Atatürk Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi
Atatürk University Journal of Faculty of Letters
Sayı / *Number* **65**, **Aralık**/ *December* **2020, 265-285**

THE TRANSITION FROM THE NEOCLASSICAL 'BEAUTIFUL' TO THE ROMANTIC 'SUBLIME': LONGINUS, BURKE AND KANT

Neoklasik 'Güzel'den Romantik 'Yüce'ye Geçiş: Longinus, Burke ve Kant

(Makale Geliş Tarihi: 11.08.2020 / Kabul Tarihi: 08.09.2020)

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Abstract

Longinus's *On the Sublime* brought the concept of the sublime to the centre of the Neoclassical and the Romantic aesthetics from the 17th century onwards. His conception of the sublime inspired Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1756/57) and Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790) in the 18th century. Burke and Kant both differentiated the sublime from the beautiful as an aesthetic category. Longinus's non-differentiation between these categories is the motivation behind both the Neoclassical and the Romantic claim on his conception of the sublime. Relating the Longinian sublime to Burke and Kant's dualistic approach to the beautiful and the sublime, this study argues that Burke's reconsideration of the Longinian sublime in its empirical relation to the object and Kant's reformulation of it as a transcendental quality of the mind have all progressively empowered the sublime's dominion over the beautiful, symbolising the Romantic takeover against the Neoclassical.

Keywords: Longinus, Burke, Kant, Beautiful, Sublime, Neoclassicism, Romanticism

Öz

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Longinus'un *Yüce Üzerine* adlı incelemesi, yüce kavramını 17. yüzyıl itibariyle hem Neoklasik hem de Romantik estetiğin merkezine oturtmuştur. Bu kavram, 18. yüzyılda Edmund Burke'ün *Yüce ve Güzel Kavramlarımızın Kaynağı Hakkında Felsefi Bir Soruşturma* (1756/57) ve Immanuel Kant'ın *Yargı Yetisinin Eleştirisi* (1790) adlı eserlerine ilham vermiştir. Burke ve Kant, estetik bir kategori olarak yüce kavramını güzel kavramından ayırmıştır. Longinus'ın güzel ve yüce kavramları arasında böyle bir ayrıma gitmemesi, Longinus'ın yüce kavramının hem Neoklasisizmde hem de Romantisizmde yer bulmasına vesile olmuştur. Longinus'ın yüce kavramını, Burke ile Kant'ın güzel ve yüce kavramlarına yönelik ikicil yaklaşımı çerçevesinde ele alan bu çalışma, güzel kavramını Neoklasik estetikle, yüce kavramını ise Romantik estetikle bağdaştırmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Burke'ün Longinuscı yüce anlayışını nesne ile kurduğu görgül ilişki üzerinden değerlendirmesine karşın Kant'ın bu yüce anlayışını zihnin aşkınsal niteliği olarak ele alması da yüce'nin güzel üzerinde gittikçe artan hakimiyetini ortaya koymaktadır. Nitekim bu da Romantik estetiğin Neoklasik estetiği yerinden edişini sembolize etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Longinus, Burke, Kant, Güzel, Yüce, Neoklasisizm, Romantisizm

I. Introduction

Preceding Plotinus and representing a new school of thought named Neo-Platonism, Longinus belongs to the Second Sophistic intellectual movement covering the period from 27 BC to 410 AD. His treatise *On the Sublime* is accepted as a major rhetorical text of this period and attributed to Longinus although there is not any precise certainty about the author and the date of the text (roughly first or second century AD). Thanks to the translation of the text by Nicolas Boileau in 1674, the concept of the sublime resurged and went beyond its identification by various critics as a mere rhetorical technique. In other words, it found a prominent place in both Neoclassical and Romantic aesthetics from this period onwards.

Alexander Pope, an early neoclassical critic, praises Longinus for "*that great sublime he draws*" in his *An Essay on Criticism* (1711). Pope combines the Horatian concept of *decorum* and Longinus's emphasis on the harmony between rhetoric and sense, thus defining the concept of the sublime as a technique that enables organic unity of form and content rather than associating it with a spiritual transcendence. Yet Longinus has left "*a pronounced influence on literary criticism since the seventeenth century, somewhat against the grain of the classical heritage derived from Aristotle and Horace*" (Habib, 2005: p. 118). Apart from falling heir to Aristotle's idea of *organicism* and Horace's praise of *decorum* in poetry, Longinus's treatise has also been associated with the Romantic tradition that portrays him as "more animating and modern compared to Aristotle and Horace" (Abrams, 1971: p .74).

Building on Longinus's emphasis on the experience of sublimity, the English philosopher Edmund Burke's landmark essay *A Philosophical Enquiry into the*

Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful (1756/7) introduces a new psychological and physiological aesthetics of the sublime by opposing it to the category of the beautiful. Burke is the first one who introduces this dualism to the field of aesthetics as two mutually exclusive, opposing elements and he expands the concept of the sublime in a way to be elaborated and contested by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. Challenging the empiricism of Burke's sublime, Kant engages in defining the sublime in his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764) by dividing the concept into three kinds: the noble, the splendid and the terrifying. However, in his *Critique of Judgement* (1790), Kant further elaborates on the concept beyond the dualism of the beautiful and the sublime. Unlike Burke, Kant strikingly focuses on not only the sublimity of the mind, namely, the transcendental power of the mind during the experience of the sublime but also the recognition of such transcendence through reason, which endows human beings with higher moral qualities.

