"Dark and Ferocious Passions: An Analysis of Sublimity and White Womanhood in *Jane Eyre* and *Zofloya*"

By Lauren Fugate

A Senior Comprehensive Project in English

Submitted to the Department of English at Allegheny College

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for a Bachelor of Arts Degree

April 17, 2020

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Professor Caballero _____

Professor Votova _____

I hereby recognize and pledge to fulfill my responsibilities as defined in the Honor Code and to maintain the integrity of both myself and the college community as a whole

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Lauren Fugate

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Introduction:

While countless critics have studied *Jane Eyre* through a variety of lenses, this project aims to compare Bronte's work to an earlier Gothic novel, also by a female author—Charlotte Dacre's *Zofloya*—in an attempt to highlight how different historical circumstances altered each woman's interpretation of similar themes. In particular, this paper explores how Dacre and Bronte conceptualized the notion of sublimity in relation to white womanhood, and how both authors understood the sublime's impact on British, or European, society more broadly. By using sublimity's relation to white womanhood as a primary lens, I also explore how Britain's changing global presence throughout the nineteenth century altered the way foreign 'others' were depicted, and what these characters' relations to white women were imagined to be by both these authors. Ultimately, this paper seeks to explore how the concept of sublimity as a running feature in both novels enabled Dacre and Bronte to respectively uphold, criticize, or maintain the existing social structures within England during the particular era they wrote in.

I have chosen to compare these books because they each follow a similar plot structure, center around a sublime female heroine, were written by British women, but were written in significantly different moments of British imperialism. Dacre's *Zofloya* follows the life of Victoria Lorendani, a young woman living in Venice during the 1500s who possesses sublime rather than beautiful characteristics. After a turbulent childhood in which her mother abandoned the family for a lover, Victoria is sent to live with a strict aunt until she too runs away and marries her lover, Count Berenza. The rest of the novel centers around Victoria's discontent in marriage, and her attempt to win the affection of Henriquez—her husband's brother—who is already engaged to a beautiful girl named Lilla. Victoria's schemes are aided by Henriquez's

Moorish servant, Zofloya, who possesses an array of seemingly magical powers that he puts at Victoria's disposal. The conclusion of the novel reveals the extent of Victoria's failure in attaining Henriquez's love, and the totality of Zofloya's—who is then revealed to be the devil—control over her. Writing in the wake of both the French and Haitian revolutions, Dacre's work maintains a negative view of sublimity, which she inextricably links to race and foreignness. And, she maintains that the sublime as a foreign concept is inherently corruptive to different types of white women, like Victoria and Lilla.

Bronte's work is likely more familiar to readers, but it is still worth offering a brief plot summary to demonstrate the similarities to Dacre's work. Like Victoria, Jane is a sublime young girl without solid family structure to grow up in. Trying to find her place in a society that looks down upon poor young women, Jane leaves her Aunt Reed's home, Gateshead, in favor of attending school at Lowood Institution. As she ages, Jane leaves Lowood to find a more favorable living place, and secures the position of governess at Thornfield hall, where she subsequently falls in love with her employer—Edward Rochester. The rest of the novel centers around the struggle she undergoes to become an independent woman before marrying him including securing her own fortune and uniting with family members she previously didn't know she had.

The quests that both Victoria and Jane go on in an effort to attain love and fulfill their desires have many parallels, but this paper focuses on a few key scenes the sublime characteristics of each heroine either help or hinder their progress in achieving their respective goals. Finally, it is worth noting that while Dacre wrote in response to various foreign revolutions, Bronte's work—produced some forty years after Dacre's—responded more to the

successes and failures of British imperialism. The main difference that I focus on between these two works is how sublimity is seen as a foreign and 'corruptive' characteristic by Dacre, whereas it is presented as a positive English attribute by Bronte. The goal of this paper is to examine parallel scenes in each novel to discern how and why these differences in interpreting the sublime occur, and why white women and notions of 'foreignness' are inextricably linked to sublimity in both texts.

Now that both texts have been briefly outlined, it is necessary to discuss the sublime, and the specific branches of sublimity that will be used within this paper. Although theorists have struggled to pinpoint one definition of sublimity, a widely accepted, albeit basic, interpretation of this concept is the, "complex feeling of intense satisfaction, uplift, or elevation, felt before an object or event that is considered to be awe-inspiring" that Robert Clewis identified in his book on the subject (Clewis 1). Clewis expand this definition by suggesting that sublimity, "can refer to a person's or subjects feelings and experiences, and it can be applied to the *object* that elicits those responses" (Clewis 1). Additionally, while a sublime experience can have "satisfying and discomforting elements, it is on the whole a positive and pleasant experience" (Clewis 1). These definitions are the foundational elements of this paper, but understanding the nuanced and revised interpretations of sublimity utilized by Dacre and Bronte, in their respective works, is the primary aim of this paper. By exploring how Dacre and Bronte revise and repurpose definitions of sublimity to create sublime characters, landscapes, and experiences that fit the aim of their novels, this paper hopes to show when and why—for Dacre—the sublime is viewed as a negative characteristic in relation to white womanhood, whereas it is later seen as an ideal characteristic for white women by Bronte.

One of the largest subheadings of the sublime employed throughout this project is the Gothic sublime. In his work, *The Gothic Sublime*, Vijay Mishra writes that this form of sublimity has been read "as an object-based sublime," but that he believes "[t]he Gothic tropes the sublime as the unthinkable, the unnameable, and the unspeakable" (Mishra 22-23). While the "object-based" approach to Gothic sublimity is crucial when examining the physical spaces in both *Zofloya* and *Jane Eyre*, I also call back to "the unthinkable...unnameable, and...unspeakable" quality of this sublimity throughout my work (Mishra 22-23). In particular, when examining the internal characteristics of characters, rather than their surroundings, I utilize the aforementioned qualities of the Gothic sublime in addition to Mishra's other comment that, "[t]he phantasmagoria of the Gothic sublime" serves "as the projection of a psychic terror...It is not what the Gothic sublime *is* that is crucial, it is what it *effects* that is its essence" (Mishra 23). Noting the dreamlike quality of the sublime, Mishra's observations enable me to examine the "psychic terror[s]" both authors employ through subconscious thought or involuntary action (Mishra 23). When calling back to the Gothic sublime I will differentiate whether I am assessing troped gothic images or objects, or whether I am analyzing the "psychic terror[s]" and "unnameable" fears found in both novels (Mishra 22-23).

Another important form of sublimity referred to throughout this paper is the gendered sublime. Critic Philip Shaw, in his book *The Sublime*, has observed that, "[s]ince Burke, the concept of the beautiful has been set against the concept of the sublime...The sublime is greater than the beautiful; the sublime is dark, profound, and overwhelming and implicitly masculine, whereas the beautiful is light...and implicitly feminine" (Shaw 9). I often call back to this definition of sublimity as one major revision between Dacre and Bronte's texts is that the former

maintains a traditionally masculine understanding of the sublime whereas Bronte asserts that this quality can be desirable in females as well. Furthermore, this definition becomes important throughout this paper when thinking about landscapes, objects, or character traits that may be "implicitly masculine" or feminine (Shaw 9). In particular, the "dark, profound, and overwhelming" qualities of the sublime and masculinity will be useful when discussing various physical descriptions evoked by Dacre and Bronte (Shaw 9). The historical contrast between the beautiful and the sublime that Shaw traces back to Burke is primarily helpful in that it allows me to distinguish gendered dichotomies in both texts, and then discuss when such distinctions are radically blurred (Shaw 9).

While there are other lesser understandings of the sublime that crop up at various points throughout my work, another major category of sublimity in need of discussion is link in Western thought between sublimity and Islam, race, and other images of 'foreignnes'. In order to understand long standing associations and prejudices, it is worth doing some brief historical orienting by noting that, as scholar Ivan Kalmar has written, "[a]ll Abrahamic faiths...demand devotion to a sublime power" but that with the re-emergence of "[t]he ancient Greek notion of the oriental despot" was "revived from the seventeenth century on" (Kalmar 1,3). With this revival came the creation of a dichotomy that both Dacre and Bronte employ in their respective works in which the "East and West are conceived of not simply as locations...but as concrete example of two contrasting types of being human, in relation to other humans and to the universe" (Kalmar 5). These points of Kalmars' are crucial given that one main argument I present is that Dacre maintains traditional understandings of sublimity by locating the primary source of sublime power within the novel in the Moorish Zofloya himself whereas Bronte

situates sublimity within a middle class, female, English identity. Furthermore, by understanding that "[s]ublimity had been associated with both Jews and Muslims" long before the era Dacre and Bronte wrote in, I can more compellingly analyze moments of Orientalism that occur in both texts to suggest that each author either uphold Western understandings of Orientalized 'others' or used such Orientalism for a new purpose (Kalmar 76).

