

APPENDIX

A CASE STUDY: SEMANTIC HISTORY OF THE WORDS *TEMHĀ* AND *TAHRĀ*

(a) *Temhā* in the Peshitta Old Testament¹

The corpus of the Peshitta OT is a very fruitful starting-point for investigating semantic developments, for it dates back to the mid-second century AD, thereby representing the oldest Syriac literature.² The root TMH occurs 75 times in the Peshitta OT, two-thirds of the occurrences being in the Prophets. The root appears 38 times in a verbal position, usually in *pe'al*, but twice also in *af'el*.³ The noun *temhā* occurs 37 times in the Peshitta OT, eighteen of these in Jeremiah alone. According to my estimation based on the contextual analysis, it has nine different basic usages. In the following examples the English counterpart of *temhā* is in boldface.⁴

1. 'Distraction' of mind as a mental disease decreed by God. In this sense *temhā* is used for three different Hebrew words:

The Lord will strike you with *wasting disease*.⁵

The Lord will strike you with ... *confusion of mind*.⁶

I will strike all horses with *stampede* and their riders with stupor.⁷

¹ It seems that the root THR is not used at all in the Syriac OT; nor is it found in Talmudic Aramaic (according to Jastrow's dictionary).

² The long discussion on the origins of the Peshitta OT seems to have been settled, for the time being, by Weizmann's extensive study. His conclusion is that the translation was made directly from Hebrew in the Edessa district by a non-rabbinical Jewish sect around 150 AD. See Weitzman 1999, 245-253.

³ I resort here to W. Strothmann's *Konkordanz zur Syrischen Bibel*.

⁴ The English translations are adopted from the New International Version (NIV), unless Syriac structure demands a freer translation. What I mean here by "context" is the semantic structure which is common to the English, Hebrew and Syriac sentence in each particular case (unless the basic texts seem to differ).

⁵ Dt. 28:22 (כֹּחַמַת – Heb. חֲחִימָה).

⁶ Dt. 28:28 (כֹּחַמַת רִגְלֵי – Heb. לְרַגְלֵי הָרֶגֶץ).

⁷ Zac. 12:4 (כֹּחַמַת – Heb. חֲחִימָה) Riders are attributed as כֹּחַמַת, Heb. חֲחִימָה.

2. 'Distraction' of mind as a painful mental state resulting from one's own awareness of a prevailing but inadmissible state of affairs, corresponding to two Hebrew words:

Horror grips me (for the destiny of the people).⁸
(Jerusalemites) will drink their water in *despair*.⁹

3. 'Distraction' as a prevailing but inadmissible state of affairs. Due to the strong tension in the content of the meaning, the concept also has some causative character: "a horrible thing causing horror". The first sentence refers to (spiritual) prostitution, and its subject might be either the Lord or the Prophet himself:

I have seen a *horrible thing* in the house of Israel.¹⁰
A *horrible* and shocking *thing* has happened in the land:
the prophets prophesy lies ... and people love it.¹¹

4. 'Distraction' as a symbol of annihilation decreed by God as a final and complete destruction, the closer nature of which is indeterminate.

"How suddenly are [the wicked] swept away by *terrors*."¹²

5. 'Distraction' as desolation of a city, by destructive divine action. To my knowledge, this is an unique usage of *temhā* in Syriac and it seems to be a slightly unsatisfactory translation for the Hebrew שָׁמָה, the problem resulting from the double meaning of שָׁמָה as both 'desolation'¹³ and 'astonishment'. It seems to me that *temhā* in the sense of desolation is a semantic borrowing from Hebrew to Syriac.

This whole country will become *deserted* and desolate.¹⁴
How *desolate* is Babylon among the nations!¹⁵
Their land will be *laid waste*.¹⁶
Therefore I will give you over to *ruin*.¹⁷

⁸ Jer. 8:21. (Heb. שָׁמָה).

⁹ Ez. 12:19. (Heb. שָׁמָה).

¹⁰ Hos. 6:10. (Heb. שָׁמָה – unvocalised in the Hebrew Bible.)

