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Creating the threshold: Between the architectural sublime and the simply terrible

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Creating the Threshold:
Between the Architectural Sublime and the Simply Terrible

By

Mark Francis

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ABSTRACT

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The program is the development of a library for Smith College to house the collection of poetic works by Emily Dickinson. The library is the result of an examination of creating an architectural space that generates the delight of the sublime and approaches the personal terror experienced by one who suffers from agoraphobia with panic disorder. The siting in the garden and the architectural decisions in the building of the library are chiefly generated with consideration of the work of Piranesi and Hopper, and the writings of Edmund Burke and Thomas Weiskel of such issues of extremes as delight and pain, the infinite and the graspable, vastness and minuteness, light and dark, life and death.
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Preface

The seduction of an architectural space is the gravity that inspires a critical architect. The accomplishment of creating an experience that is felt in the memory of the mind, the depths of the physical, and the flush of the spirit is a worthy pursuit. This thesis is the result of a fascination and a respect for the art and science of architecture and psychology. The path of discovery for me, and hopefully for the reader, is one of the recalling of the assertions and theories of Edmund Burke’s investigation into the sublime, followed by the architectural manifestations of the sublime in the drawings of architects Piranesi and Boullee which enrich the pallet of the sublime and began the interweaving of the psychological experience of sublime architecture that has influenced the spirit of this thesis. The expression of the psychological experience of space and time in the poetry of Emily Dickinson gave the eloquence and individual expression that I desired to be the intent of the work. The intensity of Dickinson’s writings are self-evident of the depth of the investigation and quite naturally established the color of the document and the program of the built architecture: a library.
Poem 414
'Twas like a Maelstrom, with a notch
That nearer, every Day
Kept narrowing it's boiling Wheel
Until the Agony

Toyed coolly with the final inch
Of your delirious Hem -
And you dropt, lost,
When something broke -
And let you from a Dream -

As if a Goblin with a Gauge -
Kept measuring the Hours -
Until you felt your Second
Weigh, helpless, in his Paws -

And not a Sinew - stirred - could help,
And sense was setting numb -
When God - remembered - and the Fiend
Let go, then, Overcome -

As if your Sentence stood - pronounced -
And you were frozen led
From the Dungeon's luxury of Doubt
To Gibbets, and the Dead -

And when the film had stitched your eyes
A Creature gasped "Reprieve"!
Which Anguish was the utterest - then -
To perish, or to live?¹

Introduction: Meeting the Subject

History: Subject 32

I had left the door open so as to appear more welcoming than a closed door with the intimidating sign "Psychophysiology Lab." Subject 32, Margaret, was written in red felt tip below my name, in blue felt tip, on the calendar on the wall. I had never met Margaret. I only knew what was on her inquiry sheet; that she was thirty-four years old, that she was married with two children from this marriage and a child from a previous marriage. On the back of the sheet, in a graceful hand, was written that she had started at a state college right out of high school, but did not complete the first year. She was no longer working, but at one time she was quite happy as an administrative assistant for a public welfare agency. She had called the university at the recommendation of a counselor that she had kept up with from the agency. She had met with the psychologist at the university for two weekly sessions.

I sat in the squarish room with cruel economical fluorescent lights overhead and a minimum amount of furnishings. The bulletin board was by far the strongest display of life, with its tongue-in-cheek cartoons, and obscenities written on the "Calls for Papers." The carpet brought interest, I suppose with its latitudinal stripes in varying degrees of 70s brown and orange tones. Otherwise, the room was brutally antiseptic, filing cabinets and the metal desk with the adjustable lamp loaded with a 40 watt bulb, for when the fluorescents were turned out after the subject was escorted to the adjacent room. The most impressive piece of furniture was the vertical cabinet of polygraph components that emitted a slight hum as I anticipated Margaret's arrival. I somewhat insecurely had
calibrated the stainless steel machine to communicate a baseline with the almost as intimidating computer that rested on the metal desk. The pens of the polygraph were lifted from the paper as horses ready for the opening of the race gates.

Symptomology: Waiting in the Next Room

Margaret was ten minutes late and then I heard the quiet voice coming from the threshold asking where her husband should wait. I was startled to attention, aware of my wandering, and suggested the clinic lobby down a labyrinth of thickly painted pale green corridors. I introduced myself to Margaret and wondered who was more nervous, the handshake was a conscious mingling of clammy palms. I motioned towards the open door of the adjacent room. We entered the rectangular room with a noticeably low ceiling. In anticipation of the client, I had turned on the table lamp, to suggest a more pleasant ambiance, and placed a fresh piece of protective paper on the rusty brown recliner. The room was as homey as could be accomplished in the sprawling assembly of diversely functioning departments. With plumes of stained grasses in the corner, a hopefully unobtrusive sheet over a video screen used for another study, and a large window into the equipment room darkened by blinds, the room was suspiciously scientific and foreboding. Undoubtedly, drawing most of Margaret's attention, however, was the ominous metal filing cabinet in the corner, certainly containing judgmental information on her disorder, and the electrodes dangling from the arm of the recliner with threadlike wires disappearing into a roughly cut whole in the sheet rock.

Margaret took a seat and I began the spiel I had been practicing for more than a week. She didn't have any questions so, talking as I went, I began applying the sensors to her upper back, "to measure her muscle tension," I said; to her chest, "to measure her heart rhythms;" to her palms "to measure her perspiration." I told her that I
would be in the next room, but I could hear her through the small speaker on the table butted up against the recliner. "There will be a waiting period of a few minutes before the tape starts as I adjust the computer." I said "computer" because it is less frightening a term, I was told, than "machine" or "electrodes." Margaret appeared surprisingly calm as I left the room, gently closing the door between us. Once in, I killed the glare of the lights and nervously approached the cabinet of components eagerly waiting for me in the corner of the room.

Treatment: Press "Play"

I released the pens and they flashed uncontrollably, like a college freshman from a Puritan home, flinging points of ink on the surrounding steel surfaces. It quickly became obvious that Margaret was indeed quite nervous as I struggled to get a baseline on almost all of her physiological measures. I regrettably turned off the "skin conductance monitor" which measured her perspiration as it appeared I would never get the squealing needle to cooperate. I set the stop watch and hoped for an acceptable baseline for the first minute. I pressed the "Play" button on the tape recorder, marked the slowly scrolling paper with the red pen, "End Baseline 1," and listened to the familiar voice of the psychologist describe a social setting.

Prognosis: The Struggle for Baseline

I noted a perceptible rise in the needle reporting the muscle tension in Margaret's back and then listened more closely to the voice on the tape. "You don't really want to go but she pressures you to come along." The needles hissed as they nervously scratched the faintly calibrated paper. I closely watched the scribble of information and
listened acutely for cries of distress from the room next door. On the tape, the doctor says, "They walk away saying 'You're no friend of mine, then.'" - silence. I, in my own panic, realized that the first script was over and I hastened to press the lever to lift the pens and then mark the paper in red ink, "End Tape 1." For the next minute, Margaret and I struggled to regain a baseline.
Panic Disorder: Out of Proportion

Fear is a critical emotion produced by the perception that a situation presents possible harm and triggers physiological responses that is considered normal in appropriate situations. One may have feelings of terror if the experience of fear is strong enough. This experience may manifest itself as:

An urge to run and hide, to cry, a pounding heart, tense muscles, trembling, liability to startle, dryness of the throat and mouth, a sinking feeling in the stomach, nausea, perspiration, an urge to urinate and defecate, irritability, anger, difficulty in breathing, tingling of the hands and feet, weakness or even paralysis of the limbs, a sense of faintness or falling, and a sense of unreality or of being distant from the event.\(^2\)

History: Numberless Generations

Men, during numberless generations, have endeavored to escape from their enemies or danger by headlong flight, or by violently struggling with them; and such great exertions will have caused the heart to beat rapidly, the breathing to be hurried, the chest to heave, and the nostrils to be dilated. As these exertions have often been prolonged to the last extremity, the final result will have been utter prostration, pallor, perspiration, trembling of all the muscles, or their complete relaxation. And now, whenever the emotion of fear is strongly felt, though it may not lead to any exertion, the same results tend to reappear, through the force of inheritance and association...\(^3\)

Symptomology: Check the Boxes that Apply

A phobia is a fear of a situation that is out of proportion to the actual danger of the situation. It is not a rational response and frequently leads to avoidance of


\(^3\) Charles Darwin, 1872, pp. 307-9; from Marks, p. 3.
the particular situation. There are several phobias and they are experienced on a deeply personal level. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III-Revised (DSM IIIR) separates phobias into agoraphobia, social phobia, and simple phobia. Agoraphobia is "the fear of being in places or situations from which escape might be difficult (or embarrassing) or in which help might not be available in the event of a panic attack." A panic attack is described as "a discrete period of intense fear or discomfort." Edvard Munch captured the emotion of a panic attack in his work The Scream, 1893 (Image II-1). The criteria for a panic attack is the occurrence of at least four of the following symptoms:

1. shortness of breath (dyspnea) or smothering sensations
2. dizziness, unsteady feelings, or faintness
3. palpitations or accelerated heart rate (tachycardia)
4. trembling or shaking
5. sweating
6. choking
7. nausea or abdominal distress
8. depersonalization or derealization
9. numbness or tingling sensations (paresthesias)
10. flushes (hot flashes) or chills
11. chest pain or discomfort
12. fear of dying
13. fear of going crazy or of doing something uncontrolled

Often as a result of these uncomfortable responses the person will begin to avoid the situations that seem to induce the panic. This leads to limited travel or the necessity of having an object of security, such as a trusted companion.4 This acute surge of intense anxiety can be cued by a particular stimuli (phobic or situational panic/anxiety) or by thinking about the stimuli (anticipatory phobic panic/anxiety). It can also occur without apparent cues and can continue in the background of the individual constantly. Almost all who are considered to be severe phobics, by definition, experience panic.

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4 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, 3rd ed. Revised, DSM IIIR, American Psychiatric Association, New York, pp. 139-44.
EDWARD MUNCH. The Scream. 1893.
There is very little difference in the autonomic symptoms and thoughts between the different types of phobias. Generally, all phobics experience heart changes, tense muscles, and sweaty palms.\(^5\)

Simple phobias are defined as "a persistent fear of a circumscribed stimulus (object or situation) other than fear of having a panic attack (as in agoraphobia) or of humiliation or embarrassment in certain social situations (as in Social Phobia)." Typically, the sufferer recognizes the irrationality of the fear and admits to its excessiveness.\(^6\)

Simple phobias are also known as specific phobias because they are focal phobias associated with specific situations such as animals, thunder, heights, or closed spaces. Although agoraphobics often have fears of enclosed spaces, the reverse is not always the case, as some claustrophobics do not have the anxiety-depression experienced by agoraphobics. Specific phobics generally have few other psychiatric problems unlike agoraphobics. The treatment of simple phobics is comparatively easy to treat by exposure and requires less time to complete.\(^7\)

Panic disorder with agoraphobia is the most common and the most debilitating of the phobic disorders seen in adult patients. Westphal first named the disorder in 1871 of the "impossibility of walking through certain streets or squares, or possibility of doing so doing only with reluctant dread of anxiety." The clinical manifestation of the disorder exists in extremes, as one might expect. It can be an isolated fear, such as claustrophobia, and actually is an overinclusive and misleading use of the label of agoraphobia. At the other extreme are the severe cases which include such complications as depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder in addition to the phobia. In these cases, the label of agoraphobia is underinclusive and represents only a part of the

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5 Marks, pp. 286-7.
6 DSM III-R, pp. 139-44.
7 Marks, pp 296-7.
clinical situation and needed treatment.\textsuperscript{8}

The clinical picture of the symptomology has not changed since the condition's description by Westphal over a century ago. Typically, sufferers of agoraphobia experience discrete episodes of anxiety outside the home. The intensity might increase through repeated exposure. The sufferer might describe the feelings as anxious, ill, or weak. They would identify palpitations, lightness and dizziness of the head, a lump in the throat, weakness in the legs, and an illusion of walking on shifting, unstable ground. They feel unable to breathe, or they breathe too rapidly or deeply. They feel they might faint, scream out loud uncontrollably, "lose control," "go mad," or die. A severe attack may root the sufferer to the same spot for a period until the intensity lessens. As some control returns, the sufferer may run to a haven of safety, such as a friend or home. A description of the attack by a sufferer illuminates the tenuousness of the control he managed to muster:

At the height of the panic I just wanted to run - anywhere. I usually made towards reliable friends . . . from wherever I happened to be. I felt, however, that I must resist this running away, so I did not allow myself to reach safety unless I was in extremity. One of my devices to keep a hold on myself at this time was to avoid using my last chance, for I did not dare to think what would happen if it failed me. So I would merely go nearer my bolt-hole and imagine the friendly welcome I should get. This would often quieten the panic enough for me to start out again, or at least not to be a nuisance or use up any good will. Sometimes I was beaten and had to feel the acute shame and despair of asking for company. I felt the shame even when I hadn't to confess to my need.\textsuperscript{9}

Avoidance of situations that are anticipated to generate fear usually begin as intermittent anxiety or panic in public situations. The sufferer will generalize the fear and will gradually avoid new situations in addition to those where panic has occurred for

\textsuperscript{8} Marks, p. 323.
\textsuperscript{9} Marks, p. 334.
fear that those too might induce panic. An example is a woman who developed more serious degrees of avoidance. Once she was unable to get off of the expressway and experienced panic and then she began using only the city streets. When she experienced anxiety here, she began using the bus system, until she had an experience of panic under those circumstances. The scenario can deteriorate to walking and then to staying within a few hundred yards from her house, then to staying within view of her house, then to the inability to venture beyond her own yard without a companion. In rare instances, the sufferer may not leave the house and may even be restricted to the bedroom. Severe cases of agoraphobia tend to panphobic. Fear of enclosed places was present in nearly two-thirds of agoraphobic women, starting before the agoraphobia in just less than half of the cases.\textsuperscript{10}

Treatment: Evidence of Factors

Charles Darwin, as evidenced in the introductory quote, could have easily seen the evolutionary evidence of the fear some humans experience related to too much or too little space and light around them. Many species shy away from open spaces that provide no cover for apparent reasons of survival from predators. Light also is a factor with some species, such as rats choosing to spend more time in black areas than white areas. Hamsters, for example choose to stay along the boundaries of an open space but will use an the open space more if the light level is reduced to just above the human threshold of perception. If the animal is confined to the middle of an open well-lit field the animal will exhibit stress and discomfort, again, which makes sense in terms of survival. Agoraphobics find it more comfortable, or rather less uncomfortable, to skirt the edges of the open space. The ability to see their objects of comfort or to have some contact, even

\textsuperscript{10} M. Dwarka, 1980, personal communication; from Marks, pp. 335-6.
if it is by radio, is sometimes enough for those persons who experience space phobias to tolerate the discomfort.

Similarly, too much cover in the form of enclosed spaces, such as elevators, can induce stress in individuals. Agoraphobics may experience anxiety if they feel that an open space or an enclosed space would hinder their attempts to escape if they begin to experience panic. The component of light should not be ignored as many adult agoraphobics often feel more comfortable in a dark situation than in the light.11 The incidence of agoraphobia can even be linked with hot weather. Wearing dark glasses has given some sufferers relief.12 The preference for less light informs the observation that some topographical features affect the intensity of the anxiety. Usually the fear is greater if the space is broader and higher and less if the space is interrupted by trees, rain, or irregularities in the landscape. "Ugly architecture" was cited for worsening the anxiety in one case.13

Carina Brodin published an experiment in which she tested the hypothesis that "people rate an outdoor environment with an intense feeling of enclosed space higher than an outdoor environment with a less intense feeling of enclosed space." In addition, she analyzed the hypothesis that type of environment is relevant. Her hypothesis was demonstrated only in the "villa environments." She found that in an urban situation the opposite was indicated, although she cited a possible bias due to the drawings used in the investigation.14 For a doctoral dissertation, J. Desor conducted an experiment in which she found that "partitioning, making linear dimensions more disparate and decreasing the

11 Marks, pp. 27-8.
12 Marks, p. 337.
13 Vincent, 1919; from Marks, pp. 337-8.
number of doors" created a perception that a room is less crowded. Her main conclusion was that "being less crowded is excessive perception of conspecifics." 15 In summary, Charles Mercer made the general statement that ". . . the physical form of the environment is an important variable in whether or not high density is seen and felt as a crowded situation." 16

The theoretical position of the Interactional-Constructivist theory is that each of us has many different "worlds within our heads." These perceptions/notions are established by a "series of ongoing transactions between ourselves and the environment" Gary Moore discusses the development:

Knowledge is neither given a priori before experience or through pure reason independent of experience, nor is it strictly a product of experience through reinforcement of stimuli impinging on a passive person. Rather it is argued that in as much as there is no way for us to know the nature of "reality" except through the minds of persons, it is impossible to separate the process of knowing from the resultant knowledge, and more importantly, it is impossible to separate what is known from what is "real." Thus what is "real" is in fact what is only taken to be "real," i.e., a construction of reality, a product of an intentional act of knowing.

All knowledge is of course influenced by experience, but the point is that it does not arise out of raw experience. Knowledge is the product of the active process of human understanding applied to sense-experience. 17

Carl Sandstrom recognized the critical consideration of perception and orientation in our response to a given environment:

What we perceive in perceiving is, in a decisive way, dependent on our level of orientation. For example, we can never feel at home unless we can experience in our home environment a state of clear orientation - an orientation state that is a necessary condition if we are to feel secure, which itself is one of the most important functions of the home. Alienation expresses inability to preserve or create meaningful relations with the environment, which leads to the feeling of being an outsider and means a condition of very grave disorientation.18

The need for a reference point or a system to meter or comprehend the space is seen in the story of a man who found himself quite uncomfortable on a mud flat at low tide. He found that the unbroken featureless surface of the mud stretched from horizon to horizon. He experienced some of the physiological and emotional manifestations of fear and did not find relief until the sea-line finally broke the horizon to provide a visual reference point, a means to comprehend the space.

