Notes on Camatkāra

David Shulman

The click of delight

The history of Sanskrit poetics is sometimes told in terms of dominant concepts, with their by-now conventional translations, such as *alaṅkāra* – "ornament" or "figuration," broadly conceived; *rasa* and *dhvani* – perhaps best taken together as "suggestion"; or *sāhitya* – "composition." Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka* is rightly seen as a moment of breakthrough, a "paradigm shift" that led to the culminating achievement of the entire science in Abhinavagupta's magisterial synthesis at the turn of the eleventh century. Maverick voices, such as Kuntaka and Kṣemendra or even Jagannātha Paṇḍita, are recognized as such – but then marginalized. *Alaṅkāra-śāstra* evolves through an inner rhythm that moves, via occasional zigzags and the one sharp shift in direction, toward climax (and perhaps, following the climax, decline). A retrospective teleology, heavily normative in tone, seems structured into the way this story is told.

There are several conspicuous difficulties with this view. It leaves later works such as the *Rasa-gaṅgādhara* dangling uncomfortably, and largely unintelligibly, in an intellectual limbo devoid of context. Worse, it tends to obscure the powerful continuities that have always characterized the *Alaṅkārikas*' intellectual program, on the one hand, and the more enduring though subtler tensions within that program, on the other. As an example of the latter, we may think of the competition between semanticized and non-semanticized verbal effects – a distinction that keeps reappearing, in surprising new forms, throughout the entire history of this tradition. There is also the loss, under the impact of this dominant view, of the integrity of local or regional *alaṅkāra* schools, although in a sense the history of Sanskrit poetics is largely a refraction of these specific cultural milieux. Add to this the overwhelming, hence blinding or even stultifying effect of Abhinavagupta's theoretical

vision, which, like Aristotle's *Poetics* in the Latin West, tended, by its sheer seductive power, to contract the space for critical analysis of the great poetic works themselves. One pays a price for diverting, not to say suppressing, the anxiety that contact with great poetry so often arouses. It is clearly time that we began to rethink this history and to articulate anew the major coordinates of its conceptual grid.

Sometimes seemingly minor elements or themes offer a novel vantage point for such a reevaluation. Relatively late texts may thematize an issue that, while belonging to the conceptual core of the *śāstra*, was never taken as expressing one of its deeper concerns. When this happens, it is usually a matter of a regional matrix absorbing and reworking certain classical perspectives. As an example, I cite the case of *camatkāra*, habitually translated as "wonder" or, occasionally, "poetic delight."[1]

The prehistory of *camatkāra* has been discussed by Raghavan (1941), among others. I will review this background in a moment. But the attempt to reorganize poetic analysis around *camatkāra* reaches full expression only in the late fourteenth-century treatise by Viśveśvara, the *Camatkāracandrikā* (henceforth: *CC*), composed at the court of Siṅgabhūpāla II in Telangana. I will argue that this work reflects a logic that operates in much of classical Telugu poetry and was formulated in theoretical terms by the major Telugu poeticians; at the same time, the focus on *camatkāra* tells us something about an important strand, at times rather submerged, in the classical *alaṅkāra* debates.

Raghavan believes that, like *rasa*, the term *camatkāra* was borrowed from the kitchen (or, stated more elegantly, from the *Pāka-śāstra*):

> It appears to me that originally the word *camatkāra* was an onomatopoeic word referring to the clicking sound we make with the tongue when we taste something delectable, and in the course of its semantic enlargements, *camatkāra* came to mean a sudden fillip to any feeling of a pleasurable type. (Raghavan 1941:294)[2]

Mixed metaphors aside, this suggestion has little to recommend it, even

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1   Ingalls, Masson, and Patwardhan (1990:69) at one point suggest "rapture."
2   In support of this reading, Raghavan cites a passage from Rāmacandra Budhendra's commentary on Laksmana's supplement to *Rāmāyaṇa-campū: sukha-duḥkhâdbhutânandair harṣâdyaiś citta-vikriyā / camatkāraḥ sa-sītkāraḥ śarīrollāsanādibhiḥ//*.

if Sriramamurti, the editor of the *CC*, repeats it and extends it to "the imitation of the sound we make, while tasting something slimy" (in Viśveśvarakavicandra, *Camatkāracandrikā*, 1969:xxxiv) True, there is a strand of the tradition that derives the term from √*cam*, "to sip, drink, eat, taste";[3] and, as we will see, Abhinavagupta paraphrases *camatkāra* as *āsvādo rasanātmā*, "tasting and savoring," in line with his general direction of interpretation.[4] Far-reaching metaphysical translations of the notion will take us to the level of "an act of undifferentiated subjective experience."[5] Such readings have their own logic within the *pratyabhijñā* texts and, obviously not unrelated to this metaphysical context, in Abhinavagupta's poetics. Nonetheless, it is far more likely that the word itself derives from the onomatopoeic click of appreciation that one still hears today, in many domains – most notably, perhaps, that of music, as any aficionado can attest. Abhinavagupta himself seems to point in this relatively concrete but still generalized direction when he speaks, in a celebrated passage, of that form of emergent sound (*śabdanam*) that, issuing from uninterrupted *camatkāra* (*avichinna-camatkārātmakam*), is like an inner nodding of the head (*antar-mukha-śiro-nirdeśa-prakhyam*).[6]

Within the poeticians' discourse, more complete definitions of *camatkāra* stress the components of the pleasurable, physically signalled sense of wonder or amazement (purely mental effects are somewhat foreign to this tradition). Since Raghavan has assembled several of the major statements, there seems little point in rehearsing this matter of definition. *Camatkāra* is another good candidate for the slot of poetry's true "self" (*kāvyâtmā*).[7] Such statements, in themselves, tell us very little. They culminate in Jagannātha Paṇḍita's well-known synoptic motto:

ramanīyârtha-pratipādakaḥ   śabdaḥ   kāvyam.   ramanīyatā   ca
lokottarâhlāda-janaka-jñāna-gocaratā. lokottaratvaṃ câhlāda-gataś
camatkārâpara-paryāyo 'nubhava-sākṣiko jāti-viśeṣaḥ.

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3   Nirukta 10.12; and see the fine discussion in Gnoli 1985:72, note 2.
4   Gnoli 1985:72, note 2, citing *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-vivṛti-vimarśinī* 3.251.
5   Alexis Sanderson, cited in Padoux 1990:174, note 21.
6   *Īśvara-partyabhijñā-sūtra-vimarśinī* 1.5.13, cited in Padoux 1990:176, note 28. The context is the creative reflection, *pratyavamarśa*, internal to God.
7   Thus, e.g. Hariprasāda in *Kāvyâloka* (1729), as cited by Raghavan (1941:296).

Poetry is an utterance that produces charming meaning. "Charm" delineates a domain of knowledge that generates transcendent delight. Such transcendence is a category dependably linked to delight, attested by experience, that can equally be described as *camatkāra*. (*Rasa-gaṅgādhara* 1983, 1:4)

In short, *camatkāra*, for Jagannātha, is the generalized basis for poetry. The word often does serve in just such a non-specific usage; insofar as poetry delights, it has *camatkāra* as both means and end. Marshalling the term in a theoretical or interpretative context is often close to tautology. Good poetry naturally calls forth the internal nodding of the head or audible clicking of the tongue. The joy that we get from such poetry always has an element of surprise or wonder at the new or unexpected. More or less the same effect comes from hearing music. Still, it is worth noticing that Jagannātha's passage insists on a cognitive component to this process and on an empirical, experiential factor. Moreover, as Sriramamurti astutely observes, he elsewhere excludes purely verbal or sonar forms of *camatkāra* (*artha-camat-kṛti-sāmānya-śūnyā śabda-camat-kṛtih*) from the scope of what he considers real poetry (in Viśveśvarakavicandra, *Camatkāracandrikā*, 1969:xxxviii). Here is an analytical point of some importance. Why should Jagannātha, who in some ways is so closely linked to the Andhra *alaṅkāra* tradition, react so strongly against an area of poetic achievement that, as we shall see, is central to the vision of those authors?

