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"Intensities of Feeling": Emotion, Espionage, and the Ottoman Empire

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ABSTRACT
Situated at the intersection of postcolonial studies, affect studies, and narratology, this essay explores the emotional and discursive consequences of the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Through a close reading of Barry Unsworth's *Pascali's Island* (1980), it traces the process by which certain sociopolitical forces give rise to dominant "structures of feeling" within decolonising societies; and it proposes that these affective qualities also make their presence felt within literary discourse, where they penetrate even the deeper reaches of form, genre, and style. More specifically, I would like to suggest that the sudden decline of the Ottoman Empire, following the revolution of 1908, generates an overwhelming feeling of dissonance within *Pascali's Island* – and that this negative emotion ultimately infiltrates the discourse itself, creating a corresponding sense of disjuncture, "offishness", and incongruity.

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> Nothing escapes the vigilance and the activity of … the Sultan. Indeed, no monarch has better deserved the blessings of his subjects than [His Imperial Majesty] Abdülhamid.
>
> *Le Moniteur Oriental*, 31 August 1896

> A generation grew up under [Abdülhamid's] sway which was the constant object of suspicion. Espionage is deadly, and creates a nation of liars … The presence of spies in the house, the mosque, the street, indeed everywhere, led to subterfuge and lying, to universal suspicion.
>
> Edwin Pears, *Life of Abdul Hamid*, 1917

I

On 3 July 1908, an officer of the Ottoman Third Army, Major Ahmed Niyazi, led two hundred soldiers in an uprising against Sultan Abdülhamid II – demanding that the Sultan reinstate the constitution he had abrogated some thirty years earlier. At first, the autocratic Abdülhamid refused to comply; but as the uprising gained popular support and spread throughout the provinces, he finally gave way. On 23 July, after meeting with his advisers, he issued a decree announcing that parliament was to be reconvened and the 1876 constitution restored. The public response to this declaration was overwhelming:

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> [C]rowds gathered in the public spaces of Istanbul and provincial towns and cities across the empire to celebrate the return of constitutional life … Over the following days, red-and-white banners emblazoned with the revolutionary slogan "Justice, Equality, and Fraternity" festooned city streets. Photographs of Niyazi … and the military's other "Freedom Heroes" were posted in town squares across the empire. Political activists gave public orations about the blessings of the constitution, sharing their hopes and aspirations with the general public.[1]

Under Abdülhamid's rule, newspapers and magazines had been heavily censored, and the secret police (or *hafiye*) became a vital component of the Sultan's repressive state apparatus. The *hafiye* employed a large number of spies and informers, operating both within the capital and throughout the empire, whose reports (known as *jurnals*) would eventually find their way to the Sultan himself.[2] The ubiquity of these spies created a general climate of suspicion and fear, which only intensified in the latter days of Abdülhamid's reign (1876–1909). As one historian wrote in 1917, "each year witnessed a steady growth in the number of [*jurnals*]". Originally devised "to inform the Sultan of what his subjects were plotting against him, the system of espionage developed to such an extent that, in popular belief, if three Turkish subjects were seen together, one at least would be certain to be a spy". In public places, people were "afraid to be seen conversing"; and "[e]ven on the occasion of a family gathering, as at a wedding, spies were constantly present and sent in a [*jurnal*] to the Palace".[3] Not surprisingly, one of the first decrees to be issued after the revolution of 1908 announced the abolition of the *hafiye* and the eradication of its vast system of spies and informers. By then, however, such a decree would have been little more than a formality, for in the days following the revolution, many of those who were closely associated with the regime were forced to flee or go into hiding. Zia Bey, for instance, the head of the *hafiye*, fled Constantinople for London under an assumed name and in disguise – and he was obliged to kill a man, he later claimed, in order to do so. "I am glad to be here", Zia Bey said in an interview with the *New York Times*,

> and it is not possible that I will ever return to Turkey. You must remember that at the bidding of my superiors I have been the means of ruining ministers, officers, and government officials; and 170 [people], many of them members of the most honorable families, have disappeared during my term of office … To be denounced by the secret police was sufficient to ruin anyone. Can you wonder that Turkey has seen the last of me?[4]

Yet not all of Zia Bey's "employees" were so fortunate. Many of those who were unable to flee or hide became the subject of violent retaliation, both within Constantinople and elsewhere in the empire. One Palestinian writer later recalled the "explosion of resentments in the first days of the revolution against those government officials great and small known to be a spy or corrupt or oppressive".[5] And it is precisely this fate, this

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[1]Rogan, 5–6.
[2]Perhaps inevitably, many of these reports were either embellished or patently false. Writing in 1896, the Egyptian journalist Ibrahim al-Muwaylihi observed that "[p]eople have now gone to such lengths in distracting His Majesty the Sultan that they submit to him some one hundred and fifty reports every day, every last one of them a tissue of lies and falsehood. Among the more remarkable aspects of this situation is that, when one of these spies is caught lying, he is not punished for it; the thought being that one day he may actually provide some genuine information" (al-Muwaylihi, 27).
[3]Pears, 199–200.
[4]"Secretly Murdered."
[5]Rogan, 6.

spectre of summary justice, that Basil Pascali – the narrator of Barry Unsworth's *Pascali's Island* (1980) – fears above all else. For the novel is set in July of 1908, and over the preceding two decades, Pascali has been one of the Sultan's most prolific and loyal spies.[6]

Although the novel's geographical setting has been left deliberately vague (the story takes place on an unidentified Aegean island that presumably belongs to the Ottoman administrative province known as the Vilayet of the Archipelago), its historical background is sharply delineated and becomes a source of increasing anxiety for Pascali as the narrative progresses. As we shall see, he is well aware of the impending collapse of the Ottoman Empire and of the danger he faces as a consequence of the espionage he has been practising for the last twenty years. But this is not his only preoccupation. The novel itself takes the form of a *jurnal*, Pascali's final report to the Sultan in Constantinople, and in it he describes the appearance on the island of a mysterious man named Anthony Bowles. Not long after his arrival, Bowles secures a temporary lease to a piece of land that he believes may be of some archeological significance. When he eventually discovers several "valuable" artefacts on this site, the original titleholder, the Ottoman governor of the island, is obliged to pay a large sum of money in order to reclaim the lease. Although we later learn that Bowles is in fact perpetrating an elaborate fraud, in an ironic reversal, he actually *does* discover something of value on the governor's land: a large bronze statue from the early Hellenistic period. And having been betrayed by Pascali, in a curious act of "motiveless malignity", he is finally killed while trying to abscond with the ancient statue he has unearthed.

