

The Sublime in Mircea Eliade's Fiction

MARINICA TIBERIU SCHIOPU

Abstract

The present paper is dealing with the diversity of manifestations of the sublime in Mircea Eliade's fictional works. The internationally renowned historian of religions included several representations of the sublime in his writings, either religious or mythological. Literary critics mainly researched the sacred and the profane in Eliade's work and they have not focused on the sublime. In the novels *Bengal Nights* and *Isabel and the Devil's Waters* or short stories such as *Nights at Serampore* or *The Secret of Dr Honigberger*, the author used several Indian mythological and religious elements which generated a sublime state to readers. In some other writings (*The Forbidden Forest*, *Miss Christina* etc.), Eliade recycled myths and symbols from Romanian mythology, having the same target. This study aims at exploring and classifying the different types of sublime in Mircea Eliade's writings. The analysis will be based on hermeneutics, close reading, narratology and semiotics.

Keywords: Eliade, mythology, profane, sacred, sublime.

I. Introduction: Different Perspectives on the Sublime over Time

The *sublime*, as a fundamental aesthetic category, has been understood and defined in a variety of ways, sometimes it was misunderstood, generated a state of equivocity and proved itself as versatile:

"The history of the sublime, as the history of many crucial notions for the humanities, may be seen and understood as a history of misreadings of the past. There is something ironic and perverse in the contemporary – postmodern – renaissance of the sublime. The almost two-thousand-year-old world history of the sublime is then full of insinuations, ambiguities, and sudden pauses" (Kenneth and Pluciennik 2002: 719).

Philip Shaw emphasized the variety of applications of this notion, from the gross reality to the most refined states of mind: "A building or a mountain may be sublime, as may a thought, a heroic deed, or a mode of expression. But the definition of the sublime is not restricted to value judgements; it also describes a state of mind" (Shaw 2006: 1).

Jane Forsey, starting from Guy Sircello's doubt about the possibility of a theory of the sublime, noticed the increasing interest in the sublime shown by the contemporary literary theoreticians and critics:

"The aesthetic notion of the sublime has had a great deal in the last decade or so engendering monographs by Paul Crowther, Jean-François Lyotard, and Kirk Pillow, critical anthologies from Dabney Townsend and from Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla, and numerous journal articles, conference panels and symposia. The renewal of interest is perhaps: a notion that conjures up the inexplicable, the overwhelming, and the horrendous may be well suited to the current age" (Forsey 2007: 381).

The conclusion drawn by Forsey is that: "the sublime, we have seen, cannot be an object of experience, but neither it can be a description of the cognitive failure of a given subject. If it is to deal only with some feeling or emotive state, it devolves to a theory whatsoever" (*ibidem*: 388). Gillian B. Pierce, in the introduction to *The Sublime Today: Contemporary Readings in the Aesthetic*, offered a possible answer for the revival of the research on this aesthetic notion and its relevance in the contemporary world: "Why the sublime? Given the magnitude of the problems confronting us today in the political, financial and economic spheres, this dynamic, which describes the experience of the human subject confronting and trying to make sense of that which lies beyond the horizon of his or her comprehension, seems particularly relevant" (Pierce 2012: 1).