Kṣemendra and Abhinavagupta

To begin to answer this question, we must make a detour through Kashmir. Once again, this is fairly familiar terrain – possibly too familiar. It is sometimes difficult to escape the feeling that we are missing something critical, partly through habituation: as Kālidāsa tells us, it is the elephant standing directly before us that we fail to see. In any case, it may be useful to review a few select references to *camatkāra* in the twelfth-century Kashmiri authors.

Kṣemendra devotes an entire chapter to *camatkāra* in his *Kavi-kaṇṭhâbharaṇa*. Without words of *camatkāra*, no poem is worthy of notice, any more than a woman's youthfulness can attract if it lacks

loveliness (*lāvaṇya*).[8] To make the point, Kṣemendra gives two strong examples on a similar trope: the unhappy lover's apostrophe to the Aśoka tree. The first, by Mālava-rudra, is conventional and mostly un-interesting; the second, by Yaśo-varman, has all the freshness and sur-prise that come with *camatkāra*. It is striking that Yaśo-varman's verse deftly uses *śleṣa* to produce its cunning twist at the end. Both the lover (separated from his beloved) and the Aśoka tree are "red" (*rakta*), the latter because of its new buds, the former because he is full of passion, *rāga*; both have been kicked by the beloved (the Aśoka, according to the poets' convention, blossoms only in this manner). Everything is thus equal and shared – except for the fact that the Aśoka is literally, by its name, "griefless" while the lover is *sa-śoka*, "full of sorrow."[9] Paronomastic effects thus immediately spring to Kṣemendra's mind as a natural concomitant of *camatkāra*. Not merely the superimposition of normally disjoined or dissonant domains, but also the verbal magic that enables this process of fusion to take place spark the momentary experience of delight.

This straightforward example is followed by an attempt to catego-rize *camatkāra* according to a ten-fold typology: there is the kind that is charming without discursive examination (*avicārita-ramaṇīya*); that whose charm depends upon such examination (*vicāryamāṇa-ramaṇīya*); that which pervades the entire utterance (*samasta-sūkta-vyāpin*); that which is localized in a single part of the utterance (*sūktaikadeśa-dṛśya*); and there are those forms of *camatkāra* that derive from the sound alone (*śabda-gata*); the meaning alone (*artha-gata*); or the sound as combined with meaning (*śabdārtha-gata*), a figure (*alaṅkāra-gata*), the *rasa* (*rasa-gata*), or a certain *vṛtti* (*prakhyāta-vṛtti-gata*). Each of these types is exemplified by a verse taken from one of Kṣemendra's works. The verses themselves are illuminating, and it is not difficult to extrapo-late a new organization of traditional *alaṅkāra* materials around this division. In a sense, this is what Viśveśvara tries to do some 200 years

8   ekena kena-cid an-argha-maṇi-prabheṇa kāvyaṃ camat-kṛti-padena vinā
    suvarṇam/
    nir-doṣa-leśam api rohati kasya citte lāvaṇya-hīnam iva yauvanam aṅganānām//
    3.2.
9   raktas tvaṃ nava-pallavair aham api ślāghyaiḥ priyāyā guṇais
    tvām āyānti śilī-mukhāḥ smara-dhanur-muktāḥ sakhe mām api/
    kāntā-pāda-talâhatis tava mude tadvan mamâpy āvayoḥ
    sarvaṃ tulyam aśoka kevalam aham dhātrā sa-śokaḥ kṛtaḥ// 3.4.

after Kṣemendra, though in a less original manner than the latter's typology would permit. Note, too, that the categorical set begins with the distinction, perhaps a tension, between analytical and non-analytical (or discursive and non-discursive) experiences of camatkāra – a restatement of the older tension we have noted.

A generation prior to Kṣemendra, Abhinavagupta offers several powerful statements built around this concept. They are not, by any means, uniform in level or intensity; and, as Gnoli (1968:xlv–xlvii) has shown – without fully drawing out the implications of this view – there are several links between the camatkāra of Abhinavagupta's works on poetics and his use of the term in more properly metaphysical works. We can examine only a small sample here. Perhaps the clearest articulation of the poetic camatkāra comes from Abhinava-bhāratī ad Nāṭyaśāstra 6.33ff (I cite Gnoli's workmanlike translations).

Abhinavagupta has demolished, at some length, the objection to rasa as an object of perception. He is now prepared to offer his own definition (tarhy ucyatāṃ pariśuddha-tattvam). He reaches it through the Mīmāṃsā terminology of bhāvanā.[10] Non-literal linguistic processes, dependent upon the sensitive listener's internal faculties of intuitive or imaginative empathy (pratibhāna), allow for an experienced perception that sets aside the normative, linguistically determined coordinates of time and space (apahastita-tat-tad-vākyopātta-kālādi-vibhāgā tāvat pratītir upajāyate). A special kind of space is created, in which emotion of a very direct intensity and nature, unconstrained by "normal" (ego-related) obstacles or by too much reality, can enter directly into the spectator's heart. Abhinavagupta's example is the fearful rasa (bhayānaka). A frightening occurrence on the stage is, from the connoisseur's standpoint, rather different from the sight, for example, of a real tiger about to pounce – an analysis that is well known and requires no further comment here. But at this point the discussion comes to a focus in the key term camatkāra:

tathāvidhe hi bhaye nâtmâtyanta-tiraskṛto na viśeṣata ullikhitaḥ/
evam paro 'pi/ tata eva na parimitam eva sādhāraṇyam api tu
vitataṃ vyāpti-graha iva dhūmâgnyor bhaya-kampayor eva vā/
tad atra sākṣātkārāyamāṇatve pariposikā naṭâdi-sāmagrī yasyāṃ
vastusatāṃ kāvyârpitānāṃ ca deśa-kāla-pramātrādīnāṃ niyama-

10 Lucidly explicated by McCrea (2008:64–60).

hetūnām anyonya-pratibandha-balād atyantam apasaraṇe sa
eva sādhāraṇī-bhāvaḥ sutarām puṣyati/ ata eva sāmājikānām
eka-ghanataiva pratipatteḥ sutarām rasa-pariposāya sarveṣām
anādi-vāsanā-vicitrī-kṛta-cetasām vāsanā-saṃvādāt/ sā cāvighnā
saṃvic camatkāraḥ/ taj-jo 'pi kampa-pulakollukasanādir vikāraś
camatkāraḥ/ .... tathā hi câtṛpti-vyatirekenâcchinno bhogāveśa
ity ucyate/ bhuñjānasyâdbhuta-bhogâtma-spandâviṣṭasya camataḥ
karaṇam camatkāra iti/

In such a Fear [of the *rasa* order], one's own self is neither completely
immersed (*tiraskṛ*) nor in a state of particular emergence (*ullikh*); and
the same thing happens with the other selves. As a result of this, the
state of generality involved is not limited (*parimita*), but extended
(*vitata*) – as happens at the moment in which is formed the idea of
the invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*) between smoke and fire or, in
fact, between trembling and fear. The combination of actors, etc.,
thus serves to nourish (*paripuṣ*) the sensation of having the event
represented directly in front of one (*sākṣātkārāyamāṇatva*); this
combination – in which the real limiting causes (*niyamahetu*) (time,
space, the particularized cognized subject, etc.) on the one side, and
those afforded by the poem on the other, cancel each other out and
completely eliminate each other – readily nourishes (*puṣ*) the state of
generality in question. Therefore, this very density (*ekaghanatā*) of
the spectator's perception nourishes the *rasa* of all of them readily,
because the latent impressions of their minds concord with each
other, the minds being varied by beginningless latent impressions.
This [form of] consciousness without obstacles is called *camatkāra*;
the physical effects (trembling, horripilation, vibrations of joy
[*ullukasana*], etc.), are also *camatkāra*[11] .... That is to say, what is
called *camatkāra* is an uninterrupted (*acchinna*) state of immersion
(*āveśa*) in an Enjoyment characterized by the presence of a sensation
of inner fullness (*tṛpti*). It might be said indeed that *camatkāra* is the
action proper to a tasting (*cam*) or enjoying subject, i.e., to a person
immersed in the inner movement (*spanda*) of a magic (*adbhuta*)
enjoyment. (Gnoli 1968:56–60; 1985:68–74)

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11 A verse is cited in which Viṣṇu is described as *camakkai = camatkaroti*.