Under these historical circumstances, and given the nature of the plot outlined above, one might imagine that the narrative's dominant structure of feeling would be suspicion or fear; and it is certainly true that such feelings do carry some significance within *Pascali's Island*.[7] I would like to suggest, however, that the novel's governing "mood" – its primary affective attitude toward the world it describes and the audience it addresses – is one of *dissonance*.[8] More specifically, I shall be exploring two different types of dissonance: interpretive and communicative. In the first case, as the Ottoman Empire

[6]There are, of course, two significant dates or "temporalities" here: the year of the novel's publication (1980) and the year of its setting (1908). My focus in the following pages will be on the second of these two dates, and I will be arguing that the novel's governing affective quality – the feeling of dissonance, of being ill at ease or out of place – is generated by these specific historical circumstances. In other words, the feeling of dissonance that achieves such ubiquity in *Pascali's Island* can be directly attributed, on my reading, to the internal social and political logic of the narrative itself. This reading emerges out of my belief that literary narratives assume a certain autonomy from their author, and that the discursive representation of a particular historical period – in this case, the year 1908 – can have a profound influence on the affective lives of the characters who inhabit this fictional world (thus giving us some insight into the lived experience of its real-world referent). "[O]nce conceived in the vision of their creator", Georg Lukács writes, "[such characters] live an independent life of their own; their comings and goings, their development, their destiny is dictated by the inner dialectic of their social and individual existence. [For no] writer is a true realist – or even a truly good writer, if he can direct the evolution of his own characters at will" (Lukács, 11).

[7]The phrase "structure of feeling" is derived from the work of Raymond Williams, who uses it to describe the "specifically affective elements of consciousness" that could be said to characterise any given historical period (Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 132). According to Williams, the "best evidence" of a structure of feeling can be found encoded within "the actual conventions of literary or dramatic writing" – in the affective and aesthetic qualities, the phobic and philic impulses, that achieve a certain salience within a work of literature (Williams, *Politics and Letters*, 159).

[8]In Arlie Russell Hochschild's classic sociological study *The Managed Heart*, she employs the term "emotional labour" to describe any form of work that involves "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display"; and when there is a pronounced discrepancy between feeling and display, she refers to this sensation as "*emotive dissonance*" (Hochschild, 7, 90). Although I shall argue that Pascali does in fact perform emotional labour in his work as an Ottoman spy, the feeling of dissonance he experiences should not be confused with Hochschild's notion of "emotive dissonance" as it relates to much broader processes of social and political transformation and does not simply emerge out of this contradiction between being and doing.

disintegrates, Pascali becomes increasingly convinced that the inhabitants of the island have discovered his true identity and that he is about to be killed for his treachery. As readers, we are never entirely sure whether this conviction should be taken at face value, particularly as we are given clues that would seem to indicate that Pascali may simply be suffering from paranoia – that he may be misinterpreting or "misreading" perfectly ordinary exchanges. We are also led to believe that Pascali has developed what the psychologist Peter Brugger, in a fascinating analysis of Strindberg, describes as a "disinhibition of [the] associative processes".[9] In other words, he becomes convinced that everything he sees carries an underlying significance and that every disparate particle of meaning is ultimately connected in some way. "The world of sense", he declares, "signals to us, but all messages are encoded. The true *frisson* is in [the] perception of the pattern, the overall design, not in the detail, however glowing".[10] This paranoid misreading of reality is, I shall argue, a form of interpretive dissonance engendered by Pascali's social and political circumstances, by the inevitable collapse of an empire that he has served since he was twenty-five years old. The second type of dissonance to which these circumstances give rise is communicative, for as well as struggling to interpret the substance of the story he is telling, Pascali also proves incapable of conveying that story in an appropriate discursive register. As mentioned earlier, the narrative takes the form of a *jurnal* addressed directly to the Sultan himself, yet both the subject matter of the report and its governing tone are entirely inappropriate for this particular "genre". And if we consider the novel as a work of literature, we encounter further generic dissonance. In this case, I am referring to the disjuncture between the novel's discursive register (lyrical, atmospheric, contemplative, etc.) and its story (which demonstrates all of the characteristics we would typically associate with a thriller). Instead of telling the story as it "ought" to be told, from a generic perspective, Pascali saturates the discourse with atmospheric "indices", and thus demonstrates, once more, the extent to which he has become dissociated from the world he now occupies. Simply put, he has become an anachronism, a creature belonging to another age; and as I hope to demonstrate, this is what ultimately generates the novel's pervasive feeling of dissonance – causing our narrator to misinterpret much of what he sees and to misjudge much of what he writes.

II

By 1908, even before the revolution, it was obvious that the Ottoman Empire had long since entered its terminal phase. Some thirty years earlier, in 1875, the Ottoman treasury had declared bankruptcy; and in 1878, the empire had suffered a humiliating defeat in the Russo-Turkish War (1877–78). In the Treaty of Berlin, which was signed later that year, the Ottomans lost roughly 40 per cent of their territory (including three of their Anatolian provinces) and 20 per cent of their population.[11] As a consequence of the treaty, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was given licence to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina; the independence of Serbia, Romania, and Montenegro was formally recognised; and, as a

[9]Brugger, 207.
[10]Unsworth, 30.
[11]Shaw and Shaw, 191.

strategic preliminary to the signing, the Ottoman territory of Cyprus was ceded to Britain.[12] The Ottomans were also to lose much of their North African territory during the nineteenth century. French colonies were established in Algeria (1830) and Tunisia (1881); and in 1882, taking advantage of an internal political crisis, the British occupied the Ottoman tributary state of Egypt.[13]

From the very beginning of *Pascali's Island*, it is clear that our narrator is aware of this steady decline. In a rare passage that actually does resemble an intelligence report, Pascali acknowledges the presence of "rebel forces" in the interior: "We see their fires", he notes. "Your troops are ambushed in lonely places. These people come down into the villages for supplies and nobody says anything".[14] He also refers more than once to the "protracted moribundity" of the empire, and concedes that the imperial bureaucracy has become "petrified at an advanced stage of corruption".[15] But it is still difficult for him to accept that the end is inevitably approaching. At one point, a local doctor conveys some "very bad" news from Constantinople. "The Sultanate", he says, "the Caliphate, the whole structure – it is all toppling over … [Abdülhamid] never leaves the palace now. He lives behind locked doors with no one to rely on but the women of his harem and his Albanian guard". Pascali is at first sceptical: "I am merely reporting what he said about you, Excellency. I am not saying that I believe it. You have ruled for more than thirty years, and in that time there have been many crises".[16] Yet as the novel progresses, he hears other rumours that would seem to confirm this dire prognosis:

> They say that you keep yourself locked away in your palace at Yildiz, for fear of assassins; that you never emerge, not even for the Friday visit to the mosque; that your troops in Macedonia and the northern provinces are openly in revolt and preparing to march on the capital; that you are without support except for your women and eunuchs and the palace guard – who are themselves owed their pay and probably disaffected – in short, Excellency, [they say] that the whole edifice of your administration is about to collapse.[17]