¹¹ Jer. 5:30. (Heb. שָׁמָה)

¹² Ps. 73:18(19). (Heb. שָׁמָה – Heb. שָׁמָה).

¹³ Is. 5:9 is an evident example of שָׁמָה in the sense of desolation, ܬܡܗܐ in Syriac.

¹⁴ Jer. 25:11 (Heb. שָׁמָה – Heb. שָׁמָה – Heb. שָׁמָה).

¹⁵ Jer. 50:23. (Heb. שָׁמָה) A similar case in Jer 51:43.

¹⁶ Jer. 18:16. (Heb. שָׁמָה) Similar or parallel cases in Jer 19:8, 25:9, 44:6,22.

¹⁷ Mi. 6:16 (Heb. שָׁמָה).

- I will make the land *desolate*.¹⁸
 I will make it [the land] *desolate* forever.¹⁹
 (I will make) the land a *desolate waste*.²⁰

6. ‘Distraction’ as horror: mental distraction caused by a concrete distraction. This use is usually applied to a city under the threat of divine punishment, but sometimes of people also. In a couple of cases²¹ the context does not indicate whether *temhā* is referring to a place or its people, or both.

- Babylon will be ... an *object of horror* and scorn.²²
 You will be an *object of horror* to the nations.²³
 You will become a *thing of horror* ...²⁴
 You will become an object of cursing and *horror*.²⁵

Although the difference between cases 5 and 6 is unambiguous in itself, in divergent contexts they overlap, and the choice between the two significations remains undetermined. Whether *temhā* is referring to an act of desolation, or to the horror resulting from it, remains in many cases undetermined. The difficulty is due to the potentially causative character in the semantic capacity of the word. For example:

- Bozrah will become *temhā* and an object of horror, of reproach and of cursing.²⁶

NIV here translates שָׁמָה as ‘ruin’, but all the other three attributes of Bozrah are mental entities, which questions this concrete translation. Possibly the Hebrew, as well as the Syriac *temhā*, might be taken here in the sense of mental distraction and hence be translated ‘aversion’ or the like. An analogous case is Ez 23:33, where Jerusalem and Samaria, according to NIV, receive “*a cup of ruin and desolation*”,²⁷ but according to the King James version a cup of *astonishment* and desolation.

- 18 Ezek. 15:8 (Heb. שָׁמָה).
 19 Jer. 25:12 (Heb. שָׁמָה וְעַד עַד).
 20 Ezek. 6:14. (Heb. שָׁמָה וְשָׁמָה) Similar cases in 33:28-29, 35:3, and 35:7 (which is vocalized differently in Hebrew).
 21 2 Kgs. 22:19, Jr 25:18.
 22 Jer. 51:37,41 (Heb. שָׁמָה).
 23 Ezek. 5:15 (Heb. שָׁמָה).
 24 Deut. 28:37 אֶתְחַמְּתָם לְאִתְחַמְּתָם (Heb. שָׁמָה). Here *temhā* is co-ordinated with “(an object of) scorn and ridicule”, in Syriac *matlā* (lit. ‘proverb’) and *renyā* (lit. ‘thought’).
 25 Jer. 42:18, similar cases in 44:12, 29:18. (Heb. שָׁמָה)
 26 Jer. 49:13. הַלְאֵתְחַמְּתָם הַלְסִיכָהּ הַלְלִיכָהּ אֶתְחַמְּתָם בְּחַיֵּי -
 Heb. לְשָׁמָה לְחִרְפָּה לְחִרְבָּה וְלִקְלָלָהּ
 27 כּוּס שָׁמָה וְשָׁמָה - Heb. אֶתְחַמְּתָם הַלְאֵתְחַמְּתָם

In addition to the previous six cases, *temhā* is employed in a few peculiar ways in the book of Job. It is to be regarded as a matter of doubt whether these are actually translations from the standardised Hebrew text, or whether they are derived from a different manuscript tradition, or whether they are explicatory translations in the Targumic fashion.

7. 'Distraction' as deficiency, inadequacy.

(God) charges His angels with *error*.²⁸

8. 'Distraction' as deduction, reduction.

