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Sublim

(_estetikk) Fra latin “sublimis”: “høyt hevet”. Dødens og ekstasens estetikk. Knyttet til fenomener som overgår det mennesket kan styre og kontrollere, som er utenfor vår viljes kontroll. Ved sublime opplevelser blir vi gjennomskaket av følelser, f.eks. ærefrykt. Opplevelsen oppstår oftest fra noe vilt og utemmet, og skaper skremmende intensitet, “intensitet og voldsomhet” (Longinos 1966 s. 97).

Som estetisk stilretning er den sublime opplevelsen først og fremst beskrevet systematisk og tradisjonsdannende av grekeren Longinos, britten Edmund Burke og tyskeren Immanuel Kant. Longinos’ verk *Om det sublime (Peri hypsous)* består i hovedsak av råd til talere og forfattere om hvordan de skal kunne gripe sine tilhørere, skake og imponere dem, støte dem ut av dagligdagse tankebaner ved billedlig talt å la lynet slå ned i hodet på dem. Senere ble det sublime ofte knyttet til det religiøse, men på 1700-tallet ble fenomenet løskoblet fra teologien.

Ordet “hypsous” rommet på gresk en lang rekke ideer knyttet til “retoriske, etiske, psykologiske, og man kan fortsette med: teologiske og metafysiske forestillinger.” (Reinhard Brandt i Longinos 1966 s. 13) Ordet har mange nivåer, og Longinos presiserer ikke tydelig hva han legger i det, men innsirkler et fenomen. For Longinos er det sublime blant annet en stilart som troner øverst i hierarkiet av stilarter (Reinhard Brandt i Longinos 1966 s. 16). Han vurderer Moses, Homer og Cicero etter de samme stilkriteriene (Reinhard Brandt; forord i Longinos 1966 s. 21).

“I kosmos beundrer han [Longinos] ikke det lovmessige, ikke delenes harmoni, men naturens storhet og voldsomhet. [...] Naturen vekker vår undring når den overstiger alt vanlig, menneskenært, alt formålstjenlig og beregnbart, og viser sin makt i det uventede og underlige. Tilsvarende overskrider den menneskelige natur – som oppdager sin bestemmelse gjennom å betrakte naturen – i *hypsous* alle menneskelige begrensninger” (Reinhard Brandt i Longinos 1966 s. 16-17).

Longinos mener at det sublime som impuls spontant og ufrivillig befrir oss og får oss til å forstå noe fundamentalt om det å være menneske (Reinhard Brandt i Longinos 1966 s. 20). Det sublime samsvarer med noe evig i menneskenaturen.

Longinos oppfattet menneskets natur som historieløs, i likhet med kosmos (Reinhard Brandt i Longinos 1966 s. 22).

Det sublime oppfattes som en krise i bevisstheten, et sjokk som inntreffer når noe overskrider våre sansers klare begrensninger. Det sublime er ifølge Longinos som et blendende lys (Reinhard Brandt i Longinos 1966 s. 18). Vulkaner og lysende lyn-forgreninger, stormer med svarte, forrevne skyer, tigre i spranget mot sitt bytte, og enorme snødekte tinder ragende opp i himmelen, er fenomener der det oppstår et crescendo av emosjon som ender i en erfaring som ikke kan innsnevres til å være enten lyst- eller smertefull. Vi frykter og beundrer samtidig. Vi befinner oss på en måte ved skjønnetens smertegrense. Det vi opplever, er så voldsomt at vi gyser; det skjer et brudd med den normale, noenlunde ordnede mottagelsen av inntrykk, og mennesket blir stilt overfor “boundless power and mystery” (Ramazani 1990 s. 119) og “violent transformations, abrupt confluences of the human and the divine, dizzying rotations between eternally recurring and infinitely expanding antinomies” (Ramazani 1990 s. 128). Det sublime setter “tillvarons stora motkrafter och antitetiska zoner i beröring med varandra” (Engdahl 1986 s. 188).

“The very gratification of instinctual aims, in its quality of excess, alerts the ego to a danger. There is simultaneously a wish to be inundated or engulfed by pleasurable stimuli and a fear of being incorporated, overwhelmed, annihilated. [...] Fascination and dread coincide. Both Burke and Kant emphasize the factor of involuntary motion in the sublime, and this suggests an appeal to the instincts, a gratification too intense to be continued without anxiety.” (Weiskel 1986 s. 104)

Det sublime er en gjennombeving, en impuls som “slår” mennesket og skaper en momentan krise, oppløftelse og frigjøring. Det er på parti med alt rystende, plutselig og ekstatisk. Det sublime kan kalles en opplevelse av det overveldende og ufattelige. Kontrasten til det sublime er primært det skjønne (det harmoniske, kultiverte, idylliske). Det sublime kan ikke forstås begrepslig (Reinhard Brandt i Longinos 1966 s. 20), eller er “et mot- og sprengningsbegrep av det vakre, for det rå og skrekkelige, det urgamle og umåtelige” (Zima 1995 s. 162). Det er et møte med “the infinite that is at once empowering and terrifying” (Ramazani 1990 s. 117). “Among the things the sublime enables us to discount is our life.” (Weiskel 1986 s. 95)

Forenklet og stikkordsmessig kan forskjellene mellom det skjønne og det sublime karakteriseres slik:

Det skjønne: Klart, tydelig Harmonisk Fredelig Glede Klare former	Det sublime: Sterkt, intenst Rystende, overveldende Kaotisk Gys, sjokk Umåtelig, formløst
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Det kjente	Det ukjente
Det jevne	Det ekstreme
Innen faste grenser	Grensesprengende
Naturtro etterligning	Uttrykksfullt
Lett å høre og se	På grensen av det sansbare
Det tamme	Det ville og ukontrollerte
Bondegårder, sivilisasjon	Fjellmassiver, lyn, storm, løver
Vise fram livets gleder	Ekstatisk, men nær døden

Det sublime er alltid rystende. For et moderne menneske kan opplevelsen illustreres med berg- og dalbanen: I de voldsomme drivene nedover skriker folk både av skrekk og av fryd; de har tårer i øynene, og kroppen er ute av kontroll. Slik har det sublime med gys å gjøre – noe flyktig og sterkt som er både ekstatisk og skrekkelig, men først og fremst intenst. Mens det skjønne er fredelig, er det sublime sjokkartet, med en desperat intensitet.

Det sublime er ikke noe retorisk argumenterende eller overbevisende, men noe skakende som med uimotståelig og grensesprengende kraft leder til ekstase (Longinos 1966 s. 29-31).