The sublime represents a central aesthetic category designating a particular experience due to a work of art, different from the category of *the beautiful*, although, "the sublime has been seen alternatively as part of, and in contrast to, the beautiful, but always associated with feelings of awe and exceptionality" (Cavanaugh 2014: 57). *The sublime* is characterised by a psychic tension which exalts and attains the highest degree of completion, beauty, elevation in the hierarchy of the moral, aesthetic and intellectual values. The analysed category became important in the XVIII century when Edmund Burke published *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), in which the author made a distinction between *the sublime* and *the beautiful*. The *beautiful* is possible only in the context of love or other similar feelings and represents the capacity to like, which transgresses towards tradition and utility. The *sublime* is driven towards notions such as terror and enchantment. Strong emotions and jams, terrible elements which act similarly to fear, the passions that bind society can be considered primary sources of the sublime. Starting from the natural sublime one reaches the feeling of wonder, the spectator being affected by what he/she sees, his/her mind being totally absorbed by its object. In the treatise *On the Sublime* (the oldest writing on this aesthetic category), Pseudo-Longinus (I century BCE) described *the sublime* as a supreme elevation, a metaphysical revelation, an ecstatic state of amazement, miracle, heaviness, ardour as a result of the concentration of energies, visions and creative tensions. Criticising the exuberant style and the rhetoric of Caecilius from Kale Akte, Longinus pleaded for the cultivation of passion. The writer's mission is, according to Longinus, to generate a state of ecstasy and miracle using the discursive techniques he or she possesses. Longinus's *sublime* refers to feelings of admiration or worship caused by the greatness of the outstanding actions of heroes or by other events which arouse grandiose spiritual tensions. The literary qualities of the text which communicates the sublime should be: the laconism and the expressiveness achievable in the short and dazzling fragments even in some long poems. *Peri hypsous* (*On the Sublime*) is considered the second most influential ancient treatise, after Aristotle's *Poetics*, "in terms of its influence on modern literary criticism, aesthetics, and the philosophy of art" (Doran 2015: 27).

Immanuel Kant, in the *Critique of Judgement* (1790), analysed the *sublime* from another perspective, as different from the *beautiful*. He distinguished the following types of sublime: "the mathematically and the dynamically sublime, which relate respectively to nature vastness and power" (Crawford 2013: 51). Dale Jacquette stated, regarding Schopenhauer's standpoint on *the sublime*, that: "the subject in moments of aesthetic appreciation become so absorbed in the experience of beauty or the sublime as to momentarily forget all concerns of the will, transfixed by aesthetic fascination beyond the willful need of self-interest and desire" (Jacquette 2013: 69).

The transition from the *beautiful* towards the *sublime* (and the propensity for the last one) marked the shift from Neoclassicism to Romanticism. Among the Romantic writers, the sublime was perceived and defined differently. Coleridge “believed that certain objects, such as the stars, were naturally fit to represent sublimity, and that in art the sublime did not depend upon large gestures or the prominence of the sensuous symbol [...] Like Richter, Herder, as well as Richard Payne Knight, one of Burke’s main opponents in England, he rejected pain as a basis for the sublime” (Modiano 1978: 118-119). Matthew C. Borushko noticed that one of the consequences of the sublime in Shelley’s work is represented by a form of *selflessness*:

“There is, in other words, a loss of self-possession involved in the Shelleyan sublime; more precisely, the sublime loss of self is exchanged for the illusion of aesthetic gain, or, the illusion that *is* aesthetic gain. Indeed, Shelley leaves us without a doubt that the feeling of imaginative power is a momentary illusion, completing the description with the attribution of power to Nature [...]” (Borushko 2013: 228).

For Wordsworth the *beautiful* and the *sublime* can be the simultaneous characteristics of an object, the prevalence of one of them depends on the spectator’s perspective:

“He was [...] also interested in the beautiful, but there is no detail of importance given in the fragment on that topic except the observations that the same object may be both sublime and beautiful, and that in attending to the beautiful we give more attention to the parts of the object than we do when we attend to the sublime” (Owen 1973: 71).

Researching *the beautiful* and *the sublime* in Virginia Woolf’s work, Patrick Colm Hogan noticed a link between *sublimity* and *loneliness*: “Whereas beauty is connected with a sense of overcoming solitude through attachment, sublimity is connected with existential loneliness” (Colm Hogan 2016: 40). Daniel T. O’Hara classified the *sublime* in Virginia Woolf’s writings as “modern sublime” (O’Hara 2015: 3) and described it as an “uncanny experience of undergoing the sudden return of an identification with an apparently surmounted power that makes us feel, momentarily, both helpless and somehow its author” (*ibidem*: 8).