This passage has been well annotated by Gnoli but deserves focused attention in light of our present concerns. Notice how the entire argument moves toward a characterization of what poetry is all about: the awareness (*saṃvit*) that true poetry triggers in terms of *camatkāra*. Such an awareness emerges from the removal of obstacles. Poetic language and dramatic means aim at this removal. Non-literal or non-denotative expressivity is central to the process. So are the existence of unconscious karmic memories, *vāsanā*, and the generalizing effect (*sādharaṇī-bhāva*) that is itself intensified by the presence of many spectators in the same audience, all concentrating on the same aesthetic object. Here, characteristically, *camatkāra* functions as a linguistic marker on two levels: that of the overriding awareness that is the aim of poetry, and that of the physical signs that such an awareness has been achieved.[12]

So far, so good. As expected, *camatkāra* is intimately linked to a sensation of expansion (or, initially, of diminished constriction). Individual, idiosyncratic constraints, including the standard space-time effects that envelop everyday experience, are loosened and, hopefully, lost, at least for a moment. For as long as this moment lasts, the connoisseur "savors" or "enjoys" or "immerses himself" (*āviṣṭa*)[13] in the pulsation (*spanda*) of an extraordinary (*adbhuta*) wholeness – a wholeness that is, however, actively *in movement*, spilling out or over – and this seemingly liquid state of sensual expansiveness also has aspects of satisfaction (*tṛpti*), rhythmic surrender or fusion (*laya*), and rest (*viśrānti*).[14] Elsewhere in Abhinavagupta, expansion, the melting down of external crusts or surfaces, and inner illumination are standard features of the experiential process induced by poetic art.[15] Add to this the notion of

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12 "If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These are the only ways I know it. Is there any other way?" Emily Dickinson to Thomas W. Higginson, *Atlantic Monthly*, 1891.

13 Elsewhere, *āveśa* suggests "possession," though Abhinavagupta is at pains to distinguish the dramatic or poetic experience from notions of possession by god or demon in a cultic context.

14 Immediately after the cited passage, Abhinavagupta again lists *camatkāra* as a name or feature of the awareness he wishes to describe: *tathā hi loke sakala-vighna-vinirmuktā samvittir eva camatkāra-nirveśa-rasanāsvādana-bhoga-samāpatti-laya-viśrānty-ādi-śabdair abhidhīyate*. On *viśrānti* see below, note 28.

15 Cf. the invocation verse to his *Locana: apūrvam yad vastu* ...; also Locana ad 2.4, end (*druti-vistāra-vikāsātmani bhoge*).

density (*ekaghanatā*), the compacted simultaneity and heightened existential intensity that is explicitly mentioned in our passage as belonging to the receptive spectator's perception (see Handelman and Shulman 1997:74–80). Centuries after Abhinavagupta, Viśvanātha, in a famous definition (*Sāhitya-darpaṇa* 3), repeats the master's understanding of *camatkāra* as, first of all, an expansion in consciousness (*camatkāraś citta-vistāra-rūpaḥ*).

And yet, matters are not really so simple. Outside the strictly poetic domain, *camatkāra*, as Gnoli has noted (1985:73, note, citing *Parā-trimśikā-vivaraṇa* 49), is the characteristic of *all* kinds of awareness, the factor distinguishing what is living from the truly lifeless (*jaḍa*). This alone might give us pause. Moreover, *camatkārita*, that is, the very business of consuming or "enjoying" (*bhuñjāna-rūpatā*), is also the mysterious, self-generating wish (*icchā*) that for everyone – even God himself – "induces consciousness to deny its original fullness and to crumble in time and space, i.e., the *āṇavamala*" (Gnoli 1985:75, note, citing *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-sūtra-vimarśinī* 3.252, a passage of some importance to this discussion). So *camatkāra* can work not only toward expansiveness but also toward contraction. One might object that we are here confusing contexts meant to be kept separate; but this can hardly solve the problem, since, as we saw, Abhinavagupta himself begins his discussion of *bhayānaka rasa* – the example leading on to his general definition – with his intriguing statement about awareness that is neither fully obscured nor articulated or revealed (*tathāvidhe hi bhaye nātmātyanta-tiraskṛto na viśeṣata ullikhitaḥ*). In other words – leaving aside the niceties of characterization for another occasion – even under full-fledged *rasa* conditions, so to speak, some residual discursivity survives in awareness. We know this to be the case from the distinction drawn elsewhere between poetic experience and Yogic or meditative states. Still, it is of some importance to see this distinction emerge naturally, once again, in the context of *camatkāra*.

As if this were not enough, the entire passage culminates with the quotation of Kālidāsa's famous verse from *Śakuntala* V, *ramyāṇi vīkṣya*:

You see something amazing, and it moves you.
You hear something wonderful, and it touches you.
You were happy, but now you're restless.
Perhaps you're remembering for the first time

friendships still alive with feeling,
buried deep in your mind.[16]

This conjunction-through-citation speaks eloquently to the double-edged
nature of *camatkāra*. Poetry, for Abhinavagupta, works on awareness
in several possible modes – including that form of "memory," *smṛti*,
that has no consciously remembered object as its content (*pūrvam
etasyârthasyânanubhūtatvāt*). Hence the Kālidāsa verse, one of the
most powerful expressions in the whole of Sanskrit literature of what
"fullness," an ultimate state, might mean in human (or, for that matter,
divine) experience. Surprisingly, however, the particular fullness
that Abhinavagupta identifies with *camatkāra* apparently shares the
restlessness and unfinished quality that Kālidāsa describes in connection
with beauty. Even for Abhinavagupta, it seems, poetry can, perhaps
should, disquiet. A part of the listener's mind still actively engages
with a reality conjured up by the poem. A certain tension inheres in
the *spanda*; and this rhythmic oscillation (*andolana*), internal to the
listener, is not entirely without ontic implications and a certain muted
skepticism. Just how real is the fictive reality on the stage and/or in
the mind? Am I, the spectator and connoisseur, still here or not? What
space does the poet's "as-if" world inhabit and – despite everything! –
what does the verse mean? Such questions do not simply dissolve under
the flood of *rasa*, nor are they necessarily signs of poetic *failure*, as
one might expect. Moreover, we need to bear in mind constantly that
the effects Abhinavagupta is exploring are triggered by language, in
its deeper reaches. In the Śaiva universe he so elaborately conceived
and defined, language, that is, sound, is inherently creative, continually
transformative of reality, in quite specific, non-adventitious ways.[17]
The phonemes of Sanskrit carry through the processes of disturbance,
reflection, contraction and emanation that constitute, in this system, all
experienced reality.