If you place a finger in a bowl of cold water and with your other hand place a finger in a bowl of hot water for a minute or two and then put both fingers in a bowl of warmish water, you would discover an elementary contrast effect. The previous experience has affected your perceptions. The contrast of the hot water makes the warmish water actually feel cool and the contrast of the cold water and the warmish water makes the water feel hot.19

Familiarity with an environment can reduce the experience of anxiety. A novel situation for an animal can become a greater source of fear than the actual stimuli. An animal confined to a novel area will generally make relentless attempts to escape. If the attempts are unsuccessful and the stress mounts the animal may become immobile, defecate, and make distress calls. The more novel the area, the more intense is this

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behavior.\textsuperscript{20}

If all forms of sensation are experimentally controlled to the point of removal or constancy the subject will experience a "reduction in their ability to concentrate or to attend to specific stimuli." These and other experiments indicate that there may be an "optimum level of stimulation for efficient performance."\textsuperscript{21}

Prognosis: High Architecture

Many people have sought the adrenaline high gained from participating in sports that generate fear and terror. Similarly, thriller films and books are targeted for this fascination. One could therefore argue that there is an interest in experiencing a slightly less extreme level of fear and that some consider it enjoyable.\textsuperscript{22}

It appears feasible that one could construct an architecture that generates this type of excitement or high. By the occupation or involvement in architectural spaces that trigger a adrenaline rush, one could experience a higher level of architecture. Definitions of the sublime and studies and theories by architects suggests such an architecture is possible.

\textsuperscript{20} Marks, pp. 27-8.
\textsuperscript{21} Canter, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{22} Marks, p. 3.
Emily Dickinson
Case study: "Ourself behind ourself, concealed"

Poem 652

A Prison gets to be a friend -
Between it's Ponderous face
And Our's - a Kinsmanship express -
And in it's narrow Eyes -

We come to look with gratitude
For the appointed Beam
It deal us - stated as our food -
And hungered for - the same -

We learn to know the Planks -
That answer to Our feet -
So miserable a sound - at first -
Nor even now - so sweet -

As plashing in the Pools -
When Memory was a Boy -
But a Demurer Circuit -
A geometric Joy -

The Posture of the Key
That interrupt the Day
To Our Endeavor - Not so real
The Cheek of Liberty

As this Phantasm Steel -
Whose features - Day and Night -
Are present to us - as Our Own -
And as escapeless - quite -

The narrow Round - the Stint -
The slow exchange of Hope -
For something passiver - Content
Too steep for looking up -

The Liberty we knew
Avoided - like a Dream -
Too wide for any Night but Heaven
If That - indeed - redeem -
History: "The slow exchange of Hope"

Emily Dickinson lived in a imposing red brick house topped by a modest tower that stood relatively close to Main Street in Amherst. When Mabel Todd, the wife of a new faculty member of the college, moved to the town, Emily lived with her seventy-seven-year-old mother who was paralyzed and had been an invalid for years and Lavina, "Vinnie," a sister. Mabel describes the aura of the mystery of Emily in a letter to her parents, before Mabel had responded to an invitation by Vinnie to sing for her ailing mother:

I must tell you of the character of Amherst, it is a lady whom the people call the Myth. She is the sister of Mr. Dickinson (the college treasurer), and seems to be the climax of all the family oddity. She has not been outside of her own house in fifteen years, except once to see a new church, when she crept out at night, and viewed it by moonlight. Visitors to the house have never encountered this wraith, but she had been occasionally glimpsed at her window lowering candy on a string into the clutch of laughing children. She dresses wholly in white, and her mind is said to be perfectly wonderful. She writes finely. People tell me that the Myth will hear every note - she will be near, but unseen.

The rumors in the town of the reason for Emily's eccentricity were as hushed as the stately house, but all seemed to begin with a tale of Emily's broken heart.

It was six months after the invitation from Vinnie before Mabel found herself singing at the square piano in the corner of the rear parlor with its diffused light from the oil lamps casting dull shadows on the dark brown woodwork. As she sang she wondered if Emily was quietly listening in the darkened hall outside. A later entry in Mabel's journal reflects her fascination with the evening, "It was odd to think, as my voice rang out through the big silent house, that Miss Emily in her weird white dress was outside in the shadow hearing every word." The darkness was quiet, but after the recital, Maggie, the Irish servant, approached Mabel carrying a silver tray; on it was a delicate glass of sherry and a single sheet of paper folded once. While sipping the wine, Mabel
read to herself the words written by Emily as Mabel sang.

    Elysium is as far as to
    The very nearest room,
    If in that room a friend await
    Felicity or doom.

    What fortitude the soul contains
    That it can so endure
    The accent of a coming foot,
    The opening of a door!23

    Five years after moving to this tranquil New England college town and always hoping to meet Emily, Mabel had to accept the broken hope when Emily died of Bright's Disease after a year's convalescence. Emily, possibly with eerie foresight, wrote to Mabel, "The parting of those that never met, shall it be delusion, or rather, an unfolding snare whose fruitage is later?"

    A few days after Emily's death, Vinnie began the task of gathering up her sister's belongings in her bedroom, which had been treated as an inviolable retreat by her family. It was then that she discovered, much to her surprise, the extensive collection of bound and loose sheets of poems in the bureau and in hiding places throughout the room. At Vinnie's nagging insistence, Mabel Todd and an accomplished editor and correspondent of Emily, Thomas Higginson, assembled the best of Emily's verse for publication.

    The book reached the public in November 1890 and was so consumed, printing after printing, that a second volume was quickly prepared and released a year later. Accompanied with the ever increasing popularity of Emily's poetry was the tension between all parties. Because of vindictiveness, bitterness, and law suits many of the poems remained unpublished or lost for years. Many of the manuscripts were burned.

lost, or hoarded, preventing forever a complete image of the *Myth*, of Emily Dickinson.\textsuperscript{24}

Symptomology: "Could it be Madness - this?"

Theories proliferate to explain why Emily Dickinson began to withdraw from public life in the mid 1850s and spent the last twenty years of her life radically cloistered in her father's house. A psychiatrist, John Cody, concluded after a thorough analysis of her letters and poetry that Dickinson suffered from a nervous breakdown in the years of 1861-1863, and attributes the onset of the depression to the "terror" she described in a letter to Higginson in 1861. This argument breaks down when the chronology of the poems, accomplished only recently, reveals that she wrote beautiful, coherent poetry throughout this period. It is doubtful that Dickinson could have accomplished this series of poems if she was in fact immobilized through depression.

Maryanne Garbowski's theory, presented in her book, *The House without the Door*, is that Dickinson suffered from panic disorder with agoraphobia, which became so enormous to her that she eventually could not emerge from the house because of her fear of the outside world, her fear of panic. Garbowski assembles a representation of poems and letters that reveal the characteristic "grip of fear, the pattern of flight, and the habitual denial. . .with its accompanying fears of madness and death" one sees demonstrated in a person suffering from panic disorder. This view of the possible "solution to the riddle at the heart of Dickinson's scholarship" allows for the language of depression theorized by Cody, but with consideration of the nature of panic disorder with its periods of reprieve that appear almost asymptomatic. Garbowski's theory lends an explanation for the continued creativity of Dickinson throughout the years of suffering. Indeed, the creativity, the writing of the poetry may have been the therapy that allowed

\textsuperscript{24} Walsh, p. 23-53.
Dickinson to endure the tremendous suffering she obviously experienced in the later years of her life.\footnote{Maryanne M. Garbowosky, *The House Without the Door*, Associated University Presses, Inc., Cranbury, NJ., 1989, pp. 21-2.}

In a letter to Sue Gilbert, who was later to marry Emily's brother Austin, Dickinson describes in detail her first panic attack. One can read in these lines the anxiety Dickinson experienced on her way to the church and how that affected her vectors and speed. After deciding not to flee, she consciously regained her control by focusing her attention on a spot, a proven treatment method of relaxation. Even though she seems to have recovered quite well during the "meeting," she was quite relieved to reach home.

I'm just from meeting, Susie, and as sorely feared, my "life" was made a "victim." I walked - I ran - I turned precarious corners - One moment I was not -then soared aloft like Phoenix, soon as the foe was by - and then anticipating an enemy again, my soiled and drooping plumage might have been seen emerging from just behind a fence, vainly endeavoring to fly once more from hence. I reached the steps, dear Susie - and smiled to think of me, and my geometry, during the journey there - It would have puzzled Euclid, and its doubtful result, have solemnized a Day. How big and broad the aisle seemed, full huge enough before, as I quaked slowly up - and reached my usual seat!

In vain I sought to hide behind your feathers - Susie -feathers and Bird had flown, and there I sat, and sighed, and wondered I was scared so, for surely in the whole world was nothing I need to fear - Yet there the Phantom was, and though I kept resolving to be as brave as Turks, and bold as Polar Bears, it didn't help me any. After the opening prayer I ventured to turn around. Mr. Carter immediately looked at me - Mr. Sweetser attempted to do so, but I discovered nothing, up in the sky somewhere, and gazed intently at it, for quite a half an hour. During the exercises I became more calm, and got out of church quite comfortably. Several soared around me and sought to devour me, but I fell an easy prey to Miss Lovinia Dickinson, being too much exhausted to make any farther resistance.

She entertained me with much sprightly remark, until our gate was reached, and I needn't tell you Susie, just how I clutched the latch, and whirled the merry key, and fairly danced for joy, to find myself at home! How I wish for you - how, for my own dear Vinnie - how for Goliath, or Samson - to
pull the whole church down, requesting Mr. Dwight to step into Miss Kingsbury's, until the dust was past!

In the telling she speaks of several of the signs of a panic attack: the sudden onset of fear, seeming to arise from no apparent cause, trembling, and overwhelming urge to run and hide, to escape.

Research suggests that avoidant behavior often develops within six months following an episode of panic such as experienced by Dickinson. Dickinson begins to go to church five minutes early "so as not to have to go in after all the people get there" and then begins to choose not to go to church. On one occasion she had Maggie lock her the cellar bulk-head so as to conceal her whereabouts after her father urged her to go to church.26

Poem 324

Some keep the Sabbath going to Church -
I keep it, staying at Home -
With a Bobolink for a Chorister -
And an Orchard, for a Dome -

Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice -
I just wear my wings -
And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church,
Our little Sexton - sings

God preaches, a noted Clergyman -
And the sermon is never long,
So instead of getting to Heaven. at last -
I'm going, all along.

Her avoidant behavior begins to generalize and she becomes increasingly reluctant to leave the house. In 1854, at age twenty-three, she declines an invitation to visit a friend, "I thank you Abiah, but I don't go from home, unless emergency leads me by the hand, and then I do it obstinately, and draw back if I can. Should I ever leave home,

26 Garbowsky, pp. 35-7.
which is improbable, I will with much delight, accept your invitation." She reveals her fear of being looked at when she continues, "all your friends would stare."\textsuperscript{27} She did not attend her father's funeral, but was listening through the door, opened just a crack so as not to be seen.\textsuperscript{28}

In "A Prison gets to be a friend" Dickinson reveals the security she feels from her home and the "gratitude" she has for its safety and protection. Although she remembers the freer days of her youth, the memory is not as real as the "Phantasm Steel" of her prison. "Escapeless - quite" indicates that although Dickinson knew her prison was "figurative rather than literal" it was nonetheless inescapable. The "narrow Round" would be the "circle of safety" that typifies the agoraphobe's limit of venture beyond the house. The acceptance of the suffering, coming to expect no relief, is evident in the last stanza, "If That -indeed - redeem."\textsuperscript{29}

Poem 410

The first Day's Night had come -
And grateful that a thing
So terrible - had been endured -
I told my Soul to sing

She said her Strings were snapt -
Her Bow - to Atoms blown -
And so to mend her - gave me work
Until another Morn -

And then - a Day as huge
As yesterdays in pairs,
Unrolled it's horror in my face -
Until it blocked my eyes -

\textsuperscript{27} Garbowsky, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{28} Garbowsky, pp. 80-1
\textsuperscript{29} Garbowsky, pp. 85-7.
My Brain - begun to laugh -
I mumbled - like a fool -
And Tho' tis Years ago - that Day -
My Brain keeps giggling - still.

And Something's odd - within -
That person that I was -
And this One - do not feel the same -
Could it be Madness - this?

"The first Day's Night had come" is a description of the experience of the panic and its "horror." Before she can mend herself from the terror a greater one still overwhelms her, it blocks her "eyes," causes "her brain to laugh," and makes her mumble "like a fool." At the end, she does not feel like the same person before, she fears that this is indeed madness, not knowing any explanation for the fear and terror she encounters. This fear of madness is one of the symptoms listed in the criteria for a panic attack in the DSM-IIIR.30

Poem 378

I saw no Way - The Heavens were stitched -
I felt the Columns close -
The Earth reversed her Hemispheres -
I touched the Universe -

And back it slid - and I alone -
A Speck upon a Ball -
Went out upon a Ball -
Beyond the Dip of Bell -

Derealization and depersonalization are two additional symptoms of a panic attack.31 Derealization is when a patient experiences a "temporary feeling of spatial disorientation, a feeling that the surroundings are strange, unreal and detached. Distance perception may be altered and the ground may seem to move or be unsteady underfoot."

30 *DSM-IIIR*, p. 140.
31 *DSM-IIIR*, p. 140.
Gertrude Kasebrier's platinum print, *The Magic Crystal*, shows the swirl of disorientation (Image III-1). Depersonalization results in "a compelling self-scrutiny" and a "loss of spontaneity" as the patient experiences a state of numbness such as the Mind shutting off. These victims complain "That activities no longer flowed from them unawares, as it were; they were compelled to scrutinize each thought, act and emotion in its detailed development." The removal of the person from the experience is described as "being a passive spectator of the activities in which the self was engaged."\(^{32}\) In "I saw no Way" Dickinson describes suffering from both depersonalization and derealization. She begins by describing a claustrophobic experience of the sky seeming to offer no outlet and the columns closing in. She goes on to describe the disorientation and the detachment of the self, the isolation - "I alone."

In "I stepped from Plank to Plank" she explores the dimension of the universe, expresses an awareness of her surroundings, and admits the anticipation of the "next" movement, the next moment. Her consciousness of the infinity of the sky and sea, the loss of a horizon and the vastness of her surroundings are reminiscent of the man in a mud flat and the anxiety he experienced from the featureless surface.

Poem 875

I stepped from Plank to Plank
A slow and cautious way
The Stars about my Head I felt
About my Feet the Sea.

I knew not but the next
Would be my final inch -
This gave me the precarious Gait
Some call Experience.

One might also refer to Edward Hopper's painting *Rooms by the Sea*, 1951

\(^{32}\) M. Roth, "The Phobic Anxiety Depersonalization Syndrome," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 1959, p. 589; from Garbowsky, p. 120.
GERTRUDE KASEBIER  The Magic Crystal  Platinum print
Royal Photographic Society, Bath
(Image III-2). In this image, the environment outside the door may have been very similar to what Dickinson had perceived in the years of her reclusion. The interior seems stark but adequate, penetrated by the glare from the open door and window in the adjacent room. But the outside is a featureless infinity of the sky and the sea measured only by the single line of the horizon.

The house imagery of "One need not be a Chamber" becomes a metaphor for the turmoil within herself. Through this metaphor, she expresses the preference for encountering the external terrors than those within the self.

Poem 670

One need not be a Chamber - to be Haunted -
One need not be a House -
The Brain has Corridors - surpassing
Material Place -

Far safer, of a Midnight Meeting
External Ghost
Than it's interior Confronting -
That Cooler Host.

Far safer through an Abbey gallop,
The Stones a'chase -
Than Unarmed, one's a'self encounter -
In lonesome Place -

Ourselves behind ourself, concealed -
Should startle most -
Assassin hid in our Apartment
Be Horror's least.

The body - borrows a Revolver -
He bolts the Door -
O'erlooking a superior spectre -
Or More -

The fear of being alone with herself, "Ourselves behind ourself, concealed" reveals the inadequacy of the house for securing her from her fears, her fear of panic. For,
Indeed, the greatest fears, the greatest terrors come from within. The imagery of the house with the haunted corridors and the haunted corridors of the brain tells of the anticipation of the onset of a panic attack and the loss of understanding of the self. In each stanza she tells of a terror that lurks throughout, and then in the fourth stanza, she admits that it is the self that "Should startle most" even more than an "Assassin hid in our Apartment." The conclusion is the inability to escape from the self: "except by Abdication / Me of Me?" and the implied defeat of that felt reality.\textsuperscript{33}

"It was not Death" is one of the clearest descriptions of the symptoms of a panic attack written by Dickinson. Many of the physiological manifestations are presented here.

Poem 510

It was not Death, for I stood up,
And all the Dead, lie down -
It was not Night, for all the Bells
Put their Tongues on Noon.

It was not Frost, for on my Flesh
I felt Siroccos - crawl -
Nor Fire - for just my Marble feet
Could keep a Chancel, cool -

And yet, it tasted, like them all,
The Figures I have seen
Set orderly, for Burial,
Reminded me, of mine -

As if my life were shaven,
And fitted to a frame,
And could no breathe without a key,
And 'twas like Midnight, some -

When everything that ticked - has stopped -
And Space stares all around -
Or Grisly frosts - first Autumns morns,
Repeal the Beating Ground -

\textsuperscript{33} Garbowsky, p. 131.
But, most, like Chaos - Stopless - cool -
Without a Chance, or Spar -
Or even a Report of Land -
To justify - Despair.

Dickinson was experiencing depersonalization evidenced in her perceived removal from the physical situation, a disorientation of presence. She was searching for clues to her status; even though she felt dead, she was able to stand up. She may have been feeling faint, for although it seemed to be night, it was noon. In the second stanza she is having hot flashes and chills. The third stanza is mention of death and the white coldness of the lifeless corpses. By "could not breath without a key" she is indicating a difficulty of breathing. The world has fallen silent and as still as Midnight when all "that ticked -has stopped - And Space stares all around." The pounding of her heart is stopped by the chill of the event: "Or Grisly frosts -first Autumn morns, Repeal the Beating Ground." Probably the most gripping stanza is the last where she speaks of the despair she feels in the hopelessness of her terror, lost "Without a Chance." ³⁴

Possibly the best known of Dickinson's poems and the most graphic description of a panic attack is "I felt a Funeral in my Brain." This poem uses the imagery of a funeral to illustrate the experience of the attack and suggest the death within herself.

