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The Sublime in the Works of H.P. Lovecraft

Bakalářská práce

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## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to explore what the relationship between the phenomenon of the sublime and the phenomenon of cosmic horror is in the fiction of the American horror writer Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937). More specifically, this thesis aims to explore how the maddening impact of cosmic horror upon the protagonist inhibits the phenomenon of the sublime in the author's works. The sublime is a phenomenon which manifests as a combination of pleasure and displeasure, and which is provoked by certain objects that exhibit some transmutation of greatness or power. Adjective laden language which captures this transmutation of greatness or power is characteristic of the prose of Lovecraft. In a subset of his narratives, unsuspecting protagonists encounter environments which are characterized as great or powerful and which inspire feelings of pleasure and displeasure characteristic of the sublime. The protagonist's presence in these environments later results in a mind-shattering revelation about the true nature of the cosmos within them. This revelation is the manifestation of a specific subtype of cosmic horror which Lovecraft pioneered. The primary texts examined in this thesis (*At the Mountains of Madness* (1936), "The Call of Cthulhu" (1928) and "The Temple" (1925)) were selected so as to adhere to the subset defined in the previous sentence.

The first Section of this thesis focuses on defining the distinction between the concepts of terror and horror. Building upon this distinction, the Section then focuses on further defining the cosmic subtype of horror, as it is that particular subtype that is present in Lovecraft's narratives.

The second Section of this thesis focuses on defining the phenomenon of the sublime. Firstly, it disregards the model of sublimity proposed by Longinus, as it is not applicable in the context of Lovecraft's narratives. Secondly, the Section focuses on the characterization of the sublime as proposed by Edmund Burke (1729-1797) in terms of what the experience entails, on what mechanism it operates and what objects it is provoked by.

The third Section of this thesis is concerned with the preliminary analysis of the first primary text. The purpose of this analysis is to examine whether the theoretical concepts

of cosmic horror and the sublime introduced in Sections 1. and 2. respectively are reflected in the primary text. Based on the result of the preliminary analysis, changes are introduced to the theoretical concepts. The text examined is Lovecraft's novella *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936). Firstly, the Section introduces the methodology that is utilized in the preliminary analysis and in all further analyses presented in this thesis. The chosen approach is of a qualitative, concept driven text analysis of the pertinent texts which utilizes the theoretical concepts pre-established in Sections 1. and 2. Secondly, it presents the results of the analysis with respect to the presence of the Burkean sublime and cosmic horror in the text. These would suggest that the model of cosmic horror introduced in the first Section of this thesis is adequate, as it is reflected in the text, whereas the Burkean model of the sublime is not, as it does not sufficiently account for what is present in the text and for why it is inhibited by cosmic horror. Thus, based on the analysis, the theoretical background established in Section 2. is to be adjusted so that it reflects the primary texts.

The fourth Section of this thesis is concerned with introducing adjustments to the Burkean model of the sublime which proved inadequately representative of the sublime in Lovecraft's narratives based on the results of the analysis in Section 3. To that end, it introduces the model of sublimity as proposed by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). It then fuses the Kantian mechanism upon which the sublime operates with the objects the sublime is provoked by as defined by Burke. This fusion is reflected in adjustments made to the code set, which are introduced in this Section as well.

The subsequent three Sections of this thesis are concerned with the analyses of the novella *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936) and two short stories, "The Call of Cthulhu" (1928) and "The Temple" (1925). The methodology adjusted in the fourth Section of this thesis is utilized.

In the eighth Section of this thesis, the findings regarding the relationship between the sublime and cosmic horror in Lovecraft's narratives are contextualized with the broader contemporary view on the phenomenon of weird fiction.

The analyses suggest that the sublime in Lovecraft's narratives is derived from one object and cosmic horror from another object. Furthermore, they would seem to suggest that there is a sequential relationship between the sublime and cosmic horror in

Lovecraft's narratives and that the presence of cosmic horror in the text has an inhibiting influence on the presence of the sublime.

## **1. Horror**

In this Section, the concepts of terror and horror shall be introduced. Furthermore, the cosmic subtype of horror shall be introduced. These concepts shall then be used in the preliminary analysis.

### **1.1. The Concepts of Terror and Horror**

For the purposes of analyzing when the sublime and cosmic horror experience occurs in the primary texts, it is imperative that a terminological distinction between the overarching concepts of terror and horror be established. Having a firm theoretical background for these two overarching concepts will firstly allow for the further delineation of the more specific cosmic horror (which is suspected to have an inhibiting impact on the sublime in the texts, as per the goal set out in the introduction) and secondly, it will have implications for the definitions of the sublime, as terror seems to be inherent to the sublime in one permutation or the other, as shall be illuminated in Section 2. and later in Section 4. (and hence it is imperative that a firm definition is established lest the definitions of the sublime be incomplete.) The two phenomena shall be defined in terms of features which contrast them.

The contemporary views on these phenomena are plentiful and diverse, but the primordial distinction remains nonetheless. The first one to make said distinction was the British gothic romance writer Ann Radcliffe in her essay "On the Supernatural in Poetry." Here, Ann Radcliffe proposes that terror and horror are polar opposites, with terror expanding the mind as opposed to horror, which constricts it.<sup>1</sup> These properties of the two phenomena are predicated on the property of obscurity. McKillop builds upon this dichotomy proposed by Radcliffe, contextualizing it with the works of Edmund Burke, claiming that the properties of mind expansion that terror exhibits are enabled by the obscurity of the object it is sourced from, whereas the mind constricting properties

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<sup>1</sup> Ann Radcliffe, "On the Supernatural in Poetry," *New Monthly Magazine* volume 16, no. 1. (1826): 149.

that horror exhibits are enabled by the non-obscurity of the object it is sourced from.<sup>2</sup> In her essay, Radcliffe establishes said dichotomy between terror and horror through a dialogue of two dramatis personae. In this conversation, Radcliffe alludes to the sublime inspiring properties which terror possesses, and horror lacks,<sup>3</sup> a clear reference to Edmund Burke, whose ideas regarding the sublime were very much alive at the time of the essay's writing (1826). However, the pertinent point is not the ability of terror to inspire the sublime,<sup>4</sup> but the distinction between it and horror, which is indirectly outlined in the following dialogue:

“terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them”<sup>5</sup>

Clearly, in her view, there are a number of important differences between terror and horror. She points out that terror, unlike horror, somehow stimulates the mind of the experiencer, leading to a state of their mental faculties which is more active than their default, whereas horror has the opposite effect of constricting them, making them less active than their default.<sup>6</sup> As McKillop proposes in his contextualization of Radcliffe's essay with the views of Burke, the faculty stimulating property of terror is, as has been aforementioned, in a large part enabled by a property of obscurity.<sup>7</sup> This is also apparent from Burke's own words:

“When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes. Everyone will be sensible of this, who considers how greatly night adds to our dread, in all cases of danger, and how much the notions of ghosts

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<sup>2</sup> Alan D. McKillop, “Mrs. Radcliffe on the Supernatural in Poetry,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 31, no. 3 (1932): 357.

<sup>3</sup> Ann Radcliffe, “On the Supernatural in Poetry,” *New Monthly Magazine* volume 16, no. 1. (1826): 149.

<sup>4</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51.

<sup>5</sup> Ann Radcliffe, “On the Supernatural in Poetry,” *New Monthly Magazine* volume 16, no. 1. (1826): 149.

<sup>6</sup> Ann Radcliffe, “On the Supernatural in Poetry,” *New Monthly Magazine* volume 16, no. 1. (1826): 149.

<sup>7</sup> Alan D. McKillop, “Mrs. Radcliffe on the Supernatural in Poetry,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 31, no. 3 (1932): 357.



and goblins, of which none can form clear ideas, affect minds which give credit to the popular tales concerning such sorts of beings."<sup>8</sup>

It is thus clear that Radcliffe, influenced by Burke's notions, considers terror to be a fearful over-stimulation of the mental faculties enabled by the obscure nature of the object from which the terror stems. In stark opposition, horror is the product of the removal of said obscurity from the terrible object and a subsequent shock caused by the experiencer's ability to see and perceive the form and nature of said object. She expresses this in her essay as well: one character ponders on instances when terror strikes the experiencer forcibly:

"How happens it then," said Mr. S—, "that objects of terror sometimes strike us very forcibly, when introduced into scenes of gaiety and splendor, as, for instance, in the Banquet scene in *Macbeth*?"<sup>9</sup>

To which the other character responds:

"They strike, then, chiefly by the force of contrast," replied W—; "but the effect, though sudden and strong, is also transient; it is the thrill of horror and surprise, which they then communicate, rather than the deep and solemn feelings excited under more accordant circumstances, and left long upon the mind."<sup>10</sup>

Thus correcting the first character that this forcible terror they speak of is in fact horror, which strikes and is perceivable by the experiencer (and thus not obscure, a required property of an object which is to inspire terror.)

I argue that this dichotomous conceptualization of the phenomena of terror and horror by Radcliffe is not only sufficient, but crucial for my project, as one of the facets of weird fiction is a certain subtype of horror (namely the cosmic horror) and it is thus imperative that a proper definition of the overarching concepts be established, so that the subsequent definition of the more specific cosmic horror is based upon a firm theoretical bedrock of the more general categories of terror and horror. This is crucial for my project, because it is the cosmic horror which, as per the analyses of the primary texts,

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<sup>8</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste*, (New York: Harper, 1844), 74.

<sup>9</sup> Ann Radcliffe, "On the Supernatural in Poetry," *New Monthly Magazine* volume 16, no. 1. (1826): 149.

<sup>10</sup> Ann Radcliffe, "On the Supernatural in Poetry," *New Monthly Magazine* volume 16, no. 1. (1826): 149.

possesses the inhibiting properties of the sublime in the protagonist in the primary texts.

The dichotomy in obscurity of the object is later on echoed (and to a degree, I would argue, made explicit) by Devendra Varma in his famous quote from his 1957 book on gothic fiction, *The Gothic Flame*, in which he argues that “[t]he difference between Terror and Horror is the difference between awful apprehension and sickening realization: between the smell of death and stumbling against a corpse.”<sup>11</sup> The dichotomy is echoed here because the terrible object is here defined yet again as something unseen to the experiencer, who experiences it indirectly through its indices (“the smell of death,”)<sup>12</sup> whereas horror is produced when the experiencer faces the object directly, i.e., when the object is presented before them in a clear, tangible manner. As Foerstch amply puts it, horror in Varma’s understanding is the fusion of the object and its indices in the eyes of the experiencer.<sup>13</sup> These echoings of Radcliffe are relevant for my project, because though they are again mostly concerned with the property of the object of terror being obscure and the object of horror being not so, Varma’s manner of explanation helps contribute in making the distinction between the phenomena more explicit and tangible and thus easier to discern in the primary texts. Furthermore, I propose that the subsequent feature of the two phenomena can be extracted from Varma’s description, that is, the temporal aspect of the dichotomy. As would Varma’s characterization of the dichotomy imply, horror is a momentary experience, a point in time in which the experiencer is overcome with the revelation (i.e., the loss of obscurity) of the horrible nature of the object laid bare before them, fused with its indices, whereas terror is a non-momentary experience.

## 1.2. Cosmic Horror

Having established the important distinction between the two phenomena of terror and horror, it is now imperative that we construct a more specific definition of cosmic horror

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<sup>11</sup> Devendra Parvas Varma, *The Gothic flame: Being a history of the Gothic novel in England; its origins, efforescence, and residuary Influences*, (London: Arthur Barker Limited, 1957), 130.

<sup>12</sup> Devendra Parvas Varma, *The Gothic flame: Being a history of the Gothic novel in England; its origins, efforescence, and residuary Influences*, (London: Arthur Barker Limited, 1957), 130.

<sup>13</sup> Jacqueline Foertsch, “Introduction: The Terror! The Terror!,” *Studies in the Novel* 36, no. 3 (2004): 286.

that has already been alluded to and which is pertinent to the analysis of the primary texts (*At the Mountains of Madness*, “The Temple” and “The Call of Cthulhu.”) Establishing a firm definition of this phenomenon is crucial because it is precisely cosmic horror, as I argue, which is responsible for the inhibition of the sublime in the primary texts. In this Section, the phenomenon of cosmic horror is analyzed as having the features of horror established in the previous section (i.e., non-obscurity and the temporal aspect of momentariness.) Supplemental features which further specify this particular subset of horror shall be outlined now.

The first scholar that shall inform this more specific subset of horror is Lovecraft himself. Working under the general umbrella of the conception of terror and horror as per the works of Radcliffe and Varma, Lovecraft proposes that „The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is the fear of the unknown.”<sup>14</sup> This serves as an important indicator of the precise nature of the fearful object that is the source of horror which Lovecraft seems to be interested in – the unknown and its fearful impact on the protagonist. This very specific source of fear is further made explicit in the essay, with Lovecraft saying that:

“A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with a seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain—a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space.”<sup>15</sup>

Thus, clearly, Lovecraft pictures the source of terror and horror in his narrative as something incomprehensible to the human mind and at the same time something which assaults the protagonist (in a metaphorical or a literal sense.) Furthermore, it is important according to Lovecraft that a tale of cosmic horror leaves the source of the horror unexplained, as a story “in which the horrors are finally explained away by natural

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<sup>14</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature: A Pulp-Lit Annotated Edition*, ed. by Finn J.D. John. Corvallis, (Oregon: Pulp-Lit Productions, 2016), 1.

<sup>15</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature: A Pulp-Lit Annotated Edition*, ed. by Finn J.D. John. Corvallis, (Oregon: Pulp-Lit Productions, 2016), 4-5.

means, is not a genuine tale of cosmic fear.”<sup>16</sup> I argue that while Lovecraft’s insight into the concept of cosmic horror is in no doubt invaluable and serves as a good basis for the definition of cosmic horror to be used in this thesis, there is one certain element which needs to be covered more explicitly for it to be applicable in my analyses. The lacking element in question would be the physical impact of cosmic horror on the protagonist, which is required, as it is precisely cosmic horror’s (inhibiting) impact on the sublime, which is the topic of this research.

Sederholme provides this lacking element. He proposes that the experience of cosmic horror may permanently alter notions of self and the world,<sup>17</sup> potentially leading to insanity.<sup>18</sup> This impact of cosmic horror is echoed by Burleson, who purports that „the idea that self-knowledge, or discovery of one’s position in the real fabric of the universe, is psychically ruinous,“<sup>19</sup> a notion central to Lovecraft’s work. I argue that in combination with Lovecraft’s broader definition of cosmic horror in his essay, Sederholme’s and Burleson’s insights regarding its impact serve in provision of a sufficient definition of cosmic horror, as they address the possible maddening impact of cosmic horror<sup>20</sup> which is crucial for its connection with the inhibiting effect on the experiencing of the sublime.