Recently, Michael Shapiro, in *The Political Sublime*, spoke about numerous types of sublime which resonate with the realities of the contemporary world: “the political sublime”, “the nuclear sublime”, “the industrial sublime” or “the racial sublime” (Shapiro 2018). The vastness and the ubiquity of economics, for the contemporary theoreticians, seem to generate a sense of sublimity:

“A vast and worrisome source of ambivalent pleasure. The possibility of delight beyond the assimilable, of being overtaken, rendered dumbstruck, flattened by surprise, all rendered palpable by an intermingling of indefinable fear. This admixture of the uplifting and the overwhelming is the stuff, of course, of the (Western) aesthetic sublime, at least those notions of the sublime that can be traced back to the Enlightenment writings of such diverse thinkers as Joseph Addison, Frances Hutcheson, Edmund Burke, and, of course, Immanuel Kant” (Amariglio et alii 2009: 1).

Because of the many perspectives on this aesthetic category generated over time, *the sublime* was considered “one of the most important and one of the most elusive aesthetic concepts” (Townsend 2006: 308). Nowadays, the notion of the sublime is also explored from the perspective of environmental studies, indigenous studies or geography. It still stimulates debates among theoreticians not only from the field of humanities but also from the area of politics, economics etc.

II. A Possible Classification of the Sublime in Mircea Eliade's Writings

Mircea Eliade used a variety of themes and topics in his fictional writings, many of them being rooted in his keen interest in world religions and mythologies. *Time* and *space* represented two of the most explored topics in Eliade's works, the author paying special attention to the *sacred* and the *profane* time and space. Besides these two literary categories, the Romanian writer recycled some mythological characters/symbols in his work as well (for instance *the vampire* in *Miss Christina* or the symbol of *snake* in the short-story *The Snake*).

The sublimity in Eliade's fiction presents three main roots: *religion*, *mythology* and *nature*. Thus, one can distinguish three types of the *sublime*: *the religious sublime*, *the mythological sublime* and *the natural sublime*.

III. The Religious Sublime

The religious aspect of humans' life is related to the depth of their inner world and the vastness of the outer space, generating a sense of sublimity:

"Religion does not have a home or a place in any of the commonly demarcated spheres of human activity, which is why the attempt to locate a determinative space for religion has become impossible. As the depth dimension of any or all of these functions of human living, however, religion represents the limits of each function. As the depth dimension of individual faculties or functions, religion appears as sublime, because one can identify a sphere or phenomenon as religious only when its self-representation breaks down" (Crockett 2001: 103).

The *religious* or *sacred sublime* can be identified in *Bengal Nights* (1933), *The Secret of Dr Honigberger* (1940), or *With the Gypsy Girls* (1963) etc.

In *Bengal Nights*, Mircea Eliade combined, as usual, the sacred and the profane in the symbolic wedding scene:

"Maitreyi continued, however, with a simplicity that finally won me. She spoke to the water, to the star-filled sky, to the forest, to the earth. She pressed the grass hard with her clenched fists, which held the ring and made her vow: 'I swear by you, Earth, that I will be Allan's and his alone. I will grow in him, like the earth grows in you. As you wait for rain, I will wait for him and his body will be like the rays of the sun to me. I swear in your presence that our union will be fertile, because I love him from my own free will. Let none of the harm that comes, if it comes, fall on him but on me alone, who chose him. You listen to me, Mama Earth, and you tell me the truth. If I am dear to you as you are to me, this moment, with my hand, with the ring, give me the strength to love him forever, to give him a joy that others do not know, a life full of richness and joy' (Eliade 1994: 108).