Poem 280
I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,
And Mourners to and fro
Kept treading - treading - till it seemed
That Sense was breaking through -

And when they all were seated,
A Service, like a Drum -
Kept beating - beating - till I thought
My Mind was going numb -

³⁴ Garbowsky, pp. 112-3.
And then I heard them lift a Box  
And Creak across my Soul  
With those save Boots of Lead, again,  
Then Space - began to toll,  

As all the Heavens were a Bell,  
And Being, but an Ear,  
And I, and Silence, some strange Race  
Wrecked, solitary, here -  

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,  
And I dropped down, and down -  
And hit a World, at every plunge,  
And Finished knowing - then -  

The sensations of the "treading - treading" and the "beating -beating" are felt by the reader as Dickinson describes the pounding within her head from the headaches and hypersensitive hearing that often accompanies an attack. The rhythm of the beating drum of the funeral service is the beating of the heart with its alternating forces:

The heart compensates for an unusually quick beat by taking a restful pause, so that the beat following the long pause is therefore actually forceful, so the heart seems to thump. To a sensitized person extra systole can feel as disconcerting as the jerk of a sudden descent of an elevator - uncomfortable indeed when he is subjected to long runs of extra systoles.35

She is again experiencing depersonalization and derealization when she writes "My mind was going numb" and "Then Space - began to toll." Patients of panic disorder report "collapsing" from their fear being so acute and their imaginations running at such a pace that at the peak of the attack their minds become numb and they are frozen, unable to think or act clearly.36 For one panic victim the feeling was as if she were falling toward 'a black nothingness' and if the fall was not somehow stopped she certainly would go

insane. In Dickinson's last stanza she is falling "down, and down" after "Reason, broke." She is experiencing the free fall the other victim described where nothing seems to be beneath you but the blackness and insanity. The house imagery is used with reference to the "Plank" and the imagery of the mind becomes this brittle construction of single planks, her "sense that the mind is not a unity, but a broken wholeness." The final line is a puzzling one. Much like the conclusion "Could it be Madness - this" the uncertainty is to the degree of sanity left remaining. "And finished knowing - then" could be that she finished the attack "knowing," in other words, she had regained her faculties after her loss of control during the attack. Or the final line could be that she had "Finished knowing" in the sense that she could no longer understand, that she had indeed lost her sanity, was at the end in madness. Maybe the irony was conscious, that we, at the end, would also be "Finished knowing."

Treatment: "The Judgement intervened"

In "Did you ever stand in a Cavern's Mouth" Dickinson begins with a short acknowledgment of the immensity of the problem she faces and the consequential loneliness she feels. Then she presents a spirit of defiance, a spirit to survive the confrontation of the power that has taken a grip of her life, "Did you ever look in a Cannon's face." So in the coldness "out of the Sun" and with loneliness "pursuing" she is saved, but being reminded that death is not defeated.

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37 Weekes, Treatment, p. 58.
Poem 590

Did you ever stand in a Cavern's Mouth -
Widths out of the Sun -
And look - and shudder, and block your breath -
And deem to be alone

In such a place, what horror,
How Goblin it would be -
And fly, as twere pursuing you?
Then loneliness - looks so -

Did you ever look in a Cannon's face -
Between whose Yellow eye -
And your's - the Judgement intervened -
The Question of "To die" -

Extemporizing in your ear
As cool as Satyr's Drums -
If you remember, and were saved -
It's liker so - it seems -

This poem is a representation of the will to survive the terror and loneliness that has been a part of Dickinson's life for most of her years. This will is the critical beginning to the glimmer of hope for treatment and relief from suffering from the debilitation of panic disorder with agoraphobia. Although it is difficult to see Dickinson as a model of treatment, given her severe reclusion until her death, she nevertheless functioned, she actually flourished in some ways.

As previously mentioned, it seems certain that Dickinson's poetry was her most effective therapy. Treatment of panic disorder may include the process of self-knowledge and awareness through the personal insights of a journal or diary that records experiences coupled with the psychological as well as physiological feelings. This technique allows for the patient to construct cause and effect relationships between the triggering event and the panic. Possibly unaware of the effectiveness of her poetry to give relief from her panic, Dickinson nonetheless apparently benefited from the solace of this treatment.
Dickinson wrote several poems that deal with the issue of the soul's discovery of the self. In "The Loneliness One dare not sound" Dickinson recognizes that it is Loneliness that is "the Maker of the soul."

Poem 777

The Loneliness One dare not sound -
And would as soon surmise
As in its Grave go plumbing
To ascertain the size -

The Loneliness whose worst alarm
Is lest itself should see -
And perish from before itself
For just as scrutiny -

The Horror not to be surveyed -
But skirted in the Dark -
With Consciousness suspended -
And Being under Lock -

I fear me this - is Loneliness -
The Maker of the soul
It's Caverns and it's Corridors
Illuminate - or seal -

In the beginning, Loneliness is described as more far-reaching than death, stronger than the grave. By the end she is beginning to face the denial that Loneliness is the determiner of the soul. The poem is a record of Dickinson's process of recognition of the essence of the self. This process of self-assessment is a critical step in the treatment of a disorder, the vehicle for the construction of the cause and effect relationships.40

It was not until 1872, fifteen years after Dickinson first began to suffer from agoraphobia, that the illness was first called Die Agoraphobie and detailed by Dr. C. Westphal in a monograph based on the case studies of three male patients:

The impossibility of walking through certain streets or squares, or possibility of doing so only with resultant dread of anxiety... no loss of consciousness... vertigo was excluded by all patients... no hallucinations or delusions to cause this strange fear... The patients experienced great comfort from companionship of men or even an inanimate object, such as a vehicle or a cane.

Given the timing of the identification of the illness and Dickinson's suffering, Dickinson most likely was ignorant of the research on agoraphobia and any possible treatment. Her suffering was multiplied by the fear of the madness, of the unknown power that directed her life. Higginson may have been aware of Westphal's work, as Higginson was chiefly in Boston working as an editor and had a greater chance of access to such information than did Dickinson. Undoubtedly, if Higginson was aware of Westphal's research, he would have recognized Dickinson's fear of leaving the house as a chief symptom of the illness. Indeed, this may have been the case, for on repeated occasions, Dickinson thanked Higginson for having saved her life. Although this is conjecture based on fragments of information, it is safe to recognize the amazing degree of self-help Dickinson achieved through her poetry.

"On a Columnar Self" indicates a level of constancy and security in her life in spite of the forces against her.

Poem 789

On a Columnar shelf -
How ample to rely
In Tumult - or Extremity -
How good the Certainty

That Lever cannot pry -
And Wedge cannot divide
Conviction - That Granitic Base -
Though None be on our Side -

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41 Garbowsky, p. 29.
Suffice - Us for a Crowd -  
Ourself - and Rectitude -  
And that Assembly - not far off  
From furtherest Spirit - God -

This assurance that she grips in this poem may not have been a constant belief, for as much as the symptoms of panic emerge and wane, so must also the confidence and the security. One must only hope that the "Crowd" indeed is not vulnerable to the doubt and depression that surround. It is, however, her "conviction" that allows for the treatment and healing to influence her pain at all.

Prognosis: "To ascertain the size"

The prognosis for change is not simply the analysis of any one poem, for the complexity of Dickinson's determination and spirit in seen in each of the thousands of lines. If "On a Columnar shelf" is about the hope, "The Soul selects her own Society" is about the futility of hoping. One can read "The Soul" as a story of Emily's decision of isolation. One could also see in it the dialogue between the selves of Emily.

Poem 303

The Soul selects her own Society -  
Then - shuts the Door -  
To her divine Majority -  
Present no more -

Unmoved - she notes the Chariots - pausing  
At her low Gate -  
Unmoved - an Emperor be kneeling  
Upon her Mat -

I've known her - from an ample nation -  
Choose One -  
Then - close the valves of her attention -  
Like Stone -
The imagery of the stone is effective in bringing thoughts of death, hardness, coldness, and endurance. The autonomy of the Soul and the unwavering obstinence in the face of pleads suggest the lack of change in the pain experienced by Emily. Garbowsky emphasizes the decision to use the imagery of the valve for the Soul because of the "mechanical operation actually shuts off the channels through which life flows, becoming permanently stopped - inert, unfeeling, and lifeless like stone." 42

"Tis so appalling" appears to have been written following an attack so severe that "To know the worst, leaves no dread more." The poem ends by seeing the only freedom from "Fright and Terror" in death.

Poem 281

'Tis so appalling - it exhilarates -
So over Horror, it half Captivates -
The Soul stares after it, secure -
To know the worst, leaves no dread more -
To scan a Ghost, is faint -
But grappling, conquers it -
How easy, Torment, now -
Suspense kept sawing so -

The Truth, is Bald, and Cold -
But that will hold -
If any are not sure -
We show them - prayer -
But we, who know,
Stop hoping, now -

Looking at Death is Dying -
Just let go the Breath -
And now the pillow at your Cheek
So Slumbereth -

42 Garbowsky, p. 134.
Others, Can wrestle -
Your's, is done -
And so of Wo, bleak dreaded - come,
It sets the Fright at liberty -
And Terror's free -
Gay, Ghastly, Holiday!

The passivity in accepting death, "Just let go the Breath" is a certain sign of the depression and loss of hope for solace. The life of struggle, "Others, Can wrestle" and the exhaustion she is feeling, "Your's, is done" is an understandable result of a life of pain and loneliness.

It is in "Tis so appalling - it exhilarates" that we see some of the ideas of the sublime that Edmund Burke developed a century earlier and that will be discussed more thoroughly later in this thesis. The idea that "So over Horror, it half Captivates" is that the strongest emotions were those of fear, those concerned with the terrible, in essence, those emotions that could catapult Dickinson into a panic attack. Briefly, it is Burke's assertion that this experience - this sublime experience - is delightful.

Other evidence of the sublime in Dickinson's works is the separation of the self and the world it has envisaged, typical of the post-Enlightenment sublimity of doubling and negativity. In Dickinson's sublimity there is a "breach between the self and the soul, and between consciousness and identity." In "There is a Zone whose even Years,"
Dickinson's existence with natural time is broken; natural time has ceased, is caught in a perpetual Noon. This separation form the self and nature is in the spirit of the sublime encounter.

Poem 1056
There is a Zone whose even Years
No Solstice interrupt -
Whose Sun constructs perpetual Noon
Whose perfect Seasons wait -
Whose Summer set in Summer, till
The Centuries of June
And Centuries of August cease
And Consciousness - is Noon.

Dickinson's universe - her self - becomes separated from time. The zone is free from interruption, yet the universe of Dickinson is about the interruption of the self and nature, and the interruption of the self and the soul - the self and the consciousness. The relationship of the self and nature becomes a metaphor for the hope that the self and the consciousness would agree, rather than break.⁴³

This consciousness of the self becomes evident in "This consciousness that is aware." By the end of the poem, the soul is "condemned" to the self.

Poem 822

This consciousness that is aware
Of Neighbors and the Sun
Will be the one aware of Death
And that itself alone

Is traversing the interval
Experience between
And most profound experiment
Appointed unto Men -

How adequate unto itself
It's properties shall be
Itself unto itself and none
Shall make discovery.

Adventure most unto itself
The Soul condemned to be -
Attended by a single Hound
Its own identity.

For Dickinson, the sublime is about the negativity of "seeing" into the dark, and the hope

⁴³ Elam, p. 84.
of the triumph over the engulfing darkness, amidst the silence of itself.44

It is the transcendence of the soul that comprises the essence of the Dickinson sublime. If the traditional sublime of the external object overwhelming the mind is applied to the idea of the horror of Dickinson, the object would be the infinity she perceives in the world outside the confines of her father's estate. Later, it could be argued that Dickinson's imagination itself provided the terror that becomes her sublime.45

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44 Elam, pp. 84-98.
The Sublime: Defining Understanding

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.46

History: Resisting Theoretical Closure

The task of defining the sublime is historically a difficult one. Nicolas Boileau said, "The sublime is not something that can be proved or demonstrated."

Suzanne Guerlac shared some frustration during her investigation into Hugo, Baudelaire, and Lautreamont:

It became clear that there was no univocal concept of the sublime whose history could be told. Nor could there be a comprehensive theory; the sublime had successfully resisted theoretical closure in every attempt made to comprehend it.47

Thomas Weiskel echoed this struggle to generate clear ideas and definitions of this somewhat elusive concept, sublimity:

We learn something but lose our chance of a deeper grasp of the sublime moment when we merely translate its terms or imagery into another set of terms (power, duration, transcendence, etc.) that are in the same order of

complexity as the first and themselves require interpretation.\textsuperscript{48}

Nevertheless, the importance of the quest, including a historical consideration, was seen as pertinent to contemporary eighteenth-century thinking:

From Longinus to Kant the sublime unites questions concerning the power of language as event with the event of transcendence. It poses questions of limits -limits between rule and infraction, originality and repetition, presence and absence, pleasure and pain, immanence and transcendence -and it questions the limits of representation, that is the limits of discourse itself.\textsuperscript{49}

Symptomology: Transcending Human Boundaries

The essential claim of the sublime was that man, through the sublime, could transcend the human boundaries in speech and feeling.\textsuperscript{50} The complexity of the term, and the experience, lies beneath the "essential claim." A contemporary of Edmund Burke, Hugh Blair, saw that sublimity produces "a sort of internal elevation and expansion; it raises the mind much above its ordinary states; and fills it with a degree of wonder and astonishment." The complexity seems to be centered around the pleasure of the experience when he continued:

The emotion is certainly delightful; but it is altogether of the serious kind: a degree of awfulness and solemnity, even approaching to severity, commonly attempts at when at its height; very distinguishable from the more gay and brisk emotion raised of beautiful objects.\textsuperscript{51}


\textsuperscript{49} Guerlac, p. vii.

\textsuperscript{50} Weiskel, p. 3.

For an adequate and accurate definition of beauty, picturesqueness, and sublimity, since each is usually defined based on distinction from the others, one must consider all three somewhat simultaneously, to understand them individually as well as to get a glimmer of their interrelations.\textsuperscript{52} In essence, the sublime is great, illustrative of the infinite in reality or in perception, and is based on the experience of awe and terror. The picturesque, on the other hand, may be great or small, but is inextricably linked with boundaries and so can never be infinite. It is of variety and intricacies rather than uniformity. The picturesque is "indifferently gay or grave."\textsuperscript{53} The picturesque was fit to become the subject of a picture, for John Ruskin, as is all sublimity, as well as all beauty.\textsuperscript{54} For Burke, beauty and sublimity are best seen in terms of the specific qualities of each, more so than a system that relies on interrelationships. The beauty of an object is measured by its possession of qualities of smoothness, and so forth.\textsuperscript{55} According to Friedrich von Schiller, "the beautiful is valuable only with reference to the \textit{human being}, but the sublime with reference to the \textit{pure daemon}."\textsuperscript{56} The differentiation of the beautiful and the sublime was the most striking of the eighteenth-century aesthetic theory. There were three sources of primary pleasure: the great, the uncommon, and the beautiful.\textsuperscript{57}

The romantic sublime was a redefinition of the sublime when it was perceived that the traditional conception: spiritual, ontological, psychological, and

\textsuperscript{53} Hipple, p. 211.
\textsuperscript{55} Hipple, p. 314.
\textsuperscript{57} Hipple, p. 16.
perceptual, was ineffective. According to Friedrich Nietzsche, the romantic sublime was the "heights of the soul from which even tragedy ceases to look tragic." In 1674, Longinus's *Peri Hypsous* was translated and publicized and became the catalyst to escape the ancients. The audience was immediate and receptive to Longinus as they were searching for a new authority to direct them amidst their anxiety of the new modernism. Within Romanticism there were convictions alternative to the sublime. There was an interest in the aesthetic of the beautiful as a humanizing influence. As these schools developed in idealist thought, "they came to subvert the very dualisms - of eye and object, spirit and sense - that the sublime presupposed and reinforced." These discussions generated many books and poems on beauty and sublimity in the period. Principally, the obsession of the period was the relation between sensation and reflections (ideas). As a conclusion, the sublime became associated in theory and in poetry with obscurity and vagueness and became a radical alternative to "decorous precision of neoclassical diction." Neoclassicism represented a profound change in the attitude regarding nature and the uses of the past. These interest were dramatically seen in the interest in antiquity encouraged by the discoveries of Herculeum and Pompeii. The perspective of the past grew wider and created a strong awareness of the uniqueness of the present. There became a cry for a new form of expression - modernism. There was a new respect for inventive genius over ancient wisdom.

