

The sublime:

Throughout the eighteenth century the *sublime* constituted an area of debate among writers and theorists of taste. In contrast to beauty, the sublime was associated with grandeur and magnificence. Craggy, mountainous landscapes, the Alps, in particular, stimulated powerful emotions of terror and wonder in the viewer. Their immense scale offered a glimpse of infinity and awful power, intimations of a metaphysical force beyond rational knowledge and human comprehension. In the expansive domain opened up by the sublime all sorts of *imaginative objects* and *fears* situated in or beyond nature could proliferate in a marvelous profusion of the supernatural and the ridiculous, the magical and the nightmarish, the fantastic and the absurd.

Linked to poetic and visionary power, the sublime also evoked excessive emotions. Through its presentations of supernatural, sensational and terrifying incidents, imagined or not, Gothic produced emotional effects on its readers rather than developing a rational or properly cultivated response.