The sublime that the reader experiences after reading this passage is related to the sacralised cosmos that *homo religiosus* designed. According to Eliade's theory, "[...] the earth was not conceived only as source of agrarian fertility. As complementary power to the sky, it revealed itself to be an integral part of the cosmic totality" (Eliade 1982: 12). Thus, Maitreyi not only considers Mother Earth as a witness of her love and her vow but also a patronal goddess. For Allan, Maitreyi was a primitive: "She seemed a child, a primitive" (Eliade 1994: 32) and Eliade considered that the primitive was a *homo religiosus* par excellence, who "can live only in a sacred space" (Eliade 1961: 55). Maitreyi's attitude is a pantheistic one, calling all the natural elements to witness her love and to protect it on the basis of the relationship between nature and deities, as David S. Shields stated:

“the religious sublime represents nature only to dissolve it and discover the divine power animating it” (Shields 1984: 241). The sublimity of this moment consists of the combination of worship and fear; because of the fear of any possible harm, the young girl asks the Earth to secure her love.

The metaphysical dimension of the short-story *The Secret of Dr Honigberger* generates a sense of sublimity due to the occult practices that the doctor experienced. The passion for the Indian mysticism led Dr Zerlendi on the path of yoga. The *religious sublime* builds itself gradually during the investigation of the narrator, while new evidence of the use of yoga practice is found, and it is directly linked to the quest of the *Absolute*. Dr Zerlendi, researching Dr Honigberger’s interest for mysticism, transgresses the historical time, entering another dimension. The three main characters of this short-story are masters of the sacred, heroes who are searching and who understand what they are searching for. Dr Zerlendi’s secret diary is the proof of an initiated person who discovered how to escape the time maintaining the continuum of consciousness, thus, his diary could be considered the evidence of the escape from the common time, maintaining his lucidity. *The Secret of Dr Honigberger* has an important intertextual component: it is built upon the real Dr Honigberger’s book *Thirty-five Years in the Orient*, as the narrator indicates: “I must admit that at that time I knew very little about Dr Johann Honigberger. I recall reading, many years before, his principal work *Thirty-five Years in the East*, in an English translation, the only one which had been available to me in Calcutta” (Eliade 1970: 67). The analysed work can be considered a piece of detective fiction which encompasses a metaphysical theme that Eugen Simion considered: “the favourite theme in his mythical prose after 1945: the escape from time and space using the yoga practice” (Simion 2011: 189). This theme is captivating for the three scholars (Honigberger, Zerlendi and the narrator) and the narrator expresses his fascination for it, which can be a sublime feeling: “At that moment I too felt myself enthralled by a strange enchantment I never had felt before” (Eliade 1970: 94). The religious sublime in *The Secret of Dr Honigberger* is doubled by a mythological one.

In the short-story *With the Gypsy Girls* (1959), the *sublime* consists of strange events which bring the piano teacher – Gavrilesco – out of the historical time, the main character being involved in a hierophany, a manifestation of the sacred into the profane. The entrance in the sacred time is presented by the narrator as a bewildering transgression from the heat of Bucharest into the coolness of the Gypsies’ hovel (a representation of the labyrinth): “In the shade of the walnut tree, he was bathed in an unexpected, unnatural coolness, and Gavrilesco stood there a moment, bewildered but smiling” (Eliade 1981: 68-69). The sublimity of the transgression into the sacred dimension has a powerful effect on Gavrilesco who suffers a transformation:

“It was a room whose limits he could not see, for the curtains were drawn, and in the semidarkness the screens looked like the walls. He started to walk forward into the room, treading on carpets each one thicker and softer than the last, as if he were stepping on mattresses, and at every step his heart beat faster, until finally he was afraid to go any farther, and he stopped. At the moment he suddenly felt happy, as if he had become young again, and the whole world was his” (*ibidem*: 71-72).

Gavrilesco went through several rooms symbolising the passing from real to unreal, the eight episodes of the story met a symmetrical number of transgressions between sacred and profane. Eugen Simion considered these passings of the main character from an existence to another as “an allegory of death or the passing towards death (Simion 2011: 211).

Thus, the *religious sublime* is related to the transgression from profane to sacred and to the fear/love towards the divine, being a characteristic of *homo religiosus*.