While Dacre links sublimity to Islam, and inherently to Zofloya's blackness—as will be addressed in greater detail in both chapters—the final definition of sublimity worth noting is how the sublime relates to the color red. Timothy Costelloe notably comments that the sublime "and its relatives then entered the vernacular French and English, starting in the fourteenth century through the alchemical tradition meaning 'to purify', and was associated with fire, violence, and pure essence" (Costelloe 3). Dacre uses the "violence" of fire to link sublimity not only to Islam and blackness, but also to evil given that fire is associated, in Christian thought, with Hell. Since Zofloya is revealed to be the Devil, she creates a trifold definition of sublimity in which Islam, blackness, and evil are all connected. Bronte, on the other hand, uses red most notably in the famous red-room scene of *Jane Eyre*. Throughout Bronte's work I will use Costelloe's definition to argue that red and fire are not linked to evil, but rather to passion.

Now that all the primary definitions of sublimity utilized throughout this paper have been addressed, it is worth revisiting the concept of beauty, and introducing the picturesque. The association between beauty and femininity, briefly mentioned when detailing the sublime's connection to masculinity, is worth delving into more thoroughly here. While the beautiful is indeed "light, fleeting...charming" and feminine—definitions I shall make heavy use of when defining who or what is sublime or beautiful in these two texts—Mishra also identifies an

interesting quality of beauty that is perhaps less thought of (Shaw 9). Claiming that, "[r]evolution transforms the beautiful into the sublimely Gothic terror of disorderly men and women," Mishra's point helps orient my argument about the destruction of beauty in *Zofloya*. Mishra's argument enables me to suggest that, in the wake of several revolutions, Dacre's work reveals a fear that a sublime, masculine, despotic, 'other' would destroy European womanhood which—in Dacre's mind—is connected to the aforementioned concepts of beauty.

Definitions of beauty are important for distinguishing characters and characteristics in *Jane Eyre* as well, but perhaps more important to Bronte's work is the concept of the picturesque—the aesthetic middle ground between the sublime and beautiful. The primary definition of the picturesque called upon throughout this paper is that, "the picturesque eye does not deal with what is unusual: 'It is fond of the simplicity of nature; and sees most beauty in her *most usual* forms'" (Miall 83). This "simplicity" becomes important when thinking about the various transformations Jane undergoes throughout the novel as I examine how Victoria becomes increasingly masculinized and racialized through sublimation whereas Jane becomes more simple and less passionate as she learns how to contain her sublimity (Miall 83).

Now that the overarching parameters of this project, as well as the definitions that enable me to examine sublimity in relation to white womanhood, Britishness, and foreignness have been discussed I will briefly outline the paper. While both Dacre and Bronte wrestle with identifying how white womanhood connects to sublimity, I argue that Dacre maintains a negative view of sublimity by associating this concept with foreignness. In doing so, Dacre creates a version of sublimity that preys upon the pre-existing fears of her British audience, especially the aforementioned fear of a revolution taking place. The fear of both a social and racial

restructuring of British society runs throughout *Zofloya*, and the text is ultimately used by Dacre to demonstrate the negative consequences sublime, foreign thought and influence would have on European society, especially if such influences were exerted over white women.

Bronte, on the other hand, revises many of the themes and plot lines shared between *Zofloya* and *Jane Eyre* in an attempt to reclaim sublimity as a positive and distinctly British attribute. Understanding that Bronte wrote in a more imperialist minded Britain, I show that she uses the same fear of foreign contamination employed by Dacre, but asserts that the 'contaminating' characteristic of foreignness is not sublimity. By situating the sublime within English, middle class, women, Bronte removes the fear associated with sublimity in Dacre's work and claims that rather than being a contaminative quality, sublimity has the power to save English culture from foreign 'corruption'.

While both Dacre and Bronte work through notions of the sublime, the changing relationship between Britain and foreign powers—and perceptions of the influence of colonialism on English culture—largely dictate whether sublimity was seen as a corruptive element possessed by an external foe, or a redemptive quality that would help Britain maintain its characteristics despite its increasing global presence. To make this argument, I have written two chapters that assess key, parallelling scenes in *Zofloya* and *Jane Eyre*. By examining scenes that parallel one another, I am able to demonstrate the similar plot structures shared by these texts, as well as demonstrating the revisions Bronte made to themes and scenes introduced by Dacre.

Chapter One concentrates on the scenes in which sublimity is introduced to both *Zofloya* and *Jane Eyre*. Although Victoria is described as having characteristics consistent with

definitions of sublimity presented earlier in this introduction, such as "a bold and towering spirit," and a "wild and imperious character," it is not until she dreams about Zofloya that Dacre brings in external forces of sublimity to her novel (Dacre 48-9, 62). Similarly, described as a "picture of passion," Jane contains characteristics of the sublime, but it is not until the famous red-room scene that she encounters sublimity outside of her own body (Bronte 7). So, while Dacre and Bronte both establish their heroines as women possessing sublime characteristics from the opening pages of each novel, the importance of their first sublime encounters is highlighted in this section.

Chapter One also uses the two aforementioned scenes to explore why the sublime produces unconsciousness, and to suggest that Dacre and Bronte employ this bodily state for two different purposes. The unconsciousness presented by Dacre evokes a fear of foreign thought infiltrating British society and social structure, as the character synonymous with sublimity in the text—Zofloya—literally infiltrates Victoria's mind. Bronte, on the other hand, uses the red room to locate sublimity within Britain itself, and to suggest that the white, female body is capable of learning to contain sublimity. The idea of contained sublimity becomes important in Chapter Two when I discuss how sublimity destroys Dacre's characters, but saves several of Bronte's. Ultimately, this chapter uses gendered notions of the sublime, coupled with a Western understanding of Islam's link to sublimity, to demonstrate that Dacre views sublimity as an external agent infiltrating unconscious Western thought, whereas Bronte locates sublimity within white women and English locales in a way that foreshadows the curative properties she later asserts sublimity contains.

Chapter Two moves into a more detailed discussion of the sublime in relation to conceptions of ideal womanhood in Britain. This section focuses on moments of movement in both novels, such as when Victoria retreats to the Apennines or when Jane contemplates leaving Lowood. Additionally, Chapter Two discusses different character relationships that emerge later in both novels, including Victoria's bond with Zofloya, and Jane's interactions with Edward Rochester, Blanche Ingram, and Bertha Rochester. Through both heroine's movements and relationships, Dacre and Bronte both entwine sublimity with race, yet they come to different conclusions about whether sublimity contaminates or cures Englishness.

I also utilize Chapter Two to demonstrate that, for Dacre, sublimity was destructive for English society, whereas Bronte revises Dacre's claims by asserting that the contained sublimity possessed by Jane Eyre could reverse the 'contamination' of English colonialism. I finally root my claims about each text in the historical era both authors wrote in to suggest Dacre's reaction to foreigners was—as other critics have noted—influenced by fears of spreading revolutions. Bronte's novel is grounded in a different era marked by a newly forming middle class who saw themselves as having the capability to uphold English ideals since the aristocracy was 'contaminated' by contact with foreign powers through colonial outposting.

Chapter 1: Locating the Sublime

While Dacre and Bronte, as mentioned in the introduction, endow their heroines with sublime characteristics from the beginning of each novel, both authors primarily introduce their protagonists to the full power of sublimity, and external sublime forces, in two parallel scenes occurring later in each work. In Dacre's *Zofloya*, Victoria encounters external sublimity for the first time in a dream she has in Chapter XVII. While not a dream specifically, Jane Eyre similarly experiences a form of sublimity that renders her unconscious in the famous red room scene. Although these two scenes parallel each other in several key ways, this chapter contends with the way the dream scene in Dacre's work functions to introduce Victoria, and the reader, to the emblematically sublime character in the novel, Zofloya. Bronte, on the other hand, uses the connection established by Dacre between the unconscious and the sublime to highlight Jane's own interior sublimity by mirroring her feelings in the surroundings of the red room. Again, while sublimity appears in both novels before these scenes, for the scope of this paper I begin my argument in these moments because they serve as transition points where both Victoria and Jane explicitly encounter the sublime force they contend with throughout their respective novels.

Chapter one relies on the correlation established in the introduction between sublimity, masculinity, foreignness, and the association created between sublimity and Islam in Western thought. Using the aforementioned dream scene, I argue that Dacre perceives the sublime—because of its link to foreignness and implicit masculinity—as a negative character trait within European society. Her negative perception primarily manifests through the feeling of fear running throughout her novel that foreign thought could infiltrate European, and more specifically British—as she herself was English—society in a way that would restructure existing

hierarchies. Bronte, on the other hand, uses the red room to locate the sublime within British society itself, and more importantly, within the white, female, Christian body. The red room allows me to demonstrate that, like Dacre, Bronte sees foreignness as a negative, external power possessing the ability to corrupt British society. Unlike Dacre, however, by locating sublimity in a female, British identity, rather than a foreign and masculine one, Bronte depicts the sublime as not a corruptive agent, but rather a curative capable of restoring a British society she sees as 'tainted' by colonialism. Thus, this chapter focuses on how Dacre represents the sublime as an external agent with the power to negatively alter European interiority—particularly through the alteration of white womanhood—and how, conversely, Bronte locates sublimity within a white woman to suggest that sublimity could cure the foreign 'corruption' of British society, rather than cause such 'contamination'.