And it is his slowly solidifying belief in these rumours that leaves Pascali with such a strong sense of "dissonance" – alienating him from the people among whom he has lived for twenty years, making him feel somehow out of place or "ill at ease", as if he is no longer "at home in the world".[18] This is the kind of *offishness* ("in the sense of 'off-key' or 'off the mark'") that Sianne Ngai associates with the qualities of incongruity and disproportionality; and as she observes, it is also "very much in keeping with the way Aristotle characterizes irritation in the *Nicomachean Ethics*".[19] In Pascali's case, he believes it is "the trade of informing" that has "lost [him] the world", for the "role of informer severs in time all bonds". But it is not just his career in espionage that has left him feeling this way. It is also the fact that he has been "abandoned" by his employers, the *hafiye*, that he survives only as an anachronistic relic of a bygone age, and that the

[12] Finkel, 486.
[13] The empire would face further territorial losses in the immediate aftermath of the revolution. On 5 October 1908, Bulgaria declared its independence; on 6 October, the Austro-Hungarian Empire formally annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina; and on the same day, Crete announced its permanent union with Greece (Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, 7–8).
[14] Unsworth, 49.
[15] Ibid., 23, 93.
[16] Ibid., 133–34.
[17] Ibid., 138.
[18] Ibid., 61, 66.
[19] Ngai, 75. Irascible people, Aristotle writes, "get angry quickly and with the wrong persons and at the wrong things and more than is right" (Aristotle, 73).

putative recipient of this, his final report, may already have been deposed – may even be dead.[20]

In the latter years of Abdülhamid's reign, the Sultan became increasingly paranoid. He lived in constant fear of assassination or deposition, and he was rarely seen in public. The navy was neglected (having played a significant role in the 1876 deposition of Sultan Abdülaziz); the army was forbidden to use live ammunition in practice; and the Sultan himself was said to carry a gold-inlaid revolver at all times.[21] As a consequence of this paranoia, a strict censorship was imposed on every publication within the empire. The use of certain words – such as "republic", "constitution", or "crown prince" – was forbidden. An Ottoman dictionary published in 1905 contained an entry for "tyrant", but only with reference to a small American bird.[22] The name of the deposed Sultan Murad V was not to be mentioned either; so a newspaper article, in 1904, reporting on the restoration of the fifteenth-century mosque of Murad II in Bursa, referred instead to "the mosque of the heaven-dwelling father of his majesty Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror".[23] And needless to say, assassination was another subject that had to be carefully avoided. Thus, to give just one example of many, when the King and Queen of Serbia were killed in 1903, it was reported in Turkey that they had died (simultaneously) of indigestion.[24] In the novel, Abdülhamid's fear of assassination or deposition is mentioned several times, and even Pascali is finally forced to concede that "[t]he Sultan has been paranoid for years", which is why "there are more spies than police in Constantinople".[25] But despite the suggestion that he and Abdülhamid may share "the same sweating intimations of dissolution", Pascali does not quite recognise the fact that this subjective feeling of paranoia has, in the late Ottoman Empire, become an objective (or intersubjective) "mood" – a mood that should be associated not only with the paranoid figure of the Sultan, cowering in his palace at Yildiz, but also with the empire itself, as it faces its inevitable demise.[26] In *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience*, Mikel Dufrenne describes a similar kind of emotion, one that assumes a decentred, free-floating status, becoming "a supervening or impersonal principle in accordance with which we [might] say that there is an electric atmosphere or, as Trenet sang, that there is joy in the air".[27] I would like to suggest that this was also the case in the final years of the Ottoman Empire; only, instead of excitement or joy, the dominant affective quality circulating within the empire's steadily contracting boundaries was one of paranoia. And although Abdülhamid served as the supreme instantiation of this dysphoric feeling, it was a mood that penetrated even the deeper recesses of his empire – such as the small Aegean island on which Pascali has lived (and spied) for the last twenty years.[28]

[20]Unsworth, 45.
[21]Hale, 29; Pears, 335.
[22]Goodwin, 313.
[23]Lewis, 187–88.
[24]Ibid., 188. One could argue, however, that Abdülhamid's paranoia was not entirely unfounded. His predecessors – Abdülaziz and Murad V – had both been deposed; opposition groups had tried to remove him from power in 1895, 1896, and 1902–3; and two separate conspiracies to assassinate him had been discovered in 1899 and 1905 (Finkel, 496).
[25]Unsworth, 172.
[26]Ibid., 62.
[27]Dufrenne, 168.
[28]Around this time, paranoia was in the air elsewhere too. In 1879, Richard von Krafft-Ebing published his *Textbook of Insanity*, in which he described the typical features of "persecutory paranoia" as follows: "The persons about the patient seem strange and even suspicious. The external world seems in general to be changed, especially in reference

On the first page of the novel, Pascali writes that this will be his final report, as the local Greeks have discovered his duplicity: "I have suspected it for some time, there have been indications, but it was only this morning that I became convinced of it".[29] In this instance, he is referring to an old fiacre-driver who, in a sign of "hostility and contempt", spat on the ground "near [his] left shoe".[30] Then later, at the Hotel Metropole, Pascali passes a group of Greeks sitting out on the veranda. "I was hardly aware of it at the time", he says, "but I seem to remember now that Politis [the cotton merchant] did not return my greeting, and that the whole group was silent as I passed. I am almost sure this is so".[31] The following day, continuing his report, he describes this scene once more: "I remember the expression … on those faces in the hotel last night. Politis, the priest's brother, the other Greeks there. Not hostility, no longer hostility, but the stillness of a final judgment on their faces … They know".[32] Similar encounters follow, all interpreted in the same way. On one such occasion, Pascali accompanies a visiting American tourist to a church service celebrating the assumption of a local saint. During the ceremony, the saint's effigy topples over and disintegrates on the floor. Suddenly the singing falters, Pascali says, and dies away:

> Then those immediately around me, men and women, turned and looked at me, and there was the same expression on every face: not accusation, but *knowledge*, the final knowledge of some utterly detestable creature … Several people made the sign of the cross. They blamed me for the debacle, Excellency. Now my treachery was confirmed … A man standing close by … suddenly stretched out his arm toward me, the fingers splayed and rigid. This is the curse on the five senses, Excellency. Others followed suit. I lost my nerve. I thought they were going to kill me. I turned, shaking myself free of Mrs. Marchant, leaving her, unforgivably, alone and unprotected, and plunged blindly through the crowd. Somehow they parted for me. I rushed out of the church, down the steps, stumbling in my haste and panic, and so home.[33]