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58 Weiskel, p. 4.
60 Weiskel, p. 8.
61 Weiskel, p. 6.
62 Weiskel, p. 16.
The dissociation of dualism at the core of the eighteenth-century sublime had profound ideological implications, and the various forms of alienation reinforced by the sublime - between the familiar and the novel, the human and the natural, the low and the high - could not be shaken until these ideological correlations were questioned in the ferment of social revolution.\textsuperscript{64}

The sublime became the new order of meaning, the new structure to support the discourse needed to replace the collapsed conventional systems.\textsuperscript{65} The sublime called into question, or was a response to, the dependence on the canons of the classical tradition. The standards of the beautiful were established by the individual's reactions of "sensing, feeling, and projecting," rather than emphasizing the embodiment of human or natural proportions. This shift affected the representation of architecture:

The criteria of judgment thereby shifted from the structural to the visual, the mathematical to the pictorial. It was inevitable that sublimity in architecture was to be represented by dramatic paintings of the building in nature, registering the effects of light, the play of shadows, the night, the dawn, the changing seasons, tempests, and clouds tossed by the wind.\textsuperscript{66}

The sublime of Longinus was little more than 'elevated expression' applied mostly to writing, painting, and sculpture. The idea of applying aspects of sublimity to architecture, the idea of form generating feelings associated with the sublime of poetry and the other arts, is a relatively modern consideration. In his introduction to his translation of Longinus, Boileau presented the idea and, by his extension of the idea, opened the door for further association with architecture by Jacques-Francois Blondel. Boileau:

It must be noted that by sublime, Longinus does not mean only what orators call the sublime style, but rather whatever is extraordinary and marvelous that strikes one in a discourse, that causes a work to uplift,\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{64} Weiskel, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{65} Weiskel, p. 22.
ravish and transport. . . . One must therefore understand by the sublime in Longinus, the extraordinary, the surprising, and, as I have translated it, the marvelous in discourse. 67

According to Jackson Bate, for Longinus, the critical message was that:

In and through the personal rediscovery of the great, we find that we need not be the passive victims of what we deterministically call "circumstances" (social, cultural, or reductively psychological-personal), but that by linking ourselves through what Keats calls an "immortal free-masonry" with the great we can become freer - freer to be ourselves, to be what we most want and value; and that by caring for the kinds of things that they did we are not only "imitating" them in the best and most fruitful sense of the word, but also "joining them." 68

For Immanuel Kant, the sublime is experienced when the mind is confronted with the "unattainability of nature." This did not mean that all things that were unattainable were necessarily sublime, however. Indeed, many attempts at sublimity were more aptly described from the "bathetic to the nonsensical." The warning was prudent to avoid the tendency for the ridiculous when striving for the sublime. It was from such "slippages" that were born the "side, or sub, genres of the sublime" that aspired to the "absolute dimension of the high sublime" but emphasized different aspects, exaggeration, fear, terror. An example of the layers of the expression of the sublime is seen in Burke's statement on ugliness, "Ugliness, I imagine to be consistent enough with an idea of the sublime. But I would by no means insinuate that ugliness of itself is a sublime idea, unless united with such qualities that excite strong terror." 69

67 Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux; from Vidler, p. 165.
69 Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, p. 119; from Vidler, p. 10.
Treatment: Structure of Plenitude

According to Weiskel, the working definition of the sublime is that: "It is that moment when the relation between the signifier and signified breaks down and is replaced by an indeterminate relation." This perspective became the central argument for Weiskel's theory of the sublime and generated a series of constructs that are touched on here, but more developed in the presentation of the program of this thesis. What Weiskel attempts to do is isolate a moment, which he calls the sublime moment. This moment is characterized as a moment in which a burden is lifted, such as the past, and there is "an influx of power."  

There are two distinct modes of the sublime moment, each with its specific anxiety and appropriate strategies of resolution. The first mode is characterized by an inability to grasp an understanding of the object, the signifier, because of a "sensory overload." Repetition is an example of an architectural technique used to accomplish this type of sublime moment. Another example would be a featureless extension - a wasteland, such as the vast mud flat with only a faint horizon line. The second case the signified - the mind - becomes captivated by itself, fixated on a spot, such as the spot in Dickinson's church meeting, which becomes an omphalos. Weiskel called this state "a kind of death by plenitude." The imagination is caught in a loop of its own understanding. Taking the example of Dickinson's panic experience where she was overwhelmed by the people, the signifiers, and regained control by focusing on the spot, it seems plausible that there can be a healing of the breakdown of the signifier-signified relationship by giving attention to the member which is not overwhelmed.

70 Weiskel, p. ix.
71 Weiskel, p. 11.
72 Weiskel, p. 27.
Prognosis: Sublime Inflation

Ever since Longinus, "repetition, overstatement, and over-extended hyperbole of any kind," has been considered an enemy of the sublime. Max Dessoir described the situation at the turn of the century when there was a "feeling of exhaustion generated by appeals to the sublime":

In our age, when relatively many persons become familiar with the sea and Alps and are early accustomed to the broadest dimensions, the qualities of the sublime must be a particular standard. Earlier generations . . . could get the same inner excitement from smaller impressions but we need vast vistas
. . . the training of the eye is now so advanced that feelings of anxiety are not present even when viewing a building of iron construction, even one of the mightiest.73

Dessoir describes an idea of the sublime that is nothing more than quantification. This attitude of empiricism of depth, height, and extension was overused and appeared to reflect little more than the "empty minds" of its users.

An additional consideration is the sensory inflation that characterizes the expansion of our experiences. Beyond the trips to the sea and the Alps, persons of this generation have access to seemingly all dimensions of the universe. Weiskel effectively set the stage for sublimity in this generation of computer generated perspectives and images from the outer reaches of our solar system and beyond, the bottom of the oceans, and the elements an atom:

To please us, the sublime must now be abridged, reduced, and parodied as the grotesque, somehow hedged with the irony to assure us we are not imaginative adolescents. The infinite spaces are no longer astonishing; still less do they terrify. They pique our curiosity, but we have lost the

obession, so fundamental to the Romantic sublime, with natural infinitude. We live once again in a finite natural world whose limits are beginning to press us and may crush our children. Like Chaucer's Troilus looking down on the eighth sphere, we see in those pictures taken aboard the Apollo spacecraft "this litel spot of erth, that with the see embraced is," and we know that the e.hos of expansion is doomed. We hear in the background of the Romantic sublime the grand confidence of the heady imperialism, now superannuated as ethic or state of mind - a kind of spiritual capitalism, enjoining a pursuit of the infinitude of the private self. "Is not the sublime felt in an analysis as well as in a creation?" asked Emerson. I don't think many analytic intellectuals could endorse such a claim. In contemporary criticism and the general development of structuralist thinking we are instructed how little, really, of our creations belongs to individual vision and choice. It is against this sense of an increasingly constricted and structured world that the ideology of the sublime looms up retrospectively, as a moribund aesthetic.\footnote{74}

Like an endangered species, Weiskel pronounces the gloom and doom over the aesthetic of the sublime. As the days of monuments are criticized as being hedonistic and the illusion of heroes shifts from equestrian statues to the imperceptible flicker of the images on the movie screens or computer assembled transmissions from the frontiers of space, the sublime retracts from built ideals in stone to fickle ideals fragilely captured on disposable plastic negatives or electronic impulses.

The task of satisfying the thirst for more excitement is frustrated in the disciplines with limited resources and real boundaries. Architecture may or may not be such a discipline. As Boullee demonstrated, the incorporation of nature in the Art of architecture rips away the limits and illustrates the infinity of the Divine Creation.

Who of us has not on a mountain top enjoyed the pleasure of discovering all that the eye can take in? What do we see there? A vast expanse containing a large number of different objects, too numerous to be counted. Now, in architecture, do we want to give an impression of grandeur?\footnote{75}

The Sublime: Natural Infinity

Edmund Burke identified the ability of infinity to elevate the emotions in a sublime experience through its "delightful horror." He quickly admitted that there rarely exist objects that are truly infinite, but the eye - the imagination - can construct such a perception:

There are scarce any things which can become the objects of our senses, that are really and in their own nature infinite. But the eye not being able to perceive the bounds of many things, they seem to be infinite, and they produce the same effects as if they were really so. We are deceived in the like manner, if the parts of some large object are so continued to any indefinite number, that the imagination meets no check which may hinder its extending them at pleasure. Whenever we repeat any idea frequently, the mind, by a sort of mechanism, repeats it long after the first cause has ceased to operate.76

After underscoring the effect of infinity, Burke described the converse to be of little consequence or worthy of our consideration:

... hardly any thing can strike the mind with its greatness, which does not make some sort of approach towards infinity; which nothing can do whilst we are able to perceive its bounds; but to see an object distinctly, and to perceive its bounds, is one and the same thing. A clear idea is therefore another name for a little idea.77

Samuel Monk quoted a passage from John Baillie's discussion of the sublime and the associated vastness and finds in its eloquence a critical adjustment from the concern with the sublimity of the object to the emotions of the subject:

But as a consciousness of her [the soul's] own Vastness is what pleases, so nothing raises this Consciousness but a Vastness in the Objects about which she is employed. For whatever the Essence of the Soul may be, it is

76 Burke, p. 128.
77 Burke, p. 108.
the Reflections arising from Sensations only which makes [sic] her
acquainted with Herself, and know her Faculties. Vast objects occasion
vast Sensations, and vast sensations give the Mind a higher Idea of her own
Powers - small scenes (except from Association...) have never this Effect; . .
. the Soul is never filled by them."78

Burke asserted that "vastness, unboundedness of space or time or number"
was the simplest of the qualities of objects that could produce sublimity. Blair developed
the idea of the axes and established a hierarchy of influences placing depth as the most
effective followed by height and then length, a somewhat conventional assertion, with his
explanation noticeably absent. He recognized that objects that are elevated above us,
either in space or time, achieve a certain sublimity. It is as if they are viewed through the
mist of distance or antiquity.79 Alexander Gerard emphasized extent as the principal cause
of the sensation of sublimity, in addition to duration and great number. This can be
contrasted to David Hume who emphasized elevation and temporal distance.80

History: The Natural Sublime

Dugald Stewart attributed much of the sublime of the material world to be
the consequence of a universal tendency to reflect on the creative power, which is
"ultimately dependent upon physical altitude for its sublimity." For Stewart, the religious
sublime is inseparably associated with the sublime of power, and the belief in directing the
thought upward.81

For some theorists, the development of the natural sublime was inextricably

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78 John Baillie, *Essay on the Sublime*, London, 1747, pp. 6-7; from Samuel Monk,
Association of America, New York, 1935.
79 Hippie, p. 126.
80 Hippie, pp. 71-2.
81 Hippie, p. 298.
associated with the emergence of Copernican cosmology and any perceived conflict in the
infinity of the Deity. The issue of unbounded space began to emerge with a new
dimension in the image of divine nature. Thomas Weiskel effectively identified the gravity
of the conflict:

If the only route to the intellect lies through the senses, belief in a
supernatural Being finds itself insecure. God had to be saved, even if He
had to marry the world of appearances. And so, in the natural sublime, He
did. The first development, in the seventeenth century, was the
identification of the Deity's traditional attributes - infinity, immensity,
coexistence - with the vastness of space newly discovered by emergent
astronomy. The emotions traditionally religious were displaced from the
Deity and became associated first with the immensity of space and
secondarily with the natural phenomena (oceans, mountains) which seemed
to approach that immensity. Soon a sense of the numinous was diffused
through all the grander aspects of nature. The mental result was
enormously to enhance the prestige of the sensible imagination as the
faculty which mediated the divine presence felt to be immanent in nature,
or at least likely to be evoked by nature's grander aspect. Indeed, the
imagination became the surest guide and recourse for the moral sense.82

Longinus, as well, associated the sublime with conditions of physical
greatness, his so-called "vision of greatness," and introduces to this discussion the aspect
of nature as a representation of dimension:

[Nature] has from the start implanted in our souls an irresistible love of
whatever is great and stands to us as the more divine to the less.
Wherefore not even the whole of the universe suffices for man's
contemplation or scope of thought, but human speculations frequently
exceed its compass. . . . Hence indeed it is that moved by some natural
impulse we do not marvel at small streams . . . but at the Nile, the Danube,
or the Rhine, and much more at the Ocean; nor yet are we more stirred by
this flamelet that we kindle . . . than by the fires in heaven . . . or consider it
more wondrous than the craters of Aetna. . . .83

The emergence of a natural religion was an acceptable alternative for the

83 Hipple, p. 18.
English mind that was leery of the "more reductive and empirical conception of the natural" which was becoming ever more popular in the eighteenth century. This natural religion allowed for transcendence without controversial theology. Nature was seen as responsible for man's physical being as well as that which "transcends the human thought, imagination, and speech." A period passage like the following represented the passions of the people:

Wherefore not even the entire universe suffices for the thought and contemplation within the reach of the human mind, but our imaginations often pass beyond the bounds of space, and if we survey our life on every side and see how much more it everywhere abounds in what is striking, and great, and beautiful, we shall soon discern the purpose of our birth.84

Ruskin, likewise, recognized the strength of the association of Nature to the images of the sublime:

Let us, then, see what is this power and majesty, which Nature herself does not disdain to accept from the works of man; and what that sublimity in the masses built up by his coraline-like energy, which is honourable, even when transferred by association to the dateless hills, which it needed earthquakes to lift, and deluges to mould.85

The unattainability of Nature was summarized by Longinus when he stated, "Nature is beneficent and methodological, and it is thus possible to speak of her art as the ground of that which is beyond human or technical art." Yet he admitted to the "unconquerable love" that is implanted into our souls for "whatever is elevated and more divine than we" that rivets our admiration, envy, and attention.86

*Fete a Rambouillet* by J.-H. Fragonard (Image V-1) is an example of the

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84 Weiskel, p. 13.
85 Ruskin, p. 73.
86 Weiskel, p. 12.
fascination of man with the awe found in the encounter with nature. The people in the painting have ventured out into nature to marvel at its power. The sublimity of the encounter is emphasized by the fragility of the boat and the shadow figure in the distance, representing The One in control of the power of nature. The tiny ship seen engulfed by the shards of icebergs in Frei'drich's The Polar Sea (Image V-2) shows the dominance of nature over the attempts of man to venture into the dangers of nature's realm.

Kant described the sublime to be the condition in which "an object (of nature) the representation of which determines the mind to think the unattainability of nature as a presentation of [reason's] ideas." For Kant, the intuition of 'unattainability' is the consequence of the failure of the "representation" of the object. He continued that reason's ideas are "unattainable" as well since they are beyond the imagination or cannot be presented in sensible form. This inability of the imagination to comprehend or represent the object is seen to illustrate the imagination's failure to contain the ideas of reason. As a comparison, the natural object is supremely signified in the beautiful. Thus, the confrontation of the unattainability of the object becomes the sublime experience.

The metaphorical moment of the sublime would be understood as an internalization or sublimation of the imagination's relation to the object. The "unattainability" of the object with respect to the mind would be duplicated as an inner structure, so that in the sublime moment the mind would discover or posit an undefinable (ungraspable) domain within.

We call an object sublime if the attempt to represent it determines the mind to regard its inability to grasp wholly the object as a symbol of the mind's relation to the transcendent order.

It is with this introduction that Weiskel presented his discussions of the three "economic states" or phases of the sublime moment:

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87 Prussian Academy edition of Kant's gesammelte Schriften, 22 vols., Berlin, 1900-1942, V, p. 268.
88 Weiskel, p. 23.
In the first phase the mind is in a determinate relation to the object, and this relation is habitual, more or less unconscious, and harmonious. This is the state of normal perception or comprehension, the syntagmatic linearity of reading or taking a walk or remembering or whatnot. No discrepancy or dissonance interrupts representation, the smooth correspondence of inner and outer. Boredom signals an incipient disequilibrium which is not yet strong enough to break into consciousness and bring to a halt the automatic, linear rhythm of sensation and reflection.

In the second phase, the habitual relation of the mind and object suddenly breaks down. Surprise or astonishment is the affective correlative, and there is an immediate intuition of a disconcerting disproportion between inner and outer. Either mind or object is suddenly in excess - and then both are, since their relation has become radically indeterminate. We are reading along and suddenly occurs a text which exceeds comprehension, which seems to contain a residue of signifier which finds no reflected signified in our minds. Or a natural phenomenon catches us unprepared and unable to grasp its scale. Any excess on the part of the object cancels the representational efficacy of the mind which can only turn, for its new object, to itself. But self-consciousness, too, can be prior and can force the rupture when the object (or memory) represented is too insignificant (fails to signify).

In the third, or reactive, phase of the sublime moment, the mind recovers the balance of outer and inner by constituting a fresh relation between itself and the object such that the very indeterminacy which erupted in phase two is taken as symbolizing the mind's relation to a transcendent order. This new relation has a "meta" character, which distinguishes it from the homologous relation of habitual perception. Should there be a reversion to habitual perception, the sublime moment subsides or collapses into something else. For it is precisely the semiotic (relation of signs and symbols and what they represent) character of the sublime moment which preserves the sublimation necessary to the sublime.

The relation of the first phase can be reduced to the dialectic of signification, which suggests in turn a signifier (object) in a determinate relation to a signified (mind). It makes no difference whether the form of the signifier is marks on a page, a disposition of colors, shapes, and lines that can be read as a landscape, or - to speak more precisely - the sensible representations of such realities in the primary or preconscious imagination. The "flow" of signifiers constitutes a "chain" or a syntagmatic progress whose continuity remains undisturbed until it is suddenly disrupted, in phase two, in what might be thought of a spontaneous commutation test.
We have seen that the disruption of the discourse may result from an excess on the plane of either the signifier or the signified.

In the first case, the feeling is one of on and on, of being lost. The signifiers cannot be grasped or understood; they overwhelm the possibility of meaning in a massive underdetermination that melts all oppositions or distinctions into a perceptual stream; or there is a sensory overload. Repetition, or any excess of "substance" in the signifier is a technique, familiar to architecture, music, and poetry, for inducing the sense of on and on. The imagery appropriate to this variety of the sublime is usually characterized by featureless (meaningless) horizontality or extension: the wasteland.

In the second case, we may imagine the discourse to be ruptures by an excess of the signified. Here meaning is overwhelmed by an overdetermination which in its extreme threatens a state of absolute metaphor, "a universe in which everything is potentially identical with everything else." We are suddenly fixated by a spot on the landscape which becomes an omphalos. Verticality is the appropriate dimension, and the image is inevitably some variant of the abyss. What threatens here is a stasis, a kind of death by plenitude, which Wordsworth calls an "abyss of idealism" and which destroys the seeking for a signifier, the "perpetual logic" in which alone the mind can continue to live.89

Weiskel is able to separate the stages of the sublime experience and articulate the conscious and subconscious happenings. The relationships of the signifier and the signified and the forces of comprehension described in this passage became the spine for this assertion of the sublime.