He leads councillors away *stripped* (*be-temhā*).²⁹

He leads priests away *stripped* (*be-temhā*).³⁰

9. 'Distraction' as a verbal entity referring to distraction in one's social relations. This somewhat peculiar usage could be an ironic application of the case six above.

I have become a *byword* among them.³¹

In addition, the passive participle – or adjective – *temhā* occurs six times in the Peshitta OT, being used in the following four ways:

1. 'Distraction' of mind as melancholy

My soul, why are you so *disturbed* within me?³²

2. 'Distraction' of mind as anguish

I sat *appalled*.³³

3. 'Distraction' of mind as desolation. If this sentence, however, were translated against the prevailing traditions as "sat down in grief", it would fit in the previous category.

(after being raped) Tamar lived *desolate*.³⁴

²⁸ Job 4:18. אַתְּחָלָה – Heb. תְּהִלָּה .

²⁹ Job 12:17. בַּאֲחַת – Heb. שׁוֹלֵל .

³⁰ Job 12:19. בַּאֲחַת – Heb. שׁוֹלֵל .

³¹ Job 30:8 (9). Heb. מְקַלָּה .

³² Ps. 42:6,11. אֲחַתְּחַלָּה, אֲחַתְּחַלָּה, אֲחַתְּחַלָּה – Heb. [תְּהִלָּה] [...].

³³ Ezra 9:3-4. אֲחַתְּחַלָּה – Heb. (מְשׁוֹמֵם)

³⁴ 2 Sam. 13:20. אֲחַתְּחַלָּה – Heb. שְׂמָמָה .

4. 'Distraction' of mind as an ecstatic mental state between revelations:

I sat for seven days among them *overwhelmed*.³⁵

So *temhā* and *temihā* more or less correspond to ten different Hebrew words from seven different roots.³⁶ Some of the Hebrew originals that seem to be behind the Syriac *temhā* are somewhat uncommon (תַּמְהָ). Apparently *temhā* was used as a general solution in various difficult situations. It is to be noted that about a half of the occurrences of *temhā* in the Peshitta OT refer to an unusual mental state, extremely negative in nature, but only one case, that in Ezekiel, is connected with religious ecstasy.

Are there, then, other ways of signifying religious ecstasy in the Syriac Old Testament? The case of Saul and the prophets is smoothly dealt with by giving the Hebrew expression a Syriac form.³⁷ To answer the question, of course, the problem is to know when the OT is referring to ecstasy allusively or symbolically, whether a certain act is ecstatic (uncontrolled) in nature or not. For example, the Hebrew *nofel*, in the case of the Oracle of Balaam,³⁸ is rendered by *remā* in Syriac, "falls prostrate" (NIV), but also "falling into a trance" (King James) – not to mention 'lankeaa loveen' of the Finnish Bible of 1938.

(b) *Temhā, tahrā* and *ekstasis* in the NT³⁹

The Peshitta NT was translated from Greek in c. 400, but the result still to some extent exhibits the influence of earlier Old Syriac versions that date back to the 3rd century. When looking for ecstatic encounters, it is essential to recall once more that even the Greek term ἔκστασις is not an exact starting-point. Its meaning is not a distinct semantic item but its usage in patristic literature is extremely diverse. Most usages concern loss of ordinary sensual perception, or rising above it (e.g. Pseudo-Dionysius). Lampe gives the following usages for ἔκστασις:⁴⁰

³⁵ Ezek. 3:15. ܪܘܡܐܠܐ ܕܢܘܚܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ ܕܥܘܠܐ – Heb. ִמְהַמְהֵם .

³⁶ We may note here that the root *TMH* also appears in mediaeval Hebrew poetry in the context of ecstatic yearning for God: "My thoughts astounded (תַּמְהָ) asked me why / Towards the whirling wheels on high / In ecstasy I rush and fly / The living God is my desire / It carries me on wings of fire / Body and soul to Him aspire." (Ibn Gabirol, *Selected religious poems*, 15; the (free) translation by I. Zangwill).