1. The Sublime in Dacre's Dreamscapes

The heroine of *Zofloya*, Victoria de Loredani—as stated in the introduction—fell passionately in love with Henriquez, the brother of her husband, Il Conte Berenza. By the time the plot of this novel reaches the aforementioned dream scene—the focus of this chapter—Victoria's love and desire completely consumed her thoughts. In a fit of rage induced by her frustration with Henriquez's devotion to his betrothed, Lilla, Victoria threw herself into her bed chamber where Dacre writes that she, "fell into a disturbed slumber...First she beheld, in a beautiful and luxurious garden, Lilla and Henriquez...he contemplated her angelic countenance with looks of ineffable love….they suddenly disappeared...and she found herself alone in a remote part of the garden" (Dacre 145). While only the opening of a dream that eventually

introduces Victoria to the character associated with sublimity throughout the novel, this beginning section remains notable for several reasons when thinking about the sublime.

Firstly, the "looks of ineffable love" Lilla's "angelic countenance" receives from Henriquez—the physical affirmations Victoria craves from her husband's brother—demonstrate that for Dacre, only Lilla's "angelic" femininity can inspire "ineffable love" in a man (Dacre 145). That a woman like Victoria, who possesses the "dark" and "profound" qualities of sublimity rather than the "light" and "fleeting" qualities of feminine beauty, finds herself "alone in a remote part of the garden" suggests Dacre sees her as unworthy of the domestic felicity enjoyed by Lilla (Dacre 145, Shaw 9). By suggesting that women can only attain a desired man's love by acting angelically, Dacre upholds a standard in which, "to say that woman is an angel...is to imply that her specialty is self-effacement, resignation, and sacrifice, it is to suggest to her that woman's greatest glory, her greatest happiness, is to immolate herself for those she loves...It is to say that she will respond to absolutism by submission" (qtd. in Sharpe 47-8).

Lilla, as the emblem of beauty and femininity in *Zofloya*, upholds these angelic and submissive standards for women, and receives domestic felicity—at least in this dream—as a reward. Victoria, on the other hand, with her "bold and towering spirit," "haughtiness," "cruelty," and "implacability" provides a direct contrast to Lilla's submissiveness by possessing non-submissive sublime characteristics, which render her a threat to European patriarchal order since she, unlike Lilla, refuses to "sacrifice" her personal desires (Dacre48-9, 62, Sharpe 47). In punishing Victoria, by prohibiting her from receiving love similar to what Lilla does—Dacre demonstrates a belief that women who embrace sublime rather than beautiful emotions have a negative social effect on a European society largely based around domesticity.

Furthermore, Victoria's removal from the social sphere—represented by Lilla and Henriquez's habitation of "a beautiful and luxurious garden" while Victoria remains "alone in a remote part of the garden"—suggests that Dacre used this dream scene to set up a dichotomy between her beautiful and sublime female characters by placing them in metaphorical realms of society delegated for each 'type' of woman. (Dacre 145). Lilla and Henriquez find themselves in a realm of domestic tranquility, mirrored by the "beautiful...garden" they're seated in, while Victoria, "alone in a remote part of the garden," finds herself physically removed from this feminine and domestic harmony (Dacre 145). While Dacre allows for sublime characteristics to reside in a woman, her assertion here, through the contrast between Lilla and Victoria's positioning within the European social sphere—represented by the garden—demonstrates that without strict reform, sublimity leads to 'improper' femininity. For Dacre this deviant femininity equates to self assurance and non-angelic behavior. Angelic behavior consequently gets replaced with masculine desires and emotions, seen in Victoria's overwhelming sexual desire for Henriquez and her strong rather than beautiful personality.

This early portion of the dream importantly foreshadows the ostracization Victoria later faces when she embraces her sublimity more than she already does in this passage, rather than trying to conform to feminine beauty. Additionally, the dream provides a crucial glimpse into Dacre's understanding of white womanhood in the rest of the novel, because it forewarns both Victoria and the audience of the supposed fate a deviant woman—who embraces sublimity rather than beauty—will encounter, that being the removal from European domesticity. Dacre's suggestion that embracing sublime tendencies inevitably removes a white woman from European society provides the backbone for the first revision I suggest between these two texts as Bronte

alters Dacre's conception of the feminine sublime, and finds room for unangelic women in English society once their sublimity has been tamed, rather than removed all together.

While Dacre uses early parts of the dream to demonstrate Victoria's future ostracization from domestic, European society, the dream also introduces the foreign aspect of sublimity. Writing that, while alone in her dream garden, Victoria "beheld advancing a Moor, of a noble and majestic form...clad in a habit of white and gold; on his head he wore a white turban which sparkled with emeralds...his arms and legs...were encircled with the finest oriental pearl...his ears were decorated with gold rings of an enormous size," Dacre employs stereotypical images of the European imagined Orient to introduce her novel's namesake character, Zofloya (Dacre 145). While Zofloya appears to Victoria as an emblematic Moor, Dacre also ensures that each of these images work to convey his sublimity (Dacre 145). His "noble and majestic form," for instance, evokes the definition of sublimity provided by Timothy Costelloe in which a sublime man possesses an "exalted...rank or position" (Costelloe 2-3). His "white turban" sparkling with "emeralds" and "the finest oriental pearl" coupled with "gold rings of an enormous size" are all external details that additionally serve to suggest his inner sublimity—matched by his external appearance—renders him a man of "exalted...rank or position" despite being the servant of Henriquez (Dacre 145, Shaw 9).

The connection between the inner self and the external appearance that Dacre plays with here, and throughout her novel, crucially relates to Zofloya since Dacre relies on a cultural European assumption that, as Ivan Kalmar notes, "the pre-romantics" held a "belief that both religions [Islam and Jeudaism], and both peoples who professed them, were especially predisposed to recognize and express the sublime" (Kalmar 77). The mere fact that Zofloya

looks like the stereotyped European conception of a "Moor," suggests that, for Dacre, his external appearance alone was enough to demonstrate his sublimity, and that she relied on a British cultural 'understanding' of Islam in relation to the sublime to bolster the sublimity of her character. Thus, without even discussing his personality or characteristics, Dacre effectively suggests that Zofloya's inner sublimity is mirrored by his external grandeur.

Although Zofloya's physical appearance importantly matches his internal characteristics, Dacre also emphasizes his sublimity in her description of Victoria's response to beholding him for the first time. She writes that "Victoria contemplated this figure with an inexplicable awe...he bent his knee, and extended his arms towards her. While in this attitude, her mind filled with terror, she looked upon him with dread, and essaying to fly, she stumbled and awoke" (Dacre 146). Robert Clewis suggests that, "the sublime can refer to a person's...feelings and experiences, and it can be applied to the *object* that elicits those responses" (Clewis 1). I argue, however, that given European assumptions about sublimity and Islam, highlighted in the introduction, Dacre expands upon Clewis's conception of the sublime by adding people—in particualar *foreign* men—to objects and experiences that can "elicit" a sublime "response" (Clewis 1).

Dacre's expansion of this definition surfaces in Victoria's response to Zofloya since she feels both "inexplicable awe" and "terror" while "she looked upon him" (Dacre 146). The majestic physical appearance—discussed in the previous paragraph—of Zofloya awakens "awe" within Victoria, indicating that she had "a positive 'aesthetic' experience" while gazing at him (Clewis 1, Dacre 146). Yet, when he "bent his knee, and extended his arms towards her " Victoria's "mind filled with terror," "dread," and the urge "to fly" away from him (Dacre 146).

Victoria's dread comes from having an Islamic 'other' reach towards her as if seeking an embrace. This desired intimacy leads Victoria to feel "terror" which awakens her from the dream (Dacre 146). Her "terror" indicates a cultural awareness of how 'transgressive' embracing a foreign man would have been for a white woman (Dacre 146, Sharpe 3). Dacre utilizes the connection between Islam and sublimity in British thought to suggest that even Victoria—the representative of a nonnormative, sublime, and 'unfeminine' woman—understood that she could have "a positive 'aesthetic' experience" looking at Zofloya (Clewis 1). But, in recoiling from Zofloya's extended arms, Victoria demonstrates that she—like Dacre—carried a rooted European fear of white women's contamination through contact with black men (Dacre 146). Dacre understands the foreign aspect of the sublime, in this scene, to be acceptable spectacle for white women, like Victoria. Embracing a foreign man or sublimity, by either physically touching Zofloya or embracing the feelings he inspires within her—as will be discussed in the next section—renders Victoria deserving of punishment in Dacre's eyes. This punishment is Victoria's 'othering' throughout the novel, as Dacre racializes and masculinizes her heroine while pushing her farther out of the "beautiful garden" of European domesticity, in an attempt to argue that contact with foreign sublimity irrevocably 'corrupts' white women.

After waking from this first dream, Victoria feels "disturbed" by her "state of...mind" and "endeavored to sleep" again to forget the horror inspired in her by Zofloya's initial presence (Dacre 146). Her next dream, which proves equally horrifying for Victoria, ensues and she watches Henriquez lead Lilla to the altar. At this point, however,

> the Moor she had beheld in her preceding dream appeared...and beckoned her towards him; involuntarily she drew near him, and touched his hand…'Wilt thou be mine?' in a

> hurried voice whispered the Moor in her ear, 'and none then shall oppose thee.' But Victoria hesitated, and cast her eyes upon Henriquez: the Moor stepped back, and again the hand of Henriquez became joined with Lilla's. 'Wilt thou be mine?' exclaimed the Moor in a loud voice, 'and the marriage shall *not be*!'--'Oh, yes, yes!' eagerly cried Victoria, overcome by intense horror at the thoughts of their [Henriquez and Lilla's] union" (Dacre 146).