Within this context, this study suggests that Longinus has not theorized any specific differentiation between the beautiful and the sublime, which has eventually located his conception of the sublime within the center of both Neoclassical and Romantic aesthetics. However, there has been a tendency among such critics of the 20th century as Samuel Monk to identify the Longinian sublime as a rhetorical or discursive sublime while the Burkean and Kantian sublime as a natural sublime (Monk, 1962: p. 10-12). This division has disregarded Longinus's equal positioning of the sublime within Neoclassicism and Romanticism. Yet, towards the end of the 20th century, Suzanne Guerlac takes a huge step in highlighting the co-existence of discursive and natural sublime in Longinus's conception of the term. A recent work in the field, Robert Doran's *The Theory of the Sublime from Longinus to Kant* (2015) affirms Guerlac's criticism and claims that Longinus's treatise already embraces an aesthetic approach to the concept.

Following the same path with these later critics, this study rejects a dichotomous approach by bringing up the interrelatedness of the Longinian, Burkean and Kantian conception of the sublime. It argues that the Longinian sublime incorporates the aesthetic categories of the beautiful and the sublime within itself without making any particular differentiation; however, the Burkean and Kantian reinterpretations of the Longinian sublime with their varying emphasis on the dualism of the 'beautiful' and the 'sublime' in the 18th century makes it possible to take these two categories as the signifying concepts of Neoclassical and Romantic aesthetics, respectively. The gradual transition from the beautiful to the sublime along with the shift from the Burkean/empirical sublime to the Kantian/transcendental sublime symbolizes the Romantic takeover against the Neoclassical understanding of art. Accordingly, the first part of this study discusses the aesthetic category of the beautiful as the representative of Neoclassical aesthetics by drawing a parallelism between Longinus's

idea of sublimity and the Burkean and Kantian conception of the beautiful. The second part analyses the sublime as a signifying concept of the Romantic aesthetics by highlighting the Longinian sublime's interconnection with the Burkean empirical sublime and the Kantian transcendental sublime within the scope of British Romanticism.

II. The Beautiful as the Representative of the Neoclassical Aesthetics

Longinus defines sublimity as "*a certain quality in excellence of discourse*" (1965: p. 114), which incorporates qualities such as beauty, grandeur, and vastness within itself, and he does not make a specific distinction between the beautiful and the sublime while Burke and Kant later discuss them as two separate aesthetic experiences and elements of judgement. In his treatise, Longinus employs the words beauty and sublimity a few times in the same passages without clarifying any distinction or even relation between them. He even mentions sublimity in beauty and beauty of sublimity as exemplified in the following excerpt from the text:

> *For a piece is truly great only if it can stand up to repeated examination, and if it is difficult, or, rather, impossible to resist its appeal, and it remains firmly and ineffaceably in the memory. As a generalization, you may take it that sublimity in all its truth and beauty exists in such works as please all men at all times*. (1965: p. 114)

Another translation of the second sentence in this excerpt by William Smith more clearly shows how he uses the terms interchangeably: "*In a word, you may pronounce that sublime, beautiful and genuine, which always pleases, and takes equally with all sorts of men*" (Smith, 1819: p. 66). Longinus describes the sublime as the true and the beautiful, and asserts that this kind of sublimity is what makes a work of art immortal for all ages. His perception of the sublime is not deliberately separated from the beautiful. In another passage, he emphasizes that sublimity is an effective antidote "*against the suspicion that attends the use of figures*" (in the case where the use of figures is not able to sincerely transmit the feelings). Thanks to sublimity, "*the cunning artifice remains out of sight, associated from now on with beauty and sublimity, and all suspicion is put to flight*" (Longinus, 1965: p. 138). The conformity between expression and feeling, in other words between form and content, is accepted as a prerequisite for both categories. He does not establish the beautiful and the sublime as mutually exclusive aesthetic judgements. Longinus's non-differentiation between these two categories has encouraged both Neoclassical and Romantic aesthetics to have a claim on the sublime. Accordingly, not only has Longinus's conception of the sublime been endowed with the Neoclassical ideals of order, harmony, and organicism, but also the definition of the beautiful by Burke and Kant as a distinct category from the sublime has its roots in Neoclassical aesthetics. In this sense, it could be suggested that while the Burkean and Kantian category of

the beautiful has its roots in Neoclassical aesthetics, their category of the sublime in line with the Longinian sublime has been the representative of Romantic aesthetics in varying degrees.

The urge to associate the beautiful with a form and order goes back to Aristotle as he claims in *Poetics* (in relation to tragedy) that "*whatever is beautiful, whether it be a living creature or an object made up of various parts, must necessarily not only have its parts properly ordered, but also be of an appropriate size, for beauty is bound up with size and order*" (Aristotle, 1965: p. 40). This classical understanding of beauty purports the idea of an organic unity between form and content, which can be considered as an earlier resonance of Longinus's attempt to unite art and nature. This conception of beauty has been appropriated during the Neoclassical period, which idealizes simplicity, clarity, restraint and regularity, in a way to emphasize conformity between discourse and intensity of emotions[1].

This conformity is a product of the Neoclassical period, called the Age of Enlightenment, the Age of Reason or the Augustan Age, in which a new scientific approach to all religious, political, social and economic issues finds its resonances in art through the classical doctrine of *decorum* that was idealized in Horace's *Ars Poetica*. Decorum necessitates a perfect compatibility between words and senses with the purpose of responding to the grandeur of a subject with a proper diction. This neoclassical unity between form and content is significant as it represents harmony between mind and Nature. The most prominent poet of the age, Alexander Pope, in his *An Essay on Criticism*, writes that "*Nature to all things fix'd the limits fit*" (I, 52) and advises mankind (the artist and the critic) to "*avoid extremes*" (II, 384) (1993: p. 2498-2505). Contrary to the Romantic conception of nature, "*Pope and his generation talked of nature, but they meant the nature of Isaac Newton's well-regulated cosmic machine; or at most the carefully controlled nature of the early landscape garden*" (Monk, 1962: p. 126). This "unchanged" and "universal" Nature represents the order in the rule-bound universe. Engaging in a scientific reading of the Bible that eventually led many intellectuals of the period to embrace Deism, neoclassical philosophy sought for a unity between the human mind and the machine-like universe. In this regard, their notions of the beautiful and the sublime are located within this unity that finds its artistic reflection through decorum. As Doran suggests, the neoclassical conception of the sublime is a new way of determining the aesthetic value of literary works: "*namely, a positive way of demonstrating the superiority of neoclassical taste, as opposed to the primarily negative manner*