IV. The Mythological Sublime

Mircea Eliade was highly interested in the study of myths and, as a consequence, he recycled several myths pertaining to different religious systems in his literary works. In *Myth and Reality*, Eliade made clear the semantics of myth:

“For the past fifty years at least, Western scholars have approached the study of myth from a viewpoint markedly different from, let us say, that of the nineteenth century. Unlike their predecessors, who treated myth in the usual meaning of the word, that is, as ‘fable’, ‘invention’, ‘fiction’, they have accepted it as it was understood in the archaic societies, where, on the contrary, ‘myth’ means a ‘true story’ and, beyond that, a story that is a most precious possession because it is sacred, exemplary, significant” (Eliade 1963: 1).

The author inserted several mythological elements in his short stories and novels, but only the mythologically-trained reader could decipher them. In *With the Gypsy Girls*, Eliade used the myth of the *labyrinth*, represented by the Gypsies’ house where Gavrilesco was led by the girls. This journey was bewildering, frightening, and ecstatic at the same time for the main character, generating a sublime state of mind. The mythological substrate of the short story is obvious: the old woman is an equivalent of Cerberus, the three girls might be related to the Romanian mythological creatures called *iele*, the number three is highly used by the author, having an important symbolic value. Gavrilesco takes a journey through time, the mythological time, being guided by the Gypsies. The main character entered a labyrinth of old things going through it in a vague state of mind (neither dream nor vigil):

“‘Let me pass!’ he cried. ‘I told you to let me pass!’ . Again someone or something, a creature or an object whose nature he could not determine, touched him on the face and shoulders; at that he began whirling his shalwars blindly over his head in an effort to defend himself. He felt hotter and hotter, he could feel the drops of sweat thrickling down his cheeks, and he was gasping for breath” (Eliade 1970: 86-87).

In *Miss Christina*, Eliade recycled the Romanian myth of the *vampire* (*strigoi* is the traditional term for the *vampire* in Romanian), combining the fantastic and the supernatural to generate a sublime state for the reader. This is achieved by using some antinomies such as being and non-being, reality and non-reality, dream and vigil etc. The use of ambiguity is a favourite strategy of Mircea Eliade in his literary work, as a main characteristic of fiction. Published in 1936, *Miss Christina* started a new stage in Eliade’s literary work, a phase characterized by a massive insertion of fantastic, symbols and myths in his writings. Catalin Ghita emphasized the importance of terror for the action of this short novel, contributing to the increment of the sublimity of this writing: “I speak of ‘terror’, rather than ‘horror’, in the case of Mircea Eliade’s *Miss Christina* for the main reason that the plot seems to provoke anxiety, not revulsion. The main element contributing to this effect is, without any doubt, narrative atmosphere” (Ghita 2013: 59). The same scholar considered this short novel as a main representative of the Romanian Gothic:

“Miss Christina retains from the above-listed features of Romanian Gothic several defining motifs: the isolated country manor, erected in the eerie Danube Plains, the bizarre domestics, the neurotic hosts, the protagonist whose state of mind becomes increasingly erratic and his more down-to-earth sidekick, whose role, though minor by comparison, helps to

establish the mental balance of the hero etc. Certainly, the most complex character of the novel is its eponymous hero, Christina. Eliade proves that the vampire can be not only an agent of destruction and ontological corruption, but also a vehicle carrying an essentially incommunicable and ungraspable sense of transcendence, a reification of 'the beyond'. Her thirst for blood is a substitute for a more refined craving, involving love" (Ghita 2017: 109).

