to the *Qur'an*", the sura *al-Fātiḥa*, I wish to highlight, on one hand, the implied relationship between the Qur'anic style and the existing literary tradition in Arabia, and on the other hand, to show the obvious necessity when reciting the Text, and especially in its translation, to take account of the stylistic value of Text, whose perfection in some suras is convincingly demonstrated. Translations of the *Qur'an* into the Bosnian language largely do not invest

in an effort to stylize particular suras – an effort adequate to the challenges suggested by the original Text – and neither do many reciters recite it with the necessary sensitivity for the rhyme and rhythm which the original demands.

The *Qur'an* in many places expresses a negative attitude towards (Arabic) poetics that had already by the pagan period of Arabian history (*al-ğāhiliyya*) reached *technical* perfection. Among the reasons for this attitude toward poetics was the fact of the union of the poet and priest in a single personage – in the pagan *kāhin* (shaman) who with poetic language would ritually commune with pagan divinities.

The *Qur'an* reasonably points out the ideological and – *implicitly* – poetic deficiencies of pre-Islamic creativity, yet at the same time establishes a competitive relationship with this tradition, and succeeds in overcoming these deficiencies. This is because Qur'anic expression represents a unique twist in a literary sense: contrary to what we encounter in poetry, as well in rhymed and rhythmic prose (sağ'), the semantic saturation of the Qur'anic text is optimally achieved, to such an extent that it always compels *contemplation,* and with its own polyvalency and ambiguity, presents itself as a structure always open to transhistorical interpretation, while its form (in some suras, such as *al-Fātiḥa*) exceptionally demonstrates simultaneously mastery of the techniques of literary expression. In a further superior outgrowth of traditional literary expression, in the *Qur'an* (as a concrete example, in the sura under discussion) there prevails the lapidariness of Saj' (rhymed and rhythmic prose) in which paragraphs represent independent semantic units, while several ayat can stand as independent semantic units, and yet their full effect emerges if they are read and comprehended as a whole – as an optimally harmonized composition. Regarding this it is important to emphasize the deliberate ranking or sequence of ayat-paragraphs, which through this gradation order an entire sura with optimal semantic saturation. In fact, the first ayah could stand as an independent semantic unit. However, the second ayah complements it through the apposite syntagm *Rabb al-'ālamīn* (Lord of the Worlds), of which, in a Qur'anic exegetic sense, it is worth noting that the syntagm *Lord of the Worlds*, by occupying such a primary position, should

arouse reverence and astonishment, yet indeed immediately following this syntagm are the attributes of the almighty, omnipotent Lord before whom one need not feel baseless fear, for His own *first attributes* are *all-merciful* and *compassionate.* The third ayah is also an apposition of the initial and basic syntagm *Lord of the Worlds*, yet it strongly and significantly linked to the second ayah which complements it, emphasizing that He on Judgment Day (the Day of Faith), over which he is the Absolute Lord, will be all-merciful and compassionate. Accordingly, the first three ayat are exceptionally semantically *graded,* expressing in only several syntagms a rich "ideological layer", and represent the whole which the second part of the sura significantly supplements.

In fact, given that He is the Lord of (all) worlds, but a Lord who is infinitely merciful on the Day of Judgment, when his mercy will be most needed by humanity, the fourth ayah follows, which introduces finite verb forms (both times in the same tense and gender) and personal pronouns (also repeated in the same gender and case) and suddenly changes the impersonal perspective in the sense that hitherto there has been no use of finite verb forms and pronouns.[104] This sudden change and turn toward personalization in a stylistic sense achieves the effect of a pleasant surprise, and in a semantic sense – expresses the critical temporality of the personal, and therefore individual and unmediated relationship with what had just been described as the Lord of the Worlds. Hence the essence of this ayah substantially builds upon the previous ayah, completing now the alliterative means and euphonic effects created through the rhyme and

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[104] There is no consensus on the number of ayat in the *al-Fātiḥa* sura. In some editions the *Bismilla* invocation is deemed the first ayah of this sura. Supporters of this solution believe this inclusion of the *Bismilla* to be the case only for *al-Fātiḥa* – and thus not in the other 113 suras – which to me seems baseless and inconsistent. I believe that the *Bismilla* is not a constituent part of this sura in the sense that it can be numbered as its first ayah, for the same reason that it is not in a single other sura. Apart from this, in some editions it is noted that the Text *Ṣirāṭ 'alladīna 'an'amta 'alayhim ġayr al-maġḍūb 'alayhim wa lā al-ḍāllīn* comprises one ayah, but I tend toward the stance that this text is split between two ayat: *Ṣirāṭ 'alladīna 'an'amta 'alayhim* and *ġayr al-maġḍūb 'alayhim wa lā al-ḍāllīn*. This split is suggested by the rhythmicization of the Text, which would be violated if the last ayah were too long. Hence, according to my judgment, *al-Fātiḥa* comprises seven ayat, excluding the *Bismilla* invocation.

rhythm. Because all of this as it is put so precisely in the first three ayat with optimally condensed meaning, it is only natural, even necessary, that with one kind of exclamation the believer conveys how, because of all that has been stated, only He does the believer worship and to Him alone does he direct his pleas.

Following further the semantic linkages between ayat (which, I repeat, may stand as independent units), I will show here their logical consistency: because of the content of the first three ayat and the reader's *consequent* decision in the fourth ayah that solely He will the reader worship and from Him alone he will seek help, he will also exhibit with the necessary plea – expressed in the form of an "imperative plea" – that the recipients are guided to the right Path, so that they can truly only adore him and from Him alone seek assistance, because the possibility exists that people will stray, or to provoke Allah's wrath, which in turn is discussed in the last and fourth ayah, whose linkage with the previous ayat is remarkably obvious.

I will paraphrase the entire sura in prose in order to present its semantic saturation and consequence, briefly:

> *Universal gratitude must be shown to Allah alone, as Lord of the Worlds, but should not provoke baseless fear, for He in his first attributes reveals universal mercy and compassion on the Day of Judgment, on which he will be a Sovereign Lord. For this we worship Him and from Him alone we seek help, pleading that he guide us down the right Path, the Path of those whom He showers with blessings, and not on the path of those who provoke His wrath and those who wander astray.*

The reader may notice that the original Text, in terms of semantic gradation, has a "pyramidal" structure. In using the word "pyramidal", I wish to draw attention to two things. First, in the meaning of the sura we see how Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, is at the summit of this structure, and those who have gone astray lie at its base; this "pyramidal" structuring is also possible to follow from the reverse direction – from those who have gone astray it moves up towards the merciful Saving Grace of its summit, or the Lord of the Worlds. Second, this term should at the same time reinforce the purposeful strength and coherence of such structures.

It is obvious that *al-Fātiḥa*, although very short, is so saturated with essence and so *semantically complete* that it calls for maximal cognitive engagement. Even though its ayat can stand as independent semantic units, such as the paragraphs of Saj', its full meaning and beauty are realized through its entirety, which traditional Saj' could not achieve as its own ideal. Moreover, the conceptual dimension of this sura comes to the fore, thereby proclaiming traditional poetic postulates unworthy of the Qur'anic text, which eludes their normativity.

As far as the formal features of *al-Fātiḥa*, I have already outlined its correspondence with the Saj' form through rhyme and rhythm, as well as alliterative repetition. As in Saj', the first few ayat are roughly of equal length, which establishes a specific rhythm, while roughly equal length of paragraphs in Saj' was the ideal for this type of literary creation. Paragraphs were rhymed by the last consonant of the last word, and which are pronounced without their final vowel. In *al-Fātiḥa* it is the plural suffix - *īn*, which here in the second and fifth ayat ends with – *īm*. The introduction of the second consonant (*m*) in the second and fifth verses presents a discreet and pleasant breaking of the monotony, which would have led to monorhyme, insofar as it were realized throughout the entire sura. Thus – the introduction of these two consonants, which are preceded by the (semi)vowel *i*, as well as other consonants as organizing factors in terms of rhyme, we perceive as a certain tonal relaxation, because the difference in the phonetic formation of the ending *īn* and *īm* is barely discernible while reciting the sura.

The relatively steady and balanced rhythm created in the first five ayat unexpectedly changes in the long last ayah, whose moving finish returns the reader to the first and basic rhyme, moving because the reader may become "worried" because of the change in rhythm created by the long last ayah. This change in the rhythm at the end, realized in the long last ayah, which is connected with the same rhyme factor, raises the tone of the entire sura, and which careful reciters of the text feel quite keenly. The sign indicating the expectation that the reciter raise his tone after which silence reigns, or calm, is the alliteration introduced with the verb *ṣirāṭ* (way) at the very start of the last ayah: such stylistic techniques resist a quiet

entrance into the final part of the stylistic and phonetic dynamic structure. In addition, the introduction of the verb *ṣirāṭ* at the beginning of the last ayah firmly and emphatically creates a semantic and stylistic connection between the penultimate and last ayat, and aside from the euphonic effect in the longest and final ayah a series of alliterative techniques are introduced, among which the pronoun *'allaḏīn(e)* is highlighted, which is phonetically congruous with the basic rhyme, and the rapid alliterative repetition of the preposition and pronominal suffix in the identical syntagm *'alayhim*.

Such pictorial and rhythmic prose expression has been perfected, because it distinguishes itself from ordinary prose with its severe regularity in the distribution of emphasis, which regularity is deliberately not fully realized, but is a quality of this kind of literary expression that consciously retains a barely noticeable discrepancy between rhythmic stresses. This strong impression that arises with regard to regularity and periodicity is enhanced by the phonetic and syntactical techniques, while the rhythmic pattern is strongly supported by the entire Text. There is a large concentration of sonic patterns within a very short part of the Text: *'ālamīn / al-Raḥīm / al-dīn / nasta'īn / mustaqīm / 'allaḏīn / 'alayhim / 'alayhim / al-ḍāllīn*,[105] such that they represent a means of intense "orchestration" throughout the entire Text. Indeed, it is not necessary to know the Arabic language for the complete phonetic experience of the *al-Fātiḥa*: if recited/learned properly – with a feeling for these sonic patterns and the repetition of these joined sonic qualities – the sura very strongly imposes itself upon readers' phonetic habits, enriching them with occasional surprises and, by listening to it, one hears an optimally cohesive intonation, even if one does not know the language. This is one of the dominant factors of the universal communicative quality of *Qur'an* which establishes various "communication codes" even if one does not know Arabic.

The discussion above shows that *al-Fātiḥa's* formal and phonetic structure is so simple that it requires voluble recitation/learning for its tonal effect to be complete. To achieve such a performance and impression, of

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[105] Here I combine phonetic and phonological transcription for obvious reasons: the phonetic transcription successfully expresses the phonetic effects of the Text.

course, thoroughly elaborated rules are given for tajwīd articulation.[106] In fact, in my opinion, it is not enough to learn this sura solely according to tajwīd, but rather in addition to this it is necessary to be keen to sonic patterns and aspects of rhyme and rhythm to approach the optimal plenitudes that this sura offers. Those who recite it in the Arabic language, especially when they do so loudly and publicly, must bear in mind these features of *al-Fātiḥa* and recite it with the feeling which this sura, given its pictorial and rhythmic qualities, simply requires, because these qualities comprise an integral part of its overall beauty.

Loud recitation of the *Qur'an* is always followed by a solemn peace and general silence (aside from the reciter's voice) for which there are at least two reasons. The first reason is, of course, the expression of respect for the divine origin of the verses, yet the second significant reason is the very request of the Text itself, whose stylistic and sonic qualities are enriched in the extreme by the meaningful tajwīd articulation, for a solemn commitment to the reciting, to listening to the reciter. To assert the literary value of the Qur'anic Text is in no way blasphemy: the *Qur'an* through this dimension establishes a very intensive contact not only with the literary tradition it so overwhelmingly transcends, but also with the universal human need for stylized expression. Thus, as the reader is more deeply immersed in the tonally and rhythmically forceful short Text, which is nevertheless "orchestrally disciplined," it reveals increasingly and with growing excitement a stylistic and euphonious quality that *simultaneously* coheres both structurally and semantically.

For example, let us look for a moment at the semantic relationships and context in which the words are placed, in others words the syntagms, which represent the factors of images, because these are neither random nor arbitrary, and hence it should be noted that for the sake of expedience their semantic similarity in the original Text should be examined: *Lord of the Worlds / all-merciful and compassionate / Day of Judgement / seek help / Right path / wander astray.* All of these words, or syntagms, whose final syllables in the original build an image that "reinforces" the entire

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[106] *Tağwīd* is the set of established rules for, in a unique way, the voluble "recitation" of the Text.

structure, belong essentially to the same semantic context; even the last phrase *wander astray* which at first seems semantically divergent from the previous is congruent with them if we take a broad look at the semantic *context*, or logical progression.

The reader who perceives this impressive unity of form and content – evident even in the cited pictorial words/syntagms – is being imposed with the judgment of the stunted development of traditional literary forms of which the Arabians were so proud: this Qur'anic text shows that an adequate evaluation of it can only be realized through the possibility that at least two values are compared or contrasted with regard to its established goals and the means by which they are achieved.

Taking into account all of the above, it's important to have an understanding of the anxieties inherent in translation approaches to *al-Fātiḥa*. The original within a very small space achieves unimaginable effects simultaneously in form and content, which to any responsible translator induces anxiety, for conveying this sophisticated structure *in a different language*, the translator lacks the same linguistic means, semantic possibilities, and stylistic means which the original uses to create a unified semantic-stylistic complex.

A successful translation must simultaneously take into account both the stylistic peculiarities and semantic precision of *al-Fātiḥa.* Translators of classical Arabic poetry as a rule rejected any attempt to convey these forms, being utterly discouraged by its technical perfection, while prose philological works conveyed only the sense, and because all of the beauty of the poetry was contained indeed in its form, their translations were essentially inarticulate. Because the *Qur'an* convincingly transcends the dichotomy of form-content, it is crucial that in translating a sura which insists upon its form to make an effort to express that form in the translation. It is of course illusory to expect that this is always possible to achieve in an ideal way, yet a responsible translator cannot ignore the form and stylistic features of the original, and must endeavor to translate these features in a manner that is close to the original.

Because the entirety of the second part of this book is devoted to a stylistic interpretation of *al-Fātiḥa*, it seems advisable here to offer the

author's own translation of this sura. Please note that this translation is somewhat different from the translation I made in 2004.[107] It is, in fact, these very differences that show how *al-Fātiḥa* (and the Qur'anic text as a whole) is a very open structure, stylistically and semantically laden and elliptical, and that the possibility always exists for the refinement of an interpretative translation.

Thus, I offer, if only as a tentative solution, this translation of *al-Fātiḥa*:

1. Praise is due to Allah who is the cultivator of the worlds,

2. The all-merciful and graceful,

3. Ruler of the Day of Faith -

4. It is You we worship and You we ask for help:

5. Guide us rightly to the Upright path,

6. Toward the Path of those You have bestowed with blessings,

7. And not of those who deserve wrath, nor those who have wandered astray.

This brief sura-opener opens the integral Text, and introduces a boundless space which it itself successfully models, despite the fact that it consists of solely one sentence.

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[107] *Kur'an s prijevodom na bosanski jezik*. Translated from the Arabic by Esad Duraković. Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 2004.

THE SACRALIZATION OF TEXTUAL SPACE

The modeling of infinite space

The text of one of the shortest suras (*al-Fātiḥa*) provides for an analysis which represents it as a Text of an infinite space. These seven very short ayat, remarkably organized rhythmically and strongly stylistically marked, have established within a limited space a Text that "shows" its limitless object – the universe in relation to an Absolute Subject - God. Its spatial structure is, on the one hand, the spatial structure of the universe, and on the other at the same time the transhistorical structure of time; this model, as transtextual, translates into the textual space by linguistic means syntagmatic elements, while the stylistic means serve a specific function that itself requires further explication.

The spatial relations in *al-Fātiḥa* are delivered through fundamental binary oppositions, such as *sky-earth*. In fact, this binary opposition is not explicitly expressed through these words; rather the Text is structured such that, clearly, the principle of these binaries builds a vertical relationship between God, the rightly guided man and the man who has wandered astray. Once it becomes clear that *al-Fātiḥa* affirms a vertical axis, it may be said that this establishes spatial relationships, which are nevertheless so specific that in certain phases and through certain means they are transformed into a sacral space that sacralizes the entire Text. Of this more will be discussed later. Certain words from the same semantic field have a particularly potent effect on establishing spatial relations: *the right path / guide us / wandering.*

At the peak of the vertical (or at the very peak of the Text) is the proper noun *Allah*, which is the first principle of space and time. Next

to it is a second noun (*al-Ḥamd* – gratitude, giving thanks), in which the proper noun *Allah* inheres in its absoluteness using a determination that is available in the Arabic language, unlike the Bosnian language. To the nouns *Allah* and *Giving thanks* (the latter capitalized to convey its determination in the Arabic language) other nouns adhere appositionally (*Cultivator of the Worlds*) which, by structuring the meaning of the Text, powerfully and cumulatively secure and determine the peak of the vertical. Moreover, again at this peak, a proper noun and its apposition are imbued fundamentally with the attribute of *all-merciful* (in Arabic this adjective is used exclusively in connective with the noun *Allah*) and *graceful*.

   This vertical peak is represented solely by nouns and the forms of the (intensified) attributes inhering in them; it is no accident that there are no verbs: the vertical peak is above time, being presented by nouns and not finite verbs. At the very start of the Divine Vertical are the nouns *Allah* and *Gratitude,* both of which exist from time immemorial. This positioning of the noun in the Text proclaims on the one hand the uniqueness of Allah, His Singularity, for as a proper noun it is differentiated from *this* or *that* noun, as well as from *anyone*.[108] On the other hand, the accumulation of nouns at the beginning of the Text, especially the exclusion of temporal categories, serves the purpose of proclaiming the timelessness of the vertical peak. Because the *Qur'an descends* to the people, it must be noted that the use of nouns before all other grammatical forms or morphological categories, in particular the use of the proper noun *Allah*, strongly affirms the uniquely human need and ability to name: as far as we know, no other being has this exceptional ability to express the individuality and the nature of their relationships to *others*. In this respect it should be recalled how the *Qur'an* speaks of how this ability to name, to express himself is the greatest gift of God to man, that it was God's reason for the creation of man; Allah has given him that ability during the very act of creation, which proclaims the

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[108] I have written extensively on the etymology of the noun *Allah,* and in particular its linguistic determination, meaning the importance of designation towards the end of expressing uniqueness, in the first chapter of this book.

measureless value of the gift itself. Even Angels lack the ability to name, states the *Qur'an*.[109]

It is only in the third ayah that there is movement through space and time (*Lord of the Worlds*): this is the Day of Judgement that will occur within eschatological space and time. At the same time, it is interesting how this is a gradual movement through space and time expressed by means of language. Namely, the word *Cultivator* is in the original active participle (*Mālik* – he who possesses, governs) which in the Bosnian language conveys the noun *Lord* and in translation omits the finesse expressed in the original. I want to say that the world of nouns and the non-temporal passes, lowering the vertical into temporality and the nominalization process: *Mālik* is not a noun so much as it is a morphological form that is in constant pursuit of nominalization, while nevertheless always retaining certain properties of verbs.

Later on, however, suddenly – syntactically unexpectedly, with a surprising violence from the perspective of stylistics because it is a rhetorical shift, and dramatically from the perspective of the vertical descent – the vertical descends to Earth where man *cries out* how *He alone we worship and He alone we seek for help*.

These movements in the textual space are highlighted in a dramatic way, just as the dramatic nature of the fateful relationship of the world's people towards the Absolute is represented in the nouns above. The verbs are in the same semantic field, even as grammatical parallelisms (/we/ *worship* and /we/ *seek your help*), and are used abruptly, such that the non-temporality expressed by the previous ayat is emphasized optimally and through defamiliarization. The contrast is very great. At the same time, the concentration of grammatic persons (/we/ *worship* and /we/ *seek your help*), and the repetition of the personal pronoun in its long form and in an inverse position with regard to the verb (*You – You*) continues to create contrast in relation to the timeless position of the nouns of the vertical peak: the world of men is the world of actions, acts, devotion, and thus a

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[109] See: *Qur'an*, 2:31-32.

world of transience, for verbs are used in a present that will always remain the present.[110]

The culmination occurs with the introduction of the fifth ayah, which is roughly half of the Text. Namely, with maximal brevity and through linguistic means, specifically grammar, followed by a descent from nouns and their adjectives to the active participle (*Mālik* = Lord), which almost imperceptibly introduces the category of time, through a strong and rhythmically propulsive present tense (*na'bud – nasta'īn* = we worship, we seek help) followed by the imperative (*'Ihdinā* = guide us rightly) which "specifies" the present time almost in a single moment, the Text arrives vertically from timelessness to temporality through an optimally concise imperative. The compression of time through human petition in the imperative represents in relation to God's timelessness a way in which, given the conciseness of the Text, there is an impressive emphasis on the significance of the vertical, which simultaneously emphasizes the sacredness of the vertical and the sacralization of the entire space. Language here achieves a true miracle, expressing a profound and great idea through extremely economical linguistic means. Hence, I believe – I can already state this, though I will return to it later – that the use of such linguistic-grammatical means here is of extreme stylistic value.

From the fourth ayah (*We worship You and We seek Your help*), there is a violent lowering of the Vertical – which I now capitalize to show that it has achieved sacredness – which temporarily calms at this point in the World, to the fifth ayah, which to an optimal extent within a sacred Text specifies time and space: *Guide us rightly onto the upright path.* The verb *guide rightly* and syntagm *upright path*, obviously, indicate a space,

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[110] Here syntactical means, and not lexical means, proclaim monotheism: *You we worship...* It is therefore inadequate to translate this verse *You alone we worship...* for the introduction of lexemes which the original lacks (*alone*) gives mistaken information about the original, and suggests, apparently, that important goals are achieved with the lexeme *alone*, rather than with syntactic means. In the original it is the opposite, and this difference is critical because it suggests that syntactic means can make the text much more expressive and rich in stylistic value.

and even though here it is used in a figurative sense, it remains a powerful factor in the sacralization of space and its Text.[111]

The temporary "plateau" in the undeferrable lowering of the Vertical there is a relative abundance of verb forms, as well as other morphemes, which include verb meanings that proclaim the dynamic human position within this semiotic space; man is entirely action: he worships, seeks help, prays to be guided rightly, etc. The temporary pause of the Vertical expression is also expressed with the first words of the next ayah: *The path of those who...*, though it should be pointed out that repetition of the word *Path* has not only value as a stylistic means given that it is repeated shortly after the syntagm *upright/vertical path* in the previous ayah. This word, on the one hand, represents in a new position the "reduction" of the previous syntagms – now it is solely *Path* – while entering into a new syntagmatic relationship (*The path of those whom you have favored*) enriching the meaning of the previous syntagms: the upright path is the path of those whom God bestows with favor. On the other hand, within the context of the basic theme of explication, repetition of the noun *Path* in the new syntagmatic relationships enriches the semiotic space and underscores the significance of the pause in the Vertical. However, as a noun *Path* semantically excludes inaction and refers solely to movement, and it is this apparent paradox in the noun *Path* that in spite of its own semantics it signifies a pause in the Vertical that emerges as an optimal instance of stylistic defamiliarization. The path is first used in a figurative sense but it belongs to the semiotics of space; it tirelessly constructs different syntagmatic relationships and ultimately, although the movement is immanent to it, temporarily "halts" the movement Vertically. In this way

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[111] And here in the translation one will notice inevitable semantic deficiencies. Namely, the imperative *'Ihdinā* (lead us) actually means *Guide us*, because it is derived more from *right path*; the long phrase *al-Ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* means: *an upright*, *vertical path* (this meaning is particularly important in that it expresses the spiritual ascent *within the Vertical*, which again highlights the sacredness of the Text); *the correct*, *authentic way*, etc. Thus in the fifth verse an exceptional semantic potentiality is realized, and could be translated: *Guide us rightly on the upright/vertical path*. Therefore henceforth I will use this translation.

the stylistic value of these syntagmatic-structural elements of the Text grow in importance.

Before moving rapidly along the Vertical – always down, to rock bottom – once more we see and feel in that space and time, along that Path, a remarkable burst in the final finite verb form *'an'amta:* you have bestowed with blessings. This verb is a divine coronation of the positivity previously prepared and explained by the positive attributes of the nouns at the beginning of the Text, as well as by using a positive verb (*we worship, we seek help, rightly guide us*). This positivity is expressed on the one hand by developing the positive semantics of the Vertical, and on the other hand simultaneously through positive active verb forms. Consequently, it is natural that this positivity ends with the verb *'an'amta*, which semantically concludes the sense of the previous part of the Text, such that, at the end of the path and after such preparation, the meaning of the verb *'an'amta* becomes much richer than it would have been in a different context, and even more so were it out of context. Moreover, it is natural that this positivity is crowned in the active verb form.

Because the entire text is based on the binary principle of *sky – earth*, this principle is realized in the parts of the Text that follow with unexpected force.

Namely, after the gracious verb *'an'amta* and its preposition, there follows an "undercutting" of the Vertical in a matter that is truly dramatic and which expresses a sinking to the very bottom.

On a linguistic plane, the drama is achieved by introducing – the only time in the Text – the noun *ġayr,* which constructs an oppositional syntagm, or syntagms bearing meanings pregnant with negative potential: *Not that of those who earn thine anger*. Negativity here is expressed twice: as said before, on a linguistic plane as expressed through the introduction of the noun *ġayr* for negation, as well as expressed on a semantic plan through the introduction of the meaning of *anger* (*who earn thine anger*). Moreover, negativity is intensified with the use of the *passive* form (the passive participle) *al-maġḍūb*. In fact, I believe that the use of the passive form here is multilayered in meaning. First, it appears unexpectedly, after a series of active forms, and as such is very powerfully stylistically

marked. At the same time, this is the first time the passive participle is used in the Text, because its meaning – owing to its negativity – is defined as something inappropriate beside the Divine qualities expressed through *beneficent*, *merciful*, and *bestowing favor*. Indeed, the context clearly shows that while God is He who is angered, the grammatical means, and the impersonalization of the passive form, very skillfully distances Allah from this negativity.[112] Finally, it must also be said how being undesirable, sinful and wayward deserves punishment even through linguistic means: the use of the negation *gayr*, and the passive participle (replacing the earlier, expansive active and finite verb forms) and, of course, the negative semantic dimension of this participle (*anger*) – all represent focused and quite repressive linguistic techniques. At the same time, for all of these same reasons listed the stylistic value of these verses is all the more evident.

This negative opposition in the second part of the Text is highlighted by a parallel negation: neither those who stray (*wa lā al-ḍāllīn*). It should be noted that the tendency for the Text to use this participle, in its second part, is effectively realized with the use of the active participle (*ḍāllīn* = those who stray), which is also the last word in the Text – at the end of the Text and at the bottom of its space. In the context of this presentation it is particularly important given that the aforementioned active participle belongs to semiotic space: wandering can, of course, occur only in some space, but it is important to point out that the noun *Path* remains in the upper part of the Text – reserved for the faithful, while *straying* is unaccompanied by nouns, implying that straying may occur only in wilderness.

The steepness of the Vertical to Allah over the rightly-guided to the strayer is proportional in contrast between the positivity of the Vertical expressed in its strongly positive attributes, and its bottom, which is also strongly negative. Such meaningful movement along the Vertical coincides with the "vertical" use of linguistic means. Namely, from the singular noun *Allah*, all of whose attributes work completely toward affirming its

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[112] For these reasons I believe it would be inadequate to translate this in the active form, or a finite verb for another persona (*who angers you*): such a translation loses the nuances I have just pointed out. When I translated the *Qur'an* I had not noticed these nuances and so I rendered it... *who angers you*..., but now I would revise it thus: *who have evoked wrath*...

singularity/uniqueness, the Text moves on to the field of the concentrated use of personal pronouns and active finite verb forms, and reaches – ultimately at bottom – a very concentrated use of participles and passive forms. There is clear linguistic verticality. Through such an ordered Text Allah in all of His Transcendence and attributes is revealed, for the true believers through active verbs, while the wayward have been banished into participles and passive forms.

It needs to be pointed out here how God expresses through linguistic means His closeness, or inclination, to the rightly guided. Namely, the boundaries between Him and the rightly guided – as a particular type of boundary in textual space – is relativized by the surprising use of the pronouns *You – You* (*You we worship, From You we seek help*), because it would be expected that a personal third person pronoun would be used to assert the detachment of God in His transcendence: *We worship Him...* However, the unexpected use of the second person realizes a certain "familiarity" with the rightly guided, as well as expresses sympathy towards them. At the same time, this rhetorical twist has a remarkable stylistic effect that could not be accomplished through the use of the third person. Finally, at the bottommost "spatial sense" it strongly avers the detachment from the wayward precisely with the linguistic means I have discussed above.

I have also already spoken of how the Text creates spatial relationships using nouns that belong to semiotic space: *path* / upright/ rightly guide / *stray,* etc. However, the reader faces a specific Text in which these words are not used in a literal sense but in a moral sense, reflecting values that are set out in terms of scale, which constitutes a sacralization of the textual space. The Vertical axis in the Text truly serves as a scale of the value of the beings that exist within that space. Spatial relations are interpreted as marked moral contrasts: *exalted – low; the Upright path –the stray path,* etc. Such a conversion of spatial relationships into those occupying moral and spiritual spheres produces a sacralization of space, even the whole of the world and its history, and as I have asserted before this textual space reveals the Universe and Eternity. The decisive factor of the sacralization is this very strong insistence on the Vertical, whose unknowable peak is

God, and at whose bottom lay all those astray. In a literary *artistic* text spatial relations are created in different directions: *vertical – horizontal*, *left – right* etc. In this sacred Text, however, there is no such diversity of spatial relationships; rather the Vertical is the sole condition for the Text's survival and its only possible organizing space. Even the binarity of *upper – lower* cannot replace as a synonym the relationship that is expressed through the Vertical: binarity in the physical sense (*upper – lower*) here is interpreted as *exalted – base;* thus, the sacralization of the textual space is realized, as is the Text itself. Finally, the reader who grasps that the process of the sacralization of space is a principle of the actual design of the Universe and who thoroughly accepts the authenticity and immutability of the Vertical cannot accept this Text as a work of art: it is for this reader an authentic presentation of the Infinite and the Universe, and hence this description of the sacralization of space is the very factor that removes this Text from the realm of art.

Even the fact that the Text is characterized by an almost inconceivable wealth of stylistic features whose full significance lies beyond the scope of this work, nevertheless one cannot still draw the conclusion that the text is fundamentally artistic in nature. The carefully executed rhyme and meter of this text, its ample parallelisms, its euphony and a host of other stylistic virtues, do, admittedly, constitute a strong aesthetic factor. Yet this is not their only aim; these virtues actually have two other purposes. The first, which is realized starkly in the Text, is to show that God expresses His sublime meaning to man in superlatively beautiful language. This again emphasizes the importance of the vertical axis. The second purpose is realized within the textual space as a rhythmic and melodic organization modelling pristinely ordered space, through its harmony, its meter, and its regularity. This sacred space is arranged very carefully, with linguistic perfection, grammatical flawlessness, and the proper distribution of phono-stylemes, etc. It would be inconceivable for the Text to convey the sacred space as arranged differently in any way, for it to be somehow chaotic etc.; the implication of this transcendent arrangement is that the Text serves yet another exceedingly complex purpose. Namely, its structure, rhythm, and its general and ambiguous regularity consistently reinforce

the importance of space in the Text, and that it is the very coupling of space and Text that signify the denial of the possibility of chaos: the Text, with all of these very attributes, negates utterly the concept of chaos. These rhythmic-melodic qualities of the Text transport the reader into a textual Universe of mellifluousness and out of torment, rendering all bright and extraordinarily lucid.

In this way, those readers committed to the Text have the exceptional need to joyfully set off into this textual space, often through recitation.

RHETORICAL SHIFT

Rhetorical shift or "stylistic noise" in al-Fātiḥa

In the previous section I mentioned a rhetorical shift in *al-Fātiḥa*. There is an effective stylistic device used in the *Qur'an* that is problematic to identify. Arabic stylistics refers to this device with the term *'iltifāt* (turning; abrupt change), yet this term is not sufficiently precise, for its doesn't cover entirely the same concepts from different stylistic and theoretical literature.

The authoritative Maǧdī Wahba states that *'iltifāt* is the sudden change from "declarative" speech in the address of any other person or non-person, be they present or absent. The author asserts that it is largely used when addressing an absent person or a personification, such as al-Mutenebbi (al-Mutanabbī, 915.-965.) does in the following verse: *Holidays! How will you return, holidays?*[113]

Deep within the history of the study of Arabic literature, two authorities have had different conceptions of *'iltifāt*. Ibn al-Muʿtazz (861.-908.) believed that it was a stylistic figure in which the speaker passes "from narration to addressing and cites as an example *al-Fātiḥa* in which, after a declarative clause *Praise be to Allah, Cultivator of All Worlds...* (Al-Ḥamd li Allāh rabb al-ʿalamīn) there follows *You we worship, and from You we seek help* ('Iyyāka naʿbud wa 'Iyyāka nastaʿīn).[114] However, Qudāma Ibn Ǧaʿfar (10. century) thought that *'iltifāt* serves as the final part of an

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[113] Maǧdī Wahba, *Muʿǧam al-mustalaḥāt al-ʿarabiyya fī al-luġa wa al-'adab*, Maktaba Lubnān, Bayrūt, 1984.

[114] Compare: Teufik Muftić, *Klasična arapska stilistika*, El-Kalem, Sarajevo 1995, p. 152.

explanation "in which the author, after his initial thoughts, follows these with parenthetical thoughts (...) which contain refutations, questions, a questioning of the causes for the foregoing, reflections on the same, and through these furnishes an answer by refuting any objections or doubts and stating the causes of what was said at the start".[115] Džemaludin Latić in his book on the stylistics of the *Qur'an* uses a descriptive term to refer to the *'iltifāt: changes to the mode of address,* citing several sub-types of the figure, some of which are then discussed.[116]

Clearly the problem lies on the horizon of Arabic stylistics, and grows even more involved when the attempt is made to find a scholarly, literary counterpart from the European tradition; both Muftić and Latić seem aware of this in their insistence on retaining the Arabic term, which is then nevertheless differentiated according to the offered counterparts. Namely, sometimes *'iltifāt* in Arabic stylistics is referred to as its counterpart deixis, in fact a *rhetorical deixis*, "with which in spirit something is presented as being present".[117] From this definition of rhetorical deixis one sees that it partially covers those meanings ascribed to it by M. Wahba. At the same time, Wahba in his own dictionary states that *'iltifāt* provides the terminological gloss as *apostrophe*, which in European literary theory is a figure in which "a speaker speaks of absent persons or inanimate things in his speech as if those people were there, or those things alive".[118] It is the same way in which *fantasy* functions. Some meaning of this figure covers *rhetorical address*, but that does not mean it covers all.[119]

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[115] Ibid.

I quote Qudāma Ibn Ğa'far indirectly because I did not have access to the original work. In classical Arabic literature on stylistics many authors have addressed the *'iltifāt*. Among them are: al-Qazwīnī, *al-'Iḍāḥ fī 'ulūm al-balāġa – al-ma'ānī wa al-bayān wa al-badī',* Manshūrāt Maktaba al-nahḍa, s. l., s. a., pp. 43.

[116] Džemaludin Latić, *Stil kur'anskoga izraza*, El-Kalem, Sarajevo, 2000, p. 277.-279.

[117] Rikard Simeon, *Enciklopedijski rječnik lingvističkih naziva*, Matica hrvatska, Zagreb, 1969.

[118] Luka Zima, *Figure u našem narodnom pjesništvu, s njihovom teorijom*, Globus. Zagreb 1988, p. 133.

[119] Marina Katnić-Bakaršić, *Stilistika*, Tugra, Sarajevo, 2001, p. 319.