³⁷ 1 Sam. 10:6-13. Hebrew forms are given Syriac form as follows: *hitnabbūtā* - *tetnabbē*, *wayyitnabbē* - *etnabbē*, *nibbā* - *metnebē*, *hitnabbōt* - *lemetnebāyū*.

³⁸ Num. 24:4,16.

³⁹ Due to the lack of a Peshitta NT Concordance, this is not necessarily an exhaustive catalogue; it is based on the use of concordances of other languages, and on my own study of the Syriac NT.

⁴⁰ Lampe 1961, 438-439.

1. Distraction of the mind caused by sin or fear
2. Drunkenness or its consequences
3. Separation (in christology)
4. Mystical experience connected with perfect prayer⁴¹
5. Mystical experience connected with visions⁴²
6. Other usages: (cf. Adam, the prophets, Christ on the cross).

The essential connection between ecstasy and silence is symbolized in an interesting way in the Peshitta; there are at least two cases (Gen 2:21, 15:12) where 'silence' (*šelyā*) is used in a position where the Septuagint has ἔκστασις.

Curiously, the role of *temhā* in the Syriac NT is quite different from the one it has in the OT. The basic sense of both *temhā* and *tahrā* in the Peshitta NT is 'wonder' in the sense of amazement, i.e. the basic meaning of the words in classical Syriac. The contexts reveal practically no semantic difference between the two roots. The most common way, however, of expressing amazement in the Peshitta NT is to use the root *DMR*. (The fourth possibility is the verb *tewah*.⁴³)

But there is also one case where *temhā* is used of religious ecstasy/trance. The distension of the semantic field from amazement to ecstasy might be a semantic borrowing from Greek, being derived from the equivalent double meaning of the word ἔκστασις. This can be illustrated by the following table of the renderings of ἔκστασις in Syriac and English Bible translations. It is especially noteworthy that in two out of the three cases where ἔκστασις clearly signifies 'trance', the whole idea of ecstasy is bypassed with the expression "I saw in a vision"⁴⁴, which seems to indicate the absence of a proper Syriac term equivalent to ecstasy.

	Greek	Syriac	KJV / NIV
Mark 5:42	ἐκτάσει (dat.)	<i>metdammerin (h)waw</i>	astonishment/astonished
16:8	ἐκτασις (nom.)	<i>tahrā</i>	amazed / bewildered
Luke 5:26	ἐκτασις	<i>temhā</i>	amazed
Acts 3:10	ἐκτασις (gen.)	<i>temhā</i>	amazement
10:10	[ἐγένετο ἐπ' αὐτόν]	[<i>nefal 'alaw</i>]	
	ἐκτασις	<i>temhā</i>	trance
11:5	ἐκτάσει	—	trance
22:17	ἐκτάσει	—	trance

⁴¹ John Climacus: *Ladder*, chapter 28.

⁴² E.g. Pseudo-Macarius, Palladius, Sozomen.

⁴³ Mk. 9:15, 2 Thess. 2:2.

⁴⁴ ܩܘܠܘܨܐܘܢܐ The expression has a biblical subtext in Dan 7:2 (*hāzē hawēt be-hezwā*).

Outside these occurrences *temhā* is quite rare in the Peshitta NT, and its meaning is consistently that of amazement: “Great *temhā* took hold of them” (after a demon had been driven out.)⁴⁵ Similarly, the verb *temah* functions in the meaning of amazement and astonishment.⁴⁶ It may also be translated “surprise”.⁴⁷ But it may also be used of a wider scale of emotional states, as can be seen from the fact that at least once it appears in a context where both the original Greek word and the contextual intention indicate great confusion and frustration.⁴⁸

The passive participle *temihā* is used in the sense of ‘marvellous sign’, and hence ‘wonderful thing’.⁴⁹ The verb *tehar* is used synonymously with *temah*, but it appears together with *temah* only sporadically.⁵⁰

(c) *Temhā* and *tehrā* in the writings⁵¹ of Ephrem

Ephrem employs the root *TMH* as the verb *temah* and as the noun *temhā*. When analysed in the light of the context, the verb consistently has the ordinary sense ‘to wonder’, ‘to be amazed’. The root *THR* is used by Ephrem as a verb in all three conjugations (*tehar*, *tahher*, *athar*) and as the noun *tahrā*. Due to its derived

⁴⁵ Lk. 4:36.