At this stage of the novel, we are still inclined to believe our narrator's interpretation of such episodes. If he says that the crowd was hostile, if he says that they "blamed him for the debacle", then we naturally assume that this was the case. Later, however, we catch glimpses of a possible alternative to this reading, as other perspectives come into view that directly contradict the interpretation we have been offered by the narrative's sole

to the personality of the patient. It seems to him as if the world did not wish him well; that there was something against him in the air" (Krafft-Ebing, 382). And then, in 1911, Freud published his famous analysis of the case of Daniel Paul Schreber, a German judge who had developed an "ingenious delusional structure", which could be summarised thus: "He believed that he had a mission to redeem the world and to restore it to its lost state of bliss. This, however, he could only bring about if he were first transformed from a man into a woman" (Freud, "Psychoanalytic Notes," 14, 16). Schreber was also suffering from the paranoid delusion that he was being persecuted by a Professor Paul Flechsig, the director of a psychiatric clinic in which he had been confined during the years 1884–85 and 1894. According to Freud, this delusion came about as a consequence of Schreber's repressed homosexual desire for Flechsig: "The exciting cause of his illness, then, was an outburst of homosexual libido; the object of this libido was probably from the very first his doctor, Flechsig; and his struggles against the libidinal impulse produced the conflict which gave rise to the symptoms" (Freud, "Psychoanalytic Notes," 43) Or to put it another way, Freud argued that the "principal forms of paranoia can all be represented as contradictions of the single proposition: '*I* (a man) *love him* (a man)'" – assuming, in the first instance, the form of an internal contradiction ("I do not *love* him – I *hate* him"), before being projected outward, onto the figure of the "persecutor": "*He hates* (persecutes) *me*, which will justify me in hating him" (Freud, "Psychoanalytic Notes," 63).

[29]Unsworth, 9.
[30]Ibid., 14–15.
[31]Ibid., 24.
[32]Ibid., 45.
[33]Ibid., 104–5.

focalising figure. In short, we begin to suspect that Pascali may well have internalised Abdülhamid's paranoia, that he may have come to share the "interpretive dissonance" that characterised the last days of the Ottoman Empire. On the morning after the disastrous ceremony described above, Pascali encounters Politis, the cotton merchant, while he is out walking. The following dialogue ensues:

> [I]nstead of ignoring me, as I had expected, [Politis] smiled and paused. "You did not speak to us the other evening," he said.
>
> "Speak to you?" I said. I was bewildered. They had failed to speak to *me*, Excellency.
>
> "Yes," he said. "At the Metropole. Now you have more important friends, eh?"
>
> "No, not at all," I said. "Any time … I would be glad –"
>
> But Politis moved away, still smiling.[34]

For a moment, Pascali questions his interpretation of the earlier encounter: "Does he mean to be friendly? Could I possibly have been mistaken? If about him, then about all the others …" Yet just as quickly he dismisses this possibility. Instead, he decides that Politis' disarming affability must be some kind of ploy – "a device to allay my suspicions until they are ready to act … [B]ut it will not succeed. I will not be lulled".[35] Some time later, we are given a similar glimpse of what may lie beyond Pascali's field of vision when Bowles gently interrogates him about "that business in the church [the] other evening":

> "[Mrs Marchant] says you ran off and left her."
>
> "She was in no danger," I said. "None whatever."
>
> "And you were?"
>
> "Didn't she tell you how they all turned on me and started making the curse sign at me?"
>
> He looked at me with a sort of faintly smiling curiosity.
>
> "She says they were simply crossing themselves."[36]

Reading this passage, we are once more obliged to consider the possibility that our narrator may be misapprehending reality; but to the very end, this is something that Pascali himself refuses to contemplate. "Could it be that I am mistaken, deluded", he muses, following another strangely amicable encounter, "that there is no feeling against me?" Immediately, unequivocally, with all the force of an interdiction, the standard response follows. "Impossible", he says. "[H]ave I not seen it on their faces, do I not see it a hundred times a day?"[37]

Of course, there is always a chance that Pascali may be right. Perhaps the local people *have* discovered his true identity; perhaps they *are* planning to murder him for his treachery. But by the end of the novel, it seems unlikely that this should be the case. More

[34]Ibid., 106.
[35]Ibid., 106.
[36]Ibid., 129–30.
[37]Ibid., 139.

plausibly, it would appear that Pascali is suffering from what Sigmund Freud calls "interpretative delusions".[38] He is determined to ascribe meaning to even the most trivial episodes, to fill the world with purpose – so that every encounter signifies something, and nothing happens by chance. As Freud, writing in 1901, put it,

> A striking and generally observed feature of the behaviour of [paranoiacs] is that they attach the greatest significance to the minor details of other people's behaviour which we ordinarily neglect, interpret them and make them the basis of far-reaching conclusions … The category of what is accidental and requires no motivation … is thus rejected by the [paranoiac] as far as the psychical manifestations of other people are concerned. Everything he observes in other people is full of significance, everything can be interpreted.[39]

Paranoia is, then, a kind of hermeneutical pathology, a distortion of our ordinary interpretive processes. Instead of seeing reality "as it is", a paranoiac typically ascribes an erroneous meaning to episodes or encounters, gestures or utterances, that may carry an entirely different significance or none at all. In some ways, one could also describe this as a "narratological" pathology – for although in reality we may encounter a complete absence of meaning, in narratives, as Roland Barthes has convincingly argued, everything signifies, every notation serves a discursive function. "Since what is noted always appears as notable", he writes, even an apparently insignificant detail "ceaselessly revives the semantic tension of the discourse, says ceaselessly that there has been, that there is going to be, meaning".[40] As Barthes acknowledges, "[t]his is what separates art from 'life,'" discourse from reality.[41] Only, for a paranoiac like Pascali, there is no such distinction – everything (in the world) signifies, every "notation" out there carries some kind of meaning. And of course the meaning that paranoiacs ascribe with such profligacy to the world around them is also typically threatening or hostile, a source of considerable anxiety, even fear ("It is said you live in hourly fear, Excellency").[42] For Pascali, this is certainly the case. Even a simple phatic exchange comes freighted with an underlying substructure of meaning; and in his mind, this meaning almost always assumes an antagonistic quality.