It is striking that not one of these counterparts covers the entirety of the meaning of *'iltifāt* - namely, the provided counterparts denote the stylistic technique wherein a character addresses through speech an absent person as if he or she were present, or an inanimate object as if it were alive. *'Iltifāt* includes this meaning – indeed, as in the case of *al-Fātiḥa*, as al-Muʿtazz long ago noted – yet this figure in the Arabic tradition is much more complex and nuanced, all of which I would like here to contend developed extraordinarily through its use in the *Qur'an*.

'Iltifāt is, etymologically, *a turn*, or *a turning to take account of something;* this is a turning away from something already perceived to be something *other* that is *otherwise* perceived or expressed, wherein this type of turn/turning preserves the relationality between both sides, given that the focus of these movements is directed to another side towards which the turn is made. The verb *'iltifata* – which is important to have in mind here – implies a certain suddenness, or agility of movement. Transferred into the domain of stylistics, this figure expresses a sudden and unexpected change in the oratorical perspective, and which achieves a remarkable stylistic effect. Because of this henceforth I will term this figure a *rhetorical shift.*

The condition for this rhetorical shift is not only a change in the grammatical person (I will carry out such an analysis through the examples below), but the underlying condition of *suddenness,* which transforms the entire oratorical perspective. Moreover, among sentences that construct this kind of rhetorical reversal there cannot exist syntactical elements (such as various conjunctions, etc.) that could attenuate such suddenness: suddenness stylistically marks the statement, and translates it into a great stylistic figure, which means that the introduction of syntactic means to mitigate or thwart its suddenness would render the statement stylistically neutral. Although the *Qur'an* abounds in this stylistic figure, I think it can be best illustrated through *al-Fātiḥa.*

The first ayah is a declarative clause, *Praise is due to Allah* (al-Ḥamd li Allāh), followed by an apposition *Cultivator of the worlds* (rabb al-ʿalamin) and then by the ideologically necessary and stylistically strong attributes the *all-merciful and graceful* (al-Raḥmān al-raḥīm), followed by another apposition, *Ruler of the Day of Faith* (Mālik al-Yawm al-Dīn).

This declarative clause (composed of as much as four ayat, thanks to the accumulation of appositions and attributes that enhance its expressiveness) is essentially impersonal in Arabic, which does not contain the word *to have,* and refers to the third person. A rhetorical shift occurs in the following sentence (It is You we worship and You we ask for help – 'Iyyāka na'bud wa 'Iyyāka nasta'īn), because then, all of a sudden, without any syntactic connections, new grammatical persons are introduced out of the impersonality: the first person (*we worship* – na'bud) and the second person emphasized with the inverse placement of the personal pronoun as an object (*You* -'Iyyāka). From a stylistic point of view, this shift is indeed impressive, since the noun *Allah* has unexpectedly been translated into a repeated second person pronoun (*You* -'Iyyāka) and suddenly first person plural has appeared (*we worship* - na'bud) so that, with this rhetorical shift, a dialogue has been initiated with Someone/Something distant in the declarative clause *Praise is due to Allah* within a very small "syntactic space." This change of perspective seems almost shocking.[120]

If, at the point where the shift occurs, a syntactic device was to be introduced that would constitute a firmer copula between the sentences – the constituents of the figure – its unexpectedness would disappear, as would the figure itself, even if a new grammatical person were introduced. For instance, if the sentence were thus transformed: *Praise is due to Allah…so hence Him we worship...* (Al-Ḥamd li Allāh... fa 'Iyyāhu na'bud...), the stylistic and semantic effect would not be the same at all: the unexpectedness would be insufficient and the distance between Allah and man would not be overcome the way it splendidly has been through this quite unexpected and very positive change of perspectives.[121] This tendency of the Text is further intensified when along with the just

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[120] Therefore, the following translation is inadequate: *Tebe, Allaha, Gospodara svjetova hvalimo (You, Allah, Lord of the worlds we praise)* since the pronoun *You* is not present in the original, nor is the finite verb *praise;* here a verbal noun *Praise* (al-Ḥamd) is used. Translating it thus significantly reduces the stylistic potentials of the original.

Quddāma Ibn Ğa'far is right in the sense that this rhetorical shift emphasizes the special nature of the relationship toward the preceding statement: Because Allah is what he is and because he is the way he is, we worship Him and ask Him for help.

[121] Of course, God's Word is immutable and I speak of changes here only hypothetically.

introduced grammatical persons a new grammatical form appears – again without any syntactic connections and suddenly, juxtaposed – in the form of an imperative (*Guide us rightly* – 'Ihdinā), which enriches the effects engendered by the change in the perspective of the speaker.

Here one can draw a difference between the function of the Arabic *'iltifāt* and its aforementioned equivalents. Namely, deixis, apostrophe and phantasm are used to address someone/something absent or inanimate as if it were alive. In the text of the *al-Fātiḥa*, on the other hand, it is about God – from the viewpoint of the Author and reader – who is very much alive and omnipresent; so in that regard, for instance, an apostrophe like *Gacko polje, how beautiful you are!*, does not have the same value, it does not express a relation of the same quality.

However, the *al-Fātiḥa* does not exhaust the possibilities and nuances of the rhetorical shift with the technique I have been describing, I think it provides splendid nuances further on in the sura, culminating at its end. Namely, the blessings of the communication between God and man, which is absolutely direct precisely thanks to the tenses and grammatical persons used, "escalates" with the verb (You have) *bestowed with blessings* ('an'amta), which still retains the second person to continue the stylistic effect of the rhetorical shift and, in particular, for a special kind of immediacy, and – if I may say here – a warmth that occurs in such a relationship between the one who bestows blessings and the one upon whom they are bestowed. Then we are once again surprised by a rhetorical shift: the "play" of first and second person pronouns and the verb in the *present tense* suddenly retreats before impersonal constructions and nonfinite verb participles; the contrast is unexpected and complete, quite appropriate to the all-embracing contrast between, on the one hand, divine lordship over worlds and man's dependence on His Grace, and on the other the contrast between true believers (and the blessings they enjoy) and the heretics or non-believers who draw divine wrath upon themselves. On a linguistic-stylistic level, the contrast manifests itself, therefore, with the sudden shift from the described grammatical persons and tenses into an impersonal passive construction (*Not of those who have evoked wrath* – ġayr al-maġḍūb 'alayhim), ending with abandoning finite tenses and

introducing a nonfinite active participle (*or those who are astray* – wa lā al-ḍāllīn).

Such shifts at the end of the sura also serve a particular purpose at the semantic level, aside from the splendid stylistic value which is perfected in the sura. Namely, in the first sentence (*Praise is due to Allah* - Al-Ḥamd li Allāh) God has stated, in the most economic manner, a cosmic fact that He is *above* and in that sense *outside* of everything. This is followed by the expression of an unexpected and utter *closeness* to true believers, so that, in the third part of the sura, distance is once again emphasized, this time toward those who do not deserve the closeness of the relations expressed by the previous grammatical persons and tenses: they are distanced, simply expelled, linguistically and stylistically, into impersonality, into faceless passive constructions, or to an active participle turned into a noun (a non-finite participle); they are already punished with this Text. The grammatical contrasts and the extraordinary changes of the described rhetorical shifts cooperate with the message of the sura so splendidly in an extremely narrow space that I believe it is not an accident that this is the *opening sura,* the one that opens the whole of the *Qur'an*. It is aesthetically brilliant.

A careful analysis of the use of rhetorical shifts in the *al-Fātiḥa* has led me to conclude that it is precisely this sura that greatly widens the notion of rhetorical shift, or the *'iltifāt*. Namely, the rhetorical shift does not remain *only* at the level of sudden changes of persons and rhetorical perspective (introduced by the fifth ayah), and therefore this figure cannot be reduced to a definition about the "departure from narration to address". The *Qur'an* has developed this figure so amply, endowing it with such rich gradation in such a small space that it can be said that the *iltifāt* not only includes a sudden shift in persons, but also tenses, as well as active and passive forms.[122]

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[122] The analysis of the rhetorical shift in the *al-Fātiḥa* has unveiled a stylistic omission I have made in my translation of the *Qur'an*, at a time when it was being printed and it was impossible to intervene, but this change should be entered into the second edition, should there ever be one. Namely, the passive construction in the seventh ayah (*ġayr al-maġḍūb 'alayhim*) I have translated as: *And not those at whom you are angry.* I used the active voice and the present tense, partly due to the demands of the rhyme and rhythm,

The distribution of rhetorical shifts in other suras

The *Qur'an* uses the rhetorical shift often and diversely: it varies this figure in the unexpected positions with which it constantly enhances defamiliarization. This also makes the reader wonder if certain stylistic techniques should be perceived as a rhetorical shift, or another stylistic figure. The rhetorical shift at times borders on the commutation or transposition of persons,[123] but I think this is a case of a rhetorical shift rather than a commutation. For instance, in the ayat *We gave you a complete victory / So that Allah might forgive you your sins* ('Innā fataḫnā laka fatḫan mubīnan / Li yaġfira laka Allāh)[124] we are taken by surprise by the sudden change of grammatical persons (and, in fact, both grammatical persons denote one Person) by which the effect of surprise is achieved as a basic precondition for a rhetorical shift (in a commutation of persons there is no such shift). In a stylistically unmarked sentence, the following order could be expected: *So that we might forgive you* (Li naġfira laka).

Moreover, the aforementioned ayat demonstrate how a rhetorical shift requires no change or relations expressing "departure from narration to address".

For the creation of a rhetorical shift a mere change of grammatical persons does not suffice. Therefore, certain ayat sometimes used to illustrate this figure cannot be accepted as rhetorical shifts. For instance, the ayah *Why would I not worship the One Who created me, for it is to Him that you shall return!* (Wa mā liya lā 'a'bud 'allaḏī faṭaranī wa 'ilayhi turġa'ūn)[125] is considered an *'iltifāt* since from the first person (*Why would I not worship*) there is a shift to the second person (*to Him that you shall return*). This

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and partly since the stylistic markedness of this construction was once unnoticeable to me. Although the passive construction has been used referring to a grammatical person (M. Katnić-Bakaršić, *op. cit*., p. 251.) – it is clear that it refers to provoking God's wrath, which is why the translation is semantically correct – the construction should, regardless, be translated differently, to preserve its stylistic value: *Not of those who have evoked wrath.*

[123] See.: Marina Katnić-Bakaršić, *op. cit.*, p. 125.-127.

[124] *Qur'an*, 48:1-2.

[125] *Qur'an*, 36:22.

sentence contains as many as three grammatical persons: the first person (*Why would I not worship*), the third person (the One Who *created me*) and the second person (*you shall return*), but the whole sentence is a first person statement uttered by an unidentified believer. The sentence is therefore not stylistically marked, since it does not contain a shift of perspective in the speaker, there is no unexpected shift of persons, and the shift is rather tightly connected with coordinating conjunctions. The same goes for the ayah (of which there are many in the *Qur'an*), where we, in fact, encounter an "ordinary" rhetorical address: *...O mankind, I am indeed the Messenger of Allah to you all, To him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth* (Yā 'ayyuhā al-nās 'innī rasūl Allāh 'ilaykum ğamī'an 'alladī lahū mulk al-Samāwāt wa al-'Arḍ).[126] This sentence is also stylistically neutral: it is uttered by one person and the location in it, presented as a source of the rhetorical shift (*His dominion is...*) has quite firmly been bridged over by the relativizing *'alladī,* which forms a relative sentence.[127]

The analysis of the use of rhetorical shifts in the *al-Fātiḥa* has led me to the conclusion that precisely this sura has greatly widened the notion of the rhetorical shift, the *'iltifāt*. Namely, the rhetorical shift has not remained *merely* on the level of a sudden change of persons and rhetorical perspective (introduced by the fifth ayah), and therefore this figure cannot be reduced to the definition of a "departure from narration to address". The *Qur'an* has developed this figure and endowed it with gradation so amply within a small space that we can say that the *'iltifāt* not only includes a sudden change of persons, but also of tenses and the active and passive voice.

The consonant *r* constitutes the rhyme throughout the entire 54ᵗʰ sura. In it, starting with the 15ᵗʰ ayah, sentences-refrains appear numerous times

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[126] *Qur'an*, 7:158.

[127] Therefore the translation of this ayah we sometimes encounter in certain translations into Bosnian is syntactically wrong: *...O, ljudi, ja sam svima vama Allahov poslanik, Njegova vlast je na Nebesima i na Zemlji..(Oh, people, to you all I am Allah's prophet; His dominion is on Heavens and Earth).* This relative sentence should be thus translated: *... Ljudi! Ja sam svima vama poslanik Allaha kome pripada što na Nebesima i na Zemlji je (People! To you all I am Allah's prophet to whom belongs all that is in Heaven and on Earth…).*

(with slight modifications, one sentence-refrain appears five times, and the other six times), and both take the consonant that is the carrier of the (mono)rhyme. Those are the ayat that follow one another (15-16): *We left it as a clear sign, will anyone learn! / Oh, what My punishment and warning have been!* (Wa laqad taraknāhā ʾāya fa hal min muddekir / Fa kayfa kāna ʿad̲ābī wa nud̲urī).

The sudden change of grammatical persons denoting a single Person here is obvious. The rhetorical shift is at the same time quite active in the construction of the rhythmical-melodic values of the sura: it achieves it with the same rhyme, of approximately the same length as with the other ayat and with its common distribution.

Finally, an ayah is not randomly chosen to rhyme. This function is carried by the ayah or verse, which plays a pivotal role in the creation of the meaning of the Text, since its role is to emphasize the content it carries through repetition. In this case (with modifications that do not affect the meaning of the Text), the first ayah underlines the importance of the *Qurʾan* as God's obvious sign and the necessity for people to be warned by it, while the second ayah, building a rhetorical shift from the first, emphasizes the horror of punishment and an admonition as to what will happen to those who will not listen to these warnings.

Therefore, aside from its quite advanced stylistic functionality, the figure of the *rhetorical shift* has been greatly endowed with meaning: here it carries the very essence of the message of the *Qurʾan*.

GRAMMAR AND GRAMMATICAL FIGURES IN THE STYLE OF THE *AL-FĀTIḤA*

"A sentence with two beginnings"

The sura that opens the immense meanings of the *Qur'an* and introduces its meanings into wide spaces (which is why it is called the *al-Fātiḥa,* or the *Opener*) is only one sentence, syntactically. It consists of seven poetically structured ayat/paragraphs, which are marked in terms of rhythm and melody so that the sentence is "fragmented" with the beats of the rhythm and rhyme. Careless and uninformed readers think that this sura consists of as many as seven sentences, since many wrongly identify an ayah with a sentence. Readers mostly fail to notice the exquisite fact that the *al-Fātiḥa* is composed of one sentence, so that, as such, it is special in the Book at whose beginning it lies; this should be added to its numerous qualities, and should be meaningfully elaborated. To demonstrate this, I will conduct a grammatical analysis of this sentence, elaborating how grammatical categories and structures perform quite complex and effective aesthetic tasks within it, and how grammatical and semantic structures build unexpectedly rich relationships. I will pay special attention to grammatical and semantic oppositions.

The first ayah (*Praise is due to Allah who is the cultivator of the worlds*) is not a sentence that could be followed by a full stop, since it is followed by an ayah (*the all-merciful and graceful*) that serves as an attribute to the proper noun *Allah*, although it has already been attributed by a genitive annexation, that is, through the attributive genitive *cultivator of the worlds*.[128]

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[128] In Arabic this is the *genitive construction*, or annexation, which is among the most frequent phrases in that language.

Therefore, it is syntactically not recommendable to detach the attribute from its noun. (Understandably, speaking of syntax, I here mean a prose and stylistically unmarked statement; in a Text characterized by high poetical values, there is a constant creative tension between grammatical and poetic syntax.) The same is the case with the third ayah (*Ruler of the Day of Faith*): it constitutes a further attributive upgrade of the noun *Allah*, and appears as a double genitive construction.

The stylistic markedness of the three aforementioned ayat is quite significant already on this level, but their defamiliarization increases further on through the structure of the Text. Namely, in the first three short ayat, the accumulation of attributes has been optimally intensified (there are as many as four) of which two are proper adjectives (*the all-merciful* and *graceful*), and two are built through genitive constructions (*cultivator of the worlds* and *Ruler of the Day of Faith*).[129] The grammatical opposition is obvious and stylistically active, since the two adjectives have been derived from the common morphological paradigm, and two have been created syntagmatically – as attributive genitives – as annexations. There are, hence, grammatical categories that unite adjacent ayat, transferring their morphological and grammatical function into an aesthetic one: already in the first three ayat grammar has been brilliantly introduced into the aesthetic sphere. What is quite important here is that the entire sura builds a grammatical rhyme – the kind that is derived with different grammatical forms, declensions, conjugations, etc.

It needs to be pointed out to persons unfamiliar with Arabic (and often to those who think they are) that classical Arabic, to which this Text belongs,

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[129] Translations of the *Qur'an* that insist on its etymology are interesting. Muhammed Asad, for instance, translates the phrase *Rabb al-'ālamīn* as *the Sustainer of all worlds* (in: *Poruka Kur'ana*, translation and comment Muhammed Asad, El-Kalem, Sarajevo, 2004, translation from English Hilmo Ćerimović). Or, André Chouraqui in his translation of the *Qur'an* into French translated the attributes *al-rahman* and *al-rahim* as *matriciant* and *matriciel*. (Compare: André Chouraqui, *Deset zapovijedi danas*, Konzor, Zagreb, 2005, translation Jadranka Brnčić and Kruno Pranjić, p. 113.)

At different points in this text I will provide different translations of certain ayat and phrases – depending on whether linguistic or poetic syntax is more important to me, and to point out possibilities for providing translation nuances.

had no punctuation, nor were these attributes coordinated by conjunctions: they are simply juxtaposed, in a state of intensive accumulation, which, in Bosnian, is unusual in such scope and through juxtaposition. These ayat are therefore quite defamiliarized, and their defamiliarization is, of course, further enhanced by the fact that they establish a poetic syntax, being subject to rhythm and rhyme. Bearing in mind this placement of attributes and their rhythmic-melodic function, as well as the fact that they unite ayat as larger rhythmic-melodic units, I can say that these grammar categories (these attributes) have grown into quite an accomplished grammatical figure. Their semantics deserve special attention, but it already bears mentioning that the attributes have been placed so as not to be random, and that it is impossible to order them otherwise, so that, in that sense, they do not constitute a mere accumulation whose only goal is aesthetic pleasure – here, the meaning and the import of the Text are also more important than its aesthetic function. Namely, in the vertical, which the sacral Text always points out, the quoted part of the sura should be interpreted in the following way in order to notice the utter coherence in the ordering of the attributes: *Allah is the cultivator of the worlds and as such is all-merciful and graceful toward the worlds he has created and He will ultimately be the One who shall rule over the Day of Faith*. This is, therefore, a matter of a vertical-*gradation*, a course of events that cannot be redirected: the creation of worlds; ruling over worlds; showing mercy toward the created worlds; and a judgment at the end of all.[130]

After the third ayah, a completely unexpected syntactic and stylistic shift follows that appears so defamiliarizing – precisely syntactically and with the use of unexpected grammatical categories – that any careful reader will simply be startled, and their optimal attention and emotion aroused. Namely, if one were to disregard Arabic syntax and the stylistics of this Text, it would be possible to place a full stop at the end of the third ayah: *Thank Allah who is the cultivator of the worlds, /The all-merciful and graceful, / the Ruler of the Day of Faith. / You we worship ...* etc.

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[130] The stylistic value of this figure is increased by the fact that a series of attributes are graded, in an unchangeable subordination, not with the help of subordinating conjunctions, but through carefully selected lexeme semantics.

However, the sentence cannot be finished here since we are dealing with a specific kind of Arabic compound sentence, an important part of which follows precisely after the third ayah. The only adequate punctuation there is a hyphen. Linguists refer to this kind of sentence as a *sentence with two beginnings*, although I find the Arabic term much better: "a sentence with two persons" (*al-ğumla ḏāt al-waǧhayn*). Structurally, this is the type of sentence we encounter in the following example: *Our friend Salih – him we see every day*. Therefore, remaining on the level of formal-structural analysis, this sentence can be reformulated in accordance with syntactic standards: *Thank Allah who is the Cultivator of the Worlds, the all-merciful and graceful, the Ruler of the Day of Faith – Him we worship and Him we ask for help…* However, this sentence – which is significantly more frequent in Arabic than in Bosnian and is, in fact, quite expressive – has here been defamiliarized in at least three ways, so that its schema is not noticeable at first sight, which however is its goal: it constitutes a veritable syntactic-stylistic accomplishment.

First, the wealth of attributes has attracted readers' attention who have dedicatedly and joyfully accepted the transfer of their grammatical functionality into an aesthetic one, such that they do not even have an idea as to what kind of syntactic and stylistic shift awaits them in the next (fourth) ayah. The "other beginning" of the sentence (its "other person" in the fourth ayah) is delayed somewhat significantly – although it turns out that this was done for a balanced cultivation of the reader's desire – and attributes are ordered with quite a thoughtful semantic connection and gradation, so that this "second beginning" is almost no longer expected: it is not so obvious as it would be in a stylistically unmarked sentence, since it is *not so close* to its "first beginning".

Second, in "sentences with two beginnings", the same grammatical person is used at both of its beginnings. In the sentence *Our friend Salih – him we see every day,* the third person is used at both beginnings of the sentence. However, the "second beginning" of the sentence in the *al-Fātiḥa* introduces the second person, although the third person is at the "first beginning". It would be expected for the sentence to read: *Thank Allah… Him we worship…* However, the unexpected and unusual

change of persons at the "second beginning" has created a forceful shift with different goals and effects. In the semantic domain of the Text, the introduction of the second person establishes a very dynamic relationship of proximity between Allah and those who worship Him. Although Allah has been distanced in the previous ayat, as necessary, in this one He suddenly changes perspective, allowing for Man to have a direct relationship toward Him, which is another facet of His grace attributed to him in the previous Text.[131]

Third, the fact is that, at a cursory glance, the Text blurs the structure of this clause as a "sentence with two beginnings", using prose in rhyme and rhythm. However, once it reveals itself as such, all of its defamiliarizing factors act strongly and in unison to achieve this genre, and the aesthetic and semantic affirmation of the Text.

The unusual change of persons has been emphasized with another grammatical device. Namely, the personal pronoun in its longer form *'Iyyāka* (You) has been placed in an anteposition – it is placed as an object before its verb (*na'bud*), thus drawing attention to both itself and the verb, only to follow again as a grammatical parallelism: *Wa 'Iyyāka nasta'īn* (*and from You we ask for help*).[132]

The Arabic "sentence with two beginnings" in itself reflects stylistic value, with considerable expressive potential. If one also bears in mind all of the defamilarizing aspects and effects of this clause in the *al-Fātiḥa* that I have just elaborated, which serve as the syntactic juncture of the entire sura and its sentence structure, it appears to be enormously defamiliarized. In other words, with a series of grammatical categories and syntactic techniques, this sentence has been converted into a splendid *grammatical figure*.

Given this interpretation, it should be pointed out that these numerous stylistic and semantic values are lost in translations that do not acknowledge this stylistic value shift of persons and given grammatical categories. For example, there is the following translation: *You,* [there is no pronoun in

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[131] For more about this see the chapter: *Rhetorical shift.*

[132] The difference is similar to what would be expressed in Bosnian with the translations *Obožavamo Te* and *Tebe obožavamo* (We worship You versus It is You we worship).

the original; also, the third person is used] *Allah, Lord of the worlds, we praise* [verbs and persons are not used in the original, which is also quite important], etc.[133]

The fifth ayah (*Guide us rightly to the Upright path*) is also not an independent clause, but a part of a compound subordinate clause without conjunctions, since this is a poetically organized Text that has a different relationship toward conjunctions than a prose text. In a prose text, this part of the sentence would start with the Arabic consecutive conjunction *fa* (*therefore, hence,* etc.): *You we worship and from You we ask for help / So guide us to the upright Path.*

The last two ayat are obviously not independent clauses, so there is no need to elaborate on them.

This sura-sentence provides an interesting combination of grammatical categories and the shaping of their semantic field, their semantic structure, as well as the order in which they are positioned in the Text's universe. First come nouns, in fact, one noun, *Allah*, and several of its attributes, which strongly lean toward nominalization.[134] These names – perhaps it makes more sense to refer to them thus – convey a static quality and in no way express temporality, so that one could say, in fact, that they are semantically timeless in the sense of their origin, duration and disappearance. Moreover, this series of names emphasizes *singularity*, which achieves the important goal of expressing the Text's monotheism with grammatical means, rather than lexical ones. Namely, instead of expressing the singularity lexically

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[133] Some pretentious interpreters of the *Qur'an*, failing to understand fundamental phenomena related to the area of linguistic stylistics and its cooperation with semantics, go so far as to demand that the word *only* be introduced into this exquisite Text: *Only You we worship.* The aforementioned stylistic value of the Text is thus reduced and redundancy increased, given that its stylistic value is built with the help of grammatical devices. Also, their semantic qualities are enhanced this way, because the statement *You we worship* clearly points to monotheism as its fundamental content. (See: Prof. dr. Jusuf Ramić, "Prijevod Kur'ana od Esada Durakovića", *Preporod*, no. 22/792, Rijaset Islamske zajednice u Bosni i Hercegovini, Sarajevo, 2004, p. 27. Even the title of Ramić's work, which contains the proposition *od* (from), characteristic of Arabic, testifies to a fundamental lack of knowledge of the Bosnian language.)

[134] The *Qur'an* itself refers to these morphological adjectives as *God's most beautiful names;* they are indeed nearly nouns, though still morphologically adjectives.

(e.g.: *Thank Allah, the only One*), it is emphasized by introducing a series of attributes, each of which entails it and is determined by a definite article, thus repeatedly emphasizing the singularity of the noun *Allah*, so that in the given structure they appear to evince more stylistic value than would a simplified lexical explication regarding the singularity. Therefore, *Allah* begins the Text, He who is the beginning of everything, outside of Time and too far away from the End, whose positive attributes are so constant they do not allow for temporality, but have instead been nominalized. This is the "first beginning" or the "first person" of a complex sentence; that is, at the "first beginning" of this sentence, Eternity, rather than Temporality, is expressed as the essential and permanent condition.

Elsewhere, starting with the fourth ayah, there are verbs that, as grammatical elements, serve as "a system of tenses organizing the temporal aspect of the (…) world."[135] Or, to use Jakobson's language, this series of verbs operate as a veritable "textual musculature" that moves it suddenly and strongly.

Deep within the structure of the Text, or this complex syntactic unit, the category of tenses translates the Text from its previous nominal extemporal quality into verbal temporality that is intensified by the frequent distribution of verbs within quite a small space (*na'bud* = we worship; *nasta'īn* = we seek help; *'ihdinā* = guide us rightly; *'an'amta* = you have bestowed with blessings), rendering their pulsation more obvious and pronounced, since they also occur as grammatical parallelisms (*na'bud* = we worship; *nasta'īn* = we seek help). The goal of the sudden introduction of these grammatical categories is to emphasize the *temporality of human existence* awash in present tense worship, calling for help, searching for the right path. This temporality, expressed by the given grammatical categories, is opposite to the timelessness and static quality present in the first three ayat, which are fully saturated with nominal categories. The very short fourth ayah repeats the two present tense forms (*na'bud; nasta'īn*) in which the action/temporality is optimally underlined also by the fact that its objects have been placed in an anteposition (*'Iyyāka na'bud…*); if these verbs were

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[135] Jurij M. Lotman, *Struktura umetničkog teksta*, Nolit, Beograd, 1976, translation Novica Petković, p. 217.

accompanied by a pronominal suffix (*na'budu*k*)*, the Text would have had a different stylistic and semantic value. Even the imperative in the fifth ayah (*'Ihdinā = guide us rightly*) is one of four verbal moods of the present tense in Arabic, of the kind that grammatically condenses the previous present tenses nearly to momentariness. At the same time, it occurs as an opposition to the previous indicative moods, thus affirming its stylistic value.

Understandably, the opposing nature of the names and verbs in this part of the sura also affirms stylistic value, all the more given the fact that each of the two grammatical categories occurs in a cumulative series. This way, each grammatical category is enriched in a *group*, since they shape a wide semantic field with this technique.

The last in this series of verbs is *'an'amta* ((you have) bestowed with blessings). After three present tenses, this is the only verb occurring in the perfect tense. The suddenness of this perfect is significant, given that it occurs after non-temporal grammatical categories and a repeatedly used present tense. This finite verb is hence quite invested with stylistic value. Given that stylistic value is generally created by context, this grammatical category has also been exposed to strong contextual forces: in this context, the morphological perfect tense *'an'amta* in fact expresses all three tenses – the perfect, present and future tenses. The interpretation of the context yields this meaning: *Guide us to the upright Path, / Toward the Path of those you have blessed /bless/ shall bless …* The perfect *'an'amta* here is clearly a *grammatical metaphor*.

Linguistic repression. The sura as a gnoseological metaphor

After the rule of names at the top of the sura-sentence, and verbs in its middle, toward the end two participles emerge – the first passive (*al-maġḍūb*) and the second active (*al-ḍāllīn*). Both participles are impersonal and temporally undefined. With this impersonality they are in utter grammatical and semantic contrast, or opposition, to the previous parts of the sura-sentence. This is due to the fact that its entire first part is dedicated to personalization expressed with the proper pronoun *Allah* and a gradation

of its attributes. The second, temporal part of the sentence also strongly emphasizes personalization, albeit with other, intentionally oppositional grammatical categories (*You*, *You*; *we worship*; *we ask for help*; *guide us rightly*), and its final part is dedicated to impersonalized participles.[136] The "semantic content" of these grammatical categories (*those who deserve wrath* and *who wander astray*) has been mercilessly pushed to the other end of the Text's universe – from idealized personalization to utter namelessness. The passive here constitutes utter linguistic repression. I have already stated this was a terrible textual punishment,[137] but I would like to add here that this in itself is an exquisite *metaphor* for the real punishment waiting at the other side of Time and Text. In other words, a subtle metaphor, which is not only grammatical, but also gnoseological, simply flashes before the reader's eye.

The fact that it contains two elements (the passive and active participle) gives an additional value to this metaphor, which is, in fact, in itself oppositional and at the same time oppositional to the entire previous Text. Moreover, it begins with the noun *ġayru,* which is at the same time the first negation in the Text, since it strongly underlines the negativity of the final part of the sura-sentence; the negative noun *ġayru* is the juncture of the sentence and its meaning – hence the fateful shift begins there. Bearing in mind the impressive opposition to the preceding Text, on grammatical-syntactic, semantic and stylistic levels simultaneously, it creates quite an impact and serves as a warning that long leaves the reader pensive, unable to put the book down; it remains open for a while with a degree of stylistic defamiliarization and utter linguistic seriousness befitting admonition.

Grammatical devices here establish a quite steep sacral Vertical. Nouns, verbs and participles in their own way present an image of the Universe and Time from Top to Bottom. These categories are composed so that

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[136] Granted, a prepositional construction comes alongside the passive participle, also including the prenominal suffix (*'alayhim* = to them), but it does not significantly impact the personalization I have been discussing: the morphological form of the participle *al-maġḍūb* is after all impersonal, and as such has a defamiliarizing effect following the finite, personalized verb forms.

[137] In the chapter *Sacralization of the textual space*.

each, in its group, affirms an utmost positivity: the first group – the noun *Allah* with its attributes; the second – worshipping, asking for help, asking for being rightly guided and bestowed with blessings; and finally, the third group – wrath and wandering astray as negative content, introduced by the negative noun *ġayru*.

In the interpretation of this image, its contrasts expressed by opposite grammatical categories need to be emphasized. While there is a full cooperation in constructing this positivity within each group of grammatical categories, *intra-groups* opposition, or contrast, is emphasized: *Allah* is grammatically fully personalized, timeless and singular; *Man* (humankind) is temporal and plural (*we worship ... we ask ...*); while the opprobrious Sinners are also plural (everything is plural but Him!), but they are, unlike the aforementioned, impersonal.

Therefore, given that the stylistic value of the Text is also achieved by contrast, and not just by figures of repetition, the implication is that the special stylistic value of the Text is achieved through both types of stylistic devices.

As I immersed myself deeply in the structure of this sura-sentence – beneath its morphological forms, attracted by the process of the syntagmatic chain creation – I also discovered an unexpected *grammar of the story*.[138] In fact, in it, the Universe and its destiny have been "narrated" in a unique way. This narration could be thus paraphrased:

Allah has always been and always will be [the static and timeless nature of the name in the first part of the sura]; *then He created Man, who exists in temporality, so this kind of Man worships, asks for help, etc. as the ultimate meaning of his existence, knowing that the quality of his fate fully depends on this* [concentrated use of verbal forms]; *finally, some will meet their end by attracting God's wrath, since they have wandered astray* [use of the participle for a resolution].

The grammatical vertical matches the sacral Vertical; their cooperation has even been optimized. At the same time, one can easily conclude that this kind of grammatical "narration" of the Universe contains, in fact, its

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[138] I have taken the term *grammar of the story* from Gerald Prince (Gerald Prince, *A Grammar of Stories*, The Hague, Paris, 1973.).

entire meaning: God's Existence is presented in the "cultivation of the worlds," exuding all-encompassing mercy, and his ruling of the Day of Faith; Man's passing existence is dedicated to belief; the existence of other kinds of people manifests an utterly different quality – sinning and punishment. In other words, the entire meaning of Faith and the fate of all worlds are contained in this single sentence-sura.

The Arabic literary tradition has always cherished the ideal of conciseness. But bearing in mind the interpretation I have just given – although it does not exhaust the capacities of the sura – the conciseness of this sentence seems absolute. The entire experience of Arabic literature has been overcome by it, which has been one of the arguments regarding the *Qur'an's* inimitability. In the *al-Fātiḥa,* in order to convey optimal semanticity, grammar and stylistics have been developed to the ultimate boundaries of functionality and defamiliarization.

The only thing about the *al-Fātiḥa* that is not strange, bearing in mind the aforementioned, is that it is positioned at the beginning of the *al-Muṣḥaf:*[139] it opens the Book like a magnificent gate, though it is in itself, as a semiotic sign, a *gate*, as it contains the entire Meaning of Openness.

The *Al-Fātiḥa* is, therefore, unique, being at once literal and metaphorical.

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[139] An *al-Muṣḥaf* is a bound copy of the *Qur'an.*

PARALLELISMS IN THE *AL-FĀTIḤA*

Grammatical and thematic parallelisms

Although many readers are familiar with the text of the *al-Fātiḥa* (both the original and the translation), I believe it is advisable here to provide the integral versions of the original and the translation, for practical purposes: the reader will often have to return to the Text in order to follow my stylistic interpretation more easily. I will combine a phonetic and phonological transcription of the original text, so that readers unfamiliar with the Arabic script can follow my analysis more easily and note the phonetic values of the Text in the elements of phonetic transcription.

Bismillāhi-r-raḥmāni-r-raḥīm
1. Al-Ḥamdu Lillāhi Rabbi-l-ʿālamīn
2. Ar-Raḥmāni-r-raḥīm
3. Māliki Yawmi-d-Dīn
4. ʾIyyāka naʿbudu wa ʾIyyāka nastaʿīn
5. ʾIhdinā-ṣ-Ṣirāṭa-l-mustaqīm
6. Ṣirāṭa -l-laḏīna ʾanʿamta ʿalayhim
7. Ġayri-l-maġḍūbi ʿalayhim wa lā-ḍ-ḍāllīn.[140]

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[140] *In the name of Allah the All-Merciful and Graceful*
1. *Praise is due to Allah Who is the Cultivator of the worlds,*
2. *The All-Merciful and Graceful,*
3. *Ruler of the Day of Faith -*
4. *It is You we worship and You we ask for help:*
5. *Guide us rightly to the Upright path,*
6. *Toward the Path of those You have bestowed with blessings,*
7. *And not of those who deserve wrath, nor those who have wandered astray.*

* * *

The shortest, most common definition of parallelism in stylistics is "the repetition of clauses of the same sentence structure or the same sentence order",[141] a repetition that is not literal, rather being expressed through equal grammatical and syntactic structures, or the same meaning. Parallelism is more rarely equated with concinnity, the harmonious or symmetric arrangement of short sentence elements, and the device for emphasizing the similarities and differences of the depicted phenomena. It appears that, in the definitions of parallelism, emphasis is placed upon similarities, though it can also be expressed through differentiation of its elements, at which the notion of synonymy, or the accumulation of synonyms, is introduced. However, already at its beginning the *al-Fātiḥa* shows there is an effective and semantically quite coherent *gradation* behind the seeming synonymy, or accumulation of synonyms.