Working under the broader conceptual umbrella of the dichotomy of terror and horror as proposed by Radcliffe and Varma (i.e., the duality of obscurity versus non-obscurity and the temporal aspect,) Lovecraft, Sederholme and Burleson enrich the dichotomy aforementioned with several new distinct features that differentiate cosmic

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<sup>16</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature: A Pulp-Lit Annotated Edition*, ed. by Finn J.D. John. Corvallis, (Oregon: Pulp-Lit Productions, 2016), 5.

<sup>17</sup> Carl Sederholme, “What Screams Are Made Of: Representing Cosmic Fear in H.P. Lovecraft’s ‘Pickman’s Model,’” in *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 16, no. 4 (64) (2006): 336.

<sup>18</sup> Carl Sederholme, “What Screams Are Made Of: Representing Cosmic Fear in H.P. Lovecraft’s ‘Pickman’s Model,’” in *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 16, no. 4 (64) (2006): 346.

<sup>19</sup> Donald Richard Burleson, “On Lovecraft’s Themes: Touching the Glass,” in *An Epicure in the Terrible: A Centennial Anthology of Essays in Honor of H.P. Lovecraft*, edited by David E. Schultz and S. T. Joshi, (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1991), 137.

<sup>20</sup> Carl Sederholme, “What Screams Are Made Of: Representing Cosmic Fear in H.P. Lovecraft’s ‘Pickman’s Model,’” in *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 16, no. 4 (64) (2006): 346.

horror and terror from the generic overarching concepts of horror and terror. Lovecraft includes his features of the horror being derived from the unknown, of it being left unexplained at the end of the narrative and the assaultive behavior of the unknown from which the horror is finally derived with respect to the experiencer. Sederholme and Burleson make Lovecraft's model more complex by their explication of its impact on the experiencer, i.e., the maddening effect of cosmic horror tied to the altering the experiencer's view on the world which is derived from the revelation of the unknown to the experiencer and its shattering of their conception of the world.

In conclusion, I argue that this Lovecraftian definition informed by Sederholme's and Burleson's insights (i.e. the horrifying revelation of the incomprehensible which assaults the protagonist's mind and alters their view on the world, resulting in insanity) is sufficient for my project, as it can be used to accurately describe the horror elements of the primary texts when codified, which is crucial for the determination of the presence of cosmic horror in the text, and because it can be used to accurately describe their impact on the protagonists when codified, which serves to adequately describe how they inhibit the sublime experience of the protagonist.

## **2. The Sublime**

In this Section, a model of the sublime that shall later be used in the preliminary analysis shall be introduced.

### **2.1. Longinian Model of Sublimity**

The aim of this Section is firstly to define the model of sublimity as proposed by Longinus. Secondly, the purpose is to outline the reasons as to why it is unsuitable for the aims of this thesis. The inclusion of the Longinian model is necessary due to its foundational nature in the field of research of the sublime.

The Longinian model of the sublime can be traced back to the classical age. It was first defined in the treatise *On Sublimity* by an unknown author, most commonly referred

to as “Dyonisius or Longinus.”<sup>21</sup> It is one of the earliest major works to tackle the notion of sublimity. It defines sublimity as something that “uplifts the spirit of the reader, filling him or her with unexpected astonishment and pride, arousing noble thoughts, and suggesting more than words can convey.”<sup>22</sup> It is concerned heavily with the role of the author as the source of sublimity,<sup>23</sup> proposing that it is the grandeur of their thoughts<sup>24</sup> conversing upon great objects<sup>25</sup> and, most importantly, their mastery at conveying them through language that inspires it in the audience,<sup>26</sup> causing them to feel “ekstasis,”<sup>27</sup> a feeling distinct from other effects of rhetoric.<sup>28</sup> Longinus outlines five sources of sublimity: “great thoughts, strong emotion, certain figures of thought and speech, noble diction; and dignified word arrangement,”<sup>29</sup> which are, as has been aforementioned, focused either on the thoughts or the literary ability of the author. Longinus further makes it a point to mention some criteria exclusionary to sublimity according to his understanding of the phenomenon, namely those of “exactitude, minutia, and correctness,”<sup>30</sup> suggesting that the qualities opposite to these are fruitful in producing the

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<sup>21</sup> Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 135.

<sup>22</sup> Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 135.

<sup>23</sup> Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 135.

<sup>24</sup> Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 135.

<sup>25</sup> Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 137.

<sup>26</sup> Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 136.

<sup>27</sup> Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 135.

<sup>28</sup> Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 135.

<sup>29</sup> Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 136.

<sup>30</sup> Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 136.

sublime,<sup>31</sup> and as Velde aptly puts it, “anything mean or disgusting,”<sup>32</sup> which includes anything tumid, bombastic or frigid.<sup>33</sup>

Despite its invaluable influence on the concept and the theory of sublime, sublimity as defined by Longinus is, I argue, unsuitable with respect to my research. The first chief reason is the fact that Longinus does not make the distinction between the sublime and the beautiful, which first appears in 18th century, with the two concepts being deemed mutually exclusive by Burke in his 1757 treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. The distinction has since become a widely accepted axiom in the field of aesthetics. Without any explicit criteria regarding the aforementioned distinction to speak of, using the Longinian definition could potentially result in a misidentification of the beautiful as the sublime and vice versa.

Secondly, there is the issue of Longinus’s rejection of that which is mean or disgusting, that which can be despised as a source of true greatness and thus of sublimity.<sup>34</sup> This naturally limits the possible applications within the context of the work of Lovecraft, whose adjective laden, exceedingly verbose prose is notable for its bombast and tumidity, for which he has been historically looked upon unfavorably by critics.<sup>35</sup>

In conclusion, for the reasons mentioned above, the Longinian model of sublimity is not the concern of this thesis. However, it remains a foundational text in the research of sublime and as such it was necessary for it to be included in this thesis.

## **2.2. Burkean Model of Sublimity**

The aim of this section is to introduce the model of the sublime as proposed by Burke. Firstly, the general mechanism of the Burkean sublime shall be introduced. Secondly, the

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<sup>31</sup> Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 136.

<sup>32</sup> Paul Velde, “Fear of the Sublime,” *The Antioch Review* 68, no. 2 (2010): 220.

<sup>33</sup> Paul Velde, “Fear of the Sublime,” *The Antioch Review* 68, no. 2 (2010): 220.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Velde, “Fear of the Sublime,” *The Antioch Review* 68, no. 2 (2010): 220.

<sup>35</sup> Jeff Lacy and Steven J. Zani, “The Negative Mystics of the Mechanistic Sublime: Walter Benjamin and Lovecraft’s Cosmicism,” *Lovecraft Annual*, no. 1 (2007): 65.

objects which provoke it shall be outlined. The Burkean model, unlike the Longinian one, shall be used in the preliminary analysis (i.e., it shall be utilized in the qualitative, concept driven text analysis of the primary text, as outlined in Section 3.)

The second of the seminal texts on the sublime which simultaneously will be the first one utilized in the construction of the first, preliminary code set and which shall be thus applied in the preliminary analysis of H. P. Lovecraft's 1936 novella, *At the Mountains of Madness*, is *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* by Burke.

In the treatise, Burke draws a dichotomy between the beautiful and the sublime. For Burke, the beautiful is derived from love<sup>36</sup> in contrast to the sublime, which is derived from pain.<sup>37</sup> He further speaks on the sublime in more specificity, proposing that the sublime is the strongest emotion that the mind is capable of feeling<sup>38</sup> (and thus more powerful than beauty) and that it is an experience of astonishment, to which awe and reverence are subordinates.<sup>39</sup> He argues that this supreme strength of the emotion results from the fact (as presented by him) that pain is inherently more powerful a feeling than pleasure<sup>40</sup> and therefore the sublime is conversely inherently more powerful an experience than beauty.

In regards to the mechanism of the sublime, Burke again ruminates upon the relationship between pain and the sublime. Burke argues that it is precisely capability of an object to excite the ideas of pain<sup>41</sup> that allows it to inspire the feelings of the sublime.

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<sup>36</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 112.

<sup>37</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51.

<sup>38</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51.

<sup>39</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 168.

<sup>40</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51.

<sup>41</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51.



Therefore, as Burke writes, whatever is terrible (inspiring fear of pain) is capable of exciting sublimity.<sup>42</sup> In Burke's conception, the sublime is the combination of pain (more specifically, fear thereof)<sup>43</sup> and pleasure.<sup>44</sup> However, it needs to be added that not everything that is in some way terrible necessarily does excite sublimity. As Burke explains, the source of terror has to be at a certain distance and with certain modifications<sup>45</sup> for it to excite sublimity. In more specificity about the modifications, Burke writes, that for a sublime experience to occur, the potential source cannot be conversant about the present destruction of the person.<sup>46</sup> Vivian Ralickas further points out the necessity of common sense,<sup>47</sup> without which a sublime experience is impossible, which is complemented by Houston's proposition that the experiencer has to possess an understanding of the potential source before a sublime experience is possible.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to his understanding of the mechanism of the phenomenon (which, as is apparent, is largely limited to how the sublime manifests externally, i.e. pleasure and fear,) Burke provides us with a varied list of objects which potentially might inspire sublimity (i.e. which are capable of inspiring fear of pain and pleasure.) From this rather extensive list, the most useful ones for the construction of my preliminary code set and its subsequent application on *At the Mountains of Madness* are power, greatness of dimension, unimaginability and obscurity. These are of course, not all of the potentially sublime objects Burke provides, but after a preliminary reading of the novella, I have

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<sup>42</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51.

<sup>43</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 73.

<sup>44</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51-52.

<sup>45</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 52.

<sup>46</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 168.

<sup>47</sup> Vivian Ralickas, "'Cosmic Horror' and the Question of the Sublime in Lovecraft," *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 18, no. 3 (71) (2007): 383.

<sup>48</sup> Alex Houston, "Lovecraft and the Sublime: A Reinterpretation," *Lovecraft Annual*, no. 5 (2011): 176.

elected not to include the entire list as comprised by Burke, for the simple reason that based on my reading, the objects not included are not present in in the novella in connection to the sublime. The pertinent objects are presented in the following paragraph.

On power, Burke writes that he knows of nothing sublime that is not in some manner a modification of it,<sup>49</sup> but he makes it a point to explain that the power which serves as the source of sublimity has to be not subjugated by the experiencer.<sup>50</sup> On greatness of dimension, Burke writes that it is a powerful cause of the sublime.<sup>51</sup> He further explains that from the three subsets of dimension, those being length, height and depth, length is the least capable of exciting sublimity whereas depth is the most apt.<sup>52</sup> Regarding unimaginability, Burke writes that the sublime is an experience is in its effect much greater than even the liveliest imagination can enjoy,<sup>53</sup> from which follows that the sublime cannot be produced by one's imagination and thus is unimaginable. On obscurity, Burke writes that it seems to be necessary to make an object terrible,<sup>54</sup> which in turn makes the object capable of inspiring sublimity, with obscurity being defined as a property that makes the object harder to fully discern from the standpoint of the experiencer.<sup>55</sup>

To summarize, Burkean sublimity is an experience consisting of pain (more specifically, the fear thereof) and pleasure that transpires when the experiencer is at a distance that ensures the sublime object does not threaten to destroy them and when they

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<sup>49</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 81.

<sup>50</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 83-84.

<sup>51</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 90.

<sup>52</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 91.

<sup>53</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51.

<sup>54</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 74.

<sup>55</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 74.

possess an understanding of the sublime object. This experience is caused by a varied list of objects, provided that the prerequisites covered in the preceding sentence are met. I argue that Burke's analysis is pertinent to my project because of his list of possible sublime objects, which serves as an important empirical bedrock for the methodology of my analyses of the primary texts. Where Burke lacks is the deeper examination of the sublime experience itself, more specifically, the mechanism on which it operates inside the mind (he focuses on how it manifests externally instead, i.e. through the combination of pleasure and fear.) This makes his model unsuitable for use, as it could lead to inconclusive results on the basis of lacking a robust theoretical framework for the identification of the experience in the primary texts, which would result in deriving the framework from the primary texts, a course of conduct unacceptable given the small sample size of the primary texts. This lacking examination of the mechanism also results in an unclear reason as to why cosmic horror has an inhibiting influence on the presence of a sublime experience, even though the texts clearly show it does, as shall be explored in Section 3.2.

### **3. *At the Mountains of Madness* Preliminary Analysis**

In this Section, firstly the methodology (in this case, text analysis that utilizes a set of codes to detect pre-established theoretical concepts in a given text) that shall be used in the analyses of the primary texts will be presented. Secondly, the method will be applied to the first primary text (*At the Mountains of Madness*) and present the results of this preliminary analysis. These results shall inform the changes to the set of codes, so that they reflect the primary texts. These changes will be presented in Section 4. *At the Mountains of Madness* is a novella that tells the story of a failed arctic expedition that comes into contact with the eponymous mountains, which are the source of the sublime experience and later falls victim to the creatures that inhabit them, which are the cause of the cosmic horror experience.

#### **3.1. The Introduction of the Methodology**

Having established the theoretical background of the Burkean conception of sublimity, the theoretical background of the distinction between terror and horror and the more

specific definition of cosmic horror, we can now apply said background in the construction of the methodology that shall be applied in the analysis of the novella. The method selected for the analysis is qualitative, concept-driven text analysis as proposed by Kuckartz.<sup>56</sup> The defining features of the sublime and of cosmic horror shall be transformed into theoretical codes (i.e., as Kuckartz explains, codes based on pre-established theoretical concepts<sup>57</sup>) that shall represent them in the text. These codes are developed deductively<sup>58</sup> (i.e., are based on the theoretical frameworks outlined in Sections 1. and 2.) This Section (3.1.) deals with the presentation of this deductively developed set of codes. Through utilizing this methodology, the analysis of the relationship between the two theoretical concepts of the sublime and cosmic horror will be possible.

The structure of the codes is fairly straightforward. Each code shall have inclusionary and exclusionary criteria. If the inclusionary criteria are met, the Section of the text the code is applied to is considered as adhering to the code and by extension, the theoretical concept is present. By contrast, if the exclusionary criteria are met (or if the inclusionary criteria are not met), the Section of the text is considered as non-adhering to the code and by extension, the theoretical concept is not present.

The code set presented in this section is dynamic, not static. This means that adjustments will be made to it based on the results of the preliminary analysis which is presented in Sections 3.2., 3.3. and 3.4. The code set shall be adjusted based on the data gathered so that the codes (and thus the concepts which they stand for) properly reflect what is present on the textual level. This adjustment shall again be conducted deductively (i.e., through supplying additional theoretical data to the frameworks introduced in

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<sup>56</sup> This text does not reserve the application of the method exclusively for mathematics despite the title - Udo Kuckartz, "Qualitative Text Analysis: A Systematic Approach," in *Compendium for Early Career Researchers in Mathematics Education*, edited by Gabriele Kaiser and Norma Presmeg, (Cham, Switzerland : Springer, 2019), 183-187.