[1] The French neo-classicist Boileau interprets the Longinian sublime as "the extraordinary, the surprising and …the marvellous in discourse" (Monk, 1962: p. 31). While Monk interprets Boileau's emphasis on emotions as the first step towards the eighteenth century sublime, Doran opposes him and evaluates Boileau's conception of the sublime within the neoclassical sublime.

of judgment based on conformity to the rules" (2015: p. 108). Accordingly, the neoclassical conception of the sublime can be considered as a re-appropriation or an elevated form of decorum. The Burkean and Kantian category of 'the beautiful' is therefore a reference to this empirically-grounded alliance between mind and nature or form and content, which has been challenged through their concept of the 'sublime' within the scope of Romantic aesthetics.

An empiricist under the influence of John Locke and David Hume, who claimed that knowledge could be obtained from senses, Burke established an empirically-grounded oppositional relationship between the categories of the beautiful and the sublime. As a political intellectual standing between the Neoclassical tradition and the forthcoming revolution of Romanticism, Burke published his *Enquiry* with the claim that taste is not open to discussion. His statements such as "*no man thinks a goose to be more beautiful than a swan*" (Burke, 1823: p. 9) indicate that he seeks after a consensus and universality in aesthetic judgements. With this purpose, Burke endows his concept of the beautiful with a universal character by limiting its nature to certain qualities such as clearness, smoothness, lightness, and pleasure. He notes, "*I never remember that anything beautiful, whether a man, a beast, a bird, or a plant, was ever shown, though it were to a hundred people, that they did not all immediately agree that it was beautiful*" (1813: p. 9). His conception of the beautiful has strong resonances with the neoclassical ideal of attaining the universal and privileging it over the particular. Although Burke admits that proportion is not the cause of beauty in vegetables, animals and human species, "*there is a certain proportion in each species absolutely essential to the beauty of that particular kind*" (1813: p. 139). The quality of balance or harmony is sought in the Burkean beautiful: "*Nothing long continued in the same manner, nothing very suddenly varied, can be beautiful; because both are opposite to that agreeable relaxation which is the characteristic effect of beauty*" (Burke, 1813: p. 229). The classical and neoclassical idea of decorum is turned into a balance in variation in the Burkean beautiful. His conception of the beautiful as an aesthetic judgement has a totalizing nature, a characteristic of the Enlightenment period, because Burke believes that differences in taste can only stem from personal prejudices and passions. It is therefore not surprising to see his conception of beauty in line with neoclassical standards such as restraint, clarity, proportion, smoothness, and harmony:

> *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 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.* (Burke, 2004: p. 340-341)

In this excerpt, he openly portrays the beautiful as a harmonious, measurable and pleasing universal quality while associating the sublime with counter-adjectives. This distinction lies behind his endeavour to identify psychological and physiological bases for the feelings that the categories of the beautiful and the sublime evoke. Opposing the positive pleasure received from the beautiful to the negative pain (called *delight* as well) attributed to the sublime lays bare the source of the Burkean sublime. Despite his search for universality in the beautiful that requires rationality, Burke antithetically cherishes irrationality as a valuable element in judgement through the concept of the sublime, which is a challenge to the Neoclassical aesthetics. It is therefore plausible to claim that his dichotomous way of distinction between the beautiful and the sublime, and his empirically grounded conception of both terms establish him as a threshold figure between the Neoclassical and Romantic aesthetics.

On the other hand, Immanuel Kant embraces a transcendental philosophy that engages in uncovering *a priori* principles of the mind. He is a critical adherent of the rationalist metaphysical tradition associated with Leibniz and an opponent of Hume's scepticism as well as Burke's empiricism. While appreciating Burke's conception of the beautiful as a separate category from the sublime, Kant criticizes his idea of the beautiful because of its entire dependence on the senses, which jeopardizes the universality of an aesthetic judgement. To Kant, if a judgement depends entirely on the senses, the object of the judgement can only be "*agreeable*" (Kant, 2007: p. 40). Although he differs from Burke in his defence of the existence of *a priori* principles in order to save aesthetic judgements from the scepticism and empiricism of the Neoclassical period, Kant resembles Burke in his association of the beautiful with the universal: "[*t]he beautiful is that which, apart from a concept, pleases universally*" (Kant, 2007: p. 51). Kant's universality is subjective universality that seems paradoxical yet systematically defined within itself:

> *In all judgements by which we describe anything as beautiful we tolerate no one else being of a different opinion, and yet we do not rest our judgement upon concepts, but only on our feeling. Accordingly we introduce this underlying feeling not as a private feeling, but as a common one. The necessity of the universal assent that is thought in a judgement of taste is a subjective necessity which, under the presupposition of a common sense, is represented as objective*. (Kant, 2007: p. 70)

This Kantian conception of subjective universality is built on the idea of 'disinterested delight' which means the denial of any personal or collective purpose, prejudice or interest in relation to the object to be judged as the beautiful (Kant, 2007: p.11). It recalls the Burkean prioritization of the swan over the goose as a common judgement. If a person manages to bracket all her/his prejudices and interests, this

person has a reason to expect a similar pleasure to be experienced by everyone. As in the Neoclassical aesthetics, Burke and Kant both characterize beauty as the harmony between an object and our knowledge of this object. The difference is that while Kant does not consider beauty as a quality existent within the object but dependent on the perceiving mind, Burke regards it as inherent in the object waiting to be sensed by the receiving mind. Another aspect of the Kantian beautiful that can be traced back to the neoclassical tradition and especially to Burke is that:

> *The beautiful in nature is a question of the form of the object, and this consists in limitation, whereas the sublime is to be found in an object even devoid of form, so far as it immediately involves, or else by its presence provokes, a representation of limitlessness, yet with a super-added thought of its totality. Accordingly the beautiful seems to be regarded as a presentation of an indeterminate concept of the understanding, the sublime as a presentation of an indeterminate concept of reason*. (Kant, 2007: p. 76)

Kant highlights that beauty is related to the form of an object that has boundaries and limits while the sublime can be observed even in formless objects. In other words, whereas beauty is located within the capacity of the senses and understanding, the sublime is a concept associated with the mind, the capacity of which surpasses the sensual potential. The restricted or totalized nature of the Kantian beautiful requires a stoic resignation and a balance as observed in Burke's distaste for variation in the object to be judged as the beautiful. Kant argues, "*the feeling of the sublime involves as its characteristic feature a movement of the mind combined with the judging of the object, whereas taste in respect of the beautiful presupposes that the mind is in restful contemplation, and preserves it in this state*" (2007: p. 78). The mind needs to be under control or moderate for the beautiful to reveal its unchanging, permanent quality. This attitude is not very distant from Pope's idea of poetry revealed by his statement "*[t]he sound must seem an echo to the sense*" (1993: p. 2504), which implies a harmony between the object and the understanding. It is, accordingly, plausible to suggest that the Longinian sublime is re-interpreted within Neoclassical aesthetics as an elevated form of decorum and this is a precursor to Burke's and Kant's conception of the beautiful prescribing to avoid singularity and achieve universality. Yet, their peculiar re-working of the sublime as a challenge to the Enlightenment ideals by associating the term with "unclassical" values such as irregularity, uncertainty, excessiveness, and freedom has gradually oriented literary history towards Romantic aesthetics.

III. The Sublime and the Romantic Aesthetics

The term sublime comes from the Latin word *sublimis* that means "*on high, uplifted, raised up*" and it was used as an adjective and as a synonym for "*grand, elevated, lofty*" in the 16th and 17th centuries (Leitch, 2001: p. 537). Towards the

middle of the 17th century, it started to be associated with "*the highest moral, intellectual, or emotional level, as well as great nobility of character*", and at the end of the century, it, both as an adjective and as a noun, came to mean "*a sensation overwhelming, awe, astonishment, fear, terror-produced by great scenes in nature and powerful works of literature and art*" (Leitch, 2001: p. 538). This final change in the concept of the sublime in the late 17th century stems from the translation of Longinus's treatise in 1674 as stated earlier. Longinus draws an analogy between the vast in nature and the sublime in art with a special focus on the intensity of feelings they evoke, which can be traced in Burke's and Kant's conception of the sublime as an aesthetic judgement in relation to the natural scenes and the reaction of the subject to them. Longinus's focus on heightened feelings and their influence challenges the neoclassical conception of nature as a mechanistic entity running merely on a rationalist agenda. Burke's interest in the psychological and physiological response of the audience to the sublime and Kant's exploration of the subjective/creative mind in the experience of the sublime point out a shift from the assumption of objective reality in the Enlightenment to that of subjective reality in the Romantic period.

Longinus's emphasis on the unity between powerful emotion and diction is re-enacted in Burke's idealization of organic unity between the word and the passion. Longinus lists five sources of the sublime: the ability to form grand conceptions, the stimulus of powerful and inspired emotion, figures of thought and speech, a noble diction, and the choice of words. While the first two belong to the innate capacity of the artist or audience, the remaining qualities are considered achievable through training (Longinus, 1965: p. 121). Although these five sources can be marked as the motivation behind the Longinian sublime to be labelled as the discursive, Longinus in fact underlines 'expression' and 'emotion' as body and soul of the sublime, respectively. Likewise, Burke –though not as extensively as Longinus– draws a connection between words and passions. He analyses some lines from Milton's "Paradise Lost", describing the travels of the fallen angels through their terrifying habitation: "*O'er many a dark and dreary vale/ They pass'd, and many a region dolorous; / O'er many a frozen, many a fiery Alp; / Rock, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens and shades of death, /A universe of death"* (Burke, 2004: p. 345). Placing emphasis on the use of "Death" and "Universe of Death", Burke argues that "*[t]his idea or this affection caused by a word, which nothing but a word could annex to the others, raises a very great degree of the sublime; and this sublime is raised yet higher by what follows, a 'universe of Death'*" (2004: p. 345-346). While this example indicates Longinus's and Burke's reciprocal emphasis on the organic unity of style and emotion to achieve sublimity, which recalls the neoclassical conception of the sublime, it, more importantly, draws attention to the way they cherish the intensity of

affection that is not expected to be restrained under the rules[2]. The sublime Burke refers to "*is representative of its decade, a decade of transition from the stricter ideas of neo-classicism to that of individualism and freer interpretation of beauty and other aesthetic ideas which are in the habit of regarding as characteristic idea of the Romantic in art*" (Monk, 1962: p. 106).