In fact, as is well known, the problem hinted at in the above-quot-
ed passage has a longer history in the Kashmiri *alankāra-śāstra*.
Abhinavagupta criticizes, rather fiercely, the views of Bhaṭṭanāyaka,
who proposed a third function of words, *bhogīkṛttva* or, alternatively,

16 Translated jointly with Velcheru Narayana Rao, whom I thank for insights illu-
    minating the problems discussed throughout this essay.
17 On the particular meanings and effects of individual *akṣaras* and their combina-
    tions, see Padoux1990:223–329.

bhāvakatva.[18] For Bhaṭṭanāyaka, *bhāvanā*, the operation itself, "has the effect of universalizing the determinants and other factors, so that they may bring about or realize a *rasa*" (Ingalls et al. 1990:36). The point, for our purposes, is that this function is a semantic property inherent in words used by poets in the charged domain of aesthetic performance. What the audience undergoes is, most definitively, a derivative of linguistic and aural processes. Precisely this notion is the object of Abhinavagupta's attack: he wants poetic effects to derive not from language but, ultimately, from experience, even if language provides the necessary trigger. *Rasa* flows from a known experience or set of sensations with which, we must assume, Abhinavagupta himself was familiar, and which he rather eloquently describes. He extrapolates on that basis, certainly not as a purely logical exercise. But in so doing – despite his presentation of "suggestion" in its many varieties as operating *by verbal means* and *within* language, broadly understood, and despite the intricate theory of sonar efficacies that he sets forth at such length in the *Tantrāloka* – he moves poetry away from the realm of language as autonomous and transformative in any objective sense. The very intensity of the discussion with Bhaṭṭanāyaka, as attested in the *Locana*, is good evidence for the critical choice that had to be made around this central theme.

We will return to this point, for here the contrast with the Andhra *alaṅkāra* school is very clear. Something has happened within the Kashmir tradition that we can glimpse only through the possibly distorting lens of Abhinavagupta's definitive statements. The ancient preoccupation with properties of sounds, whether semanticized or not, has given way to what is, in effect, a metaphysical psychology. Poetry now belongs within the latter sphere, a force working upon the minds or hearts of the audience, collectively and individually – but with the single *sahṛdaya*, like the single ritual performer in the Tantric system that Abhinavagupta rationalized, serving as the main magnet of attention. Even the analysis of intra-linguistic factors operating in poetry – a classic focus of the early *alaṅkāra* literature, and one that survived, reframed, into medieval texts on poetics – is demoted to a secondary order of magnitude. Still more striking, in a way, is the manner in which Abhinavagupta metaphysicizes, or allegorizes, the mantric energies

18 See the discussion in McCrea 2008:387–392. We are unfortunately dependent upon Abhinavagupta for our knowledge of Bhaṭṭanāyaka's position.

considered to be present in the Sanskrit phonemes, such that *a* is the deep power of consciousness, *cit-śakti*, in its changeless completion; the short simple vowels are bursts or flashes of luminous energy moving outward through desire; *ma* is a shadowy or darker aspect to this process; *r̥* / *r̥̄* and *l̥* / *l̥̄* contain different measures or levels of perturbance, rest and constriction in the "inner evolution of Śiva toward emanation" (Padoux 1990:256); and so on (*Tantrāloka* 3 [*śāmbhavopāya*]:78–79, 131–136). In relation to poetry, Abhinavagupta's conception either renders this astonishing system, with its deep roots in Śaiva Tantra, irrelevant on principle, or entirely displaces it, seeing in it a remote translation of a less abstract impulse that has also been ruled out for poetic discourse.[19] This is where the Andhra tradition offers a refreshing perspective.

Syllables that change the world

In the above-cited passage from the *Abhinava-bhāratī*, *camatkāra* suggests something of what may have been lost. The context – one of the most powerful and comprehensive of Abhinavagupta's statements about poetic effects – is not coincidental.[20] In any case, when we come to Viśveśvara, in late fourteenth-century Rācakŏṇḍa, an entirely new framework is in place. Viśveśvara is one in an impressive series of Andhra *ālaṅkārikas* who, beginning with Vidyānātha in the early fourteenth century, resystematized the inherited tradition of Sanskrit poetic theory, bringing it into line with a substratum of linguistic metaphysics active within the Deccan and South Indian poetic universe (see Shulman 2001:1–18). Medieval Tamil poeticians took the primary intuitions that shaped the role of the South Indian poets in rather distinctive directions, structuring their insights in terms of an ancient but still evolving poetic grammar. However, it is theorists such as Nācana Somanātha and Appakavi, writing in Telugu, who provide us with the closest parallels to the conceptual world of Vidyānātha,

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19 For more strictly mantric uses of the *akṣaras*, with associated specific deities and their effects, see, e.g., Abhinavagupta 1989:68.

20 Less complex and evocative usages of the term *camatkāra* turn up at various points in the *Locana*; e.g., the fascinating discussion of the particularly delightful effects consequent upon the admixture of *vyabhicāri-bhāvas*, in several possible combinations, to a predominant *rasa* ([*vyabhicāri-*]*bhāva-dhvani*): *Locana ad* 2.3. These passages merit separate analysis.

Viśveśvara, Amṛtānanda Yogin and Dharmasūri, to mention only a few.[21]

One clear innovation widely represented in the new Deccan *alaṅkāra* works is the elevation of the author's patron to the role of the exemplary Nāyaka, the hero of most of the *udāharaṇa* verses.[22] Here Vidyānātha showed the way; but, more generally, we could argue that the post-Kākatīya period of Velama rule in Rācakŏṇḍa and the Reddi kingdom of Kŏṇḍavīḍu and Rajahmundry produced the most far-reaching aestheticization of the political domain ever seen in South India. In effect, an entirely new basis was laid down for kingship, now legitimized in largely aesthetic terms.[23] We cannot pursue this theme here. We must concentrate, instead, on two marked features of our main text, Viśveśvara's *Camatkāracandrikā*: the reframing of the enterprise of poetic analysis in terms of *camatkāra*, and the theory of objective sonar effects that seems to be integral to the elaboration of this rather unusual frame.

The first element is, on the surface, fairly straightforward. Instruction, *śikṣā*, is the aim of poetry (*kāvya-prayojanam*), and instruction is effectual only if it is accompanied by *camatkāra* (*śikṣā ca sa-camatkāraṃ bodhitā sthiratāṃ bhajet*, 1.5). And what, precisely, is this *camatkāra*? It is something that continuously floods the learned connoisseurs with delight (note the liquid metaphor). It has seven analytical components: *guṇa, rīti, rasa, vṛtti, pāka, śayyā* and *alaṅkṛti*, which combine, through an inner relation to one another (*sādharmya*), in producing beautiful utterances.[24] Each of these components receives its own discursive exposition, with extensive illustrations, in the following chapters – occasionally with rather original perceptions (as in the case of *rīti*, for

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21 Vidyādhara's *Ekāvalī*, composed in Orissa, clearly belongs to this same strand of the tradition.
22 Viśveśvara states this intention explicitly with reference to his patron, Siṅgabhūpāla: *CC* 1.3.
23 Velcheru Narayana Rao has stated this point forcefully; we hope to devote a separate study to this transformation of politics in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the eastern Deccan.
24 camatkāras tu viduṣām ānanda-parivāha-kṛt/
guṇaṃ rītiṃ rasaṃ vṛttiṃ pākaṃ śayyām alaṅkṛtim//
saptaitāni camatkāra-kāraṇam bruvate budhāḥ/ 1.6–7.
The following two verses discuss their *sādharmya* and the question of the pre-dominance of one, three or seven elements, according to the views of Kubjaka, Bhoja and Viśveśvara himself, respectively.

example).[25] In general, however, poetry, as stated at the outset, is simply a *camatkāra*-oriented intra-linguistic operation combining sounds and meaning (*vāg-arthau sa-camatkārau kāvyaṃ kāvya-vido viduḥ*, 1.11).