Longinos eksemplifiserer med retoriske figurer som knyttes til det sublime: “the rhetorical question emphasizing the momentary quality of emotion arising from the occasion, asyndeton hindering the reading while pressing it onward, anaphora combining with asyndeton to force meaning to leap ahead, and so forth. As Longinus says of Demosthenes, “His order becomes disorderly, his disorder in turn acquires a certain order.” ” (Ramazani 1990 s. 120)

En god taler er ifølge Longinos i stand til å presse sammen det han snakker om, slik at det uttrykkes med en sammentrengt, oppflammende og medrivende kraft (1966 s. 57). Grekeren Demosthenes klarte på denne måten å skake sin tilhørere, når han brukte en voldsom og lidenskapelig stil. En god taler klarer å skjule at han overdriver (Longinos 1966 s. 103). Til slutt kan tilhøreren bli som en viljeløs beundrer av talerens kraft og patos (Longinos 1966 s. 65). Tilhørerne blir revet med som av en storm, ute av stand til å kalkulere (Longinos 1966 s. 89). Men det lidenskapelige i talen må virke naturlig og uanstrengt, som om den oppstod spontant i øyeblikket, selv om det er nøye planlagt (Longinos 1966 s. 73).

Longinos siterer fra et dikt av Sapfo, der han roser at jeg’et i diktet både fryser og gløder samtidig, og at mange følelser hopper seg opp (Longinos 1966 s. 51). Longinos beundrer diktere som “lar lidenskapen bryte fram som en foss, som likesom med nødvendighet fører med seg en flom av metaforer.” (1966 s. 89)

“I statuer søker man likhet med mennesker, mens man som sagt i taler søker det overmenneskelige.” (Longinos 1966 s. 101)

“Kunsten er nemlig fullkommen når den framstår som natur, mens naturen når sitt mål når den umerkelig rommer kunst i seg.” (Longinos 1966 s. 77)

Det sublime kan kalles en “redselsfull skjønnhet” (“schauriger Schönheit”; Reichel 1991 s. 203). Det overvelder, tar pusten fra en, ryster. Det sublime oppstår ifølge han når uendeligheten bryter inn i menneskets bevissthet (Meyer 1999 s. 204). For Kant rommer ikke det sublime noe begrepelig, og har heller ikke noen menneskelig formålstjenlighet (Bohrer 1993 s. 118). Kant oppfatter den sublime hendelse som fryktelig uten at vi frykter den. Naturen “appears as the medium through which the mind discovers and presents itself, in eddies of separation and reunion.” (Weiskel 1986 s. 6)

“Many of Longinus’s examples of the sublime describe combat or bloodshed, and Kant argues not only that we venerate the soldier because “his mind is unsubdued by danger” but also that “war itself ... has something sublime in it.” ” (Ramazani 1990 s. 129) For Kant kunne trusselen om krig og selve krigen skape en sublim effekt: “Even war has something sublime about it if it is carried on in an orderly way and with respect for the sanctity of the citizens’ rights. At the same time it makes the way of thinking of a people that carries it on in this way all the more sublime in proportion to the number of dangers in the face of which it courageously stood its ground.” (Kant sitert fra <https://conservancy.umn.edu/>; lesedato 04.09.15)

“Hildebrand Jacob in *The Works* (1837) can list the by-then familiar images of the sublime: All the vast, and wonderful scenes, either of delight, or horror, which the universe affords have this effect upon the imagination, such as unbounded prospects, particularly that of the ocean, in its different situations of agitation or repose; the rising or setting sun; the solemnity of moon light; all the phaenomena in the heavens, and objects of astronomy. We are moved in the same manner by the view of dreadful precipices; great ruins; subterraneous caverns, and the operations of nature in those dark recesses... the sight of numerous armies, and assemblies of people ... the whispering of winds; the fall of waters in cataracts, or heavy showers; the roaring of the sea; the noise of tempests amongst lofty trees; thunder; the clash of arms, and voice of war. Few can read in Milton the ... description, which he has given, of the opening of the infernal gates, without some emotion...” (sitert fra http://www.lukewhite.me.uk/sub_history.htm; lesedato 02.09.15).

Italieneren Francesco Petrarca besteg i år 1336 det nesten to tusen meter høye fjellet Mont Ventoux i Sør-Frankrike, og skrev senere om den vakre utsikten over Provence. Fjellturen tjente ingen praktisk hensikt. “[T]he first ‘modern’ man to climb a mountain for its own sake was the poet Petrarch in the late fourteenth century.” (Porteous 1996 s. 53)

“Transcendental experience is achieved when one attains a level of felicity or exaltation such that one is ‘taken out of oneself’; the self is transcended, and a higher state of consciousness is achieved. This ecstasy (literally ‘standing outside

oneself”) may be achieved in many ways, including the geographical, notably in the experience of exotic landscapes, close encounters with nature, hard travelling, and situations involving remoteness, isolation and desolation. When this rapture involves a sudden opening-up to metaphysical forces in a wilderness setting, it has been termed a ‘theophany’ (Graber 1976).” (Porteous 1996 s. 145) “The transcendental impulse of the sublime is ultimately apocalyptic and self-destructive – a rage not only against formal order but also against the self and language.” (Ramazani 1990 s. 125)

Først virker det sublime ydmykende og tilintetgjørende, men deretter løfter det mennesket opp (Reinhard Brandt i Longinos 1966 s. 25). Menneskets ånd kan overskride alle grenser, som om kosmos var for lite og som om mennesket var en gud (Longinos 1966 s. 99). Sjelen fylles ifølge Longinos av stolthet som om den selv frambrakte det sublime, som om den sublime opplevelsen er et slags ekko av en stor sjel (1966 s. 39 og 43).

Filosofene Edmund Burke og Immanuel Kant knytter på 1700-tallet det sublime til de tidlige alpevandringenes mål: emosjonelle rystelser, møte med det grenseløse og skakende, erfaringer på grensen av det menneskets sanser tåler (“fysiske grenseerfaringer”; Hitzler og Pfadenhauer 2001 s. 172). Burke har også en tydelig kobling til skrekklitteratur og den svarte romantikken: I slik kunst er emosjoner hovedsaken, og mørket kan romme alle slags ekstreme skapninger og hendelser. Den tyske filosofien forbinder det skjønne med det endelige og det sublime med det uendelige. En tysk kulturforsker hevder at det sublime under romantikken oppstår ved en smertelig konfrontasjon mellom det egne selvet og selvets fantasieringer (Lange 1992 s. 71). “[D]et sublime i sin søken etter det ekstreme utfordrer våre begreper om begrensninger som finnes innen moralske forbud og i representasjonsprosessen” (Duperray 2000 s. 109). Max Duperray sikter her til måten sansningene representerer virkeligheten for oss på.