Accordingly, Burke's orientation of the neoclassical conception of the sublime towards a distinct category has its roots in Longinus's stress on excessive emotion, particularly that of fear. Longinus asserts that while emotion and sublime do not mean the same thing, the latter cannot exist without the former. This relationship between the sublime and powerful emotion is a departure from the neoclassical conception of the sublime. In Monk's words, "*one of the missions of the sublime was to help art to escape from the neo-classist's nature, and to establish it on a conception of nature that included the very irregularity and vastness from which the orthodox speculation of the Enlightenment instinctively shrank*" (1962: p. 67). The qualities Longinus praises in the poet Sappho's work such as uniting opposites and creating a 'concourse of emotions' (Longinus, 1965: p. 127) introduce a conception of the sublime that does not abide by Pope's neoclassical motto for art to "avoid extremes". Longinus's further appreciation of Homer for his ability to single out the most terrifying properties of the storms in one of his descriptions establishes the sublime on excessive rather than gentle emotions:

> *Homer does not for a moment limit the terror, but draws a picture of his sailors again and again, all the time, on the brink of destruction with the coming of each wave. Moreover, in 'out from under the death' he has exerted an abnormal force in thrusting together prepositions not usually compounded, and has thus twisted his language to bring it into conformity with the impending disaster; and by this compressed language he has supremely well pictured the disaster and all but stamped on the diction the very image of the danger – slip out from under the clutch of death*. (Longinus, 1965: p. 128)

Based on a literary text, Longinus gives an account of how the sublime is related to the feelings of fear and terror. The focus is on how these feelings are described in a way to achieve the sublime, not on what type of objects causes such feelings. Therefore, it could be suggested that the Burkean sublime has its roots in such aesthetical judgements made by Longinus. Burke defines the sublime in relation

[2] This also explains why the Romantic poet William Blake looks to Milton for visionary empowerment and seeks to set Milton free from his 'mind-forged manacles' by re-working the Miltonic theodicy epically presented in "Paradise Lost" (1667). It is accordingly possible to consider Milton as an example both for the neoclassical sublime and the Burkean sublime.

to the feelings of terror and pain that external objects evoke independent of the beholder[3]. He evaluates the encounter with something terrible or infinitely vast from a safe distance as the cause of the sublime. In his own words, *"[w]hatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, 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*" (Burke, 2004: p. 340). Different from beauty that incorporates "*gentle emotions that neo-classic art sought to embody*" (Monk, 1062: p. 55), the sublime strikes with terror and delight. Following the empirical tradition, Burke thus establishes a strong connection between the senses and the experience of the sublime by evaluating the faculties of imagination and judgement based on sensual perception. Abrams notes, "*[t]he imagination, says Burke, is a creative power; it can represent the images of things in the order in which they were received by our* senses *or it can rearrange them in a new way*" (1999: p. 337). Therefore, the senses constitute the basis of the sublime which can be observed in our bodily reactions to the images of things in various forms. Burke describes the experience of the sublime as follows:

> *[T]he ear-drum suffered a convulsion, and the whole body consented with it. The tension of the part thus increasing at every blow, by the united forces of the stroke itself, the expectation, and the surprise, it is worked up to such a pitch as to be capable of the sublime; it is brought just to the verge of pain. Even when the cause has ceased; the organs of hearing being often successively struck in a similar manner, continue to vibrate in that manner for some time longer; this is an additional help to the greatness of the effect.* (1823: p. 203-204)

Burke establishes an empirical basis for Longinus's doctrine of 'the concourse of feelings' that the sublime, through rhetorical empowerment, is expected to evoke in the audience. He, as conceived in the excerpt above, pictures all the senses collaborating or rather striving during the experience of the sublime. The sublime as the terrifying, astonishing, and disrupting poses a challenging alternative to the beautiful as unity, certainty, and regularity. The need for a transcendental aesthetic category –it is an empirical transcendence in Burke's case– rather than the empirical one results from the restraint enforced by epistemology of the Enlightenment. The Burkean sublime places darkness, obscurity, and supernatural power above order and

[3] Monk explains that it is John Dennis who defines the sublime as the expression of the greatest passion. To Dennis, the sublime negates the reason and transcends the rules. Dennis's enthusiasm to subordinate all qualities to emotion is seen as an attempt beyond Longinus and Boileau. However, to Monk, Dennis does not manage to go beyond the paradigm of his time (1962: p. 53).

rationality. It is this epistemological impasse that the Age of Reason transmits to the Romantics and triggers the birth of the sublime as it breaches the gap between the subject and the object. The Burkean association of the sublime with terror, pain, and darkness as transgressive elements is very significant due to its introduction of an irrational element into aesthetic judgements that dethrone the idealization of rules and technical qualities.

The Burkean sublime can be observed in the gothic novel and the poetry of the graveyard school (a pre-Romantic movement) of the 18th century. The former's engagement with horror and the latter's with the melancholy of mortality introduced a new form of emotionalism against the cold rationality of Enlightenment. In reference to *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Ann Radcliffe describes the impact of natural terror on the mind in Burkean terms: "*A terror of this nature, as it occupies and expands the mind; and elevates it to a high expectation; is purely sublime*" (Leitch, 2001: p. 538). This relationship between the sublime and the gothic in terms of expanding and elevating the mind's capacity is a fundamental quality of the Burkean sublime. On the other hand, Burke associates the sublime with mortality that can be observed in pre-romantic works such as "The Seasons" (1730) by James Thomson or "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751) by Thomas Gray with a melancholic yearning to reconnect to nature through death. Such coexistence of two opposing situations, life/*Eros* and death/*Thanatos*, as the source of the sublime in their poems fits into the Burkean sublime which is related to the finitude of the humankind. In a letter to one of his friends, Burke describes his feelings during a flood in Dublin: "*It gives me pleasure to see nature in those great though terrible Scenes, it fills the mind with grand ideas, and turns the Soul in upon herself. This. ... forced some reflections on me.... I considered how little man is yet in his own mind how great*" (qtd. in White, 1993: p. 511). Burke's account of the influence of this flood can be seen in the pre-Romantics' preoccupation with life-death dilemma due to its potential to promote a self-encountering through its capability to elevate the mind can more clearly be observed in Wordsworth's poetry. In his "The Prelude", the poetic persona's description of a mind that is filled with infinity by taking its inspiration from "*the dark abyss*" highlights the sublime's capacity to reveal a "*transcendent power*" through nature (From *Ascent of Snowdon*, 60-68). Wordsworth's emphasis on the sublime's capability to make one aware of the existence of a greater power and to promote self-reflection shares a common ground with the Burkean sublime to be defined as "*turn[ing] the Soul in upon herself*" in Burke's own words stated above. Yet the Wordsworthian Romantic sublime goes beyond the Burkean understanding of the concept by promoting transcendence of the material reality.