<sup>57</sup> Udo Kuckartz, "Qualitative Text Analysis: A Systematic Approach," in *Compendium for Early Career Researchers in Mathematics Education*, edited by Gabriele Kaiser and Norma Presmeg, (Cham, Switzerland : Springer, 2019), 183.

<sup>58</sup> Udo Kuckartz, "Qualitative Text Analysis: A Systematic Approach," in *Compendium for Early Career Researchers in Mathematics Education*, edited by Gabriele Kaiser and Norma Presmeg, (Cham, Switzerland : Springer, 2019), 184.

Sections 1. And 2.)

This method presents us with a consistent tool of assessment that is to be applied to all the texts analyzed, which ensures the consistency of the results across the texts. For the purposes of simplicity, the names of the individual codes shall roughly correspond to the names of the sublime sources as defined by Burke, to the conceptions of terror and cosmic horror as defined by Radcliffe, Varma, Lovecraft, Sederholme and Burlison and to the mechanism of the sublime as defined by Burke (i.e. terror combined with pleasure at a certain objective distance that ensures the experiencer is not under the threat of imminent destruction, with the experiencer possessing an understanding of the object.) This course of action presents us with the following distinct codes that shall be applied to the text during the analysis: power, greatness of dimension, unimaginability and obscurity for the Burkean sources, terror and cosmic horror for the terror and horror elements of the texts and pleasure, qualification, insanity, objective distance for the sublime mechanism as defined by Burke.

The first grouping of codes are the ones derived from the Burkean conception of sublimity. Power refers to a statement regarding the degree of power of the object suspected of inspiring sublimity, with the inclusionary criteria stipulating that the object is powerful, it is described as possessing/exhibiting immense power and exclusionary criteria stipulating that the power is subjugated or is not connected to the object. Greatness of dimension refers to a statement regarding the length, depth or height of the object suspected of inspiring sublimity with inclusionary criteria stipulating that the lexicon used refers to either length, depth or height of the object and the exclusionary criteria stipulating that the lexicon used does not refer to either length, depth or height of the object. Unimaginability refers to a statement regarding the experiencer's mind's ability to comprehend the object suspected of inspiring sublimity with inclusionary criteria stipulating that the lexicon used describes unimaginability and exclusionary criteria stipulating that there are no such lexicon and if there are, they are not connected to the object. Obscurity refers to a statement regarding the obscurity of the object suspected of inspiring sublimity with inclusionary criteria stipulating that there is lexicon indicating obscurity and exclusionary criteria stipulating that there is no such lexicon and if there is, it is not connected to the object. Pleasure refers to a statement expressing awe

or pleasure connected to the object suspected of inspiring sublimity. Inclusionary criteria constitute lexicon expressing pleasure or awe. Exclusionary criteria stipulate that there is no such lexicon and if there is, it is not connected to the object suspected of inspiring sublimity. Qualification refers to a statement regarding the general qualification of the experiencer with respect to the object suspected of inspiring sublimity, their ability to understand it. Inclusionary criteria stipulate that there is lexicon indicating qualification relevant to the object. Exclusionary criteria stipulate that there is no such lexicon and if there is, it is not connected to the object. Terror refers to a statement regarding the perceived terror derived from the object suspected of inspiring sublimity. Inclusionary criteria stipulate that there is lexicon indicating terror i.e., that the object is somehow obscure, and it is a non-momentary experience causing fear. Exclusionary criteria stipulate that there is no such lexicon and if there is, it is not connected to the object. Objective distance refers to statements regarding the safety from imminent destruction between the experiencer and the object suspected of inspiring sublimity. Inclusionary criteria stipulate that there is lexicon indicating distance between the experiencer and the object which ensures the safety of the experiencer. Exclusionary criteria stipulate that there is no such lexicon and if there is, it is not connected to the object.

The second grouping of codes are derived from the conceptions of terror and horror as described by Radcliffe, McKillop and Varma as well as Lovecraft, Sederholme and Burlson. Cosmic horror refers to a statement regarding the perceived cosmic horror. Inclusionary criteria stipulate that there is lexicon indicating horror i.e. that the object is somehow non-obscure for the experiencer and it is a momentary experience as well as markers indicating the cosmic subtype, i.e. it is derived from the revelation of an incomprehensible object which assaults the experiencer's mind and alters their view on the world, which results in insanity (it is thus necessary that for horror to be considered cosmic, the code for insanity needs to be present.) Exclusionary criteria stipulate that there is no such lexicon and if there is, it is not connected to the object. Insanity refers to a statement describing the complete loss of mind in the experiencer caused by the object. Inclusionary criteria stipulate that there is lexicon indicating loss of mind.

The rules governing the presence of the sublime and cosmic horror predicated upon the presence of the codes are thus: the sublime is judged as present if a code designating

a sublime object (power, greatness of dimension, unimaginability or obscurity) along with codes for pleasure, objective distance and qualification are present. Cosmic horror is judged as present if codes for cosmic horror (the cosmic horror code is comprised of incomprehensibility, assaultive behavior and change of the protagonist's view of the world) and insanity are present. The aforementioned codes shall now be applied in analysis of *At the Mountains of Madness*.

### **3.2. The Sublime**

The first Section of the analysis to be presented is the occurrence of the sublime in the primary text. As has been outlined in the preceding Section of this thesis concerned with Burke, Burkean sublime is an experience which manifests as pain (more specifically, the fear thereof) as well as pleasure<sup>59</sup> at a certain distance which ensures the safety of the experiencer<sup>60</sup> and which can be derived from a plethora of possible sources that have been codified in the preceding Section. The primary text exhibits the sources which Burke describes in his treatise as well as the manifestation of the sublime experience (i.e., pain or fear thereof, which is codified as terror plus pleasure, which is codified as pleasure) as described by Burke.

The first instance of the sublime is present upon the arrival of the expedition to the arctic in chapter one. The group are presented as possessing an understanding of the object which later inspires sublimity in them, they are all scientists and are described as highly familiar with geology:

“[a]s a geologist my object in leading the Miskatonic University Expedition was wholly that of securing deep-level specimens of rock and soil from various parts of the antarctic continent, aided by the remarkable drill devised by Prof. Frank H. Pabodie of our engineering department.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51.

<sup>60</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 52.

<sup>61</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 723-724.

Hence, inclusionary criteria for the qualification code are met – the group possess the necessary understanding of the object (the mountains), a prerequisite for a Burkean sublime experience according to Ralickas<sup>62</sup> and Houston.<sup>63</sup> The group are traveling by a ship (“we sailed from Boston Harbour,”) <sup>64</sup> which indirectly signals a position of safety from the source of the sublime (they are not in the imminent danger of destruction at the hands of the range,) thus falling under the inclusionary criteria of the objective distance code. Upon the aforementioned arrival, possessing the necessary understanding, and being at an objective distance, the group are met with the scene of an arctic mountain range (these are not yet the eponymous Mountains of Madness,) which is the cause of the first instance of the sublime experienced by the group. The mountain range is described as “vast”<sup>65</sup> and “lofty,”<sup>66</sup> hence falling under the inclusionary criteria of the greatness of dimension code, provoking “a thrill of excitement,”<sup>67</sup> which falls under the inclusionary criteria of the pleasure code. The whole scene is then completed by the description of the environment as the “great unknown continent and its cryptic world of frozen death.”<sup>68</sup> I argue that this can be considered as falling under the inclusionary criteria of terror, as it evokes obscurity (unknown continent,) and it is not a momentary experience (nothing in the text suggest that it is, the expedition have entered said cryptic world and remain within) hence my reluctant proposition that the witnessing of the range is productive of a sublime experience for the group. However, I am aware that such interpretation might be

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<sup>62</sup> Vivian Ralickas, ““Cosmic Horror” and the Question of the Sublime in Lovecraft,” *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 18, no. 3 (71) (2007): 383.

<sup>63</sup> Alex Houston, “Lovecraft and the Sublime: A Reinterpretation,” *Lovecraft Annual*, no. 5 (2011): 176. Accessed March 6, 2021. doi:10.2307/26868437.

<sup>64</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 725.

<sup>65</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 726.

<sup>66</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 726.

<sup>67</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 726.

<sup>68</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 726.



based on insufficient data (no explicit mention of terror, merely an allusion to death,) which is why I designate the Burkean understanding of the sublime mechanism as insufficient and redress it in the following Section concerning Kant.

In chapter two, more insufficiencies with the Burkean model are revealed. The group has split at this point, with one sub-group, led by a man named Lake, flying to investigate the Mountains of Madness and the other staying behind and keeping contact through a radio transmitter. The Lake sub-group sets up a camp at the foot of the range and Lake ventures to conduct an aerial investigation of the mountains. He describes the range as “higher than any hitherto seen,”<sup>69</sup> that it “[m]ay equal Himalayas allowing for height of plateau.”<sup>70</sup> and that it “[r]eaches far as can see to right and left,”<sup>71</sup> all of which falls under the inclusionary criteria of the greatness of dimension code. He claims that the mountains “surpass anything in imagination,”<sup>72</sup> which fall under the inclusionary criteria of the unimaginability code. He also claims that the “[g]ale blowing off them impedes navigation,”<sup>73</sup> which falls under the obscurity code (navigation is impeded by the gale making the range obscure to the experiencer and thus harder to navigate around.) He expresses what can be interpreted as the pleasure code (“[w]hole thing marvelous in red-gold light of low sun.”)<sup>74</sup> Codes for qualification (“[w]ish you were here to study”)<sup>75</sup> are present. They are not in imminent danger of destruction; hence the objective distance

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<sup>69</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 731.

<sup>70</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 731.

<sup>71</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 731.

<sup>72</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 732.

<sup>73</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 731.

<sup>74</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 732.

<sup>75</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 732.

code is present (“nobody hurt and perhaps can repair.”)<sup>76</sup> However, nothing that could be considered as falling under the inclusionary criterion of the terror code is present, hence no Burkean sublime is present. This is curious, because the sublime sources as defined by Burke are present and all the prerequisites (objective distance and qualification) are present. The absence of terror is thus anomalous. The introduction of Kant addresses this discrepancy, as will be discussed in Section 4.2.

This anomalous pattern repeats itself again following the aforementioned aerial investigation. Back in the camp, Lake shares his impressions of the mountain range yet again, saying that they possess “ineffable majesty,”<sup>77</sup> which falls under the inclusionary criteria of pleasure. He is “in the lee”<sup>78</sup> of the mountain range, clearly indicating objective distance. He further speaks of “vast silent pinnacles whose ranks shot up like a wall reaching the sky at the world’s rim,”<sup>79</sup> professing that “theodolite observations had placed the height of the five tallest peaks at from 30,000 to 34,000 feet,”<sup>80</sup> which falls under the greatness of dimension code as well as the qualification code (theodolite observations refer back to the science background of the experiencers and suggest that they have an understanding of the object.) Once again however, no terror is present and thus the experience cannot be judged sublime, despite the prerequisites (objective distance and understanding) being met.

With relation to power, Lake notes “[t]he windswept nature of the terrain”<sup>81</sup> which

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<sup>76</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 731.

<sup>77</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 733.

<sup>78</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 733.

<sup>79</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 733.

<sup>80</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 733.

<sup>81</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 733.

argues for the existence of “prodigious gales,”<sup>82</sup> which falls under the power code and he expresses a “subconscious alarm in his words,”<sup>83</sup> which again can be interpreted as falling under the code for terror, as said alarm is connected to the prodigious gales derived from the mountains which are not present at the moment of the utterance and thus are obscure, to be possibly revealed, and the subconscious alarm is not a momentary experience, it remains with Lake, who worries about said gales continuously, hence fitting the definition of terror I have established. No pleasure code is present however, and thus the windswept terrain does not inspire the sublime.

The Lake sub-group is then wiped out and with it gone, the presence of the sublime shifts to another sub-group, consisting of, among others, the narrator Dyer and a young student, Danforth, who fly to investigate the Lake sub-group when they go radio silent. While flying to the mountain range, a sublime experience transpires. They describe the range as having an “abnormal height,”<sup>84</sup> which falls under the inclusionary criteria of the greatness of dimension code. They speak of “curious sense of phantasy which they inspired”<sup>85</sup> as well as “a persistent, pervasive hint of stupendous secrecy and potential revelation; as if these stark, nightmare spires marked the pylons of a frightful gateway into forbidden spheres of dream,”<sup>86</sup> which fall under the inclusionary criteria of the pleasure and terror codes respectively. The entire Section is introduced with assurances that

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<sup>82</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 733.

<sup>83</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 733.

<sup>84</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 745.

<sup>85</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 745.

<sup>86</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 745.

“[t]he atmosphere was clear, fairly quiet, and relatively mild in temperature; and we anticipated very little trouble in reaching the latitude and longitude designated by Lake as the site of his camp,”<sup>87</sup>

which falls under the inclusionary criteria for objective distance, as they are not in an imminent danger of destruction. All prerequisites met; the mountains provoke a sublime experience here.

The final instance of this particular model of sublimity in the novella is tied not to the mountains but to the city atop the mountains. Having investigated the ruined camp of the Lake sub-group, Dyer and Danforth venture to investigate the mountains themselves. Reaching the peaks of the range and witnessing what is beyond, the sight of said city presents itself for them. This inspires a sublime experience in them. They “cried out in mixed awe, wonder, terror,”<sup>88</sup> with awe falling under the inclusionary criteria of the pleasure code and terror falling under the inclusionary criteria of the terror code. They note a “limitless, tempest-scarred plateau,”<sup>89</sup> and an “almost endless labyrinth of colossal, regular, and geometrically eurhythmic stone masses,”<sup>90</sup> both of which fall under the greatness of dimension code. They express what can be considered within the inclusionary criteria for the qualification code: “we must have had some natural theory in the back of our heads to steady our faculties for the moment”<sup>91</sup> – in that moment, they construct some plausible explanation of the object at hand, and they manage to do so. They are not in an immediate danger of destruction; hence the objective distance code is present. All prerequisites met, the city provokes a sublime experience here.

In conclusion, the results of the preliminary qualitative, content driven analysis

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<sup>87</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 744.

<sup>88</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 757.

<sup>89</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 757.

<sup>90</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 757.

<sup>91</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 757.

would seem to show that the sublime experience in the text is tied to large structures like the mountains and the city which is atop them. However, the Burkean model seems to have proven itself an insufficient theoretical basis for the code set, as there are several anomalous instances in the text which should present as the sublime, but which for some reason do not.