In *The Secret of Dr Honigberger*, the *religious sublime* is doubled by the *mythological* one. The idea of a mythical and utopian/heavenly land triggers a sense of sublime in readers – Shambala:

"For thousands of years rumours and reports have circulated among the cognoscenti of the nations suggesting that somewhere beyond Tibet, among the icy peaks and secluded valleys of Central Asia, there lies an inaccessible paradise, a place of universal wisdom and ineffable peace called Shambala – although it is also known by other names. It is inhabited by adepts from every race and culture who form an inner circle of humanity secretly guiding its evolution. In that place, so the legends say, sages have existed since the beginning of human history in a valley of supreme beatitude that is sheltered from the icy arctic winds and where the climate is always warm and temperate, the sun always shines, the gentle airs are always beneficent and nature flowers luxuriantly" (LePage 1996: 4).

The excitement and the enchantment of the narrator in *The Secret of Dr Honigberger* when he discovered a note in one of Doctor's papers, could be considered a sublime experience: "There were only a couple of words but they filled me with excitement. *Shambala = Agarttha = the invisible realm [...]* I returned to the house the next day earlier than usual. Never before have I entered the library as excited and curious as I was now" (Eliade 1970: 90). The myth of Shambala or Shangri-la has always generated a sublime state of mind to people, especially to Buddhists. The detective plot of *The Secret of Dr Honigberger* is hiding a metaphysical theme and the occult events are related to sublimity. James Hilton was interested in the story of this pure land as well and wrote a novel (*Lost Horizon*) based on this Asian myth.

The Forbidden Forest is a profound mythical novel in which the main character, Stephan Viziru, is trying to escape the historical time; thus, the reader is following his quest to enter the mythical time, the round time. The novel is based on the daily reality which opens secret doors to another dimension, to a mythical world. The universe in Eliade's novel is open, it is pervious to transcendence and salvation. The idea of transcending our prime reality implies a feeling of sublimity and the hero's way to escape history is to die: "He had known that last unending moment would be enough for himself"¹ (Eliade 2007: 291).

V. The Natural Sublime

If the previous two types of sublime are related to culture, the third one is linked to the natural environment in which people live and project their spiritual creation. Although, through scientific and technological progress humans transform nature, generating a shift from the natural or ecological sublime to the industrial or digital sublime, the primary bond between human beings and the natural environment is still functional:

"If nature's sublimity has traditionally been defined in large part by its permanence, its sovereignty, its inviolability, then the decline of this version of the sublime should be cause for concern. Undoubtedly, the fact that through technological advances we do have more control over nature than ever before has contributed to the antiquation of the traditional natural sublime. Furthermore, in addition to altering fundamentally our relationship with

the natural world, technology has assumed an integral role in the ideology of the sublime as it informs that relationship. The sublime is not disappearing along with the disappearance of wild nature; its grounds are merely shifting" (Hitt 1999: 618-619).

Nature has always influenced humans' feelings, either the natural beauty or the destructive power of nature has generated a sublime state in human beings' minds and souls: "rather than being left behind, or indeed being substitutable, natural objects engage the mental powers and maintain the type of activity that grounds the mix of pleasure and displeasure characteristic of the sublime response" (Brady 2012: 101-102).

The miracle and the mystery of nature have a great impact on the two lovers in *Bengal Nights* and the description of a walk through the forest is the best occasion for Eliade to catch the sublimity of the grandeur of nature. The dance of fireflies and the performance of all the elements of nature seems to remind of the cosmic dance (*Lila*) to the reader:

"Chabu, Maitreyi and I set off to explore the forest. The moonless summer night was alight with all the stars of Bengal; fireflies descended on our faces, our shoulders, our necks, like the living jewels of some folk-tale. We did not speak. Little by little, Maitreyi and I moved closer to each other, frightened that Chabu might see us, but encouraged by the silence and the darkness. I do not know what unknown state of being awoke in me, in response to that undreamt – of India stretching out before me. The forest seemed without beginning, without end. The sky veiled itself behind ageless eucalyptus trees, the eye unable to distinguish between the fireflies and the tiny, faraway stars. We stopped at the edge of a pond, all three of us silent. What spells were being woven in those closed lotus petals, in that motionless, soundless water which reflected of a thousand points of gold? Relentlessly, I forced myself to keep awake, to resist the enchantment of the fable that surrounded us. The rational being inside me was floundering in the unreality and the sanctity of our presence at the edge of that silent lake. The state of ecstasy lasted for what seemed an age. I did not speak" (Eliade 1994: 98-99).