Accordingly, Burkean sublime has its own limits due to its empirically oriented basis, which can also be observed in his paradoxical relationship with the politics of his time. It is undeniable that Burke, as Longinus does, values the spiritual

power of the sublime on the ground that it encourages a self-questioning and hence precipitates the formation of 'grand ideas'. However, unlike Longinus, he seems to argue that the sublime makes one aware of her/his weakness before nature, no matter how great human beings are in their own mind. Although Longinus engages in portraying the human being as an overreaching being, Burke contrarily reflects upon the finitude of the mankind. In this respect, the return to the self/the soul induced by the sublime is expected to enable these two different kinds of realization: The infinity of the mind and the finitude of the mankind.

This paradoxical attitude towards the power of the sublime recalls Burke's dissatisfaction with the French revolution. He has been a key figure in challenging the neoclassical tradition and supporting the American Revolution that opened the way for the literary movement following the French revolution. Yet, Burke is highly conservative in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). Shaw writes that Burke's *Reflections* argues that "*the French people are not fit for Liberty and must have a Strong hand like that of their former masters to coerce them*" (1999: p. 55). Monk explains the irony between his politics and taste with the conviction that "*Burke is not anarchistic but has unortohodox taste*" (1962: p. 96). While the Burkean sublime is associated with the revolutionary spirit, Burke himself identifies such kind of a sublime as a "*false sublime*" that intends to bring chaos to the society. White notes that "*Burke had the fear of false sublime which would limit the confrontation with the finitude and he was afraid of the French revolution promoting false sublime*" (1993: p. 511). Accordingly, for Burke, the effect of the sublime should aim at elevating minds up to a point where they cannot avoid accepting their finitude based on a restricted sensual capacity. Yet this form of elevation in the mind as proposed in the Burkean sublime is not appreciated by William Blake, a visionary, who "*abhors 'Enquiry' since it engages in a physical explanation for art, but the empirical method of Burke does not attempt to go beyond the immediate sensible qualities. He restricts his inquiry to sensation and to its physical and emotional effect*" (Monk, 1962: p. 96)[4]. Burke does not attribute a mystical approach to his sublime, to which Blake and Coleridge add a neo-platonic and mystical aspect in their poetry. To exemplify, the sublime in Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", "Kubla Khan", and "Christabel" has the power to shatter egoistical boundaries and enable a psychic expansion through the transition from the material to the visionary. This lack of a spiritual transcendence in the Burkean sublime locates his conception between

[4] Blake writes in a letter (1803) to Thomas Butts: "Allegory addressed to the intellectual powers, while it is all together hidden from the corporeal understanding, is my definition of most sublime poetry" (Blake, in Balfour, 2002: p. 148), which explains his definition of the sublime as the power to turn the sensible into conceivable.

Neoclassical and Romantic aesthetics, and opens the way for Kant to take the sublime to a "noetic" direction, to use Doran's terminology[5].

The Enlightenment was in a state of crisis in the 1780s, and it was the decade during which Kant published his *Critique*. Therefore, it was considered as "*a transitional decade in which the cultural balance shifted decisively away from the Enlightenment toward Romanticism*" (*Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*). The shift has philosophically been visible in terms of transition from Locke's theory of the passive mind to Kant's theory of the creative mind. The latter's subjectivism indicates a profound change in perspective in philosophy and art that complies with the art of the Romantics. To Wheeler, "*Kant's great influence on romanticism was, then, the systematization of the mind as synthetic and creative, and not merely as associative and selective*" (1989: p. 46). Rather than idealizing nature or imagination as the source of the sublime, Kant looks to the mind for it[6]. Kant argues that there is an *a priori* principle of judgement that renders an aesthetic judgement purposive, but the sublime denies this principle. While he associates the beautiful with purposiveness without a purpose, Kant defines the sublime as unpurposive or counter-purposive with a purpose. Beauty is partially determinable independent of the subject, but the sublime pertains entirely to the perception of the subject. Within this context, Kant divides the sublime into two: The mathematical sublime and the dynamic sublime. Burnham explains that the overwhelmingness of the experience of the sublime stems from its spatial or temporal enormity (its size) in the mathematical sublime and from the hugeness of its power in the dynamic sublime (2000: p. 91). The failure of the imagination to calculate the size of an object in the mathematical sublime is accompanied by the triumph of reason to dominate it in the dynamic sublime. The experience of the sublime, thus, goes through two processes: One involves counter-purposiveness and displeasure, and the second involves overcoming this feeling through reason, and thus, rendering the experience painfully pleasurable. Kant asserts:

[5] According to Doran, "Dennis's singular emphasis on violent emotion represents the beginning of a bifurcation in the theory of the sublime, with one strand orientated toward the pathetic (terror, the irrational, the sensational) and the other toward the noetic (the mental, the intellectual, the rational), Burke being the primary exponent of the first and Kant of the second" (2015: p. 7).

[6] Trott states that this attitude seems to oppose British Romanticism as it idealizes the imagination-especially combined with the fact that Kant preferred Milton and Pope to the German Romantic poets and Kant was unknown in Britain except by Coleridge. However, Kant's sublime is the "*sublime of crisis*" resulting from the mind-nature split which "*lies at the heart of Romanticism*" (Trott, 1999: p. 90). In Kantian sublime, the mind feels a sense of power during the failure of imagination. The simultaneous co-existence of opposite feelings in the Kantian sublime reflects the dynamic and complex nature of the Romantic sublime.