Symptomology: Boullee

The application of these theories of vastness are illustrated with more detail by Burke, which one might find to be quite similar to those espoused by Blair. These proposals reinforce thoughts of architecture as an instrument of the sublime:

89 Weiskel, pp. 23-4.
Greatness of dimension is a powerful cause of the sublime. This is too
evident, and the observation too common, to need any illustration; it is not
so common, to consider in what ways greatness of dimension, vastness of
extent, or quantity, has the most striking effect. For certainly, there are
ways, and modes, wherein the same quantity of extension shall produce
greater effects than it is found to do in others. Extension is either in length,
height, or depth. Of these the length strikes least; an hundred yards of even
ground will never work such an effect as a tower an hundred yards high, or
a rock or mountain of that altitude. I am apt to imagine likewise, that
height is less grand than depth; and that we are more struck at looking
down from a precipice, than looking up at an object of equal height: but of
that I am not very positive. A perpendicular has more force in forming the
sublime, than an inclined plane; and the effects of a rugged and broken
surface seem stronger than where it is smooth and polished.90

The immensity of nature calls for a scale of buildings that suggest the
quality of infinity and are most poignantly illustrated in the works of Boullee. The
Metropole (Image V-3) and his National Library project (Image V-4) rival the infinity of
nature. Boullee may have been influenced by the assertion of Burke that for sublimity to
be achieved in architecture, "greatness of dimension seems a requisite; for on a few parts,
and those small, the imagination cannot rise to any idea of infinity."91 Rosenau referred to
his series of Cenotaphs (Image V1-2) as "embracing the principles of nature in spatial
form."92

Boullee's Architecture, Essay on Art is a clear statement of his belief in the
importance of nature in the design of imposing structures. He began the argument with a
question:

Is architecture merely fantastic art belonging to the realm of pure invention or are
its basic principles derived from Nature? Allow me first of all to challenge the
existence of any art form that is pure invention. If by

90 Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the
Sublime and Beautiful, 1757, edited by James T. Boulton, Notre Dame, 1968, p. 120.
91 Burke, p. 135.
92 Helen Rosenau, Boullee and Visionary Architecture, Harmony Books, New York,
1976, p. 10.
strength of his mind and the techniques it devises, a man could arouse in us with his art those sensations we experience when we look at nature, such art would be far superior to anything that we possess, for we are limited to more or less imperfect limitations. But there is no art that can create alone, for if such art existed it would mean that the Divine Being, the creator of Nature, had endowed us with a quality that is part of His own essential being.93

Possibly in agreement with Gerald, Boullee attributed the ability to create the sensations aroused when we are looking at nature to the Divine Being alone. One must emulate the grandeur of nature to accomplish such impressions.

It is impossible to create architectural imagery without a profound knowledge of nature: the Poetry of architecture lies in natural effects. That is what makes architecture an art and that art sublime. Architectural imagery is created when a project has a specific character which generates the required impact.94

As Boullee emphasized the specifics about architecture in the process of the Essay, he concentrated on the character of the buildings and how that is achieved.

As in nature, the art of giving an impression of grandeur in architecture lies in the disposition of the volumes that from the whole in such a way that there is a great deal of play among them, that their masses have a noble, majestic movement and that they have the fullest possible development. The arrangement should be such that we can absorb at a glance the multiplicity of the separate elements that constitute the whole. The play of light on this arrangement of volumes should provide the most widespread, striking and varied effects that are multiplied to the maximum. In a large ensemble, the secondary components must be skillfully combined to give the greatest possible opulence to the whole; and it is the auspicious distribution of this opulence that produces splendor and magnificence.

It is just such expanded images that I have tried to produce in several of my projects, notably the Palace at St. Germain-en-Laye, the Metropolis and Newton's Cenotaph. I have tried to avail myself of all means put at my disposal by nature and to convey with my architecture the image of grandeur.95

93 Boullee, pp. 85-6, 88.
94 Boullee, p. 88.
95 Boullee, p. 89.
In the discussion of his typologies, Boullee asserted that the edifice of a Basilica is definitely worthy of "sublime ideas and to which architecture must give character." Immensity is needed for such a structure because man is most impressed by size; "it should, if that were possible, appear to be the universe." Boullee, in his discussion of the "poetic impression of grandeur," presented the visual image of a man at sea with only the sky and water around him as an image of true immensity -"everything is beyond our understanding." He continued his discussion with the different ways an architect can achieve magnificence in Basilica design.96

The project for the Palace of the Sovereign consisted of a group of buildings that Boullee described would create "the most exquisite effect." Part of the effect would be accomplished by the expanse of the walls that would make an "extraordinary impression" on the viewer, "bringing us closer to infinity; its magnificence would dazzle us with its impact; . . . the splendor . . . would arouse in us a sense of wonder."97

Boullee was inspired by the immensity of Newton himself as he considered the design of the cenotaph. Boullee wrote, "Sublime mind! Prodigious and profound genius! Divine being! Newton!" Crediting Newton with the discovery of the universe, he conceived of the idea of building the universe around him in homage. "I turned over in my imagination all the magnificence of nature. I groaned at not being able to reproduce it. I wanted to give Newton that immortal resting place, the Heavens." At the completion of his design, he boasted:

The effect of this magnificent composition is, as we can see, produced by nature. One could not arrive at the same result with the usual techniques of art. It would be impossible to depict in a painting the azure of a clear night sky with no cloud, its colour scarcely distinguishable for it lacks any

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96 Boullee, pp. 90-4.
97 Boullee, p. 97.
nuance, any gradation, . . . . In order to obtain the natural tone and effect which are possible in this monument it was necessary to have recourse to all the magic of art and to paint with nature, i.e. to put nature to work; . . .”

Treatment: Proper Dimension

Burke did not neglect the power of the minute, the "extreme of littleness," for creating a sublime environment. The effectiveness of the other 'great extreme of dimension' is explained by its incomprehensibility:

... in tracing which the imagination is lost as well as the sense, we become amazed and confounded at the wonders of minuteness; nor can we distinguish in its effect this extreme of littleness from the vast itself. For division must be infinite as well as addition; because the idea of a perfect unity can no more be arrived at, than that of a complete whole, to which nothing may be added.

Burke qualified these conditions of infinity in vastness, and in minuteness, by emphasizing the need for proper dimension:

... too great a length in buildings destroys the purpose of greatness, which it was intended to promote; the perspective will lessen it in height as it gains in length; and will bring it at last to a point; turning the figure into a sort of triangle, the poorest in its effect of almost any figure that can be presented to the eye. I have ever observed, that colonnades and avenues of trees of a moderate length, were without comparison far grander, than when they were suffered to run to immense distances.

Burke in fact warned against compositions that were so large that they were criticized for diminishing effect. He further asserted the need for appropriateness when he stated, "Designs that are vast only by their dimensions, are always the sign of a common and low

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98 Boullee, p. 107.
99 Burke, pp. 127-128.
100 Burke, p. 135.
imagination."¹⁰¹

Gerard was skeptical that sublimity is ever directly evident in the arts, even in architecture. He stated that it is the presentation of "strength or durability or magnificence" in architecture that exhilarates our emotions.¹⁰² Burke also encouraged the consideration of great strength as well as "intense labor" as a means of grandeur of dimension rather than "solely magnitude."

The use of the "artificial infinite" in architecture can be quite effective in stimulating the sublime. This could be achieved by the use of a "combination of the succession and uniformity of the parts of the building." An example is the level of sublimity achieved in Giorgio De Chirco's Mystery and Melancholy of a Street, 1914 (Image V-5). The building blanched in the sun has a succession of shadowed upper windows and arcade. Although the termination of the building is provided at the center of the painting, the infinity of the facade is clearly achieved. This effect of uniformity and the infinite can be accomplished by an element such as a rotunda, which allowed for the continuous turning of the eye or a colonnade where the effect is a "grand appearance."¹⁰³ This use of the artificial infinite can be directly applied to the works of Piranesi, especially the Carceri with its obscurity and "greatness of dimension."¹⁰⁴

Prognosis: "Behind Me - dips Eternity"

The presence of the condition of infinity is represented in the works of Dickinson in "Behind Me - dips Eternity" among others. Here, Dickinson writes of the infinity of being - different states of Eternity.

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¹⁰¹ Burke, p. 136.
¹⁰² Hipple, p. 73.
¹⁰³ Vidler, p. 167.
¹⁰⁴ John Wilton-Ely, p. 90.
Poem 721

Behind Me - dips Eternity -
Before Me - Immortality -
Myself - the Term between -
Death but the Drift of Eastern Gray,
Dissolving into the Dawn away,
Before the West begin -

'Tis Kingdoms - afterward - they say -
In perfect pauseless Monarchy -
Whose Prince - is Son of None -
Himself - His Dateless Dynasty -
Himself - Himself diversity -
In Duplicate divine -

'Tis Miracle before Me - then -
'Tis Miracle behind - between -
A Crescent in the Sea -
With Midnight to the North of Her -
And Midnight to the South of Her -
And Maelstrom - in the Sky -

The dimension of the image is an elusive "Illocality" somewhere between the nearness and infinity that can never quite occur in time or place.¹⁰⁵ The sublime of infinity is seen through the boundlessness of her Eternity - "Behind Me," "Before Me," and "the Term between."

The Sublime: Black and Light

Religion and ideas of a deity generated a description of the sublime as experiences of darkness, confusion, uncertainty, and infinity, eternity, supreme and unlimited power. Tony Vidler effectively clustered the aspects of the experience of the sublime, considering the influence of religion and the conception of a deity:

Darkness, confusion, uncertainty, all added to the sense of the sublime as necessarily connected to the practice of religious domination. Similarly, the imaginative experience of infinity, eternity, of supreme and unlimited power, such as might be ascribed to a deity, led inevitably to a feeling of the sublime. Thus impressions or experiences of vacuity, darkness, solitude, and silence, all connected with a general feeling of deprivation; vastness in every dimension, height, breadth, length, and depth; magnificence and splendor; all these are causes of the sublime and might equally be stimulated by nature or architecture.\(^{106}\)

History: Dark Temples

The origins of this power may be the absolute light and absolute darkness, the "fiat lux" of Biblical creation.\(^{107}\) Burke used the example of darkening the temples to create the general effect of obscurity and stimulating apprehension:

Almost all the heathen temples are dark. Even in the most barbarous temples in America at this day, they keep their idol in a dark part of the hut, which is consecrated to his worship. For this purpose too the Druids performed all their ceremonies in the bosom of the darkest woods, and in the shade of the oldest and most spreading oaks.\(^{108}\)

\(^{106}\) Vidler, p. 167.
\(^{107}\) Vidler, p. 168.
\(^{108}\) Burke; from Vidler, p. 167.
Boullée was influenced by these ideas of darkness and temples when he designed his "Temple of Death" (Image VI-1). This architecture was not of stone but entirely of shadows:

...present a plane surface into which the columns and pediment of a "shadow building" are inscribed. The facade is to be built out of a material that absorbs light, its decoration "consisting of shadows outlined by still deeper shadows"; nothing, observed Boullée, could be gloomier in its effect.\textsuperscript{109}

Boullée's experimentation with counter-architecture, his 'search for the absolute sensation in architecture,' resulted in his entirely dematerialized architecture of shadows. His "Temple of Death" was a depiction of the absolute sensation in architecture, the ultimate representation of sublime negativity. This was perhaps the expected conclusion of the application of the ideas of the sublime to the ideas of architecture, albeit an extreme conclusion.\textsuperscript{110}

Symptomolgry: Obscurity of Darkness

Burke elaborated on this aspect of the sublime by acknowledging how much of our anxiety is due to the unknown condition of a situation. Darkness becomes a mask of the condition and thus increases the terror. Burke:

To make any thing very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary. When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes. Every one will be sensible of this, who considers how greatly night adds to our dread, in all cases of danger... \textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{110} Vidler, p. 187.
\textsuperscript{111} Burke, p. 99.
Vidler couples this sensation of obscurity-evoked terror with "the uncanny" or das *unheimliche*, stating that at times it is indistinguishable from the sublime of Burke.112

Burke developed the argument about the obscurity of darkness to be even the unidentifiable sound that may exceed the terror of silence:

I have already observed that night increases terror, more perhaps than anything else; it is our nature, when we do not now what may happen to us, to fear the worst that can happen; and hence it is, that uncertainty is so terrible, that we often seek to be rid of it, at the hazard of a certain mischief. Now, some low, confused, uncertain sounds leave us in the same fearful anxiety concerning their causes, that no light, or an uncertain light, does concerning the objects that surround us.

Quale per incertam lunam sub luce maligna
Est iter in sylvis.----

----A faint shadow of uncertain light,
Like as a lamp, whose life doth fade away;
Or as the moon clothed with cloudy night
Doth shew to him who walks in fear and great affright.

Spenser.

But a light now appearing, and now leaving us, and so off and on, is even more terrible than total darkness: and a sort of uncertain sounds are, when the necessary dispositions concur, more alarming than a total silence.113

 Associations with great sounds such as "raging storms, thunder, or artillery" quickens the mind to terror. The sudden and unexpected clap or cessation of a sound arouses the soul to be on guard. Even the repetition of a great sound, such as a grand clock, or the stoke of a drum, in the silence of the night stirs the imagination.114

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113 Burke, p. 153.
114 Burke, pp. 150-1.
Treatment: Architecture of Light

Fonthill Abbey is a striking example of the use of light, darkness and sound to create a sublime environment. Built at the end of the eighteenth century, the complex of vast buildings settles in extensive woods consisted of a tower 276 feet high with a stair hall 120 feet high. The sublime experience was most intense at a night gala when the staircase was dimly lighted by shadowy hooded figures and mysterious music emanated from the darkness. The woods were alive with the shadowy dance of the night.115

Burke recognized that although the darkness will invoke a greater sense of the sublime than the light, an even greater effect is a quick transition from light to dark and from dark to light.116 He introduced the art of light and darkness in the design of architecture:

As the management of light is a matter of importance in architecture, it is worth enquiring how far this remark is applicable to building. I think then, that all edifices calculated to produce an idea of the sublime, ought rather to be dark and gloomy, and this for two reasons; the first is, that darkness itself on other occasions is known by experience to have a greater effect on the passions than light. The second is, that to make an object very striking, we should make it as different as possible from the objects with which we have been immediately conversant; when therefore you enter a building, you cannot pass into a greater light than you had in the open air; to go into one some few degrees less luminous, can make only a trifling change; but to make the transition thoroughly striking, you ought to pass from the greatest light, to as much darkness as is consistent with the uses of architecture. At night the contrary rule will hold, but for the very same reason; and the more highly a room is then illuminated, the grander will the passion be.117

Blackness can invoke sublimity as it absorbs sight and reflects little light.

116 Burke, p. 144.
117 Burke, p. 146.
The black bodies become vacant spaces and derives some of its powers from the same
obscurity that darkness enjoys, and by surrounding blackness with colored bodies, one
increases its influence on the mind. For Burke, blackness is a partial darkness:\footnote{118}

Though the effects of black be painful originally, we must not think they
always continue so. Custom reconciles us to every thing. After we have
been used to the sight of black objects, the terror abates, and the
smoothness and glossiness, or some agreeable accident of bodies so
colored, softens in some measure the horror and sternness of their original
nature; yet the nature of their original impression still continues. Black will
always have something melancholy in it, because the sensory will always
find the change to it from the other colors too violent; or if it occupy the
whole compass of the sight, it will then be darkness; . . .\footnote{119}

One is again reminded of the drawings of Boullee and his skill in the use of
light and darkness. He was especially captivated by the use of light and darkness in his
design of Cenotaphs (Image VI-2): "Temple of death! The sight of you chills our hearts.
Artist, flee the light of the Heavens! Descend onto the tombs to sketch your ideas in the
pale dying Light of the Sepulchral Lamps!"\footnote{120} He described Newton's Cenotaph as
having "bright, sparkling light" which has filtered through "apertures into the gloom of the
interior." He theorized that the "sombre light that would prevail in this place would favor
the illusion" he has constructed.

For Dickinson, the light had special meaning. The light represented time in
the form of Day and Night as seen in "A Night - there lay the Days between."

\begin{quote}
Poem 471 A Night - there lay the Days between -
The Day that was Before -
And Day that was Behind - were one -
And now - 'twas Night - was here -
\end{quote}

\footnote{118}{Burke, p. 281.}\footnote{119}{Burke, p. 285.}\footnote{120}{Boullee, Ed. Rosenau, p. 105.}
Slow - Night - that must be watched away -
As Grains upon a shore -
Too imperceptible to note -
Till it be night - no more -

But possibly of greater importance, is Dickinson's use of Light and Dark, Day and Night, as a metaphor of her panic attacks. This usage is in several poems, such as "The first Day's Night had come," a poem previously discussed, and "The Sun kept setting - setting - still."

Poem 410
The first Day's Night had come -
And grateful that a thing
So terrible - had been endured -
I told my Soul to sing

She said her Strings were snapt -
Her Bow - to Atoms blown -
And so to mend her - gave me work
Until another Morn -

And then - a Day as huge
As yesterdays in pairs,
Unrolled it's horror in my face -
Until it blocked my eyes -

My Brain - begun to laugh -
I mumbled - like a fool -
And Tho' tis Years ago - that Day -
My Brain keeps giggling - still.

And Something's odd - within -
That person that I was -
And this One - do not feel the same -
Could it be Madness - this?
Poem 692

The Sun kept setting - setting - still
No Hue of Afternoon -
Upon the Village I perceived -
From House to House 'twas Noon -

The Dusk kept dropping - dropping - still
No Dew upon the Grass -
But only on my Forehead stopped -
And wandered in my Face -

My Feet kept drowsing - drowsing - still
My fingers were awake -
Yet why so little sound - Myself
Unto my Seeming - make?

How well I knew the Light before -
I could not see it now -
'Tis Dying - I am doing - but
I'm not afraid to know -

This impression of Light and Dark, Day and Night as related to the terror of panic may have influenced the tenuousness she used to illustrate the light in "A Light exists in Spring."

Poem 812

A Light exists in Spring
Not present on the Year
At any other period -
When March is scarcely here

A Color stands abroad
On solitary Fields
That Science cannot overtake
But Human Nature feels.

It waits upon the Lawn,
It shows the furthest Tree
Upon the furthest Slope you know
It almost speaks to you.
Then as Horizons step
Or Noons report away
Without the Formula of sound
It passes and we stay -

A quality of loss
Affecting our Content
As Trade had suddenly encroached
Upon a Sacrament.