### 3.3. Cosmic Horror

The second Section of this preliminary analysis is concerned with the presence of cosmic horror in the primary texts and its influence on the sublime. It is apparent from the analysis that at the moment when cosmic horror becomes present in the text, the instances of sublimity diminish, despite the sources and the prerequisites for the sublime experience defined by Burke being still present. Cosmic horror thus seems to have an inhibiting impact on the presence of the sublime. This inhibiting impact shall now be demonstrated on several examples.

The first such example can be observed after the Lake sub-group is wiped and stops responding to Dyer. Dyer ventures to investigate. He introduces what his experience at the Lake camp and at the city atop the mountains shall be with the following words: “[i]t marked my loss, at the age of fifty-four, of all that peace and balance which the normal mind possesses through its accustomed conception of external Nature and Nature’s laws.”<sup>92</sup> Hence, the experience to come (i.e., what shall be found at the camp and atop the mountains) clearly has an altering impact on their view of the world, a feature of cosmic horror. Following this proclamation, they experience the sublime (“curious sense of phantasy which they inspired,”)<sup>93</sup> which is still possible, as they haven’t been exposed to the cosmic horror at the camp or in the city at that point. After witnessing the ruins of the

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<sup>92</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 744.

<sup>93</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 745.

camp, they describe “soul-clutching horror.”<sup>94</sup> The sight of the destruction assaults the Dyer sub-group, causing them to lose the grip on their sanity (“Danforth in a poor nervous shape to navigate,”) <sup>95</sup> which is caused by the witnessing of the carnage.) The source of the horror (here the object which caused the destruction of the Lake sub-group) is incomprehensible to the Dyer sub-group:

“[f]or madness—centring in Gedney as the only possible surviving agent—was the explanation spontaneously adopted by everybody so far as spoken utterance was concerned; though I will not be so naive as to deny that each of us may have harboured wild guesses which sanity forbade him to formulate completely,”<sup>96</sup>

they are unable to comprehend what could have caused the destruction of the camp, a clear example of the unexplained outer force Lovecraft alluded to in his essay<sup>97</sup>. This horror inducing inspection of the Lake camp somehow makes the sublimity sources in the text inert (“[o]ne had to be careful of one’s imagination in the lee of those overshadowing mountains of madness,”<sup>98</sup> here the adjective overshadowing suggests greatness of dimension, qualification has been established already and objective distance is present, yet no sublime is produced, given the lack of pleasure.)

An interesting anomaly which becomes apparent is the presence of the sublime with connection to the city (“cried out in mixed awe, wonder, terror”<sup>99</sup>) despite the cosmic horror experience at the camp, which precedes it, and which should inhibit it (i.e., the sublime provoked by the city should not be possible after the cosmic horror experienced at the camp.) The observation that the sublime seems possible even following a cosmic

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<sup>94</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 747.

<sup>95</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 747.

<sup>96</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 753.

<sup>97</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature: A Pulp-Lit Annotated Edition*, ed. by Finn J.D. John. Corvallis, (Oregon: Pulp-Lit Productions, 2016), 4-5.

<sup>98</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 752.

<sup>99</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 757.

horror experience would seem to suggest that whatever it is in cosmic horror that inhibits the sublime, it does not appear to be irreversible. This too is addressed in Section 4.2.

The subsequent cosmic horror experiences transpire in the city atop the mountains. The Dyer sub-group delve inside the city, discovering murals on the walls chronicling the history of its inhabitants. The revelations contained in those murals has an unhinging impact on the sub-group characteristic of cosmic horror:

“we were forced to face definitely the reason-shaking realization which the reader of these pages has doubtless long ago anticipated. I can scarcely bear to write it down in black and white even now, but perhaps that will not be necessary.”<sup>100</sup>

This profession falls under the code for insanity. It also exhibits the property of incomprehensibility (their faculty of reason is shaken, they cannot comprehend the matter at hand) as well as a transgressive nature (the newly revealed knowledge assaults their view of the world and alters it, a property of cosmic horror,) hence falling under the pre-established definition of cosmic horror.

In contrast to the horror at the camp, the sublime becomes largely inhibited from the entrance to the city onward: the sub-group is in direct contact with the unknown which causes consecutive cosmic horror revelations. These result in the loss of sanity in the sub-group. Any contact with sources of sublimity as defined by Burke is not productive of the sublime after this point in the narrative (“vast circular place,”<sup>101</sup> or “vast five-pointed structure of evidently public and perhaps ceremonial nature,”<sup>102</sup> here we again see codes for greatness of dimension which fail to inspire sublimity.)

In conclusion, this section of the preliminary analysis seems to reveal three things. Firstly, that the definition of cosmic horror as established in Section 1. is sufficient, because it is adequately reflected in the primary text. Secondly, based on the cosmic horror following the presence of the sublime and the subsequent absence of the sublime

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<sup>100</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 769.

<sup>101</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 789.

<sup>102</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 784.

in the text, there is an inhibiting influence exacted by the cosmic horror upon the sublime in the text. And lastly (and this point largely follows from the point preceding,) that there is a sequential relationship between the sublime and cosmic horror in the text (i.e., the sublime precedes cosmic horror.)

### **3.4. Conclusions of the Preliminary Analysis**

The preliminary analysis of the novella shows that the Burkean conception of sublimity is insufficient, as it does not reflect what is perceived as the sublime in the text in two distinct ways. Firstly, it does not account for anomalous instances in the text which should present as the sublime (the prerequisites - objective distance and qualification - are met, yet the pleasure/fear combination characteristic of Burkean sublimity is not produced) as outlined in Section 3.2. Secondly, it does not explain why cosmic horror seems to have an inhibiting influence on the presence of sublimity, despite the fact that it clearly does based on the textual evidence (the sublime is present, it is followed by cosmic horror and suddenly it is not present, even though the sources are present) as outlined in Section 3.3. This ties to the observation that the inhibiting impact of cosmic horror is not irreversible. The preliminary analysis further shows that the pre-established definition of cosmic horror is sufficient, as it is reflected in the text.

As is apparent from the preliminary analysis, a more comprehensive model of sublimity that would account for the discrepancies outlined in the first paragraph of this Section is required. This updated model will affect the code set. Both the model and the code set shall be explored in the following Section.

## **4. Adjustments to the Model of The Sublime**

Having outlined why the Burkean model of sublimity is insufficient for the purposes of this research, it is now necessary to introduce adjustments to said model so that sufficiency is acquired. The theoretical source for these adjustments shall be the conception of sublimity as proposed by Kant in his so-called third critique, *Critique of Judgment*.



#### 4.1. Kantian Model of Sublimity

Having outlined why the Burkean model of sublimity is insufficient for the purposes of this research, it is now necessary to introduce adjustments to said model so that sufficiency is acquired. The theoretical source for these adjustments shall be the conception of sublimity as proposed by Kant in his so-called third critique, *Critique of Judgment*. The aim of this section is firstly to introduce the model of sublimity as proposed by Kant, secondly to compare the conflicts and similarities of this model and the Burkean one and thirdly to outline how precisely to incorporate the Kantian features into the pre-established Burkean model. The aim of this comparison is to find where the two models differ. The reasoning behind this is that in order for the features of the Kantian model to be incorporated into the pre-established Burkean definition (hence achieving the aforementioned adjustment,) the point of contention between the two models needs to be established (and addressed, which is the aim of Section 4.2.)

Both Kant and Burke differentiate between the beautiful and the sublime. Kant, in his third critique, introduces his notion of subjective universality of the judgment whether something is beautiful or sublime, a judgment being defined as the determination whether a particular instance is one thing or the other.<sup>103</sup> This dichotomy of the beautiful and the sublime is, as per the position of Holmqvist and Pluciennik, in line with Burke's understanding of the phenomena.<sup>104</sup> The concept of purposiveness, or "the general sense that a thing was formed by a purposive hand, although without a specific function or purpose,"<sup>105</sup> is integral to the dichotomy, with the beautiful being inherently purposive in its nature, and the sublime being contra purposive.<sup>106</sup> This binary conflict between the two phenomena is aptly summarized in the following quote by Kant:

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<sup>103</sup> Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 500.

<sup>104</sup> Kenneth Holmqvist and Jaroslaw Pluciennik, "A Short Guide to the Theory of the Sublime," *Style* 36, no. 4 (2002): 719. Accessed May 27, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/style.36.4.718>.

<sup>105</sup> Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 504.

<sup>106</sup> Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 520.

“natural beauty carries with it a purposiveness in its form, by which the object seems as it were predetermined for our power of judgment, so that this beauty constitutes in itself an object of our liking. On the other hand, if something arouses in us, merely in apprehension and without any reasoning on our part, a feeling of the sublime, then it may indeed appear, in its form, contra purposive for our power of judgment, incommensurate with our power of exhibition, and as it were violent to our imagination, and yet we judge it all the more sublime for that.”<sup>107</sup>

In contrast to Burke, Kant does not see the object as the source of the sublime, but rather the experiencer themselves. Kant proposes that the experience of sublime is more often than not tied to the internal confines of one’s mind, claiming that “all we are entitled to say is that the object is suitable for exhibiting a sublimity that can be found in the mind.”<sup>108</sup> This is an interesting point which diverts from the Burke’s understanding of sublimity, who, despite claiming that the sublime is productive of “the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling,”<sup>109</sup> nonetheless maintains that it is in fact the object that is the source of sublimity and not the experiencer’s mind’s internal workings. This is rather apparent from his initial definition of the phenomenon:

“[w]hatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger that is to say whatever is in any sort terrible or is conversant about terrible objects or operates in a manner analogous to terror is a source of the sublime.”<sup>110</sup>

According to Kant’s understanding, it would seem that it is not the object that is sublime, but the experience, which would tie sublimity to the experiencer rather than the source, which, according to Kant’s definition, becomes the catalyst (i.e., an object which provokes the sublime without being the source of the sublime) that inspires the sublime experience. This interpretation of Kant is further supported by his claim that “what is to be called sublime is not the object, but the attunement that, the intellect [gets] through a

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<sup>107</sup> Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 520.

<sup>108</sup> Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 521.

<sup>109</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51.

<sup>110</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51.

certain presentation that occupies reflective judgment.”<sup>111</sup> This shift in the source of sublimity from the object to the experiencer has had an influence on my updated code set somewhat, as it shall lead into why cosmic horror has an inhibiting impact on the sublime, as shall be explored in Section 4.2.

Kant differs from Burke substantially regarding his understanding of the mechanism upon which the sublime operates. He does not merely describe the pleasure and terror with which the sublime manifests the way Burke does. On the contrary, he provides an explanation as to the sources of this pleasure and terror, which shall again prove crucial in explaining why cosmic horror inhibits the sublime. To that end, he introduces two subdivisions of the sublime: the mathematically and the dynamically sublime, with both subdivisions being the product of the triumph of reason over nature.<sup>112</sup> This definition might initially seem at odds with Burke’s understanding, as he defines the sublime as something which is analogous to terror.<sup>113</sup> However upon closer examination we find that Burke’s ideas seem to be imbedded in Kant’s understanding of the phenomenon, as shall be outlined in the following three paragraphs, with the first two presenting the two Kantian subdivisions and the third arguing for why the Burke’s ideas are included within said subdivisions.

In case of the mathematically sublime, Kant writes that “the feeling of reason's superiority over nature takes the form, more specifically, of a feeling of reason's superiority to imagination,”<sup>114</sup> explaining that the displeasure of the inadequacy of our imagination to comprehend nature combined with the pleasure of the affirmation of the superiority of our reason in comprehending nature is the source of the sublime

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<sup>111</sup> Vincent B. Leitch (Ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 522.

<sup>112</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1987), 120.

<sup>113</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51.

<sup>114</sup> Hannah Ginsborg, “Kant’s Aesthetics and Teleology,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, Winter 2019. Accessed May 27, 2021. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics/#Bib>

experience.<sup>115</sup> Regarding its source (or rather, the object which provokes it,) he explains that the mathematically sublime is usually triggered by the experience of something that is “so large that it overwhelms imagination's capacity to comprehend it,”<sup>116</sup> providing the examples of “Pyramids in Egypt and St. Peter's Basilica in Rome”<sup>117</sup> while at the same time maintaining that the prime examples of the mathematically sublime are to be derived from the experiencer confronting nature.<sup>118</sup> The concept of the overwhelming largeness which inspires the mathematically sublime seems to be inherently tied to the concept of infinity as perceived by human imagination and reason from Kant's perspective.<sup>119</sup>

In case of the dynamically sublime, Kant writes that it transpires when our reason is affirmed as superior over nature which is in the particular instance of said affirmation perceived as powerful without having a dominion over us.<sup>120</sup> He further illuminates that the dynamically sublime occurs “when we experience nature as fearful while knowing ourselves to be in a position of safety and hence without in fact being afraid,”<sup>121</sup> providing “overhanging cliffs, thunder clouds, volcanoes and hurricanes”<sup>122</sup> as examples. Similarly to the mathematically sublime, the dynamically sublime too is a combination of

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<sup>115</sup> Hannah Ginsborg, “Kant's Aesthetics and Teleology,” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, Winter 2019. Accessed May 27, 2021. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics/#Bib>

<sup>116</sup> Hannah Ginsborg, “Kant's Aesthetics and Teleology,” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, Winter 2019. Accessed May 27, 2021. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics/#Bib>

<sup>117</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1987), 108.

<sup>118</sup> Hannah Ginsborg, “Kant's Aesthetics and Teleology,” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, Winter 2019. Accessed May 27, 2021. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics/#Bib>

<sup>119</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1987), 110.

<sup>120</sup> Hannah Ginsborg, “Kant's Aesthetics and Teleology,” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, Winter 2019. Accessed May 27, 2021. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics/#Bib>

<sup>121</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1987), 120.

<sup>122</sup> Hannah Ginsborg, “Kant's Aesthetics and Teleology,” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, Winter 2019. Accessed May 27, 2021. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics/#Bib>

pleasure and displeasure, the particular transmutation of the displeasure here being “the awareness of our physical powerlessness in the face of nature's might,”<sup>123</sup> with the pleasure being again the affirmation of our reason’s superiority over nature.<sup>124</sup>

One can immediately notice parallels with Burke’s ideas with regards to both the mathematically and the dynamically sublime. Firstly, it can be argued that both Burke and Kant define the sublime as an experience incorporating pleasure and displeasure alike.<sup>125, 126</sup> Secondly, there is a considerable overlap in the sources (from Burke’s point of view) or catalysts (from Kant’s point of view) that are conducive to the sublime experience. Kant’s understanding of the mathematically sublime seems to correspond to several potential sources of sublimity as defined by Burke, namely those of greatness of dimension,<sup>127</sup> unimaginability<sup>128</sup> and obscurity,<sup>129</sup> all of which have been discussed amply and are to an extent tied to the overarching concept of infinity. Similarly, Kant’s notion of the dynamically sublime likewise shares the potential source of power as defined by Burke and is arguably even more directly overlapping with Burke in the context of said source, as it is power precisely that is the catalyst of the sublime in the experienter in the context of the dynamically sublime.