But this is by no means Viśveśvara's final word on *camatkāra*. The first three *vilāsas* of the book work up, deliberately and in logical order, to a point where a further typology can be articulated. The first chapter, to which we return below, deals with the level of phonology and purely acoustic effects. The second addresses the complete sentence (*vākya*) in terms of poetic virtue (*guṇa*) and poetic fault (*doṣa*). The third – in many ways the real high point of the entire work – begins with the traditional semantic analysis of powers or levels of speech – denotative, transferred (secondary, figurative) and suggested. So far, Viśveśvara follows the classical models closely – although it is important to observe that his understanding of *camatkāra*, more deeply explored, proceeds precisely from this context of linguistic theory. For, having set out the possibilities for suggestion (*vyañjanā*) in accordance with the *Dhvanyāloka* (the three types of *vastu-*, *alaṅkāra-* and *rasa-dhvani*), he now goes on to tell us that there is a hierarchy of possible *camatkāra* effects:

śabdârtha-rūpaṃ tad idaṃ kāvyaṃ śabdârtha-kovidaiḥ/
traividhyena camatkāri camatkāritaraṃ yathā/
camatkāritamaṃ ceti pravivicya nidarśitam/
śabda-cārutva-tātparye camatkārîti kathyate//

Those who know about words and meanings say that poetry, which is, after all, a matter of words and meanings, can be divided into what is "delightful," "more delightful," and "most delightful." "Delightful" poetry comes from concentrating on the play of sounds. (3.36–37)

An illustration, entirely dependent on alliteration (*anuprāsa-nirvahaṇa-mātre*) and lacking any compelling cognitive content, follows.

Next we have "more delightful," a matter of the predominance of (literal) meaning (*vācya-cārutva-tātparye camatkāritaraṃ matam*, 3.38). Eight varieties of *guṇī-bhūta-vyaṅgya* – cases where the suggested meaning is less striking than the surface meaning – are enumerated

25 As noted by Sriramamurti in *Viśveśvarakavicandra*, *Camatkāracandrikā*, 1969:xlv. Raghavan (1934–1935:131–139) gives an overview of the structure of the book and notes on Viśveśvara's discussion of specific topics.

and exemplified in verses praising Siṅgabhūpāla, the author's patron (famous in his own right as the author of the *Rasârṇava-sudhâkara* and *Saṅgīta-sudhâkara*). But the acme of *camatkāra* – the poetry that is "most delightful" – is achieved, not surprisingly, by the predominance of suggestion (*pratyeyârthasya cārutve camatkāritamam matam*, 3.40). Could Viśveśvara, coming at this point in the development of the *alaṅkāra-śāstra*, have thought differently? Delight must be deeply intertwined with suggestion. Yet the two illustrations he cites – neither of them great poetry – still seem to point beyond a merely mechanical reading of this typology:

singa-prabhur alaṅkārī laṅkārī rāghavah punah/
varṇântaratvam ubhayoh śrūyate sarva-sammatam//

kṛtāya-stambha-nirbhedo bhakta-prahlāda-poṣakah/
śrīpatir nara-simho 'yaṃ rājate rāja-śekharah//

Neither verse is really amenable to translation, since both are built around *śleṣa*-paronomasia. In the first, there is only one substantial difference between Siṅgabhūpāla and the god Rāma: the former is *alaṅkārī*, "beautifully ornamented," while the second is *laṅkārī*[*h*] (with *sandhi* lengthening), "the enemy of Laṅkā." That is, the difference is one phoneme (*varṇa*), the initial *a*-vowel. But this *varṇa*-distinction also implies another distinction, in the social order, where Siṅgabhūpāla, in theory, was a Vaiśya, while Rāma, of course, was a Kṣatriya – or so Viśveśvara explains in his prose commentary to the verse. So we have a slightly complex and more or less amusing *vyatirekâlaṅkāra*.

The second verse produces a somewhat similar effect by playing on the name of [Nara-]Siṅgabhūpāla. Likened to the original, divine Narasiṃha, who emerged from an iron pillar to save Prahlāda and is married to the goddess Śrī, the supposedly human king and patron Siṅgabhūpāla is described in the same terms: He wields an iron mace, takes care of those who depend upon him and is marked by regal splendor (*śrī*). The prose commentary Viśveśvara appends to this verse explains all this as a *śabda-śakti-mūla-upamâlaṅkāra*, a simile based on the power of words,[26] hence laden with suggestion, which leads, however, to a two-

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26 On Ānandavardhana's not entirely successful attempt to distinguish *śabda-śakti-mūla-dhvani* from *śleṣa* see Bronner 2010:211–212.

tiered *utprekṣā*: Since the king can easily wipe out his enemies, just as the Man-Lion disembowelled Hiraṇyakaśipu, only idiots would choose to oppose him; both in his own right and in his identity as the divine Man-Lion reborn on earth, this king is dangerous and splendid. The two levels of the suggestion intensify and reinforce the primary thrust of the verse, which, in short, is both a warning and an encomium.[27]

There is no need to overload these two relatively simple illustrations. Yet these are the only examples Viśveśvara brings of his "most delightful" category. He could easily have gone in a more conventional and predictable direction and produced rather more sophisticated samples of predominant *vyaṅgya* in praise of his king. Instead, he insists that the latter verse conduces to an appreciation so deep that the mind comes to rest in total satisfaction (*acintya-mahima-viśrānti-dhāmatāṃ nītam*), which is why we are in the category of *camatkāritama* (*CC*:59).[28] At the very least, we seem to have a drift toward that part of poetic language that depends uniquely upon intra-linguistic mechanisms – in this case, sound-coincidence and superimposition – to achieve its intended expressivity. *Śleṣa*, as Yigal Bronner (2010, passim) has shown, is a matter of profound expressive and, indeed, metaphysical significance for both poets and poeticians, even if the *ālaṅkārikas'* theories of *śleṣa* are, in certain ways, contradictory and somewhat limited in explanatory scope (*ibid.*, esp. 195–230). For our purposes, the point is that certain linguistic mechanisms turn out to be more powerful, and also more interesting to certain poeticians, than others. What happens in poetic language, at least within the domain of such mechanisms and figures, is by no means a matter of accident or a rather marginal source of transient amusement. The highest form of *camatkāra*, in short, is here linked to a highly charged use of language, which, when properly controlled or mastered by the poet, is capable of astonishing transformative effects.

A somewhat routine exposition, while reorganizing the standard materials of analysis around the principle of *camatkāra*, has hinted at an understanding of poetic language as inherently capable of working

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27 It may not be entirely without meaning that this rather slight verse, used by Viśveśvara to illustrate the ultimate form of *camatkāra*, is addressed to Narasiṃha, like the famous invocation of the *Dhvanyāloka*. We need to bear in mind as well the role of Narasiṃha as tutelary deity in Telangana; the verse brings this god into active presence – perhaps the hidden side of *camatkāra*. See below.

28 On *viśrānti* see *Locana*, ad 2.3 [for *viśrānti* glossed by *camatkāra*: Pullēla Śrīrāmacandrudu, in Ānandavandhana, *Dhvanyāloka*, 1998, loc. cit. (p. 293)].

upon both awareness and what could be called "reality," on the basis of certain phonic properties in their relation to meaning.[29] The next step, already taken by our author in his first chapter, is to subordinate semantic analysis itself to the purely aural level of linguistic operations. In effect, he tells us in the very first, programmatic verse of his text that this is his primary orientation:

vāg-devī vadane mama sphuratu yā dhvany-ātmanollāsinī
varṇa-vyaktim upāgatā ca tadanu sthāna-prayatnâdibhiḥ
bhāvānāṃ pada-sañjñayā vidadhatī tredhā samullekhanā-
ny ānandān anusandadhāti viduṣāṃ prāptā mahā-vākyatām

May Speech come alive in me,
the Goddess vibrant with suggestion
who becomes present through sounds,
each with its place of articulation and the effort
that goes into pronunciation,
who emerges in the three-fold registers of the word
and the states that words convey,
who, fully articulate, embodied in sentences,
aims at happiness
for those who know. (*CC* 1.1)