But why should he feel this way? What, precisely, has caused this interpretive dissonance? I would argue, first of all, that he has internalised the paranoia that seemed almost ubiquitous in the latter years of Abdülhamid's reign. However, it is also worth noting the extent to which paranoia has, for twenty years, been a crucial part of the "emotional labour" that Pascali has performed as an Ottoman spy.[43] To identify the "true" meaning of the everyday utterance, to see the offhand and accidental as deliberate, to organise the contingencies of life into a discernable pattern – these have been some of the key requirements of his "job description". According to the philosopher Paolo Virno, many of the dysphoric feelings produced by the capitalist system have since been reintegrated into that system and reconfigured as "desirable" professional qualities. "Fears of particular dangers", he writes, "haunt the workday like a mood that cannot be

[38]Freud, "Further Remarks," 185.
[39]Freud, *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, 225.
[40]Barthes, "Introduction," 267.
[41]Ibid., 261.
[42]Unsworth, 62.
[43]As mentioned above, the sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild uses the term "emotional labour" to describe those occupations where the "*emotional style of offering [a particular] service is part of the service itself*" (Hochschild, 5).

escaped". Yet this fear is "transformed into an operational requirement, a special tool of the trade. Insecurity about one's place during periodic innovation, fear of losing recently gained privileges, and anxiety over being 'left behind' translate into flexibility, adaptability, and a readiness to reconfigure oneself".[44] In Pascali's case, however, it is paranoia that becomes an "operational requirement", a desirable – even essential – professional quality. For years, he has made a rather meagre living from this particular dysphoric feeling, this "mood that cannot be escaped"; but as the empire collapses, his paranoia loses its "productivity". Instead of being directed at a specific object in a profitable way, it becomes an all-pervasive, freely circulating mood that attaches itself to anything within range. In this instance, naturally, the subject of the feeling is still Pascali, but its "sphere of influence" has now expanded to include almost everyone else on the island ("surrounded as [he is] by enemies").[45] Moreover, as the pathological features of Pascali's affective life begin to merge with those of the Sultan, his silent addressee, the delusional structure he has erected over the years becomes increasingly personalised. What may previously have constituted a threat against the empire now constitutes a threat against Pascali himself – so closely, so intimately, does he identify with the reclusive figure of Sultan Abdülhamid II.

One of the primary discursive consequences of this interpretive dissonance is an inability to recognise varying degrees of narrative value (or functionality). If every episode or utterance carries equal meaning, and if all these disparate particles of meaning ultimately cohere, then it is almost impossible to distinguish between a detail that is of genuine significance within the narrative (what Barthes would call a nucleus) and one that is dispensable or interchangeable (a catalyser).[46] Under these circumstances, even the most inconsequential detail can be seen to carry enormous significance. When Pascali visits the Hotel Metropole, for example, in the early pages of the novel, he notices "old Mrs. Socratus, sitting reading the *Figaro Littéraire*"; and there are other elderly people there, too, "for the most part sitting very still". Instead of recognising these people for what they really are (personified catalysers), he ascribes a profound allegorical significance to their postures:

> They were sitting very still, Excellency. Age and stillness combined at this moment to make them seem emblematic to me. I loitered for a while among the pillars, formulating sentences which might or might not go into this report. The good informer sees parallels everywhere, and this careful immobility reminded me of the state of the Empire.[47]

While it may be legitimate to see these old people as indices of atmosphere (within a particular type of novelistic discourse), if we are reading the report *as a report*, it would be hard to justify their inclusion. And I certainly would not regard Pascali's failure to identify appropriate sentences, or his tendency to see "parallels everywhere", as a sign of a "good informer". To some degree, of course, the ability to derive significance from even the smallest detail is another "operational requirement" of the profession of spying; but this form of expertise can also be taken too far. In the report that Pascali is composing, he frequently demonstrates an inability to distinguish between the

[44]Virno, 17.
[45]Unsworth, 138.
[46]For more on this distinction between nuclei and catalysers, see Barthes, "Introduction," 265.
[47]Unsworth, 23.

genuinely "significant detail" and the inconsequential catalyser (the detail that carries no value whatsoever as intelligence).[48] On page 36, for instance, a description of the smoke from the rebels' fires is surrounded, on one side, by a lengthy description of the sea (there is, he says, "a kind of luminosity on the face of the water") and, on the other side, by a description of what he will have for breakfast that morning ("olives and bread and salami"). Elsewhere, we see the same thing, only in a more compressed form. On his way to the Hotel Metropole, Pascali pauses for a moment outside the magistrate's house: "I breathed [the] scented air from his garden, gulps of jasmine and mint. His shutters were not closed. *I saw two men in the room overlooking the steps, none of them known to me*. Out at sea fishing lanterns in a looped chain …"[49] I have italicised the potentially significant sentence here (although the Sultan has not been afforded the same courtesy) as it is easily missed among all the "filler" that has been granted an equal, if not superior, status within the hierarchy of the narrative. Indeed, Pascali himself misses this particular detail, so focused is he on everything else within the field of representation – on the insignificant detail, the meaningless utterance, and the innocent gesture.

Almost imperceptibly, we have now reached the point at which interpretive dissonance gives rise to communicative dissonance. For as I shall argue in the following section, Pascali's inability to identify varying degrees of narrative value, along with the "disinhibition of [his] associative processes", makes it almost impossible for him to achieve an appropriate discursive register, whether he is composing an intelligence report addressed to Abdülhamid II, the thirty-fourth Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, or simply serving as the autodiegetic narrator of a novel called *Pascali's Island*.[50]

III

When Pascali first encounters the newly arrived Bowles on the veranda of the Metropole, things very quickly go awry. Or as Pascali himself says, "I must admit that, as far as my personal relationship with [Bowles] is concerned, I have not made a very good beginning. Things went wrong from the start".[51] Coming to a halt at Bowles' table, he "pause[s] rather too long", having been "momentarily disabled" by the visitor's strong physical presence:

> I don't know whether it was because of this, or because the hostility of the Greeks, though still not fully registered, had thrown me off balance, but I now, on a strange impulse, in full sight of Politis, made the Moslem salaam, raising my hand to forehead and lips. "*Selamin Aleyküm*," I said.
>
> Consciousness of my folly was immediate, and I felt fear, though not of those watching. "Excuse me, sir," I said, in English. "Can I have a word with you?"
>
> At once, even while he was making a gesture toward the chair opposite, even before I was seated, I knew that I had struck a false note: my loss of poise at that crucial moment had made my manner too ingratiating. The English despise a too-evident desire to please. I saw something change in his face, and I was distressed, because I wanted him to like me, or at least to see my worth.[52]

[48]Ibid., 148.
[49]Ibid., 22.
[50]Brugger, 207.
[51]Unsworth, 23.
[52]Ibid., 24–25.