The first three ayat of the *al-Fātiḥa* contain several parallelisms that comprise almost the entire sura. They are a series of grammatical (nominal) parallelisms: *al-Ḥamdu Lillāhi rabbi-l-'ālamīn / ar-Raḥmāni-r-raḥīm / Māliki Yawmi-d-Dīn* (*Praise is due to Allah, cultivator of the worlds, / The all-merciful and graceful, / Ruler of the Day of Faith*). The underlined words are the parallelisms that occur as nominal accumulation. They are, at the same time, grammatical parallelisms that have been optimally enhanced in very small structural units /phrases: *rabb* is a singular noun and *al-'ālamīn* is a plural noun, and together they build a genitive construction (*status constructus*). The second ayah (*ar-Raḥmāni-r-raḥīm*) contains two adjectives that are also presented in the *Qur'an* as attributes leaning toward nominalization (the so-called "Allah's beautiful names"). Already this nominalization status of two juxtaposed attributes and their attributive relationship toward the previous dominant nouns constitutes in itself a parallelism. Since juxtapositions are quite common in Arabic, this second ayah is uttered as a phrase: in one breath, connected, though it needs to be emphasized that the entire second ayah constitutes an attribute of the previous one. With this insistence on syntagmatic repetition the

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[141] Marina Katnić-Bakaršić, *Stilistika*, ed. II, Tugra, Sarajevo, 2007, p. 315.

parallelism draws attention to itself and the previous genitive construction (*rabbi-l-'ālamīn = the cultivator of the worlds*). The relationship between the two builds a parallelism of sorts that is grammatically incomplete, though symmetrical and euphonically quite efficient. The third ayah (*Māliki Yawmi-d-Dīn = Ruler of the Day of Faith*) contributes to that particular parallelism since it begins (again!) with a *nominalized* active participle *Mālik* (The one who rules, Ruler), but also by building a genitive construction that is already strongly positioned in the first ayah (*Rabbi-l-'ālamīn = Cultivator of the worlds*). However, like the rest of the sura, the Text refuses to embrace a full parallelism that could turn the principle of stylistic shaping into automatism and accumulation as such. Here, in the third ayah, it therefore builds a double genitive construction: *Maliki-Yawmi-d-Din* (*To the ruler of the Day of Faith*). Therefore, these parallelisms are not fully identical, but are notably symmetrical and belong to the same type of grammatical construction (*status constructus*). Finally, when recited, even readers who do not know the meaning of the aforementioned ayat can feel the rhythm and rhyme, which could also be referred to as a grammatical rhyme, since it is built with grammatical devices in the entire sura. Granted, the rhyme in the second ayah is based on the consonant *M*, rather than *N*, as in the greater part of the sura, but both consonants are quite close in pronunciation, and the introduction of the consonant M into the rhyme of the second ayah should be interpreted as a device with which the Text resists automatism and monotony.

If one were to carefully examine the first three ayat, as structural units that create parallelisms in the first part of the "sentence with two beginnings" – right before the rhetorical shift that introduces the next, fourth ayah – it can be noticed that they build, on one level, stylistically rather effective grammatical parallelisms, especially given the fact that they are realized in quite a small "language space". However, the parallelism is also realized on another level that the Text cares more about than the formal-structural one. Namely, the first three ayat consist of nouns or nominalized categories (active participles and adjectives). The tension created by the nominalization of participles and adjectives enhances their stylistic value. At the same time though, it is noticeable that, strictly speaking, the

first three ayat contain only two nouns-lexemes (*al-Ḥamd* [Praise] and *Allah*), while the other words in their surroundings, like the nominalized participles and adjectives, on a semantic-syntactic level, in fact serve as attributes to a single proper noun - *Allah*. The genitive constructions in Arabic (a simple one in the first ayah [*rabbi-l-'ālamīn*] and a complex one in the third [*Māliki Jawmi-d-Dīn*]) tend to function as attributes in the domain of syntax.[142] This multiple defamiliarization of the structural units of the Text, this syntactic effort and ability of the phrases to perform several important tasks here at the same time, again exceedingly enhance this short Text's stylistic value. One may even say that the first three ayat constitute a complex attributive phrase, which is, as such, recited in one breath, but (this always needs to be emphasized in order to properly notice the stylistic value of the entire sura) this "phrase" constitutes merely the "first beginning" of the "sentence with two beginnings".

The second level on which the principle of parallelism is realized in these three ayat ("the first beginning of the sentence") is *thematic parallelism*. Namely, the aforementioned ayat-phrases convey one topic with the parallelisms: *Praise Allah – the Cultivator of all-worlds – the All-Merciful-the Graceful-Ruler of the Day of Faith.*[143] This thematic parallelism, together with the grammatical one, constitutes the soul of the Text to which message and argumentation are the key, although here the full cooperation of the two levels in which parallelism operates is obvious. Here, in merely three rather short ayat, the following is thematized, and through parallelisms rendered poetically aesthetic: the fate of the world/worlds (which Allah "cultivates" or maintains), the thankfulness to which He is therefore entitled, His universal grace toward the world/worlds, and the fate of the world/worlds which ends in the Day of Faith, or the Day of Judgment. This thematic parallelism can be represented in the following manner: *Cultivator of the worlds – the All-Merciful-the Graceful-the Ruler of the Day of Faith.* The

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[142] In June 2007, at the Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo, Elma Dizdar defended her splendid PhD dissertation entitled *Atribut u arapskom jeziku*, in which, among other things, this function of the Arabic genitive construction is interpreted.

[143] Hyphens serve to emphasize the syntagmatic structure, and the word *all-worlds* points to the Text's aim to rhyme certain parts of the phrase.

thematic parallelism here is supported by grammatical parallelisms in which morphology and syntagmatics, as well as the rhyme, are so effective that they mask the level of thematic parallelism to a reader who is not so insightful, though this level is, in fact, essential.

The combination of grammatical categories (nouns, participles and adjectives made tense through nominalization, as well as genitive constructions that function as attributes) forms an extremely wide semantic field that, theologically, encompasses all worlds and their fates, even the Day of Faith. Bearing in mind this wide semantic field, it is fascinating how it has also been rendered semantic using extremely economical linguistic devices and thematic parallelisms that contribute to this economical quality, since extensive representation of the same semantic field by different stylistic and genre devices would demand incomparably more space without yielding such strong poetic effects. Finally, this introductory series of parallelisms in a syntactically defamiliarized sentence take possession of the subject position strongly and in a specific manner.

Parallelisms in poetry operate through accumulation, repetitions etc., and the repetition of structural units most often affirms the similarity principle. Parallelisms are also known to affirm the difference principle. A notion or idea can be reiterated by accumulated synonyms. However, the thematic parallelisms in the first three ayat of the *al-Fātiḥa* do not express mere accumulation, similarity or difference, nor do they express synonymy. Parallelisms convey something else in this Text: their role is to affirm thematic gradation within a widely set theme. *Allah* is at the top of this gradation as a proper and absolutely singular noun coherently and consistently "interpreted" by thematic parellelisms. This can be interpreted in the following manner: *He is the cultivator of all worlds; as such, He is all-merciful and graceful; He is (again, as such, consistently) the Ruler of the Day of Faith (Judgment Day).* This series is therefore composed of parallelisms, but in such a way that none is determined as a synonym or another, nor do they seem a mere accumulation that would be exhausted in the realization of the formal values of the Text. The meaning is here, in fact, more important than the aesthetic effect of the form. Since this is a matter of gradation along a vertical of ethical values, the structure of the

Text is immutable and inversions of the parallelisms impossible to make since this would lead to a loss of the gradation of meaning and the text's essence. Namely, in the gradation of divine cosmic prerogatives, the first is that He cultivates/maintains worlds; a "lower", consequential one, is the all-encompassing mercy and grace in the maintenance of those worlds; and finally, He shall be the Ruler of the Day of Faith (Judgment Day), where/when all of the "consequences" of His previous prerogatives and traits shall manifest themselves. At the same time, this gradation could be translated into a chronological line of cosmic events, which further strengthens the structural position of each unit, or each parallelism, without the possibility of permutation. This could be thus paraphrased: *Allah, who is textually defined as a noun, outside all temporal categories, first cultivates/develops worlds with an act of His all-encompassing mercy and grace, and in the end Judgment Day shall follow over which He will rule.* Therefore, the structure of the Text is also chronologically immutable. The middle ayah (*the all-merciful and graceful*) especially strongly affirms this principle of the gradation of parallelisms, which translators into Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian have failed to convey in and ideal manner until Enes Karić's translation (Sarajevo, 1995). Namely, the attribute-noun *al-Raḥmān* is, in terms of gradation, incomparably higher than the juxtaposed attribute-noun *al-Raḥīm*. *Al-Raḥmān* is not used alongside any other name, except for Allah's, because this trait is inherent to Him only: He is the All-Merciful, which means that only He can be merciful towards everything and everyone, and in general towards the worlds he cultivates. *Al-Raḥīm* is used alongside other nouns, it is inherent even to people, so it should be translated as *milostiv*, *samilostan* (merciful, pitying). The grammatical parallelism is therefore not composed of two synonyms, but rather the two attributes have been exposed to splendid gradation within the general gradation of the Text.[144]

The fact that these parallelisms do not contain synonymy, or accumulation as such – the kind whose goal is to impressively play with the art form – leads to a far-reaching conclusion that characterizes the entire

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[144] It is sad to hear how almost all imams fail to note this significant difference despite Karić's and my own numerous warnings.

Text of the *Qur'an*. Namely, the essence is that the Text I am analyzing contains *absolutely no redundancies*, while generally texts abounding with synonyms and parallelisms face a grave risk of redundancy: avoiding that danger demands great skill, especially in texts in which parallelisms are the dominant stylistic device. In fact, the previous analysis of the first three ayat of the *al-Fātiḥa* demonstrate an optimal economical quality with a semantic density that is at first impenetrable.

The three ayat (this principle applies to the entire sura, as I will demonstrate further on in the analysis) also point to another trait of the Text, upon which it explicitly insists in the following suras. Namely, the Text has demonstrated the ability to use poetic language is an extraordinary manner and to a superior degree outgrowing the found tradition, but its ultimate goal is not aestheticism, but rather conveying its (sublime) content and argumentation, which are merely formally aesthetized. Thus, it also cultivates that aspect of man's being, since God has pointed out the capability for beautiful expression as one of His greatest gifts to Man.[145]

The aestheticization of argumentation

Since the Text that is the subject of this analysis prefers synonymy and accumulation as devices participating in the building of parallelisms, consequently its parallelisms are of particular stylistic value. Namely, at first they appear to be "ordinary" parallelisms, also prone to synonymy, since, as I have said, the second ayah appears to be a typical instance thereof. However, these ayat tremendously develop their stylistic value by not accepting synonymous accumulation, which is often found in parallelisms in literary artistic texts. The order of the parallelisms, or the phrases that build them, is impossible to change since the priority meaning-message of the Text does not allow it. In other words, this Text is defamiliarized by one of the most prevalent poetic devices – parallelism – enriching it with new experiences. To underline this, I will once again look into another ayah-phrase: *ar-Raḥmāni-r-raḥīm*.

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[145] *Qur'an*, 55:4.

Translations of the *Qur'an* into Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian, starting with 1895, have failed to quite adequately convey this parallelism.[146] Only in 1995 did Enes Karić in his translation and interpretation identify this ayah as an attributive gradation and translate it accordingly. Therefore, already the second ayah of the *Qur'an* is inadequately translated, stylistically and semantically. Granted, even those earlier translations did not fully lose its stylistic value, but the fact that it took about a hundred years for a single parallelism – already the second ayah in the *Qur'an* and part of the Bismillah – to be adequately translated into Bosnian testifies to the immensity of its stylistic defamiliarization.[147]

Since I have already stated that argumentation is the main goal of this sacral Text, it should be added that parallelisms as a stylistic device especially contribute to that goal. Namely, parallelisms generally have the goal of emphasizing, drawing attention and warning about certain

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[146] Mićo Ljubibratić in his 1895 translation of the *Qur'an* translated the attribute *al-Raḥmān* as *Blagi* (the Mild one). Muhamed Pandža and Džemaludin Čaušević (Sarajevo, 1937), as well as Omer Karabeg (Mostar, 1937) have noticed the difference between the two attributes, so they translate the word *al-Raḥmān* as: the *Sveopći Dobročinitelj (Universal Benefactor)*. However, the issue is that a single attribute is translated with two words, or even two categories of words, one of which is a noun, rather than an adjective, as is the case in the original: with this, the translation approaches the sense of the Text, but the stylistic loss is too great and irreparable. Besim Korkut (Sarajevo, 1977) translates this phrase with an inadequate synonymy, introducing a redundant comma into it, so that he offers the following translation of the *Bismillah*: *U ime Allaha, Milostivog, Samilosnog!* (In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Graceful!) I once again point out that imams in Bosnia and Herzegovina have unanimously carelessly accepted this inadequate translation.

[147] This incompetence with which translations of the *Qur'an* abound testifies to the fact that many people who claim only theologians are competent to translate and interpret the *Qur'an* are wrong. Namely, all of the aforementioned translations have been made precisely by theologians whose feeling for the literary-aesthetic values of the Text, for its stylistic potentials, have proved rather deficient. (Granted, Enes Karić is also a theologian, but he is an exception given his pronouncedly fine sense for the Bosnian language.) Of course, a solid theological education is important for producing a good translation, but it is clearly insufficient, since the semantic and stylistic level of the Text cannot be divided as a dichotomy, since they establish a full cooperation, as my brief analysis testifies. Also, the Tafsir cannot entail only a purely theological interpretation of the *Qur'an*, since it is insufficient without strong support through linguistic and literary expertise.

segments of the Text or an idea. This function of theirs is obvious – especially and naturally – in this Text, which has argumentation at its very essence. Parallelisms' connective role is also pronounced since they are, generally, recurrent devices. In this Text, parallelisms' connective role is so pronounced that the entire first three ayat are uttered in a single breath – as an expanded phrase of sorts, or a complex apposition of the noun *Allah*.

The additional structural strengthening of the Text is achieved with the next, fourth ayah (*'Iyyāka na'bud wa 'Iyyāka nasta'īn = You we worship and from You we ask for help*), as it constitutes the second beginning of a "sentence with two beginnings", but in the shape of rhetorical shift as a special stylistic figure. However, I would like to point to the fact that the fourth ayah has a connective role, like the parallelism. It differs somewhat from the previous ones as a typical syntactic parallelism, which makes it more obvious, the type where identical syntactic constructions are found: *Tebe obožavamo i od Tebe pomoć tražimo (You we worship and You we ask for help)*. The identicalness is even greater in the original; in the original it is complete, since the Arabic Text does not contain the preposition *from* in the second member of the parallelism, because the Arabic verb *nasta'īn* (we ask for help) is used without a preposition, with a direct object, as is the verb *na'bud* in the same ayah. Also, the original uses two finite verbs, but they have to be translated into Bosnian with two words: *nasta'īn = pomoć tražimo*.[148] Therefore, the syntactic symmetry of the fourth ayah in the original is complete: the same personal pronouns are used (*'Iyyāka = You*), and both times in the anteposition in order to emphasize their positions as objects; two verbs in the same tense and same person are used, and the coordinating conjunction *wa* (and) easily connects the two structures. Thanks to this insistence on parallelisms, the reader simply feels the rhythmical pulsation of the Text.

On the thematic level, the parallelism of the fourth ayah introduces a shift of sorts, or a contrast to the themes of the previous parallelisms, which is in line with the experience of parallelisms in general, since

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[148] This is also one of the examples – already at the very beginning of the *Qur'an* – that its Text is tied to the "conditions" of the Arabic language and how losses are inevitable when it is translated into another language.

they – I would like to reiterate – do not express only similarities, but also contrasts. This thematic contrasting is stylistically all the more effective as it is realized by an ayah (the fourth) that constitutes the "second beginning" or the "second person" of a "sentence with two persons", that is, the "sentence with two beginnings". Therefore, this syntactic and stylistic juncture of the sura contains enormous potentials: this ayah is the "second beginning" of the sentence, defamiliarized by the fact that at the same time it constitutes a stylistic figure known as a *rhetorical shift* (ar.*'iltifāt*); it is a typical syntactic parallelism expressed by a full syntactic symmetry not entirely transferable into Bosnian and is different from the parallelisms in the previous three ayat; it is thematically different from all of the previous thematic parallelisms, since it occurs in an unexpected and pronounced subordination in relation to them, although, syntactically and in terms of stylistic value it points out the "internal" coordination of the conjunction *wa* (and). Namely, the first three ayat with their parallelisms thematize the Absolute Supreme (the cultivation/maintenance of the worlds; the all-encompassing mercy and grace fit for the One who cultivates the worlds; sovereign ruling of the Day of Faith, which is also suitable for the all-Merciful who cultivates worlds). The fourth ayah, however, thematizes subordination in relation to the aforementioned: people are dependent on the Absolute Supreme; they worship it in an *absolute subordination*, they ask It for help. Therefore, the thematic contrast built by parallelism is here sudden and forceful, syntactically optimally defamiliarized; everything seems like a forceful rupture, a "deafening bang", but at the same time the connective forces of the Text have not been defeated: the entire sura is still, after all, a single sentence; parallelisms as connector-figures are still at full force*;* rhyme, as a sonic parallelism and a special kind of connector is also at play. The Text remains unified, connected, although there is no doubt – given what I have already pointed out – that this ayah is a place of unforgettable syntactic whirling and the shining effervescent stylistic cascade of the entire sura.

The stylistic and syntactic drama appears strongly to correspond to the content expressed by the aforementioned ayat. Namely, in the first three ayat – which I have said strive to be uttered in one breath since,

in all aspects, they have been optimally homogenized, syntagmatized – God's otherworldly and timeless traits have been thematized: *He is the one who cultivates and maintains worlds (at all times); His all-encompassing mercy and grace are inherent to Him in the otherworld, in relation to all worlds and all times; just as such He is the Ruler of the Day of Faith (Judgment Day).* However, the fourth ayah brings us down forcefully from the other world into ours, which should be, according to the Text's demands, contained in worshipping God and asking him for help. In other words, this juncture ayah (the fourth) expresses the transition from one world into another, from timelessness into temporality, from the nominal grammatical categories (hence, also timelessness) into temporality reduced to a pure and repeated present tense (*we worship* and *we ask for help*) to which temporality is the very soul. The drama is universal and of fateful import, and it once again demonstrates how all of the linguistic and stylistic devices in this holy Text constantly offer the utmost support to its content, or meaning. Therefore, I can here draw a conclusion regarding another very important stylistic quality of the *al-Fātiḥa,* or more precisely, this particular point. Namely, if we were to observe the sura from the viewpoint of spatial semiotics – and such an analysis is quite fitting – a conclusion imposes itself that, together with all of the aforementioned values, the fourth ayah also realizes a brilliant semiotic stylistic figure. It is as if its values were endless.

The second part of the sura, beginning with the fifth ayah, also abounds with parallelisms, among which are symmetrical repetitions, partial repetitions, grammatical and syntactic symmetries, as well as so-called negative parallelisms.

The fifth ayah introduces the phrase *Upright Path* (*'Ihdinā-ṣ-Ṣiraṭa-l-mustaqīm = Guide us to the Upright Path*), and in the sixth ayah the word *Path* is repeated (*Ṣiraṭa -l-laḏīne 'an ʿamta ʿalayhim = To the Path of those you have bestowed with blessings*).[149]

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[149] The phrase *aṣ-Ṣiraṭa-l-mustaqīm* is most commonly translated as the *Right Path*, but I here use the translation *Upright Path* since it is closer to the original meaning in the domain of ethics and semantics.

The seventh ayah builds a *negative parallelism* that is not present in the previous part of the sura: *Ġayri-l-maġḍūbi 'alayhim wa lā-ḍ-ḍāllīn* (*Not [to the path] of those who deserve wrath, nor [to the path] of those who wandered astray*). The grammatical structures and morphological shapes are distributed into different categories of parallelisms so as to perform aesthetic and argumentative functions.

Therefore, the *al-Fātiḥa* is so tightly structured that any changes to its structure are impossible. Although it is composed of a single complex sentence (and as such is relatively tightly structured as a separate chapter of the *Qur'an*), this tightness is further enhanced by a series of connective stylistic devices, including parallelisms. However, its parallelisms are specific due to the fact they are diverse: a very short Text uses various parallelisms, which range – following the ethical vertical of the Text – from those which in the first part of the sura thematize a positivity of the highest order to negative parallelisms at the bottom of the sura. If we accept that parallelisms, among other things, have the task of emphasis, then the argumentative quality of the *al-Fātiḥa* has also been optimally underlined with that stylistic device: its stylistic value strongly supports its argumentative quality, while this stylistic value proves to be an argument in itself.

THE SEMIOTIC STYLISTICS OF THE *AL-FĀTIḤA*

The confrontation of the center and the periphery

In many aspects the *al-Fātiḥa* is a sura that individually fully represents the *Qur'an* ideologically and as a text. I will examine it here from a semiotic point of view, which demands that its position first be defined – especially given its representational quality – in the culture where it was first revealed, as a semiotic space, and in which it has first exerted its influence.

The *Al-Fātiḥa*, that is, the Text it represents, appeared in a relatively calm and self-sufficient semiosphere:[150] the pre-Islamic Arabian world was indeed semiotically quite vigorous, self-sufficient and fulfilled, and described itself thus. However, in the 7th century, the Text vertically descended, which not only

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[150] I use the term *semiosphere* in the same sense it is used by J. Lotman in his precious book *Semiosfera. U svetu mišljenja. Čovek – tekst – semiosfera – historija*. Svetovi, Novi Sad, 2004, translation from Russian Veselka Santini.

In the second part of his book ("Semiosfera", p. 182 and onward) Lotman explains in detail what he means by the term semiosphere.

Although it is risky to present Lotman's relatively comprehensive text on the semiosphere in a few sentences, I will use Sanja Veršić's succinct interpretation:

"The concept which Lotman started developing in the 1980s, addresses the entire *cultural space* as a semiotic continuum, a semiotic space outside of which semiosis is impossible. This is the only space which allows for communication processes to occur and new information to be produced. Lotman has developed the term 'semiosphere' in analogy with Vernadski's 'biosphere', with which the natural scientist referred to a space filled with live matter as the totality of living organisms." (Sanja Veršić, "Nekoliko bilježaka o semiotici prostora /Na tragu 'tartuskih' studija", in: *Oko književnosti. Osamdeset godina Aleksandra Flakera*. Edited by Josip Užarević. Disput, Zagreb, 2004, p. 210.)

shook, but also broke this ancient vigor, roundedness and self-sufficiency to pieces, positioning itself as the central Text of the semiosphere. The "fragments" of this "broken culture" were then reshaped in its gravitational field and so the entire semiotic system was reshaped.

At the time of its vertical descent, the Text encountered relatively strong resistance from other semiotic texts and signs – from pagan religion, through literature and a variety of customs identified with the found culture. It was mostly unacceptable, since it appeared outside of the found context in the widest meaning of the word and was fundamentally opposed to the cultural codes it encountered. However, this was its goal: it was not revealed to the system in order to affirm it, but to revolutionize it; its intention was not to position itself – even as an authentic value – within the encountered value system, but to create a new one itself, in line with its own content and values, and to rearrange the entire semiotic system. If it did not have such intentions (from today's perspective we know how well founded they were), instead of accepting to "fit" into the encountered system, the Text would today exist within a sort of a literary-historical value system and would not produce the strong meanings it has had throughout history: it cannot be denied that this Text's semiosis is still the same as at the time of its revelation fewer than 15 centuries ago. Such is the destiny of rare distinguished texts, sacral texts usually more than others. I will later address the conditions that make them so special in that regard. In other words, it still generates tremendous energy, which produces new semiotic signs and rearranges the space around itself in concentric circles.

At the same time, while ancient Arabian society resisted the Text, a smaller segment thereof recognized its specific quality and accepted it with fervor proportionate to its particularity, quite firmly and unwaveringly. The Text had clearly arrived from the very edges of this cultural system, almost beyond its horizon: the Text itself explicitly states that its fundamental idea has always, with continuity, visited the world, but has with time been pushed behind the cultural horizon, or has been transformed beyond recognition. A Text from the periphery – in fact, from the "vertical edge" of the culture – forcefully penetrates its center, determined to break it and

reshape it. Precisely this fact regarding the forceful "encounter" between the periphery and the epicenter always produces enormous energy, which inevitably changes the entire "cultural landscape", or reshapes the cultural semiotic space. The result depends on conquering the ultimate semantic identity of the peripheral or the epicentral, since they are initially strongly differentiated, to the point of confrontation.

The Text of the *Qur'an* was initially accepted by a very small number of people, but its semantic identity was so strong that its few interpreters took it to have a fateful import on their individual spiritual and physical existence, as well as on an immense semiotic system. Therefore, thanks to such a strong semantic identity further empowered by the knowledge that, as a peripheral text, it can only impose itself upon the center with the force of this identity, the Text at the very epicenter unstoppably conquers space to the "point" where a radical shift in positions comes to being: the "peripheral semantic identity" becomes epicentral, and the previously epicentral retreats "scattered" toward the edges, the very horizon. With time, of course, this new central Text will give way to inertia to a point; it will also seriously exhaust its fuel so that, for the sake of the necessary semantic dynamism, it will need new external or peripheral impetuses.[151] Hence, it is no wonder that precisely in Saudi Arabia – where the Text was revealed and first became central – two negative forces operate. On the one hand there is the pronounced conservatism of that society, which quite baselessly "legitimates" itself with the Islamic faith, and, on the other, the even more conservative Wahhabi movement. The latter emerged precisely according to the principle of semiotic dynamism: it describes itself as a resistance to the inertia that has for centuries held a grip over the center of that semiosphere, rendering it sclerotic; it describes itself as a force capable of revitalizing the entire cultural space, or the entire semiotic space. However, the problem with Wahhabism is its being obviously retrograde and manifesting a very narrow consciousness: there are too many destructive and reductionist elements in it for it to be able to build anything. Wahhabism does not act in modernity with the strength

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[151] Lotman observes the relationship of texts in the semiosphere in a similar manner in: *op. cit.*, pp. 215.-216.

of its idea, or a semantic identity that imposes itself as such, but through exclusion and with a force the nature such that it cannot count on permanent success. Wahhabism is fundamentally anachronistic and in contradiction with the very essence of Islam, in the name of which it acts, so that it can never semiotically become the central text of the semiosphere. This topic is, however, marginal to my current interest and deserves to be treated separately.

Regardless of the divergent semiotic "subsystems" such as Sunni, Wahhabi and, of course, Shia Islam, with an array of semiotic signs that culturally individualize them in the search for an individual semiotic identity, the Text operates as a centripetal force that manages to preserve the unity of this semiosphere in very important aspects and in the widest horizon. There is no doubt, namely, that in any case all of these subsystems are defined and represented with the same Text: the entire Oriental-Islamic culture represents itself with the Text of the *Qur'an* as its core, and, at the same time, its ultimate framework, although they vary greatly in their interpretations of the Text. The *Al-Fātiḥa* is representative in that regard in all aspects: for all of the aforementioned semiotic subsystems it is the Text's Opener, since it positions itself at its beginning, formally and in terms of content. The Rejoicer of the opening of the sacral space, it worthily represents an ideologically and aesthetically pregnant Text that aims toward terseness and laconism, and deservedly throughout Oriental-Islamic culture it has been semiotically universalized. In the entire world believers recite it on all occasions and hence at mutually contradictory ones: the *al-Fatiha* is recited to accompany good wishes, for wish-fulfillment in general; it is recited at birth and after death (it is present at the start and end of life); it is recited at every joyful occasion – even being placed upon palms facing the just newly emerged moon; it is recited at the beginning of the *Qur'an* and after it has been read in its entirety (an act called *ḥatma*). Therefore, the entire Text of the *Qur'an* has been, conditionally speaking, "reduced" to the *al-Fātiḥa* in a special way and has identified itself with it. This is, undoubtedly, due to the fact that the Text is a pivotal one and as such hinders the collapse of the semiotic system; in fact, this entire system identifies itself with it.

The "descent" of an ordered sura into a disordered space

The semiosis of the *al-Fātiḥa* (the well-known relationship: sign > referent (object) > interpretant) is so dynamic that it is barely possible to represent. Aside from the aforementioned aspect of the identification of this sura – composed of a single sentence – with the universe of the sacral Text in all three semiotic subsystems, at least another aspect of its semiosis needs to be pointed out. Namely, there is widespread opinion that this sura is called the *al-Fātiḥa* (literally: *the one that opens*) because it is found *at the very beginning of the al-Muṣḥaf* (a bound corpus of suras). This is true, but the semiosis does not end there, since the *al-Fātiḥa* as a sign connotes a number of meanings. If the connotations of that sign were exhausted with the meaning the *first*, *the one at the beginning*, a more adequate linguistic sign would be: *the first* (al-ʾūlā). However, since the semantics of that sign carry the primary meaning of *opening* and *conquering*, the sign *al-Fātiḥa* denotes the opening/conquering of the entire forthcoming sacral space, the opening/conquering of its excessively rich meanings, which constitute a veritable semiotic universe. The specific semantics of the Arabic active participle *al-Fātiḥa*, which I have expressed with the words *opening/conquering*, need to be pointed out here. Namely, in Arabic this word holds, in the same semantic field, the meanings of *opening* and conquering, which implies that it realizes a special kind of proximity between the two meanings: the opening of a certain space calls for its conquering, or rather mastery, since without this second "act" the first is rendered nearly meaningless; only in their continuity and complementariness, in their semantically necessary consecution is an integral, saturated semantic field realized. This complex and, let us say, successful semiosis, is not realized in the translations of the *al-Fātiḥa* into other languages. However, this sura in itself realizes this comprehensive semantic field, at the same time providing a model for quite a wide semiotic space, which is semantically rounded and fulfilled. (I have written about this in detail in a text titled the *Sacralization of the textual space*.) Namely, this sura-sentence provides a model for a vertically ordered universe – as ethical space is usually ordered: from God's name, which is the beginning

of all things attributed by the "highest quality" adjectives, among which is the *all-merciful* (*al-raḥmān*), which is linguistically unique in the sense that is inherent to God only, through a strongly pulsating, almost quivering devoutness in ayat 4 and 5 to an anger trapped in participles toward those who have wandered astray. The *Al-Fātiḥa* therefore unexpectedly realizes a seeming paradox. With its position in the *al-Muṣḥaf* it constitutes merely the beginning, or the gates of the corpus; with its semantics it denotes an important, but unfinished process (opening-conquering); yet in itself – although on the syntactic level it constitutes merely one sentence – it is both an *opening* and a *conquering*, the beginning and the end with everything between, and is semantically ordered such that, as a miniature, it constitutes and represents all of that which the extensive Text "behind" it speaks. One could say that the *al-Fātiḥa* exists in a sort of paradox. However, it operates within the universe of the sacral Text whose gates it constitutes, and because at the same time provides a model within itself for a textual and ethical universe, a seeming paradox manifests itself, which is simultaneously an undreamed-of advantage of the sura: these aspects suggest less a paradox, but rather defamiliarization in the positive sense of the word in terms of the semiotics of the sacral Text and Oriental-Islamic culture as a semiosphere. Observed this way – in relation to the entire sacral Text – the *al-Fātiḥa* presents itself as an imposing semiotic figure. However, it also presents itself as a figure in the wider semiotic system – in the oriental-Islamic culture in which it operates "figuratively" in relation to the entire sacral Text and the entire culture that identifies itself with the Text of the *al-Fātiḥa* in a substantial and figurative manner. I will address the semiotic stylistic figures within the *al-Fātiḥa* in more detail further on. Before this, however, another aspect regarding the fact that this sura serves as a model needs to be pointed out.

The linguistic and stylistic organization of the *al-Fātiḥa* is carefully ordered, as I have elaborated in other parts of this book. Precisely the well-organized quality of these devices places it in positive contrast in relation to the world onto which it descended. At the moment of its "descent", that world was so disorganized as to border on chaos. Importantly, the world, the semiosphere into which the sura-Text descended, was essentially so

thoroughly fragmented that the life of the generation to which the Text was revealed constituted a series of pronouncedly disconnected episodes in both a spatial and ideological sense. The history of that world was also thoroughly fragmented in relation to the duration of relatively isolated tribal communities, which were brought into contact by sporadic events: long-lasting wars, joint pastures, or intertribal fairs plagued by envy. Furthermore, the aforementioned fragmentation occurs in a one-dimensional space – always "stretched" toward the horizon, in sight of false gods who, in this ideal flatness, are easy to see, grasp and require no great feats of imagination. The Vertical is essentially unknown in this world, and not just in the semiotic-spatial sense, but also in terms of the vertical integration of the world, ideological, ethical monolithism and firmness. The sura-sentence *descended* into such a world and was in such stark contrast to all I have just mentioned that it could only dramatically alter that world.

Primarily – to repeat – with its grammatical and stylistic orderliness, the *al-Fātiḥa* provides a perfect model for a general order that strongly differs from the disorder of the real world into which it descended and reordered as a new reality. This is one important level of contrastive modeling. The second level – always contrastive – manifests itself in the imposing fact that the entire sura is contained within a single sentence, a fact which not even many believers who utter it repeatedly every day are aware of; this is something not even linguists are always aware of. In fact, syntactically it is ordered thus that its fourth ayah (*'Iyyāka na'bud*… You we worship …) forms a "sentence with two beginnings", relatively common and stylistically strongly marked in the Arabic language. (Syntactically, ayat are not sentences, but rather rhythmical units.)

How is the fact that the entire sura constitutes one sentence relevant for my analysis, which provides an interpretation of the context of the revelation of the sura-sentence? In that regard, it occurs as a splendidly organized structure, providing a model for a firm structure of the world the Arabians failed to notice. The sura is fundamentally in opposition to the fragmentation of the Arabian world and history: as much as that world was fragmented without hope and perspective in its present and history,

the *al-Fātiḥa* is, in contrast, firmly structured; in fact, this intention of the sura is brought to its extreme, as manifested by the fact that it is organized as a single sentence, precisely due to its awareness of its modeling role. This contrast from the "periphery" is fundamentally unacceptable to the self-sufficient and inert center of the semiosphere. Moreover, at the same time this sura constitutes a fully rounded whole, not only on the level of syntactic organization, but also in terms of semantics; it is semantically saturated and homogeneous to the extent that nothing could be added to it or taken away from it without its syntactic organization and semantic self-sufficiency being broken. It does not admit of any kind of reorganizing. Therefore, with its firmness it provides a model for the tight structure of the micro- and macro universe. Its semiotic defamiliarization grows.

In the further interpretation of the context in which the *al-Fātiḥa* was revealed and operates, its relationship toward the one-dimensionality of the ancient Arabian world also needs to be explained. Namely, this world indeed existed horizontally in the sense I have just presented. However, the *al-Fātiḥa descended* upon the *one-dimensional* world. That angle is dramatic and charged with such "energy" potentials that it inevitably led to a historical revolutionizing of the semiosphere; the descent of the Text into an easily observed world at that particular angle, at the same time, indicates that the Text must have had such a unique semantic identity that it was the absolute precondition for its survival and an inexhaustible generator of its changes. The sharpness of the angle at which different texts (in the semiotic sense) meet is very important. If a text enters the center of the semiosphere at a relatively obtuse angle, its energy potentials are smaller and its influence on the center reduced accordingly. By increasing the sharpness of the angle, the active Text increases its chances of exerting a strong influence upon the center, though this entails the risk of utter failure if the text lacks a sufficiently strong semantic identity. This is why false prophets who have appeared after the prophet Mohammed failed to produce dramatic changes in the semiosphere, having (now and in the past) a negligible number of followers.