The light represents the passing of nature out of reach, the lack of control of Dickinson. The Light is seen as appearing and disappearing in the following poem as well. The slant of light affects all that it touches and all that it passes. The landscape anticipates not its arrival as much as its departure.121

Poem

There's a certain Slant of light,
Winter Afternoons -
That oppresses, like the Heft
Of Cathedral Tunes -

Heavenly Hurt, it gives us -
We can find no scar,
But internal difference,
Where the Meanings, are -

None may teach it - Any -
'Tis the Seal Despair -
An imperial affliction
Sent us of the Air -

When it comes, the Landscape listens -
Shadows - hold their breath -
When it goes, 'tis like the Distance
On the look of Death -

121 Elam, p. 85.
Burke stated, "To make any thing very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary." He asserted a theory on the effectiveness of the darkness in invoking terror and it was elaborated by Weiskel:

In nature, "dark, confused, uncertain, images have a greater power on the fancy to form the grander passions than those have which are more clear and determinate. This is so because it is our ignorance of things that causes all our admiration, and chiefly excites our passions. Knowledge and acquaintance make the most striking causes affect but little." Hence the sublime comes to be associated both with the failure of clear thought and with matters beyond determinate perception. It is not a radical alternative but a necessary complement to a psychology that stresses its own limits.\footnote{Weiskel, p. 17.}

Thus, according to Weiskel, and Burke, the obscurity or unfamiliarity of a situation or object can have a greater affective appeal, a more intense passion, a greater sense of fear. Burke even stated that clarity "In some sort an enemy to all enthusiasms whatever."\footnote{Burke, p. 117.} Monk wrote that the sublime experience is "contra final" for the imagination, but "final for the whole province of the mind." For Monk, the sublime is what pleases immediately by reason of its opposition to the interest of sense.\footnote{Samuel Monk, The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVII-Century England, Modern Language Association of America, New York, 1935, p. 94; Burke, II, p. 4.}

Piranesi was a master of this art of obscurity through the development of vastness that avoids definition and by the concealment of understanding through smoke and mist. Vidler wrote, "Indeed, in many veilles smoke is an agent of dissolution by which the fabric of the house is turned into the depth of the dream; in the same way, as an instrument of the sublime, smoke has always made obscure what otherwise would have seemed too clear."\footnote{Vidler, Uncanny, p. 14.} Vidler further developed this architectural idea:
The perpetual exchange between the homely and the unhomely, the imperceptible sliding of cosiness into dread, was, in Hoffmann and de Quincey, a carefully arranged affair, where architecture operated as a machine for defining boundaries that in the end were to be overcome. In Melville, the division, while still essentially embodied in physical spaces and objects, are less clear; between literal concealment and projected fantasy, settled comfort and lurking dread, the smoke raised an ill-defined wall.\textsuperscript{126}

Prognosis: A Measure of Freedom

We tend to develop our dependency on visual images and are limited only by the scope of the imagination. The relationship between the mind and the eye is not one in which one reigns consistently supreme. The dialogue is one of influence and exchange. Wordsworth wrote of a "bodily eye" that:

\begin{quote}
Could find no surface where its power might sleep;  
Which spake perpetual logic to my soul,  
And by an unrelenting agency  
Did bind my feelings even as a chain.\textsuperscript{127}
\end{quote}

The "power" of the eye is seeking a state of equilibrium in which it may rest, "sleep." But its efforts are thwarted by an inability to find an adequate "surface." Weiskel wrote, "Hence an oscillation which the soul understands but which binds the feelings into a compulsive repetition. To entreat such power is oddly to lose a measure of freedom, to become subject to the pressure of an 'unrelenting agency.'"\textsuperscript{128}

The discussion becomes the relation between reflections of the imagination, of the mind, and sensation. One must also consider memories and their influence on perception. Addison outlined a distinction between primary pleasures of the imagination, those "which entirely proceed from objects as are before our eyes," and secondary

\textsuperscript{126} Vidler, \textit{Uncanny}, p. 23.  
\textsuperscript{127} Wordsworth, 1949.  
\textsuperscript{128} Weiskel, p. 32.
pleasures, "which flow from the ideas of visible objects, when the objects are not actually before the eye, but are called up into our memories, or formed into agreeable visions of things that are either absent or fictitious." 129 This component of the memory when applied to the eye and the mind creates a truly rich discussion of the sublime and obscurity. The imagination's ability to produce a perception in an obscure vision can result in a terrific and fearful experience for an individual who is predisposed to experiencing fear.

The Sublime: Terror

It was Burke's 1757 *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* that the ideas of the sublime were most radically extended into discussions of "aesthetic perception founded on the psychology of sensation." Burke reduced the sublime essentially to the effects of terror:

> Whatever 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; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.\(^{130}\)

History: Tranquillity tinged with Terror

It is important to note that although Burke asserted that the sublime is produced by whatever is terrible, the sublime is not always terrible or associated with something terrible, or influences us like the terrible. In other words, not everything that induced terror is sublime. The idea of the delight, the pleasure of the pain, may actually be linked to the remission of the danger:

> The passions which belong to self-preservation, turn on pain and danger; they are simply painful when their causes immediately affect us; they are delightful when we have an idea of pain and danger, without being actually in such circumstances; this delight I have not called pleasure, because it turns on pain, and because it is different enough from any idea of positive pleasure. Whatever excites this delight, I call sublime. The passions belonging to self-preservation are the strongest of all the passions.\(^{131}\)

Burke described sublimity to be "tranquillity tinged with terror." He insisted that "when

\(^{130}\) Burke, p. 58.
\(^{131}\) Burke, p. 84.
danger and pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply
terrible, but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they may be, and they are
delightful, as we every day experience.\textsuperscript{132}

Gerard and Baillie found the sublime to be a twofold movement of the soul, a response to the perceived object and a self-reflection, an evaluation. The delight comes from confrontation of pain and danger without actually encountering the consequence and is accompanied by self-glorification of the soul for "conceiving such objects with
equanimit.\textsuperscript{133} Baillie vehemently argued against the notion that terror could be sublime. He admitted that the two feelings might co-exist or even oscillate in the mind when presented with such an object. But for him, the sublime is about the dilation and elevation of the soul and fear is more of the contraction and sinking of the soul.\textsuperscript{134} Gerard disagreed, and thought of terror and sublimity as having similar feelings: "Objects exciting terror...are in general sublime; for terror always implies astonishment, occupies the whole soul, and suspends all its motions.\textsuperscript{135}

Hipple linked the terms "astonishment," "awe," "admiration," "reverence," "respect," with the sublime effect of inferiority by the observer. Burke stated, "The passion caused by the great and the sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully is astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended with some degree of horror.\textsuperscript{136} In this case, according to Burke, "the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it.\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{132} Burke, p. 91; from Hipple, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{133} Hipple, p. 89.
\textsuperscript{134} Hipple, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{136} Burke, p. 108; from Hipple, p. 89.
\textsuperscript{137} Burke, p. 95.
It is here that rests the great power of the sublime. Burke continued, "far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force. Astonishment...is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree; the inferior effects are admiration, reverence, and respect." 138

Symptomology: Pain and Pleasure

Burke gave needed attention to the difficult task of discerning an adequate definition or understanding of the terms "pain and pleasure" and their relationship with one another and with the sublime:

Pain and pleasure are simple ideas, incapable of definition. People are not liable to be mistaken in their feelings, but they are very frequently wrong in the names they give them, and in their reasonings about them. Many are of opinion, that pain arises necessarily from the removal of some pleasure; as they think pleasure does from the ceasing or diminution of some pain. For my part, I am rather inclined to imagine, that pain and pleasure, in their most simple and natural manner of affecting, are each of a positive nature, and by no means necessarily dependent on each other for their existence. The human mind is often, and I think it is for the most part, in a state neither of pain nor pleasure, which I call a state of indifference. 139

... pleasure follows the will; and therefore we are generally affected with it by many things of a force greatly inferior to our own. But pain is always inflicted by a power in some way superior, because we never submit to pain willingly. So that strength, violence, pain, and terror, are ideas that rush in upon the mind together. 140

The polarity of the concept of Burke of pain and pleasure was reduced in this statement about the "two heads," self-preservation and society:

138 Burke, p. 95.
139 Burke, p. 44.
140 Burke, p. 111.
To the ends of one or the other of which all our passions are calculated to answer. The passions which concern self-preservation, turn mostly on pain or danger. The ideas of pain, sickness, and death, fill the mind with strong emotions of horror; but life and health, though they put us in a capacity of being affected with pleasure, they make no such impression by the simple enjoyment. The passions therefore which are conversant about the preservation of the individual turn chiefly on pain and danger, and they are the most powerful of all the passions.141

For the purpose of this discussion we will focus on self-preservation as the source of the sublime.

Burke was clear in his mind what was the hierarchy of pain and pleasure as far as invoking a strong emotion:

I say the strongest emotion, because I am satisfied the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure. Without all doubt, the torments which we may be made to suffer, are much greater in their effect on the body and mind, than any pleasures which the most learned voluptuary could suggest, or than the liveliest imagination, and the most sound and exquisitely sensible body, could enjoy.142

Burke addressed the visual encounter of an object and the resultant experience of fear, even without the physical experience of pain: "No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear. For fear being an apprehension of pain of death, it operates in a manner that resembles actual pain."143

The experience of fear is reliant on association:

Original sublimity is a mode of terror (anticipated pain) vividly conceived but not actually raised into a passion, it follows that such circumstances will be sublime as, through original efficacy, experience, education, or custom, are fitted to suggest terror; by more remote associations, accompaniments of such circumstances too may become sublime. The task of the aesthetcian should presumably be to trace out the various classes of

141 Burke, p. 57.
142 Burke, p. 58.
143 Burke, p. 96.
associations. . . 144

George Stubbs', *Lion Attacking a Horse*, 1770 (Image VII-1) is another example of the drama of the sublime as it existed in the eighteenth-century art community. The fierceness of both animals and the surrounding nature completes an strong experience for the viewer. Burke provided an example of a horse and the visual imagery that can be generated in a given context and how that can result in a certain sublime experience:

The horse in the light of an useful beast, fit for the plough, the road, the draught; in every social useful light, the horse has nothing of the sublime: but is it thus that we are affected with him, whose neck is clothed with thunder, the glory of whose nostrils is terrible, who swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage, neither believeth that it is the sound of the trumpet? In this description the useful character of the horse entirely disappears, and the terrible and sublime blaze out together. 145

In essence, this is an example of how power is also a source of the sublime because of its association with violence, pain and terror. When the accompanying terror is stripped from the power, the sublimity is "spoiled" and it is rendered "contemptible." 146

The domesticated, docile horse does not induce fear or terror for most who view it or have contact with it, but the enraged, hostile horse is a creature of force and power capable of inflicting pain and therefore terror.

The physiological explanation for the experiences of pain and fear, according to Burke, is the literal stretching of the nerves, "an unnatural tension of the nerves." The stretching of the nerves results in a feeling like pain or terror, therefore, the causal relationship is reversible. Burke stated that in order to have the nerves "in proper place, they must be shaken and worked to a proper degree." This is applied to his

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144 Hipple, p. 90.
145 Burke, p. 113.
146 Burke, p. 112.
argument for the agreeableness of the experience of pain and terror.147

Treatment: Cause and Effect

The experiential progression of anticipated or "apprehension of pain and death" led to Burke's theory of cause and effect and an analysis of objects in nature that could be associated with fear, or more precisely, objects which could invoke fear in the mind. Because architecture is experienced in much the same way as nature, it was seen as a cause of the sublime.148 Vidler followed this idea in his investigation of the terror that is incorporated into the architecture of the uncanny:

Following Kant's prescription for the achievement of delight through terror through certain knowledge of safety - "provided our own position is secure [the aspect of terrifying natural phenomena] is all the more attractive for its fearfulness" - the aesthete of terror succeeded in barricading the walls against nature in order to indulge a taste for fear. But the locus of the uncanny was now in the mind, and the mind recognized no such barriers, dissolving them into the fabric of the dream, haunting the site of its own dread.149

Prognosis: Architecture as the Sublime

Resuming the discussion regarding the problem of the increased level of stimulation needed to experience sublimity in our modern times, one should consider the vast possibilities available to architecture, such as Vidler's research into the uncanny and its power in stirring the emotions. The pessimism that surrounds architecture is the consequence of a lackluster belief in its ability to respond to the needs of society, sublimity

147 Hipple, p. 91.
148 Vidler, Sublime, p. 167.
being just one of many. Architecture becomes painfully self-conscious as it strives to respond. Bernard Tschumi said, "By focusing on itself, architecture has entered an unavoidable paradox: the impossibility of questioning the nature of space and at the same time experiencing a spatial praxis."\textsuperscript{150}

In order to achieve a nature of space that elevates the soul to a sublime experience, some or all of the qualities: infinity, light/dark, terror should be called upon. The challenge rests in creating a space that is confrontational to the spirit in such a way that does not become "simply terrible" - the threshold. The words of Wordsworth are an appropriate reminder of the responsibility of architecture in general and sublime architecture specifically - to listen.

\begin{quote}
The old Man still stood talking by my side; 
But now his voice to me was like a stream 
Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide; 
And the whole body of the Man did seem 
Like one whom I had met with in a dream; 
Or like a man from some far region sent, 
To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.\textsuperscript{151}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{151} Wordsworth, p. 239.
Piranesi
Case Study: Delightful Prison

In 1743, the twenty-three year old Piranesi published his first production, the *Prima Parte di Architettura e Prospettive*. The collection was twelve etchings of imaginary temples, palaces, ruins and a prison. The introduction demonstrated the conditions of the day and Piranesi's prejudices well:

Since it is not to be hoped that an architect in these times could execute any (grand ideas) either because Architecture itself has fallen from that happy perfection which it reached in the age of the greatest grandeur of the Roman Republic and the powerful Caesars who succeeded it, or because those who should be patrons of this art are to blame... there is no course open to me or to any other modern architect but to set out in drawings our ideas and thus regain from Sculpture and Painting the advantage which, as the Juvarra says, they have gained over architecture.\(^{152}\)

History: Drawings

Piranesi's *Vedute di Roma* is the one-hundred and thirty-three piece series of the Rome of his day, published by the middle of the century. The first thirty-four plates were published as a single volume as *Le Magnificenze di Roma* in 1751. With these views were bound the *Grotteschi*, an enlarged version of the *Prima Parte*, the *Carceri*, and the *Archi trionfali*. The collection was evidently unpopular as most people preferred the tourist views without the imaginary scenes. It was at this time, however, that Piranesi first began to build recognition and a reputation.\(^{153}\)

\(^{153}\) Scott, pp. 26-7.
The theme of the *Grotteschi* (Images VIII-1, VIII-2) was originally explored in certain plates of the *Prima Parte*. In addition to the theme of antique ruins in melancholy decay, probably influenced by the ideas and style of the earlier engraver, Marco Ricci, Piranesi expressed his command of fantasy in the arrangement of objects and use of textures that are typical of the decorative language of contemporary Venice. The influence of Giovanni Battista Tiepolo can be seen in Piranesi's "fluency of expression, suggesting rather than defining forms, and the built-in luminescence achieved by leaving substantial area of the paper blank." But probably of more importance, was Tiepolo's influence on Piranesi's heightened sense of intensity, a feeling of an "underlying sense of mystery, if not actual fear, far beyond the brittle elegance of the Venetian Rococo."\(^{154}\)

**Symptomology: Confrontation of Life and Death**

The ruins and skeletons begin a discussion of "earlier allegories of worldly vanity."\(^{155}\) The intensity of the themes of the *Grotteschi* presented to the spectator is no less than the confrontation between life and death. The tense relationship expressed by the proximity of "living and dead forms, human and inanimate, imply the presence of new creative forces arising from the process of decay." These images introduce the struggle between man and nature which be a recurring theme in Piranesi's work. The next logical consideration is later expressed in Piranesi's work - "the inherent property of rejuvenation in Roman Civilization."\(^{156}\)

The embryonic elements of the *Carceri* are evident in the *Prima Parte*. The *Dark Prison* with tackle for punishing criminals has the requisite rugged masonry and thick grills and suspended dark lanterns to which Piranesi added the bridges and ascending

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\(^{154}\) Wilton-Ely, p. 9.


\(^{156}\) Wilton-Ely, p. 19.
flights of stairs for his later prison designs.¹⁵⁷ (Images VIII-3 - VIII-32)

Piranesi probably started on the Carceri soon after his return to Rome from Naples, near the archaeological activity of Herculaneum. Scott theorized that Piranesi created these etchings with such exuberance that he made several mistakes in his haste. An example is that in altering the flow of the steps of Plate XIV (Image VIII-28) of the Carceri he mistakenly launched the steps into non-existent space. He further asserted that in some cases, such as in Plates XI (Image VIII-21) and XV (Image VIII-29), he appears to have attacked the plate without having done preliminary sketches.¹⁵⁸

The creations were not appreciated by the patrons in contemporary Rome. The designs were regarded to be too abstract and maybe even incomplete. They lacked the customary romantic creepers to be called ruin-pieces and the connection to antiquity was too tenuous. They were not considered appropriate for stage sets either. Indeed the plates proved to be difficult to sell; the visiting tourists preferred the picturesque views of Rome.¹⁵⁹

The ideas of the Dark Prison were developed partially through technical advances. The solidity and clarity of the masonry arches, piers, vaults and stairs are skillfully redefined as insubstantial visions in the Carceri. The escalating sense of fear is encouraged by the evaporation of seemingly tangible objects, the security of understanding the environment is tenuous, at best. There are no bounds to the spaces; the vaulted halls extend through glimpses of another world, pulled by the imagination into infinity. Nothing seems certain. The conventions of perspective are broken by "deliberate ambiguities, obscured points of connection or irrational relationships between neighbouring planes and surfaces."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Scott, p. 59.
¹⁵⁸ Scott, pp. 52-3.
¹⁵⁹ Scott, p. 54.
Unlike the ornate decoration in most of the *Prima Parte* plates, the *Carceri* capitalizes on a stark economy to establish the drama:

An almost abstract play of structural forms rendered in terms of pure masonry where the proportional system of Vitruvian ornament no longer inhibits the imagination. . . . They also contain an equally personal language of arcane imagery which, like that of *Grotteschi*, continues to defy all attempts to impose a coherent iconographic solution.