“In the Kantian moment of the sublime the surface is broken, the discourse breaks down, and the faculties are checked or suspended: a discontinuity opens between what can be grasped and what is felt to be meaningful.” (Weiskel 1986 s. 21) “The sublime in Kant also seems, as Schiller phrases it, “two contradictory perceptions in a single feeling”, f.eks. “delightful horror”, som ifølge Edmund Burke er “the most genuine effect, and truest test of the sublime” (gjengitt fra Ramazani 1990 s. 108).

“Self-consciousness, together with the powers of reasoning, judgement and so on, is swallowed up in the overwhelming impression of sublime amazement. The mind’s powers are entirely concentrated upon the object, leaving virtually no resources of self-definition, which are ‘suspended’ in the encounter with a degree of terror essential to the experience of the ‘sublime’. The result is at once a sense of boundlessness and of powerful unity” (Welburn 1986 s. 131). Den tyske sosiologen Georg Simmel skrev i essayet “Alpene” (1923) at høyfjellet har en “transcendent

virkning på den menneskelige sjel” (gjengitt etter Giesen 2009). Det sublime er ifølge Harold Bloom “the quest for a transcendence of limits” (1995a s. 524).

I Kants *Kritikk av dømmekraften* (1790) viser den tyske opplysningsfilosofen hvordan det er en grunnleggende uoverensstemmelse mellom menneskets verden og naturen. På tvers av dette skillet kan det bare finnes symboler og analogier, aldri sammenfall. I prinsippet er det splittelse og konfrontasjon. Men dette reduserer ikke mennesket, mener Kant, for uendeligheten og totaliteten ved den ytre verden finnes også i mennesket. Alt i naturen er framtreddelser som mennesket bare kan oppfange ved å mobilisere sine egne krefter. Selv de mest voldsomme naturkrefter, så voldsomme at våre sanser ikke makter å gi dem proporsjoner, vekker ideer i oss. Alle har i seg et rom av frihet og imaginasjon uhemmet av naturens raseri og følelsenes kaos. Havets eller verdensrommets uendelighet kan ikke true menneskets autonomi som åndsvesen, men bare sette sansene ut av spill, for disse har kroppens begrensninger. Mens våre sanser bare kan oppfatte biter av den faktiske uendeligheten, kan derimot bevisstheten stille opp ideer som rommer den, balanserer den. Det er disse ideene som ryster oss. Det sublime er dermed for Kant en mulighet som finnes i menneskets sjellege utrustning. Mennesket har åndelige krefter i seg som oppveier naturens velde, hvor stor denne enn måtte være. Vi oppfanger det formløse og rystes innenfra når havet i storm får sansene til å svikte, men menneskets indre styrke gjør det umåtelige til sitt eget.

“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 a transcendent order.” (Weiskel 1986 s. 23) “The mind which recognizes its own sublimity will not prostrate itself timorously before the Godhead; it will identify with that Godhead.” (Weiskel 1986 s. 77)

Kant skriver om det “ateleologiske” ved det sublime: “The *Sublime* is what pleases immediately through its opposition to the interest of sense. [...] If then we call the sight of the starry heaven *sublime*, we must not place at the basis of our judgement concepts of worlds inhabited by rational beings, and regard the bright points, with which we see the space above us filled, as their suns moving in circles purposively fixed with reference to them; but we must regard it, just as we see it, as a distant, all-embracing vault. Only under such a representation can we range that sublimity which a pure aesthetical judgement ascribes to this object. And in the same way, if we are to call the sight of the ocean sublime, we must not *think* of it as we [ordinarily] do, endowed as we are with all kinds of knowledge (not contained, however, in the immediate intuition). For example, we sometimes think of the ocean as a vast kingdom of aquatic creatures; or as the great source of those vapours that fill the air with clouds for the benefit of the land; or again as an element which, though dividing continents from each other, yet promotes the greatest communication between them: but these furnish merely teleological judgements. To call the ocean sublime we must regard it as poets do, merely by what strikes the eye; if it is at rest, as a clear mirror of water only bounded by the

heaven; if it is restless, as an abyss threatening to overwhelm everything.” (fra §29 i *Kritikk av dømmekraften* sitert fra <http://oll.libertyfund.org/>; lesedato 16.01.14).

“The sublime refers to our responses to everything that is too overwhelming to comprehend, for example, forces of nature such as volcano eruptions or man-made objects like pyramids. According to Immanuel Kant, the observation of such overwhelming matter leads first to a feeling of insignificance and speechlessness, followed by the experience of a feeling of rising above the overwhelming matter. [...] it is a discontinuation of the narrative of our life course. There is something that breaks through all normal human boundaries. The common forms are broken through. [...] he or she would only experience real fear of dying, which does not qualify as sublime because it is not followed by relief. The sublime therefore consists of two aspects: a disturbance and the overcoming of that disturbance. We feel powerless or small because of something that is stronger or larger than us. But we also experience a feeling of pleasure which is sublime when it results in happiness or understanding. Sometimes this pleasurable feeling produces an abstract experience of ‘the otherness’. Kant discusses the sublime in his third *Critique (Critique of Judgement)*. According to him it comes in two ways: as mathematical (a form of immeasurability) and as dynamical (a form of powerfulness). The mathematical sublime is an experience of overwhelming vastness; it is caused by objects that appear infinitely large. The dynamical sublime is an experience of overwhelming power brought about by objects that seem to have absolute power over us.” (Rob Leurs i <http://www.the-philosopher.co.uk/sublime.htm>; lesedato 09.06.16)

“Kant discusses the mathematical sublime more extensively than the dynamical sublime. He illustrates the mathematical sublime with the example of a pyramid: it takes time for your eye to go from the base to the top (if you are near the object). During that time some parts of your observation will disappear from your imagination. And as you still have to observe later parts you can never fully comprehend the pyramid. The imagination has to completely perceive an object that is too large to observe as a whole. The normal functioning of bringing order and consistency to the sensory perception fails: a pyramid crosses the limits of what the imagination can perceive in one go. We cannot get an overview of the pyramid. This brings about a feeling of displeasure; [...] The feeling of displeasure is succeeded by pleasure: although we cannot perceive a pyramid as a whole, we are still able to think it as a whole. We can overcome this flaw in sensory perception as theoretical Reason can think the absolute totality. We are above the sensory world due to theoretical Reason. In short, the mathematical sublime is about Reason, which is in contrast to the dynamical sublime.” (Rob Leurs i <http://www.the-philosopher.co.uk/sublime.htm>; lesedato 09.06.16)