Despite this "false" beginning, Pascali tries to salvage the situation, but in doing so, he only makes things worse: "I will admit to your Excellency that I felt a degree of self-contempt to hear my own voice, before too deferential, now become boastfully assertive. 'I live here, in the town,' I said. 'I am a well-known figure on the island. Everybody knows me. Everybody knows Basil Pascali.'"[53] After a moment or two of silence, and another stilted pleasantry, the dialogue continues:

> "You are younger than I thought," I said. "I mean at a distance –"
>
> It seemed to me that at this point Mister Bowles raised the level of his eyes slightly, as if to study the top of my head.
>
> "Yes," I said, "I myself … I am getting thin on top, as they say."
>
> I smiled at him, too familiarly. My face felt stiff. "You too," I said. "Slightly. If you will forgive me. But in your case it is at the temples."[54]

In an attempt to establish "comradely feelings" between the two men, Pascali decides to tell Bowles an "old joke about baldness"; yet this, too, falls flat. Bowles refuses to smile, and as Pascali, with a "humorous leer", demonstrates precisely why the joke should be considered funny, he is "wretchedly aware" that he has failed to amuse his audience.

> It was [Bowles] who brought my cavortings to an end with the offer of a drink. "Folklore," I said, returning my poor head to a position of rest. "The simple beliefs of simple people."
>
> "Would you care for a drink?" Mister Bowles said again.
>
> I pretended to deliberate. I am practiced in the quiet dignity of acceptance.
>
> "Thank you, yes," I said.[55]

Throughout this exchange, as we can see, Pascali is struggling to adopt the right tone – and consistently failing to do so. Even before he is seated, he realises that he has "struck a false note", that his manner has been overly ingratiating. But then he moves too far in the opposite direction, becoming "boastfully assertive". Adjusting his manner once more, Pascali assumes an excessively familiar tone, before resorting to an ill-advised joke that is quite clearly inappropriate given the circumstances. In short, our narrator completely misjudges his crucial first encounter with Bowles. Not only does he fail to achieve the proper tone – or discursive register – for an encounter of this kind, but he also fatally misrecognises the receptive "preferences" of this particular addressee (i.e., the kind of tone, attitude, and subject matter that his interlocutor will find most agreeable). As he himself acknowledges, "I [have] failed to make the desired impression on Mister Bowles; I [know] that he despise[s] me".[56] I have been arguing, thus far, that Pascali's general sense of "dissonance" – of being out of place or "ill at ease", as if he is no longer "at home in the world" – gives rise to an *interpretive* dissonance, whereby he ascribes an overdetermined significance to everything he sees, and as a consequence

[53]Ibid., 25.
[54]Ibid., 26.
[55]Ibid., 27.
[56]Ibid., 28.

finds it difficult to recognise varying degrees of narrative value.[57] This feeling of being ill at ease also generates a kind of *communicative* dissonance, undermining Pascali's ability to achieve an appropriate discursive register, whether it be at the intradiegetic level (as we have just observed), at the level of the report that he is apparently composing, or at the level of the novel itself, the one we are reading. In every case, Pascali experiences a communicative malfunction – striking "false note[s]", losing his "poise" at crucial junctures, and consistently misidentifying the register that is most appropriate for each of his addressees.

In the opening pages of *Pascali's Island*, our narrator wonders if his style is "too verbose" for a report, "too complicated [and] obscure".[58] The answer, clearly, is yes – but his style is also too elaborate, too complicated and obscure, for the generic orientation of the narrative itself, if we are to read it as literature. In other words, there seems to be a curious disaffiliation between the novel's discursive qualities (lyrical, atmospheric, contemplative, etc.) and its story (which demonstrates many of the characteristics of a thriller). It is as if the narrative has somehow chosen the wrong focalising figure in Pascali, and this original error of judgement has made everything else go awry, so that the discourse and the story feel constantly "ill at ease" in each other's company.[59] Every genre, by definition, has a range of characteristic features, and it is typical of the thriller that it should be heavily proairetic. According to Barthes, the proairetic code is responsible for initiating, sustaining, and ultimately concluding the logical sequences of action and behaviour that structure literary narratives. Such sequences, he argues, can be easily categorised under certain generic titles. In the case of the thriller, for instance, we frequently encounter sequences that could be labelled "abduction", "revenge", or "murder". It is also typical of the thriller that these proairetic sequences should be represented in a style that is notable for its transparence. As Barthes himself writes, the proairetic code, "when subjected to a logico-temporal order", constitutes "the strongest armature of the readerly".[60] From a structural perspective, then, one could characterise the thriller as a narrative that relies to a large degree on a series of interrelated, and often highly charged, proairetic sequences, which are themselves easily recognised (as belonging to familiar generic categories). These proairetic sequences are also typically represented in a discursive style that privileges intelligibility, linearity, and structural coherence – so that the reader has as clear a "view" as possible of the unfolding action.[61] In *Pascali's Island*, however, there is an obvious disjuncture between the generic substance of the story (with its "thrilling" proairetic sequences) and the discursive register in which this story is narrated. When Bowles discovers the Hellenistic statue on a

[57]Ibid., 61, 66.
[58]Ibid., 10.
[59]The term "discourse", in this instance, refers to "the narrative statement, the oral or written [utterance] that undertakes to tell of an event or a series of events", while the term "story" is being used to describe "the succession of events, real or fictitious, that are the subjects of this discourse" (Genette, 25).
[60]Barthes, *S/Z*, 204.
[61]I am referring here to the transparence of the language or discourse itself, which is to be distinguished from the various opacities that one might encounter at the level of story. As Allan Hepburn has noted, spy thrillers often contain "codes, secret languages, and encrypted meanings", all of which "require reading beyond the surface" (and may generate a feeling of "paranoid suspicion" on the part of those who are obliged to do so) (Hepburn, 53–54, 242). However, it is one of the conventions of the genre that this hermeneutical opacity should not be allowed to infiltrate the discourse itself, which typically maintains a kind of pristine legibility, ensuring that its literal or denotative meaning is always easily accessible. For more on the paranoid tendencies of the thriller, see Cobley, 146–66.

piece of land belonging to the governor, he invites Pascali to act as his accomplice, and the following dialogue ensues:

> "What do you say? Shall we be allies?" He was smiling. Suddenly he held out his hand. "We two against the whole damn lot of them," he said.
>
> I smiled back at Mister Bowles and took his hand. "Allies," I said. "We will see this thing through together." I was drawing, Excellency, on the vocabulary of adventure-story heroes … And so, I think, was Mister Bowles.[62]

At that very moment, as he is shaking Bowles' hand and uttering these sentences, Pascali feels his "own readiness to betray [Bowles] burgeoning within [him]"; and this is a betrayal that will take place not only at the level of story, where the proairetic resides, but also at the level of discourse – for although Pascali draws here on the "vocabulary of adventure-story heroes" in order to establish a complicity with Bowles, he does so nowhere else in the novel.[63] In fact, a short time later, while they are disinterring the statue, Pascali becomes acutely aware of the affective and generic distance that separates him from this rather hyperbolic figure:

> I thought that [Bowles'] manner was suspicious when he greeted me on my return. I say that I thought so, Excellency – it was impossible with him now to be certain of such things. His wild and gleaming appearance made normal identifications impossible. His whole manner, since the finding of the statue and the subsequent secret labors, had become so charged with feeling, so almost *melodramatic*, that there was no register for milder feelings.[64]

As we read this passage, it becomes clear that Pascali is facing both interpretive difficulties ("it was impossible with him now to be certain of such things") and communicative or discursive difficulties ("there was no register for milder feelings"). The momentary sense of generic accord that was created when the two agreed to act as accomplices, when they both employed the "vocabulary of adventure-story heroes", has completely collapsed, leaving Pascali with a combined sense of interpretive *and* communicative dissonance. Simply put, he no longer recognises this character from another genre, from another type of novel altogether; and as a narrator, he is constitutionally incapable of producing the kind of discourse that such a figure would seem to require.