The *Carceri* is a further development of the optical journey created for the spectator: "frenetic motion by means of a succession of stairs, ramps, bridges, balconies, catwalks and galleries - a nervous continuum with no point of stability or rest throughout."\(^{161}\)

In spite of the rejection of the first release, Piranesi continued to rework these pieces. In 1760 he responded to criticism that the etchings were insufficiently gaol-like by dramatically darkening the former silvery lights, by scoring in black shadows, and by adding the "sinister paraphernalia of the torture chamber."\(^{162}\) This consideration is demonstrated in Plate I (Images VIII-3 & VIII-4). The second state instantly appears much darker from the shadows and the bridge. Piranesi has added the spikes on the wheel and the beam on the left. The entrance has become more ambiguous as one assumes the bridge is now of chief importance rather than the ascending stairs. The space extends indefinitely by the addition of the bridges and stairs at the top center and top right. The effort to create a greater sense of terror and a sinister series of spaces seems to have become a greater priority for Piranesi.

The *Carceri* was a response, a criticism, of the patrons and architects of Rome who had failed to respond to the creative atmosphere of the "speaking ruins" that surrounded them. With the re-publication of the *Carceri* in reworked form as the *Carceri d'Invenzioni* around 1760, Piranesi expressed his continued estrangement from the

\(^{161}\) Wilton-Ely, p. 83.

\(^{162}\) Scott, p. 54.
contemporary movements in architectural design, chiefly the Hellenizing influence of the French Academy. The Carceri was his source of self-analysis, his creative release. The re-published version met a more receptive generation, stirring their imaginations as well.\textsuperscript{163}

It is certain that the Carceri had deep personal meaning to Piranesi. For one, he returned to rework the plates even after the collection had such a cool reception. The amount of energy, and one can imagine passion, he put into the works is undeniable. These works were his therapy, his freed imagination. One could speculate, in a similar manner to Dickinson's poetry, although there is no evidence of panic disorder in Piranesi. If we examine the two states of Plate VII (Images VIII-13 & VIII-14), we gain insight into this imagination. The ideas interact in a dialogue that never reaches a conclusion. By the second edition, Piranesi had abandoned the idea of a finite discipline of design, regardless of the author, Vitruvius, or Palladio, Laugier or Lodoli. Piranesi recognized the richness of the world to be far too great to be constricted by "narrow doctrines or immutable canons of taste."\textsuperscript{164}

Three plates are of particular interest to the reworked series - Plates II (Image VIII-5) and V (Image VIII-10), added to the new series, and the closing plate reworked as Plate XVI (Images VIII-31 & VIII-32). The detail of these works is emphasized over the compositional clarity. In Plates II and V, Piranesi employs a series of vast arcades, reminiscent of the Curia Hostilia and the Tablinium of the Capitol. Reliefs, inscriptions and large ornamental fragments are added details to the scene. The general theme addresses the Romanita and its origins in the time of the kings and the early Republic. The individual inscriptions and reliefs speaks to the arguments made by Piranesi concerning the Lex Romana and its "civil virtue and equity in primitive times" and the

\textsuperscript{163} Wilton-Ely, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{164} Wilton-Ely, pp. 90-91.
subsequent failure of the system under a philhellene emperor.

Plate XI (Images VIII-21 & VIII-22) was reworked so that the background extends infinitely with a series of receding arches and ascending stairways. The central void is broken by the cantilevered platform and leaping bridge. The platform is framed by round watch towers with dark openings concealing the custodians within. Immense piers bear the weight of the gigantic arches that span through the shadows into the light and back into the shadows. Cages dangle from heavy but frayed ropes. The dark foreground brings the space within a few inches of the observer even though the activity, the occupation occurs beyond. This creates an effect or feeling of voyeurism, within the safety of the shadows you can watch the horrors of the prison, unnoticed. The ambiguity of the spaces and levels taunts the observer as if the logic could be understood and then the shadow or overlap steals the understanding.

The two additional works to the series, Plates II (Image VIII-5) and V (Image VIII-10), overlay the timeless gloom onto classical antiquity. In these plates the prison appears to be in a subterranean vault. In Plate II the prison is an extension of a forum and in Plate V the character of the surface condition is provided in holes in the maze of arches or as subtle extensions of the space. The addition of relief sculptures of lions and barbarian captives further reinforces the sense of hostility and terror. The ropes and chains contribute to the complexity of the spaces and the ideas of bondage.165

The increased tonal contrasts of the reworked plates was the most intense change, certainly heightening the drama. The horror of the prisons was now emphasized through the "structural immensity and spatial complexity." The plates were of more explicit details:

An extended system of staircases, galleries and roof structures recedes into infinity with that spirit of self-generation that De Quincey considered a

165 Scott, p. 55.
property of the highly developed imagination out of control. Also now inserted is a complete repertoire of penal apparatus in the form of chains, cables, gallows and sinisterly indistinct instruments of torture, many of them infused with a sense of decay through endless use. Animating this punitive hell is an increased number of figures, together with certain episodes of punishment being enacted. The key to this crucial transformation of the Carceri lies in the substitution of explicit imagery for the implicit ideas which had given the earlier state a more potent, if elusive, sense of fear.\textsuperscript{166}

The technique itself, interweaving lines and contradictory hatching, is confused by obscure areas of light and shadow. Strategically placed plumes of smoke mask crucial junctions that otherwise would have helped to establish clearer spatial references. Each of the elements, whether arch, pillar, vault or pulley rope, cable, bar, joist, is clear as an element, but once put in the context of overlapping planes and dimensions, the complexity becomes overwhelming. Add to this an uncertainty regarding the amorphous figures that occupy the spaces, "grouped together in imponderable rites or set apart in total seclusion, unrelated one to another in these labyrinthine halls," the spectator feels drawn into the terror as an actual participant. Each of the plates is no longer a representation, it is an architectural experience:

Through the most complex system of decoding where conventional perspective sets up expectations only to deny them by introducing fresh patterns, the spectator becomes inescapably involved in the creative process. Each plate embodies a set of endless possibilities. As never before, the Western system of pictorial space is questioned with all its implications concerning the nature of perception. The challenge is not to be met again until the revolution of Cubism.\textsuperscript{167}

Manfredo Tafuri considered Plate IX (Images VIII-17 & VIII-18) to be the key to understanding the entire series of the Carceri:

\textsuperscript{166} Wilton-Ely, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{167} Wilton-Ely, p. 84.
In it, the two poles of Piranesi's research - the evocation of a primordial structurality connected to the celebration of the *Lex romana*, of the idea of justice, and the disarticulation of the structure evoked - are shown, without any didactic or narrative intent, reduced to the encounter between two novel forms.\textsuperscript{168}

The experience of the observer is pointed out by Tafuri in his analysis of the first and second states of Plate IX. More than half of the composition is taken up by the large oval eye that rest somewhat precariously upon the stone base. Beyond the eye, is revealed the expected catwalks and shadowed structure. The arches attached to the base complete the enclosure, although with certain ambiguity. In the second state, with the heightened contrast, especially the diagonal shadow across the base, and the addition of the gallows to the left, one begins to re-evaluate the closeness of the experience. Feelings of terror begin to mount as, with closer examination, one realizes that the structures within the two ovals, masked by amorphous plumes of smoke and dark recesses, extend in both directions. One is observing not the interior from without, but one is indeed a participant, a member of the shadowy figures in the foreground. The observer is within. The ovals are but two in a series that are as endless as the imagination, as vast as the terror allows.

Of particular relevance to the works of Piranesi seems to be the discussion of depth and his experimentation with the vertical dimension as well as horizontality, the vastness demonstrated in works such as Plate IX. The extension of his spaces beyond understanding, through a series of layers and perspectives, is an effective example of the use of dimension as a characteristic of the sublime, as earlier discussed.

The effect of Piranesi's work is very much like the expanded concept of the labyrinth as presented by Denis Hollier, in his book *Against Architecture: The Writings of George Bataille*. According to Hollier, "the labyrinth is not an object, not a referent." It is a place of "distance and proximity," "separation and adhesion." It is beyond something

to explore. The labyrinth is beyond our smaller conception of labyrinth. Much like
Piranesi's spaces, one is neither inside nor outside, but the labyrinth is itself the anxiety of
"am I inside or outside?" Hollier:

The labyrinth is not a safe space, but the disoriented space of someone who
has lost his way, whether he has had the good fortune to transform the
steps he is taking into a dance, or more banally has let spatial intoxication
lead him astray: the labyrinth is drunken space. The drunkenness is not
without vertigo; drunken words have meaning no more than the drunken
man has balance. The axes of orientation (up/down, left/right, back/forth)
are astray. The inner ear returns to the level of immaturity associated with
infancy: upon these bodily passages, referred to as labyrinth, orientation
and disorientation depend. The key to the labyrinth, if there is one, is a
drunkenness with Galilean cosmic implications: "What did we do [asks
Nietzsche's madman] when we detached this world from its sun? Where is
it going now? Where are we going? Far from all the suns? Are we not just
endlessly falling? Backward, sideways, forward, in every direction? Is
there still an up and a down? Are we not being borne aimlessly into an
endless void?" Here vomiting.

This description matches the depersonalization and derealization described as a symptom
of panic disorder and in the discussion of Dickinson's works. The fear "is there still an up
and a down" reflects the loss of faith in reality, in truths relied on, in sanity.

Hollier described labyrinthine space to also be the questioning of the future,
the belief that the future is comprised mostly of the unknown. He quoted Neitzsche's The
Gay Science, "My thoughts," said the wanderer to his shadow, "should show me where I
am: not reveal to me where I am going. I love ignorance of the future and do not want to
succumb to impatience or to savoring beforehand what is promised."

Bataille reversed the traditional concept of the labyrinth as a panic to
escape. The myth of escape relies on access to the thread of knowledge, those without are
"condemned to lose their way." Bataille denounced the myth of ultimate solutions,
"whether a scientific one, praising the merits of the 'ancient geometric conception of the
future,' or an artistic-utopian one, dreaming of escape." He questioned the idea that the labyrinth indeed lead somewhere at all, for, by wishing the labyrinth to have a true exit, it becomes a prison more so than a labyrinth.

Unable to grasp it in understanding, unable to escape it, one never knows if one is indeed inside. Therefore Hollier described the labyrinth as "that insurmountably ambiguous, spatial structure where one never knows whether one is being expelled or enclosed, a space composed uniquely of openings, where one never knows whether they open to the inside or the outside, whether they are for leaving or entering.\textsuperscript{169}

Ruskin also had a conception of the labyrinth as a space of oppositions, disorientation of knowing:

Neither father's nor mother's maternal womb (neither human nor natural), the labyrinth is basically the space where oppositions disintegrate and grow complicated, where diacritical couples are unbalanced and perverted, etc., where the system upon which linguistic functions is based disintegrates, but somehow disintegrates by itself, having jammed its own works.\textsuperscript{170}

One could also consider the diagram of the breakdown of the signified and signifier as delineated by Weiskel. It is remarkable that Piranesi accomplishes both conditions in the \textit{Carceri}. With the etchings of the prisons, the observer begins to be overwhelmed by the "on and on" character of the space, by the ambiguity, and begins to feel disoriented, lost in the confusion. The observer experiences "a kind of death by plenitude" by the seeming endless dimension of the space. The complexity and sheer number and detail of objects result in "sensory overload." The repetition of arches, ropes, even shadows is a easily identified technique. Piranesi quite effectively created an experience where everything begins to run together, breaking down the signifier-signified

\textsuperscript{170} Ruskin, pp. 73-4.
relationship.

The constant disintegration of the conventions of perspective, the logic of structure, engages the observer to, almost unwillingly, reconstruct the spatial understanding of the composition, to "reconnect the fragments of the puzzle" that proves to be, in the end, unsolvable. At this point, the spectator becomes "obliged, rather than invited, to participate in the process of mental reconstruction proposed by Piranesi." In essence, the spectator is imprisoned in the image. The prison gains one more shadowy figure.\(^{171}\)

It would be only conjecture that Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* influenced Piranesi's second series of the *Carceri* as it was not published until 1757. It is safe to assume, however, that the topic was discussed among the Brits who were returning from tours of Rome and Venice, some of them carrying works of Piranesi. The compatibility of the two works can be seen in Burke's chapter headings: "Terror," "Obscurity," "Privation," "Vastness," "Infinity," "Magnitude in Building," "Magnificence," and "Feeling Pain." It is important to recognize that even if Burke's writings colored the second series, Piranesi's attitudes regarding the *Carceri* existed in the first states which antedate Burke's *Enquiry*.\(^{172}\)

Astonishment was defined by Burke as "The state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended with some degree of horror." He adds that in such a state, "the mind is so entirely filled with this object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it." The "irresistible force" is felt in the emerson the observer experiences in trying to escape the confusion of the prisons, escape the terror.\(^{173}\) Although it would be conjecture to say that Burke was influenced by Piranesi or vice-versa, what does seem certain is that the period was centered on the re-

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171 Tafuri, pp. 25-6.
172 Burke; from Scott, p. 61.
173 Monk, p. 92.
evaluation of these issues.

In 1788 John Soane began his relationship with the Bank of England, a position he would keep until 1833. 174 The work of the Bank appears to demonstrate the almost immediate impact of the Carceri on the architecture of the period. Soane began his career in the office of George Dance at the age of fifteen in London. It was at this time that Dance was consumed by the design of the Newgate Prison; undoubtedly, discussions of Piranesi's Carceri were in the office. In 1788, Soane journeyed to Rome to meet the master, and on his return to London, he carried with him four large engravings from the Views of Rome. 175 The interiors of the Bank Stock Office (Image VIII-33) and the Consols Office (Image VIII-34), for example, especially the drawings seem to be influenced by the ideas of space expressed by Piranesi. The endless series of low sprung arches and dark recesses, the infinity of the glimpses of the sky beyond, even the brittle ladder at the back of the Consols Office carry the spirit of the Carceri. Soane's re-evaluation of space and materials as he encountered the task of designing these buildings to fire proof specifications, and the consideration of the appropriate use of conservative aesthetics must have led him to recall his exposure to Piranesi and his spaces and commentary on aesthetics and history. Gandy's watercolor (Image VIII-35) is certainly reminiscent of the ruinous etchings of Piranesi.

Possibly a more conclusive expression of Piranesi's influence is the designs of Soane for his home at 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields. The watercolor by Gandy (Image VIII-36) captured the essence of "a 'prison' swarming with 'archaeological' shreds reduced to things." 176

176 Tafuri, p. 41, figure from Stroud.
Figure VIII-34
The English romantics were quite interested in Piranesi's works. De Quincy referred to the prisons as "Dreams" in his *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*:

Many years ago, when I was looking over Piranesi’s "Antiquities of Rome," Mr. Coleridge, who was standing by, described to me a set of plates by that artist, called his "Dreams," and which record the scenery of his visions during the delirium of a fever. Some of them . . . represented vast Gothic halls, on the floor of which stood all sorts of engines and machinery, wheels, cables, pulleys, levers, catapults, etc., etc., expressive of enormous power put forth, and resistance overcome. Creeping along the sides of the walls, you perceived a staircase; and upon it, groping his way upwards, was Piranesi himself; follow the stairs a little further, and you perceive it comes to a sudden, abrupt termination, without any balustrade, and allowing no step onwards to him who had reached the extremity, except into the depths below. Whatever is to become of poor Piranesi? - you suppose, at least, that his labours must in some way terminate here. But raise your eyes, and behold a second flight of stairs still higher, on which again Piranesi is perceived, by this time standing on the very brink of the abyss. Again elevate your eyes, and still more aerial flight of stairs is beheld; and again is poor Piranesi busy on his aspiring labours: and so on, until the unfinished stairs and Piranesi both are lost in the upper gloom of the hall. With the same power of endless growth and self-reproduction did my architecture proceed in my dreams.\(^{177}\)

Piranesi is sometimes referred to as "the first great artist of Romanticism, a symptomatic figure in a changing order." Piranesi's writings that span virtually his entire career reflect the Enlightenment considerations that are expressed in his works. One should also reflect on the Baroque style of composition, and to a lesser extent, the influence of Mannerism. It was also at this time that Neo-Classicism was developing as a movement of ideas and forms:

The Life and work of Piranesi are fundamentally bound up with the early and most important phase of this intellectual ferment which reflects the Enlightenment in its radical questioning of established concepts in all branches of knowledge. Like any period of transition, that of Neo-

\(^{177}\) Scott, p. 57.
Classicism was shot through with conflicts and paradoxes as new modes of expression emerged from traditional patterns. In this disturbing process the activities and attitudes of Piranesi help us to understand the intricate character of Neo-Classicism as the preliminary phase of the Romantic movement.\textsuperscript{178}

The principal consideration of Neo-Classicism was the re-evaluation of attitudes towards nature and the uses of the past. The discoveries of Herculaneum and Pompeii and the subsequent archaeological interests in antiquarian activity as well as the rediscovery of Greece and Egypt and the re-evaluation of the Gothic symbolize the struggle to better understand the past and its relevance to the day. In general, two results of this phenomenon of historicism particularly touched Piranesi:

As the perspective of the past grew wilder, the more strongly emerged an awareness of the unique character of the present, as well as of the need for an appropriately modern form of expression. This in turn was related to a growing self-consciousness in the artist and a conviction of the superiority of inventive genius over the limited authority of ancient wisdom such as was enshrined in the writings of Pliny or Vitruvius. In this respect the career of Piranesi can be shown as one of artistic self-discovery through the study of antiquity - a creative dialogue in which the roles of scholar and visionary were fruitfully engaged. The other product of historicism was a growing belief in the evolutionary nature of civilizations and the cultural destiny of nations, in which the artist plays a determining function.\textsuperscript{179}