“Some examples of the dynamical sublime are overhanging rocks, volcanos and thunderclouds. We experience these objects as frightening. This time imagination is not confronted with theoretical but practical Reason. This is the moral aspect of

Reason. A feeling of displeasure arises because we perceive the frightening phenomenon as something that can destroy us. But then pleasure occurs: although a volcano can physically destroy us it can never endanger our humanity: we are rational beings and therefore, in moral respects, we are free. Fear caused by, for instance, volcanos makes us realize that we are more than nature; nature can bring about fear but because we are morally gifted we are superior to nature. [...] Where the mathematical sublime is about reason, the dynamical sublime concerns respect for the moral law. (The moral law is our knowledge of the difference between good and evil and our inner conviction that we must do what's good. It is located in practical reason.) The mathematical sublime occurs when an object is too large to be perceived as a whole, while the dynamical sublime is caused by frightening phenomena. In both instances displeasure is succeeded by pleasure: the mathematical sublime indicates that we can make use of theoretical Reason and the dynamical sublime reveals a respect for the moral law within us. In both cases we are superior Reason-able creatures: subject to Reason and to moral law.” (Rob Leurs i <http://www.the-philosopher.co.uk/sublime.htm>; lesedato 09.06.16)

Kant hevder at det sublime ikke forholder seg direkte til den fysiske omverden. Det er et symbol for det opphøyde ved menneskets fornuft. Menneskets rasjonelle evne er sublim. “[T]he sublime transforms the painful spectacle of destruction and death into a joyful assertion of human freedom and transcendence.” (Ramazani 1990 s. 107).

Den skotske dikteren James Macphersons publiserte i 1760 verket *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland and Translated from the Gaelic and Erse Language*. Ossian var en skald og kriger som var kjent fra irske og skotske (keltiske) sagn og ballader. “Namnet Ossian betecknar hos [den svenske dikteren Thomas] Thorild ett poetiskt tillstånd, i vilket skrankorna mellan jaget och naturen har försvunnit. [...] Ossian ersätter till och med sfärernas musik, uttrycket for Alltets eviga harmoni, samtidigt som han är inbegreppet av vällustig fasa. Han är med andra ord *det sublima*. [...] diktjaget omges av naturens tumult och kraftspel.” (Engdahl 1986 s. 109) Dikterne var oppmerksomme på “the very dualisms – of eye and object, spirit and sense – that the sublime presupposed and reinforced.” (Weiskel 1986 s. 6)

Det sublime kan oppfattes som “a staged confrontation with death” (Ramazani 1990 s. 110). “[T]he destructive urge, or death drive, [is] at work in the poetics of the sublime.” (Ramazani 1990 s. 121) Den irske dikteren William Butler Yeats beskrev det sublime som “Gaiety transfiguring all that dread” (sitert fra Ramazani 1990 s. 110).

Den tyske dikteren Friedrich Schiller var påvirket av Kant, bl.a. i Schillers “Om det sublime” (1801). Men Schiller oppfatter det sublime mer som en fortsettelse av det skjønne enn det Kant gjør. Schiller mener det er en kvantitativ ulikhet mellom det

skjønne og det sublime, mens Kant mener at det er en kvalitativ, grunnleggende forskjell. For Kant er det sublime hinsides enhver anskuelsesform.

Den svenske 1700-tallsdikteren Bengt Lidners lange dikt *Yttersta domen* (1788) sin “skræcksublima skildring av apokalypsen har formen av en vision, og dette minskar ytterligere muligheten att göra en sträng åtskillnad mellan de bilder som rullas upp i själva synen och de som frambringas genom figuration. Det som skalden ser är retoriska figurer: en svärm av metaforer, svällande liknelser, personifikationer och allegoriska attribut. Världen går under i troper.

Nu Ödets kädja bräcks, nu Tidens grundval gungar,
Och Dödens Ängel ner på domsens åska ljungar.
Nu ramlar hoppets thron. Förtviflan rusar fram,
Och ljusets vida rymd, är natt, och blod, och dam.” (Engdahl 1986 s. 118-119)

I Sverige på begynnelsen av 1800-tallet brukte den romantiske dikteren Carl Jonas Love Almqvist en annen betegnelse enn det sublime: “Det som Almqvist kallar *det dunkelsköna* är en excess, en kraftens rikedom som överbjuder de moraliska normerna.” (Engdahl 1986 s. 187) Almqvist “hjälper oss att förstå vad det sublima egentligen säger: att harmonin mellan Subjektet och Alltet inte kan inrättas på de mänskliga behovens nivå, inte i förståndets och gemenskapens termer, utan bara genom jagets paradoxala kärlek till något ofantligt eller vederstyggligt.” (Engdahl 1986 s. 188)

Ikke all teori om det sublime er løskoblet fra teologi. En av de første estetikerne som skrev om det sublime etter Longinos i antikken var briten John Dennis. I verket *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* (1704) kobler han det sublime til det guddommelige: “the Sun mention’d in ordinary Conversation, gives the Idea of a round flat shining Body, of about Two Foot Diameter. But the Sun occurring to us in Meditation, gives the Idea of a vast and glorious Body, and the top of all the visible Creation, and the brightest material Image of the Divinity.” (sitert fra Leighton 1984 s. 15) “Tanken om det sublime var fra begynnelsen av tilknyttet en religiøs kontekst, men i romantikken ble det sublime sekularisert og knyttet til den romantiske subjektforestillingen.” (Hognestad 1999 s. 18)

“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.” (Weiskel 1986 s. 14)

Det sublime er “an aesthetic of the limitless, the terrible, the grandiose” (Leighton 1984 s. 11). Denne opplevelsen kan vanskelig rommes i språk: “The principle of defeat, of insufficiency and unattainability, makes the art of the sublime one in which verbal grasp always falls short of imaginative reach.” (Leighton 1984 s. 22) Det har også blitt hevdet at den sublime opplevelsen innebærer et erkjennelsestap (Bohrer 1993 s. 224).