A 90 degree angle is sharpest, and that is precisely the angle under which the *al-Fātiḥa descended* into the one-dimensional ancient Arabian

world. This optimally emphasizes two things. First, the meaning of the vertical in a world that is one-dimensional in every aspect, primarily the ideological and ethical, is emphasized. The vertical is optimally contrastive to that world whose dimensionality it strives to change fundamentally by positioning itself as its fundamental value. Moreover, the vertical in itself entails an optimally firm structure, since that is the precondition of its existence. And, last but not least, as a semiotic sign the vertical indicates a fundamentally different "order" and orientation of man's spirit. The *Al-Fātiḥa* testifies to this precisely and splendidly: at the top of its textual space, as well as at the spatial and temporal "top" of the universe for which this sura provides a model, resides God who rules over worlds; at an immeasurably lower instance exist human beings who worship him and plead for help from Him, and quite at the end of the Text and at the "bottom" of the textual space dwell those who deserve wrath and have wandered astray. The vertical has been coherently placed not only existentially, but is absolutely immutable ethically. The difference between such an understanding of the world and the ethical values and notions that ruled at the time of the pre-Islamic Arabians is proportionate to the difference between sculpting a false god with one's own hands and believing in one invisible God who rules over worlds. That difference is simply immeasurable, spatially and ethically. Hence the world into which the sura descended was in shock and its resistance was understandable, although, at the same time, obviously futile. Also, it is no wonder, if one bears in mind the aforementioned, that the descending Text caused such a forceful and rapid rearrangement of the semiosphere, with a tendency to constantly expand and move apart the boundaries of the periphery.

Moreover, the vertical points to the necessity and possibility of overcoming fragmentation in the horizontal world of the ancient Arabians: the perspectiveless segmentation of this world was its very essence, the same way unity and firm structure are the essence of the vertical. The integral Text insists upon it – as does its representative, *al-Fātiḥa* – in its entirety. However, when I turn to analyzing the structure of the *al-Fātiḥa*, it will be obvious that its "lower instance" structural units also insist on affirming the same principle.

If we bear in mind the aforementioned aspects of the contrasting of the *al-Fātiḥa* as a Text with a series of other texts in the said culture – in fact with all of the other texts in the culture in which it was revealed,[152] and here I place special importance upon the word *revelation* – then a prominent conclusion becomes inevitable. However, before I present that conclusion, I must explain which special meaning of the word *revelation* I would like to underline. Namely, a "revolutionary" text in the semiosphere can arrive from its periphery, it can even originate in its exhausted center, but the word *revelation*, as is the case with the *al-Fātiḥa*, emphasizes the intentional hierarchical positioning of the texts. Such positioning, in general, does not provide the same energy potentials as in the cases of texts that arrive from the periphery to the center of the semiosphere. One should go a step further in this explication. Namely, *revelation* as an expression for the hierarchical positioning of texts in a cultural universe is specific to sacral texts. The notion of *revelation* is an instrument with which the sacralization of the Text is achieved, and which will be addressed in more detail further on. Thanks precisely to this intentional hierarchical superiority of the sacral Text, which is relatively modestly denoted by the linguistic sign *revelation*, sacral texts as a rule operate in a cultural universe with incomparably more energy than "profane" texts, as authentic, valuable, or even pretentious as they may be.

The stylistic marking of the al-Fātiḥa

The prominent conclusion on the *al-Fātiḥa* in the given context of its revelation actually relates to its enormous stylistic value in the semiopshere in which it was revealed. Namely, its stylistic value is significant in terms of semiotics in several aspects. If we stay within traditional, linguistic stylistics – and there is no reason to deviate from it – the style of the result of the choice and with the understanding of its stylistic value as

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[152] By the word *texts* I do not mean texts in the literal sense of the word only – that is, written or verbalized texts – but all forms that constitute a cultural universe, or even better, a semiosphere.

defamiliarization, or its markedness in that choice, then we can successfully use analogies in semiotic stylistics.

The semiotic stylistic value of the *al-Fātiḥa* (let us not forget the fact that it is one sentence) manifests itself primarily in the fact that it appears rather defamiliarized in the entire culture into which it was revealed – among all the signs and texts of that culture – so much that it rapidly changes that entire semiosphere, or cultural space, ultimately to "impose itself" as the marking sign (semiotic styleme) of that entire culture. It, therefore, enters into the center of an entire series of signs that build a certain cultural context or a sphere, but this sign-sentence appears semiotically so defamiliarized and efficient that it manages to recompose the entire context, or for the most part to construct a new one, to create an immense array of signs and texts that will reshape the semiopshere. On the other hand, the *al-Fātiḥa* is also a styleme in relation to the integral sacral Text: it "represents" it semiotically, not only by being at its beginning, but also by representing it as a whole Text. Of course, I speak of this representation on the semiotic level, as a special kind of semiosis in which one sign is replaced by another, or substituted, but one should also bear in mind that they mutually represent each other on an ideological level, because in that regard as well the essence of the *Qur'an* is contained in the *al-Fātiḥa*. Many believers who are not fully aware of the phenomena I am discussing express the same meaning with the belief that it is enough to recite the *al-Fātiḥa* (once or several times) at various occasions instead of the whole Text of the *Qur'an*.

The ability of the *al-Fātiḥa* to act as a styleme is so wondrous as to manifest itself at the highest level possible. Namely, its markedness, coupled with its ability to mark, is so great that it has spread to the entire faith (Islam), even to religion and culture, since it authentically and convincingly represents them with an array of other signs, or texts. I will illustrate this with two examples.

At commemorations in multi-religious communities, a group of people pays respect to the deceased with a minute of silence, while the other group at the same time sits with their arms outstretched, palms facing the sky, reciting the *al-Fātiḥa*. Therefore, a particular kind of semiosis is at play

here: different signs are used simultaneously to denote the same signified. In this case the *al-Fātiḥa* represents the *Qur'an* and is at the same time a sign of identification for Muslims. The Text uttered and the other sign – arms outstretched with palms facing upward – constitute a compression of signs of sorts, each of which is capable of acting independently in terms of semiosis: in some cases people do not know the text of the *al-Fātiḥa*, but semiosis is still realized with the gesture that accompanies the reciting. Granted, at these occasions something that was uncommon before happens, something that testifies to the tendency of signs to multiply. Namely, at commemorations Muslims recite the *al-Fātiḥa* with an adequate position of their arms, but also *standing* still, which is a splendid sign that did not used to belong to their faith or culture.

Another example of the exquisite markedness of the *al-Fātiḥa* among semiotic signs can be illustrated with the situation where a blonde Muslim finds himself in front of a mosque in the Arabic world. It has happened to me in Cairo several times, as a man with a fair, "European" complexion, that I have been stopped from entering it on a Friday at noon, because the hosts doubted I could be Muslim and would state that I could not enter the mosque at prayer time. My appearance is a special sign that produces a special meaning, or even a series of meanings. However, the moment the "suspect" recites the *Bismillah*, as well as the *al-Fātiḥa*, the previous sign loses its original meaning, being derogated by the other sign, at which point the "suspect" is allowed inside, which is sometimes accompanied by expressions of joy from the hosts – a third sign produced by the second sign's annulment of the first.

Of course, the *al-Fātiḥa* does contain a relative multitude of semiotic signs in its own structure, which demand special analysis. I can only tentatively refer to them as internal – in the sense that they are situated and operate within this sura. However, at the same time they act "externally" (like the ayah *Guide us rightly to the upright Path,* but also other ayat), at which they optimally cooperate with other semiotic signs in the Text outside the *al-Fātiḥa*, but also with the Text as a whole, as a semiotic universe of sorts. Precisely this optimal cooperation further enhances the stylistic value of the sura.

The Al-Fātiḥa *represents the entire Text: the world of* *connotations*

The aforementioned substitution stems from the Text of the Qur'an as a whole towards the sura-sentence. There is no doubt that the vast and comprehensive text following the *al-Fātiḥa* is, in fact, an exceedingly rich development of its meanings, a movement from one sign to another in a constant, unyielding multiplication of signs that are always somehow related to one another, so that a veritable universe of signifiers and meanings, an utterly coherent and, in terms of signification, consistent system, is formed in the Text. Due precisely to its semantic coherence and consistency in signification, a successful substitution is possible. The Text in its entirety is, hence, semantically "superior", being comprehensive to such a degree and in such a manner that the *al-Fātiḥa*, in comparison, is merely a sign, or a complex signifier pregnant with connotations and references to a multitude of other signifiers. I believe that the development of its stylistic potential constantly corresponds with its position in relation to the Text. Granted, this can be viewed in a different direction. In the context of this analysis, we could observe the *al-Fātiḥa* as a special type of compendium to the whole Text: with its optimally succinct system of signs, it contains the entirety of the Text that follows, though in such a way that each of its signifiers and meanings refer to other signifiers and meanings.

I will represent this schematically: Obligatory expression of gratitude to Allah (monotheism) > He is the cultivator of the worlds > He shall rule the Day of Faith (Judgment Day) > Hence we worship Him and ask Him for help > and to guide us to the upright Path > On this Path His blessings are poured > But there is also the path of those who provoke wrath because they wander astray.

This short sura obviously anticipates and *thematizes* the entire Text that follows by summarizing and representing the entire religion of Islam. This complex system is further on developed gradually and in a strictly consistent manner, so that the insufficiently versed reader may fail to notice that it is contained in the *al-Fātiḥa* – this, however, is due to

their inadequate interpretation. As a matter of fact, thematizing the the Text that follows in its entirety, in the way the *al-Fātiḥa* does, turns into another stylistic virtue, with amply developed connotations in this regard. In her exquisite book *Stylistics*, Marina Katnić-Bakaršić proposes the discipline of "semiotic stylistics", which I find astute and which is the result of her excellent knowledge of stylistics generally. In it, she states that "semiotic stylistics would examine aspects of style as the results of choice (in all semiotic systems), especially focusing on the connotations of the signs in them."[153] My semiotic interpretation of the *al-Fātiḥa* is almost an illustration of the author's view of semiotic stylistics at work. The connotations of the semiotic signs in the *al-Fātiḥa* are barely reachable, and can be followed on two levels: on one level, connotations are revealed if the sura is analyzed independently, although not in complete isolation from the Text in its entirety; I will also pay special attention to this later on. At this point, I would only like to stress its connotative quality on another level – in relation to the Text in its entirety, since I have already stated that each of its signs refers to a chain of other signifiers and meanings, and that they connote a system of ethical values, epistemological potentials, as well as practicalities and rituals. The greatness of the *al-Fātiḥa*'s connotative quality reveals itself if one bears in mind that, in a single sentence, it connotes the universe of the sacral Text and the immense multitude of its meanings. Sacral texts generally have greater connotative potential than profane ones, which is an important point of differentiation between the two. With each connotation - whether it reveals itself in the very structure of the *al-Fātiḥa* or, through it, in the Text in its entirety - the semiotic stylistic value of individual signs and their systems increases. As an example, I will refer to the fifth ayah: *Guide us to the upright Path*. The phrase *the upright Path* is, in itself, an extremely connotative semiotic sign and a striking semiotic styleme to which I will pay special attention. Here it should be pointed out that it connotes, among other things, the existence of Allah, His all-encompassing mercy and the grace with which he cultivates worlds, the right path and wandering astray (ethical virtues and wrongs) which lead to virtue and rewards or to anger and humiliation, etc. This single rhythmic

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[153] Marina Katnić-Bakaršić, *Stilistika*, p. 27.

unit can be semiotically interpreted through literally everything contained in the integral sacral Text. Such a grand semiotic styleme can barely be imagined and interpreted precisely due to the question of whether it is even possible to grasp all of its connotations.

The connotative quality of the *al-Fātiḥa* can hardly be comprehended at first in a so-called normal reading of the *al-Muṣḥaf* from beginning to end. The defamiliarized quality of the *al-Fātiḥa* lies in the fact that its connotative potential increasingly reveals itself as one progresses through the Text, so that it demands a second reading afterwards, once one has read the Text in its entirety. This second reception is incomparably richer and more complex than the first: the sura is pregnant with connotations that reveal themselves "retroactively". Understandably, this contributes to its semiotic and linguistic stylistic value. It is reasonable to assume that this need to reread the *al-Fātiḥa* (it is impossible to even start reading the *Qur'an* without it) and discover its values afterwards has resulted in the fact that the prayer following one's completion of the *Qur'an* in its entirety necessarily involves reciting the *al-Fātiḥa*, as it is generally recited on all occasions. Indeed, many people recite it mechanically, not even ritually in the true sense of the word, unaware of its values addressed here. In any case, only once the *Qur'an* is read in its entirety can one appreciate the magnitude and significance of its first sura, the *al-Fātiḥa.* It then becomes clear why substitution is possible, what the connotative and semantic principles are that make it possible for it to be representative of the integral Text in a semiotically "legitimate" manner. In order to reveal the connotations further, the following needs to be stated.

In light of the aforementioned representative quality of the *al-Fātiḥa,* its very title further interprets itself on a semantic and semiotic level. Namely, I believe that only at this place did it become quite clear why it is the *opener /revealer* and, at the same time, the *conqueror*. *The al-Fātiḥa* opens the integral Text and introduces one to it (ar. *fataḥa* = to open; conquer). However, it does not open it in a "concrete-material" sense only through its being the first sura in the corpus – it opens or unveils its meanings through an endless series of connotations; each semiotic sign in it and each ayah as a rhythmic unit connote the following meanings

in the Text in its entirety. In other words, quite wondrously, the entire *al-Fātiḥa* as a sentence represents a grand gate into the depths of the universe of the Text in its entirety, into the universe of its meanings. At the same time, each semiotic sign in this sentence and each of its rhythmic units itself represents a gateway to a world of connotations contained by the sura itself, as well as the integral Text. This is indeed a wondrous and stylistically quite defamiliarized state of *openness* and *opening,* both on semantic and semiotic planes, representing a multitude of gates within a grand gate. Does this not widen the meaning of gates, of openness and opening, to its ultimate frontier, which signals, among other things, the openness of a book, the openness of meaning, the openness of the world, the openness that marks even death, which, according to this Text, is not the end and finality, but a gate into a new world that shall forever remain open? Therefore, the highest meaning of the Text lies in its universalized openness, which has been optimally connotatively affirmed. This is quite a strong semiotic styleme.

At the same time, its meaning of *Conqueror* can be comprehended and exhausted only once the whole Text has been read: in that long process of perusing and semiosis, the person interpreting it indeed conquers meanings by mastering the textual space that is constantly engaged in pushing borders apart. Ultimately, it turns out that it was precisely the *al-Fātiḥa* that has made it possible for the recipient, interpreter and believer to conquer the wealth of meanings and immense space of the integral Text. In that state, each of the aforementioned types of communication with the Text seems fulfilled, although it is, of course, possible that all three of the aforementioned types of communication are realized simultaneously in the experience of a single subject whose satisfaction grows proportionately with it. A particularly learned believer can possess a pronounced capability in his experience to realize more types of communication with the Text simultaneously, which enhances the dynamism of his faith. Namely, he acquires a complex experience regarding the sacral Text since he is *inside* it in a particular way, thanks to his special qualities among which education plays an especially important role. This experience itself influences the quality of his faith, developing it enormously, cultivating the believer's

ability to communicate with the Text in a more complex manner. Such is the path of the *’i‘jāz*. The believer's semiotic dynamism, which I am merely sketching here, keeps producing its own energy, perfects itself and reaches the stage in which the believer – and this is something only truly educated people can achieve – comes to a discovery, which he perceives to be a salvation for his spirit, regarding the supernatural quality of the Text and the textual world before him. The *’i‘jāz* triumphs.

The analysis of the *al-Fātiḥa* regarding its initial position, and its stylistic value in that regard, imposes other conclusions through the incessant development of its semiotic stylistic value which is not to be strictly separated from its linguistic development.

Additional meanings of the al-Fātiḥa's *initial position*

One of the many interpretations is to perceive the *al-Fātiḥa* as a *prologue* to the Text, since this sura introduces it in the previously described manner. It is also possible to interpret it as a title of sorts, for with its titular explication – which both denotes a certain explicatory reservation and, at the same time, particularity – it thematizes the whole textual corpus. Such an understanding can be supported by the fact that the *al-Fātiḥa* is merely one sentence, which differentiates it from the other sura, particularly the very long ones following it immediately and to which it is contrasted in that regard as well. And finally, the third possible interpretation – which is also particularly in accordance with our habits when it comes approaching a book in general – would be to understand the *al-Fātiḥa* as a very special type of *table of contents* preceding the entire corpus. Namely, the *al-Fātiḥa* thematizes the following contents of the Text: it speaks of monotheism (of faith in Allah); of the Universe he rules; His mercy toward worlds and everything alive; of the Day of Judgment and everything related to it, which connotes a number of themes; it speaks of the need for and forms of worshiping and invocation; of what the right/upright/ethical path is; it speaks of the bestowing of blessings upon those on the upright Path; of

how God's wrath can be incurred and the kind of desperation that follows wandering. Those are clearly the contents of the textual corpus following the *al-Fātiḥa*, though the meanings and topics constantly develop from one other according to the connotative principle, which I have already presented as one of the greatest values of this sura.

It is worth mentioning in this context that, in the Oriental-Islamic tradition, books and texts in general did not have tables of contents (or titles). Instead, at the beginning of their texts, in place of the prologue/ invocation, they hinted at the contents of their work or, more precisely – the topic of the Text indirectly, usually by quoting an ayah that was thematically related to the topic of the manuscript or book. Therefore, the insufficiently skilled reader will find it difficult to determine what an old work is dealing with – they neither bear a title nor a table of contents, while those familiar with the tradition will already from the first page decipher what the work is dedicated to fairly easily. I do not know if this has been remarked upon earlier, but the tradition obviously cooperates splendidly with the *al-Muṣḥaf* in that regard.[154] It is unclear if even the tradition is aware of that, but the aforementioned *fact* once again indicates that, in many ways – and in more or less recognizable ones - the Text of the *Qur'an* has influenced the cultural universe which it had, in fact, created. One must bear in mind that thousands of manuscripts created over the long course of history contained neither titles nor tables of contents *just like the* al-Muṣḥaf; this is too big, persistent and long-lasting a coincidence to be defined as such. The effect of a text as powerful as the *Qur'an* is not random. On the contrary, as a core Text it influences other texts with the consciousness of a crucial Text that rearranges the entire semiosphere. Therefore, in terms of semiotics, there is a sort of interesting imitational relationship other texts have toward it – a relationship of adjustment in a

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[154] Practice shows it useful to differentiate between the terms *Qur'an* and *al-Muṣḥaf*: informed people are familiar with it, but some do not differentiate between the two terms, so that, for example, for a number of copies of the *Qur'an* they use this noun in the plural: ten *Qur'ans*. However, the Qur'an is one, so it is possible to speak of ten copies of the *Qur'an*, or of ten *al-Muṣḥafs*, since the *al-Muṣḥaf* is a bound copy of the *Qur'an*.

vast semiotic system that has been developing for almost fifteen centuries after the Text of the *Qur'an* embarked upon conquering the tradition.[155]

Today books in the Oriental-Islamic world contain titles and tables of contents in the European tradition. This change has been the consequence precisely of what Lotman has described as a state in which some texts in the semiosphere bombard others: when one cultural structure has remained stagnant for too long, it starts to get "excited by a torrent of texts coming from the side."[156] In other words, the Arabic-Islamic culture, especially since the 18th century, has been exposed to a constant "bombardment" by texts from the so-called western cultural circle, so that great changes have occurred in the "bombarded" culture and a multitude of new texts have been created. Nowadays the "excited" oriental-Islamic culture produces texts and has begun to "bombard" – to use Lotman's words – its "exciter"[157] with an increased energy. Hence, it is no wonder that great literary works today come precisely from the Islamic world, written by authors who rely on the Oriental-Islamic tradition, for this is quite in line with the laws on the shifts between the center and the periphery in the semiosphere. In that regard, we need to recall Mahfouz, Maalouf, Pamuk, Khaled Hosseini…

But let me return to placing the *al-Fātiḥa* in different functions. It performs all of the aforementioned three functions (prologue, title, table of contents), yet at the same time it cannot be fully reduced to any one. The *Al-Fātiḥa* functions as a prologue in the meaning of an introduction to a work,

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[155] Some might find fault with my analysis by putting forth the argument that each sura has its title and that each *al-Muṣḥaf* has a table of contents in which the suras are listed along with the pagination. However, this argument is invalid since the titles of the suras are the work of man, rather than a decision of the Author of the Text. It also needs to be pointed out that people have named the suras, deciding, in most cases, upon a motif in the sura, which is often not the dominant one: many other motifs in the suras could have become titles. The order of the suras in the *al-Muṣḥaf* is also the work of man and God. People have resorted to such a systematization of the suras probably because some systematization was necessary for the sake of easier orientation within the corpus, easier quoting, etc., since the Text is present in the believers' everyday use. However, the fact remains that the Text itself had not determined the titles, nor the table of contents, and that the tradition wisely conformed itself to that aspect of the Text's authority as well.

[156] Lotman, *Semiosfera…*, p. 215-216.

[157] Ibid.

yet a prologue and an introduction are not the same, since the prologue, especially in drama, refers to a speech on events that have preceded the contents of the (main) work. On the other hand, the *al-Fātiḥa* /sentence thematizes the *contents* of the corpus and, in that sense, functions partly as a title. However, it is only one of the 114 suras in the *Qur'an*, which is also why it cannot be reduced to a title, aside from the fact that the Text names itself the *al-Qur'an*, although *al-Qur'an* is not a title in the traditional sense of the word. Although the *al-Fātiḥa* contains thematic fields, motifs, etc. that are amplified quite profusely in the integral Text, it is clear that it does not denote its contents the same way a table of contents of a book does – according to chapters, subchapters etc. Therefore, while the *al-Fātiḥa* has some traits of a prologue, title and table of contents, it cannot - and this bears repeating - be fully reduced to any of these functions. If we bear in mind that the prologue and the title are quite strong positions in the Text, this means that the *al-Fātiḥa* is of stylistic value in various ways. However, the fact that it cannot be completely reduced to any of these functions – at the same time, it both is and is not these things – implies that its defamiliarization is enormous, and that it occurs on two levels. On one level, its defamiliarization is realized in relation to the Text in its entirety, as I have just elaborated. On the other, however, the stylistic value of the *al-Fātiḥa* is realized in itself. Of this I have written in detail in other Texts dedicated to the *al-Fātiḥa*.

The *Al-Fātiḥa* connects the integral Text vertically, while structuring itself through a (pyramid-like) vertical (on such structuring of the *al-Fātiḥa* see more in the text titled "Spatial semiotics in the *al-Fātiḥa*").[158] Namely, since this Text primarily orders the world ethically and is part of a corpus of sacral texts that have been revealed or brought down to humankind, their meanings are spatially connoted in accordance with the vertical "arrangement" of authorities and priorities. We have already seen that God is at the top of the pyramid, or the textual space, that worlds are placed onto a "lower instance" in terms of values and hierarchy, followed by people aquiver with worship and constantly "met" with blessings on

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[158] On this structuring of the *al-Fātiḥa* see more in the text titled *The Semiotics of Sacral Space in the al-Fātiḥa*.

their right path, while at the bottom dwell wrath and wandering. I have already determined that the *al-Fātiḥa* is a representative of the Text in the full sense of the word, which means that the corpus of sacral texts shapes the spatial semiotics, which should ultimately not be understood literally as space, but rather as an ethical ordering of the universe, which can only be vertical. In other words, we are facing a sacral Text that, in many significant ways, differs from other kinds of texts that I will here term peripheral, so that the semiotics of the sacral Text are somewhat different, which also impacts its semiotic stylistics.

What makes the semiotics of the sacral Text so specific?

Specifying the semiotics of the sacral Text

A semiotic approach to the sacral Text entails research into the specific ways in which communication through sign processes occurs. In this research one needs to bear in mind the Text's intentionality, its consciousness and the way in which it describes itself. Such a research position is quite delicate, but it is crucial that a coherent system be built upon it and possibly even different coherent systems, which means these systems remain parallel and do not clash with my system. Some might object to this approach as being theist and, as such, partial, faulty, etc. However, such objections are inferior if directed against a coherent system. On the other hand, I find approaches exclusively from the external position inadequate, such that their results can hardly be otherwise. It is inadequate to study a text while neglecting the basic intention, attributes, methods, goals, etc. with which it describes itself, since what it says about itself a priori and a posteriori are not empty declarations, incoherent prose, or mere verbalizations: on the contrary. In accordance with how it constantly represents itself, the text structures itself, orders itself linguistically and on a literary-aesthetic plane marks itself stylistically, etc. It affirms its position and not its pose. Hence any researchers who ignore this principle crucially valuable to sacral texts are helpless. It is incomparably more important

here than in studying literary text or texts of some other sort. Regardless, whether the researcher uses an immanent or transcendental method in studying a literary work, his approach is more or less valid, in the sense that he is aware in both instances that he is approaching a literary artistic work, as the product of the human spirit. However, if one is to approach a sacral Text, a holy book, with a transcendental method, one must, as a starting point, deny the authorship of the work and thus essentially limit one's possible achievements, thwart them; such a researcher has through his aprioristic attitude blocked the breath of a work they would like to examine. Denying authorship in this case needs to be additionally explained. Authorship can be questioned with regard to whether the author of the work is known, whether it is a case of plagiarism etc. and this is an important question for literary history, but in any case the researcher/ critic is faced with an artifact whose value does not change significantly depending on who its author is and whether he is known. When it comes to a sacral text the situation is drastically different, and proportionate to a conviction (and approach) on God's and man's work.

This does not imply that only believers can study sacral texts, or only those who believe that a certain text is God's work. Of course, it can also be studied competently by those who are neutral in this regard, those who believe that some other text, or none at all, is God-given, yet *while they are studying the text* they need to be *inside it*, that is, they should not make such a harsh oversight so as to attribute to the human mind a Text that keeps presenting itself as God-given. In this, they significantly promote falsification with an a priori implied negative value judgement.

A semiotic approach to sacral texts is in this context and regard particularly efficient. Namely, in semiotics, as the process of sign communication and exchange of information, the awareness of the sacral nature of the Text is crucial - a priori and a posteriori. Let us remind ourselves – the sacral Text enters the semiosphere at a particularly sharp angle, unlike other types of texts. At the same time, in the entire culture – as a tremendous system of signs - it acts semiotically first and foremost precisely in relation to its sacral nature, or in relation to the faith in its God-given nature, or the lack thereof. Those who accept it as God's work

change their attitudes towards a series of values and semiotic signs in their culture: by establishing new sign processes they permanently differentiate themselves from other people who do not accept the God-given nature of the Text and, at the same time, in the full sense of semiosis, identify themselves with a certain sign system. It would be impossible to list here all the semiotic signs with which sacral texts differentiate and identify themselves, but I will mention some examples.

First of all, those who believe that the Text of the Qur'an is God's work change their natural language somewhat, and not just the artificial/ language of signs. The language of prayers, rituals, is different than the natural language they usually speak. Sometimes greetings too are different, regardless of whether they are contained in a natural or artificial language (certain gesticulations, etc.). This different natural language aims to conquer as wide a "space" as possible in accordance with the general aspiration of the sacral Text toward domination and imposing signs. It penetrates everyday natural language through curses and vows, all sorts of optatives, even emotionally neutral speech. The language of Bosnian Muslims is, for instance, not quite the same as the language of the Orthodox from Šumadija: they differ in certain aspects, but here I am *also* thinking of the differences that have resulted from the impact of sacral texts upon those languages. Each person who carefully listens to the conversation of these groups, as well as others, notices this. Ultimately, and not infrequently, the sacral Text, in accordance with its general expansive aspirations, transcends the boundaries of the language in which it has been linguistically and semantically shaped. This is how, in the natural language of Bosniaks, as well as other Islamic peoples in the world, one finds numerous Arabisms that have spread to other languages owing not so much from trade, or diplomatic or other kinds of relations, as from the influence of the common sacral Text. In the Islamic world or, to be more precise, in the semiosphere of the Text of the *Qur'an*, that linguistic "overflowing" from one system into another was particularly intense and comprehensive. The language of the *Qur'an* – and by this I not only mean Arabic, but a special kind of Arabic (that is, not just any dialect) that the sacral Text has codified and preserved as a standard throughout

almost fifteen centuries – has imposed itself upon mighty peoples and cultures, such as the Persians and their refined Sasanian culture, as well as the Ottomans and their Ottoman-Turkish culture. As someone versed in Arabic, time and again I feel surprised listening to modern Turks and Iranians speak: their languages are inundated with Arabic words. Need I remind that even now Persian script is Arabic, as was Turkish until the age of Kemal Ataturk? The reaches of the sacral Text of the *Qur'an* in the semiosphere it has created are almost incredible and unexpected: the Bosniaks used Arabic for hundreds of years and the Arabic script (the arebica) was a means of bringing literacy to many Bosniaks even in the twentieth century. Those are the consequences of the effects of the sacral Text in a cultural universe that is – just like the physical or astronomical universe – constantly expanding. The fact that the cultural universe would not have experienced such grand changes had it not been for the sacral Text, or to be more precise, without the faith in its sacral nature, bears no further explanation.

The aforementioned changes in the semiosphere are the consequence of the forces the sacral Text has exerted; some accept it as God's work, and some do not, but in any case it does operate as a sacral Text, with a full awareness of itself as such, as well as in the consciousnesses of many a recipient and interpreter.

Among other semiotic signs created by the sacral Text I have mentioned a special greeting as a means of identification (*selam*). A whole series of folklore elements are also present. Today it is possible to identify Muslims by some items of clothing they wear. Wearing a headscarf is characteristic in that regard, though there are other items of clothing that can also serve as a means of differentiation. Today we witness a dramatic semiosis in that regard. In the contacts between the European and Oriental-Islamic semiotic systems it is precisely the example of the headscarf worn by women, which on one side is considered to be a sign of identification derived from the demands of the sacral Text, and on the other is perceived to be a symbol of the expansion of one semiotic system into another, given that the other semiotic circle considers this a danger.

The example of clothing, or fashion, as a semiotic system was more pronounced in the relatively recent past. Namely, the Text of the *Qur'an* had created such a semiosphere that in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century the Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina differentiated themselves from non-Muslims through their clothing, so that they could be unmistakably differentiated on the street. Only at first glance, or to the insufficiently informed, this might seem not to have anything to do with the Text of the *Qur'an*; in fact, the causal relationship is undeniable: the *Qur'an* has determined certain standards of attire for women only, but they have with time established themselves for men too, not because they are dictated to them directly by the Text – indeed they are not – but in the sense that its general tendency toward difference produces an immense energy that constantly engenders space for creating semiotic signs that are not directly connected to its norms, but are related to its general differentiating tendencies in accordance with which it creates its own semiosphere. The short pants and excessively long beards worn by the Wahabi have no basis in the *Qur'an*, but the Wahabi have raised that semiotic sign to a level of obligation, even a *farḍ* (duty) of sorts, having placed it into the *Qur'an's* semiotic system in a wider sense. By raising such banalities to the level of religious obligation, they commit a blasphemy in a way and falsify the Text. Nevertheless, even negative phenomena and semiotic signs enter a semiotic system, the same way it is constituted by positive signs.

Semiosis also occurs in architecture, which could be tentatively termed the semiosis of the sacral. Mosques always have minarets, which are necessarily placed in a specific position relative to the *Ka'aba* and represent a grand semiotic sign of the sacral, a sign which, on the one hand, operates through architectural semiotics to express something special precisely using this sign language; and on the other, whose semiosis needs to be observed in relation to the *Ka'aba* due to the obligatory orientation toward semiotic communication with the *Ka'aba* no matter where the mosque is in the world – which is indeed a perfected way of communicating. At the same, within the semiotic system of architecture, mosques operate in the semiosphere as the widest system of permanently active semiotic

signs: they are an important marking element, I would even say a semiotic styleme, or a figure in the universe of the oriental-Islamic culture.

In listing similar semiotic signs, one could indeed go far, but I will mention here only two more which communicate vividly with the mosque and the minarets as semiotic signs, though not exclusively with them.

The first sign is the Muslim flag – hoisted on the minaret or some other place – and the other is its green color. I will offer the reader a mere hint as to how it is possible to determine semiotic communication among signs, through connotations which reveal the system, as they are of extreme importance in semiotic stylistics, as Marina Katnić-Bakaršić well notes. My role as an interpreter is thus conditional: the sign from which I will determine semiosis using connotations, that is, a semiotic system in very dynamic communication, is not unconditionally identical for each person interpreting it, nor is the order of signs I bring into communicative relations necessarily identical. Someone might take a different path without their interpretation being in any way less valid.

The mosque as a sign connotes a command for religious service as a condition of belief; since it has been built for the collective performing of *namaz,* which is highly recommended, this "mosque collectivity" brings with itself connotations regarding the imperative of the *ummah* – a tightly organized religious-social community, upon which the *Qur'an* and the *Ḥadīṯ* insist; the mosque contains two other signs – the *miḥrāb* and *mimber* – which connote further strengthening of the Islamic imperative of community and a feeling of unique origin. Namely, the *miḥrāb* as a semiotic sign (as an integral part of every mosque) obligates all believers to face the same direction – the direction of the *Ka'aba*; this is how they use an artificial semiotic language to express their unity, since throughout the world they all face one center, at the same time conveying that they belong to the same source – the same Text that has been brought down to Mecca; the green flag on the minaret expresses the triumph of the green, and green in the world where Islam originated is used to connote an oasis symbolizing life, pleasure and rest. This oasis green color has established quite a lively connotative communication with the azure green *jannahs* of which the *Qur'an* speaks in several places as the greatest reward to

the believers and the meek, and which again connotes the necessity of believing in countless new connotations and amplifications.

The aforementioned semiotic connotations can be deduced following a different order in the other direction:

Jannah belongs to faith > *Jannah* is a satisfaction like an oasis > an oasis is green > green is triumphant, being most full of life and as such the ultimate expression of joy > that triumph is expressed by hanging a green flag on a minaret whose communicative orientation is toward the aforementioned, etc.

It is clear that these semiotic signs and their connotations build a *system* that, in terms of communication, is polyphonic – to use Bakhtin's term – but in such a way that each sign expresses the same basic idea or speaks on its behalf. These signs do not hold the same position in the system: some can be "omitted" without the system of connotations falling apart; to some it is possible to add other signs that I have also omitted. They keep changing "distances" away and toward each other.

It seems important to point out something else here. Namely, the process of connotation, as a special kind of semiotic communication, can be started at different places in the system – not only in the direction I have just suggested or its reverse. From this I have deduced that the semiotic-connotation system does not realize itself in a linear manner, but circularly, around a single epicenter. In other words, to remain terminologically consistent, the system realizes itself spherically, creating a semiosphere in the real sense of the word. However, the epicenter remains immutable, which is particularly important, since it generates the state of the semiosphere. At the centre is the sacral Text, whose position remains immutable in the semiosphere until a possible new dramatic change occurs in the positions between the center and the periphery, which the sacral Text resists as a radical change of its own fate.