With the points of similarity and contention addressed, a conclusion regarding the

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<sup>123</sup> Hannah Ginsborg, “Kant’s Aesthetics and Teleology,” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, Winter 2019. Accessed May 27, 2021. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics/#Bib>

<sup>124</sup> Hannah Ginsborg, “Kant’s Aesthetics and Teleology,” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, Winter 2019. Accessed May 27, 2021. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics/#Bib>

<sup>125</sup> Hannah Ginsborg, “Kant’s Aesthetics and Teleology,” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, Winter 2019. Accessed May 27, 2021. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics/#Bib>

<sup>126</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51-52.

<sup>127</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 90.

<sup>128</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51.

<sup>129</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 79.

chief discordance between the two models presents itself. As it would appear, the key difference between Burke's and Kant's understanding of the sublime seems to be neither in the worldly phenomena that might inspire it (though there are differences,) nor in the pleasurable and displeasurable feelings of the experiencer that generally signify it (which, as has been established, both Kant and Burke agree upon,) but in the precise the nature of the mechanism through which the sublime operates in the experiencer themselves. This disagreement regarding the mechanism is apparent from Kant's own words:

“[t]o make psychological observations, as Burke did in his treatise on the beautiful and the sublime, thus to assemble material for the systematic connection of empirical rules in the future without aiming to understand them, is probably the sole true duty of empirical psychology, which can hardly even aspire to rank as a philosophical science.”<sup>130</sup>

It is clear from this quote that Kant criticized Burke's lack of focus on the specific nature of the mechanism of the sublime experience and his exclusive concern with the sources that might or might not inspire it.

This fundamental clash of these two theorists might be the reason why their respective ideas regarding the sublime are sometimes seen as incompatible.<sup>131</sup> To overcome this obstacle of incompatibility, I argue that it is possible to salvage the library of sources of the sublime as defined by Burke as well as the incomplete Burkean understanding of the mechanism on which the sublime operates and filter them through the framework of the Kantian model of the mechanism of the dynamically and the mathematically sublime. Doing so, the specific points of incompatibility between the two mechanisms and the overlap in the possible sources shall be addressed so that both the empirically firm Burkean set of possible sources and the deeper understanding of the mechanism provided by the Kantian model (i.e., the two well developed subtypes of dynamically and mathematically sublime) can be benefited from for the purposes of this research. Having established and addressed this point of contention between Kant and Burke, it is now apparent that a synthetic approach which would gather sources of the

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<sup>130</sup> Immanuel Kant, *First Introduction to the Critique of Judgment*, trans. James Haden (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1965), 146.

<sup>131</sup> Kenneth Holmqvist and Jaroslaw Pluciennik, “A Short Guide to the Theory of the Sublime,” *Style* 36, no. 4 (2002): 719. Accessed May 27, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/style.36.4.718>.

sublime as defined by Burke which overlap with Kant's definitions of the mathematically and the dynamically sublime is permissible.

#### **4.2. Methodology – Introducing Changes to the Code Set**

Having established the reasons as to why the Longinian understanding of the concept of sublimity is unsuitable for my research and why the Burkean and Kantian understanding can be applied synthetically in the context of the presence of sublimity in the text, it is now necessary to systematically define the Burke-Kantian conception of sublimity which shall be applied in the subsequent analyses of Lovecraft's selected works. It needs to be added that a preliminary comparison with specific focus on the points of compatibility between Kant and Burke (namely, the simultaneously pleasurable and displeasurable nature of the sublime experience and the overlap in the objects which provoke it) and incompatibility (namely, the precise nature of the mechanism through which the sublime experience transpires) has already been carried out. It is the aim of this Section to address these points of compatibility and contention from the standpoint of synthesis, i.e., to amalgamate them and form a cohesive, coherent model of the sublime which respects both the theory of Burke and Kant and functions on its own. This shall be achieved in four points of synthesis (covering the overlap of the sources, the necessity of understanding the object, the conflict between the mechanisms of the sublime, and the inhibiting impact of cosmic horror upon the sublime respectively) which shall be discussed in detail herein.

The first point of synthesis that shall be outlined herein and that has been commented upon earlier in the Section 4.1. shall be the formalization of the overlap of the objects which provoke sublimity as defined by Kant and Burke respectively. As has been aforementioned, both Burke and Kant see the sublime experience as a combination of pleasure and displeasure<sup>132, 133</sup> and that it is provoked when certain objects external to the

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<sup>132</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51-52.

<sup>133</sup> Hannah Ginsborg, "Kant's Aesthetics and Teleology," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, Winter 2019. Accessed May 27, 2021. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics/#Bib>

experiencer are present. The overlap of these objects will form the basis of this adjusted, synthetic code set which shall be used for application in subsequent analyses.

The codes pertaining to the sublime objects which were based on the ideas of Burke shall remain unaltered. They are, corresponding to both Burke's and Kant's conceptions of sublimity, greatness of dimension, unimaginability, obscurity, and power (I will not outline how in particular they correspond, as I have already done so in Section 4.1.) In conclusion, the codes pertaining to the sublime objects are transferred in their entirety.

The second point of synthesis that shall be outlined herein is the necessity for the ability of the experiencer to have some transmutation of understanding of the object that is the cause of the sublime experience within them. Both Burke and Kant agree that a degree of understanding on the experiencer's part is necessary.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, with Kant specifically stating the fact that reason, the source of the pleasurable component of the Kantian sublime, is the substrate from which an understanding of the object that is the cause of the sublime stems and thus the Kantian definition is explicitly dependent on the notion of understanding the object. The conclusion, then, is that the codification for said notion (i.e., the code for qualification) is to be preserved in the adjusted code set.

The third point of synthesis addresses the incompatibility of the two mechanisms. It is concerned with the Kantian focus on the precise mechanism the sublime experience transpires that is lacking in Burke (as has been established already.) Burke's analysis of said mechanism goes only as far as to say that whatever is capable of threatening an experiencer with pain (thus is terrible)<sup>135</sup> and whatever is at the same time incapable to actually inflict pain upon the experiencer (and thus is pleasurable)<sup>136</sup> is productive of the sublime. Kant partially rejects the terror as being the prime component of the sublime experience (that is the case for the mathematically sublime as shall be explained bellow) and goes further to clearly, systematically define the processes that transpire in the mind

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<sup>134</sup> Vivian Ralickas, "'Cosmic Horror' and the Question of the Sublime in Lovecraft," *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 18, no. 3 (71) (2007): 383. Accessed March 11, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24351008>

<sup>135</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51.

<sup>136</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 52.



of the experiencer in the moment of a (either mathematically or dynamically) sublime experience.

It is my reasoning (as has been established) that because of this point of contention, the removal of the incomplete Burkean analysis of the precise mechanism on which the sublime experience operates in favor of the Kantian model is required so that both models can be used synthetically in the creation of my new updated code set that shall reflect the primary texts. Thus, a division into two new subtypes of sublimity pertinent to my project is achieved.

The first product of this division is based in the Burkean idea of sublimity (the threat of pain without an actual danger of pain which is conducive to a feeling of mixed pleasure and displeasure)<sup>137</sup> and the Kantian idea of the dynamically sublime (“We have the feeling of the dynamically sublime when we experience nature as fearful while knowing ourselves to be in a position of safety and hence without in fact being afraid.”)<sup>138</sup> It can be argued that in this particular instance, the Kantian and the Burkean perspective are virtually interchangeable. The reasoning here is threefold. Firstly, both Burkean and the dynamically sublime see fear (or terror) as the source of the displeasure component of the sublime experience.<sup>139, 140</sup> Secondly, in both Burke’s and Kant’s conception, the sublime object is not in our control (Burke claims that the sublime object, more specifically, power has to be unsubjected,<sup>141</sup> and Kant claims that the experiencer has to feel powerless before it.<sup>142</sup>) Thirdly, both Burke and Kant acknowledge the

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<sup>137</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51-52.

<sup>138</sup> Hannah Ginsborg, “Kant’s Aesthetics and Teleology,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, Winter 2019. Accessed May 27, 2021. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics/#Bib>

<sup>139</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51.

<sup>140</sup> Hannah Ginsborg, “Kant’s Aesthetics and Teleology,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, Winter 2019. Accessed May 27, 2021. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics/#Bib>

<sup>141</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 81

<sup>142</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1987), 120.

element of objective distance as a prerequisite that needs to be met in order for a sublime experience to transpire.<sup>143, 144</sup> Having established these three crucial points of compatibility, it is permissible to adopt the codes pertaining to the mechanism of the sublime which was created using the Burkean conception of sublimity into the new code set for this particular subdivision. Those would be the prerequisites of objective distance and qualification (which corresponds to the Kantian dynamically subtype as per Section 4.1.) which, when in combination with the code for power, result in terror and pleasure (for more specific definitions of these two codes, do consult Section 3.1.) For the purposes of simplicity, this particular subdivision shall henceforth be dubbed the dynamically sublime (thus adopting the Kantian nomenclature.)

The second product of this subdivision takes special focus on the mathematically sublime. Here, Burke and Kant differ substantially. Firstly, seeing that it is not terror (in the Burkean sense) or fearfulness (in the Kantian sense) before an unsubjected object of power, but the inadequacy of the experiencer's imagination to comprehend an object (which happens to be some transmutation of greatness of dimension, unimaginability or obscurity) that is the source of the displeasurable aspect of the mathematically sublime experience,<sup>145</sup> the Burkean definition of a sublime object provoking terror (along with pleasure) is inapplicable. Secondly, given that the element of objective distance is not mentioned as necessary by Kant (the reasoning here for this point of contention stems from the fact that Kant's division of the sublime in his *Critique of Judgment* specifically designates the dynamically sublime as the subtype which requires objective distance as its prerequisite,<sup>146</sup> whereas no such necessity is mentioned in his description of the mathematically sublime,) the Burkean prerequisite of objective distance in combination with the sublime object as elements conducive of the sublime in the experiencer is

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<sup>143</sup> Edmund Burke and Abraham Mills, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful; With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste* (New York: Harper, 1844), 51.

<sup>144</sup> Hannah Ginsborg, "Kant's Aesthetics and Teleology," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, Winter 2019. Accessed May 27, 2021. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics/#Bib>

<sup>145</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1987), 106.

<sup>146</sup> Paul Crowther, *The Kantian Sublime. From Morality to Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 148.

inapplicable as well.

It is thus necessary to make two adjustments so that both of the models (the Burkean and the mathematically sublime) are in concordance. The first is the elision of the objective distance as a prerequisite for a mathematically sublime experience. The second is the generalization of the terror component, which shall in the case of this subtype be morphed into the broader phenomenon of displeasure derived from the inadequacy of one's imagination, which in combination with pleasure constitutes the sublime. It is important to note that said displeasure can still manifest as fear, but unlike the dynamically sublime, it is not necessary that it does. In terms of the code, it shall be defined thusly: displeasure refers to statements regarding the displeasure experienced with relation to the object suspected of inspiring sublimity. This displeasure stems from the inadequacy of the experiencer's imagination (i.e., ability to comprehend the object at hand.) Inclusionary criteria stipulate that the lexicon used refers to displeasure (which can include terror) connected to the object suspected of inspiring sublimity. Exclusionary criteria stipulate that the lexicon used does not refer to displeasure, and if it does, it is not connected to the object suspected of inspiring sublimity. Thus, if lexicon related to the objects that might be conducive of the sublime (unimaginability, greatness of dimension or obscurity,) in combination with the codes for the displeasure and for the pleasure of the protagonist is present, then this new subtype of the sublime is present. This new subdivision shall henceforth be dubbed as the mathematically sublime (thus adhering to the Kantian nomenclature.)

Having established the particulars of the synthesis of the Burkean and the mathematically sublime, it is now necessary to comment upon how specifically it shall manifest in the new updated code set. The codes that shall pertain to the properties (obscurity, greatness of dimension and unimaginability) which are in adherence with the Kantian mathematically model (as outlined in Section 4.1.) shall be preserved in their entirety and transferred from the original code set, as they are not in conflict with Kant's notion of the mathematically sublime, which forms the basis of the mathematically sublime. The code pertaining to terror shall still apply (it thus applies to both the terror and the mathematically sublime), but it is to be supplemented with a code for displeasure (which applies to the mathematically sublime exclusively.) The code for qualification, as

per the second point of synthesis, is still a prerequisite. The code for objective distance has no bearing on the possibility of the manifestation of the mathematically sublime.

The fourth and simultaneously the most crucial point of synthesis that shall be outlined herein is the ability of cosmic to make a sublime experience impossible within the experiencer. As has been established in Section 3.3., cosmic horror seems to have an inhibiting impact on the presence of the sublime. Building upon this finding, the inhibiting impact of cosmic horror is not well established in the Burkean model, as outlined in Section 3.4. It is, however, as shall be demonstrated now, established in the Kantian model. With respect to both the dynamically and the mathematically sublime, the mechanism of which is adopted from the Kantian model, cosmic horror in the context of Lovecraft's prose robs the protagonists of their mental faculties, as established in Section 2.2. This by definition renders Kant's understanding of sublimity, which is predicated upon the triumph of reason over nature<sup>147</sup> (which the Lovecraftian protagonist by then no longer holds command over) impossible. With this being the case, it can be argued that the codes for cosmic horror and insanity in my old code set can be transferred into the new code set unaltered.

Finally, the presence of sublimity following a cosmic horror experience needs to be addressed. The presence of the sublime should be impossible based on the model outlined in the preceding paragraph. In contrast, it seems to be possible given the textual evidence presented in Section 3.3. (i.e., the city inspiring sublimity in spite of the Lake camp horror.) To rectify this discrepancy, two new codes, dubbed brink of insanity and condition, shall be introduced. The purpose of these codes is to monitor the mental state of the protagonists to pinpoint when precisely their faculty of reason is irreversibly compromised and thus to detect whether a sublime experience is possible to attain or not. Brink of insanity refers to the experiencer's mental faculties being compromised due to the object suspected of being the source of cosmic horror. Due to the mental faculties being compromised, it inhibits the possibility of the sublime experience the same way the insanity code does. However, unlike the insanity code, this state is reversible, thus not

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<sup>147</sup> Hannah Ginsborg, "Kant's Aesthetics and Teleology," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, Winter 2019. Accessed May 27, 2021. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics/#Bib>

irreversibly inhibiting the sublime, which is predicated upon sound reason.

The brink of insanity code is defined thusly. Inclusionary criteria stipulate that there is lexicon indicating the faculties being compromised, which is reversible. Exclusionary criteria stipulate there are no such linguistic markers and if there are, they are not connected to the object and/or they are not reversible. The reversibility is signaled by the presence of the condition code at some point following the brink of insanity code (i.e., if the mental condition of the protagonist improves, then the Section describing the faculties being compromised is under the inclusionary criteria of the brink of insanity code, because the mental faculties have been sufficiently restored, permitting the sublime experience again in the protagonist.)