Ifølge en fransk kunstteoretiker er det sublime “neither style nor theme; it is psychological effect. Furthermore, it is an effect which draws heavily on the language of religious mysticism. The sublime is a mysterious and violent force, irreducible to anything in the work, which strikes and uplifts the involuntary reader without warning.” (Boileau referert fra Leighton 1984 s. 10)

“At the end of the 18th century, the fear of darkness brought about a great fascination for everything concerning the dark side of life, for a fantastic world, filled with dark stone walls, hiding places and dungeons. A spatial phenomenology of darkness came to life.” (Nele Bemong i <http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/uncanny/nelebemong.htm>; lesedato 23.11.15)

Den britiske filosofen Edmund Burke ga i 1757 ut verket *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Denne estetiske avhandlingen sammenligner de to estetikene som nevnes i tittelen, og beskrivelsene av det sublime fungerte som en “teori” for den gryende britiske skrekklitteraturen. Burke beskriver opplevelser som det å se på en vakker kvinnes kropp, å gå i en mørk skog, å oppleve en storm osv. Både det skjønne/vakre og det sublime overskrider fornuftens begrensninger, men det sublime er voldsomst og mest intenst. En lang rekke fenomener kan framkalle det sublime gys.

Burke beskriver det sublime som et område unndratt alle former for klarhet. Han bryter med klassisismens idealer ved å lede oppmerksomheten mot hvordan uklarheter i visse tilfeller kan vekke våre følelser sterkere til liv enn en entydig avbalansert referanse til en kjent virkelighet. Natten, mørket og alt dunkelt kan vekke en skjelvende tiltrekning, nettopp ved at det virker skremmende. Mørket og dets særegne ugjennomtrengelighet rommer bestyrtelsen, skrekken, gjennomrystelsen. Det er noe som ligger på lur i det, noe vi ikke aldri helt kan forutse. I slik uhygge ligger både skrekk og ekstase latent, og disse følelsene er og forblir uimotståelige for oss når de opptrer sammen. Burke fokuserer på menneskets mentale behov for eksess. Han mener at mennesket har evner i seg som gjør det mulig for det umediert å ta det evige og det uendelige opp i seg, og dermed lamme fornuften i en sublim opplevelse. Burke undersøker område etter område av mulige sjelelige rystelser. Han fokuserer på sansenes svikt og følelsenes ekstreme muligheter, på uvisshet som skaper ubalanse og kaos i menneskesinnet. Følelsene betyr så avgjort mer for mennesket enn fornuften, som uansett aldri kan gjennomlyse menneskets subjektive virkelighet.

“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. 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.” (Burke 1990 s. 36)

“I have already observed, 1 that night increases our terror, more perhaps than anything else; it is our nature, when we do not know 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 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.” (Burke 1990 s. 76-77)

Trekk ved det skjønne oppsummerer Burke slik: “On the whole, the qualities of beauty, as they are merely sensible qualities, are the following: First, to be comparatively small. Secondly, to be smooth. Thirdly, to have a variety in the direction of the parts; but, fourthly, to have those parts not angular, but melted as it were into each other. Fifthly, to be of a delicate frame, without any remarkable appearance of strength. Sixthly, to have its colours clear and bright, but not very strong and glaring. Seventhly, or if it should have any glaring colour, to have it diversified with others. These are, I believe, the properties on which beauty depends; properties that operate by nature, and are less liable to be altered by caprice, or confounded by a diversity of tastes, than any others.” (Burke 1990 s. 107)

Del 3 av Burkes bok avsluttes med en oppsummerende sammenligning av det skjønne og det sublime: “On closing this general view of beauty, it naturally occurs, that we should compare it with the sublime; and in this comparison there appears a remarkable contrast. For sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small: beauty should be smooth and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly; the great in many cases loves the right line, and when it deviates it often makes a strong deviation; beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy: beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid, and even massive. They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure; and however they may vary afterwards from the direct nature of their causes, yet these causes keep up an eternal distinction between them, a distinction never to be forgotten by any whose business it is to affect the passions. In the infinite variety of natural combinations, we must expect to find the qualities of things the most remote imaginable from each other united in the same object. We must expect also to find combinations of the same kind in the works of art. But when we consider the power of an object upon our passions, we must know that when anything is intended to affect the mind by the force of some predominant property, the affection produced is like to be the more uniform and perfect, if all the other properties or qualities of the object be of the same nature, and tending to the same design, as the principal;

If black and white blend, soften, and unite

A thousand ways, are there no black and white?

If the qualities of the sublime and beautiful are sometimes found united, does this prove that they are the same; does it prove that they are any way allied; does it prove even that they are not opposite and contradictory? Black and white may soften, may blend; but they are not therefore the same. Nor, when they are so softened and blended with each other, or with different colours, is the power of black as black, or of white as white, so strong as when each stands uniform and distinguished.” (Burke 1990 s. 113-114)

Koblingene mellom skrekk og det sublime er markante: “I have before observed, that whatever is qualified to cause terror is a foundation capable of the sublime; to which I add, that not only these, but many things from which we cannot probably apprehend any danger, have a similar effect, because they operate in a similar manner.” (Burke 1990 s. 119) “[I]f the pain is not carried to violence, and the terror is not conversant about the present destruction of the person, as these emotions clear the parts, whether fine or gross, of a dangerous and troublesome encumbrance, they are capable of producing delight; not pleasure, but a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquility tinged with terror; which, as it belongs to self-preservation, is one of the strongest of all the passions. Its object is the sublime. Its highest degree I call *astonishment*; the subordinate degrees are awe, reverence, and respect, which, by the very etymology of the words show from what source they are derived, and how they stand distinguished from positive pleasure.” (Burke 1990 s. 123) “There is something so over-ruling in whatever inspires us with awe, in all things which belongs ever so remotely to terror, that nothing else can stand in their presence. There lie the qualities of beauty either dead or unoperative; or at most exerted to mollify the rigour and sternness of the terror, which is the natural concomitant of greatness.” (Burke 1990 s. 142) Sammenstillingen “delightful horror” er et eksempel på språkfiguren oksymoron.

Den franske forfatteren Jean-Jacques Rousseaus brevroman *Julie, eller Den nye Héloïse* (1761) bidro til “estetiseringen” av Alpene. I denne romanen skriver Rousseau: “Det er faktisk noe alle mennesker føler, selv om ikke alle er seg det bevisst, at man på høye fjell, der luften er ren og tynn, puster inn mer frihet, føler seg lettere i kroppen, kjenner med åndelig glede [...]. Det føles som om man svinger seg opp over menneskenes boliger og der etterlater alle lave og jordiske tanker, som om sjelen nærmer seg det eteriske med dets uforanderlige renhet.” Rousseau opplevde “det sublimas befrielse” (Engdahl 1986 s. 182).