The goddess Vāc is radiant and alive through the suggestive resonance that is her innermost reality, her *ātman*: Viśveśvara has naturally internalized the compelling perspective of the mature *alaṅkāra* tradition. He is committed, at least in some formal sense, to a view of *dhvani* as the central core of the entire poetic endeavour. However, he has deeper concerns, which seem to have escaped both Raghavan and the learned editor of the text. These immediately become apparent in the characterization of the goddess in terms of the primary phonemes and the technical process of their articulation, even before they achieve syntactical coherence and potential meaningfulness, on one or more levels, in the complete sentence. Indeed, this description culminates in a full utterance (*mahā-vākyatā*) that beautifully enacts the entire process of emergence, an externalization of the phonic and semantic

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29 Recall that a seemingly "technical" matter of *sandhi* proves consequential in the analysis of the first "most delightful" sample verse.

properties latent within Speech in her potential, sometimes enigmatic, pre-articulate existence. The verse is not simply a mechanical repetition or cumulation of analytic perceptions that we recognize from Bhartṛhari (and before him, from the *Pāṇinīya-śikṣā*) as internalized and reorganized by the *alaṅkāra-śāstra* – though it could perhaps be mistaken for such. In the context of the discussion that is about to unfold in the first *vilāsa*, the invocation clearly prepares the reader for a ranked series of theoretical domains. Here the phonemes and their poetic uses have pride of place. Moreover, the process described precisely parallels the actual embodiment of a living divine presence ritually extracted, so to speak, from its prior, latent or potential state – in stone or mind, for example – by a poet whose task and talent is, above all, to achieve this very manifestation. This is a goal somewhat at odds with the idea of inducing a universalized, *rasa*-pervaded awareness, to say the least.

How does the poet manage the business of making divinity come alive? Viśveśvara proceeds to tell us. It is a matter of manipulating the *varṇas* (or *mātṛkās*), all of which have objective concomitants and influences upon the field of energies in which they are externalized – although these objective traits have context-dependent, hence sometimes relativized features as well. The system as a whole is dynamic and continuously in motion. After a brief summary of the major features of phonetic articulation (*prāṇa, varga*, the role of nasalization and so on), we are given a first, schematic, generalized list of useful meta-phonetic properties (for word-initial position, particularly at the opening of a poem):

yathocitam ime varṇā rasâder upayoginaḥ/
nyastā kāvya-mukhe varṇās tat-tad-daivata-mūrtayaḥ//
kartuḥ kārayituḥ śrotuḥ kalpayanti śubhâśubhe/
a-kāraḥ prīti-dāyī syān niṣedhe tu viparyayaḥ//
ā-kāro harṣa-daḥ so 'pi krodhârtyādiṣu nocitaḥ/
i-kārâdi-catuṣkam tu kuryāt tuṣṭi-manorathau//
ṛ-kārâdīni catvāri santati-stambha-hetavaḥ/
ekārâdyāś ca catvāraḥ kāma-vāṅ-mokṣa-bhūti-dāḥ//
lakṣmī-kāraḥ ka-vargaḥ syāc ca-kāraḥ kīrti-nāśanaḥ/
cha-ja-kārau roga-harau jha-ñau tu maraṇa-pradau//
ṭa-ṭha-kārau kheda-karau ḍaḥ śubho ḍhas tv akānti-kṛt/
vastu-lābha-karo ṇas tu ta-kāro vighna-nāśanaḥ//
tha-karo yuddha-kārī syād da-dha-karau dhṛti-pradau/
na-kāras tāpa-kṛt kaś-cid aniṣedhe śubhaḥ smṛtaḥ//

rakṣa-dāyī pa-kāraḥ syāt pha-kāraḥ sādhvasa-pradaḥ/
ārogya-kṛd ba-kāraḥ syād bha-kāraḥ smṛti-bhāgya-kṛt//
ma-kāraḥ kṣoba-kṛd yas tu śrī-do rephas tu dāha-kṛt/
lo jāḍya-kṛd va-kāras tu vāg-ārogyâyuṣāṃ khaniḥ//
ūṣmāṇaḥ sukha-bheda-śrī-nirvāṇa-nidhayaḥ kramāt/
kṣaṃ vinā krūra-saṃyuktaḥ saumyas tyājyo viṣânnavat//

These phonemes generate *rasa* and so on, when appropriately used; placed at the beginning of a poem, each has its own divinity and can cause auspicious or inauspicious results, as the case may be, for the author, the patron and the listener. The sound *a* confers pleasure, unless used in negation (prohibition), when it effects the opposite. *ā* gives joy; it is not appropriate for contexts of anger and suffering. *i*, *ī*, *u* and *ū* make for satisfaction and the fulfillment of wishes. *ṛ*, *ṝ*, *ḷ*, and *ḹ* block continuity [of the family line]. *e*, *ai*, *o*, and *au* lead to desire, speech, release and wealth, respectively. Velar consonants (*k*, *kh*, *g*, *gh*, and *n*) generate prosperity. *c* leads to a loss of fame. *ch* and *j* remove disease. *jh* and *ñ* will kill. *ṭ* and *ṭh* produce depression; *ḍ*, however, is auspicious; *ḍh* diminishes beauty (or brightness). *ṇ* conduces toward achieving what one wants. *ta* destroys obstacles. *th* leads to war. *d* and *dh* produce steadfastness. *n* makes for suffering;[30] but when not used in negation, it can be auspicious. *p* protects. *ph* terrifies. *b* gives health. *bh* is lucky.[31] *m* is disturbing.[32] *y* gives splendid wealth. *r* burns. *l* makes for dullness. *v* is a mine of eloquence, health and long life.[33] The three sibilants and *h* offer happiness, conflict, prosperity and ultimate joy, respectively; but when one of them is combined with *k* to produce *kṣ*, cruelty results – this cluster, however pleasant (it might sound), should be avoided like poisoned food (at the outset). (*CC* 1.18–27)

This list is fairly standard and recurs, with some significant variations, in the works of all the major Andhra *ālaṅkārikas*, including Amṛtânanda

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30 *tāpa*. But more commonly in lists of this sort, *n* is linked to *pratāpa*, courage.
31 *bh* is a subject of widely differing views; some claim it is extremely dangerous, a source of *kleśa* or *tāpa*.
32 Note the convergence here with the *Tantrâloka* view of *ma-kāra*; see Ingalls et al. 1990:36.
33 Bhairava-kavi, in the Telugu *Kavi-gajâṅkuśamu*, thinks v leads to poverty. Amṛtânanda Yogin connects it to disaster: *Alaṅkāra-saṅgraha* 1949:1.29.

Yogin, Anantārya and the anonymous authors of textbooks such as the *Kāvya-lakṣaṇa* and the *Kavi-kaṇṭha-pāśa*. These passages have been studied by C. Sarasvati (1963) in a fine essay, with a conspectus of the entire phonematic series.[34] More to the point, the various identifications are taken up, often at some length, by Telugu poeticians like Appakavi, who also extend the discussion in remarkably innovative and complex directions. Thus, it turns out, for example, that all the phonemes have social class (*varṇa*) values, and a poet should begin his work with a phoneme of the same class or caste as his patron. Velars, palatals, retroflexes and vowels are Brahmins; dentals, labials, *r* and *v* are Kṣatriyas; sibilants, *h*, *y* and *l* are Vaiśyas; and the purely Dravidian phonemes *ts*, *dz*, *r̠* and *ḷ* are Śūdras (*Appakavīyamu* 2.300; see Sarasvati 1963:96–97). In general, aspiration is dangerous and should be avoided at the start of a poem; it kills the patron within a month, as word-initial long vowels also tend to do (*ibid.*:95; see *Appakavīyamu* 2.270). And so on. Further context-dependent empirical observations bring other factors into play, such as the time of day, the season of the year, astrological configurations and the deities presiding over particular phonemes. Such lists are common to the Telugu *alaṅkāra* texts from the fifteenth century on.