To reflect here upon the assertion that one cannot ignore the intention of the Text regarding its divine origin and sacral nature in order to assume a valid methodological orientation, I can claim that it is only now clear that a semiotic analysis of the Text is adequate, and possibly to an extent no other is, or at least that there are rarely other valid ones, since it shows

how respecting the intentions of the Text and its own description of itself is a *sine qua non* for a meaningful and consistent research endeavor. In other words, of all of its traits it is the sacral nature of the Text that is in constant mutual affirmation with the adequate semiotic method. This trait differentiates it from other texts in its immense energy, which other texts do not possess. The intensity of that energy manifests itself, on the one hand, *in space,* since the sacral Text traverses linguistic, national, continental and other kinds of barriers incomparably more successfully than other texts. On the other hand, the intensity of that energy manifests itself *in time* as well, since it is well known that some sacral texts exert influence over thousands of years with an undiminished force. No literary work of art, or any text in general, has had such a strong diachronous and synchronous effect as, for example, *the Bible* and *the Qur'an* have had. They can thank two key factors for this. First, they describe themselves as sacral texts, and second, they have been accepted by a large part of humankind as such. Speaking strictly and without exaggeration, one can say these texts' elixir is in their sacral nature. Artistic literature is not capable of that, since it relies on other values, such as value argumentation. The literary-aesthetic, stylistic and other values of artistic texts are also permanent and, to a point, universalized, but they are just that. Sacral texts, on the other hand, abound with literary-aesthetic values, stylistic markings with potentials appealing to believers and other recipients alike, yet at the same time are far more. Where the artistic text ends – in the sphere of aesthetics – is where the sacral text begins. The *al-Fātiḥa*, for instance, is a literary-aesthetic and stylistically unique gem. A similar thing can be said about the *Song of Songs*, or some other fragments of sacral texts. However, the key difference between the *al-Fātiḥa* and some artistic text is that the Text of the *al-Fātiḥa* claims of itself – which indeed appears to be the case – not to be a work of art, the product of one's imagination or fiction, not an artistic transposition of reality, but rather a most serious "account" of it, and that it can only be properly understood – and I am talking of the Text's immanent position – if understood precisely that way. To put it simply – the sacral Text starts from the literary-aesthetic position, only to soar into the ethical sphere; this is the difference between the *game* at the very soul

of art (of course, game in the wider sense of the word) and the *reality* that is the soul of the sacral Text and ethics.

At this stage of (self-) differentiation of the sacral and artistic texts one can surmise the answer to the question regarding their different energy potentials. Importantly, the artistic work presents itself in the sphere of the subjective: the subjective game of the imagination, structuring, the game of stylistic marking and selection, etc. In terms of the reception of the work, one also remains in the sphere of the subjective. Namely, a work of art aspires to actualize itself through its reception in the subject's consciousness, also relying on the "forms of the game", upon which it was created by the author. However, a work of art, regardless of how artistically universal it is and whichever special values it possesses outside of objective categories, can count on a smaller or greater degree of intersubjectivity in its reception and valuation, and never upon objectivity. Value judgments are to be found in the domain of subjectivity, and a work of art counts precisely on value judgments. Things are different when it comes to sacral texts. Of course, this rather modest sketch on the nature of art, on which many works have been written, only serves here to emphasize the essential difference between the artistic and the sacral Text. The sacral Text does not present itself as a work of art. On the contrary, it refuses this categorically, knowing it would thus thwart its own goal if it agreed to be deemed artistic.[159] The sacral Text agrees to the game to quite a limited and controlled degree, but from a higher level of reception that is revealed not to be a game. Namely, it also uses the experience of art profusely, so that the *Qur'an*, for example, is copiously inundated with literary-aesthetic and linguistically-stylistic values; it is a particular kind of semiosis. However, the sacral Text claims to be a reality of the highest order and its most authentic account. Essentially, there is no game here. The artistic-literary values of the sacral Text merely facilitate the communication of pure reality, making it more pleasant.

From this position, different degrees of intersubjectivity in the reception of the artistic and sacral Text are realized, which means that here too a

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[159] Therefore the *Qur'an* in numerous places resolutely refuses to be perceived as a poetic work of art and for Mohammed to be referred to as a poet.

difference in their energy potentials can be determined. The sacral Text can win over considerably larger numbers of subjects through a significantly different quality, for it presents itself uncompromisingly as the reality of something related to the reader's fate, or even better, the fate of reading, as well as fate in the literal sense of the word in terms of both mundane and eternal fate. In the spiritual-existential sense the Text is too serious for anything related to it to be situated within a playful domain, as is the case with artistic texts. With regard to the reception of artistic works it can be discussed how a work impacts the reader's "spiritual fate", but when it comes to the believer's reception of a sacral Text – and here we are addressing that kind of reception's intersubjectivity – the spiritual and existential fate upon which the Text exerts its influence cannot be separated, nor can it depend upon this reception. There is, in fact, a specific relationship between the spiritual and the physical, unlike what is realized in the reception of the artistic text. Namely, while the reader of the artistic text can always draw the boundaries between the fictional through which the text guides them and the reality in which they find themselves physically, this is impossible when it comes to the sacral Text, since the recipient's fate in both worlds depends directly upon the acceptance of the sacral Text in the spiritual sphere. Thanks to such significant differentiations in relation to the two text types, the sacral Text demands a greater degree of identification and engagement; it does not allow for the recipient of the Text to "snap awake", and, even temporarily, somewhat distance themselves from it. The number of the Text's recipients rises proportionally with this reality of the Text, while the extent of subjectification diminishes in that mass, in the same sense that the degree of relativity in valuation that is characteristic of an artistic text decreases: for millions of believers the same Text, with its fundamental content and values, is the objective, the real, given, and not fiction. They order their lives accordingly.

The difference between the sacral and artistic text keeps evolving in different directions. In that regard, quite an unusual paradox has arisen. The sacral Text operates so that those who do not accept it as a God-given Text, as the Revelation, have an ambivalent attitude towards it, which they sometimes are not even aware of. For example, atheists and members of other

religions think that the *Qur'an* is the Prophet's work, which accordingly gives it a relatively high degree of artistic value. This desacralizes the Text; in fact it renders it tremendously profane, in proportion to the resistance by those who desacralize it, which is significant.[160] However, the paradox lies in the fact that even such individuals acknowledge that it has created a sacral semiosphere: they acknowledge that there is a religion called Islam with its own sacral universe, even though they do not accept it, even though they take the Text to be a pretentious work of man. On the one hand they minimize it, on the other they simultaneously take its "effects" on the entire semiosphere in utter seriousness, and not just those it has realized in the past, but also those they know have continued into the present day and are to be projected into the future. This is a "revenge" of the Text of sorts: it is too wise and strong to allow itself to be completely marginalized, which it is, paradoxically, promised by this initial minimization of the text as Mohammed's work. The "revenge" manifests itself in the fact that it has led its opponents into a state of ambivalence and insurmountable inconsistency.

The *al-Fātiḥa*, for instance, is pregnant with literary values, particularly stylistic value. If it were to be understood as an artistic text, that is, as Mohammed's work, then it would border on science fiction. Its extraordinary and intentional stylistic markedness dissuades the reader from interpreting it as a prose whose goal is to prophesize, a domain not characterized by high literary-aesthetic values. However, if it is understood as a work of art, then the existence of an unknown multitude of worlds – of which the *al- Fātiḥa* speaks – belongs to a pronouncedly artistic fictionality, especially at the time the Text came to be, when astronomical findings were quite meager. This is all the more quite a daring fiction, one which the imagination of a Jules Verne could not even begin to match, if one is to take into account the level of scientific development in Mohammed's age. In that regard, a multitude of worlds maintained by one God is a literary motif *par excellence*. The same goes for the *Ruler of the Day of Faith*, or the Day of Judgment. For an atheist the notion of Doomsday and

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[160] The *Qur'an* itself is in a special position, since it recognizes other sacral texts as God's Word that people have somewhat deformed.

a Ruler presiding over it belong to the realm of science fiction without any perspective of it being realized, to which even science fiction aspires. However, the Text asserts that its statements are in fact accounts of reality, that is, a representation of authentic reality. A great number of people in the world accepts its assertion. Owing to this, the Text of the *al-Fātiḥa* – though it is a single sentence – produces a tremendous energy that, in turn, creates a specific semiosphere by producing a multitude of signs, whether they are subjected to its epicentral position, or as a range of opposing signs to which I have referred in the context of the relationship an atheist or a member of a different religion would have towards this Text. Also, the *al-Fātiḥa* influences the stylistics of its entire semiosphere, since we have seen how the sacral Text, of which the *al-Fātiḥa* is a worthy representative, produces an endless line of semiotic signs, which – in accordance with the principle of choice and connotation – appear to be of stylistic value, precisely as stylemes. In that regard, I would like to again point to a series of connotations from the mosque, through the flag, to *Jannah*. Choosing the minaret (to which we arrived carried by the forces of the sacral Text that shape its universe) is undoubtedly a styleme since, instead of the minaret, any other sign in the realm of architectural language signs could have been chosen whose connotative direction we could not know for certain until we defined it; the sign cannot be interpreted a priori, based on conjecture. We can assume that another color could have been chosen for the flag instead of green. Of course, in that case the question of its connotations would remain open, as one could question the coherence of the entire system. The sign system constructs a universe of connotations. This means that certain signifiers refer to certain signifieds. Ultimately it transpires that the choice of signs in semiotics, as a stylistic technique, is connected to connotations and meanings. Replacing one sign with another seems in a way like a choice in stylistic linguistics. However, choosing a green flag is undoubtedly a styleme in the semiotic linguistics of the sacral Text, as well as in the spatial relation of colors. Believers, but also non-believers, often express their satisfaction at the sight of a beautiful minaret whose stylistic value is sometimes amplified with an additional two or for a single mosque. They have a similar reaction when they see a flag on top

of it. They also have a positive reaction when the *adhan is recited upon-a-minaret-under-the-flag*, which creates an exquisitely effective compression of semiotic signs. Namely, the minaret and the flag are a sort of sign in semiosis, but the *adhan* has a twofold effect and is hence stylistically even more defamiliarizing. The *adhan* operates communicatively together with an artificial semiotic language (*upon-a-minaret-under-the-flag*), but, at the same time, it of course operates through a natural language, because in a very special way, in terms of stylistic value, certain words and sentences are articulated that communicate through their meanings, and not solely through the position from which they are recited with the *mosque-minaret-flag:* these are words that verbalize "belonging to monotheism (*kelime-i şehâdet*)", "summon to prayer in the mosque underneath the minaret" – words that assert that this is salvation. From the viewpoint of semiotics, such a compression of signs and the fact that even different languages (natural and artificial ones) directly communicating infuse this "bundle" of signs with extreme stylistic value. People, therefore, react to it the same way they react to an effective stylistic figure or a trope in linguistic stylistics in a text written in a natural language. These are stylemes in "texts" in an artificial semiotic language.

When it comes to minarets, it should be pointed out that as a semiotic sign-styleme they suggest something else unusual, but clearly present in our age. Namely, I have said that even non-Muslims react positively, even as stylophiles, to those signs. However, we should point out that at present in Europe – we read about this quite often – the construction of mosques has been problematized. To be more precise, if allowed, it is often under the condition that they do not have a minaret, which allegedly disturbs the semiotics of the given space. Of course, a mosque without a minaret is not a mosque, but an ordinary house. In terms of semiotics, a "mosque" without a minaret is a *stylistic mistake* in semiotic stylistics: as a matter of fact, it has been stylistically neutralized in that domain.

Here once again the semiosphere's center and periphery confront each other: the minaret, as a "styleme-representative" of one semiotic space, aspires to expand itself from the center of one semiosphere toward the periphery and to cross the boundaries of other spaces. Those other spaces

resist to a certain degree and with a certain intensity. The issue is not, of course, that the construction of minarets in certain cities is not allowed, since it disturbs the "structure of urban space", as it is usually justified, since tower-like structures, relays, etc. abound in that space, and yet they do not disturb it. The matter is – and this is actually clear to everyone – that the minaret is a specific semiotic sign, as are church towers, of course; the minaret is a powerful styleme that takes on specific connotative directions and has pronounced ambitions in the semiosphere in which it aspires to appear and that hinders it in its cultural selfishness. The resistance to building minarets, or rather the suggestion that "mosques" be built without them, also operates stylistically: this is merely the deadening of metaphors without which the "text" does not function. Ultimately, the urban space – I will also refer to it as a text in the semiotic sense of the word – that refuses such defamiliarization in fact insists upon stylistic monotony, or aspires to keep it under strict control. The issue at stake here is, in fact, the homogenization of space and culture instead of their heterogeneity. In the semiotic stylistics of a certain urban space – if the clearly limiting ideological prejudices that are clearly limiting in this case were to be overcome – the introduction of other semiotic stylistic figures and tropes, like mosques with minarets, would undoubtedly have quite a luxurious stylistic effect. Beautiful cathedrals, not just European ones, but also those in the Islamic or multinational space, have always left me breathless, precisely in this semiotic-stylistic sense. In the same way, Orthodox monasteries in Kosovo, for example, that I have visited so many times, appear stylistically quite defamiliarizing in an environment populated by a Muslim majority and dominated by Islamic sacral architecture.

Why is Bosnia beautiful? It is not just its mountains and plateaus, rivers and springs, of which one could speak in the context of other semiotic systems. Foreigners are impressed by this – let us call it Sarajevan – composition of various semiotic signs. The minarets and cathedrals, church bells and *adhans*, the synagogues – these are all exquisite stylemes of different sacral texts that together build a universal sacral Text or, to be more precise – a single impressive universalist Text. Rarely does a city have such luxurious semiotic stylistics as Sarajevo, with a unique abundance of

stylistic figures and tropes. This, however, has been the source of some of the city's occasional misfortunes, since there are powerful people and organizations who have no affinity for such beauty, who remain in some sort of primordial stage when it comes to understanding the richness and beauty of the semiotic space, and so generate exclusion and an incomprehensible primitivism, in fact, barbarism, at the expense of enriching the semiotic space. What can one say in this context regarding the demolition of thousands of mosques and monasteries?

Reciting the al-Fātiḥa *as a semiotic stylistic technique*

The previous reflection on the minaret, mosque and flag might appear to be a digression, given that it follows a discussion of the *al-Fātiḥa*. However, the *al-Fātiḥa* is a Text that has created these signs and they refer to it, by which I do not mean the *al-Fātiḥa* only in the strict sense of the word, but the sacral Text it represents as a whole, as it has its own semantic identity, as well as a representational identity and legitimacy – given to it by believers – in relation toward the integral Text. Its double position defamiliarizes it alongside a range of other qualities and characteristics. I have already mentioned that the *al-Fātiḥa* is recited/spoken on all sorts of occasions, even those that are semantically of a contradictory character, but it is precisely the *al-Fātiḥa* that gives them a unique meaning and nullifies the seeming contradictions. Death, on the occasion of which the *al-Fātiḥa* is recited, as well as birth and joy on the occasion of which it is also recited – to list just the most extreme positions – are permanently irreconcilable contradictions for an atheist, or someone who is not under the sign of the *al-Fātiḥa*. However, for the *al-Fātiḥa* and its religious "interpreter" birth and death are merely two breaking "points" in eternity, so that they do not find themselves in hopeless contradiction as perceived by atheists. However, someone can consider the fact that it is recited at such irreconcilably opposite occasions contradictory, but it creates a (unique) universe in which even this world and the one beyond the grave

represent a unique "system" whose condition of survival – as is the case with any complex system – is coherence and systemic functionality. A conclusion emerges that the *al-Fātiḥa* is of enormous stylistic value in this tremendously complex semiotic system. We should add something else to the above.

The *Al-Fātiḥa* is hence recited on all sorts of different occasions, so it is very simply unstoppably brought into connection with the communication system *mosque-minaret-'aḏān:* it is omnipresent. After the adhan is called upon the mosque minaret (and not just there, since the *al-Fātiḥa* has a universalizing effect), each believer raises their palms – above their arms – and recites the *al-Fātiḥa*. This is how, once again, it enters here into a semiotic dialogue with other signs: the mosque, minaret, *'aḏān.* This is its very strong stylistic position. Uninformed individuals could think that reciting the *al-Fātiḥa* following the *'aḏān* terminates the communication of signs, that semiosis is thus ended. However, there appears to be no end to the surprises it offers, as if its semiotic energy were indeed endless. Namely, communication, which has only seemingly been terminated, is merely a "break" in the dialogue that is about to recommence. Reciting the *al-Fātiḥa* at that spot represents the gate leading into *ṣalāt*, the ritual performance of prayer: just after recitation of the *al-Fatiha*, believers stand up and start praying. During the *ṣalāt* – which in itself is a semiotic sign containing a number of "sub-signs" and is rhythmically exquisitely structured, both on the verbal and gesticular levels – that is, following each new structural unit (*rak'at*), the *al-Fatiha* is recited, which tremendously enhances the rhythm of the *ṣalāt*, supported by the creation of rhythm through gesticulation, so that its stylistic functionality is constantly enhanced.

The true nature of the recitation of the *al-Fātiḥa* should finally be addressed here. It only resembles recitation, but it cannot be fully reduced to this alone. Reciting the *al-Fātiḥa* is an act of verbalization, an act of piety; the sacralization of one's consciousness and the world; reciting the *al-Fātiḥa*, as we have seen, inevitably acts connotatively in a variety of directions; it is an expression of meekness, piety, ecstasy, devotion, sacral pathos, etc. Briefly put, it does not constitute mere recitation, but

an extremely complicated semiotic sign. In every aspect of its effect it is a styleme and its stylistic value is enhanced with the frequency of its recitation, its "competent" and purposeful threading through a multitude of semiotic signs. I will use some analogies here to make it easier for readers to follow my elaboration. As often as possible I will use analogies with literary works of art and with linguistic stylistics. Of course, these analogies cannot be fully made since, as I have already said, there are quite significant differences between sacral and artistic texts, and also since this is, after all, a matter of semiotics and linguistics, although F. de Saussure long ago spoke of them as being "blood relatives".[161] It is possible to move in the field of analogies with certain results only if the researcher knows well where the hidden traps lie.

Because of the enormous influence of the *al-Fātiḥa* in the semiotic sacral system, its being persistently recited and "passing through" many semiotic subsystems (for example, in the mosque and during the *salat* in which it is recited within every structural unit) in the domain of stylistics it has an effect similar to that of a specific structural unit in a poem – the refrain. The refrain powerfully provides rhythm to the whole structure, just as the *al-Fātiḥa* does for the structure that it is built into; that is, it provides rhythm to the entire ritual act. Of course, it is known that the refrain – let us assume here that in a poem an entire stanza functions as a refrain – is not always semantically identical. Although the words remain the same, it is contextualized in terms of meaning, emotion and aesthetics according to the surrounding structures: in a certain way it adapts itself to them, while at the same time influencing them. The *Al-Fātiḥa,* which is recited at various occasions, along with other fragments of the sacral Text, also appears different to a degree, although, of course, much remains the same. That is the exquisite "refrain function" of the *al-Fātiḥa* in many verbal and semiotic acts. For people who have no sense for the subtleties and comprehension of the system, the positioning of the *al-Fātiḥa* as a refrain might appear tedious, but to others it is precisely this positioning that gives joy, the way the prose is enriched through a verse-rhythmical organization of language and signs. If the stylistic value of the refrain in a

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[161] Compare: Marina Katnić-Bakaršić, *op. cit*., p. 24.

poem is obvious, then the stylistic value of the *al-Fātiḥa* in compositions and semiotic systems in which it operates should also be obvious to the uninformed.

Further consequences can be glimpsed at this point in the analysis.

The *Al-Fātiḥa* "refrainizes" – I hope that now I can use this neologism as a term – exquisitely wide semiotic systems, since in the exposition so far there has been enough discussion of its omnipresence that is not realized chaotically, but in acts that occur in a rhythmization of sorts, which can also be expressed as binary oppositions: life-death; joy-sorrow; always at the beginning, as during the *ṣalāt,* etc. So if we were to carefully examine on which occasions it is recited, we could determine a certain degree of rhythmic repetition-recitation in the semiosphere of the all-encompassing sacral – from birth to death, which is, once again, merely a boundary, and a boundary is not the same as an end, since at the same time it both divides and brings together. This refrain-like rhythmization of a believer's life realized by the *al-Fātiḥa*, given its omnipresence, ultimately provides rhythm to a believer's entire life, turning it into a magnificent poem, since his life strongly pulsates with the *al-Fātiḥa* in an exquisite tension that can only be of a religious or sacral nature. It is his topos of unexhausted meanings and vital effects.

The analogy with a poem also has special intentions. Namely, for someone who has surrendered himself to the *al-Fātiḥa* as his main characteristic, life can neither be suffering nor meaninglessness, and death is not the ultimate end – to use an Arabic corroborative. For such a person, life is a magnificent poem, in the rhythm of piety and beneficence.

This analogy has enabled me to express another important point. Exhilaration and exaltation are inherent to this poem. It is the same with that of the life of one surrendering to the *al-Fātiḥa* – if he is a true believer – a poem in the semiotic sense: he is all aquiver in piety (*It is You we worship and You we ask for help* – the ayat of the *al-Fātiḥa* pulsate) and beaming with joy due to the particular code in his communication. Therefore, for a believer (and by this, I always mean, of course, a true believer because there are many who have turned faith into a series of mechanical actions) even the so-called suffering in life is neither pessimistic nor hopeless: he

endures it as a relative "calm" in the general exaltedness of the Poem. This is how, using an analogy, a poem, life and sacral Text can be brought into the same horizon.

The Al-Fātiḥa: *yearning for an ideal audience*[162]

The aforementioned relationship of the Text and its recipient/believer expresses the special nature of the audience in this case. Each text, in fact, searches for its ideal audience, or, to be more precise, it aims to render its audience ideal. This is the case with artistic texts as well, and the sacral Text renders this aspiration unconditional. The *Al-Fātiḥa,* as we have just seen, demands utter abandon from its audience. The search is reciprocal: the text searches for its ideal audience and the audience searches for its ideal text. When the sacral Text and its audience meet, the degree of identification and the excitement prompted by it is tremendous. The special nature of the Text and its audience is reflected, among other things, in that it realizes itself in the domain of the individual and the collective, cultivating both with the same intensity, which is not the case with artistic texts.

The *Al-Fātiḥa* is directed at humanity in general: humanity is its target audience, which reflects a special dimension of its yearning for an ideal audience. Hence, the ideal of the *al-Fātiḥa* is to be the foundational marking Text of all of humanity. The same goes for other sacral Texts as well. However, the specificity of this situation is in the fact that the sacral Text aims to render its audience ideal, not just in terms of quantity, but also the quality it establishes and interprets according to its own criteria.

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[162] In the context of this discussion, the term *audience* cannot be replaced with the terms *recipients*, *readers* etc. Namely, the sacral Text, aside from the reception that other texts have, addresses its "readers" in a special way: the hierarchical relationship between the "reader " and the Text is different insofar as the Text presents itself as a divine revelation, and that it operates from a position of an incomparable authority, addressing with high pathos a *mass* of devoted "listeners" – like a Text that must be *meekly* obeyed and *according to which one must act*; there is no two-direction communication as in other, non-sacral texts.

This ideal needs to be realized in utter devotion. In it lies its conversion mission. The text does not accept a "lower level" of reception, in the sense that one enjoys its literary-aesthetic, philological and generally cultural values, which it does not give up, instead demanding from the recipient a full ideological engagement along the lines the Text has drawn. The artistic text makes more modest demands: it is satisfied with reception on the aesthetic level. In fact, we should underline here something that has long been known in literary theory. The literary artistic text, namely, exposes itself to grave dangers to undermine or thwart its own value, its "artistic identity", the greater a possible affirmation of the ideological forces within it is: the ideological engagement here collides with the text's artistic value. Unlike the artistic text that does not strive to conquer its ideal audience ideologically, but "only" to enrich it aesthetically, the sacral Text operates in a manner that strives to render the audience doubly ideal – on the one hand, it strives to endlessly expand its audience diachronically and synchronically; on the other, it "unifies" this vast audience ideologically, and which will, once it surrenders itself to the Text, also unconditionally accept the Text's literary-aesthetic values. Let us pay attention to the first paragraph of the *al-Fatiha: All praise is for Allah, cultivator of the worlds*. This line contains tremendous ideological potential. The word praise/gratitude expresses a special relation – in this case hierarchically ordered – between the one who gives thanks and the one being thanked: a man has a duty, according to this text, to nourish a constant sense of gratitude to *Allah* for being a cultivator of the worlds. Therefore, already the first word of the *Qur'an* emphasizes the Text's ideological facet. At the same time, it points out its special relations: the Text ideologizes its audience (the one reciting the *al-Fātiḥa*) as the audience expresses utter surrender to the Text by pronouncing its first word, *praise*. In other words, the Text asks from the recipients, as a starting point, to present themselves as an audience which is ideal in the sense of being devoted to the Text. An artistic text does not contain such a thing. In terms of semiotics, this is another strong position of the Text: in terms of the spatial semiotics of the sacral Text the *praise* of the recipient/believer confirms the vertical hierarchical spatial organization, since God in his superiority is *above* those who express gratitude to Him,

and that He is the master of worlds, which additionally emphasizes the semantic spatial dimension of the sacral Text. The fact that the stylistic value of this statement does not reveal itself immediately makes it even stronger; its stylistic defamiliarization is derived from the fact that only afterwards is it revealed that this is, in fact, a matter of spatial semiotics. A mere cursory glance at the statement *All praise is for Allah, cultivator of the worlds* reveals no space. That space is, however, present is indicated already by the word *praise,* which, as I have said, establishes relations. On the other hand – and this further amplifies the stylistic value space is here, due to the hierarchical relations entailed in the act of expression of gratitude, translated into an ethical space in which God is necessarily *above.* The last phrase in this ayah, *cultivator of the worlds,* enriches the spatial semiotics of the ayah immensely by retrospectively shedding light on the stylistic value of the first phrase and first word. Namely, in the phrase *lord of the worlds* the noun *lord* resolutely and enormously emphasizes the hierarchical relations as a spatial factor, while the word *worlds* emphasizes the spatial semiotics with an almost astounding force since it does not refer to a single world, which simultaneously denotes space, but, in fact, to worlds each of which denotes space in itself and, even more, the space between them.

The idealization of the audience and the Text flows both ways.[163] On the one hand, the Text idealizes its audience by qualitatively rendering it yielding and dedicated, despite being massive, since the pathos and exaltation with which a convinced recipient recites the *al-Fātiḥa* are almost immeasurable; in principle, no artistic text is uttered in the same quality, although they too can stir quite powerful emotions. That is the point where the *Qur'an* persistently differentiates itself from poetry, which can be used as a metaphor for art in general. Namely, the *Qur'an* constantly asserts that it is not poetry, the work of a poet, which means that its pathos is derived from a feeling of dedication to an ideology, rather than aesthetics, in the sphere of which poetry ends. At the very start, this type of idealization is

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[163] I do not use the word *idealization* here in its common sense as an unfulfilled yearning toward the ideal, as something utopian and futile, but in the meaning of a process through which subjects strive to make each other mutually ideal, and which they manage to realize.

emphasized with the act of expressing gratitude, worshipping, calling for help generally – with a pronounced vertical subordination. If we recall how the *al-Fātiḥa* is recited in various occasions with an equal conviction in its effectiveness, that it is a commonplace of faith, then the ideal dedication of the recipient to the Text reveals itself in its full light; it becomes the sign of their life and actions, a sign to which believers literally tie themselves to as a matter of fate. The Text has obviously managed to render its audience ideal. Moreover, the Text radically privileges its audience in relation to others, which is also a position in which it differentiates itself from non-sacral texts. Namely, its audience is privileged, since the Text considers its audience chosen and protected. The *Al-Fātiḥa* expresses its audience's worship toward Allah, from whom it came, and already that fact is an act of extraordinary selection. Their being chosen is only amplified, since they are the rightly-guided to the upright Path, while others are negatively selected: they deserve wrath as they have strayed in the ethical space. Hence, in a very short Text – in merely one sentence – the chosen audience has been truly and divinely idealized.

The aspects in which this idealization manifests itself are almost infinite. The audience arranges the entire space of its sacral life according to the Text, and in Islam, unlike in other religions, this equals a totality, since in Islam there is no sphere of a person's life separated from faith, or toward which faith is indifferent. In their dedication to the Text, Muslims – as its ideal audience – build their places of worship, *verbalize* their prayers (which is not the same as a bell or a gong); the Text regulates their economy, and even politics, in quite a comprehensive manner. In the process of ideologizing its audience, the sacral Text of *the Qur'an* has become truly total. In this sense, it could be said that the Text represented by the *al-Fātiḥa* has been quite successful in idealizing its audience. Although this is not currently the topic of my deeper interests, it needs to be at least hinted at here in which sense that audience is "more ideal" than that in other religions – I will take the liberty of expressing gradations of the word *ideal* in this case. Namely, the Text of the *Qur'an* has an ideal audience in the sense that it reigns over all spheres of one's spiritual and material life in their totality. It needs to be emphasized that this sacral Text

operates in a way that does not satisfy itself with this individual quality, rather translating the individual into a collective as a special quality: all the spheres of one's material and spiritual life conquer their full meaning only in collectivity. The *Ummah* is an institution of extraordinary importance; in it, ultimately, the spirit of Islamic totality is realized. Of course, at this point it has become superfluous to emphasize that an artistic text is incapable of realizing something like that; such an aim is not even inherent to it.

On the other hand – and utterly inseparably from the Text's effect on its audience – the audience itself idealizes its Text. Namely, to those devoted to the Text, it is not merely the chosen one, but simply incomparable to any other. The relationship of any text and its audience is one of mutual idealizing, but when it comes to a sacral Text, this relationship is extremely intensified, since the Text and its audience compete in emphasizing each other's qualities to the utmost degree. The *Al-Fātiḥa* is "privileged" in relation to the Text it represents as its strong position. Namely, its audience considers it the superior, favorite and most important among all other texts, be it among other sacral corpuses or (profane) artistic texts. In this case, it is as if the audience repays the Text that has chosen it in such a clear and sublime manner with all of its force, reaching a conclusion that the *al-Fātiḥa* is its *holy* Text under which it joyfully places its life and fate. By endowing the Text with such a status, as I said, the audience differentiates it from all other texts, while differentiating itself *with its help* from all those that "belong" to all other texts. This is how the point in which the Text is proclaimed *sacred* is reached. No audience is capable of surpassing that point in idealizing its Text, just as no text can emphasize its audience's chosen nature better than with the heavenly reward that awaits them precisely for choosing the Text's sacral inviolability and for having lived their lives in accordance with it. Hence, since the sacral Text – in this case the *Qur'an* – has in return been proclaimed ideal, the *al-Fātiḥa,* which figures as its representative in all occasions, is at the same time a representative or the essence of this ideal. In other words, in the variety of ways in which it emphasizes its stylistic value, it is revealed that this stylistic value is also at work in the consideration of the relations through

which the Text and audience aim toward optimal mutual idealization. The establishment of spatial relations among them is extremely dynamic. On the one hand, there is a distance between the Text and the audience, proportional to the conviction that the Text is God-given, that it has been brought down from His unreachable Heights to man stationed deep down the vertical in a passing existence whose ultimate outcome depends on the relationship toward the top of the vertical. Once again one should emphasize that the Text of the *al-Fātiḥa* provides a model for that space. On the other hand, there is a constant bringing together of the Text and audience through ethics and devotion, since God and people are connected through an immeasurable all-encompassing mercy, benedictions, etc. Overcoming spatial distances is also achieved through linguistic means (language here provides a spatial model), since the Text suddenly introduces frequently occurring second person pronouns for God: *It is You we worship and You we ask for help – guide us rightly to the upright Path*. A greater closeness, almost intimacy, between a Text and its audience can hardly be achieved.

The audience's dedication to its Text, with all of its content, is absolute. The semantic "coverage" of the names for this religion (*Islam*) and Muslims' vast devotion to the Text, that is, the faith that the Text includes, cannot be an accident. In their semantic field, the word *Muslim* and all its morphological derivatives contain *devotion* as their basic meaning.

Common memory of the Text and its audience: The Al-Fātiḥa *as a leitmotif*

The absolute devotion of the audience to its Text, and the Text being directed at its audience, imply a common memory. The Text is explicit and persistent in that regard. Namely, it asserts that it is not appearing for the first time, but rather – on the contrary, and puzzlingly – that it has been appearing since the beginning of time. To be more precise, the text of the *Qur'an* as a textual structure we have before us today has not been revealed before us as such, as quite the same structure, but it has – as

it asserts – existed as a text since the dawn of humanity. By text I here mean religion, which since the first man has represented faith in Allah, the angels, the Day of Judgment, the other world, etc. Therefore, this Text claims to be coming as a contextualized confirmation of all previous sacral texts, which over time were deformed or falsified.

Such positioning of the text of the *Qur'an* has determined a vast space for a common memory of the Text and its audience, and that fact of a common remembrance has numerous implications. Ultimately, the implication is that the *al-Fātiḥa* has always existed, though not in the identical form we know today. It marks eternal memory in the sacral sphere. The Text has always been the same in the sense that it has forever represented the same type of monotheism, and the audience has always been the same since it represents humanity. Such a view of the relationship between the audience and Text leads to a conclusion regarding their "total relationship". In other words, in line with the terminology I have used so far, an ideal relationship is achieved to which no relationship of any (profane) artistic text and its audience can be compared. Even in comparison with other monotheistic sacral texts, the text of the *Qur'an* "realizes" a different kind of relationship with its audience with regard to the ideality each Text strives for. The depth and range of its memory are different. Namely, the Text represented by the *al-Fātiḥa* occurs as the last in a line of texts representing monotheistic (heavenly) religions. This makes its position especially privileged. It acknowledges the preceding sacral texts – starting with the Seven Tablets – given that it claims that with time they have been deformed. Other texts do not acknowledge each other that way, especially not the *Qur'an*'s divine authorship. The fact that the *Qur'an* acknowledges basically all texts ensures it a special position in the domain of texts and audiences' common memory, since its memory (the memory of its Text) spans from the first man, Adam, until Today and Tomorrow. Its memory operates both in the arenas of hierohistory and history, which are unbounded and continuous through repetition and the actions of prophets acting in the same direction throughout history. Admittedly, history does abound with deformed texts. Throughout history, the ideal audience occasionally blurred the ideality the Text insisted upon

(absolute devotion to it), so that interventions in the form of prophets' actions and epistles followed, from which – I always speak of the Text's immanent position – their audiences "wandered", or even strayed, that is from the "main road" upon which their ideal relationship was achieved.

Ultimately, the implication is that the ideal relationship between the audience and the Text has not existed as a *permanent* category in the entirety of history, but that it is quite a dynamic process, with certain oscillations and occasional tendencies of the audience to "drift away" in the history of its Text. Hence, the Text has been a constant, according to its explications, unlike the audience: the common memory it shares with the Text tends not to be of the same quality. This also implies that their understandings of the ideal relationship between Text-audience and audience-Text do not possess the same quality.

Bearing in mind that the integral Text, represented by the *al-Fātiḥa*, acknowledges other sacral texts with which it lively communicates and strives to establish a common memory, on the one hand, as well as with their audiences, on the other, one can speak of the *al-Fātiḥa*'s extraordinary position toward the Text in its entirety, which it represents in relation to its sacral universe, as discussed, but also in the semiosphere of all sacral texts and their common memory. A Text (the *Qur'an*) that claims for itself always to have been present and that it always will be, and by which it includes elements of other sacral texts in a truly syncretic manner, emphasizes the *al-Fātiḥa* as a matrix of common memory. In line with analogies from traditional, linguistic stylistics, it can be said that the *al-Fātiḥa* is a unique *leitmotif* and a strong position not only of the *Qur'an* but also of other sacral texts – from Adam until today. Of course, this kind of conclusion can be problematic, perhaps even offensive to followers of some other sacral texts, or members of other religions. But this is a matter of an immanent and consistent interpretation of the text of the *al-Fātiḥa*. Its Text has affirmed, in principle, other sacral texts by acknowledging their divine origin, thus ensuring the special position I have already discussed, which situates the Text of the *al-Fātiḥa* as a trans-historical one. Hence, an immanent and consistent analysis of the text of the *Qur'an* inevitably leads in this direction and stage of the conclusion. In a vast hierohistorical and

historical space it occurs as a "textual dominant", as a "textual cohesive space" or a leitmotif. Thus, its stylistic markedness has grown truly vast: I have already determined the stylistic position of the *al-Fātiḥa* in the corpus of the Text of the *Qur'an*, but immanent analysis would show its stylistic markedness is also quite vast among other sacral texts. At the same time, it is stylistically marked in a historical *space* due to the aforementioned reasons. It is a striking semiotic styleme.