Det britiske dikteren og bildekunstneren William Blakes dikt “Night the Ninth” i *The Four Zoas* (påbegynt i 1797, ikke fullført) “has been likened to the fourth movement of Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony*. The words *epiphany*, *apotheosis*, and *climax* have all been used to describe the grand finale of Blake’s unfinished epic, in which all of life appears to rush together to restore the transcendent unity that was shattered in Night the First. [...] The poem aims to delay the movement of the sublime from blockage to transport and elevation, long enough for the reader to see the warring visual and verbal elements of the fallen world as the fragmented and

dismembered *body* of humanity [...] Blake's poem [...] directs us to a human rather than transcendent reality. Contrary to the thrust of the sublime, therefore, the 'transcendence' canvassed in this poem is horizontal and temporal rather than vertical and eternal [...] Enlisting the services of Locke, Young, and Swedenborg clarifies Blake's response to the sublime and shows convincingly how each member of that motley group is essential to Blake as he forges his response to it." (<http://www.rc.umd.edu/reviews-blog/peter-otto-blakes-critique-transcendence-love-jealousy-and-sublime-four-zoas>; lesedato 24.04.15).

Den engelske romantikeren Percy Bysshe Shelley omtalte i brev til en venn sublime opplevelser på denne måten: "- But how shall I describe to you the scenes by which I am now surrounded? - To exhaust epithets which express the astonishment & the admiration – the very excess of satisfied expectation, where expectation scarcely acknowledged any boundary – is this to impress upon your mind the images which fill mine now, even until it overflows? [...] The immensity of these aerial summits excited, when they suddenly burst upon the sight, a sentiment of extatic wonder, not unallied to madness – And remember this was all one scene. It all pressed home to our regard & to our imagination.... All was as much our own as if we had been the creators of such impressions in the minds of others, as now occupied our own." (siteret fra Leighton 1984 s. 38).

Percy Bysshe Shelley skrev om et fjellområde i Wales: "Rocks piled on to each other to tremendous heights, rivers formed into cataracts by their projections, & valleys clothed with woods, present an appearance of enchantment – but *why* do they enchant, *why* is it more affecting than a plain, it cannot be innate, is it acquired? [...] Thus does knowledge lose all pleasure which involuntarily arises, by attempting to arrest the fleeting Phantom as it passes – vain almost like the chemist's aether it evaporates under our observation; it flies from all but the slaves of passion and sickly sensibility who will not analyse a feeling." (siteret fra Holmes 1987 s. 74)

I skrekkromanen *Frankenstein* (1818) bruker Mary Shelley uttrykket "the sublime shapes of the mountains" om de sveitsiske alper (Shelley i Fairclough 1968 s. 295; begynnelsen av kap. 2). Om en isbre heter det senere i romanen: "I remembered the effect that the view of the tremendous and ever-moving glacier had produced upon my mind when I first saw it. It had then filled me with a sublime ecstasy that gave wings to the soul and allowed it to soar from the obscure world to light and joy. The sight of the awful and majestic in nature had indeed always the effect of solemnizing my mind and causing me to forget the passing cares of life." (Shelley i Fairclough 1968 s. 361; begynnelsen av kap. 10)

Mary Shelley skrev om naturen ved Chamonix i de franske Alpene: "This cataract fell in to the Arve, which dashed against its banks like a wild animal who is furious in constraint. As we continued our route to Cerveaux, the mountains increased in height and beauty; the summits of the highest were hid in clouds, but they

sometimes peeped out into the blue sky, higher one would think than the safety of God would permit, since it is well known that the Tower of Babel did not nearly equal them in immensity.” (sitert fra Holmes 1987 s. 339) “Another rock, over which a waterfall divided, seemed to her like the visionary image of ‘a colossal Egyptian statue of a female deity’ ” (Holmes 1987 s. 339).

Også ektemannen Percy Bysshe Shelley var overveldet av Alpene. “They arrived at Chamonix, exhausted, at 7 on Monday evening, and were startled by the unearthly thunder of an avalanche from the further mountain. [...] Then he began the second of his long descriptive diary-letters to [Thomas Love] Peacock, filled with the immensity and grandeur of the icy peaks. During the following days they visited the glaciers at Boisson and at Montavert. The impact which the sheer mass and cruel simplicity of the Alps at close quarters had on Shelley was profound. It entered immediately into the store of his fundamental imagery, like the rivers, and the sea, and the sky. On the first day in Chamonix he wrote to Peacock. ‘Pinnacles of snow, intolerably bright, part of the chain connected with Mont Blanc shone through the clouds at intervals on high. I never knew I never imagined what mountains were before. The immensity of these ariel summits excited, when they suddenly burst upon the sight, a sentiment of extatic wonder, not unallied to madness.’ ” (Holmes 1987 s. 339)

Percy Bysshe Shelleys “overall impression was one of overwhelming power, gigantic but infinitely remote force. It frightened and fascinated him. He was filled with awe and the sense of his own limited, human intelligence brought face to face with enormous natural energies and processes beyond anything he had previously imagined. The meditation became a poem called simply, ‘Mont Blanc’. [...] What he saw seemed to him both a symbol, and an actual example, of the sublime but utterly impersonal Power which functioned through nature. Describing the slow but irresistible advance of the glacier towards Chamonix, and the ‘inexpressibly dreadful’ aspect presented by the shattered pines which were overwhelmed one by one by its relentless progress, a few feet each year, he wrote to Peacock that he tended to believe Buffon’s theory of Nature’s inevitable self-destruction, of its inherent entropy. He saw this as yet another example of a tyranny, of power functioning inhumanely to crush and destroy, and likened it to the esoteric Indian dualism which Peacock had used in his earlier poetry. This was the eternal struggle between Oromazes, the spirit of life and warmth, and Ahrimanes, the spirit of darkness, cold and death.” (Holmes 1987 s. 339-340)

“After a superb description of the terror of the glacier’s advance, he [P. B. Shelley] concluded: ‘I will not pursue Buffon’s sublime but gloomy theory, that this earth which we inhabit will at some future period be changed into a mass of frost. Do you who assert the supremacy of Ahriman imagine him throned among these desolating snows, among these palaces of death and frost, sculptured in this their terrible magnificence by the unsparing hand of necessity, & that he casts around him as the first essays of his final usurpation avalanches, torrents, rocks & thunders

– and above all, these deadly glaciers at once the proofs and symbols of his reign. – Add to this the degradation of the human species, who in these regions are half deformed or idiotic & all of whom are deprived of anything that can excite interest & admiration. This is a part of the subject more mournful & less sublime; – but such as neither the poet nor the philosopher should disdain.’ ” (Holmes 1987 s. 340)