> *The feeling of the sublime is therefore a feeling of pain arising from the want of accordance between the aesthetical estimation of magnitude formed by the imagination and the estimation of the same formed by reason. There is at the same time a pleasure thus excited, arising from the correspondence with rational ideas of this very judgment of the inadequacy of our greatest faculty of sense, insofar as it is a law for us to strive after these ideas*. (Kant, 2004: p. 436)

To put it more explicitly, Kant suggests that the sublime occurs at the moment when one painfully struggles to achieve equivalence between the calculations made by the imagination and reason. However, the experience of the sublime involves pleasure as well which is paradoxically obtained through reasonable thinking, which makes the recognition of the inadequacy of reason meaningful. The harmony of the mathematical sublime and dynamic sublime is therefore necessary for an aesthetic judgement. Unlike Burke, Kant does not attribute true sublimity to "*shapeless mountain masses piled in wild disorder upon one another with their pyramids of ice*", and emphasizes that "*volcanoes in all their violence of destruction; hurricanes with their track of devastation; […], and such like-these exhibit our faculty of resistance as insignificantly small in comparison with their might*" (Kant, 2004: p. 436-437). The main point is that the mind judging an object is elevated not because of the form of the object, but the capability of the imagination and reason to locate the limitlessness and might of this object. That is why; Kant defines the Burkean sublime as a physiological and psychological exposition.

To Kant, "[*t]rue sublimity must be sought only in the mind of the judging person, not in the natural object the judging of which prompts this mental attunement*" (Abrams, 1999: p. 525). The objects are the instruments that enable access to the forms/categories reserved in the mind of the perceiving subject. Monk points out a parallelism between Wordsworth's and Kant's understanding of the sublime[7] based on the crossing of the Alps section in "The Prelude" (1962: p. 4). To him, the Alpine landscape creates an atmosphere in which nature can manage to evoke a sense of the sublime, but the focus is on the power of the mind's power to grasp it. In Book VI of "The Prelude", the poetic persona speaks to his conscious soul: "'*I recognise thy glory:' in such strength/ Of usurpation, when the light of sense/ Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed/The invisible world*" (Line 54-57), referring to the role of the mind during the experience of sublime. The momentary split between imagination

[7] It should be noted that Wordsworth (and Coleridge) did not read Kant when he wrote down his major poetic works. Yet his idea of transcendence from the physical to the spiritual world shares a common ground with Kant's conception of the sublime as a transition from the phenomenal to the noumenal.

and understanding during the experience of the sublime enables transition from the phenomenal to the noumenal[8], which defines the transcendental in Kantian terms and implies transcendence in Romantic terms. In terms of transcendence, Coleridge's[9] understanding of the sublime has affinities with the Kantian sublime even more than Wordsworth's. Not attributing the sublime to the senses and a passive mind, Coleridge shares Kant's view that the sublime is within ourselves and leads to a diligent reflection upon eternity. Rejecting the Burkean idea that the object itself is the sublime, Coleridge follows the German path as cited by Shaw: "*I meet, I find the Beautiful-but I give, contribute, or rather attribute the Sublime. No Object of Sense is sublime in itself*" (Shaw, 2006: p. 121). The description of gloomy, dark, and frightening natural scenes in his poetry such as in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is not, accordingly, the source of the sublime, but offers a paradoxical representation in order to intensify the grandeur of the sublime, which is a pre-condition for elevating the mind to perceive what lies beyond the empirical reality.

This sort of philosophical high-mindedness enabled by the experience of the sublime has been a critical concern in Kant's conception of the term as well as Longinus's and Burke's. Yet Kant's account of mental elevation shares a similarity with Longinus's sublime more than the Burkean one does. It is a point that signifies the transition from the object-oriented Burkean sublime to the subject-oriented Kantian sublime, which relates the Kantian sublime more to Romantic aesthetics. The Kantian sublime anticipates an irresistible effect upon the audience by leading them into the realm of the incomprehensible and unrepresentable. As a precursor of this idea, Longinus emphasizes the sublime's capacity to transport the audience to a world beyond the empirical reality. The fact that the audience is expected "*to be swept off their feet*" (Longinus, 1965: p. 130) and left overwhelmed by the incomprehensible transmitted through a powerful language might suggest an unconscious and unpurposive transportation of the individual; however, the sublime actually functions to elevate the mind by dissolving the binaries, which turns the sense of the sublime experienced by the poet and the audience into a collective good. Longinus asserts that *"[w]e should do all we can to train our minds towards the production of grand ideas, perpetually impregnating them, so to speak, with a noble inspiration*" (1965: p. 122). The soul is regarded as the inseparable part of the body, and the sublime is

[8] In Kant's philosophy, noumenal is opposed to phenomenonal. He defines the concept of a noumenon as "an object that would be cognized by an intellect whose intuition brings its very objects into existence" and of phenomenon as the object of "universal experience" (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

[9] While Coleridge produced his *Biographia Literaria* (1817) about two decades after the composition of his profound poems, his affinity with Kant's metaphysics is undeniable considering his embracement of the notion of transcendental sublimity by attributing the self/subject/perceiver as the creator.

the element that nourishes the soul to elevate the mind, a foreshadowing of the Romantic Movement, problematizing the mind/body duality and calling for social renovation through poetry that needs to be discussed further in relation to the Kantian sublime.