The particularity of this sacral Text lies in the fact that it rests upon individual and collective memory. Namely, on one level, the Text and the individual affirm the joint memory of/about God, hence first of faith as such and then of a particular, specific faith with all that entails. An individual has their memory of it. The Text, on the other hand, has its own memory, which reaches through history of how essential and portentous faith is, for humanity in general and for the individual in particular. In that context the Text and the individual, as its audience, open themselves to each other completely, affirming each other to a degree of sacralization and ideality. On this level of their mutual opening and idealization we talk about faith as an individual act or a spiritual state; that is, something that remains in a consecrated private sphere. The growth of this joint memory is so strong that it manifests itself in a particularly intensified emotionality. When an individual recites the *al-Fātiḥa*, they are undoubtedly in a state of elation – or they have to be, if they are honest – since this state is conjured by the occasions in which it is recited (over a deceased or newborn, in direct communication with God, which must be utterly exciting, etc.). Therefore, this joint memory of the Text and the individual does not remain on the level of contemplation or an emotionally neutral communication, but also includes emotional potentials that originate precisely in the recognition of this mutual memory: an individual feels exalted by the knowledge of the fact that, as an audience, it identifies itself with the Text, which it discovers as its ideal Text every time it recites it; it is thrilled and made happy by the knowledge that it has confirmed its communion with the Text. I will provide another illustration here. When the *Qur'an* is recited loudly in a ritual manner, in a place of worship or elsewhere, a good interpreter (the *Qur'an* is always recited individually) can bring tears to the audience's

eyes, or cries of delight. One needs only to listen to the famous Egyptian interpreter Abdussamed and his listeners' cries of delight.

On the other hand, collective memory occurs in the space outside of an individual's intimate world and beyond the boundaries of their existence. The Text and the collective audience share a joint memory on a historical level, in line with what I have stated regarding the Text's claim that it has, in a way, existed forever, but that people have deformed it so much that the Vertical has had to intervene again. Human memory about/of Islam is transhistorical, and in that regard collective, just as the Text remembers its own aspirations, norms, as well as the necessity for its audience to be devoted and yielding. However, collective memory is also realized in the present moment: it becomes reality *within the community*, in any age. For instance, in the modern world the Islamic community, the *ummah*, clearly shares a collective joint memory with the Text.

Shared memory recommends conciseness

This exquisite closeness of the Text and its audience, brought to a state of individual elation and collective mutual identification upon which foundations the community is tightly organized, creates the specific stylistic characteristics of the *al-Fātiḥa*. Namely, the developed joint memory allows the Text, even recommending this as a value, to maximally develop its conciseness, to condense meanings and universalize semantics. Such aspirations are almost proportional to the scope and intensity of collective memory and mutual experience, and we have just seen how this degree of community is extremely high on individual and collective levels. Extensive explications in a non-artistic Text – such as a sacral one – entail the need for constructing joint experience and memory. That influences the different "stylistic orientation" of the Text.

The text of the *al-Fātiḥa* provides a model of the universe: from God in his otherworldly and timeless nature, through worlds He cultivates and over which he rules, through our world dedicated to worshiping, to

wandering at the Bottom. That is the largest possible space. At the same time, the content of the *al-Fātiḥa* is proportional to this space, since it includes Islamic monotheism; God's all-encompassing mercy as a durable and extremely comprehensive process; the Day of Judgment and the reckoning; the worship of and dependence upon God which include the entire human existence; the upright Path as an array of ethical values; bestowing with blessings those on that path; wrath toward those who are precipitously wandering astray. The content is clearly so vast that it even transcends the human world and existence.

One also needs to bear in mind the abundance of connotations of each semiotic sign in the *al-Fātiḥa;* speaking of these connotations, I have already pointed out their important role in the semiotic stylistics of the sacral Text.

The enormous space and multitudes of meaning that become literally boundless if one is to take into account the overabundant connotative nature of the Text are contained in a single sentence – the *al-Fātiḥa*. Hence, the meanings and the space are simply compressed to a short Text whose semiosis is necessary and quite intensive. Such tremendous compression of the Text is, of course, quite interesting in terms of poetics and no less striking in terms of stylistics. Such a peculiar Text must contain many allusions, connotations, and a relative abundance of stylistic figures in general. This is why it would be unfounded to speak of the general figurativeness of the *al-Fātiḥa*, since figurativeness is a characteristic of sacral texts in general, to an incomparably greater degree than in artistic texts. A careful perusal of the *al-Fātiḥa* will reveal the very high degree of its figurativeness. Let us cast at least a cursory glance at what this looks like.

The first ayah: *Cultivator of the worlds* is a figurative statement due to the word *cultivate,* which transfers the meaning to something that is not literally cultivated – worlds in particular cannot be literally cultivated. With this, the word *cultivate* does not abandon its semantic content according to which the one who cultivates something lords over it, in the sense of being greatly superior, but with the sort of superiority to which mercy is inherent. Hence the semantics of the Arabic word *rabb* are significantly broader than the common translation *lord*: a lord is not necessarily merciful, but

can be merciless as well, which is more commonly the case, while the word *rabb* denotes a lord-cultivator, hence one who cultivates and mercifully rules, without misusing and abusing. The second ayah is thus strikingly complementary to the first: *the All-merciful and graceful*. It can also be seriously comprehended both literally and figuratively, especially since the ayat preceding and following it are pronouncedly figurative.

The third ayah (*Ruler of the Day of Faith*) also has a figurative value. Namely, the word *malik* (*ruler, owner*; some also translate it as *lord*) primarily contains a sense of ownership in the physical sense in its semantic field, while the *Day of Faith* is, of course, something immaterial and as such cannot be possessed literally; "owner of the *Day of Faith*" (even: Day of Judgment, although in the domain of stylistics there is a big difference between the phrases *Ruler of the Day of Faith* and *Lord of the Day of Judgment*) is a figurative statement. The second part of that complex phrase, *Day of Faith*, which is also a phrase, is figurative in itself – which is obvious – so that it additionally amplifies the figurative nature of the whole ayah-phrase.

Even the fourth ayah is figuratively situated in the given environment, although at first sight it appears non-figurative: *It is You we worship and You we ask for help* is a statement that indeed does not appear to be figurative. However, it is strongly "shaded" by the figurative nature of the previous and following ayat; it is simply immersed in (their) context. Namely, the statement according to which *the cultivated* worships the *Cultivator* and asks him for help completes the figurativeness of the previous statement; the fourth ayah constitutes a branching out of the previous figure. A consistent interpretation implies that man (as the *cultivated*) connects his worshiping only to the Cultivators cultivating "activity", and that he seeks His help in that sense. Therefore, worshipping is not a relation in which the Worshipped one in any way exploits the worshipper, nor is the worshipper enslaved in relation to the Worshipped one. The key word of the context – *Cultivator* – confirms a relation devoid of vested interests: the Cultivator (God) has no particular *interest* in cultivating man, while the latter's interest to plead for His blessings has a fateful import. The word *cultivator*, as a semiotic sign, in the process of semiosis changes the meaning of the words

worship and *ask for help* they would have in isolation, or in some other context. What I have just referred to as the "shading" of the ayah through the figurative effect of the adjacent ayat can now be termed semiosis and the initiation of "connotative processes".

In order to surmise how far the semiotic interpretation in this ayah and the sura in general reaches, and in order to see at the same time how their connotative potentials are nearly inexhaustible, I will refer to two more signs – *slave* and ethics – which have tremendous import in terms of semiosis, and which, in fact, indicate that it can be developed ad infinitum. With this I will also point out to the stylistic value of the sura and its individual ayat. The stylistic value is all the greater given that it occurs in an ayah (the fourth) for which I have said that it at first does not appear to be figurative.

1. The word *worship* has been derived from the root *'BD,* which means (to be) *a slave*, *worship as a slave* etc. In the integral Text this word is very often used to refer to believers/Muslims. However, the broader context (which I have introduced in the interpretation of the *Cultivator*) does not allow for the word *slave* and those derived from it to be interpreted literally, but always in light of the meanings entailed by *cultivator/cultivating*. For the literal meaning of *slave,* the Text could have used another sign, such as *'aṯīr* = bondman), but it has decided upon the sign *'abd,* translating its basic meaning into a figurative one. In fact, the word *slave* has a pronouncedly positive meaning in the sphere of this sacral Text, as does that root's derivative *worship*. It needs to be pointed out that the Arabic verb *na'bud* essentially means *we are enslaved*, and only then: *we worship as slaves*. Outside of this context the words *slave* and *worship like a slave* absolutely cannot have such a positive meaning. On the contrary, in a sacral Text the person who worships is positively dependent on his Cultivator; he is made immensely happy by the relationship whose positive perspective is endless.

A conclusion can now be made regarding two important effects of the use of the word, or rather, root *'BD.*

a) An important word – *slave* and its derivatives – which in a non-sacral and stylistically neutral language only has negative meanings has

been "converted" into a word/notion with extremely positive ones. The semiosis of the sacral Text, clearly, reveals itself here to be particular and wondrously powerful; this may precisely be the example upon which it is possible to demonstrate how great the sacral Text's forces are and how its context, with its great figurativeness, is also capable of "bending" the semantics of words for which that seems barely possible. With this, a particular relationship toward language in general is established, since due to the effect of the sacral Text, the word *'abd* (slave) and *to be enslaved* have conquered meanings that they could not in texts of a different nature. Here the sacral Text differentiates itself from (profane) artistic texts. Also, this is how the specificities of semiotic stylistics in the sacral Text are manifested. In a novel, for instance, a *slave* can be showered with his master's attention, he can be in relatively comfortable and pleasant circumstances, but he is still a slave, which means he is essentially damaged, since he does not have freedom, which is a person's absolutely greatest value. All of his master's goodness is in vain. The artistic text and textual reality, as well as the objective one, can never bestow that word/sign with fully positive meanings. The relation here is "horizontal": even though the relation is pronouncedly one of subordination, it is still a relation between two human beings. Hence, in a literary artistic text, as well as in reality, *slave* has a very specific and relatively limited semantic field both as a word and a semiotic sign. Things are different in a sacral Text. Thanks to the sacral textual environment, this word turns into its opposite and this semiotic sign has significantly different interpretations. The steepness of the Vertical and the relatively great distance between the *Cultivator* and *the enslaved one* change the quality and connotations of this sign, so that language, as if by miracle, witnesses a sudden "rise" of the semantic field and the "bending" of semiosis.

The transformation of the word *slave* into its opposite, achieved in the sacral Text, as well as its verb *to worship* (as a slave), is truly unexpected, but also inexorable in the given context. Therefore, *slave* in the sacral Text is a *liberated man*, *worshipping* is an act of liberation and action in a space of freedom. How was such a tremendous semantic shift and stylistic reversal achieved?

We have seen that man is free in relation to his Cultivator since the Cultivator's relation to him is devoid of vested interest, not egocentric; in fact, it aims to cultivate man for his salvation. In other words, this means further that the sacral semantics of the word *being a slave* denotes man's deliverance from the existential, relative indifference into a religious exaltation; he is ultimately delivered from an existential lack of perspective into the beauties of *Jannah* and a perspective of eternity. Man's deliverance is complete precisely due to slavery in the sacral sense. Hence, his *happiness* with his "slavery" is immense, which no longer seems paradoxical at this stage of the discussion. A reverse connotative direction is, understandably, also possible. A free man, as a sign opposite to the one who *worships like a slave* (ya'bud), is in fact not free: at the dawn of the Revelation he was a slave to paganism; captive of the ephemeral world; a slave to his passions; and what is most important – in his deceptive freedom he is deprived of the perspective of eternity in the afterlife (viewed from his position), or deprived of the perspective of afterlife benedictions (viewed from the position of the Cultivator).

b) The word *being a slave,* which we encounter in the fourth ayah, has turned into an exquisite styleme with this "semantic shift", which is not noticeable from a cursory glance at the Text. In fact, it has become a styleme on two levels. The strong transfer of one meaning into another – *slave* into a *delivered man* – according to the interpretation I have just given, is an obvious styleme because it is, in fact, colossal. Its stylistic value is even more striking since, at first sight, it cannot even be surmised. However, here it is in the domain of linguistic stylistics, which is enough to render the entire Text exceptionally strongly marked. The sacral Text possesses inexhaustible stylistic potentials. Namely, the relationship between God and slave, Cultivator and cultivated, also appears to be of extreme stylistic value in the semiotic domain. If we take those two as semiotic signs in the process of semiosis, of semiotic communication, an extremely richly nuanced semiosis will manifest itself. God and (His) slave are two signs that achieve a miraculously intense and rich communication, all of whose aspects are nearly impossible to present, and that is not my priority here. However, it is necessary to say at least the following. In

relation to God/the Cultivator, a slave finds himself in a double position that at first sight appears contradictory. On the one hand, the subordination between them is strictly vertical. At the same time, they are as distant from each other on this vertical – precisely within a relation of subordination and hierarchy – as God and man are incomparable and distant, which is to an incomprehensibly immense degree. Countless differentiations between them are derived from this. However, the duality of the position is reflected in the fact that they are close in a special way – in the way the Cultivator and cultivated are. At the same time, they drift apart and come closer; they are distant and close, in light of the fact that God is "shrouded" in gratitude at the top of the Vertical, and man is at its foot, worshipping. Hence, God and man are *actors in space* in relation to each other. The slave is essentially different, his position is quite specific but, as such – and as a semiotic sign – he intensively communicates, so that an extraordinary semiotic syntax with an abundance of connotations is activated.

In this context and in this semiosis, *slave* is quite an unexpected choice as a sign for a number of reasons. The second thing I have demonstrated with my interpretation is the essential reasoning behind such a choice, though it is unexpected, since relations between slave and master exclude the closeness present between God and man. Slavery implies quite a steep and long relationship. Given that the sign slave denotes something low and at a fundamental distance from superior values, it seems inappropriate to the real meaning given to it by God's Will and the sacral context, which I have already explained. The sacral Text could have chosen another word instead of *slave* and *worshipping like a slave* in this ayah.[164] However, the choice of this word – to be more precise, this sign – is an exquisite semiotic stylistic technique that makes it an exquisite styleme. Stylistically it is all the more effective since, at the same time, it "distorts" "our reality", which is the intention of the Text that sacralizes it. The human concept of *slavery* and *lordship* is something extremely negative in human practice and reality, unlike the optimally positive divine notion of *slavery* and *lordship*.

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[164] At one point He calls man His *representative* (kalifa) on Earth (*Qur'an*, 2:30), but that title does not essentially change their positions and relations, which remain in the domain of *worshipping as a slave* in the meaning described.

This means that, by using the same signs, the sacral Text and space project in a "reverse perspective" in relation to a purely profane reality. The sacral Text has exquisite powers – that is its soul – to convert reality, to transpose its values. Bearing in mind the great difference between slavery in the sacral and the profane, I can say that the semiotic stylistic value of the sign *slave/worship like a slave* increases constantly.

2. In a further interpretation of the fourth ayah, whose figurative quality seems limited to an almost unnoticeable degree, I will demonstrate how the word *worship* further develops its connotative meanings, which are, in fact, the end goal of the ayah-sura, even the Text as a whole. Therefore, a relationship between the Cultivator of the worlds and man who worships his Cultivator like a slave is established in this ayah. Divine cultivation essentially determines man's nature, his fate, but also his behavior. God maintains man's physical existence – as He does His worlds in general – but the faith God determines and "inaugurates" with the Text keeps man in a special kind of spiritual existence. From the Text's perspective, this means that existence without the quality of faith is worthless. This is the special kind of cultivation that encourages a religiously aware person to worship/be a slave and call for help. By embracing such a meaning of *cultivation* – which clearly imposes itself in a connotatively consistent interpretation – man and his Text, the Text and the audience, have found themselves in a special sphere named ethics. The pretensions of the Text are ethical rather than artistic. In that context, *being a slave* (or worshipping like a slave) assumes a new meaning. The primarily ethical relationship of Cultivator – man means, in fact, that God is worshipped through *actions* He expects in the ethical domain, to a degree of slave-like devotion, which is, seemingly paradoxically, proportional to (ethical) liberation. In other words, being a slave to God is an ethical act, even a process, and worshipping is manifested by an act/acts of utter devotion that entail not only the ritual-prayer of religious service, but also actions: a believer's life must be saturated with acts of gratitude and good deeds until the end. Figuratively speaking, God is ultimately worshipped as a Cultivator through ethical growth, since His goal is precisely to cultivate man thus and for that reason.

Such an interpretation of the fourth ayah eliminates all the negative meanings of the word *na'bud* (we are slaves to/we worship like slaves), with which the vast potential of this word/sign in the domain of linguistic and semiotic stylistics is revealed. However, it is possible to go further in the interpretation of the word *na'bud*. Namely, the entire previous examination has led me to an important conclusion: the fourth ayah and its key word *na'bud* are not the resonance of the *al-Fātiḥa* only, but rather of the integral Text. Bearing in mind this fact of the interpretation, the exquisite semantic density of this short Text reveals itself anew with its great stylistic defamiliarization. However, this analysis indicates another important thing, the common thread of the entire Text: the strong position of the *al-Fātiḥa* is constantly emphasized.

Although pregnant with stylistic potentials – in the domain of linguistic and semiotic stylistics – the Text does not end in the aesthetic sphere, though it is undoubtedly ennobled by it, since it presents itself as God's Word for which it would be unseemly to be different than it is. Ending in the sphere of ethics, the Text manages to underline its often explicated claim that it is no artistic text. In light of this, I believe that sacral texts generally, and this one in particular, cannot ultimately be defined as artistic, although they do possess great literary-aesthetic values.

Rhythmization of the Text and Universe

The strong rhythmization of the Text also provides a deceptive impression that it functions on an artistic level, although it is, in its essence, a prose Text. Each ayah of the *al-Fātiḥa* represents a rhythmical unit. Careful observation can show that the Text's rhythmization is not a purpose in itself, and that it is not achieved as strictly as in poetry: in poetry, each verse used to be composed of hemistichs, with a clearly determined number of open and closed syllables that created a meter that ruled the entire poem. Rhythmization is not as strictly implemented here, although it is so noticeable it cannot be overlooked. Of course, the Text

does not strive to be a poem – it distances itself from this – yet it provides a model of harmony and the general rhythmical nature of the Universe with its rhythmization. It is noticeable, however, that the criterion for rhythmization in this sura lies in the meaning of the Text. The first ayah contains a single theme: the expression of gratitude to the Cultivator of the worlds; that thematic unit is at the same time a rhythmical unit of the Text. In the second ayah the theme is grace; in the third ayah it is the reckoning of the Day of Faith; in the fourth ayah it is worship, etc. Therefore, each thematic unit in the *al-Fātiḥa* is at the same time a rhythmical unit, and all within a single sentence characterized by internal rhythmization and rhyme. The effects of this technique are multiple.

Primarily, since these are relatively short and frequent rhythmical units that announce the semantic unit's relative independence (the poetic "sovereignty" of rhythmical units is relative since they are structurally connected to other units), it becomes obvious how this is used to achieve the conciseness of the Text: a single thematic unit is limited to the confines of a single rhythmical unit, in this case, of a single ayah. Rhythmical effects are, of course, known to be possible in certain textual lengths since, if the rhythmical units are too long, the rhythm is no longer effective and becomes unnoticeable, which thwarts its basic intention. In the *al-Fātiḥa* the rhythmization is obvious and very efficient. Therefore, the principle according to which a rhythmical unit is spatially limited and the defamiliarizing principle according to which single themes overlap with rhythmical units influence the great conciseness of the Text. I have, so far, at different points and contexts, pointed out how the *al-Fātiḥa* represents the entire integral Text semantically almost as a compendium, and that one can speak of its resonance in that regard. This trait is further asserted given the simultaneous activity of its form and content in the same direction. The optimal semantic density of the Text is, therefore, supported by formal factors testifying to the great deftness in its construction, which, as we will see, departs from tradition. One should, however, first say that the conciseness or density of the text's meaning, achieved also through its form, strongly participate in the realization of the aforementioned grand goal of the Text regarding the common memory and experience

shared by the Text and its audience, for only through this melding can the conciseness of the Text be optimized. One should also bear in mind that such great conciseness includes the possibility of developing quite strong associations and connotations, which branch out, but never diverge in terms of meaning. The basic assumptions for such a mutual relationship between the Text and the audience are joint memory and experience. The degree of their mutual understanding raised to a particular type of intimacy is proportional to the laconism of the Text, and vice versa: in order for it to be understandable, the laconism is possible to the degree that the Text and audience determine such a joint memory and experience. The effect is remarkable. On the one hand, the *al-Fātiḥa* provides a model for the Universe's textual space, which equals infinity. On the other – as demonstrated by the previous interpretations – the laconism provides almost endless possibilities for connotations and associations. The stylistic defamiliarization is therefore extraordinary, since a single sentence with seven rhythmical units, ayat, contains infinitudes. We should also emphasize that the stylistic defamiliarization is realized both at the levels of traditional linguistic stylistics and the level of semiotic stylistics. If we bear in mind that the *al-Fātiḥa* contains a textual space and provides a model for the Universe, it is clear that its spatial semiotics contain a multitude of signs that operate as extraordinary semiotic stylemes. Such stylemes are, for instance, *Cultivator of the worlds*, *Day of the Faith*, *guide us rightly on the upright Path,* etc.

In the cultural universe, as the semiosphere in which this Text is revealed and active, it appears quite defamiliarized in relation to the found semiotic space and its signs. Namely, until the Revelation, the tradition was also familiar with the ideal of laconism and rhythmization in the dominant poetic endeavors. In them, however, the dichotomy of form-content was pronounced, with form proving dominant, while content did not receive enough attention. This sacral Text, however, operates inversely, guided by deductive poetics, and places content seeking adequate form at its forefront, so that the role of form is to optimally affirm content as an aesthetic factor. The *Al-Fātiḥa* is exemplary in that regard. The sacral Text affirms tradition by paying adequate attention to form as an aesthetic

factor, but in the case of the *al-Fātiḥa*, the content builds rhythmic-structural units, determines their limits and demands that they affirm the thematic units with their pulsations, or rather, the content of the sura as a whole. This is an essential shift in relation to tradition, a shift that can only be observed on the level of poetology. However, precisely this level is translated into the semiotic sphere if one takes into account that the sacral *text* acts through dramatic shifts among other texts that contain the core of a self-sufficient semiotic sphere. The sacral Text left a dramatic effect precisely in the field of semiotics. Namely, the predominant poetry in the found semiotic space – as a spiritual, emotional, historical, political and societal expression generally, since such space was the realm of poetry – felt inferior in relation to the sacral text, which has made the entire semiotic space surge and resulted in its reorganization. In that world, which poetry has made its true realm, a sudden muteness emerged before the sacral Text due to a feeling of inferiority: this lasted until the Umayyad dynasty (661-750), but neither then, nor ever after, has poetry been quite the same as before the sacral Text was revealed. In other words, that semiotic space has been restructured and revalued through the introduction of a number of semiotic languages, not just the poetic, among which are the artificial languages of rituals and ceremonies, architecture, customs, etc., all the way to ethics and morality.

If we are to stand by the previous claim that the *al-Fātiḥa* represents the integral Text of the *Qur'an*, which has generated thorough changes in the found semiotic space and widened its boundaries for hundreds of years, the implication is that the *al-Fātiḥa* is not just a styleme in the integral sacral Text, but, as its representative, also a grandiose styleme within the entire semiosphere upon which it acts with an unabated intensity. It has reshaped tradition. Its effect in the integral Text in relation to other sacral texts in the widest meaning of the word can also here in the semiosphere be compared to the effect – from a stylistic point of view – of a leitmotif in a text, with its dominant styleme, or with its strongest position: it is a leitmotif and the strongest position of the entire semiotic space, or cultural universe. Hence, the stylistic defamiliarization of the *al-Fātiḥa* is additionally amplified with the rhythmization of the thematic units, with

which the correspondence of the two types of structural units is realized – at the level of form and content. The rhythmization is also noticeable when the semiotic space of the Text is analyzed. A simultaneous rhythmization on both levels furthers the stylistics of the Text.

Namely, each ayah in the sura (which is composed of seven), with the partial exception of the second, which clearly serves as an attribute to the first, is a fragment of textual space. Bearing in mind that each ayah has a single theme, consequently there is an overlap between the theme and the segment of textual space, again to a defamiliarizing effect. The first ayah (*All praise is for Allah, Lord of the Worlds*) fragments space with *worlds* as parts of the Universe. The third ayah fragments it with the noun *Owner* (Mālik) and *Day of Faith,* which are to be realized in some eschatological space. The fourth ayah is fully engaged with the world of human existence, which is dedicated to worshiping and seeking help in order to triumph in the space of the Other world. The fifth ayah (*Guide us to the upright path*) "translates" that space into a vertical, and it appears that it holds the central place in the thematization of space in the sura in general. It segments space into a vertical, by defining the space in which human existence occurs as the upright path. In the sixth ayah (*The way of those upon whom You have bestowed your blessings*) space is segmented with the very noun *Path*, in a manner similar to the previous ayah, only specifying that it is graced with blessings. And finally, in the seventh ayah (*Not of those who earned Your Anger, nor of those who went astray*) space is structured as the wrong path. I hope the correspondence between themes and ayat as rhythmical-structural units has become obvious. The fragmentation of space, however, does not occur without perspective or chaotically, but quite coherently and in line with the thematization of the rhythmical units. This parceling rhythmizes the semiotic space. Understandably, this technique achieves a specific semiotic stylistic effect, so that the cooperation of linguistic and semiotic stylistic value is strikingly complementary here: thanks to this cooperation, the whole sura has been created as an abundantly rich stylistic space.

The rhythmization of the Text and the textual space, thanks to certain thematic-rhythmical units, can only at first sight appear to be a kind of

disintegration of the Text, its fragmentation in the literal and strict sense, which would mean without perspective for its ultimate integration. The technique of rhythmical segmentation has precisely the opposite effect. Rhythm always implies a certain whole, or a system built with rhythmical units; the principle of rhythmization does not have a disintegrating effect, but an essentially integrative and cohesive one. In the case of the *al-Fātiḥa* this means, on the one hand, that order is introduced into the Text and its space to a degree implied and enabled by the rhythmical principle, which means to an enormous degree. On the other hand, the Text and its (semiotic) space are strongly integrated, since the rhythmization principle simply demands the impact of the next and again the next rhythmical unit – until the composition has been saturated. This is not a mere analogy in the analysis of the *al-Fātiḥa*, although analogies are precious as such. Therefore, rhythmization has an integrative effect, strongly binding the rhythmized structure, so that, from this position, the initial impression regarding the lack of perspective due to fragmentation is quite successfully overcome. In fact, here it turns into its opposite.

Since the *al-Fātiḥa* provides a model in a number of aspects – some of which have already been discussed – it is obvious that the rhythmization of the Text and the textual space also have the same effect. The great order of the Text – in which, together with other factors, rhythm plays a significant role – provides a model for the order of the world of which it speaks. At the same time, it contains its indivisibility. The Universe and the Text of the *al-Fātiḥa* are each indivisible in themselves, but also from each other (from the position of this Text) and are at the same time so ordered that they exist in quite a regular rhythmical pulsation. Such an interpretation of the Text, its space and that for which it provides a model, inevitably leads to semiotic stylistics being noticed and affirmed as an utterly coherently selected principle.

Since the *al-Fātiḥa* is about a vertical textual space, its rhythmization occurs accordingly. The world of the ancient Arabians, to whom the Text was first revealed, was pronouncedly flat, completely easy to survey, so that the entire life of the Bedouin was pervaded with the appropriate rhythm: it was fragmented from pasture to pasture, from oasis to oasis, year to year,

etc. These were *cycles* utterly resembling one another, to the degree that the fragmentation in that case had a different meaning and function from those in the semiotic sphere ordered by the sacral Text, where fragments, in fact, function as a kind of sequence. In terms of logic and reality, a vertical cannot be organized as a flat space, nor are its structures equally firm.

In terms of semiotics, the vertical space of the *al-Fātiḥa* can be understood both as a physical and ethical space, and even as a physical space that is ultimately converted into an ethical one. I have already discussed how this Text provides a model for physical space in the shape of a Universe, and that God, as cultivator of the worlds, organizes it rhythmically, followed by human existence in the light of worship, down to a bottommost space, where anger and deviation dwell. The ethical space is organized according to the same principle. On the one hand, this means it is organized vertically and according to "sequences": at the top of religious ethics is, of course, God, to whom Praise and Gratitude are due. Lower in the ethical space, subordinated, are his all-encompassing mercy; the Day of Faith (the Day of Judgment) from which all-encompassing mercy is inseparable; slave-like worshipping; yearning for the Upright Path; the blessings of the Upright Path; God's wrath toward those who have wandered astray. The vertical in the ethical space is obvious. On the other hand, it is easily noticeable how ethical space is organized according to a rhythm which, quite successfully, in yet another way, affirms the rhythmical organization – the rhythmical firmness of physical and ethical space.

In terms of the rhythmization of the ethical world, I will point out another characteristic of the Text that acts quite discretely in the domain of the rhythmization of the ethical. This is namely the domination of binaries, or duality; I cannot use the word *dualism* since it has religious connotations essentially opposite to monotheism, which the Text presents as its very soul. This binary is realized in two ways: through complementariness and oppositions. I will present it in the following way.

Complementary duals: God > Cultivator of the Worlds; the all-merciful > graceful; Lord > judgment; worshipping > seeking help; rightly guiding > the upright path; the upright path > blessings.

The end of the Text, the bottom of the textual and ethical space, occurs in opposition to the aforementioned, but again through binaries: wrath > wandering. The tone of the last ayah is hence opposite to the positive one of the preceding ayat, but is complementary in itself to the degree that signs such as *wrath* and *astray* are.

A number of conclusions can be deduced about this persistent pulsation of binaries. I have already pointed out (considering the stylistic values of the *al-Raḥmān* sura, which is entirely marked by dualities) that the *Qur'an* generally strongly affirms binaries as one of the fundamental principles of existence, as an ethical confrontation between Good and Evil, as a relationship between the affirmative and negative that generates almost everything, and which is a source of general dynamism. Therefore, such an understanding of binaries represents the definition of the basic driving forces of the physical and ethical world. It bears mentioning that, in the given context, this binary appears rhythmical, providing support to the general rhythmization of the Text. Moreover, using dualities and binaries contributes to the general tendency of the Text towards a laconism of meaning and acts almost "preventively" in the sense that it hinders the stretching of the rhythmical units. The use of the dual (odd-even; position-opposition) is the best way to simultaneously achieve rhythm and conciseness.

Joint memory of the Text and its audience: Ḥifẓ *as an institution supported by the rhythmization of the Text*

The general rhythmization of the Text supports the memorization of the Text, in particular the institution of *ḥifẓ* (memorizing the Text in its entirety), which is semiotically also very effective. I am not aware of any other text which that has quite so firmly established the institution of memorizing its entirety in the way the *Qur'an* has. At the time of the revelation, it was memorized and this was one of the ways in which it was preserved (the Text was at the same time written down on various objects).

Since then, in Islamic culture, those who have ventured upon the great endeavor of memorizing the Text in its entirety have been accorded great respect. Such is the specific relationship between the Text and memory. It is interesting to mention in that regard that the Arabic word *ḥifẓ*, or *ḥāfiẓ* (a person who knows the entire *Qur'an* by heart), in its semantic field contains two meanings inseparable from each other: *to learn by heart* and *to preserve*. Therefore a ḥāfiẓ is a person who learns the whole *Qur'an* by heart in order to preserve or guard it: he is literally *the one who remembers it,* and, as such, its *guard*. Hence, since the revelation of the Text, there have been many ḥāfiẓ in Islam and the ceremony proclaiming them is quite solemn. It seems that most people believe that the institution of hafiz has had a historical task – to preserve the Text in history, or to prevent it from getting lost or falsified. Of course, the mass memorizing of the Text had this role, but it is by no means the only one. Other goals and functions of the ḥāfiẓ need to be pointed out as well.

The hafiz does not conquer the audience (the ḥāfiẓ as an audience) the same way reading the Text from the *al-Muṣḥaf* does, and one of the important goals of the Text is always to position itself as the central Text of the individual and semiosphere. The difference in quality is quite considerable. Namely, the Text is in such a relation with the ḥāfiẓ that, not only does he master the Text, but the Text completely envelops and overcomes its audience, in this case the ḥāfiẓ. That means that the text masters the consciousness of the individual who has remembered the Text. (One should not forget that it is considered a great sin when a ḥāfiẓ forgets his lines, which means that he repeats them every day throughout his whole life, thus preventing them from falling into oblivion.) When I say that the Text masters the ḥāfiẓ's consciousness – which is in fact the primary goal of the ḥāfiẓ, rather than physically preserving the *Qur'an*, because there are a number of other ways to do so – I mean that the Text preserves its recipient, its audience or ḥāfiẓ, since the Text keeps him from straying and acting unethically more than anything else could through the force of its ideology and *'I'jāz* generally, which the ḥāfiẓ has accepted. To this extent the ḥāfiẓ who forget the *Qur'an* are sinful, as are those who resist the basic intention of the ḥāfiẓ: to keep the ḥāfiẓ from sinning, acting

unethically, etc. Such are in a dramatic conflict with the Text, much more than believers who are not ḥāfiẓ. Therefore, there is a certain change of position in the institution of ḥāfiẓ, to which the Text very wisely aims at and which is realized in the semantic field of the root *ḥfẓ = remember* and preserve. An individual decides to memorize the Text in order to preserve it and to be in line with the tradition in which the institution of ḥāfiẓ was an important factor for the physical preservation of the Text. However, at the very essence of things, the remembered Text with which the believer's consciousness is completely imbued preserves its ḥāfiẓ. That is the first important step of the ḥāfiẓ in the direction of the great changes it causes in the semiosphere. Before I point to that direction, one should say that the rhythm of the Text is an extremely important factor, and which makes remembering it easier.

By raising ḥāfiẓ to the level of institution, the awareness of its holiness increases. This is the unstoppable path of sacralization that will, again, have great effects in the semiosphere. It is not only the ḥāfiẓ that plays a role in the affirmation of the ḥāfiẓ, but an entire culture that ensures the institution a reputation, even a great authority. This means that the general awareness of the Text's sacral nature is quite significantly advanced through the institution of the ḥāfiẓ, so that its epicentral position in the cultural universe is strengthened and its effect on the given semiotic space becomes much more efficient. One can thus speak of the ḥāfiẓ as a specific semiotic phenomenon, since it functions in the general efforts of the Text, as a sacral text, to play a decisive role in the semiotic space in which it positions itself. As much as the ḥāfiẓ are given authority by their society marked with the Text, so they contribute to the society being further marked in a sacral manner. The effects are reciprocal.

The ḥāfiẓ's memory of the Text – complete and relentless – establishes certain relations that have been addressed as the joint memory of the Text and its audience. I have already explained some aspects of this relationship. Here it should be added that it is natural for the institution of ḥāfiẓ – precisely as an institution – to contribute to the general common memory by stimulating it institutionally. Every believer strives to remember as much of the Text as possible and their ideal is to remember it in its entirety. If we

add to this the fact that the institution of the ḥāfiẓ is a historical one, it is clear that memory is, on the one hand, affirmed by the ḥāfiẓ in his individual endeavor and at the same time on the collective level, being historical. Therefore, the ḥāfiẓ is, at the same time, an individual and collective act. Thus is the joint memory of the Text and its audience also ensured on two levels. On one level, common memory is promoted by the institution of the ḥāfiẓ, granted that this memory has been nourished since the revelation of the Text. On the other level, common memory is ensured on the transhistorical or hierohistorical level, since the Text, which is carried through history, claims only to be an attestation of sorts of all previous sacral texts, and that its basic task is to preserve this common memory since the beginning of time: a memory of all that the Text establishes and explicates (anew).