In Barthes' seminal essay "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives", he makes another useful distinction between narrative *functions* and *indices*. The first of these he describes as "distributional" in that they follow the logic of causality and operate on the chronological (or syntagmatic) plane of the narrative, influencing, in one way or another, its diachronic unfolding. The purchase of a revolver, for instance, has "for [a] correlate the moment when it will be used (and if not used, the notation is reversed into a sign of indecision, etc.)".[65] Narrative indices, on the other hand, which Barthes describes as "integrational", refer not to a "consequential act" but to a narrative unit whose broader significance can only be understood at another level of (implied) meaning – indicating "the character of a narrative agent", for example, or "a feeling", or "an atmosphere".[66] In order to understand, Barthes writes,

[62]Unsworth, 158.
[63]Ibid., 158.
[64]Ibid., 169.
[65]Barthes, "Introduction," 264.
[66]Ibid., 267.

> what an indicial notation "is for," one must move to a higher [paradigmatic] level … for only there is the indice clarified … The ratification of indices is "higher up," sometimes even remaining virtual, outside any explicit syntagm … That of functions, by contrast, is always "further on," is a syntagmatic ratification. *Functions* and *indices* thus overlay another classic distinction: functions involve metonymic relata, indices metaphoric relata; the former correspond to a functionality of doing, the latter to a functionality of being.[67]

Moreover, as Barthes observes, we are able to classify certain genres according to which of these two "devices" they privilege. "Some narratives are heavily functional (such as folktales), while others on the contrary are heavily indicial (such as 'psychological' novels); [and] between these two poles lies a whole series of intermediary forms, dependent on history, society, genre".[68] This classification is particularly valuable for our purposes, as it gives us a more precise understanding of the discursive or generic dissonance we have been discussing. Reading *Pascali's Island*, we encounter many of the functional sequences that are typically associated with the thriller. There are mysterious alliances, elaborate deceptions, dangerous conspiracies, all of which rely on a horizontal "functionality of doing". But as we have seen, the discourse itself emphasises a "functionality of being", consistently interrupting the action in order to generate unnecessary and inappropriate indices of character, feeling, and atmosphere, which can only be understood if we follow a vertical trajectory to a higher plane of meaning. In the novel's opening pages, for instance, Pascali insists on describing "the precise aspect of the world outside [his] window, composed of sky and sea and shore". At present, we are told, "because of the slight haze or graining in the air, only the nearer islands are visible". He then goes on to describe these islands and the distant mainland in some detail, before turning his attention to the shoreline, where, "[i]n this thickening of atmosphere, the sand and stones … appear slightly smoky, as if enveloped thinly in their own breath". Then, of course, there is the sea itself, which at this time of day is "opaline, gashed near the horizon by a long, gleaming line of light". And by a process of association, we finally arrive at a brief parenthetical reference to a visiting American, who has been on the island for "ten days now, fishing for sponges".[69] Having also established an alliance with Bowles, the enigmatic American will play a crucial role in the action to come; but in this passage his functional significance within the story is clearly subordinated to the indicial quality of the discourse (which evokes, at a higher level of meaning, an atmosphere of ambiguity, perspectival distortion, opacity, ontological instability, etc.). Near the end of the novel, this story-discourse disparity becomes especially pronounced. While Bowles is busy excavating the statue he has discovered, Pascali offers the following reflection:

> It was extremely hot in the hollow. My feeling of oppression increased. It was due, I think, not merely to the heat, or the ambivalence of the [statue] in the hillside, but to what I felt as the intensities of feeling expended and retained in this enclosed place. Secrecy, aspiration, fanaticism – I know not what to call it. It was in the red earth and pale rock and the bushes and the liturgies of the bees among the thyme. It was in Mister Bowles's face. *Savage* was the word that came to mind. I am sensitive to atmosphere, as I have told you before, Excellency. All good informers are.[70]

[67]Ibid., 264–65.
[68]Ibid., 265.
[69]Unsworth, 11–12.
[70]Ibid., 147.

The difference between Pascali and Bowles, between the discourse and the story, could not be clearer than it is here. While Bowles concentrates all of his energy on unearthing the bronze statue that will – like the visiting American – play a crucial functional role in the resolution of the novel's major proairetic sequences, Pascali does absolutely nothing to move the story forward. Instead, he introduces a number of atmospheric and emotional indices ("intensities of feeling") that actually *impede* the narrative's diachronic unfolding. In a classic thriller, as we have observed, atmosphere is usually subordinated to action ("the functionality of being" subordinated to "the functionality of doing"); yet in this case, the reverse is true. Something important is obviously taking place on that clay hillside, among the ruins of an ancient villa, but it can only be seen through a dense concentration, a poetic "thickening", of vertical indices.

The discourse is, then, saturated with atmospheric indices, when what the generic mode of the thriller traditionally requires is functions – easily recognised proairetic sequences ("conspiracy", "betrayal", "captivity", etc.) that generate suspense and ensure that the narrative maintains its "readability". But why should this be the case? Why does Pascali feel compelled to generate so many indices, when he should really be focusing on the functionality of the story he is narrating? For a start, I would argue, it is symptomatic of the more general feeling of dissonance he has been experiencing as he witnesses the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after twenty years of loyal service. If Pascali feels out of place or "ill at ease" under such circumstances, then it is only to be expected that the discourse should internalise these affective qualities – feeling "ill at ease" in the company of the story it has been charged with telling.[71] Yet that is not the only reason why the novel is full of generically inappropriate indices. Earlier, if you remember, I described paranoia as a hermeneutical pathology, a distortion of our ordinary interpretive processes. For paranoiacs, even the most insignificant gesture or utterance carries interpretable meaning – and they are particularly attuned to *atmosphere*, to a sense of animosity that may not be attached to a specific person or object, but may simply be "in the air".[72] I also suggested that these paranoid tendencies have been an essential part of the emotional labour that our narrator has been obliged to perform, since the age of twenty-five, in his capacity as an Ottoman spy. The fact that Pascali's occupation has involved identifying and interpreting "indices" of one kind or another ("I am sensitive to atmosphere", he says, "[a]ll good informers are") makes it almost inevitable that these paranoid tendencies should also infiltrate the discourse itself. Or to put it another way, it is not particularly surprising that Pascali's *interpretive* dissonance – whereby he ascribes an overdetermined significance to everything he sees – should give rise to a *communicative* dissonance, whereby the discourse focuses not on the "functionality of doing" but on the implicit signified that can only be located on another, higher plane of meaning. "Indices", Barthes writes, "involve an activity of deciphering", and that is precisely what Pascali has been doing for the last two decades.[73] He has been interpreting the "real" meaning behind ordinary gestures, recognising the "actual"

[71]Ibid., 61.