Kant shares Longinus's emphasis on the sublime's capacity to transport the individual to the level of the divine for grand purposes while Burke, as discussed earlier, argues that the sublime guides the individual to encounter his finitude in the presence of absolute power. Longinus points out that "*sublimity carries one up to where one is close to the majestic mind of God*" (1965: p. 156). Likewise, Kant's idea of self-transcendence associates the human mind with the mighty God and brings morality into the conceptualisation of the sublime that might coincide with Longinus's concern for the common good. Burnham notes that for Kant *"[t]he demand of reason for self-transcendence of will is thus related to demand of reason to obey moral law. Through it, we are shown to belong to a transcendent community of supersensible beings, created in the very image of God*" (2000: p. 100). The experience of the sublime creates a moment in which the individuals transcend the empirical or phenomenal world through the supersensuous powers of reason. Although a natural object seems to overwhelm the human capacity, it is indeed the sensory capacity under risk, but reason incorporates the idea of infinity and a power of resistance. Such capacity of reason endows the individuals with higher moral functions, as it provides a glimpse of the divine called *the One* among the Neo-Platonic Romantics.

Accordingly, the dynamic interplay between individual transcendence and collective good has been a crucial point in Longinus's and Kant's understanding of the sublime, and extensively poeticized by the second-generation Romantic Percy Bysshe Shelley. Shelley is informed about Kant's metaphysics through Coleridge, and he, as Longinus does for the unity of mind and soul, underlines the interconnectedness of reason and imagination as a major point in his *Defence of Poetry* (2004: p. 499). In "Mont Blanc", the poetic persona endows the "great Mountain" responsible for changing the already-present ideas in the mind, yet acknowledges that it is the mind of a poet itself that has the capacity to learn and teach through the suspension of "[*l]arge codes of fraud and woe*" (III, 80-81). A poet is the one endowed with the ability to accomplish the union of her/his imagination and reason to the extent that enables her/him transcend her/his own time and space. Yet, although Shelleyan transcendence differs from the Kantian transcendental philosophy in that it does not acknowledge the existence of a distinct noumenal world[10], his notion of transcendence reveals a Longinian and Kantian purpose attributed to the sublime that is the expansion of the mind for common good. This purpose has been embodied in the

[10] Shelley, as an "intelligent materialist and intelligent idealist in his own way" (Keach 124) seeks after a psychic transcendence by identifying the noumenal world with the psychic world.

image of *the poet as prophet* in British Romanticism. Poetry with its prophetic power in this period aims for social renovation through selflessness. De Luca notes that "*nearly all the great Romantics recognized and profoundly grappled with the twin lures of attaining an aggrandized self and of serving a common good through the articulation of a universalizing vision in which all might share*" (1991: p. 227). The lure of "serving a common good" by "attaining an aggrandized self" is only possible through the experience of the sublime where the momentary split between imagination and understanding imitates the rupture between man and nature, and the overcoming of this split through the Romantic transcendence/Kantian transcendental sublime functions to end this rupture between man and nature.

To sum up, the emphasis on the transcendence of material existence and the infinity of the creative mind has been a crucial point in the Romantic conception of the sublime as opposed to the Neoclassical conception of the sublime which is the elevated form of decorum to have been re-defined as the beautiful within the scope of this study. The sublime's capability to elevate the mind by transcending the material reality can be observed in Longinus, Burke and Kant in varying degrees. That the Burkean sublime is empirically grounded and signifies an encounter with the finitude designates him as a threshold figure between Neoclassical and Romantic aesthetics and further explains why he embraces a limited understanding of serving the common good as mentioned earlier. On the other hand, the Kantian sublime, in line with the Longinian idea of the human being as an overreaching entity, signifies the infinity of the mind and hence the enhancement of its moral capability for common good, which brings this conception of the sublime closer to the Romantic aesthetics. This study, as a result, concludes that the Longinian sublime incorporates later categories of the beautiful and the sublime within itself. This not only precludes a dichotomous understanding of Longinus's aesthetics but also sheds light on how the Burkean and Kantian re-working of the Longinian sublime symbolizes the gradual transition from the Neoclassical to the Romantic understanding of art.

IV. Conclusion

This study has tried to explore how Longinus's non-differentiation between the beautiful and the sublime has brought his conception of the sublime into both Neoclassical and Romantic aesthetics, and how the establishment of these two aesthetic experiences as mutually exclusive categories by Burke and Kant indicates the gradual transition from the Neoclassical to the Romantic understanding of art. It has explored how the association of the beautiful with proportion, regularity, harmony, and pleasure in contrast to the association of the sublime with infinity, overwhelmingness, fear, and pain constitutes the distinction between the two concepts as specified by Burke and Kant, an idea not particularly and deliberately suggested by Longinus. The study has pointed out that the conceptualisation of the beautiful by Burke and Kant represents the Neoclassical re-working of the classical doctrine of decorum; and that the empirically grounded/object-oriented Burkean sublime and the

transcendental/subject-oriented Kantian sublime offer two distinct versions of the Romantic challenges to this doctrine. Although the Burkean sublime takes the feeling of terror as its source, which opposes neoclassical rationality, yet is empirically grounded, Kant's conception of the sublime is based on subjective universality that incorporates a transcendental quest, and hence complies with the Romantic idealization of transgression and transcendence.

This study has accordingly defined the neoclassical alliance between mind and nature as "the beautiful" and the Romantic transcendence of the discordance between them as "the sublime" by limiting itself to these two aesthetic categories in reference to Longinus, Burke and Kant within the scope of British Neoclassicism and Romanticism. Yet the intellectuals particularly from all over Europe such as the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, critical theorist Theodor Adorno from the Frankfurt School, and the postmodernist Jean-François Lyotard have continued the conceptualisation and evolution of the sublime in the 20th century. Most notably, the critic Peter V. Zima (1999) has re-worked Kant's concept of the beautiful in relation to the 20th century theories such as Russian Formalism, New Criticism, and Prague Structuralism, and the sublime in relation to the theories of the Avant-Garde, Poststructuralism, and Postmodernism. These critical studies, particularly of the sublime, point out that further studies can be pursued with a two-fold purpose to investigate how these aesthetic categories can shed light on the evolution of aesthetics and subjectivity in our contemporary world.

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