⁴⁶ *Temah* is usually used of a reaction towards something unexpected. Its quality may be expressed in another language in various ways. This can be illustrated by its English equivalents in NIV. The Greek originals are also varied (θαυμάζω, ἐξίστημι, εκπλήσσω, ἀπορέω). This indicates, on the one hand, the inexact nature of emotional states and thereby a manifest need for dynamic translation, but on the other hand it also shows a certain inconsequence in the Syriac translation technique.

– Mt. 22:33 Crowds were *astonished* [*Ethpa.*] at His teaching (Gr. ἐξεπλήρσοντο).

– Mk. 1:22 The people were *amazed* at His teaching (Gr. ἐξεπλήρσοντο).

– Mk. 16:5 (Women) were *alarmed* (Gr. ἐξεθαμβήθησαν).

– Lk. 1:21 People were waiting for Zechariah and *wondering* why ... (Gr. ἐθαύμαζον).

– Lk. 2:33 (Joseph and Mary) *marvelled* at what (Simeon) said (Gr. θαυμάζοντες).

– Lk. 2:47 Everyone who heard Him was *amazed* (Gr. ἐξίσταντο).

– Lk. 8:56 Her parents (i.e. of the girl who was raised from the dead) were *astonished* (Gr. ἐξέστησαν).

– Lk. 24:4 (Women did not find the body:) they were *wondering* (Gr. ἀπορείσθαι).

– Lk. 24:22 ... women *amazed* us. (Af.)

– Acts 8:13 (Simeon) was *astonished* (*tāmah*) by the great signs and miracles. (Gr. ἐξίστατο).

– Acts 13:41 Look, ... *wonder* and perish! [Cit. Hab. 1:5] (Gr. θαυμάσατε).

⁴⁷ Mk. 15:44 “Pilate was surprised.”

⁴⁸ Gal. 4:20: “I am perplexed about you” (Gr. ἀπορούμαι, from the verb ἀπορέω).

⁴⁹ Rev. 15:1 “Great and marvellous sign”, Lk 13:17 “wonderful things” (done by Jesus).

⁵⁰ Mt. 21:20 Disciples were amazed (seeing the fig tree); Mt. 13:54 “(People in the synagogue) were amazed”; Acts 4:13 “People were astonished” (at the courage of Peter and John); Acts 3:11 “People were astonished” (act. prt. vocalised *tahrī!*).

⁵¹ The analysis is based on Ephrem's Hymns on Paradise, Virginity, and the Nativity and selections from his Commentary on Genesis, his Homily on our Lord and his Hymns on Faith.

functions, *THR* is the more common of the two roots. Both verbs may occur either independently or as a pair. It seems to be impossible to detect any clear difference between their meanings or any noteworthy contrast in their usage.

The nouns *tahrā* and *temhā* are also closely connected: *temhā* actually seldom occurs without *tahrā*. Especially in Ephrem's poetry these two words are often used along parallel lines and with similar functions. Even though there may be no clear difference between the usages of *tahrā* and *temhā*, both words themselves seem to function with several different types of nuances when analysed in relation to their textual context. Unlike in the Bible, *tahrā* is used more frequently than *temhā*, so its usage is explored here more carefully. Contextual analysis shows six different nuances, the first two being very closely connected.

(1.) 'Wonder' as something incomprehensible. This is applied to the divine nature of Christ and some of its paradoxical consequences. For example, on the subject of the divine nature of Christ announced by the star and his human nature announced by John the Baptist, Ephrem declares: "Great wonder (*tahrā*), that His divinity, and His humanity were declared by them."⁵² Accordingly, the pre-existence of Christ causes Ephrem to ask, "Who indeed has seen the Babe who is more ancient than his bearer?" and to respond apophatically: "a great wonder!" (*tahrā rabbā*).⁵³ The paradoxical mystery of the Incarnation also means that the Lord entered a woman's womb and was borne by her: "A wonder is your mother!"⁵⁴