“Shelley thought the Terni waterfall the grandest natural spectacle he had ever seen except for the glaciers of Montanvert, and described with minute care the strange hallucinatory effect of the light and movement of the great mass of water as it fell 300 feet into the valley of the Velino. ‘It comes in thick & tawny folds flaking off like solid snow gliding down a mountain. ... Your eye follows it & is lost below. ... The very imagination is bewildered in it. ... We past half an hour in one spot looking at it, & thought but a few minutes had gone by.’ ” (Holmes 1987 s. 460)

Den franske forfatteren François-René de Chateaubriand skriver i kortromanen *Atala* (1801) om et lyn som antenner en skog, og hvordan vindstøt og hyl fra skogens dyr, fallende trær og ildens voldsomme knitring skaper et “enormt kaos” som ikke bare er skrekkelig, men også storslagent (Chateaubriand 1971 s. 80). Noen av personene opplever Niagara-fossene der tusen regnbuer er spent over avgrunnen med det tordnende vannet. På en lang grein sitter det noen jerver og spiser kjøtt fra elger og bjørner som har blitt drept av vannmassene (Chateaubriand 1971 s. 131-132). Chateaubriand kaller det sublimt når mystisk skrekk gir mennesket lykkefølelse (Chateaubriand 1971 s. 83). Han hevdet at det skrekkelige i naturen øker det majestetiske i den (Gallo 2012 s. 182).

Den franske 1700-tallsforfatteren Voltaire skrev i en av sine verk om skrekkelige grotter i Alpene (Cresson 1958 s. 110). I Aasmund Olavsson Vinjes *Ferdaminni fraa Sumaren 1860* (1860) skildres hvordan Malene fra Foldalen utbryter at det er så stygt og øde når hun sammen med Vinje skuer utover fjellheimen. Dette var mange bønders syn på den ville naturen. Fjellene var unyttige (uproduktive), farlige og stygge. Det er en klar motsetning til den sublime følelse. Fjellene oppleves som det opprinnelige og det fjerneste fra sivilisasjonen.

Høyfjellslandskap ble i Tyskland til inn på 1700-tallet oppfattet som farlige og skrekkelige – og derfor *stygge* (Glaser og Luserke 1996 s. 91).

Den franske filosofen Jean-François Lyotard har den sublime estetikk som et sentralt tema i noen av sine tekster. Hans syn er at “den sublime opplevelse slår punktuelt ind hinsides den formmæssige konstituering af omverden” (Brügger 1990 s. 86), og overskrider dermed vanlig diskurs og gjengse forståelsesrammer.

Den amerikanske avantgarde-maleren Barnett Newmans bilder uttrykker “hans personlige visjon av det sublime: overveldelse, voldsomhet, men også ekstrem enkelhet, strenghet, og som tenderer til det absolutte.” (Bonfand 1995 s. 115)

Den franske filosofen Jean-François Lyotard var opptatt av Newmans kunst, knyttet til en teori og moderne, abstrakt malerkunst og det sublime. Ideene knyttet til noen bilder av Newman er “essential for Lyotard’s philosophy of the sublime. The first is that colour, line or rhythm are not considered for what they might portray: it is presence, rather than representation that makes them sublime. And the second is that even in a visual art like painting, sublimity is primarily a matter of time, not space. As Lyotard said in an interview to Christine Pries, Newman was one of the sources of his interest in the concept of the sublime. Newman’s theoretical text ‘The sublime is now’ and several of the titles of his paintings, such as *Here, Not There, Here, Now* and *Be*, indicate, according to Lyotard, a sense of place and time that cuts across the spatiotemporal coherence of conscious experience. “Newman’s *now* which is no more than a now is a stranger to consciousness and cannot be constituted by it. Rather, it is what dismantles consciousness, it is what consciousness cannot formulate, and even what consciousness forgets in order to constitute itself.” Consciousness demands an uninterrupted connection of space continuing, time passing, events happening. Dreading the possibility of a void, of nothing happening, it is not able to think the occurrence of an event in its singularity and contingency. We can only think an occurrence as such, if we allow for the possibility that it could not have happened, even that nothing could have happened at all. Lyotard expresses this awareness in the question *Is it happening?* Not *what* is happening is doubted, but *that* something happens at all. This awareness evokes suspense, anxiety, fear – and then joy if something happens nonetheless: ‘the joy obtained by the intensification of being that the event brings with it’. The sublime is the feeling evoked by this awareness of a possible ontological void: ‘The sublime is a kind of hole, a breach in the given itself’.” (Renée van de Vall i Smith og Wilde 2002 s. 361)

“In his adaptation of the concept Lyotard maintained the contradictory structure of the sublime feeling, in which pain is mixed with pleasure, terror with delight. The idea of a terror inspired by the possibility of a void he derived from Edmund Burke’s section on privation: ‘All *general* privations are great, because they are all terrible; Vacuity, Darkness, Solitude and Silence’. The notion of the sublime as a breach in the given recalls Kant’s aesthetics, on which Lyotard has published a detailed commentary, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*. Lyotard agrees with Kant that experiential coherence presupposes a synthesis, an act of connection bringing unity in the diversity of what is given. The feeling of the sublime is evoked when this unity is first threatened, then restored at another level of consciousness. However, Lyotard departs from Kant in two respects. To begin with, Kant denied that art could be sublime. In contrast to beauty, defined by Kant as ‘the form of finality in an object, so far as perceived in it apart from an end’, the sublime cuts across every experience of finality or form. Sublime feelings are evoked by those natural phenomena that are too large to be comprehended by the imagination or too powerful to be resisted by our physical capacities. It is through this absence of encompassing form and denial of natural purpose in experience that

the spectator is made aware of the powers of a higher faculty and a higher goal: those of reason. What imagination cannot comprehend, infinity, reason is able to think as an Idea. Hence the joy we feel. According to Kant, works of art can never be an occasion for these feelings, because they always show discernible form and are created by purposeful acts. In response, Lyotard has answered that what matters most in Kant's 'Analytic of the sublime' is that something 'unformed' is incommensurable with the synthesis of the imagination. Lyotard claims that abstract or minimal art may very well be able to bring about the same kind of breach in the formal synthesis of consciousness as natural formlessness does." (Renée van de Vall i Smith og Wilde 2002 s. 362-263)