Certain logical affinities underlie some of the equations. (Others may be a matter of empirical observation or even experimentation.) If *p* protects, this presumably reflects the Sanskrit root √*pā*, just as *dh* (and also *d*) suggests *dhṛti* and *s* leads to *sukha* (Amṛtānanda Yogin 1.29). One might refer this to a principle of elliptical homophony, or iconic suggestion, such as is pervasive in magic or sorcery – to use two perhaps misleading and needlessly pejorative terms. A Jakobsonian view of linguistic iconicity is perhaps more to the point (see Jakobson 1987). But if we are back in the realm of homonymy, like it or not, we should probably recall the way *śleṣa* so readily presents itself to Viśveśvara when he wishes to exemplify what is "most delightful," the acme of poetic achievement. There is a sense in which the complex semantic operations implicit in *śleṣa* are not entirely removed from the empirical and objective play of phonemes in the hands of a master poet. We will return one more time to this point.

The list of initial phonemes and their properties is, naturally, only the bare beginning. Much more complex equations quickly take over. In

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34 The same author announces that she has also edited the CC (Sarasvati 1963:90, note 1), but her edition apparently is unavailable.

particular, metrical units, analyzed in the standard series of eight triplets used by the prosodists, become critical. This entire field is, after all, one of poets singing in charged metrical patterns that have differential effects upon reality. The full range of permutations is beyond the scope of this essay – and Viśveśvara himself limits his discussion to the basic principles – but we may observe, at least, the values he ascribes to the main metrical building blocks (gaṇa), each referred to by a shorthand syllable:

sarva-mūlaṃ tu ma-gaṇam prāpya sarva-gaṇaḥ śubhaḥ/
pūrvācāryoditaṃ teṣāṃ lakṣma daivaṃ phalaṃ bruve//
kṣemam sarva-gurur datte ma-gaṇo bhūmi-daivataḥ/
karoty arthān ādi-laghur ya-gaṇo vāri-daivataḥ//
bhīti-dāyī madhya-laghū ra-gaṇo vahni-daivataḥ/
kurute 'ntya-gurur nāśaṃ sa-gaṇo vāyu-daivataḥ//
īṣatvam antima-laghus ta-gaṇo vyoma-daivataḥ/
rujā-karo madhya-gurur ja-gaṇo bhānu-daivataḥ//
ādi-guruḥ saukhya-dāyī bha-gaṇaś candra-daivataḥ/
dhanaṅkaraḥ sarva-laghur na-gaṇo yajña-daivataḥ//

The *gaṇa ma* [– – –] is the root metrical unit, always auspicious, defined by the ancient teachers as the divine fruit [of poetry]. With its three long syllables, it provides a secure foundation. Earth is its presiding deity. The *ya-gaṇa*, with its initial short syllable [ˇ – –], produces the effects one wishes.[35] Water is its deity. *Ra-gaṇa*, with its medial short syllable [– ˇ –], is frightening; it has fire for its deity. *Sa-gaṇa* has a long syllable at the end [ˇ ˇ –] and the Wind as its deity; it brings destruction.[36] *Ta-gaṇa* has a short syllable at the end [– – ˇ] and space for its divinity; it gives lordship.[37] *Ja-gaṇa*, with a long syllable in the middle [ˇ – ˇ], brings illness; the sun presides over it. *Bha-gaṇa* – long initial syllable [– ˇ ˇ] – generates happiness; the moon is its deity. *Na-gaṇa*, with three short syllables [ˇ ˇ ˇ], has the sacrifice for its divinity and produces wealth. (31–35)

35 Amṛtānanda Yogin: *ya-gaṇa* is *dhana-kṛt*, "enriching."
36 Others: exile.
37 The most extreme disagreement applies to *ta-gaṇa*, for other *ālaṅkārikas* believe the empty-space metreme means poverty, destruction or sorrow. Context is critical here; see below.

These somewhat isolated and theoretical values are essentially points
of departure for any empirical analysis of a given text; for in this field
of volatile sonar energies that can kill, bring to life, impoverish, enrich,
heal, induce illness, destroy a city, bring down rain and so on,[38] relative
positioning is everything. Metremes combine to sometimes devastating,
sometimes positive effect. *Ja-gana*, which tends toward illness, turns out
to be useful and beneficial if it is placed in the vicinity of *ta-gana* (1.41).
Moreover, purposeful usage and contextually appropriate intention can
overrule inauspicious tendencies: even a deadly *gana* becomes harmless
if it appears in a *mangala* invocation or to mark a person's name or the
name of a god (1.42). Subject matter has its own exigencies; a poem
about love or heroism or friendship can thus begin auspiciously with *r*
or *ś* (1.44). There is also the potentially unnerving fact that many of the
classical *kāvyas* begin with theoretically inauspicious phonemes. In this
case, Viśveśvara assures us, present-day poets can follow the classical
precedents and ignore the laws of phonemic positioning.[39]

Such normative, rule-oriented discussions, which we find in all the
Andhra *alankāra* textbooks from this period, in Sanskrit and in Telugu,
are usually much less interesting than the pragmatic application of this
mode of analysis. Examples abound in the Deccan commentaries and
deserve to be taken seriously, even if at times they may appear casuistic
and rationalizing. Carla Venkatasūri, an eighteenth-century commenta-
tor on the *Sāhityaratnâkara* – from West Godavari District, and thus
naturally immersed in the Andhra *alankāra* way of thinking – begins
his *Naukā* commentary by asking how Dharmasūri could possibly in-
voke the god Vināyaka with a verse opening with the word *ālingya*
[*gāḍham udaram pitur ardha-jāner* ...]. After all, as everyone knows,
initial *ā* is a source of some slight discomfort (*īṣat-paritāpâdi*), while
l burns and brings disaster. Even worse, the *ta-gana*, which has empty
space as its divinity, means emptiness and destruction (*vyoma śūnyaṃ
vitanute dyaur anta-laghuś ca kṣayam iti vacanāt ta-gaṇasya vyoma-
devatākasya kṣaya-kṛttvena gaṇa-śuddhir api nâsti*). Neither the *varṇa*
nor the metreme is proper to the beginning of a book. On the other
hand, continues Venkatasūri, *ā* is also sometimes linked to worship of
the moon (*indu-santoṣa*), and *l* in relation to masculine usages conjures

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38 See Shulman 2001:67–71, for early (Cankam-period) examples of this poetic
    art.
39 prācāṃ prāyeṇa gambhīrā vācas tad adhunātanaiḥ/
    tad-udāhṛti-mātreṇa laṅghyā lakṣaṇa-saṃsthitiḥ// 1.47.

up Indra – and thus both phonemes, insofar as they relate to deities, are actually auspicious. Any syllable that means "god" is non-threatening (*devatâdy-arthakānām aduṣṭatā*) – that is the general (obviously very useful) principle. As for the metrical objection, the proximity of *bha-gaṇa*, with the moon as its deity (combining with the open space of *ta-gaṇa*) will solve the problem. (This would seem to cover all cases of *vasanta-tilakā* metre at the opening of a text, as in the present instance.) For good measure, Veṅkaṭasūri throws in a verse that he claims to have taken from the *Camatkāra-candrikā* (though it is missing from our version), to the effect that *ta-gaṇa* always gives good results to both author and patron if it is conjoined to *bha-gaṇa*. There is something benevolent about the moon in the empty sky. And he also finds textual support for the strong positive reading, in general, of *ta-gaṇa* (as, indeed, our text of *CC* suggests).[40] So everything, after all, is in perfect order. There is one further consideration: It is always a good idea to start a *kāvya* with an indeclinable (*avyaya*), as Dharmasūri did; and the opening verse of Murāri's *Anargha-rāghava* provides Veṅkaṭasūri with another prestigious precedent (*niṣpratyūham* ...; Dharmasūri 1972:2–4).

As this one simple example suggests, a scholar reading a poetic work, or a work on poetics, in late-medieval Andhra (and also further south and west) naturally navigates his way through a dense grid of sonic waves and energies that, while bearing their own inherently positive or negative charges, interact decisively with one another, with various divine presences, and with context, intention, velocity, density, volume, and other determining factors that shift and transform. Poetics, at least in part – a very central part – is the science of such interactions. It theorizes on the basis of empirical observations and inherited, authoritative presuppositions.