(2.) 'Wonder' as something secret, something hidden. The most unequivocal example is that of the mystery of the Trinity, three as one, which causes Ephrem to utter: "Great paradox, an open *tahrā*."⁵⁵ The mystery of the Trinity is like the sun, its light and warmth, manifested in its rays: the undivided and mixed are bound and loosed: "a great *mystery*."⁵⁶ Ephrem's meditative approach also sees hidden mysteries behind earthly actions. When John the Baptist bows down before Christ, Ephrem parallels the bowing with John's movement in the womb: "a great wonder (*tahrā rabbā*) that here he bows down, and there he leaps (for joy)".⁵⁷ Most of these apophatic usages of *tahrā* deserve the title "seal of paradox".

(3.) 'Wonder' as something that causes a person to wonder in a general sense, a miraculous thing. This case can be understood in terms of either of the nuances

⁵² ܐܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܢ ܡܠܚܘܬܐ ܕܥܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܝܢܐ Ephrem: *Hymnen de Nativitate*, 6:10.

⁵³ Ephrem: *Hymnen de Nativitate*, 12:1.

⁵⁴ Ephrem: *Hymnen de Nativitate*, 11:6. ܥܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܢ ܥܘܪܝܢܐ

⁵⁵ Ephrem: *Hymnen de Fide*, 73:3. ܥܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܝܢܐ

⁵⁶ ܥܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܝܢܐ Ephrem: *Hymnen de Fide*, 73:8.

⁵⁷ Ephrem: *Hymnen de Nativitate*, 6:18.

in cases 1 or 2, 'incomprehensible miracle' or 'hidden cause of wonder', yet it may be syntactically slightly different.

The sun is *tahrā* in its route, and *tahrā* in its sublimity (*šelyūtāh*).

What did you show to the Magi? You showed a *tahrā*, for they rendered You homage although You were poor.⁵⁸

The tripartite division made above is not the only possible one. The first two cases may seem to constitute one consistent meaning, the semantic fields largely overlapping. Nevertheless, it is possible to think of them as three variations by dividing the examples into the categories of (i) incomprehensibility, (ii) hiddenness, and (iii) mysteriousness (which in turn could be taken as a combination of the first two: hiddenness + incomprehensibility = mysteriousness). The ultimate criterion of such differentiations is functionality. Moreover, all divisions should be made according to the semantic structure of the Syriac *parole*, not according to the set of words available in English.

One aspect of *tahrā* has special theological significance. According to Ephrem, the mysterious essence of the Divine Being should not be subjected to analytical description in the philosophical sense, for such subjection would subject the Creator of all things to human understanding. The correct human attitude in the presence of the Divine belongs in the category of wonder, not that of description. Ephrem himself introduced this attitude on the methodological level by using poetical form when composing his theology. Even in his prose works Ephrem never applies rational descriptive analysis to the Divine Being.⁵⁹ For him that would have meant being guilty of the Arian heresy.⁶⁰ In other words, if he describes the Trinity, he does so symbolically, not analytically. This is often regarded as a typically Semitic phenomenon, a characteristic feature of primitive Aramaic Christianity.⁶¹ For our study this represents the fourth case of 'wonder', the opposite of analytical inquiry:

(4.) 'Wonder' as a proper, emotionally pure and intellectually sound attitude to *approaching* the Divine. "Listen to the *tahrā* that our Lord has in His mercy brought to help us."⁶² Accordingly, the error of Balaam, in the case of the talking donkey, was that the 'stream' of his wonder ceased, leading to pride: "He saw *temhā*, but the stream of *tahrā* ceased."⁶³

⁵⁸ Ephrem: *Hymnen de Nativitate*, 19:11.

⁵⁹ On Ephrem's theological approach, see Brock 1984, 29-30, 132-134.

⁶⁰ See R. Murray 1975, 342.

⁶¹ For a clear synopsis, see Brock 1984, 118-119. For further details, see R. Murray 1975; Brock: *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (Variorum reprints, London 1984).

⁶² Ephrem: *Sermo de Domino Nostro* (XXXVIII), 35. English in Gwynn, 321.