The *Al-Fātiḥa* also represents the institution of the ḥāfiẓ; that is, it represents everything connected to the Text and the different aspects of memory related to it. Every believer knows the *al-Fatiha* by heart, as a precondition for prayer. Since it represents the *Qur'an* in a number of ways, as well as the relationship of the audience toward the Text, the representation also manifests itself in that aspect. Reciting the *al-Fātiḥa* implies that memorizing the Text in general is advisable, and that the act of memorizing has the effect of mutual protection: the individual and the audience preserve/protect the Text by memorizing it, and the Text keeps them on the *upright path*.

God's speech in human language

I have provided interpretations of only several of the first ayat of the *al-Fātiḥa* to illustrate its figurative quality. My interest here lies much more in the semiosis and the semiotic stylistic value of the *al-Fātiḥa*. With that aim, I will turn to two types of language – the divine and human.

In artistic, profane texts, the language of the text and its audience, author and recipient, is the same – the natural language of both subjects, which, granted, does not always cover the same codes of the author and

recipient. In the sacral Text, however, the situation is different precisely because it is sacral. True, the sacral Text also uses the natural language of its audience, yet from a semiotic point of view it is important that in the reader's consciousness, the language in which the sacral Text addresses them is one of a "higher instance", a language of inequality, sacral superiority, or divine adaptation of His language to the human. A special kind of encoding is at work.

In order to notice the special nature of the sacral text, it is necessary to contrast it occasionally with non-sacral ones, primarily artistic texts. In the artistic text the reader and the text with which the reader communicates are *interlocutors*.[165] They open up to each other precisely the way interlocutors do – not through confession, nor even narration, but through dialogue. This means that neither of them is a definitively closed "structure", because communication in that case would be hopeless. Also, they are not so different so as not to be able to communicate. The text and its reader share a language, a common general understanding of literature and values, which constitute the prerequisites for their communication in which they are, more or less, equal interlocutors.

In the sacral Text communication is realized under the implied assumption that the Text is written in a language that is God's expression to man. The semiosis is significantly different than the one in profane texts, since the *relationship* of the recipients is different with the sacral Text, and that relationship is determined by the awareness of the divine nature of this language. This is one of the important points in which the equality of the interlocutors present in the reception of artistic texts is cancelled: instead of equality, there is a pronounced relationship of subordination in sacral texts; instead of *mutual* adjustment, man's unconditional submission to the

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[165] Lotman writes of the joint memory of the text and audience in a book I have already stated was quite inspiring (J. M. Lotman, *Semiosfera* …, p. 96 onward). He also writes about the ways the text and the reader position themselves as interlocutors (op. cit., p. 124.). All of Lotman's analyses refer to texts in general, and he does not distinguish between sacral texts and others in terms of their interlocution and joint memory. I, however, believe – and have explained previously – that sacral and profane texts differ significantly in this regard.

Text and utter abandon to the Text's guidance is emphasized. Admittedly, some type of dialogue is also present here, but in no way implying equality.

The fact of the inequality of Text and audience is what is specific in the semiotics of the sacral Text. Here I must refer to what I have stated numerous times: the Vertical is omnipresent because communication also occurs in accordance with it. This indicates that their signs are not of the same order, although they understand each other using the same natural language. All semiotic signs in the *al-Fātiḥa*, for instance, have just one value for man and are of the same order – from his direction of communication, while those same signs are of a different order and value for God – from the direction of His communication along the vertical. These semiotic facts make this semiosis significantly different than in the texts in which the principle of equality between the interlocutors is affirmed. I will list several examples.

Thanking Allah (in the first ayah) represents the type of communication in which the determined *Gratitude* does not mean the same to God and man. Gratitude as a sign expresses some sort of subordination, emotional or other type of inferiority – even if it denotes a temporary relational state. Gratitude to God in this sense is enormous, incomparably greater than it is in the relation between man and man, so that it changes significantly as a semiotic sign in the sacral Text, or is not of the same order as a sign in non-sacral texts. On the other hand, gratitude does not have the same meaning for God as for the one expressing it to Him, nor does it have the same meaning as gratitude in communication among people. God does not need gratitude – unlike in human communication – to improve the relationship between Him and man, or even the relationship of mutuality, to express a special kind of sociability between them, to humor a "divine vanity" that he in fact does not possess. Also, such an expression of gratitude to God would not have the same meaning in a non-sacral text – for instance, in a dialogical situation or an interpretation of an artistic text. The same sign has different interpreters in different texts and, generally, different semioses. In the *al-Fātiḥa* gratitude is a sign of man's utter subordination to God, but not for the sake of subordination itself, as a negative state and feeling, but quite to the contrary, in light of the general context of the

sacral Text. Gratitude is in this case an expression of man's deliverance from heathenism, man's liberation; in fact, it is a special expression of man's rapture at the knowledge of this very steep subordination, which is not expressed by the same sign outside the sacral Text and its textual space. Due to this specific meaning of the expression of gratitude in the *al-Fātiḥa*, it can be said that this syntagmatic of the signifier and signified arranges the entire space in a special way, as well as relations, relationships between subjects, their perception of space, etc. The space in sacral texts, as well as the sacral space in general, is significantly different than the non-sacral. This is clearly the domain of semiotics.

The choice of the word *gratitude* (al-ḥamd) is a semiotic stylistic choice. Instead of *gratitude,* the Text could have chosen the word *submission*, *service*, *dedication,* etc. However, every other choice would have a proportionally different meaning and different connotations. Most importantly, a different choice would express a different relation, different quality of relationship etc., from which it follows that the entire semiotic space could be organized differently. The phrase *cultivator of the worlds* also denotes different content and establishes different relations between the Author and recipient of the Text. How the worlds are "cultivated" or maintained is mostly unknown to the Text's audience. It is also, for the most part, unknown which and what kinds of worlds it speaks of. The audience's "knowledge" of this remains mostly in the sphere of conjecture and assumptions, while divine knowledge – according to the Text – is complete and efficient. The same sign has different contents derived from the fundamental inequality between the Text's Author and the recipient. However, the fact of their not having the same knowledge of the meaning of the sign is not the whole issue, for it is also important that this difference has an effect on rendering the semiotic space in which the Text and audience specially communicate. The Text still insists on the spatial vertical. The word *cultivator* is especially interesting here, being a defamiliarizing choice in terms of linguistic and semiotic stylistics. On the semiotic level, that sign establishes a special communicative relation toward the preceding noun *Allah,* specifying it in a very special way. The sign *cultivator* is a wondrous semiotic styleme, since its choice establishes

efficient communication with the adjacent signs (that word has a stylistic value effect in linguistic stylistics as well). Here I will provide an outline for an interpretation of the semiotic stylistic value of the sign *cultivator*.

Allah is a cultivator, which means that this trait of his is of tremendous importance to the Universe, so that between God and this trait of His there is, to an extent, a sign of equality. The communication between these two signs is excellent and leaves, obviously, an open channel of communication with other adjacent signs. In that sense, the following sign, *worlds*, can seem both expected and unexpected, in the sense that a statement of how *worlds are cultivated* stylistically seems rather defamiliarized in terms of linguistic stylistics. However, from the point of view of semiotic stylistics, the statement that God *cultivates worlds* is not so unusual, since that is quite inherent to His power. The phrase *cultivator of worlds* opens up endless space. Instead of the word *cultivator* the Text could have chosen a sign like *owner*, *creator*, or another, but any other choice would leave different traces in the semiosis. The syntagmatic of the signs *Allah > cultivator > worlds* expresses particular content, among which prevail meanings of upkeep/maintenance, development and perfection; it is even possible to develop a connotation regarding the "raising" of new worlds, etc. At the same time, the sign *cultivation* has utterly positive content (in proportion to encompassing all worlds), which is only possible as God's main trait present in many aspects. With this sign, God defines His absolutely positive position in the Universe (in which man, also cultivated by God, exists). Of course, given the worlds' totality, His cultivation is ultimately of such a quality that, even what seems destruction to us, death, is no longer so, but – paradoxically – cultivation. From the point of view of the sacral Text, man's life is ethical cultivation, while death is the seed for a new life. Death is – to interpret the Text here – a sort of sprouting in an utterly new semiotic space. The semiosis seems never-ending. The syntagmatic of the signs is dynamic and exceptionally rich with content. Given the aforementioned regarding the semiosis of the sign *cultivator*, a question poses itself whether a sign other than *expressing gratitude* could even be used: the communication of this sign with others in the first ayah

is quite dynamic and coherent, so that changing any sign would cause great changes in their communication.

The analysis of other signs and their syntagmatic in the *al-Fātiḥa* would take me too far from my intention of tackling the specific relationship between divine and human language in the Text of the *al-Fātiḥa* as the representative and guide of the Text of the *Qur'an*.

The audience's awareness of the sacral Text being God's Word is important in the realization of each sacral Text and its audience. The awareness of this kind of subordination sacralizes the Text, and the sacral Text has a special semiotic system. I have already pointed out how, in sacral texts, divine and human languages are not of the same order, and how, in accordance with this, they achieve a special kind of communication. The particular nature of divine language is pronounced in the Text of the *Qur'an* incomparably more than in other sacral texts. In this case, its particularity has been raised to the level of dogma and the consensus of believers; it is called *ijaz*. Namely, according to Muslim belief, the language and style of the *Qur'an* are supernatural. The linguistic and stylistic organization of the Text takes place within the framework of a natural language (Arabic) that, at the time of the Revelation, was the dialect of the tribe of Quraysh, Muhammad's tribe. It is, therefore, a human natural language, with divine content brought into it, in a way that the Text, as divine expression, surpasses human powers of imitation. All Muslims who know Arabic testify that the linguistic and stylistic organization of the Text is, in fact, such that by itself and for itself it represents an argument for the Text's divine origins. This demonstrates best that the language of the Author, that is, the Text itself, and that of the audience is in a way the same, but also different on two accounts. First, a difference is established in the audience's very awareness that it is a language from God and that, as such, it is not of the same order as man's natural language (Arabic). Second, the difference is manifested in the Author's ability to organize the Text in a natural language, so as to make it a proof of God's superiority expressed in a language in which the Text and audience communicate. There is literally no word in the Text that did not already belong to Arabic vocabulary – this as a precondition for mutual understanding – but the Text as speech is in a "condition" that causes an

effect of defamiliarization to the utmost degree with the audience, which grows into a faith of the Text's supernatural qualities. The relationship between the Text of the *Qur'an* and its audience in that regard is unique and, as such, wondrous.

According to Muslim belief, the *Qur'an* is a copy of the *Lawḥi-Maḥfūz* – the Well-Preserved Tablet, which is in the other world. A parabolic bending of the ellipsis on the *Lawḥi-Maḥfūz*, on which there is no reliable information, is possible to understand how the Text was transferred from the Tablet to language, with its form and content, and revealed to mankind. An interpretation regarding a "translation" of sorts into the Text that we have at our disposal is possible. In any case, it appears possible to understand *Lawḥi-Maḥfūz* as reality – as an "object" within an unknown matrix of the Text, which is difficult to believe in, unless we are prone to literal interpretations of very complex phenomena and relations necessary for literal comprehension, that it has existed exactly in Arabic, in exactly the same form and organization in which it was *lowered* into Earth. I am inclined to interpret the *Lawḥi-Maḥfūz* precisely as a semiotic sign in the meaning that I have hinted at. Namely, the term *Lawḥ* emphasizes the otherworldly nature of the original Text and its language. The transfer of the Text from the *Lawḥi-Maḥfūz* to the text we are familiar with constitutes a special kind of mediation and simultaneously a special expression of distancing. It appears naïve to believe that the Text, in its full authenticity, was simply literally transferred from the Tablet into the Book. If one were to believe that, it would be to take the principle of simplification so far as to believe that in God's otherworldly realm, in the "world" of *Lawḥi-Maḥfūz*, Arabic is used, and – no more, no less – the Quraysh dialect the Prophet Mohammed spoke, which, thanks to the *Qur'an*, has been promoted into a literary standard. I do not see any grounds to believe this. The *Lawḥi-Maḥfūz*, from which the Text of the *Qur'an* originated, belongs to a different language, of which humankind knows nothing and which it is likely incapable of imagining. It can only be surmised by a metaphor, rather than positive knowledge. Be that as it may, by introducing the *Lawḥi-Maḥfūz* as a special kind of semiotic sign into the interpretation of the relationship between the origin of the Text

and language in which it has been revealed, the semiosis is extraordinarily intensified and rendered increasingly complex. The sign *Lawḥi-Maḥfūẓ* reveals the fact that divine and human language, or speech, are not of the same order and that, precisely in the domain of semiotics, there is a very dynamic relationship between the human natural language in which the *Qur'an* was revealed, its organization at the supernatural level, and its origins in the *Lawḥi-Maḥfūẓ*.

The vertical that the *Qur'an* always emphasized is still visible here. The "path" from the *Lawḥi-Maḥfūẓ* toward the presumably supernatural Text, expressed in language and speech that the audience understands, is extremely steep. And vice versa – the path from the humanly understandable to the incomprehensible, and the incomprehensibly beautiful, is equally vertical and quite uncertain. This may seem oversimplified, but in the given context I am ready to offer a bold assumption that I believe is in line with the coherence of the system I am elaborating. The revelation of the *Qur'an* in the Text we know can be understood as quite a particular act of "translation", though an act of translation and transmission at the absolutely highest level. If the Text had existed in an unknown language and in an unknown form on the *Lawḥi-Maḥfūẓ* and was then transferred into Arabic and as such published in Saudi Arabia, than this is an act of translation of the highest order. The extraordinariness of the act is also reflected in the fact that one could easily and understandably assume that the language of the *Lawḥi-Maḥfūẓ* is not a natural language at all, because, in that case, the Text could have simply been "copied" and "brought down" to people in that natural language. Since there are a number of reasons to believe that the language of the *Lawḥi-Maḥfūẓ* is completely unknown, a language we cannot carelessly claim to be artificial (in the sense of the human opposition *natural – artificial*), then its translation/transfer into the supernatural Text of the *Qur'an*, aimed at natural human understanding, constitutes such a complex semiotic process, such a rich and dynamic semiosis worthy of the Text's authority and wondrousness, that it is impossible to bring to completion. The defamiliarization is endless.

The translation of the Text occurs on two levels, which also renders the semiosis more complex. First, a translation was made from the *Lawḥi-*

Maḥfūẓ into Arabic, as discussed so far. The process of translating that Translation is, however, endless, since it has been translated into all of the languages of the world, while in some languages the translation race has yielded numerous renditions. Each translation has its semiotic functions because it occurs in another language, a different system. Something similar occurs on both levels of translation.

As a translator of the *Qur'an* into Bosnian, I am well aware – and this experience I share with numerous other responsible translators in the world – that translations are doomed to significant losses, regardless of the translator's abilities. If the translator is a believer, in the process of translation, he will constantly gain convictions of the supernatural quality of the text and the critical relativity of his endeavors. If the translator is not a believer, in his work he will inevitably get an impression of the genius, linguistic and stylistic superiority of the author. In both cases the translators are therefore aware – in fact, the more talented, the more aware they are – of the great losses their translations suffer. They are also aware, which is important to emphasize in this context, that the Text is quite firmly bound to what I refer to as the conditions of the Arabic language, which not only expresses the original's sovereignty but its superiority. I will allow myself here to share a short intimate story with which I would like to illustrate this.

Although the sound of the Text of the *Qur'an* was the first thing that reached my ear, even when I was not aware of it; although I have heard and read it my entire life, in different phases of intellectual and emotional growth; although I am, professionally and vocationally, an Arabist, my translation of the *Qur'an* into Bosnian, which I did toward the end of my fifth decade, does not brine me an excess of joy, for I constantly discover possibilities to translate things differently and realize that some meanings have eluded me, as they still would if I were to translate it a number of times. Besides, the work that I produce – this particular text as well – testifies precisely to how conditional and temporary translations are, and how necessary it is to interpret the Text in order to discover previously unselected translations and meanings of the original that have not been reached before. In other words, my studies on the sacral Text primarily

aim to compensate for the losses I have accumulated as a translator and of which I am more or less aware, and to at least partly assuage my conscience as a translator. Only an ignorant man can be too harsh on a responsible translator of the *Qur'an*. Instead of excessively harsh criticism they should roll up their sleeves, sharpen their pens and compose their own translations. However, such critics will not venture such endlessly difficult and demanding work: they would rather remain "protected" with their strict posturing and ignorance.

When it comes to the translation or the transference of the *Qur'an* from the *Lawḥi-Maḥfūz*, there is no doubt that losses were also inevitable there, since the *Lawḥi-Maḥfūz* exists in divine perfection, whence it was transferred into natural human language, even though the Text has positioned itself in that language as supernatural. It would be quite exciting to embrace mentally the Absolute Original of the *al-Fātiḥa* – in the *Lawḥi-Maḥfūz*, in its absolute beauty. One should wonder: what kind of comparative study of that original and its translation into Arabic could be made? That question is actually more of a rhetorical nature, since it is no "ordinary" translation, but rather a transcendental one.

The *'i'jāz* of the Text of the *Qur'an* poses serious questions regarding its elliptical nature, or its permanent openness, not only in the realm of meanings and connotations, but also in terms of its stylistic and linguistic values. It is believed that the *'i'jāz* has always existed and always will. The natural question in that case is how a Text can be deemed linguistically and stylistically perfect – in that sense supernatural – in the 21st century, as in the 7th when it was revealed. A language does not remain stagnant, but rather develops, while the Text of the *Qur'an* has remained unchanged almost 15 centuries. The belief in its supernatural quality means that the *ijaz* is situated as a semiotic sign of extremely great energy and import. It positions itself as the soul of the Text that is, again, the semiosphere's pivotal Text. In a way, the *'i'jāz* ensures the vitality of the Text in time and gives it the energy with which the Text manages to preserve itself at the epicenter of the semiosphere. The conviction regarding the Text's supernatural quality implies that humans need to constantly discover the way in which the supernatural quality in language and style manifests and

proves itself for a 20th century recipient, for instance, although not just the language and the style have changed very much since the revelation of the Text, but also their "self-awareness", and the knowledge of them. And indeed – one cannot deny the fact that insightful linguistic and stylistic studies have always been written about this Text. This implies that the *'i'jāz* is an enormous energy center of the Text, since it keeps it vital and constantly at the center of attention. The *'i'jāz* not only captures believers' attention, to a degree of utter fascination, but also generates a series of texts on the sacral Text itself, by which I mean precisely texts dedicated to its linguistic-stylistic analysis. This Text, hence, produces a multitude of other texts, which is a typical semiotic activity accompanied by something characteristic of sacral texts in general, and for the Text of the *Qur'an* in particular. Namely, it is interesting that, as a kind of rule in semiotic processes, with time, and to a certain extent through quality, peripheral texts persistently "bombard" the central text. With time it becomes "sclerotic", it exhausts its energy capacities, gets pushed aside and its central position is taken over by peripheral texts, which are, in principle, pretentious, full of ambition and vitality. That principle vitalizes every great cultural space or semiosphere. In the case of the Text of the *Qur'an*, however, these processes do not occur quite in the same manner. The central Text produces a multitude of other texts that have no ambitions to push aside and replace it, but quite to the contrary their goal is to affirm the central Text, giving it, out of its "youth" and vitality, the energy that keeps it central and vital.[166] In this case, such is the merit of the *'i'jāz*. In fact, the multitude of texts generated by the central Text of the *Qur'an* (entire libraries of tafsir and theological literature in general) with time float toward the periphery, gradually losing their strength (extraordinarily valuable ones, of course, maintain part of it) and give way to new texts. Such a principle of operation of the semiosphere renders it somewhat static, as it will remain until the texts from the periphery have incomparably more self-confidence and authority to reinterpret than they do today. The Text, which has remained central throughout many centuries, claiming it was given for all times, can clearly maintain its vitality thanks to the

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[166] See: Lotman, *Semiosfera…*, p. 215.

reinterpretation of the values of the texts that appear around it and about it. A different understanding will inevitably lead into stagnation and sclerosis. The point of *'i'jāz* is that it reveals itself and its Text as such at all times in a way that is at the same time contemporary, while also maintaining the essence of the text and its values. It would be illogical and utterly retrograde that, in the domain of language, style, social aspects, as well as ideological wisdom, *'i'jāz* were today determined the same way and with identical values as in the 7th and 8th centuries, for instance. The *'i'jāz* is an imperative of contemporaneity, or rather it is an imperative *for* contemporaneity. Without such an understanding, it is not affirmed. In relation to this, it is possible to observe the puzzling fact that today the Islamic world is stagnating; it has been, in fact, for centuries, and brighter perspectives are still not in sight. The problem is that this semiosphere lacks the dynamism to rearrange and change it. The central Text has remained central, with a narrow understanding of its *'i'jāz* reduced to language and style, while the demand for modernity has been reduced to a humiliatingly servile consumption of western technology. To my knowledge, a dreadfully retrograde principle reigns in the entire Islamic world, according to which texts in this semiosphere are valued in accordance to how temporally close they are to the central Text and its origin. Throughout the Islamic world one can hear today from ḫaṭīb, wā'iẓ, as well as a great part of the so-called ulema, of how the supreme authorities in the various interpretations of the *Qur'an* and Islam in general, as a Text composed by a series of other texts, were the *'aṣḥāb* (Mohammed's companions, contemporaries) and the *tābi'ūn* – the generation that followed them. The value hierarchy is ordered precisely so: the closer the interpretation, that is, the interpreter-authority is to the prophet Muhammad, the more valuable it is. In discussions, the argumentation refers to interpretations of the *'aṣḥāb* and the *tābi'ūn* as the supreme and absolute authorities. This sounds incredible, but it is true. Any questioning of these authorities is judged as true blasphemy. This is a retrograde principle that hinders avant-garde texts from adequately affirming the soul of the *'i'jāz* for modernity and contemporaneity. It is quite puzzling how some ("regular") Muslims from the 7th century can be the absolute authority to 21st century Muslims, just because they were

close to the Prophet. This is an instance of a wrong and hence damaging sacralization of history. They can be authorities by only one criterion: precisely in how intensely and boldly they lived *their* age and how they were *its avant-garde;* only when modern Muslims take them as role models in that regard can they hope for the dawning of a new age. The *'i'jāz* is at the service of the sacralization of the Text – since it expresses the supernatural quality of the Text – but it positions itself as supernatural in its own age, and each age is responsible for discovering aspects of its assumed supernatural quality from its own perspective.

In the linguistic domain, two spheres "clash" in the Text – the divine and human. On one level, God's speech has been transferred to human language, and on the other there is only human natural language, in which communication occurs. Confronting those two levels is in itself very interesting semiotically, as it appears as a kind of special kind of communication and creates a special sort of semiotic space. The very fact that God speaks human language defamiliarizes both the speech and the language. The *Al-Fātiḥa* is very interesting in this regard.

In the *al-Fātiḥa* God addresses people using their own language, their own semiotic system, while at the same time suggesting His own system of signs to them. There is a strong interaction between the two sign systems, an interaction that represents the basis for the origin and activation of the *'i'jāz*. Let us take a look at what this looks like in the first ayah.

The statement *All praise is for Allah, cultivator of the worlds* constitutes human natural language. However, into that language, as a system of lexemes and their syntactic organization, signs are introduced from a special semiotic system. Allah is within our world, yet at the same time outside it; He is within our semiotic space and at the same time outside it. Also, we know this is a proper noun for God, and, as such, as a specific semiotic sign, it has entered our language. Yet one should bear in mind – in order to understand the semiosis – that in our language/languages there are also other gods, that is, other names for gods. This sign thus has multiple semiotic effects. On the one hand, its effect has been the creation of an enormous sacral space around it, an entire semiosphere we can in this case call Islam and Oriental-Islamic culture and civilization. At the same time,

that name has a semiotic effect on the widest possible space, whether in spreading Islam, or attempting to thwart its spreading, in Islam's polemics with other faiths, by creating new texts in the interreligious dialogue and even confrontation, etc. Therefore, in our language, this noun, as a semiotic sign from another semiosphere, is extraordinarily active and constitutes an obvious interaction of the two semiotic systems. The fact that we actually do not know all of the meanings or "content" covered by that noun and even less of this semiotic sign testifies to its power and uniqueness and that it originates from another semiotic system, which exerts enormous force over "our" semiosphere. Namely, we know only that this is a sign for God, who is, according to the Text, one and unique, but we essentially do not know everything about Him, nor even a greater part thereof: we do not know exactly what He is, what He is like. In primitive religions this was not a problem, because members of some religions saw their god/gods, even creating them with their own hands. Those gods were an inseparable part of the "human semiosphere", and did not stem from another sphere, especially not from a vertically hierarchical one. Flatness was a characteristic of that thinking. The fact that His Text itself says that he has 99 (beautiful) names says enough about how many connotations and meanings it hides at the same time. His name is actually one, and everything else are attributes that aim to present him, by which the number 99 should not be taken literally, but as a sign of plurality, or infinity. The whole Text explains Him, and yet, for the most part, he remains unknown to us.

Be that as it may, already in the first ayah of the *al-Fātiḥa* two semiotic spheres confront each other that I will illustrate with the noun and sign *Allah*. The confrontation has manifested itself through an explosive dynamic and achievements. A more detailed interpretation of the explosive effects of the introduction of this sign into the semiosphere would demand too much space. It suffices to remind that the sacral Text, whose author is precisely Allah, has caused fundamental changes in the Arabian society in which the Text first appeared, and that it then caused tremendous changes in the history of the world, and is today still very active in the ideological and political "profiling of the world". I would like to point out that great changes occur in the semiosphere when different semiotic systems meet,

as in this case with the confrontation arising from the sacral nature of the Vertical and the one-dimensional nature of a self-sufficient world. It is probably best to call this an explosion, by which I exclude the negative connotations of this word, only keeping the positive meaning, which entails a strong disruption and a thorough rearrangement of space.

In the given context, the use of the noun/sign *Allah* is a matter of selection. Namely, the text could have chosen another sign here, for instance the noun *God*, or any of his other 99 "names". The Text, however, decided precisely upon using this sign, since *God* is a common noun, even though it starts with a capital letter and as such does not specify the given sacral Text, or the given religion. In fact, by providing a series of attributes following the proper noun (*cultivator, the all-merciful, the graceful*) the insufficiency of any replacement is emphasized. Such a selection thus has two functions. On the one hand, *Allah* is absolutely the Text's strongest position and the pivotal sign of the entire semiotic space. That is the noun/sign through which the Text and semiotic system are identified and at the same time are differentiated from other religions and systems. The strong position of the noun/sign is additionally emphasized by the fact that it is situated at the very beginning of the first ayah of the first sura in the textual corpus. In other words, it marks the Text in its entirety, positioning itself as its main feature, which is noticed as such at the beginning of the reading of the Text, but also after the whole Text has been read. After the noun/sign has been thus marked and interpreted, it again becomes obvious that it is not recommended to substitute it with some other noun or attribute, since the use of another semiotic sign would reduce important content, rendering rich connotations elusive.

Selecting the sign *Allah* appears quite efficient in the domain of semiotic stylistics; in short, this sign is a semiotic styleme.

The other two words that build the phrase (*cultivator of the worlds*), in a way similar to the word *Allah*, operate in two semiotic systems: within our language and in a system outside our language and experience in general. From a linguistic stylistics perspective, the sign *cultivator* is used figuratively. However, here the meanings of this sign are not fully known, as the way the manners and levels in which "worlds are cultivated" are

unknown. The word *worlds* also appears to be of stylistic value in the given phrase, and, as a sign, in the domain of semiotics, it also denotes content that is for the most part unknown. The sign partly belongs to a semiotic system within the human domain, but, at the same time and to an even greater degree, it belongs to a semiotic system generally outside of human experience. Throughout the ages and with the advancement of science, increasingly more has become known about other worlds and their ways of existence ("cultivation"), which means that our relationship toward the meanings of those signifiers changes with time. (This is also a special aspect of the manifestation of the Text's superiority, the manifestation of its *'i'jāz* in the domain of content.) Choosing the sign *worlds* is very effective: with it, the meaning of the previous signifiers is emphasized already in the first paragraph of the sura. It can be interpreted thus:

Allah as the only God, with all this implies and what is His due, is a *cultivator* (= provider and a guardian) *of worlds*, hence, of absolutely everything, and that befits Him only. Precisely this should confound one and take their breath away, and make them understand why it is necessary to worship Him because of that; because of the aforementioned, gratitude is due to him.

The meaning of the ayah/paragraph is quite rich, although this paragraph is merely a shorter part of the sentence, though an independent thematic-rhythmical unit. Also, the laconism of the paragraph has been so optimized that it has almost been reduced to a code. In order to simply present the laconism of this statement with its enormous connotative potentials, and at the same time point out a quite effective selection of signs, I could present them almost schematically: Allah = cultivator = worlds = expression of gratitude.

The previous analysis demonstrates how the entire first ayah/paragraph – and this is merely an example for the other ayat – is exquisitely ordered in the domain of semiotic stylistics. Each sign has been carefully selected and contains a multitude of connotations. However, their full stylistic functionality manifests itself in syntactics, in the mutual relationship of the stylemes of the entire paragraph, which is so organized that each change in the domain of the "semiotic lexis" (to use an analogy) has tremendous consequences for the whole paragraph. The semiosis is quite dispersed

and intensive; also, it is not a stylistically neutral process, since the entire paragraph is pregnant with stylistic potential. When a Text – which rearranges the world the way this one does – starts with the verse *All praise is for Allah, cultivator of the worlds*, then this is indeed an impressive, quite complex semiotic styleme, which I have briefly interpreted. It stands at the beginning of the Text (with all of the stylemes that comprise it); precisely with this statement the Text claims to be standing at the beginning of the world, and we know from history that it stands at the beginning of an oriental-Islamic culture and civilization as a very active system in the global semiosphere, to resort to an Arabist corroborative. The word/sign (expressing) *gratitude* is always the end result of the process. This is not about other content, such as *entreaty*, *prayer*, *crying for help*, *devotion*, but precisely *expression of gratitude* as the greatest possible act of acknowledgment, which at the same time (and this seems to me quite important in the God – man relationship, the way it is established by this Text) contains to a great degree a feeling of dignity of man and the worlds that express gratitude. I believe it is no accident that the expression *Thanks be to Allah* is an extremely common saying in the oriental-Islamic world in general, being encountered at every opportunity: from birth and the greatest human joys to death or suffering. To be more precise: thanking Allah is the most frequent expression in the whole Islamic word, and not just the oriental-Islamic one; it is the dominant speech act to express gratitude. It cannot be replaced either by a plea or curse, invocation or damnation. A Muslim will always say: *Thanks be to Allah for everything.* This statement, whose meaning and semiosis I am now presenting, is often oversimplified and misinterpreted as utterly passive "Islamic fatalism". Fatalism is uncharacteristic of Islam; on the contrary, even the *al-Fātiḥa*/sentence itself is entirely about resisting fatalism and "combativeness", zeal in ardently reaching for goods, and even for the ascent up the vertical path as the most expressive sign of a hearty battle for God's blessings. Hence not even the statement *Thanks be to Allah* is fatalist at all, since fatalism, much like indifference and passive resignation to "fate", is fundamentally un-Islamic. *Thanks be to Allah* comes at the beginning and end of everything. Spoken after a negative outcome, it was preceded

by an activity, after which the statement comes as acceptance of God's inevitability, when nothing more can be done. The Text strongly promotes the institutions of *Jihad* and *Ijtihad* as fundamental Islamic institutions, both of which are essentially opposed to fatalism.

Let us then take a look at how the statement *Thanks be to Allah*, as the first two words in the *al-Fātiḥa* at the beginning of the *al-Muṣḥaf*, is semiotically quite active.

In the discussion so far I have interpreted the position of the statement *Thanks be to Allah* with regard to the semiotics of the textual space and the stylistics of the sura, and its stylistic position in relation to the integral Text, since the *al-Fātiḥa* is a representative of that Text. However, I have just demonstrated that the expression *Thanks to be Allah* has become very frequent, which means that the first words of the *al-Fātiḥa* have "moved" from the sacral to a different kind of text, without forgetting its "origins" and fitting into a context that is new, but not different. From the Text of the *al-Fātiḥa,* the statement *Thanks be to Allah* has been transferred to everyday life, where it operates like a semiotic sign with which, quite often, satisfaction or generally acceptance of a state is expressed, rather than profound religious feelings and convictions, as when it is spoken in the integral Text of the *al-Fātiḥa*. It is not equally sacral in the two positions. Therefore, when the expression is used in everyday life, its fundamental meaning and function proportionally depart from the original meaning that it performs in the Text of the *Qur'an*. This causes a certain shift of its semiotic function: it still remains a semiotic sign, but what it denotes is not precisely of the same quality, since the signifier also operates in a context that has been somewhat changed. The distancing from its basic meaning – better to say, from its basic function – manifests itself as a temporary suppression of the act of intense devotion, although it is not completely abandoned. Not infrequently this statement is uttered quite mechanically, which, in terms of semiosis, is extreme and not the topic of my current interest. The statement gradually advances to the level of custom, even folklore and, as a semiotic sign, gains new content. In that sense it becomes a sign of identification, since it is never pronounced – in Bosnia, for instance – by a member of a different faith or a non-Muslim

tradition.[167] It is spoken by inheritors of the Muslim tradition, which means that, as a semiotic sign, in the widest sense, it operates on a societal level and not just in the domain of intimate religious feelings. This goes so far as

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[167] In the Arabic world, the expression/sign *al-Ḥamdu lillāh* is also used by non-Muslims. Christians in the Arabic world use the noun *Allah* as the common noun *god*, so that sometimes they give personal names-compounds a part of which is the proper noun *Allah* (*Naṣrullāh* etc.). In that context it is important to say that before the revelation of the *Qur'an* – this has been noted in different sources – Arabians were familiar with the noun *Allah* as it was used by Christians and Jews before the prophet Mohammad a. s. They used this noun to refer to their biblical God, while the pagan Arabians used the same noun to refer to other gods. From the point of view of the Revelation, this fact is not puzzling at all; on the contrary, the use of the noun *Allah* even before the revelation of the *Qur'an* testifies precisely to what the *Qur'an* insists on – that Islam as a faith has existed forever but has been deformed with time, and that the *Qur'an* is just the final confirmation of the authenticity of previous revelations. With the revelation of the *Qur'an*, however, the noun *Allah* emerged as a noun with which Islam differentiates itself from other religions, as well as from Christian and Jewish beliefs. However, the fact that even today non-Muslims in the *Arabic speaking world* (it is never used the same way by Christians and Jews *outside* of it) use the noun *Allah* in different phrases and proper nouns constitutes incredible semiosis. Such a use of the proper noun *Allah*, with which Islam essentially and resolutely differentiates itself from other religions, in the meaning of the common noun *god*, has a twofold effect: in the domain of religion, it is conflicting when a Christian uses this noun or the entire statement, since – even if unaware and due to some uncontrollable influences – that noun, used to differentiate between religions, is introduced into their own, essentially different religious context. In the cultural-civilization milieu in general, the use of this sign in the language of Arabic Christians is fully complementary and comprehensible, since Arabic Christians find themselves in the Muslim linguistic and cultural sea and are exposed to the great influences of Islam in general, and so use it to significantly harmonize themselves with an environment that simply cannot be resisted. Sociolinguistics is also at play here. In Europe it is unthinkable for a Christian to say: *al-Ḥamdu lillāh*, not just since their linguistic environment is not Arabic, but also because their general cultural environment is completely different and historically quite often opposed to the Islamic one. How big the forces of the context are, the sociocultural and even linguistic environment, manifests itself in the fact that Arabian Christians – if things were to be observed through a more narrow focus – by using the sign *al-Ḥamdu lillāh* inadvertently and frequently pronounce the first words of the *Qur'an*. That is a fact that can only have religious implications in malicious interpretations, namely that Christians do not accept the Islamic God through this, but rather a semiotic sign that has transformed itself so much that it simply means: *Thank God*.

to sometimes reduce its value to that of a saying, ridding it of its primary meanings.