The narrator-hero, Allan, expressed his amazement and bliss at the beauty of nature, the powerful effect of the natural sublime on the character consists of silence, contemplation and a feeling of transcendence. The picture of India's natural landscape depicted by Allan is so vivid and engaging for readers and its sublimity invites the reader to reverie and meditation. The purity of nature is doubled by the innocence of Maitreyi's love for Allan. Thus, the scenery resonates with the lovers' feelings.

The same situation is presented in *Nights at Serampore*, where the narrator and his companions take a walk in the forest and India's nature overwhelms them:

"As usual, as soon as we arrived we ordered the servants to get supper ready, while we set off for a walk around the pond. It was the next-to-last night before full moon. We walked along as if in a daze, intoxicated by that invisible cloud of odours which enveloped us even more powerfully the deeper we went into the forest of coconut palms. Whether because of the unexpected encounter with Suren, or because of the charm of the moonlit atmosphere, we were shaken and unsettled. The silence had now become uncanny, and it seemed as though all nature were holding its breath under the spell of the moon. The shaking of a branch made us tremble too, so unnatural did sound and movement seem to us in this extraordinary universal standstill" (Eliade 1970: 18).

Eliade manifested a propensity to place the mysterious events in the middle of the forest, which could be seen as a natural occurrence of the myth of the labyrinth. The scenery and the occult events strengthen the sublimity of the writing, increasing the reader's suspense. The similarities between the landscapes depicted by the narrator in

the two above-mentioned writings are striking: the coconut forests are both located in Bengal, the mystery of the night is intensified by the moon (by its presence or absence), the setting influences the characters' emotions, reaching the peak of the sublime.

Nature is an unceasing source of beauty and sublimity, representing one of the most frequently chosen settings for the events which generate sublime feelings/states of mind.

Conclusion

Mircea Eliade's writings usually deal with mystery, fantastic or occultism, creating the proper atmosphere for the occurrence of the sublime. I identified three main types of the sublime in the fictional work of the Romanian writer: the religious, the mythological and the natural sublime. All of them are related and caused by the main specialization of Eliade as a historian of religions. His entire literary work contains numerous religious elements, Mircea Eliade often used *hierophany* to insert these elements in his short stories and novels. The mythological sublime can be demarcated from the religious sublime by the absence of the divine in the first one and by the intensive usage of myths. The natural or the ecological sublime in Eliade's fiction is generated by the grandeur of nature and it is often linked to the previous two types of sublime, the natural environment representing the setting of the majority of hierophanies. The author inserted in his literary works all the topics that he was interested in from the History of religions: the sacred and the profane, the linear and the circular time, the transcendence of reality, myths and nature etc. All these topics that Eliade recycled in his fictional writing gave a special and distinct profile to his literary work.

University of Craiova, Romania

Notes

¹My translation from Romanian.

Sources

- Eliade, Mircea. 1970. *Two Tales of the Occult*. Translated from the Rumanian by William Ames Coates. Herder and Herder: New York.
- Eliade, Mircea. 1981. *Tales of the Sacred and the Supernatural*. Translated by Mac Linscott Ricketts and William Ames Coates. The Westminster Press: Philadelphia.
- Eliade, Mircea. 1994. *Bengal Nights*. Translated by Catherine Spencer. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Eliade, Mircea. 2007. *Noaptea de Sânziene*. Vol. 2. Bucuresti: Cartex 2000.

References

- Amariglio, Jack; Joseph W. Childers and Stephen E. Cullenberg (eds). 2009. *Sublime Economy: On the Intersection of Art and Economics*. London and New York: Routledge.