⁶³ Ephrem: *Hymnen de Fide*, 41:7 (ܪܗܘܪܐ ܕܗܘܪܐ ܕܗܘܪܐ). See also Brock 1984, 30-31.

Ephrem's writings also contain a few cases indicating development towards the latter usage of the word in the mystical metatheology. In this very phase we can see the link between the usage of *temhā* and *tahrā* as signs of surprise and astonishment and their use as a sign of ecstasy. If we consider 'wonder' as a proper attitude to *approaching* the Divine, it is easy to understand the use of the same word when describing *abiding* in the divine presence.⁶⁴ In that case, the supposition of a semantic borrowing from Greek is unnecessary, but it may be an internal Syriac development as well. Due to Ephrem's central role in the history of Syriac literature, it is even possible that these very cases influenced many later writers. Or perhaps more probably, both Ephrem and later writers derived their extended use of *temhā* and *tahrā* from the common kerygma transmitted in ascetic circles throughout the centuries. From this we may constitute the fifth category of wonder:

(5.) 'Wonder' as an emotional state in *abiding* in the nearness of God. Here the context is eschatological, and the characteristics of the state are immateriality and unburdenedness.

the senses stand in awe and delight before the divine Majesty (*be-tahrāh de-rabbōtā*).⁶⁵

(6.) And finally, if we proceed to the logical end, we may distinguish the occurrence of 'wonder' as a mental state caused by God, or considered as given by Him, as being the final perspective where the categories of approaching or abiding seem to be no longer relevant. (The soul) "pastures on His beauties, full of *tahrā* at His treasures."⁶⁶ Some characteristics of the state may be found in the following context of the verbs *temah* and *tehar*:

Scripture brought me to the gate of Paradise, and the mind, which is spiritual, *stood in amazement and wonder (temah we-tehar)* as it entered; the intellect grew dizzy and weak as the senses were no longer able to contain its treasures.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ It may be recalled here that in the Semitic languages the aspects of being and becoming are often expressed by the same word.

⁶⁵ Ephrem: *Hymnen de Paradiso*, 9:17. Another example: "The Watchers of fire and spirit stood in wonder (*teharū*) at Elijah, seeing hidden within him the sweet treasure; in wonder at one formed of earth ... his virginity caused wonder (*w-atherat*) to those above." Ephrem: *Hymnen de Paradiso*, 6:24; translated in Brock: *Hymns on Paradise*, 117-118.

⁶⁶ Ephrem: *Hymnen de Paradiso*, 9:18. (ܘܫܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ) Another example might be taken from *Hymnen de Fide* 42:7, where Ephrem compares the warmth of the sun to the effect of the experience of the Son.

⁶⁷ Ephrem: *Hymnen de Paradiso*, 6:2. Translated in Brock: *Hymns on Paradise*, 109. Another example in *ibid.*, 6:15 "If the beauty of Paradise strikes us with astonishment (ܘܫܘܚܘܢܐ), how much more should we be astonished (ܘܫܘܚܘܢܐ) at the beauty of the mind." (ܘܫܘܚܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ).

We may conclude that in the writings of Ephrem the noun *tahrā*, and its counterpart *temhā*, gained several theological connotations, and hence somewhat technical usages, whereas an ordinary case of astonishment is usually expressed by the corresponding verbs. The ultimate usages function in contexts of mystical experience.

In this way we have wandered through semantic fields and discovered a route from 'surprise' to the gates of 'ecstasy in God' (*tahrā dab-allāhā*). The variation in the use of the concept is well in line with the fact that the transition from wonder to ecstasy is stepless in the mental reality, too. This may be illustrated by the following diagram, where the axes represent the mental phenomena, the emotional development from a sense of surprise, via astonishment and the state of wondering, to ecstasy and still further towards trance. The circles represent the semantic fields of the roots *DMR*, *TMH* and *THR* in (post-OT) Classical Syriac. The first one is used in the area of "normal" emotional phenomena, but the other two for some more unusual states in addition. They are almost identical, and they also share more usages outside this particular mental process (i.e. under the horizontal axis).