Here, Dacre moves away from using Zofloya's exterior appearance to communicate his power and sublimity, and instead demonstrates his ability to sway Victoria through a combination of rhetorical tools. Additionally, this scene provides a crucial shift in the novel because Victoria does physically touch Zofloya which, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, enables Dacre to justify racializing and masculinizing her heroine.

Zofloya employs both verbal and visual rhetorical skills in this dream to coerce Victoria into pledging herself to him. Firstly, by increasing the volume of his voice, going from a "whispe[r]" to "a loud voice," Zofloya creates a sense of urgency in his speech that aids him in pressuring Victoria to rapidly ally with him (Dacre 146). Additionally, by raising his voice Zofloya parallels the "mov[ement] upward from a position below" that Timothy Costelloe has identified as a foundational definition of sublimity (Costelloe 3). Without this rhetorical sublimity, and the increasing intensity he addresses Victoria with, Zofloya's speech would have seemed less persuasive, and Victoria may have woken—as she did when he first extended his arms to her—rather than agreeing to ally with him.

Furthermore, by showing Victoria images of Henriquez and Lilla's marriage after she "hesitated" when he asked her "[w]ilt thou be mine," Zofloya uses Victoria's fear of this union to

suggest that if she did not ally with him her fears would turn into reality, but that in joining him she could change this romantic outcome (Dacre 146). "[O]vercome by the intense horror at the thoughts of their union," Victoria readily agrees to work with Zofloya, although she felt wary of him in her last dream (Dacre 146). Ultimately, her submission to Zofloya demonstrates the rhetorical aspect of the sublime that this foreign 'other' possesses and uses to sway Victoria into working with him.

Critic Philip Shaw has noted that, "for Longinus, the discourse of the sublime...works to overcome the rational powers of its audience, persuading them of the efficacy of an idea by means of sheer rhetorical force. In Longinus' view...listeners and readers are ravished or, more disturbingly, raped by the power of words" (Shaw 5). Zofloya, utilizing Victoria's unconscious state of mind while she dreamt, employed strong rhetorical work to "overcome the rational powers" of his "audience" (Shaw 5). His ability to persuade Victoria—who submits herself to no other character—to ally with him indicates that he possessed an ability to "persuad[e]" her "of the efficacy of an idea by means of sheer rhetorical force" (Shaw 5). Zofloya's external appearance coupled with his rhetorical capabilities reveal his full sublimity as he not only looks sublime, but can also use speech to coax sublimity and submission out of other people, like Victoria.

So, while Victoria was at first hesitant to respond when the distinctly 'othered' Zofloya asked "Wilt thou be mine," the "power of words" and images he employs inspire so much "horror" in her that she felt "overcome" with emotion, and easily consented to submit herself to Zofloya, although she had previously identified him as a dangerous and terrifying foreign 'other' (Dacre 146, Shaw 5). Finally, although Victoria felt "terror" and "dread" when Zofloya

"extended her arms towards her" earlier, in this later section of the dream she "involuntarily...drew near him, and touched his hand" (Dacre 146). The "involuntar[y]" nature of her physical contact with Zofloya, coupled with her somewhat forced submission to him, suggests that Zofloya used his sublime rhetorical skills and physical appearance to coerce Victoria to submit to him, and to embrace him although she previously recoiled from his touch.

Victoria's submission does not merely represent a white woman transgressing social norms by submitting herself to a Moorish servant, however, but it demonstrates a complex process involving the power of sublimity that initially occurs without Victoria's consent. The "involuntary" way "she drew near" Zofloya in the dream reveals that Victoria was not always fully "aware of her transgression," or in control of her submission, as critic Beatriz González Moreno has suggested. Victoria's inability to listen to her reason and desire when she submitted herself to Zofloya—in an unconscious state of mind—demonstrates that the rhetorical force of his sublimity became too powerful for Victoria's subconscious to counteract (Moreno 425, Dacre 146). Although Victoria later comes to see Zofloya as the only person she wants to submit to since he represents "the epitome of the sublime," as Moreno demonstrates, at this point in the novel Dacre saw a danger in foreign sublimity as an irresistible and unavoidable force to a woman like Victoria. Because she did not embody white womanhood or 'angelic' qualities, like Lilla, Victoria—in Dacre's eyes—became a perfect target for the external corruption rendered by Zofloya. The sublime, for European women, therefore, becomes a characteristic that, without elimination or strict reform, is susceptible to contamination by sublime racial and religious influences deemed 'corruptive' by European society.

As I earlier suggested, Dacre punishes her heroine by racializing her, and by putting her increasingly masculinized and darkened body on display for readers of the novel. Dacre presents her as both a freak and a warning to other European women about the perceived threat of succumbing to sublime forces outside of European society, such as Zofloya or other foreigners more generally. While Victoria does have sublime characteristics—as Moreno has noted and I have pointed out in the introduction—throughout the dream scene Dacre relies on the idea that white women may find themselves susceptible to contamination if they, like Victoria, come under the influence of a *foreign* sublime power. Victoria's increasing contamination, in Dacre's eyes, into an 'other' and social anomaly herself, much like Zofloya. Her masculinization and racialization thus serves as a caution to other white women about the percieved dangers in allying with a non-white, non-European person.

Especially since, "[a] revolution...may be sublime in so far as it carries a people along with it" it comes as no surprise that Dacre, wirting in the wake of the Haitian Revolution and the French Revolution would project her racist and xenophobic fears of 'other's' ideas infiltrating British society and uprooting the British aristocracy, onto her novel and her 'nonnormative' heroine. (Shaw 2). Critic Diane Hoeveler in her landmark article on *Zofloya* has crucially observed that "the gothic drama presents black slaves only too quick to flip the master-slave dialectic and deal in...poisonings and slave uprisings. Sensational press accounts of the maroon wars of the 1790s in Jamaica and the bloody revolution in Haiti made the issue all too immediate to ignore" (Hoeveler 188). Dacre relies on this existing trope of "black slaves...flip[ping] the master-slave dialectic," and uses it to suggest that when such an "uprisin[g]" occurs, it has the potential to restructure both class and gender roles (Hoeveler 188). In doing so, Dacre ultimately

cautions her British audience about the importance she sees in upholding traditional gender roles. By having Victoria's predisposition to sublimity lead to her contamination, Dacre suggests that British society has a responsibility to 'normalize' supposedly 'deviant' behavior, especially in women who might otherwise become 'infected' with otherness, and—in turn—destroy traditional notions of femininity, just as Victoria kills the emblematic Lilla later in the novel, a scene which will be discussed in the next chapter.

2. The Red Room and Bronte's British Sublime

Unlike Dacre, who connects Zofloya's foreignness to sublimity throughout her novel, Bronte locates the sublime within England, and within Jane Eyre herself. Like Victoria, Jane's sublime tendencies appear from the beginning pages of the novel, however, this section explores Jane's encounter with sublimity in the famous red-room scene. The red-room parallels Victoria's dream scene since in both novels each heroine is isolated, enters a state of unconsciousness, and has a profound encounter with internal or external representations of sublimity that influence the rest of the text. While many similarities exist between these two scenes, the most obvious revision Bronte makes comes when introducing Jane to the sublime, as she places sublimity within an *English* mansion—a representation of the domestic sphere—rather than in a foreign object or person, as Dacre does in *Zofloya*.

Additionally, the red room serves as a canvas for Bronte to project Jane's internal sublimity onto. Dacre, on the other hand, uses sublime people and objects to influence the inner sublimity of Victoria, not to help her heroine in understanding herself. For Bronte, therefore, sublime objects, people, and places enable Jane to project and understand her own sublimity while looking upon them, unlike Victoria who is influenced by such objects. Ultimately, the

unconsciousness and dream-like state Jane encounters in the red room allows her to later understand herself more fully, whereas the unconscious for Victoria was a vulnerable state of mind in which she was corrupted by external influences.

After two servants dragged Jane into the red room as a punishment for refusing to submit to her cousin John Reed's abuses, Bronte's heroine describes her prison chamber at Gateshead "the largest and stateliest" room "in the mansion" (Bronte 10). Relying on the "origins" of sublimity, rooted in "the Greek...meaning height" or "of men….exalted in rank or position," Bronte's preliminary description of the stately red room hints at its sublimity by the mere fact that it is physically "the largest" room in the house, and also the most revered or "exalted" (Bronte 10, Costelloe 2-3). Jane continues describing her prison by noting that it had "a bed supported on *massive* pillars" that "stood out like a tabernacle in the centre; the two *large* windows...were half shrouded in festoons...the carpet was red...the bed was covered with a crimson cloth...Out of these deep surrounding shades rose high, and glared white, the piled up mattresses and pillows of the bed, spread with a snowy Marseilles counterpane" (Bronte 10, emphasis added). Here, Jane again emphasizes the height of the furniture of the room through language such as the "massive pillars," "large windows," and "piled up mattresses" covered in "a snowy Marseilles counterpane" which all evoke the image of a mountain, in a way that further emphasizes the physical sublimity of the space.