The condition code is defined thusly. Condition refers to a statement regarding the positive mental condition of the experiencer. Inclusionary criteria stipulate that there is lexicon indicating favorable mental condition or there is lacking lexicon that would suggest a negative condition (i.e., a positive condition is the baseline status of the protagonists unless the text suggests otherwise.) Exclusionary criteria stipulate that there is lexicon that suggests a negative mental condition (i.e., the code for the brink of insanity.) This will differentiate between a reversible state of madness and an irreversible state of madness, thus enabling to pinpoint in the text when the sublime experience becomes entirely impossible for the experiencer (i.e., when the markers for the code of madness are present.) It also explains why the sublime is present following cosmic horror in the preliminary analysis (see Section 3.3.) The rest of the codes which are not informed by the theories of either Burke or Kant (those being insanity) shall be preserved in their entirety and transferred.

In conclusion, through the synthesis of the sources of the sublime as defined by Burke and the sublime mechanism as defined by Kant, the similarities and differences of the two models covered in Section 4.1. (namely, the overlap in the sublime objects, the qualification prerequisite and the conflict between the mechanisms) have been addressed. Likewise, the insufficiencies uncovered in Section 3. (namely the explanation why cosmic horror seems to inhibit the sublime and the inconsistent presence of the sublime despite the prerequisites being met) have too been addressed. The synthesis has resulted in two new subtypes of the sublime: the mathematically and the dynamically sublime.

The dynamically sublime manifests when the codes for qualification, objective distance, condition and power are present. It results in an experience signified by the codes for terror and pleasure. The mathematically sublime manifests when the codes for greatness of dimension, obscurity or unimaginability, qualification and condition are present. It results in an experience which is signified by the codes for displeasure (this subsumes terror) and pleasure.

## **5. *At the Mountains of Madness* Final Analysis**

The aim of this section is to apply the code set newly updated in the preceding Section and subsequently present the results. The focus is again on the presence of the sublime, of cosmic horror and on the relationship between them (i.e., how the cosmic horror's maddening impact inhibits the sublime.) In contrast to the preliminary analysis, the condition code as well as the newly split insanity/brink of insanity codes are now being tracked for reasons explained in Section 4.2.

### **5.1. The Mathematically Sublime**

The aim of this section is to present the results regarding the presence of the mathematically sublime in the text. The first instance of the sublime is better accounted for. The expedition arrives in Antarctica and is presented with the sight of a mountain range. As has been described in Section 3.2., the sight of the range provokes a sublime experience. However, given the adjustments to the model of sublimity introduced in the preceding Section, we can now describe the sublime in the novella more accurately. The natural vastness (greatness of dimension code) inspires pleasure and displeasure (“great unknown continent and its cryptic world of frozen death,”<sup>148</sup> which was identified as terror in the preliminary analysis) in the experiencers. Condition code is present (“[t]he health of our land party—twenty men and 55 Alaskan sledge dogs—was remarkable.”)<sup>149</sup> No objective distance marker is present directly, which is in accordance with the new

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<sup>148</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 726.

<sup>149</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 727.

model, as mathematically sublime does not require one. In this case, the mathematically sublime explains the shortcoming of the Burkean model.

The second instance of the sublime is better accounted for as well. During Lake's aerial exploration of the eponymous mountains, the code for objective distance is missing, the code for displeasure is present ("[m]ain summits exceed Himalayas, and very queer,"<sup>150</sup> here queer, an expression of displeasure, refers to the greatness of dimension property of the range) and the code for pleasure is present ("[w]hole thing marvelous in red-gold light of low sun."<sup>151</sup>) Nothing suggests a negative condition, so the condition code is present. Hence, the shortcomings of the Burkean model (the missing terror and objective distance codes) are addressed here, pleasure and displeasure provoked by the properties (unimaginability and greatness of dimension as described in Section 3.3.) inspiring the mathematically sublime produce the mathematically sublime in the experiencers.

Following the aerial exploration, Lake has returned to the camp. He expresses "ineffable majesty of the whole scene"<sup>152</sup> and "the queer state of his sensations"<sup>153</sup> when being present below the "vast silent pinnacles whose ranks shot up like a wall reaching the sky at the world's rim,"<sup>154</sup> which falls under the pleasure, displeasure and greatness of dimension codes. The qualification code is present ("Atwood's theodolite observations."<sup>155</sup>) The condition code is again met, as there are no indications of a negative condition. All prerequisites met, the mathematically sublime transpires in Lake.

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<sup>150</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 732.

<sup>151</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 732

<sup>152</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 733.

<sup>153</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 733.

<sup>154</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 733.

<sup>155</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 733.

A shortcoming of the Burkean model is addressed here – the lacking element of terror is represented here in the form of the code for displeasure contained in the word queer.

The remaining instances of the mathematically sublime tied to the Dyer sub-group largely correspond in the manner in which they operate to the instances of Burkean sublimity as outlined in Section 4.1. (i.e., apart from the obvious lack of necessity of the objective distance code, the two particular instances covered in Section 3.2. present in an identical manner to the proposed mathematically sublime covered in Section 4.2.)

## **5.2. The Dynamically Sublime**

The presence of the dynamically sublime is problematic. Interestingly, similarly to the preliminary analysis, the instances of power in the text do not seem to inspire the sublime (the dynamically sublime in this case.) Lake mentions “The windswept nature of the terrain”<sup>156</sup> which argues for the existence of “prodigious gales,”<sup>157</sup> which falls under the power code, and he expresses a “subconscious alarm in his words,”<sup>158</sup> which again can be interpreted as falling under the code for terror, as outlined in Section 3.2. No pleasure code is present however, and thus the experience derived from the sight of the windswept terrain cannot be considered dynamically sublime.

## **5.3. Cosmic Horror**

The instances of cosmic horror in the novella have been covered in the preliminary analysis and given the fact that the model of cosmic horror has remained the same, unlike the model of the sublime, it would be counterproductive to repeat here what has already been covered in Section 3.3. However, two points which have been alluded to in the previous Section 4.2. need to be addressed.

The first point is concerned with the inhibiting impact cosmic horror seems to have

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<sup>156</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 733.

<sup>157</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 733.

<sup>158</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 733.



on the possibility of the sublime experience, more specifically, its demonstration on concrete examples extracted from the text. The reason why cosmic horror inhibits the sublime has been outlined in Section 4.2.: the insanity inducing impact cosmic horror has on the experiencer compromises their faculty of reason, which by definition makes the sublime, whose mechanism is based on reason, as it is the triumph of reason over nature which is the source of its pleasurable component, impossible to attain. This can be demonstrated on a textual level, for instance, after the Dyer sub-group discovers the city. They undergo a sublime experience upon witnessing it, as has been outlined in Section 3.2. and subsequently, undergoing cosmic horror when venturing inside the city, no sublime is attained despite the codes for sources being present (the codes are there, yet no pleasure and displeasure/terror are produced which I argue is precisely because the faculty of reason has been compromised by the cosmic horror undergone within the city, which has been covered in Section 4.2.

The second point ties to the first one, as it is concerned with when precisely in the text the sublime becomes impossible. As has been outlined in Section 5.2., it is the brink of insanity code that affects the possibility of the sublime experience, but it is reversible, hence not wholly eliminating the possibility of the sublime experience. In the text, this can be observed after the Dyer sub-groups arrival at the camp. Having undergone a cosmic horror experience there, as has been established in Section 4.2., the Dyer sub-group venture to examine the city atop the mountains which inspires a sublime experience within them. I argue that the cosmic horror experienced at the camp does not affect the reason of the Dyer sub-group irreversibly. This is the difference between the brink of insanity code and the insanity code, the former is reversible whereas the latter is not, with the reversibility being signaled by the condition code which is present subsequent to the horrors at the camp: “In spite of all the prevailing horrors we were left with enough sheer scientific zeal and adventurousness to wonder about the unknown realm beyond those mysterious mountains,”<sup>159</sup> hence making the attainment of a sublime experience subsequent to the cosmic horror at the camp possible.

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<sup>159</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*, in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 753.

## 6. “The Call of Cthulhu” Final Analysis

The first aim of this section is to present the salient examples of the mathematically and the dynamically sublime in the short story “The Call of Cthulhu.” Each example is described with respect to the codes. The second aim of this section is to present the salient examples of cosmic horror and describe how its maddening impact inhibits the sublime. This presentation and description is again conducted with respect to the codes.

### 6.1. The Mathematically Sublime

The aim of this section is to present the salient examples of the mathematically sublime in the short story. The only instance of the mathematically sublime occurs nearing the end of the short story, when the narrator, who is not the experiencer, collects the account of one of the crew members of a ship which came upon a gigantic city in the middle of the ocean.

In the story, the sailor Johansen and his crew venture to explore an island upon which stands a large city which becomes the source of the mathematically sublime experience. The story is presented through a retrospective narrative, with Johansen and his crew being secondary characters whose accounts of the city are presented by the protagonist, who is the narrator. This plays an important role in the possibility of the sublime in the experiencers, as the experiencers are unaware of the true, cosmic horror inducing nature of the city when they first come into contact with it (the city is described by the narrator as “the nightmare corpse-city of R’lyeh, that was built in measureless aeons behind history by the vast, loathsome shapes that seeped down from the dark stars”<sup>160</sup> which is followed up by the proclamation that “[a]ll this Johansen did not suspect, but God knows he soon saw enough!”<sup>161</sup> This indicates that while the narrator is aware of the true nature of the city, the secondary characters are not.) This clearly implies that Johansen and his crew have not been subject to a cosmic horror revelation that would

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<sup>160</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Call of Cthulhu,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 375.

<sup>161</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Call of Cthulhu,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 375.

inhibit the sublime experience prior to their arrival at the city. To them, the city is merely a vast structure upon their arrival. The experiencer (Johansen) describes the “Cyclopean masonry,”<sup>162</sup> “unbelievable size”<sup>163</sup> and “vast angles”<sup>164</sup> of the city. He describes the “awe”<sup>165</sup> which these properties produce in him, which falls both under the inclusionary criteria of the pleasure code and the displeasure code, as awe is a combination of both displeasure and pleasure. Displeasure caused by the immensity of the city is further present in the “dizzying”<sup>166</sup> feelings it inspires in him. Objective distance is not present, which according to my model is permissible for the attainment of the mathematically sublime experience. Johansen and his crew are also described as knowing immediately “that it was nothing of this or of any sane planet,”<sup>167</sup> displaying some rudimentary understanding of the object at hand, thus the qualification code is present. No negative condition is indicated, thus the condition code is present. All prerequisites for a mathematically sublime experience are present, mathematically sublime transpires.

## 6.2. The Dynamically Sublime

The aim of this section is to present the salient examples of the dynamically sublime in the short story. The issue here is even more straightforward than Section 5.2. The power code that would relate to an object suspected of inspiring sublimity is not present in the text, and hence dynamically sublime cannot be present, as it is derived from power.

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<sup>162</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Call of Cthulhu,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 375.

<sup>163</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Call of Cthulhu,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 375.

<sup>164</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Call of Cthulhu,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 375.

<sup>165</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Call of Cthulhu,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 375.

<sup>166</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Call of Cthulhu,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 375.

<sup>167</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Call of Cthulhu,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 375.

### 6.3. Cosmic Horror

The aim of this section is to present the salient examples of cosmic horror in the short story and how they inhibit the sublime. The instance of the mathematically sublime, inspired by the city (as described in Section 6.1.) is immediately followed by an instance of cosmic horror which is derived from the creature, Cthulhu, which emerges from the city's confines. Its emergence is accompanied by a transgression upon the experiencers (it emerges and attacks the crew – “[t]hree men were swept up by the flabby claws before anybody turned”<sup>168</sup> - killing some and causing the others to flee in fright, hence its mere presence is a manner of assault.) It is incomprehensible, altering the crew's worldview (“[t]he Thing cannot be described—there is no language for such abysses of shrieking and immemorial lunacy, such eldritch contradictions of all matter, force, and cosmic order.”<sup>169</sup>) This horrible revelation of the creature (and the alteration of their worldview) causes madness in the surviving members of the crew (“survivor in a half-delirious condition.”<sup>170</sup>) Insanity is the inhibiting factor for any subsequent sublime experience, as it is predicated upon the sound mind of the experiencer, which is now compromised. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that no sublime transpires after the revelation of Cthulhu.

## 7. “The Temple” Final Analysis

The first aim of this section is to present the salient examples of the mathematically and the dynamically sublime in the short story “The Temple.” Each example is described with respect to the codes. The second aim of this section is to present the salient examples of cosmic horror and describe how its maddening impact inhibits the sublime. This presentation and description is again conducted with respect to the codes.

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<sup>168</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Call of Cthulhu,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 377.

<sup>169</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Call of Cthulhu,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 377.

<sup>170</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Call of Cthulhu,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 372.

## 7.1. The Mathematically Sublime

The aim of this section is to present the salient examples of the mathematically sublime in the short story. The only instance of the sublime occurs after the narrator Karl Henrich comes upon a large marble temple when his submarine capsizes on the ocean floor.

The condition code seems to be present. It is expressed prior to the capsizing, when the narrator (unlike in “The Call of Cthulhu”) overtly compares his superior mental resolve and state to his companion, Klenze, whose mind is becoming affected (“[h]is mind was not Prussian, but given to imaginings and speculations which have no value.”<sup>171</sup>)

Following the capsizing and the discovery of the temple, he describes it as a “titanic thing”<sup>172</sup>, noting a facade of “immense magnitude”<sup>173</sup> as well as “a great open door”<sup>174</sup> that is reached by an “impressive flight of footsteps,”<sup>175</sup> all of which fall under the inclusionary criteria of the greatness of dimension code. He notes that he “cannot imagine”<sup>176</sup> how the temple’s interior was excavated, a statement which falls under the inclusionary criteria of the unimagability code.

He also expresses what can be considered as falling under the qualification code. Met with the sight of the temple, his words are thus: “I was confronted by the richly ornate and perfectly preserved facade of a great building, evidently a temple, hollowed

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<sup>171</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Call of Cthulhu,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 94.

<sup>172</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Temple,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 97.

<sup>173</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Temple,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 97.

<sup>174</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Temple,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 97.

<sup>175</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Temple,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 97.

<sup>176</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Temple,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 97.

from the solid rock.”<sup>177</sup> Here, the narrator clearly expresses a degree of understanding regarding the titanic temple, hence the qualification code is present.

