#### Small Satellite Passive Magnetic Attitude Control

by

#### David T. Gerhardt

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# This thesis entitled: Small Satellite Passive Magnetic Attitude Control written by David T. Gerhardt has been approved for the Department of Aerospace Engineering Sciences

| Professor Scott Palo       |      |
|----------------------------|------|
|                            |      |
|                            |      |
| Professor Hanspeter Schaub |      |
|                            |      |
|                            |      |
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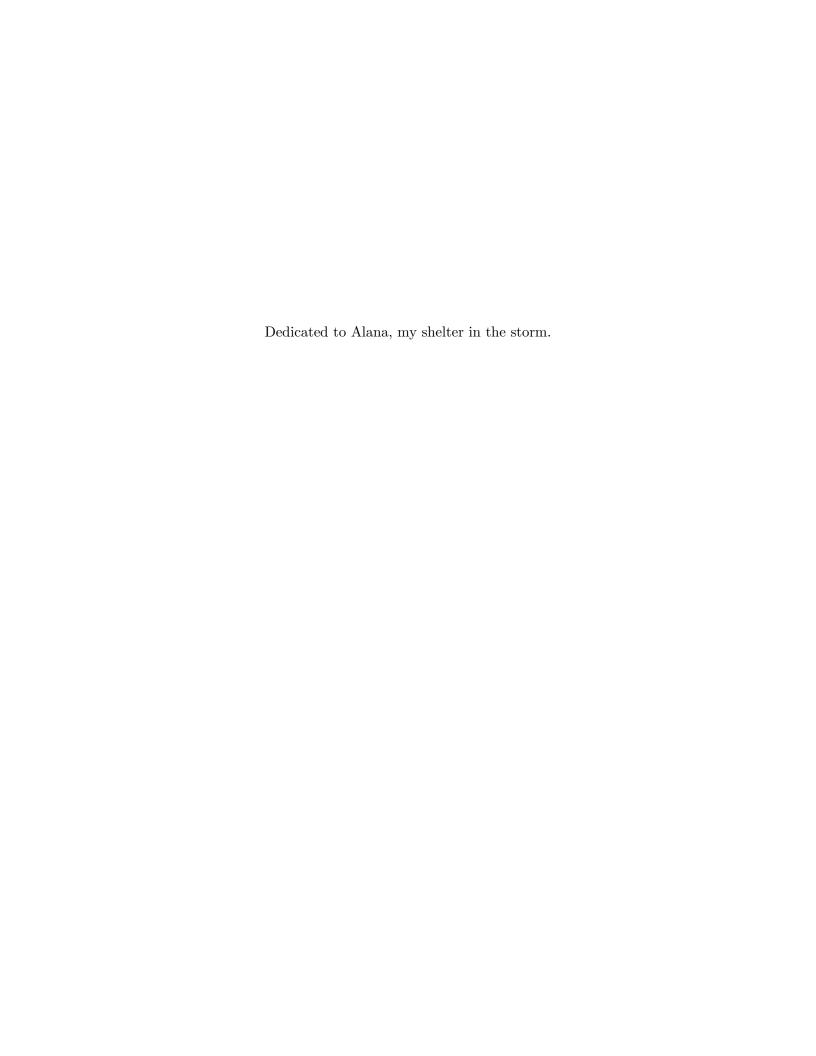
Small Satellite Passive Magnetic Attitude Control

Thesis directed by Professor Scott Palo

Passive Magnetic Attitude Control (PMAC) is capable of aligning a satellite within 5 degrees of the local magnetic field at low resource cost, making it ideal for a small satellite. However, simulation attempts to date have not been able to predict the attitude dynamics at a level sufficient for mission design. Also, some satellites have suffered from degraded performance due to an incomplete understanding of PMAC system design. This dissertation alleviates these issues by discussing the design, inputs, and validation of PMAC systems for small satellites.

Design rules for a PMAC system are defined using the Colorado Student Space Weather Experiment (CSSWE) CubeSat as an example. A Multiplicative Extended Kalman Filter (MEKF) is defined for the attitude determination of a PMAC satellite without a rate gyro. After on-orbit calibration of the off-the-shelf magnetometer and photodiodes and an on-orbit fit to the satellite magnetic moment, the MEKF regularly achieves a three sigma attitude uncertainty of 4 degrees or less. CSSWE is found to settle to the magnetic field in seven days, verifying its attitude design requirement.

A Helmholtz cage is constructed and used to characterize the CSSWE bar magnet and hysteresis rods both individually and in the flight configuration. Fitted parameters which govern the magnetic material behavior are used as input to a PMAC dynamics simulation. All components of this simulation are described and defined. Simulation-based dynamics analysis shows that certain initial conditions result in abnormally decreased settling times; these cases may be identified by their dynamic response. The simulation output is compared to the MEKF output; the true dynamics are well modeled and the predicted settling time is found to possess a 20 percent error, a significant improvement over prior simulation.



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