She also details the color scheme of the aptly named red-room, however, by observing that it was entirely "red," "crimson," and covered in other "deep….shades" of red (Bronte 10). As discussed in the introduction, sublimity has long been "associated with fire," and Jane's description of the red-room, although it does not have a fire in the fireplace, certainly conjures up

images of a burning fire given the obsessively red color scheme of the place (Costello 3). Jane's description of the red and grand characteristics of the red room is only pertinent to this paper because the room's interiority mirrors Jane's. While containing all of the sublime elements listed above, the red-room, nevertheless, felt "chill, because it seldom had a fire; it was silent, because remote from the nursery and kitchen; solemn, because it was known to be so seldom entered" (Bronte 10). The "chill," silence, and solemness of the room—its inherent characteristics—are quite the opposite of the awe inspiring, majestic sublime. Interestingly, however, what makes the room "chill" and "silent" is its removal "from the nursery and kitchen," two rooms associated with domesticity and femininity (Bronte 10). So, while the objects *within* the room are sublime, the red room itself—removed from the domestic part of the house—does not fit into the domesticity associated with a home because its' sublime characteristics, such as grandeur, stateliness, and fiery passion, differentiates it from other more domestic rooms.

Jane, herself removed from the nursery and kitchen, as well as from Mrs. Reed's affection, parallels the sublimity of the red room in several ways. This parallelism is perhaps best seen when she writes that,

> before the looking-glass…[a]ll looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality: and the strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit: I thought it like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp...coming out of lone, farny dells in moors' (Bronte 11).

Just like the "chill" and "silent" red room, Jane's exterior appearances look less than sublime, but she too contains a fiery interior, mirrored by the red objects within the room (Bronte 11). Her

"white face and arms," and "glittering eyes of fear" are virtually the opposite of outwardly sublime characteristics such as Victoria's "imposingly tall" stature, or Zofloya's majestic and noble appearance (Bronte 11). Additionally, the room's lack of "fire" and noise from more domestic rooms like "the nursery and kitchen," serve to parallel Jane's own lack of a family, as she, like the red room, is isolated from these familial objects, places, and sounds (Bronte 10).

However, like the red room with its "deep...shades" of red furniture concealed in a less than sublime part of the house, so too does Jane's plainness conceal the "picture of passion" and "fury" that she contains (Bronte 6-7, 10). Similarly, she shares the status of an outcast from domesticity with the red room, as both are removed from the nursery and kitchen. Without a place in the domestic sphere, Jane's sublimity goes unchecked, which earns her the label of a "fury," and ultimately to her exile in the red-room rather than sharing in domestic life with the Reed family. Thus, by comparing Jane to the red room, Bronte forms a link between domesticity and sublimity in which a woman can embody the sublime, but only if she can simultaneously inhabit the domestic sphere. This directly contrasts Dacre, who views the sublime solely as a characteristic capable of corrupting European domesticity.

Another revision Bronte makes, when thinking about the red room as a parallel to Dacre's dream scene, is that by locating the sublime in a British manor house, and within Jane herself, Bronte challenges Dacre's assertion that sublimity is located in foreignness. While Dacre locates sublimity predominantly in Zofloya, by having Jane, described as "one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp...coming out of lone, farny dells in moors" Bronte goes further than mirroring Jane to the sublime red room by locating sublimity not just in a British house and woman, but also rooting it in Britain's Celtic past (Bronte 11). As critic Patricia McKee

observes, "[c]omprehending the supernatural dimensions of the soul, Jane's spirit also comprehends the supernatural dimensions of the legendary fairies and elves believed to occupy England in times gone by.....Her cultivation of a free English spirit reaches back to legends of a savage past for a naturalized national identity yet recovers that identity as a freedom to move out of bounds, not only of nation but of other bounded spaces" (McKee 69). While I agree with McKee that, in the red room, Jane begins her journey to cultivate "a free English spirit" by likening herself "to legends of a savage past for a naturalized national identity," I suggest that the "supernatural dimensions of the soul" McKee identifies are Jane's sublime characteristics. According to Costelloe, "the *moral sublime*" occurs when "one transcends one's immediate environment...in order to emerge a fully moral being," and Jane is desirous of transcending her "immediate environment" at Gateshead by reimagining herself as folklorik figure "coming out of lone, farny dells in moors" (Bronte 11, Costelloe 205, McKee 69). The red room thus serves as a crucial beginning point in Jane's journey to cultivate her "free English spirit" (McKee 69).

Additionally, by utilizing the sublime interior of the room as both a mirror for Jane's interiority, and as the place where she first imagines herself transcending Gateshead, Bronte "move[s] out of" the traditional "bounds" set for conceptualizing English femininity—bounds that Dacre upheld—and reimagines white womanhood as an identity rooted in a folklorik tradition inextricably linked to the sublime (McKee 69). Thus, while Dacre asserts sees sublimity as a foreign contamination on the English woman's spirit, Bronte's posits that cultivated sublimity provides English women an opportunity to recover an identity located in "a savage past," and reconceptualize it to give them the "freedom to move out of bounds" previously set within a patriarchal English society (McKee 69). McKee correctly observes that Bronte valued

the cultivation of an English identity found within "a savage past," but that she—like Dacre—still saw the unregulated sublime as a force with potentially detrimental consequences (McKee 69). Dacre understood the consequence of sublimity entering English society as the corruption of white womanhood. For Bronte, on the other hand, a lack of cultivation causes the sublime to manifest in the fiery "passion" Jane exhibits early on in the novel before she learned self regulation (Bronte 6).

The overwhelmingness of uncultivated sublimity sends Jane into near hysteria, while in the red-room, as she thinks a light outside the window is the apparition of her late uncle. After screaming at the thought of encountering a ghost, she writes that "Mrs. Reed, impatient of my now frantic anguish and wild sobs, abruptly thrust me back and locked me in, without further parley. I heard her sweeping away; and soon after she was gone, I suppose I had a species of fit: unconsciousness closed the scene" (Bronte 16). The unconsciousness that descends upon Jane at the thought of her dead uncle, who she believes "would have treated…[her] kindly," returning as an apparition is an experience that—as a sublime experience should be—"slips out of conventional understanding" (Bronte 16, Shaw 2). Jane slips into unconsciousness because, as Shaw notes, "the sublime marks the limits of reason and expression together with a sense of what might lie beyond these limits," and so Bronte uses this moment to foreshadow the eventual connection Jane finds with Rochester--the novels' other internally sublime character. This moment further suggests that while Jane might find herself isolated without her Uncle to help her realize that 'wild,' 'passionate,' and sublime English individuals exist beyond the confines of Gateshead, she will, at some point in her journey, find not an apparition of sublimity in

England's past generation, but an English identity she can share with others that embodies this sublimity once more.

Additionally, as Heta Pyrhönen has observed, "Jane's traumatic red-room experience...is paralleled by Rochester's similar experience...after four years of marriage to Bertha…contemplates suicide...Again, spatial representation provides a key to psychic topography...His oppressively hot room, painted red by a bloddy moon, corresponds with his self-destructive psychic impasse" (Pyrhönen 24). Thus, Jane's quest is to locate the sublime in her own white womanhood, and to reassert its presence in the English domestic sphere, as Bronte comes to see sublimity as an inherently English virtue, that needs rekindling to prevent the harsh and cold Reeds (and other aristocrats) from dictating English morality, spirituality, and femininity. Rochester's quest becomes linked to Jane's as she endeavours to impart her own English sublimity on him in an attempt to cure him from the forieng 'contamination' he received when he married Bertha, and then later had foreign mistresses. His English sublimity, therefore, needs to be restored by Jane's, and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two. It was crucial, before doing so, however, to foreground that discussion by demonstrating that the red-room scene connects Jane and Rochester through the sublime, not simply through their anger at various forms of confinement, as many critics have argued.

3. Waking from the Unconscious Sublime

Moving slightly beyond the dream scene in *Zofloya* and the red-room scene in *Jane Eyre*, it becomes evident that another notable revision between Dacre and Bronte's work occurs in where and how each heroine wakes up from their unconsciousness. When Victoria wakes up from her first fit of sublimity, for instance, her psychology has been altered by Zofloya who

extracted sublimity and violent desires that resided in the back of her mind, and brought them to the forefront. Dacre's writes that Victoria felt "influence[d]" by "some superior and unknown power" that had infiltrated her subconscious, and this statement corroborates my earlier claims that Dacre believed foriegn sublimity would 'contaminate' white female minds, as it demonstrates that Zofloya negatively altered Victoria's mind in her dream (Dacre 145). Additionally, Zofloya quickly approaches Victoria after she wakes from her dream, and she easily falls under his sway, as she recollects her submission to him in her dream and readily believes that he will assist her, in real life, in gaining Henriquez's favor. Jane Eyre, on the other hand, wakes up from her red-room incident feeling, much like Victoria, that she "had had a frightful nightmare" (Bronte 17).