"Lyotard has to admit that there is something paradoxical in this conception of sublimity in art. The paradox is that art has to testify to the indeterminate but can only do so in a determinate fashion. The paradox disappears if the task of bearing witness to the indeterminate is equated with the avant-garde questionings of pictorial tradition. From Cézanne onwards, avant-garde artists have asked the question 'What is a painting?' and have brushed aside what were supposed to be its elementary constituents: figuration, form, colour, object, even spaces for display. One should be careful, however, not to mistake these investigations for a search for innovation, or to confuse true avant-garde art with the present-day, commercially induced proliferation of new styles. The feeling of the sublime is not a mere 'shock of the new'. 'The occurrence, the *Ereignis*, has nothing to do with the *petit frisson*, the cheap thrill, the profitable pathos, that accompanies an innovation.' The difference between sublimity and innovation lies in the work's relation to time: "Through innovation, the will affirms its hegemony over time. It thus conforms to the metaphysics of capital, which is a technology of time. The innovation 'works'. The question mark of the *Is it happening?* stops. With the occurrence, the will is defeated. The avant-gardist task remains that of undoing the presumption of the mind with respect to time. The sublime feeling is the name of this privation." In this diatribe against innovation Lyotard seems to distance himself from a distinction he has earlier made: that between a modern and a postmodern sublime." (Renée van de Vall i Smith og Wilde 2002 s. 365-366)

I mange dataspill skal vi oppleve det sublime som flygere av jettfly, som bilførere i majestetiske landskaper, i mørke haller i skumle slott o.l. Store byområder med skyskraperne kan virke sublime ved å romme spor av så mange menneskeliv at vi blir overveldet.

"The notion of the sublime is not entirely new to game studies. Paul Martin (2011) has employed it to explicate the manner in which the landscape in *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* (Bethesda 2008) is initially presented to the player as a boundless expanse, suggestive of near-infinite possibilities for exploration and constituting a whole beyond the grasp of the imagination. It is unsurprising that the sublime proves well-suited to the task of outlining Oblivion's poetics of landscape – we need only recall the late seventeenth and eighteenth-century usage of the term

to address the feeling of delight mixed with terror that accompanied the contemplation of Alpine landscapes for British Grand Tourists like John Dennis (1693) and Joseph Addison (1773). [...] The distinction between aesthetic judgments of the beautiful and judgments of the sublime is drawn by Kant in the following terms: “the Beautiful in nature is connected with the form of the object, which consists in having boundaries. The Sublime, on the other hand, is to be found in the formless object, so far as in it or by occasion of it *boundlessness* is represented, and yet its totality is also present to thought” (2007[1790], §23). An object that excites an aesthetic feeling of beauty in the viewer, as we have seen, does so through presenting an ordered form to perception, albeit a form that seems to fit no concept of the understanding; but an object that evokes the sublime does so because it appears “to be unsuited to our presentative faculty, and, as it were, to do violence to the Imagination” (ibid.). In other words – and Kant provides the sight of the Pyramids of Giza and of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome as examples (§26) – its totality extends beyond the limits of perception, tied as it is to a narrow, situated viewpoint, leaving the faculty of the imagination struggling to represent it as a coherent object of thought determined by a formal order.” (Daniel Vella i <http://gamestudies.org/1501/articles/vella>; lesedato 21.10.15)

“Both when it comes to its ludic form (adopting the tropes of the action role-playing game) and in its cultural generic milieu (medieval high fantasy), *Dark Souls* pigeonholes itself within some of the most established videogame traditions. At first glance, then, it would appear to be a poorly-chosen example of the ludic sublime, proffering familiarity and a pre-established, conventionalized mastery that would seem to leave little room for mystery. In practice, however, *Dark Souls* sets out with the express purpose of unsettling these preconceptions, deploying a range of formal techniques and mechanisms designed to arrest the player’s judgment and prevent her from arriving at a stable cosmic understanding, preserving a sense of mystery and gesturing towards a whole that escapes the player’s conceptualizing grasp. In various ways, *Dark Souls* works to actively remind the player of the limits and the inadequacy of her perceptual opening onto the milieu of the gameworld, the computational systems underlying it, and the space of possibilities they structure. This is not to suggest that *Dark Souls* presents us with a special case, in the sense that it establishes a sublime aesthetic mechanism that other games do not. What sets *Dark Souls* apart is arguably a matter of degree, not of kind: it simply foregrounds a sublime quality of mystery that, I have argued, is integral to the formal structure of digital games. A consideration of the ways in which *Dark Souls* achieves its sense of the ludic sublime, then, can perhaps begin to point us towards a poetics for this aesthetic mode. For this reason, I shall now proceed to outline a set of formal techniques – *indistinct boundaries, unclear causes and/or effects, undefined entities* and *ergodic irony* – by which *Dark Souls* suggests to the player an ineffable whole that extends beyond her necessarily limited perception and cosmic understanding of the game at any given moment.” (Daniel Vella i <http://gamestudies.org/1501/articles/vella>; lesedato 21.10.15)

“What is initially [i spillet *Oblivion*] encountered as a boundless spatial extension harbouring a dizzying range of possibilities is reduced into a network of locations, paths and possibilities for action, such that it can, eventually, be easily grasped as a bounded, orderly cosmos. The landscape of *Oblivion* is therefore only grasped as sublime for as long as it takes for the last vestiges of mystery to succumb to mastery: “the reductions necessary in the creation of Tamriel as a game space are discovered over the course of the game in a way that undermines the sublime mode in which the landscape is initially presented”. It is certainly possible to argue that the feeling of the sublime is transient, and will subside as soon as the player achieves a reasonably stable cosmic understanding of the game – in other words, as soon as mastery gains dominance over mystery. [...] Even after extended play has resulted in mastery of the game, there remains at least an opening for the possibility of surprise and further revelation – and the result of this is that the player’s cosmic understanding of the game, which serves as the basis for action and as the ground for the continuing feedback loop of the magic cycle of play – can never be finally closed, and must, by the very formal nature of digital game play, retain the status of a hypothesis.” (Daniel Vella i <http://gamestudies.org/1501/articles/vella>; lesedato 21.10.15)

“Artist, writer and critic Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe has expressed a current view of the beautiful–sublime relation in his book, *Beauty and the Contemporary Sublime*, 1999. What is most revolutionary about Gilbert-Rolfe’s perspective is his notion that the sublime cannot exist in nature today. He claims that the sublime can only inhabit, or be expressed by, technology – as technology is limitless and yet to be apprehended. Gilbert-Rolfe says that nature is limited and finite, and that the sublime requires the limitlessness of technology. Gilbert-Rolfe associates beauty with glamour and frivolity, as opposed to the “goodness” of the Kantian or Burkeian “beautiful” (Gilbert-Rolfe, 1999).” (Laura Smith i <http://humstatic.uchicago.edu/faculty/wjtm/glossary2004/beautifulsublime.htm>; lesedato 03.10.16)

Å sublimere innebærer i psykologen å forandre en dyrisk trang (f.eks. til vold eller sex) til noe høyere (f.eks. et kunstverk).

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