Following these statements, the sublime experience occurs. The narrator proclaims that “[n]either age nor submersion has corroded the pristine grandeur of this awful fane,”<sup>178</sup> which is the moment of the mathematically sublime experience, with pristine grandeur falling under the inclusionary criteria of the pleasure code and the adjective describing the fane (i.e., the temple) as awful falling under the displeasure code. Objective distance is not present, which is in accordance with my model, as mathematically sublime does not require it.

## **7.2. The Dynamically Sublime**

Dynamically sublime is not present in the text, as there is nothing in the text that would fall under the inclusionary criteria of the power code from which the dynamically sublime is derived.

## **7.3. Cosmic Horror**

The first instance of cosmic horror in “The Temple” occurs prior to the narrator capsizing on the ocean floor. It occurs in members of his crew. The narrator and the crew come into possession of a strange ivory idol which becomes the source of cosmic horror. It launches an assault on the crew, causing temporary and later permanent insanity:

“They were evidently suffering from the nervous strain of our long voyage, and had had bad dreams. Several seemed quite dazed and stupid; and after satisfying myself that they were not feigning their weakness, I excused them from their duties.”<sup>179</sup>

The narrator does not connect this suffering with the idol, as is evident from the preceding quote. However, it is clear from the text (the idol comes into the crew’s

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<sup>177</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Temple,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 97.

<sup>178</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Temple,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 97.

<sup>179</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Temple,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 92.

possession and the crew begins to go insane, which is supported by the words of the affected: “the curse of the ivory image and the dark dead youth who looked at them and swam away,”<sup>180</sup>) that it is the idol which is the cause of the mental deterioration. Eventually, mad from the influence of the idol, a large portion of the crew commits suicide (“Müller and Zimmer, who undoubtedly committed suicide as a result of the fears which had seemed to harass them”<sup>181</sup>) or are shot by the narrator (“I shot all six men, for it was necessary, and made sure that none remained alive.”<sup>182</sup>) The cosmic horror does not inhibit the sublime in the crew, as there are no objects which could inspire the sublime present up to that point.

The second instance of cosmic horror in the short story occurs in the last remaining member of the narrator’s crew, a man named Klenze, who has not yet succumbed to the influence of the idol. He begins exhibiting what falls under the inclusionary criteria of the insanity code (“[a]fter a time he became noticeably unbalanced, gazing for hours at his ivory image and weaving fanciful stories of the lost and forgotten things under the sea.”)<sup>183</sup> Here we can see the first instance of the inhibiting impact of madness (which is an effect of the cosmic horror) in the story – Klenze is overcome with “the vastness, darkness, remoteness, antiquity, and mystery of the oceanic abysses,”<sup>184</sup> which falls under the inclusionary criteria of the greatness of dimension and obscurity codes, yet no pleasure is derived from this experience, as his reason is compromised by the idol. Klenze’s state continues to deteriorate (“It was at 3:15 P.M., August 12, that poor Klenze

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<sup>180</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Temple,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 94.

<sup>181</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Temple,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 93.

<sup>182</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Temple,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 94.

<sup>183</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Temple,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 95.

<sup>184</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Temple,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 95.

went wholly mad.”<sup>185</sup>) He makes an important connection between the idol and the entity which dwells inside the temple, hence designating the entity as the ultimate cause of the incomprehensible which transgresses upon him through the idol and thus insanity (““*He* is calling! *He* is calling! I hear him! We must go!” As he spoke he took his ivory image from the table, pocketed it.”)<sup>186</sup> Following that, he commits suicide by leaving the submarine and vanishing into the depths.

The third instance of cosmic horror occurs with the narrator himself. The terrible revelations regarding the temple

(“[a]s I considered the inevitable end my mind ran over preceding events, and developed a hitherto dormant impression which would have caused a weaker and more superstitious man to shudder. *The head of the radiant god in the sculptures on the rock temple is the same as that carven bit of ivory which the dead sailor brought from the sea and which poor Klenze carried back,*”<sup>187</sup>)

cause him to start losing his mind. Given his strong mental resolve (“my iron German will,”<sup>188</sup>) he is aware that his reason is compromised (“[t]his daemonic laughter which I hear as I write comes only from my own weakening brain,”<sup>189</sup> here the narrator is aware that he is becoming unhinged), but in spite of that, his mind is becoming corrupted nonetheless, which, given the effect on the narrator’s faculty of reason, inhibits any subsequent sublime experience past that point. No sublime is attained by the narrator past the point when his reason becomes compromised.

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<sup>185</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Temple,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 95.

<sup>186</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Temple,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 95.

<sup>187</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Temple,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 99.

<sup>188</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Temple,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 91.

<sup>189</sup> Howard Phillips Lovecraft, “The Temple,” in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 101.



## 8. Contextualization with Weird Fiction

It is my aim now to compare and contrast how my findings regarding the relationship between the sublime and cosmic horror (i.e., how the maddening impact of cosmic horror inhibits the sublime) established in Sections 1. to 6. contextualize with the phenomenon of weird fiction in general. This contextualization shall draw from the theoretical insights of China Miéville, Houston, Ralickas and Linda Wight and Nicole Gadd.

China Miéville provides useful insight into both the phenomenon of weird fiction and its relation to the phenomenon of the sublime from a historical perspective (i.e., focusing on Lovecraft and his followers in the 20th century.) Firstly, he defines weird fiction as an amalgam of horror, fantasy and science fiction.<sup>190</sup> Secondly, he sets out to examine what the central focus of weird fiction is, proposing it to be “awe, and its undermining of the quotidian.”<sup>191</sup> Miéville illuminates the awe and how it undermines the everyday by tying it to the concept of the numinous. The numinous, traditionally a concept related to the sublime, is a largely positive awe-inspiring realization of the presence of a supreme being,<sup>192</sup> or the “godhead.”<sup>193</sup> According to Miéville, however, in the weird, this numinous (and the awe associated with it) takes a rather negative role. Given the nature of the unknown from which the numinous stems, its effect upon the experiencers is destructive (Miéville himself dubs it the “oppressive”<sup>194</sup> or “bad”<sup>195</sup> numinous.) He further contrasts this bad numinous and the sublime, proposing that unlike

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<sup>190</sup> China Miéville, “Weird Fiction,” in *New Directions in Popular Fiction: genre, reproduction, distribution*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 510.

<sup>191</sup> China Miéville, “Weird Fiction,” in *New Directions in Popular Fiction: genre, reproduction, distribution*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 510.

<sup>192</sup> Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 12.

<sup>193</sup> China Miéville, “Weird Fiction,” in *New Directions in Popular Fiction: genre, reproduction, distribution*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 511.

<sup>194</sup> China Miéville, “Weird Fiction,” in *New Directions in Popular Fiction: genre, reproduction, distribution*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 513.

<sup>195</sup> China Miéville, “Weird Fiction,” in *New Directions in Popular Fiction: genre, reproduction, distribution*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 514.

the latter, which is somehow separated from the experiencer, the bad numinous, the central component of the weird<sup>196</sup>

“punctures the supposed membrane separating off the sublime, and allows swillage of that awe and horror from “beyond” back into the everyday – into angles, bushes, the touch of strange limbs, noises, etc. The Weird is a radicalized sublime backwash.”<sup>197</sup>

This assaultive swillage of the incomprehensible then results in cosmic horror, the definition of which has been established in Section 1.2. This awed horror,<sup>198</sup> as Miéville puts it, in the face the incomprehensible which assaults the protagonist's mind and alters their view on the world.

The easy conflation of this bad destructive numinous (a component of the cosmic horror experience) with the sublime is perhaps the reason behind the contemporary (the last decade or so) dismissal of the interpretation of the sublime in Lovecraft's narratives. The range of such interpretations is ample. One position proclaims that the experience of cosmic horror (numinous is a component of) is misidentified as the sublime, as per the words of Alex Houston, who summarizes this stance aptly in the closing remarks to his essay:

“Lovecraft's work entirely fails to be read as sublime and, arguably, openly contradicts the requirements necessary for a sublime experience. His characters always lack the necessary objective distance needed to experience both the Kantian and Burkean sublime, and Lovecraft amplifies sublime characteristics such as size, obscurity, and depth to such a degree that they completely engulf his characters, cutting them off from any form of humanity and relentlessly beating them until they submit to these phenomena. What the characters actually experience is cosmic horror—the overwhelming realization that humanity's position within the world, and the cosmos, is not at all as secure and permanent as they had previously believed.”<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> China Miéville, “Weird Fiction,” in *New Directions in Popular Fiction: genre, reproduction, distribution*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 510.

<sup>197</sup> China Miéville, “Weird Fiction,” in *New Directions in Popular Fiction: genre, reproduction, distribution*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 511.

<sup>198</sup> China Miéville, “Weird Fiction,” in *New Directions in Popular Fiction: genre, reproduction, distribution*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 514.

<sup>199</sup> Alex Houston, “Lovecraft and the Sublime: A Reinterpretation,” *Lovecraft Annual*, no. 5 (2011): 179.

A second position in this vein is expressed by Vivian Ralickas, who proposes that cosmic horror stems from the same place as the sublime,<sup>200</sup> of which it is the diametrical opposite. Finally, there are claims that what initially presents as the sublime is subverted into cosmic horror. This particular stance is championed by Wight and Gadd, who claim that “the Weird affect is produced through the sublime and the grotesque, both of which remain central to recent Weird Fiction,”<sup>201</sup> explaining that:

“Weird Fiction invokes the sublime by introducing the unknown and the unspeakable as a source of cosmic fear and interweaving it with the horror-inducing transformation of the known and familiar into something grotesque”<sup>202</sup>

with grotesque being defined as “ontological categories that reason has considered essentially distinct, creating a spectacle of impossible fusions.”<sup>203</sup>

Running contrary to these propositions, my analysis of the primary texts seems to have shed some light on this issue. I argue that firstly, the one-ness of the source of the sublime (here I refer to my model) and cosmic horror (as purported by Ralickas and Wight and Gadd) is an interpretation of the texts that is contrary to mine, as the primary texts clearly show a differentiation in the respective objects from which the sublime and cosmic horror are derived.

This can be demonstrated in all the three texts which have been analyzed in Sections 5., 6. and 7. The first example of this differentiation would be *At the Mountains of Madness*, where the mountain range (the source of the sublime experience) does not cause an alteration in worldview in the protagonists that would lead to insanity and is not

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<sup>200</sup> Vivian Ralickas, ““Cosmic Horror” and the Question of the Sublime in Lovecraft,” *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 18, no. 3 (71) (2007): 367. Accessed March 11, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24351008>

<sup>201</sup> Linda Wight and N. Gadd, “Sublime and Grotesque: The Aesthetic Development of Weird Fiction in the Work of H.P. Lovecraft and China Miéville // Sublime e Grotesco: O Desenvol Vimento Eestético da “Weird Fiction” nas Obras de H. P. Lovecraft e China Miéville,” *Abusões* 1, no. 4 (2017): 294.

<sup>202</sup> Linda Wight and N. Gadd, “Sublime and Grotesque: The Aesthetic Development of Weird Fiction in the Work of H.P. Lovecraft and China Miéville // Sublime e Grotesco: O Desenvol Vimento Eestético da “Weird Fiction” nas Obras de H. P. Lovecraft e China Miéville,” *Abusões* 1, no. 4 (2017): 294.

<sup>203</sup> Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, “Introduction,” in *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 7.

incomprehensible (I base this on the qualification code which is present in the text with relation to the mountains – the experiencers have an understanding of the mountains, they are not incomprehensible to them,) hence not fitting the inclusionary criteria of cosmic horror. In stark contrast is the Lake camp horror, which is incomprehensible to the protagonists, transgresses upon them and causes madness (and thus fits the pre-established definition of cosmic horror) and the creatures inhabiting the mountains, which, albeit indirectly through the murals, cause an insanity-inducing alteration of the experiencers' worldview, again a rather clear example of cosmic horror. The second example of this differentiation would be “The Call of Cthulhu,” where the source of the sublime is a city that once again adheres to my model, whereas the source of cosmic horror is the creature of Cthulhu. This is echoed in the words of the authors themselves, who designate the city as the source of the sublime and the creature Cthulhu as the source of grotesque and thus of horror.<sup>204</sup> Finally, this differentiation is apparent in “The Temple” as well. The sublime is derived from the physical building of the underwater temple, whereas the cosmic horror is derived from the entity residing within, both indirectly through the idol and directly (see Section 7.3.)

To conclude the contextualization of my findings, Alex Houston and Vivian Ralickas argue that this cosmic horror tends to be misidentified as the sublime. Wight and Gadd take a more compromising approach to the matter, proposing that the sublime derived from the ultimate source of cosmic horror is present initially, but is subsequently subverted into cosmic horror by the cause of a grotesque transformation. Contrary to these two propositions, my findings would suggest that there are separate objects which inspire sublimity in the experiencers (e.g., the mountains) which is subsequently inhibited by the effects of cosmic horror derived from another object (e.g., the creatures) as per the mechanism outlined in Section 4.2. (i.e., cosmic causes insanity, affecting reason, thus removing the reason prerequisite required for both the dynamically sublime and the

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<sup>204</sup> Linda Wight and N. Gadd: “Sublime and Grotesque: The Aesthetic Development of Weird Fiction in the Work of H.P. Lovecraft and China Miéville // Sublime e Grotesco: O Desenvol Vimento Eestético da “Weird Fiction” nas Obras de H. P. Lovecraft e China Miéville,” *Abusões* 1, no. 4 (2017): 299.

mathematically sublime which operate on the mechanism proposed by Kant who designates reason as the source of pleasure in the sublime experience.)

## **CONCLUSION**

The aim of this thesis was the analysis of the manner in which the phenomenon of the sublime interacts with Lovecraft's characteristic permutation of the concept of horror, cosmic horror, more specifically, how the horror's maddening impact inhibits the sublime. These analyses were conducted on the basis of a qualitative, concept driven text analysis of the pertinent texts. The necessary theoretical background regarding the sublime and horror required for the conducting of the analyses was introduced in Sections 1., 2. and 4.

In the first Section, the dichotomy of terror and horror was delineated. The dichotomy can be surmised in two opposing features: terror is a non-momentary experience that is derived from an obscure object whereas horror is a momentary experience derived from a non-obscure object. Building upon this dichotomy, the specific Lovecraftian subtype of cosmic horror was subsequently specified. This specification can be surmised in terms of several features: firstly, a cosmic horror experience is, like its superordinate, the generic horror, momentary and derived from a non-obscure object. Secondly, cosmic horror is further distinguished by being derived from an object which is incomprehensible to the experiencer and whose revelation causes an alteration in the experiencer's worldview, which negatively impacts their sanity.