While she does not describe feeling possessed, like Victoria does, Jane still asserts that "agitation, uncertainty, and an all-predominating sense of terror confused" her "faculties" (Bronte 17). Although she experiences the same sense of "terror" and confusion upon waking that Victoria did, Jane quickly feels her "bewilderment dissolv[e]" as she realizes that the only "red glare" around her now was "the nursery fire" not the red-room's sublime shadows (Bronte 17). This change of scenery enables Jane to reenter the domestic sphere and to recover from the overwhelming sublime experience she endured, whereas by being approached in real life by Zofloya, Victoria quickly gets sucked further into sublime behavior. Furthermore, returned to the domestic sphere, Jane receives a visit not from a sublime character—like Victoria—but from "Mr. Lloyd, an apothecary" (Bronte 17). His presence brings Jane "an inexpressible relief, a soothing conviction of protection and security" because he did not "belon[g] to Gateshead" and did not treat Jane cruelly, as her relatives did (Bronte 17). Mr. Lloyd's presence, upon Jane's

awakening, is one major revision between Dacre and Bronte's works since he has a calming effect on Jane, whereas Zofloya's intimidating sublimity only increases when Victoria encounters him in person.

Furthermore, the apothecary's implied whiteness, and Christianity, also renders Jane's awakening as a far different experience than Victoria's. Whereas a white man saves Jane from sublimity by arousing her from her unconscious, Victoria gets pulled further into sublime thought—as will be discussed in Chapter Two—by a 'dark' man. While Bronte introduces her heroine to the sublime in a way that calls back to Victoria's violent fit, she ultimately revises Dacre's work by having the apothecary, who "lift[s]" Jane "up" and "support[s]" her "more tenderly than" she "had ever been raised or upheld before", serve as angelic figure in Jane's recovery, which directly contrasts Victoria's awakening as she quickly falls in league with the devil, disguised as Zofloya (Bronte 17). Victoria thus gets pulled into more corrupt and uncontrolled behavior the longer she interacts with the sublime Zofloya, but the apothecary lifts Jane "up" and out of the mental state she occupied during her fit of uncontrolled sublimity (Bronte 17).

So, while Bronte and Dacre both establish that their heroines possess sublimity which can overwhelm their consciousness, the fact that Jane's recovered thanks to an angelic figure, suggests that Bronte does not find sublimity a dangerous characteristic under the guiding influence of British and Christian culture. Dacre conversely maintains that Victoria's corruption results because the sublime—which for her is located in a racial and religious other—has the capacity to infiltrate and contaminate a deviant white woman's psyche. Thus, the dream scene and red-room incident demonstrate that while Dacre retains a strict understanding of the sublime

as a purely nonEnglish, unfeminine, rigid concept, Bronte—early on in her novel—reconceptualizes sublimity as a positive, and British attribute.

Finally, it is worth noting that Dacre feared sublimity because she linked this concept to foreign thought, whereas by locating sublimity in English women, Bronte suggests that a new form of femininity might emerge from embracing sublimity, rather than ending white womanhood all together, as Dacre believes. In their landmark work on *Jane Eyre*, Gilbert and Gubar claim that Bronte's original audience was "disturbed...by the Byronic pride and passion of Jane herself. In other words, what horrified the Victorians was Jane's anger" (Gilbert and Gubar 338). The "pride," "passion," and "anger" that Jane exhibits line up with definitions of sublimity presented in the introduction that also apply to Victoria (Gilbert and Gubar 338). Bronte's audience, based on their unfavorable critical reception of her work, thus shared a similar conception of sublimity with Dacre, and saw it as a corruptive emotion capable of causing a revolution. Bronte was not, like Dacre, positing her heroine as a woman utilizing sublimity "to escape...from drawing rooms and patriarchal mansions," but rather as one who wanted to to cultivate her sublimity into a new form of femininity that allowed her to exert a higher degree of control over her own life and the lives of men and the aristocrats around her, than she had previously had at Gateshead. The aforementioned apothecary gives Jane a brief insight into how sublimity can be a controllable rather than overwhelming emotion, and her subsequent desire to leave Gateshead is largely encouraged by wanting to develop this freedom without external aid.

Thus, Jane does not use sublimity to escape the domestic sphere, as Victoria does, but wants to use her sublimity to expand conceptions of what 'types' of white women the domestic sphere can include, and to reform it to make it align with a sublime definition of Englishness

rather than the aristocratic views that had previously dominated understandings of British society. The work in this chapter leads me to conclude that Bronte found a place for sublime characteristics in the English domestic sphere, and this startled audiences since they recognized that Jane's "revolutionary" spirit, and location of the English identity in the middle class, had the power to reform English society, but not from the outside—as Dacre feared—but from the inside in a way that parallels Jane's own internal revolution as she comes to embrace her sublime identity.

Chapter 2: Embodying and Revising the Sublime

As demonstrated in the last chapter, Dacre presents sublimity as a foreign characteristic capable of 'contaminating' and 'destroying' European society, especially when that sublimity infects the white female body. Bronte, on the other hand, relocates sublimity within English women's bodies, and in reverse of Dacre, suggests that this mode of the sublime can cure an English society damaged by foreign influence. So, while both authors identify a contamination or destruction of English and European society, they each have different understandings of how the sublime relates to this perception. This chapter continues exploring how race and notions of foreignness interlock with the sublime in *Zofloya* and *Jane Eyre*.

This chapter does so, however, by utilizing the conclusions drawn in the last chapter about where each author places the sublime—either within or without English society—and then responds to the crucial point Diane Hoeveler has made that the English culture Dacre was living in "was looking for someone to blame for the social, familial, political, and economic transformation it was experiencing. It chose to blame the devil in league with a sexualy demanding woman" (Hoeveler 186). This chapter argues that another revision between *Zofloya* and *Jane Eyre*, based on this quote, is that Dacre's society looked for external factors to blame internal English problems on, whereas Bronte sought to redefine Englishness in terms of an emerging middle class, and distribute new ideals throughout an expanding British empire.

To make this argument, I again examine passages from both novels that parallel each other in key ways. I begin with Dacre's piece, and concentrate firstly on Victoria's movement into the Apennine mountains where—under the direction of Zofloya—she poisons her husband, Berenza, and subsequently murders her rival, Lilla, in an attempt to gain Henriquez's love. This

section of the novel is important to this project, because Dacre relies more heavily on gothic tropes of the sublime, and these tropes help make clear precisely what elements of the sublime she sees as detrimental to English and European society. Furthermore, the murders Victoria commits symbolize the destruction of different elements of European society. I only focus on Lilla's death, however, as this scene represents the violation and demise of white womanhood, and demonstrates what Dacre sees as the result of foreign thought infiltrating British society.

Jane Eyre's parallel passages occur when she leaves Lowood to work as a governess, and then when she encounters Blanche Ingram, Lady Ingram, and Bertha Rochester at Thornfield Hall. Jane's movement from Lowood to Thornfield mirrors Victoria's journey into the Apennines, but the crucial difference between these scenes comes when Jane finds herself in a location where sublimity blends with the picturesque, whereas Victoria stays primarily in sublime landscapes. The different atmosphere each heroine inhabits ultimately has a lasting effect on their respective internal sublime characteristics. Additionally, Jane's encounters with Blanche, Lady Ingram, Bertha, and Edward Rochester can be compared to Victoria's interactions with Berenza and Lilla. In both novels, these character interactions come to define the bounds of white femininity in relation to the sublime, and also to English society more broadly.

Chapter Two primarly utilizes the Gothic sublime, the masculine and feminine sublime, and sublimity's relation to Islam and 'otherness'. I have chosen to work with these renditions of the sublime—defined and discussed more broadly in the introduction—because they provide the most comprehensive lenses through which to examine the Gothic tropes employed by each in relation to white womanhood and 'otherness'. These modes of sublimity also provide effective definitions of the sublime for this chapter because each one provides an interesting

understanding of how race, gender, and nationhood intersect with sublimity more broadly. Finally, the beautiful and the picturesque—defined in the introduction—figure heavily in this chapter. In particular, Victoria and Lilla's relationship, as well as Jane's perception of Blache and Bertha, largely revolves around the differences between beauty and the sublime. The landscapes discussed in this section, on the other hand, demonstrate the intersections between the picturesque and the sublime.

1. The Natural Sublime in *Zofloya*

By the point in the novel that this chapter focuses on, Zofloya and Victoria's relationship transitioned from meeting in a dream to working together in real life to poison Victoria's husband, Berenza, and to eliminate Henriquez's fiance, Lilla. After delivering several doses of poison to Berenza, Victoria quickly realizes that her home—situated in the ever watching city of Venice—proves a less than optimal location from which to kill her husband. Zofloya helpfully suggests that Victoria urge Berenza and his family to retire to "Torre Alto," the "castle appertaining to him [Berenza], which is situated among the Apennines," as this mountainous retrete would provide ample seclusion for killing him in (Dacre 167). Victoria indeed expresses her "desire to visit" the "sublime solitudes" of Torre Alto to a pleased Berenza, who readily consents and invites Henriquez and Lilla to join him and his wife there (Dacre 168).