The result of these considerations, "the artist's right to creative originality and the cultural destiny of Rome," for Piranesi was an interest in examining the past and critically applying it to his time.\textsuperscript{180}

\textsuperscript{178} Wilton-Ely, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{179} Wilton-Ely, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{180} Wilton-Ely, p. 8.
Treatment: Gaining a Better Definition of Nature

Piranesi had a special fascination with the engineering of Rome that expressed her magnificence in "the sewers, the filling of the valleys, the walls of Rome, the aqueducts, the paved roads." This interest and knowledge was partly from his experience with his uncle Matteo in Venice and partly from studying Roman engineering in Vitruvius. It had been the job of the Renaissance architects to measure the broken columns and entablatures, so as to inform the designs of the new facades. Piranesi approached antiquity differently. Like a scientist, he pursued a better understanding of the past: "I have drawn these remains . . . by means of sections and profiles, and have sometimes been able to show how they were built through my many years of tireless close scrutiny, digging and study."181 Tafuri suggests that Piranesi's archaeological interest in "what is hidden;" the sewers, caves, and substructures, is a metaphor for "the search for a place in which the exploration of the 'roots' of the monuments meets with the exploration of the depths of the subject."182

Tafuri developed these aspects of Piranesi, his "scientific study of archaeology" and his "absolute arbitrariness in their restitution" to establish him as "the conceptual heir" of the great critical line of modern architecture:

Piranesi, no longer founding language on the authority of history, brings to completion, coherently, the same principle of reason that guided him in his diggings into antiquity. Just as history is the reconstructive analysis of ancient findings, so language, precisely because it is finally freed from the authority of history . . . will impose itself as "an in-progress criticism of

182 Tafuri, p. 38.
language itself.\textsuperscript{183}

Tafuri asserted that Piranesi's work of the altar of the church of the Knights of Malta best demonstrates the "ultimate essence of his research:"

It can be safely stated that the sphere hermetically inserted into the silent exchange of geometric solids, emerging from the altar, is the terminal point, constantly fleeting and feared, of Piranesi's research.\textsuperscript{184}

In the ambiguity and specificity of his instruments of work - freely chosen, for that matter - Piranesi may appear as a critic of Enlightenment hypotheses; leaping over them with his secret aspiration to found new syntheses, he follows his own intuition to the end. It is not by chance that his criticism remains within the sphere of pure "possibility." Architecture is nothing more than a sign and an arbitrary construction, then; but this is intrinsic to Piranesi's discovery of the absolute "solitude" that engulfs the subject who recognizes the relativity of his own actions.\textsuperscript{185}

Prognosis: To Nightmare Angst

The works of Piranesi have a common theme, sometimes more overt than other times, of the power struggle of man and nature, the issue of gaining a better definition of nature. This is what is construed as the "natural sublime" by Kant. In addition, the natural sublime includes the provision, as established earlier by Burke, that the subject who is being overwhelmed by the strength of the nature be in a secure position, not actually in any real danger. As Kant puts it, what is experienced in the natural sublime is "not actual fear but only the attempt to feel fear by the aid of the imagination . . . this in the safety in which we know ourselves to be." To this cause, much of Piranesi's work is quite effective. One can feel the intensity of the terror of the prisons as an observer, yet one can experience the escalation of emotion through the ambiguity of observer's position.

\textsuperscript{183} Tafuri, pp. 38-9.
\textsuperscript{184} Tafuri, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{185} Tafuri, p. 54.
in the scene. The viewer is unavoidably feeling the struggle between man and nature, especially in the Grotteschi. In other words, the struggle exhibited in the Grotteschi collection addresses the ultimate state of man:

Nature at its grandest is not a sublime object but rather a spectacle of power that provokes our sense of power of sublimity in us. Thus the sense of superiority of man over the forces of nature depends upon the division between the phenomenal and intelligible subjects. It depends upon what Kant calls our "dignity" or "moral destination." 186

Aldous Huxley emphasized Piranesi's concern with states of the soul: "All the plates in the series are self evidently variations on a single symbol, whose reference is to things existing in the physical and metaphysical depths of human souls - to acedia and confusion, to nightmare angst, to incomprehension and a panic bewilderment." 187

The Carceri are especially capable of being interpreted in many different ways, at many different times:

Each generation can discover the expression of its own doubts and fears . . . the dark shadows of the Carceri have also been seen as prisons of the mind. Disoriented by the Kafkaesque forces that surround us, we can feel an immediate affinity to the faceless cyphers who wander, unchained but still captive, in the labyrinth of Piranesi's incomprehensible structures. To the physical misery of imprisonment is added the extra dimension of mental anxiety and doubt. 188

186 Guerlac, p. 10.
187 Aldous Huxley, "Prisons, with the Carceri etchings by G.B. Piranesi;" from Scott, p. 57.
188 Scott, p. 57.
O wells of the Indies, and clustered monuments, where the troubled eye is met by a wheeling mass of steps and ramps, chill cells, lamplit passages, beams hung with the spider's long threads, sinister profiles of jutting blocks; where granite roofs, worn into holes like a thin cloth, afford a view of the distant stars; where crumbling staircases plunge without reason through a chaos of walls, chambers, landings; o vast and gloomy crypts, your awesome vaults filled with religious terror; o caverns where the spirit dare not penetrate: before your depths, as before the furnace or the abyss, I pale - terrifying Babels from the dreams of Piranesi! Enter if you dare....

At those hours when the spirit, wide/ranging, seeks in the darkness to reach the foundation of all things, I have lost myself in these haunts of fear. Often I have contemplated them, saying: "O visions of granite, grottoes of nightmare, crypts, palaces, sounding sepulchres: you are less misted and obscure, less strange, less deep and desperate that destiny - that cavern peopled by our fears, where the soul, wandering in fearful labyrinths, hears afar, through the shadows, the muffled roar of the flood of Time pouring into the chasm of the unknown."¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ Victor Hugo; from Wilton-Ely, p. 126.
Program: Library Addition

History: Identifying the Threshold

In the Eighteenth century, Edmund Burke built all of his arguments of the sublime on the strength of the emotion of terror, or fear of pain and asserted that one would find in this terror delight. Immanuel Kant added that what is experienced in the natural sublime is "not actual fear but only the attempt to feel fear by the aid of the imagination . . . this in the safety in which we know ourselves to be." 190 Furthermore, Burke theorized that through clarity and understanding, the most striking causes can become dull. "Dark, confused, uncertain images" have a greater power of demanding attention and generating passions than those which are more "clear and determinate." In summary, the sublime came "to be associated both with the failure of clear thought and with matters beyond determinate perception."191

In the early twentieth century, Samuel Monk wrote that the sublime experience is "contra final" for the imagination, but "final" for "the whole province of the mind." Hence, for Monk, the sublime is what "pleases immediately by reason of its opposition to the interest of sense."192

The definition of the sublime, roughly sketched here, is one of the delight found in the terror of an object that is beyond the subject's understanding. The collision of the perception -- of the eye -- and the imagination -- of the mind is the resultant struggle which constructs the sublime experience.

190 Kant, p. 268.
191 Burke, p. 128.
192 Monk, p. 94; from Burke, II, 4.
Symptomology: Approaching the Threshold

My thesis is that one can build spaces that exist as thresholds between that which invokes the delight of the sublime as described by Burke and Weiskel and that which "when danger and pain press too nearly, . . . are simply terrible." The vehicle of this thesis is a library to house the collection of poetic works by Emily Dickinson and the accompanying reference material for Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. The architectural expression of this building and the garden will suggest an analogy of agoraphobia with panic disorder, an illness from which Dickinson suffered severely for most of her life.

The building is an investigation of approaching, occupying and possibly crossing the threshold that separates the delightful and the simply terrible. In the approach and passage through the library, one would be able to measure the escalation of the sense of panic. For this reason, the library will not strive to create a calm ambiance as one might anticipate to be the goal in the design of a library; but it will encourage the qualities of the terror of the sublime. Denis Hollier wrote that, for Bataille, the prison is the true origin of architecture rather than the house, temple, or tomb. Hollier quotes Foucault's assertions of an "architecture that would be operative in the transformation of individuals."¹⁹³ Hollier continues, "It is not just a simple container, but a place that shapes matter, that has a performance action on whatever inhabits it, that works on the occupant."¹⁹⁴

David Canter, a twentieth-century architectural psychology theorist, asserted that if all forms of sensation are experimentally controlled to the point of removal or constancy, the subject will experience a "reduction in their ability to concentrate or to attend to specific stimuli." These and other experiments indicate that there may be an

¹⁹⁴ Hollier, pp. i-ii.
"optimum level of stimulation for efficient performance." There seems to be a level of discomfort that creates not only a more interesting environment, but a more efficient environment for performance. The performance in this situation would be the attention to the Dickinson works and the consequent discussions and, more covertly in some cases an increased awareness of the experiences of panic disorder.

Treatment: Building the Threshold

The chosen site is the eastern slope of Paradise Pond, the collision of the academic grid and the expanse of the playing fields and open green spaces of the campus (Images IX-1 - IV-5). The library is defined by the assembly of suggested walls of enclosure of the garden within the landscape, such as this example of the romantic occupation of the ruins of the 12th century Fountains Abbey in North Yorkshire, England (Image IV-6). The occupation of the wooded bank by the assembly of buildings and the conception of nature become key issues in the thesis.

The library consists of architectural elements which are drawn from the rooms of importance in Dickinson's home in nearby Amherst (Image IX-7). Her bedroom was the most comforting to her pain and is best seen as four walls with very different intentions. Each of the walls has a unique quality to the passage of the sun, to the house and garden, and to one another. These qualities define each wall and inform its function in the garden. These walls are the impetus for a literal or suggested enclosure in the landscape (Image IX-8). The first element encountered at her home and on the site is the garden wall which suggests a separation of the house and the familiar from infinite expanse of the world unknown. The basement was a hiding place for Dickinson when she was

retreating from social gatherings and represents the most reclusive, womb-like
environment. The conservatory was her secure bridge to the nature that she so enjoyed,
yet so greatly feared outside. These rooms were connected by stairs which remind one of
the central element of stairs in Piranesi's prison etchings and other shadowy images of this
significant vertical bridging element (Frederick H. Evans, A Sea of Steps, 1903; Image IX-9 and Yukio Futagawa, 1961; Image IX-10).

The garden wall separates the site from the pedestrian traffic of the
academic setting and creates a visual as well as physical boundary to the site (Image IX-11). The wall suggests that the garden within is somehow different from the remainder of
the campus. The ambiguity of inside and outside, of watching and being watched, as
discussed in reference to Piranesi's Plate IX (Image VIII-18) is also implied in these two
works by Hopper, Nighthawks, 1942 and Office in a Small City, 1953 (Image IX-12 and
IX-13).

The windows in the wall are a response to the vast grid of windows of the
science building that is adjacent to the site (Image IX-14). One of the strongest
contributors to the escalation of panic is the fearful assumption that if a panic attack were
to occur, the sufferer would be unable to escape the critical eyes of on-lookers. The
repetition of windows in the science building and their proportions are mirrored in the
garden wall as if looking back and as if allowing one to look in. The wall of windows, as
do all of the elements of the garden and library have a special presence in the night,
recognizing the influence of the shadows of light and dark as they change through the day
and night (Image IX-15 and Hopper, Rooms for Tourists, 1945, Image IX-16). The
windows are fixed, but fixed in different degrees of openness allowing passage through the
wall over moveable styles. The intention is not to dictate how one enters the garden,
much as one cannot control how one enters a life of panic. It is at this line that the
threshold begins, that the anxiety subconsciously accumulates.
The basement correlates well to the crypt of the library where the collection is actually housed, and becomes the door of the garden sitting just inside the garden wall (Garden of Villa Giusai, Verona, Italy; Image IX-17). This element is the picture of Emily's east bedroom wall which contained the door into the hall. This was the fragile connection to the outside, much as was her poetry, the controlled lock of contact. Hopper's work, *Rooms by the Sea*, 1951, illustrates the strength of this threshold as separating the safe and the beyond (Image IX-18). The wall became a series dark monolithic tombs, half-buried in the slope of the hill, an image of the duality of the prison cell as the room of safety for it is the shelter one escapes to once one becomes aware of the escalation of the symptoms of panic (Image IX-19). The cells are finely crafted metallic cubes suspended in cylinders within the monolithic pour of the wall structure suggesting the ambiguity of the relationship to the earth and the sky, to time and space. The cubes are punctured with slats of light that reflects off of the concrete walls as they measure the movement of the day. The grotto is defined by these cells of stacks, constructed of an order of knowledge, each one taking on individual characteristics and memories.

The south wall in Emily's bedroom contained the windows that looked out onto the garden and the street beyond with the garden wall between. She would often sit here in the cloak of the shadows and satisfy her thirst for nature (Hopper, *Morning Sun*, 1952, Image IX-20). The element in the garden is the wall of the forest at the edge of the clearing. Imagining Emily losing her consciousness of self in the play of the light and the rustling of the wind, the wall loses the print of man and allows for the force of nature.

The north wall in the bedroom housed the hearth as a central element. The library has a free-standing element which is a station for a curator or librarian, a person for support or refuge (Image IX-21). The object is veiled so as to suggest a separation but an
available presence. It would not be obvious if the station was occupied, so the person in
the garden would be encouraged to rely on their own strengths. The form is intended to
recall the form of the fireplace as well as suggest the panopticon that would have a central
viewing station. The cage is an image taken again from Piranesi’s prisons.

The individual reading rooms or carrels each have a unique relationship to
the ground, to the sky, to the light (Image IX-22). The struggle for supremacy between
the buildings and nature is an expression of the struggle between man and nature as seen in
Piranesi’s etchings and other sublime or romantic examinations. The carrels are the
generation of the west wall of Emily’s bedroom which contained the windows from which
she would often gaze on the west garden and find inspiration for her poetry (Hopper, Sun
in an Empty Room, 1963, Image IX-23). The carrels each have a door that punctures a
monolithic wall which is the support for a large window which is focused on an island in
the pond. The large window is a response to the collective view and aspired hope of
freedom (Image IX-24). The carrels are cantilevered from this wall as individual units or
cells. These cells suggest the duality of being an individual within the greater collective
and the strength of the knowledge of the individual as the measure of the collective. The
carrels are simply furnished with a table and a chair and the light that filters in from
trellises that slice the incoming light into shards of light and shadow. The light from the
west faces is diffused and creates a milky relationship of ambiguity with the nature beyond
(Image IX-25).

The last piece in the progression through the threshold is the great reading
room (Image IX-26). The room functions as the gathering place in the garden and is
where readings of the poetry would occur. In spite of what may be an oversized space,
the gatherings would be quite small, maybe six people. The reading room has a special
relationship with Paradise Pond as it actually engages the water as if launched, analogous
to a healed relationship with the unbound nature beyond, the bridge to nature that
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Dickinson found in the conservatory. The room is designed as a structural bow truss on its side. The incorporation of steel in the structure is reminiscent of the alien use of steel in Dickinson's house in the construction of the conservatory. The tension of the cables are analogous to the psychological tension of confronting the expanse of the fields beyond and the possibility of emergence from the protected environment of the garden. The room is in an ambiguous position of partially engaged in the ground and partially suspended over the pond. The image of the boat is intended to suggest the launching from the garden as well as reflect the other buildings on the pond which are provided for the college rowing crew. The construction of the building is important in that the wooden lapped wall is a fragile dependence on the individual wooden members which collectively provide the necessary strength. The west wall is the cable system that defines and holds the arc of the wooden wall. Translucent membranes are hung from the cables and their movements in the wind create soft shadows on the curved wall. It is through this ethereal wall that the user of the facility first glimpse, as an active collage, the fields beyond, first understands the possibility of passage through the threshold.

Prognosis: The Metaphor of the Threshold

The metaphor of education contributed to the grounding of the project on a university campus. The thesis is concerned with the issue of extremes; delight and pain, infinity and the graspable, vastness and minuteness, light and dark, freedom and incarceration, life and death. Education is a metaphor for extremes; detail and the ideal, inclusion and exclusion, knowledge and naivety. The exploration of these limits, the occupation of these extremes, the occupation of the threshold between, is the spirit of this thesis.
Discussion

The presentation was of a grid of 4' x 4' images of a crowd overlaid by the computer drawings which were in turn overlaid by mylar sheets collaged with images that determined the visual and psychological texture of the drawings (Image X-1).

An initial study model (Image X-2 - X-3), three site models of various scales (Image X-4 X-8) and detail models were included.

The intent of the intimidation of the grid of people filling the wall was to make the connection with the person suffering from panic disorder.

The garden was described as a theater with the people, either actual or perceived, in the adjacent science building as the audience.

A juror complemented the sensitivity of the design and presentation of the drawings and asked if I had considered psychology as a profession.

The suggested inadequacies of the thesis design were chiefly centered around the functionality of the library as a working library. Concerns were expressed that one could not carry a book from the stacks to the carrels in the rain without getting wet, which led to the question "Is this a functioning library or solely an analogy of panic disorder?" It was suggested that the thesis did not have to be one or the other, but could satisfy both.
The decision to make the library an open garden rather than an enclosed building was questioned. The decision was driven by the need for the user to be in direct contact with nature in a safe surround, much as Dickinson yearned for. The decision to make the library a garden was a desire to satisfy that felt need. The openness also allowed for the analogy of the fear of being caught in an open space or the fear of being seen by people looking in if a panic attack should occur.

The design of the great reading room was identified as unresolved. The structural engineering was seen as naive and the functioning of the room was criticized as the most problematic of the elements. The attempts to keep the design of this piece as elemental as possible do not justify these concerns. The room should, if I assert that this library can function, provide for protection from the environment and have structural integrity. The scale of the wall and its relationship to the rest of the collection and to the surrounding site, which attempts to address the issue of scale in the sublime, are also legitimate concerns.

The director commented that the evolution of this thesis and the intertwining of the architectural and psychological disciplines had been an admirable example of the Qualifying Graduate thesis.