[72]Remember, too, that quotation from Krafft-Ebing: "The persons about the [paranoiac] seem strange and even suspicious. The external world seems in general to be changed, especially in reference to the personality of the [paranoiac]. It seems to him as if the world did not wish him well; *that there was something against him in the air*" (Krafft-Ebing, 382; my italics).

[73]Barthes, "Introduction," 267–68.

purpose of casual utterances, and tracing the vertical indices of everyday life to that higher plane of meaning where their "true" significance can finally be revealed.

IV

In the concluding pages of the novel, after some deliberation, Pascali follows through on his decision to betray Bowles. He goes to see the governor of the island and tells him everything; then later that night, he accompanies a group of soldiers to the place where Bowles is attempting, with the help of the mysterious American and his men, to excavate the bronze statue. The soldiers surround the archaeological site, and when the order is given, they open fire. The American and several of his men are killed instantly, while Bowles himself is crushed by the falling statue. It is a terrible betrayal – and all the more terrible for being somehow "undermotivated". The possibility of betrayal is first raised on page 151 of the novel ("though it is difficult to be precise about beginnings"), and over the following thirty pages or so, our narrator alludes to a potential motive on more than one occasion, but never with any real conviction or plausibility (e.g., "I wanted to make my failure his too, [I wanted to] preserve the intimate connection between us").[74] The only thing we *do* know for sure is that Pascali's motivation was not financial: "I did not do it for money", he says, "though money was the pretext I carefully fashioned for myself".[75] It is only on the very last page of the novel that we learn precisely why Pascali felt compelled to do what he did. Some time earlier, while working on the statue, he had confessed to Bowles that he would like, one day, to go to Constantinople and take possession of the many *jurnals* he has submitted over the years (perhaps with a view to publishing them in a single volume bound in "[r]ed morocco").[76] Bowles' response is brutally candid: "The whole system is clogged with paper", he says.

> Have you any idea how many informers there must be in the Ottoman possessions? The Sultan has been paranoid for years, you know. It is common knowledge that there are more spies than police in Constantinople. Do you really suppose those fellows in the Ministry have a filing system? No one reads *anything*, Pascali.[77]

Much later, once Bowles has been killed, Pascali acknowledges that this is probably so: "He was right, Excellency. I knew it then, as I know it now. My reports have not been read. Worse, they have not been kept. And now you are no longer there. It was because I knew he was right, and because of the pity in his eyes, that I betrayed him".[78] In one of his later essays, Mikhail Bakhtin argues that "for the word (and, consequently, for a human being) there is nothing more terrible than a *lack of response*", and this may well be the case.[79] But for "the word", surely, it is even worse to be *unread* – and worse still for the writer himself or herself to be aware of this fate. Unfortunately, Bowles was probably quite right when he told Pascali that his reports were not being read in Constantinople; and if we are to believe Edwin Pears, this would almost certainly have been

[74] Unsworth, 182.
[75] Ibid., 161.
[76] Ibid., 126.
[77] Ibid., 172.
[78] Ibid., 191–92.
[79] Bakhtin, 127.

true of the Sultan, who received far more dispatches, from all over the empire, than he could possibly hope to read:

> In his later years [Abdülhamid] fell a victim to his own machinations. His suspicion led to his being ill informed of what was going on around him. The [*jurnals*] sent daily by his army of spies were so many that he could not find time to read them. He dared not entrust them to anyone else; and yet those which he did read were so contradictory that he ended, as was shown after his deposition, by leaving most of them unread.[80]

For someone who has dedicated much of his life to writing reports of this nature, I imagine the discovery that they have not been read would be devastating. But is it really enough to provoke a betrayal of this magnitude, to justify the deaths of nine people altogether (including four soldiers)? Even at this late stage, as the narrative concludes, Pascali's decision to betray Bowles seems curiously undermotivated – reminding one of the "strategic opacities" that Stephen Greenblatt identifies in Shakespeare's late tragedies.[81] However, if we see it from both an affective *and* a narratological perspective, this rather strange decision may begin to make more sense. Over the course of this essay, I have been arguing that, as a consequence of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and of Pascali's inability to adjust to these rapidly changing sociopolitical circumstances, he has experienced both an interpretive dissonance (a paranoid conviction that everything he sees carries an underlying meaning) and a communicative dissonance, whereby he fails to achieve a discursive register that would be appropriate for either of the "genres" in which the narrative operates. In the latter case, I suggested that there is a pronounced disparity between the discourse, which is dominated by atmospheric indices, and the story, which demonstrates many of the features we would associate with a thriller. For much of the novel, it would seem that Pascali has had no choice but to occupy a generic world in which he is profoundly "ill at ease", and over which neither he nor the discourse itself has had any control.[82] At the end, however, everything changes. If the narrative were to follow the typical trajectory of a thriller, the hero (Bowles) and his lover (a character by the name of Lydia) would escape the island with the object they have been pursuing (the statue). The primary villain (the governor) and the secondary villain (Pascali) would be foiled and in some way made to pay for their villainy. But of course this is not what transpires. In the novel's final pages, Pascali betrays the hero, who dies along with his lover and their accomplices; and one of the immediate consequences of this betrayal is *generic*. At the very moment that the statue crushes the hero-figure, the disparity between the story and the discourse is suddenly eliminated. Bowles may well have been living in a "melodramatic" mode – like an "adventure-story [hero]" – but as the novel concludes, our narrator manages to convert this thriller, to which he has been subordinated, into a tragedy over which he has a large measure of control.[83] And in so doing, he also manages to shrug off at least some of the dissonance that has been afflicting him from the very first page.

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[80]Pears, 349.

[81]According to Greenblatt, "Shakespeare found that he could immeasurably deepen the effect of his plays, that he could provoke in the audience and in himself a peculiarly passionate intensity of response, if he took out a key explanatory element, thereby occluding the rationale, motivation, or ethical principle that accounted for the action that was to unfold. The principle was not the making of a riddle to be solved, but the creation of a strategic opacity" (Greenblatt, 323–24).

[82]Unsworth, 61.

[83]Ibid., 169, 158.

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