Crucially, in her appeal to Berenza, Victoria suggests that "the change of atmosphere and a more elevated situation might be a means of bracing [his] nerves, and restoring him to his pristine health" (Dacre 168). Although Victoria clearly lies to her husband, since Berenza's health has only been weakened by the poison she feeds him, it is nevertheless important to note the "atmosphere" and "sublime solitudes" of Torre Alto are considered by the ailing Berenza to

be a place capable of "restoring him to his pristine health" (Dacre 167-8). While I have primarily concentrated on how the sublime affects white women, this moment shows that Dacre viewed the sublime natural world in Europe as a beneficial setting for white men's health, which suggests that sublimity only becomes destructive when embodied by women or foreign men.

Furthermore, the suggestion that a sublime landscape could restore a white mans' strength, also indicates Dacre believed the sublimity of an object or place, such as the Apennines, could permeate into a person and alter their interior state of being. Given that "the meeting with the sublime strengthens our powers of conception; we become, as it were, equal to the powers we survey," it comes as no surprise that Dacre viewed the "implicitly masculine" sublime as capable of restoring masculine strength, and even increasing it to mirror to the surrounding sublimity (Shaw 6). Since the external qualities of the sublime mountains have the power to influence Berenza's interiority, it follows that other objects and agents of the sublime, in Dacre's understanding of sublimity's potential impact, could influence other characters, like Victoria, and turn them into equals of whatever sublime power they looked upon. While Dacre may view the sublime as restorative to men, the influence of the natural world on Victoria has detrimental consequences.

Once Victoria, Berenza, and the other main characters—including Zofloya—relocated to Torre Alto, Dacre goes into a lengthy description of the castles' sublime features by noting that,

> the Castella of Berenza...was situated in a deep valley, on the borders of a forest. On either side huge rocks towered above its loftiest spires, and half embosomed it in terrible but majestic sublimity...at times, when the wind blew towards the castle, the murmuring peal of the lofty-sounding organ (from a nearby monastery), caught at intervals in the

> breeze, seeming more like the mysterious music of the spirits of the air, than sounds from mortal haunts (Dacre 170-171).

Here, Dacre continues to set up the sublime landscape of the Apeninnes as a traditionally masculine space. As noted in the introduction, "the sublime is greater than the beautiful; the sublime is dark, profound, and overwhelming and implicitly masculine" (Shaw 9). The "deep valley," "forest," and "huge rocks" with lofty "spires" that were "terrible but majestic" in their sublimity all indicate that this landscape is more "profound….overwhelming and implicitly masculine" than a location such as a tame, "fleeting" and beautiful space like a garden (Dacre 17-171, Shaw 9).

Not only does Dacre use conventional language to render her sublime space "overwhelming and implicitly masculine" by employing images of a gothic forest and craggy mountains, but she also inserts a "mysterious" quality of the mountains that serves to situate her both within the traditional masculine notion the sublime, and the Gothic understanding that the sublime "is marked by a negative transcendence that is primarily evil" (Mishra 11). Even the "wind" that "blew towards the castle" with a "murmuring peal of the lofty-sounding organ," sounding "more like the mysterious music of the spirits of the air, than sounds from mortal haunts" is a description used by Dacre to place Torre Alto in the gothic sublime tradition. Additionally, the "lofty-sounding orgam" produced a sound "more like the mysterious music of the spirits of the air, than sounds from mortal haunts" which further indicates that this music, and other gothic tropes employed by Dacre, contributed to a "process of sublimation" in which she uses the landscape, castle, and finally the music to "conver[t] the unsayable into the said," both

through the act of writing itself, and also through this music—and other gothic tropes—that recur throughout the rest of her novel (Dacre 170-1, qtd. in Mishra 37).

Dacre's attention to the sublimation of the landscape and castle, through the use of gothic tropes, suggests that as the novel progresses she more explicitly identifies objects and areas of the sublime. That she had not previously evoked such strong sublime landscapes and objects earlier in the text demonstrates that she worked to create, in Terro Alto and the Apennines, a world filled with sublimity that would permeate into Victoria's already sublime body, but not with the restorative properties it had for men, but with corruptive capabilities that would masculinize her already wavering femininity. The sublime scenery encouraging Victoria's own sublimity to come out is perhaps best seen a few pages later when, after becoming frustrated with how slowly the poison was killing Berenza, "the demons of evil raged with such fury in her bosom" that she "bent her steps towards the thickest of the forest" until she came upon a spot where she "stopped for a moment...gazed around" her and realized that "the wild gloom seemed to suit the dark and ferocious passions of her soul" (Dacre 180). While the natural world, here, mirrors Victoria's internal sublimity, it is also worth noting that immediately after finding this place reflective of her inner turmoil, Victoria gives "way to the chain of thought that came pressing on her mind" and that "the despotic sway of evil...triumphed in her heart" (Dacre 180). That she didn't give "way to the chain" of evil thoughts prior to entering this landscape indicates that the sublime scenery which "suit[ed] the dark and ferocious passions of her soul" drew more sublimity out of her until "the despotic sway of evil...triumphed in her heart" (Dacre 180).

Since I have previously demonstrated the masculine qualities of this sublime scenery, it follows that in both mirroring this sublimity, and having more of her internal sublimity drawn

out by this location, that Victoria becomes masculinized. Victoria is not just masculinized in this scene, however. The "*dark* and ferocious passions of her soul" coupled with "the despotic sway of evil...in her heart" indicates her further racialization as more sublimity was drawn out of her (Dacre 180; emphasis added). It is now worth recalling the connection highlighted in the introduction between Islam and the sublime since "the oriental despot—Allah as much as asultan shah" was "often imagined in western cultural history as a perversion of the father figure: a terrifying, cruel force that abuses his unlimited power for his own enjoyment" (Kalmar 4). That Victoria is depicted as having "dark and ferocious passions" and well as possessing "the despotic sway of evil...in her heart" suggests that she has the "terrifying" and "cruel" internal attributes of "the oriental despot" (Dacre 180, Kalmar 4). Additionally, given that "the oriental despot" was "imagined...as a perversion of the father figure" further indicates that Victoria is masculinized since she is here identified with a distinctly masculine and foreign figure (Kalmar 4). Thus, the sublime scenery in this section is used by Dacre to draw out the inherently sublime characteristics of Victoria, but the masculine and Islamic attributes of Dacre's imagined sublime ultimately transform her heroine into a racialized and masculinized figure herself. That this transformation only happens to Victoria, and none of the other characters like Berenza or Lilla, suggests that sublime *scenery* does not have the power to negatively affect white masculinity or 'proper' white femininity, although Victoria's sublimity does later contribute to the downfall of both these characters.

2. Comparisons of Beauty and Sublimity in *Zofloya*

While Brenza's death deserves attention in conjunction with the female sublime, for the scope of this paper I only look at Lilla's death since hers represents the supposed destruction of

white femininity at the hands of an increasingly racialized and masculinized woman. The contrast Dacre sets up between Victoria and Lilla is perhaps best seen when she writes of Henriquez that,

> his soul was enslaved by the simplicity and innocence of the youthful Lilla...her trembling delicacy, her gentle sweetness, her sylph-like fragile form, were to him incomparable...Victoria he viewed with almost absolute dislike; her strong though noble features, her dignified carriage, her authoritative tone--her boldness, her insensibility, her violence, all struck him with instinctive horror; so utterly opposite to the gentle Lilla...and compared the picture in his mind, to the snowy dove fondled by the ravenous vulture (Dacre 196).

Again, when recalling definitions set up in the introduction, "the honor" and "high rank" associated with sublimity can be seen in Victoria's "strong though noble features" and "dignified carriage" (Dacre 196, Costelloe 3). However, her "authoritative tone," "boldness," and "violence" are all "properties...that...awaken fear" in Henriquez, as the viewer of Victoria's sublime state (Dacre 196, Clewis 1). In particular, Victoria's "authoritative tone" and "violence," call back to an aforementioned form of sublimity linked to "the oriental despot" that was imagined as "a terrifying, cruel force that abuses his unlimited power," and this quality awakens fear in Henriquez since he imagines this abuse of "unlimited power" in the image of "the snowy dove fondled by the ravenous vulture" (Dacre 196, Kalmar 4).

Interestingly, the fear of Lilla being "fondled" by "the ravenous vulture" of Victoria, and her association with "the oriental despot" links Victoria to what Jenny Sharpe has identified as a common theme during times of imperialist British fear (Dacre 196, Kalmar 4). Although she was

discussing later works of British literature, Sharpe's observation that "a crisis in British authority is managed through the circulation of the violated bodies of English women as a sign for the violation of colonialism...English womanhood emerge[s] as an important cultural signifier for articulation of a colonial hierarchy of race" remains relevant to Dacre's work as well (Sharpe 4). Dacre's choice of the word "fondled" for Henriquez's imagined interaction between Victoria and Lilla serves to further the formers masculinization and racialization, as Victoria falls in close line with the troped fear "of the dark rapist" (Dacre 196, Sharpe 4).