An even better example for this is the expression *inshallah*, also from the Text of the *Qur'an*. It has become a signifier, primarily, for the hope in God's (good) will and that, with this will, something will happen; at the same time, the statement expresses the determination of the subject to do everything on their part for this intention to come true, with the rest up to God, so that ultimately the statement expresses a great likelihood that something will be realized. However, Muslims have practically so often and so radically deviated from the basic meaning of this signifier that, in some environments, it has turned into its opposite, which is, from the viewpoint of semiotics, quite interesting, since a sign – primarily from the Text of the *Qur'an* – has in everyday language acquired its opposite meaning. Therefore this sign can be heard among Muslims in general (apparently, among some in particular), when planning something, in the desire of fulfilling some intention etc., used in precisely the opposite meaning: *Nothing will come out of it!*

However, there is another interesting issue here. The content of the sign has been changed in terms of the human rather than the divine will: the sovereignty and achievability of God's will is not thus annulled or thwarted, but human will is in conflict with divine will, that is, with the content of the sign expressed originally in His Text. The tension between the two contents is dramatic, since they are utterly conflicting, meaning: *Regardless of God's will, nothing will come out of it,* which is blasphemous.[168]

The two aforementioned signs are convenient examples of the complexity of the semiosis. A sacral Text – in this case a part of the *al-Fātiḥa* – has been transferred as a sign into everyday life as a special kind of Text and has made a strong impact even on natural language, imbuing the noun *Allah* with additional meanings (as if in the Arabic-Islamic environment it is taken for granted that Allah Is the One Who is God). This kind of

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[168] Of course, this statement is not always and everywhere used precisely this way, since there are many people who preserve its sacral dignity and authentic content, but the use of the sign in the meaning I have presented is, after all, quite frequent.

transference of a sign into a new space enriches the semiosis, since, due to the sign's activity, different texts meet and the semiotic space expands. In fact, in the stated example two semiotic spaces meet: one is the space of the sacral Text, and the other the socio-cultural environment in which the initial content of the sign changes twice: its meaning in the Muslim world shifts, while also continuing to move in that cultural universe in general, since some of its meanings are also accepted by people who do not acknowledge the divine origin of the Text of the *Qur'an*.

In this case one can speak of the encounter between the center and the periphery: the effect of the signs from the central Islamic culture and tradition onto a system that is peripheral in that sphere. The results of such encounters are always interesting and fruitful, since dynamism in the culture occurs, its important content shifts and space is reorganized. That dynamism is in itself interesting. At the same time, the aforementioned example once again testifies to the sacral text's constant desire to expand and create its own semiosphere. That is its basic trait. The encounter of the center and the periphery, or simply the encounter of two semiotic systems, produces the irresistible charm of novelty and mostly initiates more or less seriously a move forward. The entire history of culture testifies to that. For instance, here is an outline: the Arabians accepted the Text of the *Qur'an,* and, thanks to this, radically changed themselves and the world around them. The encounter with the Sasanian culture led to the brilliant Abbasid cultural period, which in its day was the most important on the planet and had a significant influence on the perspective of the world. The Arabic-Islamic discovery of ancient Greek culture had a fateful import for the existence of that culture, but also for the emergence of European humanism and the renaissance as foundations of modern western culture. Today we witness, by all accounts, that the best literary works are not created in Europe or America, but by authors who enter the central culture from the periphery.

The history of world culture includes the sacral Text, whose conquest started in Saudi Arabia in the seventh century. It was revealed in a natural language and then created a multitude of other languages, primarily artificial ones, which have always remained in its orbit in a way, or in its

semiosphere. The communication between different languages in a single cultural space (and I do not mean here just natural languages, but also artificial ones) is desirable since it is fruitful. The *Al-Fātiḥa*, together with all of the other models, also provides a model for communication between different languages (divine and human). I have already addressed the fact that these are not originally the same languages and are not on the same level. Now some other important aspects of that communication need to be shown.

We recite the al-Fātiḥa *as if it were our own words, although they are God's*

The specificity of the language of the *al-Fātiḥa* manifests itself, among other things, in the fact that God speaks a language that is at the same time His and ours. Inasmuch as that language is His, it is not entirely ours, since the previous analysis has shown that those languages are not of the same order and that in the Text's signs, whose author is Allah, remains much content that man cannot fathom. This means that communication has been somewhat limited; the openness of the Text is not complete, since the *connotative tension* of the signs remains permanent, almost endless. Man, as participant in communication, as an audience that the Text addresses, is probably never fully going to discover all the meanings of the phrase/sign *cultivator of the worlds*, or *Allah:* this remains beyond the boundaries of human cognizance. Consequently, the conclusion follows that the semiosis of the sacral Text is endless, since the one interpreting it necessarily leaves his interpretation permanently open and always active. The text is aware of that position, which is even explicitly stated with the words *Mankind has not been given knowledge except a little*.[169] However, such a relationship does not bother any of the participants in the communication because they are fully aware of their mutual hierarchical relationship, one of quite steep subordination and that I have presented numerous times as the vertical of

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[169] *Qur'an*, 17:85.

the sacral Text. In a number of places, where the Text elaborates certain things, when it refers to something, when it uses certain signs, etc., it states *Allah knows best*. Therefore, the Text does not aim at all to use its signs so that their meanings will be fully comprehensible to man. It often demands thinking, understanding, rationality, while at the same time emphasizing their shortcomings in relation to the Text's semiotic system. In an artistic text, as valuable as it may be, such a thing would not be possible. Although highly valued artistic texts can also be elliptical, with open meanings, that trait is pronounced to an incomparably lesser degree than in the sacral Text and not as explicitly. We cannot imagine an artistic text that would so persistently tell his reader that he knows very little, that only a small fraction of meaning is available to him. That would inevitably be a disparaging, repulsive attitude on behalf of an artistic text that the audience could not justify. The big difference between the sacral and profane artistic texts comes from the aforementioned fact regarding the interlocution between the reader and the artistic text, while the sacral Text situates itself as the *Revelation*, with which the authority of the Text, its hierarchical position and relationship with the audience, is quite differently determined. The revelation always entails the existence of a vertical. The sacral Text and its audience are always at peace with its position and always remain fully, perhaps too dignified, since the audience (whether it is about an individual/ believer or the community/ummah) is always made happy with this type of communication. Ultimately, this means that the aforementioned positioning of the Text and audience is a *condition* for communication and its essential specifying factor. A hypothetical shift in positions entails a termination of the "vertical channel of communication", which would thwart communication of this sort.

It is therefore obvious that in the sacral Text, at whose front is the *al-Fātiḥa*, signs have different meanings and are used differently by the Author and the audience. That difference causes a special type of tension, which regulates the dynamics of the Text. The audience is aware that the Text intentionally places signs so that their meanings are not fully available to it. Besides, the very fact that there are different levels of meaning carried by the signifier in the Text makes it dynamic in many aspects, and not just

through the feeling of exaltation among the audience – paradoxically – but through a kind of epistemological inferiority that the audience – indeed, only seemingly paradoxically – accepts as an *argument* for faith and incentive for delight. The aesthetic function of the Text is made dynamic due to the great tension between its content and form, while its stylistic dimension in the domain of semiotics and linguistics becomes dynamic. I have paid special attention to interpreting the former; the reception of the Text on an ideological level, precisely due to these different levels of meaning, is literally in a state of permanent upheaval and positive argumentation. The sign systems engage in constant interaction, without a perspective of its ever ending. Understandably, the semiosis is also quite dynamic, as always, and also without a perspective that it could ever be interpretatively exhausted.

Bearing in mind the aforementioned, it is no wonder that sacral texts are so active ideologically, aesthetically, stylistically and semiotically even after a thousand or two thousand years. The Text of the *Qur'an*, aside from the aforementioned, is also quite lively in another domain, unlike other sacral texts. This is in its relationship toward natural language. Namely, if we were not ourselves historical witnesses of this fact, it would seem incredible. It is miraculous that after fifteen centuries the Arabic literary standard is preserved precisely by the Text of the *Qur'an*, particularly in a world where centrifugal forces are so strong that same world is torn apart in its entirety in a number of fundamentally important aspects. The only thing that keeps the Arabic world in some kind of unity is its common literary language, which is the language of the revealed Text.

In the *al-Fātiḥa* God simultaneously speaks His and our language. In fact, He speaks our natural language, but uses His sign system. At the same time, He uses an interesting rhetorical technique, which, yet again, complicates the semiosis greatly, giving a special status to signs in the system of this Text. Why is this rhetorical technique special?

Millions of believers accept that the *al-Fātiḥa* is God's speech, His work, His Text. This is undeniable and quite important for further analysis. Namely, if we carefully examine this Text, we will notice that it is structured so that we pronounce it as our own words, our own speech: *Praise is due to*

Allah, cultivator of the worlds, / The all-merciful and graceful, / The ruler of the Day of Faith – / It is you we worship and You we ask help from: / Guide us toward the Upright Path, etc.

The Text strongly suggests, or even imposes that we pronounce these as our own words and not someone else's. Nowhere does it say that we should pronounce that Text as if it were our own, for it is, in fact, God's. For instance, the Text could have been preceded by an imperative, a recommendation, etc., such as: *Say; You should utter,* etc. I believe that a great part of the audience, perhaps its greatest part, is unaware of this exquisite double position: people pronounce the Text with the awareness that it is God's Text, although He has structured it so as to appear to us as ours. He suggests to us what we should say. This is how the entire sura is an exquisite figure of speech. Logic also clearly indicates these are the "reader's" words: God does not need to thank himself as the *cultivator of the worlds, / the all-merciful and graceful / the Owner of the Day of Faith;* those are undoubtedly words that a believer should utter about God. The fourth ayah (stylistically the crucial verse in the entire sura/ sentence) clearly indicates that we pronounce the Text as our own, since finite verb forms and personal pronouns are suddenly introduced into the Text: *We worship you* and *You we ask help from*. This personalization in the Text comes with a certain delay, only as the fourth verse, although it could have been expected, as I have said, that at the beginning of the Text it is undoubtedly clear who the author and who the audience is. The personalization of the sentence is twofold, maximally intensified – as if a kind of redemption were wanted for the preceding vagueness: twice a doubly emphasized personal pronoun is used – both times in its longer form (*'Iyyāka*) and both times in an anteposition, the object is placed before its verb.[170] This delay of personalization followed by its persistent emphasis appears to be of significant stylistic value in this Text. It would appear so in any Text, but here it appears to be all the more so, since this is a Text containing extremely different levels whose difference is here ostensibly neutralized, for one level (God's) is presented with

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[170] If the Text had insisted on the emphasis, it would be stated in the Text: *na'buduka* (we adore You), instead of *'Iyyāka na'bud* (You we adore).

another level (human). The following, fifth verse (*Guide us to the Upright Path*) in fact maintains the personalization started only at the middle of the Text. Personalization devices seem never to end. Namely, the fourth verse introduces dialogue into the Text, direct speech, which appears quite defamilarizing, as a rhetorical shift.[171] The dialogical structuring of the Text strongly emphasizes its intention to present itself as if though the Text were our speech, although this both is and is not the case. This is not our speech since we know, after all, that God is its author, but it is our speech in the sense that we accept for it to be ours as well because this has been suggested to us. In fact, this has been ordered of us.

From the point of view of semiosis and in the domain of semiotic stylistics, the situation is extraordinary. The field of interpretation stretches indefinitely. The stylistic value of the signs increases enormously due to the fact that the very same signs in natural language (the lexemes and the phrases) operate as semiotic signs simultaneously on two levels, and the arch of their distance has already been discussed enough here. Tremendous energy is manifested in that arch and great tension created, so that, thanks to this, the semiotic stylistic value of the *al-Fātiḥa* is extraordinarily vast. It bears mentioning that linguistic stylistic value cooperates with it splendidly, which has already been addressed in other parts of this book dedicated to the stylistic interpretation of the *al-Fātiḥa*. One should also bear in mind the fact that this sura – let us recall – is but a single sentence of modest length, structured in seven rhythmic theatrical units bursting with meanings. A conclusion imposes itself based on this, which might appear biased to someone with a priori reservations toward the values of this sacral Text. Namely, the syntactical length of the sura/sentence is quite disproportionate to the tremendously large potential it clearly has in the domain of ideology, linguistic stylistics, semiostylistics and semiotics in general. Hence it is no wonder that it is a common place of the semiotic space of the sacral Text. A more advanced stage of research shows how the researcher's inclination toward this sura does not come *a priori*, but precisely *a posteriori*. At this point an ayah comes to mind: *Say: "If the sea were ink for the words of my Lord, the sea would have surely been*

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[171] For more on this see the chapter titled *Rhetorical shift*.

exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even if We brought
the like of it as a supplement.''[172]

Rhetorical-stylistic technique for expressing closeness

By presenting the Text of the *al-Fātiḥa* as if it were our speech,
although these are primarily God's words He wants to hear from us, an
important effect is achieved. Namely, rhetorical-stylistic means are used
to bring closer something that is at the same time close and quite distant.
God and man are in many ways, and even fundamentally, endlessly distant
from each other, being in every way different. At the same time, they are
quite close given man's awareness that he depends on God and given
that God wants – in His special way – for man to come close to Him,
so He rewards him for this approach. The *Qur'an* explicitly states this
at certain points. However, the entire *al-Fātiḥa* constitutes a process of
coming closer, though not explicitly, but through a rhetorical procedure.
With the utmost discretion, without being explicit and quite deftly, God
puts His own words into man's mouth, which are, according to Him, the
most appropriate for strengthening and expressing their relationship. This
has been done so skillfully that the reader is most often not even aware
of the Text's double position. Can two things that are endlessly distant be
brought any closer?

This coming closer occurs spatially, ideologically and emotionally.
The *Al-Fātiḥa* generally provides a spatial model, as I have already stated;
that it, in fact, provides a model for the Universe. However, it provides
a spatial model by establishing relations between God and man, and a
relation is a spatial category. God is spatially close and far from man;
He is within the world and man, but at the same time, outside them. The
Al-Fātiḥa expresses this positioning with extraordinary success, nearly
faithfully copying it, as I have already determined how its Text is divine
– which means it is otherworldly – while man pronounces it every day as

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[172] *Qur'an*, 18:109.

his own Text, which indicates the utmost intimacy. The ideological coming closer is, on the other hand, realized by the Text's lack of ambiguity when it comes to the (ideological) relationship between God and man. Although an entire sura testifies to this, it is enough to refer to the fourth and fith ayat (*It is you we worship and You we ask for help - / Guide us to the upright Path*) in order to see the nature of man's position in relation to God. When it comes to coming closer emotionally, the sura carries an emphasis of sorts derived from man's awareness of how fatefully important his surrender to God is – as an act of utter and permanent deliverance.

Let us try to imagine if this Text began with (God's) words: *When you speak to Me, you need to utter the following words,* or simply: *Say*, followed by the (present) Text of the *al-Fātiḥa*. This would annul the aforementioned effects of the Text, since the boundary – which in the current Text is fluid and utterly discrete – would be quite strongly drawn.

A boundary expressed with the pronouns we and *them*

Unlike the discrete boundary between God and man, another kind of boundary stands out in the Text, and since boundaries are generally characteristic of space, this other case also testifies to how the sura should, in fact, be interpreted from the perspective of spatial semiotics. Namely, the boundary in this semiotic space is determined with the personal pronouns *us* and *them*. In the fourth and fifth ayah the first person is emphasized: *we worship*, *we ask for help; Guide us to the upright Path.* The middle part of the sura is, hence, *dedicated* to the first person, though we should bear in mind that the first person plural was used, and not the singular. Though this may seem a digression – since I will go back to the boundary confirmed by the Text with the pronouns *we* and *they* – it is useful here to point out the context and the effects of the use of the plural, rather than the first person singular, since this is a stylistically strongly marked Text.

The Text is read/uttered by an individual, with their arms outstretched or in another position. Hence, one should expect that the Text states: *It*

is You I worship and You I ask for help - / Guide me to the upright Path. Why would an individual use for himself a plural pronoun? The fact that the Text of the *Qur'an* is never uttered/recited by a group, or chorally, speaks in favor of this. Even in mosques, before a multitude of people, it is always one voice that recites the Text, as is the case at prayer time. Such an important fact cannot be overlooked, and one of its numerous implications is the fact that there is no clergy in Islam and the absolute affirmation of the subject is the act of faith. Hence, a careful reader should ask themselves why the Text uses a first person plural verb instead of the expected singular, although it is necessarily uttered by an individual. This can be accounted for by the following reasons, which to me at this point seem comprehensible.

The stylistic effect is clearly considerable, achieved by the use of the unexpected plural: such a use simply startles a careful reader, especially given the fact that this plural appears twice in a very short ayah. The stylistic defamiliarization is effective here as well, although the sura as a whole has very high stylistic potential. On the other hand, the stylistic effect is extraordinary precisely in the domain of semiotics: by reciting the Text, an *individual* strongly *communicates togetherness*. The Text affirms individual belief – including ritual individual recitation of the Text – but it does demand, naturally, that the community-ummah be affirmed for it to extend to the entirety of humankind. In light of this, the individual is tasked with always implying togetherness in a stylistically effective manner with the act of individual recitation of the Text: by uttering the Text of the sura individually, they utter it on behalf of all their co-religionists. The semiosis is extraordinary. The spatial semiotics in the "shifting apart" is constantly active. In other words, the Text is positioned as the Text of an individual, while at the same time being the audience's Text; it is deeply in one – as the deepest and most active part of their intimate sphere – while also extending to all others, in the same depths of their beings; it positions itself as an individual's utterly active intimate sphere, but also as that of a collective. The duality of the position of this Text is once again at work, though in the background. The semiotic aspect of duality becomes obvious and of extraordinary stylistic value, since one sign also communicates

"something else": my speech act includes a vast community/ummah who accept the Text as its speech act; with it, each speaker of the Text encompasses/includes all other speakers individually, all members of the same community, which, *in this case*, is not only religious, but also markedly an "aesthetic community". But that is not all. While we still bear in mind the just described circumstances of Text-individual-audience, let us remind ourselves of the previous discussion of how the Text, at the same time, constitutes divine and human speech. This is the culmination of the intensity of the creation of networks or relations in the most comprehensive sense of the word.

An additional reason for the defamiliarizing effect of the use of the *first person plural* is in the fact that further on in the Text – with equal frequency and rhythm – *the third person plural is used*, but now in the form of personal pronouns, rather than finite verb forms, for the sake of the balancing and gradual distribution of morphological and grammatical categories. Through this, semantic and semiotic *symmetry* is achieved, which is even more noticeable given that the Text is quite short. In fact, it is about a couple, or a binary opposition: *we – they*. The symmetry is achieved on the level of grammar (plural – plural), and opposition on the level of grammatical person (we – they). However, the Text makes an effort to achieve optimal harmonization and rhythm in both cases. These microstructures clearly greatly contribute to that. Precisely here I can return to the lines that in the text, that is, the textual space, are determined by the persons *we* and *they*.

Since I have said numerous times that the *al-Fātiḥa* provides a spatial model, the use of these binary opposite personal pronouns still provides a model for that semiotic space. On the one side stand *we* (*we* worship; *we* ask for help; guide *us*), and on the other side are *they* (*they* deserve wrath; *they* wander astray). Granted, the personal pronoun *they* is used once in the Text also for persons who are not on the other side of the space (*The path of those upon whom you have bestowed blessings*), but with the affirmative context it has been kept on the side where *we* usually stand, since that ayah occurs as an apposition of sorts to the optimally positive previous ayah:

Guide us to the upright Path / The path of those upon whom you have bestowed blessings.

The space is very strictly divided by persons; the boundaries between them are absolutely insurmountable. The following would be the simple interpretation: We worship and we ask for help; we are asking you to guide us toward the upright Path since that is the path of *those among us* you have, as such, blessed, so we hope to receive that positive outcome; do not lead us to the path of *those among them* who have caused (Your) wrath, nor along the "path" of *those over there* who are, in fact wandering astray. The entire semiotic sphere of this sacral Text has been divided by lines established by personal pronouns to *these here* and *those there*, *us* and *them*. The contrast is full: we are positive, they are negative; ours is good, theirs is bad; blessings are for us, wrath is for them, etc. This kind of division is, in fact, a division of the semiotic ethical space, but the division will also be realized – in its ultimate consequences and according to the Text's explications –literally, since *we* are going to *Jannah* and *they* are going to *Jahannam*; the ethical differentiation leads to an actual one. The positivity of the first person has been affirmed with dialogue as an exquisite textual privilege. Namely, *we* directly address God, and to *them* this privilege is *denied*; due to *our* dialogical position, *we* are quite close to God (we address Him as if he were listening to us), and *they* are deep in the third person pronouns, sunk into silence, deprived of the ethereal dialogue. Finally, *their* wandering astray in space has been presented as utterly negative, and *our* ascent up the *upright Path* should be luminous.

The vertical path to Virtue

The *Al-Fātiḥa* is a Text of space. Movement, even travel, is inherent in space. *Worlds* are at the top of the sura as a signifier of endless space. The second ayah (*the all-merciful* and *graceful*) appears to be only an attribute of the first ayah and neutral when it comes to marking the space, which is not the case.

The use of two attributes (*the all-merciful and the graceful*) with the phrase *cultivator of the worlds,* implies a space since it denotes relations: grace is expressed/manifested by someone toward someone, from a subject to an object that exist and (inter)act in a given space. The first attribute, *the all-merciful*, is even transparently a spatial signifier; hence the gradation of the two juxtaposed attributes is neither accidental nor random. In that sense, the following needs to be pointed out.

The attribute *all-merciful* is often adjacent to the previous phrase *cultivator of the worlds*, juxtaposed to it without any orthographic or grammatical means for coordination or subordination. Since this adjective is attributively tied to the noun *worlds*, grace is expressed toward an undefined number of worlds. This is only possible for God, so this adjective is used in Arabic next to His proper name only. The semantic cooperation of the two words is extraordinary; instead of an extensive description, very complex content is expressed in only two words (that is, in three words, if one were to insist on breaking down the phrase *cultivator of the worlds*). However, more than the semantic-syntactic relationship of these words, I am currently interested in their semiotic aspect, in order to explain my statement on the *al-Fātiḥa* being a spatial Text. As I have stated, a spatial meaning is immanent to the word *all-merciful*, since it expresses relations – which I can here treat as a sign in accordance with semiotic terminology – so it is to a much greater degree and nearly obviously connected to space, even worlds. Establishing relations as a spatial category is pronounced.

The third ayah (*Ruler of the Day of Faith*) portrays space in a special meaning, but no less than the previous ayat. To be the *ruler/owner* (malik) of something is possible only in space. The stylistic value of this word is great and appropriate to the Text's general stylistic value. The sign *malik* here even functions as a semiotic trope. Namely, owning/ruling in space is possible in relation to something material in the strict sense: land, slaves, material values in general. In this Text, however, Day, Time (the so-called Day of Judgment) are ruled over. The figurative transfer is enormous and hence this is a semiotic trope. The category of space is specially emphasized in this ayah, since the act of *ruling over the Day of Faith* will occur *far away from* this world, but in relation to it. Even if it disappeared (which

again denotes space), it will occur in some eschatological space emphasized as such precisely due to its being defamiliarized, incomprehensible. The entire third ayah is thus quite striking in the domains of both linguistic and semiotic stylistics.[173]

The fourth ayah (*It is You we worship and You we ask for help*) expresses human existence in time and space: the entire human existence *in* this world – this is the opinion of the Text – should be dedicated to worshipping Allah. This space is limited by the duration of human life, or this world. In any case, time and space present in that time are limited through human existence. On the other hand, the "phenomenon" of establishing relations that characterizes the sura and represents the category of space once again stands out. Namely, worshipping God – as the fourth ayah says – expresses a relation between them, which we have already discussed as a simultaneous coming closer and growing apart. Finally, relations are particularly strongly emphasized/stand out in relation to the previous ayah, which speaks of the *Day of Faith*. This is an eschatological space in which Faith shall triumph. On the other side stands this world as the second space.

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[173] The phrase *Day of Faith* is regularly translated into Bosnian as *Day of Judgment*. This translation is inadequate and, as an interpretation, quite clumsy. *Day of Judgment* is a statement according to man's measure and experience – it is pronouncedly, and in this case unjustifiably, anthropomorphous. Man has established courts and the judiciary, so that the aforementioned translation is a projection of a human practice onto something that may or may not have judiciary character. Simply, in the *al-Fātiḥa* this is not the *Day of Judgment*. The phrase *Day of Faith* contains much more positivity than the *Day of Judgment*, which is appropriate to God who in the previous two ayat was persistently presented as merciful: He is the cultivator, the all-merciful, graceful, praiseworthy. Hence the phrase *Day of the Faith* exquisitely cooperates, in a positive aspect, with the textual environment. Moreover, the reader should try to imagine how much positivity each of these words contains in itself; day is generally a synonym for the greatest good one can have since it has connotations of life, the light of life, life-giving activity necessary for humans, etc. What can be said about faith? From the viewpoint of the Text, it is man's greatest good, if such gradation is even possible; it is the Absolute Good. There are barely any other words in language with so many positive meanings, especially joined in the triumphant phrase *Day of Faith*. The translation *Day of Judgment* neutralizes the positivity of the original, even transforming it into its opposite. The translation *Day of Judgment* thwarts not only the indicated positive connotations but also stylistic potential, and the sign's semiotic stylistic value is neutralized.

Those two spaces share a textual boundary (being adjacent to one another in the Text), in the third and *fourth* ayat, and in religious reality they follow each other. That encounter of sorts at the boundary of two vast spaces, two worlds, creates a tension equal to what is usually entailed by *the Day of Judgment*. Many consider that great energy negative, cataclysmic, while others see it as triumphant. In any case, a vast space is opened in the Text of the sura, and in a number of directions and meanings. Namely, it was necessary for me to point out several times in different contexts that this sura provides a model for the Universe in which a vertical hierarchy reigns. A textual space of the Universe is hence represented, the space of this world. However, in the ultimate consequences I have hinted at with the interpretation of the third and fourth ayah, in a very short Text of the sura, the comprehension of the space in an enormous scale has been expressed through the border relations between the two worlds, of which the third and fourth ayah speak.

Movement is immanent to space. In the textual space of the *al-Fātiḥa* movement is quite intensive. Since the first four ayat have marked a huge textual space, the rest of the Text, starting with the fifth ayah, introduces notions of movement that dynamize the entire semiotic space. In fact, the whole space is open for a *journey* that is done in different ways, so that it can be said that the textual space of the *al-Fātiḥa* is a *travel* environment of sorts, which corresponds to the belief that this world is a *transitional* stage, that one passes through it very quickly and that one *moves* to a different space to the other world. Hence, speaking of the deceased, Muslims use the verb passed much more often. The verb to pass clearly and strongly expresses space and its dynamization through *movement* and emphasizes the permanent boundlessness of space as an essential part of faith, while the verb *died* conveys an ultimate restrictedness of space and absolute, permanent passivity. The *Al-Fātiḥa* is in that regard impressively open: as a religious Text it implicitly promises moving to a different space (in that regard it is also possible to interpret the word *worlds* from the first ayah), but its textual space is also very ethereal and immensely spacious. In line with the basic theme of journeys and moving, in the fifth ayah the *al-Fātiḥa* introduces the notion of the path, that is, journey, emphasizing it

so much that the entire ayah contains only that notion emphasized through the grammatical device of the corroborative. Since that ayah directly introduces the notion of the journey in the textual space, it is extremely interesting from the viewpoint of semiotics.

The imperative *'Ihdinā* means: *Guide us to the upright path*. This is the full semantic scope of that verb. However, it is followed by the phrase *the right path*, so that the translation should be: *Guide us rightly to the upright path* (or: along the *upright path*). This translation could appear like a pleonasm, or a stylistic error because of the first word *pravouputi,* which translators replace with the verb *guide*. However, the translation *Guide us rightly along the upright path* is not a stylistic mistake, but rather a stylistic marking, a means to enhance the stylistic value of the statement. One should differentiate between corroboratives and pleonasms. In Arabic, corroboratives are much more commonly used than in Bosnian, and those in Arabic are of stylistic value, enhancing the impressiveness of the language. By transferring this corroborative into Bosnian the unusual nature of the language of the original is hinted at, but – more importantly – a certain "dosage" of pathos is achieved that is precious to the sacral Text, while at the same time an optimal semantic saturation of the Text is realized. Since generally the entire sura is extremely pregnant with meaning relative to the Text's length, with this enriched translation the general stylistic characteristic of the sura is signalled. To expand the interpretation, it can be said that the word *pravouputi* in a way specifies the phrase *the right path:* there are all sorts of paths, but as a rule they are not upright, so the worthiness of that path is confirmed with the word *pravouputiti*, since the derivative of that root *hudan* means the *straight/right path*. A more detailed interpretation of the *uprightness* of the path is yet to come. The translation *Guide us along the Right Path* is not the same as *Guide us rightly along the Upright Path:* the second is stylistically more valuable, more expressive, significantly closer to the original's multilayered nature, as it points to the Vertical as the dominant of the Text of the *Qur'an,* etc. The advantage of that second translation is, in fact, substantiated by an entire chapter titled *the vertical path to Virtue*. This ayah, which in the original is teeming with stylistic values, in translations has been rendered

neutral linguistically, is stylistically almost quite passive, while in the original it is quite an effective rhetorical unit, and in fact quite an active linguistic and semiotic styleme.[174]

The phrase *the Upright Path* is defamaliarized in natural and artificial language. In order to emphasize the rightness of a path, the conviction that it leads toward a righteous goal, attributes *wide*, *straight, direct,* etc. could be used. Also, the word *road* contains many of those traits, but it would be inadequate here, even a stylistic error. However, the path of which the *al-Fātiḥa* speaks is *upright*. Aside from the aforementioned adjectives, the Text could have used words that would express that this is a rising road. However – *ascent* and *descent*, or a *steep path* introduce different meanings than that of the adjective *upright:* this one does not denote exertion, quite the contrary – it denotes elevation, elation, etc., implying a great degree of relaxedness. The possibility of choice is quite broad, but the final choice of the Text is quite unexpected and inasmuch stylistically quite defamiliarized. The path of which the Text speaks is of the good, straight, right, etc., and only after having "collected" all of those qualities can it be called *upright*. Every possible other word would be incomparable to what is being replaced; they would hardly even approach equivalence, because the choice of the word *upright* (al-mustaqim) is quite unexpected. Hence, in the domain of natural language, the *Upright Path* appears to be of stylistic value, while being a peculiar styleme in the semiotic domain as well whose semiosis is quite complicated, since it contains a multitude of meanings and – just as the upright path – appears quite unusual in spatial semiotics as well, altering common notions of space. Since the path in this space is neither direct nor straight, or anything like it, but upright,

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[174] Today I am not satisfied with my own translation, which in the edition of my translation of the *Qur'an* (Svjetlost, Sarajevo, 2004.) states: *Guide us to the right path*. I have always been aware that there are no final translations, especially of large texts such as this one. Every new perusal of the Text of the *Qur'an* – writing these stylistic interpretations of the Text is, indeed, careful examination – reveals something new to me, so that I constantly very critically reexamine my own translation. This kind of communication with the Text is endless, not just in the life of an individual, but also of generations. If there is a new edition of my translation this ayah will be translated as: *Pravouputi nas ka Putu uspravnome (Guide us rightly to the Upright Path).*

this means that the entire space in which people worship and seek help adjusts itself to the upright path, which as such is straight, right, perhaps it even could be said magisterial. In other words, this path is dominant in the textual space, but its direction is not surprising to the reader who has understood that the Text organizes the space vertically.

The defamilarized quality and the full effect of this semiotic styleme are realized in the environment in which this sura was revealed. Namely, in Saudi Arabia real space is – more than predominantly – flat. Roads are straight since they cross boundless plains. A straight path is synonym for ease, a sort of travel conformism. To speak of an upright path to people who only know straight roads is a semiotic "stylistic assault" on their notion of space and understanding of the world.[175] The goal of the Text was to cause a general state of surprise, since its intention was to fundamentally change the world. By introducing the styleme *Upright Path* into the given semiotic space, the Text introduced an extraordinary innovation that has twice opposed reality. On the one hand – and this is primary – it has opposed the ideological inertia by affirming the vertical among people who have created gods-idols for themselves, thus persistently affirming flatness even in the domain of religion. On the other hand, this phrase has strongly opposed the rhetorical rigidity of language, and the Text of the *Qur'an* has, according to Islamic belief, demonstrated its supernatural qualities in the domain of rhetorics as well, presenting it as an argument for its divine origin.

Bearing in mind the relationship of this sign to the space in which it occurred denoting something unknown in a familiar space, as well as the fact that such a phrase is not used in natural language, it can be said that the *Upright Path* is in fact a splendid semiotic trope. It has successfully conquered its semantic identity, since it has also quite successfully determined the differences that separate it from other signs in the language

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[175] The straightness of the path that is relatively easily achieved in flat landscapes such as those in Saudi Arabia represents an irreplaceable ideal of the path. Some paths (in other regions even today) are not always straight, although they constantly strive to be: they will much rather use tunnels than hairpin-bends; they contradict the idea of the path whose ideal is to be straight, comfortable, for communication to be achieved as easily and quickly as possible. The uprightness of the path in real space is unacceptable.

system and in semiotic space. This tremendous difference manifests itself in quite an intensified form of domination: in a way, it contains, more or less, the meanings of all of the other related signs, while at the same time denoting something quite different. That kind of semantic identity and the path on which it reaches it gives it a special value – precisely the kind tropes have. However, the semiotic trope *Upright Path* is not a mere decoration but also a mechanism for constructing rich content. In fact, guiding rightly along the *Upright Path* encompasses the entire spiritual mechanism, devoutness, religious strictness and righteousness, service to God and spiritual ascent, etc. Walking along the *Upright Path* includes all that faith contains, which means so much that it is impossible to interpret here; nor is it necessary, since readers are mostly familiar with it. Therefore the trope of the *Upright Path* carries an immense number of connotations, and their transfer is quite powerful so that, on its part, it affirms what I have already referred to as the optimal density of meaning in the *al-Fātiḥa*, such that it is not surprising that it precisely represents the Text in its entirety. The terseness of the fifth ayah in terms of content come from its phrase *Upright Path*, which as a trope is its dominant styleme within its *textual fabric*, and it can even be said its junction point, for the world has been made for virtue and the Text should maximally affirm it. In fact, the Text itself is – from its perspective – the greatest virtue of this world, because it is in charge of saving the world from itself. The *Upright Path* thus has an additional meaning that enriches this semiotic trope. Namely, the ultimate conclusions in the interpretation of this sura once again inevitably lead to the notion that the Text is organized vertically, and that the entire textual space is so organized. In other words, this is the ethical space that operates in real space, in the world. Many signs in this Text should therefore ultimately not be taken literally, although they have not entirely abandoned their literal quality, meaning that they do not establish specific relations with reality. The phrase *Upright Path*, in accordance with the aforementioned, is related to reality in the sense I have already explained, but ultimately the *Upright Path* is the *Path of Ethics*. From here we can provide another insight into the relationship between the phrase *Upright Path* and the Text itself, both in its entirety as well as the

Text of the *al-Fātiḥa*. Namely, since the Text has the task of revealing the faith and affirming the greatest ethical values, the implication is that the Text itself is the *Upright Path*. Therefore, knowing the Text and abiding by its norms and instructions means moving along a road that is straight, wide and splendidly marked, such that it ultimately becomes upright. The Text has been *lowered* (ar. 'unzila), as I have mentioned several times; the vertical is irreplaceable. Hence virtue can only be reached by taking the path that is also vertical/upright. This has been the path of the Text: the Text was lowered, while man ethically moves in the opposite direction – he ascends.

The *Upright Path* – since here the semiotic stylistics of the *al-Fātiḥa* is addressed – defines the space differently from the way (profane) artistic texts do, which makes the phrase-trope *Upright Path* of all the more stylistic value. Here it is about a sacral space characterized precisely by the vertical.

The sacral Text, or the *Upright Path*, does not lead straight toward the horizon, but upright – toward expanses of light.

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