- Borushko, Matthew C. "The Politics of Subreption: Resisting the Sublime in Shelley's 'Mont Blanc.'" *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 52, no. 2, 2013, pp. 225–252. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/24247249. Accessed 5 Aug. 2020.
- Brady, Emily. "Reassessing Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature in the Kantian Sublime." *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2012, pp. 91–109. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/jaesteduc.46.1.0091. Accessed 4 Aug. 2020.
- Cavanaugh, Shane. "Science Sublime: The Philosophy of the Sublime, Dewey's Aesthetics, and Science Education." *Education and Culture*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2014, pp. 57–77. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5703/educationculture.30.1.57. Accessed 9 Aug. 2020.
- Colm Hogan, Patrick. 2016. *Beauty and Sublimity: A Cognitive Aesthetics of Literature and the Arts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crawford, Donald. 2013. "Kant", in Berys Gaut and Dominic Mclver Lopes (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Crockett, Clayton. 2001. *A Theology of the Sublime*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Doran, Robert. 2015. *The Theory of the Sublime from Longinus to Kant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Eliade, Mircea. 1963. *Myth and Reality*. Translated from the French by Willard R. Trask. New York and Evanston: Harper & Row.
- Eliade, Mircea. 1982. *A History of Religious Ideas: From Gautama Buddha to the Triumph of Christianity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Forsey, Jane. "Is a Theory of the Sublime Possible?" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 65, no. 4, 2007, pp. 381–389. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/4622261. Accessed 9 Aug. 2020.
- Ghita, Catalin. 2013. "An Example of Romanian Terror Fiction: Aestheticism and Social Criticism in Mircea Eliade's Miss Christina", in Joseph H. Campos II and Catalin Ghita (eds), *At the Nexus of Fear, Horror and Terror: Contemporary Readings*. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press.
- Ghita, Catalin. 2017. *Fear and Big Ideas: A Short Introduction to an Inter-Disciplinary Relationship*. Koszalin: Politechnika Koszalińska.
- Hitt, Christopher. "Toward an Ecological Sublime." *New Literary History*, vol. 30, no. 3, 1999, pp. 603–623., www.jstor.org/stable/20057557. Accessed 10 Aug. 2020.
- Jacquette, Dale. 2013. "Idealism: Schopenhauer, Schiller and Schelling", in Berys Gaut and Dominic Mclver Lopes (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Holmqvist, Kenneth, and Jaroslaw Pluciennik. "A Short Guide to the Theory of the Sublime." *Style*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2002, pp. 718–736. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/style.36.4.718. Accessed 5 Aug. 2020.
- LePage, Victoria. 1996. *Shambala: The Fascinating Truth Behind the Myth of Shangri-la*. Wheaton: Quest Books.
- Modiano, Raimonda. "Coleridge and the Sublime: A Response to Thomas Weiskel's The Romantic Sublime." *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1978, pp. 110–120. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/24039647. Accessed 4 Aug. 2020.
- O'Hara, Daniel T. 2015. *Virginia Woolf and the Modern Sublime: The Invisible Tribunal*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Owen, W. J. B. "The Sublime and the Beautiful in The Prelude." *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1973, pp. 67–86. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/24039116. Accessed 5 Aug. 2020.
- Pierce, Gillian B. (ed.). 2012. *The Sublime Today: Contemporary Readings in the Aesthetic*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Shapiro, Michael. 2018. *The Political Sublime*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Shaw, Philip. 2006. *The Sublime*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Shields, David S. "The Religious Sublime and New England Poets of the 1720s." *Early American Literature*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1984, pp. 231–248. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25056565. Accessed 4 Aug. 2020.
- Simion, Eugen. 2011. *Mircea Eliade: Nodurile si semnele prozei*. Univers Enciclopedic Gold: Bucuresti.
- Townsend, Dabney. 2006. *Historical Dictionary of Aesthetics*. The Scarecrow Press: Lanham, Maryland.