Conclusion: The objective life of a poem

We began with the notion of *camatkāra* in its most general sense, as an aesthetic reaction akin to other forms of pleasurable surprise, and we have finished with a notion of *camatkāra* as bound up with the interplay of objective energies unleashed by language in any of its various modes,

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40 Veṅkaṭasūri quotes an unidentified source: *ta-gaṇaḥ sarva-saubhagya-dāyakaḥ sarvadā bhavet.*

with or without a link to meaning. Are we still within the same *śāstra*? Can we still recognize this *śāstra*'s history?

In all likelihood, the continuities are greater than the ruptures and re-framings. What surfaces so powerfully in the Andhra poeticians is not as exotic as it might seem. I have suggested that even within the Kashmiri tradition at its height, in Abhinavagupta, we can sense a tension around issues relating to the essential autonomy of linguistic forces, as distinct from the psychology of the spectator or listener. One explicit expression of this tension revolves around semanticity. A more interesting question is whether Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's Mīmāṃsā-derived terminology exhausts the notion of *bhāvanā* as language-based transformation of some reality. In any case, Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka resumes, or reformulates, a very ancient discussion about the powers of sound, *śabda*, operating at times independently of the intention of the agent who produces it. The *alaṅkāra-śāstra*, from its beginnings – not to speak of Vedic theories of language and Mīmāṃsā debates about their meaning – is aware of this possibility. The Andhra *ālaṅkārikas* take it as one of their primary theoretical challenges.

Abhinavagupta uses the term *camatkāra* in at least four distinct senses. There is the generalized notion of delight triggered by poetry – an involuntary response that gives rise immediately to certain physical symptoms, also called *camatkāra*, in the second sense. There is a particularly rich, cognitively and emotionally nuanced *camatkāra* that comes from what Abhinavagupta calls [*vyabhicāri-*]*bhāva-dhvani*, when various secondary admixtures intensify or vary the dominant *rasa*-experience. Note that this third *camatkāra* requires more than a residual self-awareness on the part of the empirical, observing or listening subject, and that such cognitively qualified, ego-dependent states constitute a continuum that reaches right up to the full moment of *rasa* melt-down and expansion. We tend to forget this fact of experience under the impact of the full-blown *rasa* metaphysics; but the pointed citation of Kālidāsa's *ramyāṇi vīkṣya* points precisely to the restless incompletion that even, or especially, an unobstructed flood of *rasa* may induce. This latter experience is the fourth, rather specific application of *camatkāra*, pregnant with the associations of the *pratyabhijñā* vision of consciousness pulsating with self-reflection, contracting and expanding under the impact of this driving inner rhythm. Once again, it is important to see that *camatkāra* applies to both phases of this pulsation. This observation has implications

for our understanding of Abhinavagupta's polemical stance toward Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka's *bhāvanā*.

What is it, then, that creates poetry? Abhinavagupta, perhaps reacting to his predecessors, insists that the final ground of poetry is experience. He gives us an exquisitely refined articulation of his own experience in this domain. But the South Indian *alaṅkāra* school boldly offers an alternative. Poetry is produced by the living word. In effect, it is a kind of sorcery that never leaves the world as it finds it. Sound has powers of its own – creative, destructive, transformative in various patterns and modes – and these powers can be studied, categorized, analyzed and (above all) used. They impinge upon experience in mostly objective ways and give rise to the same physical and emotional signs that Abhinavagupta mentions:

An arrow shot by an archer
or a poem made by a poet
should cut through your heart,
jolting the head.
If it doesn't, it's no arrow,
it's no poem. (Nannĕ Coḍa, *Kumārasambhavamu* 1.41)

This is Nannĕ Coḍa (possibly twelfth century), another maverick figure, who was largely forgotten by the Telugu tradition until he was rediscovered at the start of the twentieth century,[41] but who seems already to know something of what the later Telugu poeticians felt to be so central – something of the empirical and experimental nature of the poetic enterprise. Subjective expressivity is no more a part of this enterprise than is any sort of trans-empirical, universalized and intra-psychic revelation. Poetry, in this light, is certainly not about representation, in any sense of the word, and not really about metaphysical truths or an experience of ultimacy, though it does deal in truth. In a sense, poetry is not "about" anything. It is a supremely effective means of working with, through or upon what is real.

For this, it requires a grammar, which guides the poet in his play with the syllables. Hence, the first poet and the first grammarian are, in Telugu, in principle fused in the foundational figure of Nannaya (see Shulman

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41 By Mānavalli Rāmakrṣṇakavi. See the discussion of Nannĕ Coḍa in Narayana Rao and Shulman 2002:67–75.

2005). Sorcerers can learn from other sorcerers, but handbooks may save time. By the time such works are produced in Sanskrit at the Rācakŏṇḍa and Kŏṇḍavīḍu courts, various theoretical problems, which have their own interest and integrity, define both the genre and the direction of discussion. The great works of the *alaṅkāra-śāstra* are fully assimilated into the Andhra *ālaṅkārikas'* discourse, providing it with a normative structure and an entire lexicon of concepts; a poetics of suggestion, incorporating the earlier logical studies of figuration, is integrated into the world of colliding, competing, interpenetrating verbal frequencies.

It is always helpful to remember, however, that living examples of the peripatetic, quick-witted and practically effective poet-sorcerer were part of the poeticians' familiar milieu. Sometimes the latter imitate the former – for example, in invocation verses like the one we quoted from Viśveśvara (*CC* 1.1). In such verses, one often recognizes the highly pragmatic goal of bringing a deity into existence or intensifying his or her active presence. Such ritual efforts, which generated a not inconsiderable theology, are no less objectivist than any other aspect of this poetic praxis. Poetic production is in no sense limited to this field – the great Telugu court-poets such as Pĕddana and Kṛṣṇadevarāya have very powerful thematic concerns and an expressive drive that has its own dynamic and diverse directions – but neither should one ignore the objective sonar and musical potentialities at work in *mahākāvya* masterpieces such as Bhaṭṭu-mūrti's *Vasu-caritramu*, to mention only one particularly compelling example.

Such a perspective allows for sometimes surprising connections. Many strands fed into these late-medieval *alaṅkāra* works. Notions of *guṇa*, *rīti* and *vṛtti*, for example, take on meaning that potentially goes far beyond issues of style. The critic's appreciation of a poem in terms of a set of classical criteria stands side by side with questions of its effectiveness in the mantric or sonar sense. Figuration, too, may be driven by this rearticulated frame. Hence, again, the special interest of *śleṣa*.[42] Logically, figurative *śleṣa* is an extension of the iconic affinities of phonematic pragmatics. Language has within it the potential to superimpose apparently diverse realities and to tease out the secret bonds among them, while simultaneously conjuring up a presence or radically altering perception. Unexpected combinations like these are never innocent, nor do they disappear without leaving traces. "Magic," broadly stated, is often

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42 Discussed at length in Viśveśvarakavicandra 1969, 6.8–10 (pp. 100–104).

a kind of *śleṣa* – linguistically powered and controlled. On a somewhat deeper and more general level, we can perhaps glimpse here something that is always part of the enchantment active within language.

Referring to poetry's other – musical – side and the discovery of a complementary, equally perfected sonar system, Thomas Mann's thaumaturgic composer Leverkühn declares: "Vernunft und Magie ... begegen sich wohl und werden eins in dem, was man Weisheit, Einweihung nennt, im Glauben an die Sterne, die Zahlen ...."[43] And there is Osip Mandelstam's penetrating, somewhat similar vision, mobilized in debate with his Symbolist contemporaries: Symbolism, he said, is entirely unnecessary, since *any* proper use of language is an incantation.

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43 Thomas Mann, *Doktor Faustus*, Frankfurt a/m: Fischer Verlag, 1999, 261–262.

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