In the second Section of this thesis, the Burkean definition of the sublime was delineated. Firstly, the section disregards the model of sublimity proposed by Longinus, as it is not applicable in the context of Lovecraft's narratives. This is firstly because it does not distinguish between the beautiful and the sublime as separate categories, which could lead to misidentification and secondly, because it rejects tumid and bombastic language as being productive of sublimity, a limitation that is in conflict with Lovecraft's narratives which are characteristic for bombast and tumidity. Secondly, the Section focuses on the characterization of the sublime as proposed by Burke (1729-1797) in terms of what the experience entails, on what mechanism it operates and what objects it is provoked by. In this characterization, the sublime experience as defined by Burke is

introduced. This can be surmised as an experience of pleasure and fear derived from a certain object. Secondly, the Burkean conception of the mechanism upon which the sublime operates is introduced. This mechanism can be described in terms of several features: the experiencer has some understanding of the object that inspires sublimity in them, and they are not in danger of being destroyed by the object. Thirdly, a list of objects that have the ability to inspire sublimity as defined by Burke is presented.

In the third Section of this thesis, the methodology was introduced and subsequently applied to the first primary text, Lovecraft's novella *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936). The results of this analysis would suggest that firstly, the definition of cosmic horror as delineated in Section 1. is sufficient, because it is reflected in the text. Secondly, they would suggest that the Burkean model of sublimity introduced in Section 2. is not sufficient, because it firstly does not account for anomalous instances in the text which should present as the sublime (the prerequisites – objective distance and qualification are met, yet the displeasure/fear combination characteristic of Burkean sublimity is not produced) and secondly, it does not explain why cosmic horror has an inhibiting impact on the presence of the sublime, despite the textual evidence suggesting it clearly does. Based on this outcome, the model of sublimity was revised in Section 4. This revision was reflected in changes to the code set (thoroughly covered in Section 4.2.) utilized in the text analysis.

In the fourth Section of this thesis, the model of sublimity as proposed by Kant (1724-1804) is introduced. The implementation of Kant is justified by his prominence in the field of research on the sublime. The focus is put on the mechanism of the Kantian sublime, which can be surmised in several features. Kant subdivides sublimity into the dynamically sublime and the mathematically sublime. The dynamically sublime is the combination of the fear of our powerlessness in the face of nature's power and our pleasure stemming from our knowledge that we are in a position of safety. The mathematically sublime is the combination of the displeasure of the failure of our imagination in the face of nature's grandeur and the pleasure of our reason's capability to comprehend said grandeur. In both cases, the pleasure stems from the superiority of our reason. The Kantian understanding of the mechanism is fused with the Burkean list of possible sublime sources, yielding a code set which accounts for the discrepancies listed

in the previous paragraph.

In the fifth Section, the final analysis of *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936) utilizing the updated model of sublimity introduced in Section 4. is conducted. The results suggest that the sublime is derived from a distinct object (the mountains, the city) and is later inhibited by the experience of cosmic horror, which is derived from a different, distinct object (the creatures inhabiting the city.) The inhibition is rooted in the insanity-inducing impact of cosmic horror, which compromises reason and thus makes the attainment of sublimity functioning on the basis of the Kantian mechanism impossible.

In the sixth Section of this thesis, the final analysis of “The Call of Cthulhu” (1928) utilizing the updated model of sublimity introduced in Section 4. is conducted. The narrator here is not the experiencer of the sublime. A secondary character Johansen and his crew, whose conduct the narrator retrospectively relays are the experiencers. The results would suggest that Johansen and the crew stumble upon a city (a distinct object), which inspires the mathematically sublime within them, and are subsequently transgressed upon by the creature Cthulhu (another distinct object), which emerges from the city and causes a cosmic horror experience in them. The cosmic horror experience is accompanied by loss of sanity. This makes the sublime impossible. No sublime is present after that experience.

In the seventh Section of this thesis, the final analysis of “The Temple” (1925) utilizing the updated model of sublimity introduced in Section 4. is conducted. A crew of German submarine sailors locate an idol which is the cause of cosmic horror in them. The protagonist is resistant to the effects of the idol initially. After the submarine capsizes, the protagonist beholds an undersea temple (a distinct object) which inspires the mathematically sublime in him. An entity inhabiting the temple (another distinct object,) which has been at this point established as the cause behind the impact of the idol and which resides within the temple is then the cause of cosmic horror experience that inhibits any further sublimity in the narrator.

The eight Section of this thesis focuses on the contextualization of the results of the analyses regarding the relationship of the sublime and cosmic horror with the broader phenomenon of weird fiction. The impossibility of the sublime in Lovecraft’s narratives

and the one-ness of the object which is the cause of the sublime and of cosmic horror is addressed. The data gathered during the analyses would suggest that there are separate objects which inspire sublimity in the experiencers (e.g., the mountains) which is subsequently inhibited by the effects of cosmic horror derived from another object (e.g., the creatures) as per the mechanism outlined in Section 4.2.

In conclusion, the analyses would seem to show that Lovecraft places his protagonists in a setting which inspires sublime experiences within them. These experiences stem from the faculty of reason triumphing over the environment (i.e., nature.) The possibility of these experiences is then made impossible by the introduction of an incomprehensible object which transgresses upon the protagonists, causes an alteration in their view of the world and thus affects their faculty of reason, compromising it (this can be broadly characterized as an experience of cosmic horror.) Without the faculty of reason intact, no sublime is possible.

## **Resumé**

Howard Phillips Lovecraft je americký spisovatel literatury hororu, jehož tvorba je známa pro hojné užívání adjektiv vyjadřujících velikost a velkolepost a zároveň pro užívání specifického typu hororu, jenž autor nazývá hororem kosmickým. Kosmický horor je vyvolán odhalením nějaké zapovězené pravdy týkající se skutečné povahy vesmíru a má na protagonisty, kteří toto odhalení podstoupí, negativní dopad projevující se smrtí či šílenstvím. Cílem této práce je osvětlit, kterak tento šílenství vyvolávající dopad kosmického hororu znemožňuje v protagonistech Lovecraftovy prózy prožitky vznešenosti.

První sekce této práce se zabývá poskytnutím teoretického zázemí pro koncepci teroru a hororu dle poznatků britské spisovatelky a novátorky v oblasti gotické literatury Ann Radcliffové, indicko-britského literárního teoretika a experta na gotickou literaturu Devendry Parvase Varmy a v neposlední řadě politika, ekonoma a filozofa Edmunda Burkeho. Dále je v této sekci definován Lovecraftův specifický podtyp hororu, t.j. kosmický horor, který spisovatel užívá ve své tvorbě. Kosmický horor je definován za užití poznatků výše zmíněných osobností.

Druhá sekce této práce se zabývá poskytnutím teoretického zázemí pro koncepci



vznešenosti. Za tímto účelem se zaměřuje na poznatky historicky dvou hlavních přispěvatelů k teorii vznešenosti, t.j. řeckého básníka a literárního kritika Longina a již výše zmíněného Edmunda Burkeho. Longinova koncepce vznešenosti je shledána nevhodnou pro záměry této práce. Důvody pro tento závěr jsou dva: za první, Longinus narozdíl od Burkeho nerozlišuje ve své koncepci mezi kategoriemi krásy a vznešenosti a za druhé Longinus vylučuje bombastické užití jazyka jako užití schopno vyvolat vznešenost, což je v rozporu s výše zmíněným stylem Lovecraftovy prózy. Naopak Burkeho koncepce je shledána vhodnou. Burke popisuje vznešenost jako nejsilnější emoci, kterou je lidská mysl schopna pocítit, a definuje ji jako kombinaci libosti a nelibosti odvozené od velkých či mocných objektů, které nám nejsou bezprostřední hrozbou. Burkeho koncepce je dále využita.

Třetí sekce této práce se zaměřuje na představení metodologie dále užitě v analýzách primárních textů představených v následujících sekcích a zároveň tuto metodologii aplikuje na první primární text, Lovecraftovu novelu *V horách šílenství* (*At the Mountains of Madness*) z roku 1936. Zvolenou metodou je kvalitativní textová analýza dle Uda Kuckartze, jež je představena v relativně nové formě v jeho eseji “Qualitative Text Analysis: A Systematic Approach” z roku 2019. V souladu s touto metodou jsou teoretické poznatky, představené v první a druhé sekci této práce, kodifikovány a tyto kódy následně aplikovány na primární text. Kód se sestává z inkluujících a exkludujících kritérií, podle kterých je determinováno, zdali jej lze v textu aplikovat či nikoliv. Seznam kódů užitý v této metodě není statický ale dynamický, t.j., bude podstupovat úpravy na základě výsledků analýz, ve kterých je užit. Cílem první analýzy představené v této sekci je právě určení, zda jsou teoretické koncepty představené v první a druhé sekci adekvátně reflektovány skrze kódy v primárním textu. Výsledky této analýzy nasvědčují tomu, že koncepce kosmického hororu adekvátně reflektována je, zatímco koncepce vznešenosti adekvátně reflektována není. Tato neadekvátnost je založená na nedostačujícím popisu mechanismu vznešenosti dle Edmunda Burkeho. Z tohoto důvodu jsou v následující sekci představeny dodatečné teoretické poznatky týkající se vznešenosti za účelem rektifikace této neadekvátnosti.

Čtvrtá sekce této práce se zaměřuje na představení koncepce vznešenosti dle poznatků německého filozofa Immanuela Kanta a následnou inkorporaci těchto poznatků

do koncepce vznešenosti představené v druhé sekci za účelem rektifikace její neadekvátnosti popsané ve třetí sekci. Za tímto účelem je propojena Kantova koncepce mechanismu vznešenosti a Burkeho seznam objektů, které potenciálně vyvolávají vznešenost. Kant, narozdíl od Burkeho, dělí vznešenost na dynamickou a matematickou. Dle Kantova mechanismu je libost je odvozena od schopnosti triumfu našeho rozumu nad přírodou, zatímco nelibost je odvozena od neschopnosti naší představivosti pojmout přírodu (to jest vznešenost matematická) či uvědomění si bezmoci tváří v tvář moci přírody (to jest vznešenost dynamická.) Toto spojení se projevuje v úpravě seznamu kódů představených ve třetí sekci této práce.

Následující tři sekce této práce se zaměřují na aplikaci výše zmíněného upraveného seznamu kódů na tři primární texty. Prvním z nich je výše zmíněná novela *V horách šílenství*, kde reaplikace studuje, zda-li nový seznam kódů již adekvátně reflektuje vznešenost či nikoliv. Výsledek analýzy nasvědčuje tomu, že vznešenost reflektuje adekvátně. Další dva analyzované tituly jsou Lovecraftovy povídky “Volání Cthulhu” (“The Call of Cthulhu”) a “Chrám” (“The Temple.”) Výsledky těchto dvou analýz se shodují s výsledky druhé analýzy *V horách šílenství*, t.j., prožitky vznešenosti jsou protagonistům přístupné právě do té doby než v nich kosmický horor způsobí šílenství a tudíž kompromituje jejich rozum, který je dle Kanta zdrojem libosti v prožitku vznešenosti.

Osmá sekce této práce se zabývá kontextualizací poznatků ohledně znemožňujícího dopadu kosmického hororu na prožitek vznešenosti v Lovecraftově próze s širším konceptem “Weird Fiction,” tedy módem či žánrem, pod který Lovecraftova próza spadá. “Weird Fiction” je definována za užití poznatků spisovatele a literárního kritika Chiny Miévilla a literárních teoretiků Alexe Houstona, Viviany Ralickasové, Lindy Wightové a Nicole Gaddové. Poznatky těchto vědců a vědkyň, společně s daty nashromážděnými v průběhu analýz primárních textů, nasvědčují tomu, že v kontextu Lovecraftovy prózy je objekt vyvolávající v protagonistech prožitek vznešenosti oddělený od objektu, jenž v nich vyvolává prožitek kosmického hororu a že v průběhu narativu dochází k transgresi tohoto objektu kosmického hororu na objekt vznešenosti. Šílenství v protagonistech vyvolané kosmickým hororem v nich pak znemožňuje prožitek vznešenosti, jelikož ten je založen na zdravém rozumu, který je šílenstvím kompromitován.

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## ANOTACE

Příjmení a jméno: Pastorek Jindřich

Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název práce: Vznešenost v díle H.P. Lovecrafta

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Elizabeth Allyn Woock, Ph.D.

Počet stran: 71

Klíčová slova: Lovecraft, Vznešenost, Kosmický Horor, Horor, Teror, Kant, Burke, Kvalitativní Textová Analýza

Cílem této práce je prozkoumat vztah vznešenosti a kosmického hororu dílech amerického autora Howarda Phillipse Lovecrafta (1890-1937) za užití metod kvalitativní textové analýzy. Analyzovaná díla jsou novela *V horách šílenství* (1936,) povídka “Volání Cthulhu” (1928) a povídka “Chrám” (1925.) První část práce se zabývá definicí teroru, hororu a kosmického hororu. Druhá část práce se zabývá definicemi vznešenosti dle Longina a Edmunda Burkeho. Třetí část práce se zabývá představením metodologie a následnou aplikací metodologie na primární text *V horách šílenství*. Čtvrtá část práce se zabývá úpravami metodologie skrz představení definice vznešenosti dle Immanuela Kanta. Pátá část práce se zabývá aplikací metodologie na primární text *V horách šílenství*. Šestá část práce se zabývá aplikací metodologie na “Volání Cthulhu.” Sedmá část práce se zabývá aplikací metodologie na “Chrám.” Osmá část práce se zabývá kontextualizací dat nasbíraných aplikací metodologie s širším konceptem fenoménu “Weird Fiction.”

## **ABSTRACT**

Surname and name: Pastorek Jindřich

Department: Department of English and American Studies

Title of the thesis: The Sublime in the Works of H.P. Lovecraft

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Keywords: Lovecraft, The Sublime, Cosmic Horror, Horror, Terror, Kant, Burke, Qualitative Text Analysis

The aim of this thesis is to examine the relationship between the sublime and cosmic horror in the works of the American author Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937) by means of qualitative text analysis of the primary texts. The texts analyzed are the novella *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936,) the short story “The Call of Cthulhu” (1928,) and the short story “The Temple” (1925.) The first section of this thesis is concerned with the definitions of terror, horror and cosmic horror. The second section of this thesis is concerned with the definitions of the sublime by Longinus and Edmund Burke. The third section of this thesis is concerned with the introduction of the methodology and the subsequent application of the methodology on the first primary text *At the Mountains of Madness*. The fourth section of this thesis is concerned with the adjustments to the methodology made by the means of the introduction of the definition of the sublime as according to Immanuel Kant. The third section of this thesis is concerned with the application of the methodology on the primary text *At the Mountains of Madness*. The third section of this thesis is concerned with the application of the methodology on the primary text “The Call of Cthulhu.” The third section of this thesis is concerned with the application of the methodology on the primary text “The Temple.” The fourth section of this thesis is concerned with the contextualization of the data gathered by the means of application of the methodology and the broader phenomenon of Weird Fiction.