Although she was writing in the wake of the Haitian revolution rather than in the midst of British imperialism, Dacre nevertheless conjures images of dark men being corruptive for white females. The fact that Victoria, rather than a man, fondles Lilla in Henriquez's imagination, however, ultimately serves to suggest that by drawing the sublimity out of Victoria, Zofloya transformed her into a masculinized and racialized agent of the sublime herself, rather than just a woman with sublime characteristics. Dacre, through the image of the "snowy dove fondled by the ravenous vulture" foreshadows Lilla's role in becoming one of the "violated bodies of English women" used "as a sign" not "for the violation of colonialism" specifically, but for the fear of foreign revolutions infiltrating British thought (Dacre 196, Sharpe 4).

While Victoria's death demonstrates her personal destruction after embodying sublimity, Lilla's death remains equally important since Dacre uses this scene to further the aforementioned trope of white women's violation at the hands of 'dark' men. Although several interesting scenes precede Lilla's death, and would make an interesting contribution to a larger work on the topic of women and sublimity in *Zofloya*, for this paper I will briefly summarize these scenes and primarily analyze Lilla's death. After the death of Berenza, Victoria and Zofloya imprison Lilla

in a cave located far into the mountains. When she realizes that her attempts to gain Henriquez's love have failed, Victoria angrily returns to the cave—against Zofloya's orders—and decides to kill the girl in an unprecedented act on her part since every action she had previously made was approved og by Zofloya. Victoria's 'corrupted' femininity, that often makes her seem more masculine and violent than other women in the novel, here overcomes her to such a point that she kills Lilla in a manner highly suggestive of rape.

Before she kills Lilla, however, the girl runs from Victoria, and Dacre calls back to the scene in which Lilla is described as a dove and Victoria as a vulture as she writes that, "Victoria pursued her flying victim. At the uttermost edge of the mountain she gained upon her, when Lilla...caught frantic, for safety, at the scathed branches of a blasted oak" (Dacre 220). Dacre employs the word "flying" to evoke her earlier image of Lilla as the "snowy dove" and Victoria as the "ravenous vulture" (Dacre 196, 220). Dacre furthers this contrast between the two women when Victoria, after catching Lilla, "with her poignard...stabbed her in the bosom, in the shoulder, and other parts...Victoria pursued her blows—she covered her fair body with innumerable woulds, then dashed her headlong over the edge of the steep.—Her fairy form bounded as it fell against the projecting crags of the mountain" (Dacre 220). By employing the phallic image of Victoria stabbing Lilla in stereotypically sexualized places on the female body like "the bosom...the shoulder, and other parts," Dacre essentially implies that Victoria's sublimity has transformed her from a "wild" and "passionate" woman into a near rapist (Dacre 220).

Going back to my earlier point that Victoria's sublimation is also linked to her racialization, Dacre again depicts her heroine as the troped "dark rapist" Sharpe identifies as an

image connected with Britain's fear of losing control (Sharpe 4). Since Victoria, as a 'fallen' white woman, is depicted as Lilla's "dark rapist," it follows that Dacre, unlike the later British authors that Sharpe discussed, was primarily concerned by foreign thought internally 'corrupting' British society, rather than Britain losing control over external areas (Sharpe 4). The fallen woman, then, becomes a character Dacre sees as susceptible to foreign influence, as Victoria's sublimity was heightened by Zofloya's presence. The fallen woman figure thus becomes capable of destroying white womanhood without further external direction, just as Victoria acts against Lilla without Zofloya's guidance. Ultimately, the link formed by Dacre between sublimation and racialization/masculinization transforms Victoria, as a 'fallen' woman, into a "dark rapist". Victoria's sublimation draws out her characteristics that—earlier in the novel—were not totally unfeminine (although Dacre asserted they were in need of reform) and rendered them closer to the characteristics of an "oriental despot" (Kalmar 4, Sharpe 4). The intricate links Dacre forges between these tropes finally demonstrates that 'fallen' or deviant European women could destroy—in Dacre's view—traditional white womanhood if their sublime characteristics were enhanced by foreign influence rather than reformed by European structure.

3. The Natural Sublime and the Picturesque in *Jane Eyre*

One of the main revisions between *Zofloya* and *Jane Eyre* is Bronte's treatment of the natural sublime. As shown in the previous section, Dacre did not identify the natural sublime as inherently harmful to European society, but did view it as a force capable of masculinizing and racializing a sublime woman, like Victoria. For Charlotte Bronte, on the other hand, Jane Eyre's relationship with the natural world communicates the author's belief that sublimity can be

cultivated within England and used to ‘cure’ the effects of colonialism on British society at large. To understand the scene in which Jane encounters the natural world in a way that parallels Victoria’s movement into the Apennines, it is necessary to understand the process by which Jane learns to cultivate her sublimity. After the red-room incident, Jane is sent to Lowood Institution, a cold and unpleasant boarding school for girls. While she excels as a student, Lowood offers little opportunity for happiness, and Jane’s only real consolations in the bleak atmosphere are her friend Helen Burns, who dies early in Jane’s stay at the school, and Miss Temple, the head mistress. While Helen Burns is also tied to the sublime in interesting ways, for the scope of this paper I only focus on Jane’s relationship with Miss Temple as their relationship is more important for understanding Jane’s interaction with the natural world.

While Jane Eyre was described as a passionate child before coming to Lowood, by the point in the novel I am considering she had spent nearly eight years there. During her time at this institution, Jane is taken under Miss Temple’s wing, and enjoys conversations and support from the head mistress. When she is old enough to become a teacher at Lowood, Jane then forges a friendship with Miss Temple that is fulfilling enough for her to continue working at the bleak school. After Miss Temple marries, and leaves Lowood, however, Jane states that she, “had undergone a transforming process; that my mind had put off all it had borrowed of Miss Temple—or rather that she had taken with her the serene atmosphere I had been breathing in her vicinity—and that now I was left in my natural element, and beginning to feel the stirring of old emotions” (Bronte 105). The “old emotions” experienced by Jane are the sublime “passions” for which she was locked in the red room, and that Miss Temple’s “serene atmosphere” calmed (Bronte 105).

Jane's returning wildness and passion, at the removal of Miss Temple's presence, exemplifies what critic Patricia McKee has asserted about "Victorian atmospheric theory" in which people believed that "the air was understood to carry material effects: persons could become infected by disease, for example, if they inhaled air breathed by sick persons" (McKee 71). Just as in *Zofloya* where the sublime Apennine air restores masculine health, but conversely affects Victoria by masculinizing and racializing her, so too does Bronte imply Miss Temple's "serene atmosphere" heavily influenced Jane Eyre (Bronte 105). While Victoria's encounter with sublime atmosphere increasingly draws out her own sublimity, Bronte ensures that Jane is influenced by an emblematic white woman who, according to Gilbert and Gubar, "is not just an angel-in-the-house; to the extent that her name defines her, she is even more house than angel, a beautiful set of marble columns" keeping Lowood afloat (Gilbert and Gubar 345). That Miss Temple has angelic attributes—one of the hallmarks of white womanhood as discussed in the previous chapter—as well the attributes of a house itself—the emblem of domesticity—and is able to control Jane's sublimity ultimately suggests that, for Bronte, the female sublime can be controlled by mixing 'proper' female attributes with sublime characteristics. At this point in the novel Jane does not yet possess the angelic attributes of Miss Temple, when the latter's presence is removed from Lowood Jane reverts back to her previous passionate thoughts. After Miss Temple's departure, Jane learning to control her sublimity becomes one of the driving plot lines.

After Miss Temple's wedding, Jane stares out a window, contemplating "the two wings of the building...the garden...the skirts of Lowood...the hilly horizon" (Bronte 105-6). Her vision quickly moves beyond the walls of Lowood and the garden, however, to "the blue peaks" that Jane "longed to surmount; all within their boundary of rock and heath seemed prison-ground,

exile limits. I traced the white road winding round the base of one mountain, and vanishing in a gorge between two" (Bronte 105-6). In this moment, Jane reflects on her dissatisfaction with the "routine of eight years" that Lowood had instilled in her, and she suddenly "desired liberty" (Bronte 106). By equating her desire for "liberty" with "the blue peaks" that formed a "prison-ground" around her, Jane essentially equates freedom with feelings of the sublime since she desires to "surmount" the peaks to escape the "routine" she had been living in. Since the sublime is characterized as marking "the limits of reason and expression together with a sense of what might lie beyond these limits," it seems natural that Jane would look upon a sublime mountainscape that appeared to form a "boundary of rock and heath" and believe that if she "surmount[ed]" it then she could find a liberty beyond the independence she gained at Lowood (Shaw 2).

That Jane uses the mountains to describe her desire to find "what might lie beyond" the "limits" indicates that she possesses an internal sublimity that she projects back onto the natural world when she needs a canvas on which she can express her feelings. By using the natural world as a place to project Jane's feelings, rather than a mirror for interiority as occurs in *Zofloya*, or as a force that draws the sublime out of Jane, Bronte suggests that Jane's internal sublimity has more power than external forces of sublimity since she is not influenced by external sublimity in the same way Victoria is. This difference ultimately indicates that one revision Bronte makes regarding white womanhood and the sublime, is that she finds women like Jane capable of using nature for their own purposes, rather than being influenced by it, and thus she finds superiority in British sublimity as a force that can affect perceptions of other people and places rather than being influenced by those same things, as occurs in Dacre's work.

Thus, by using the mountains as stand ins for Jane's emotional state, Bronte again revises conceptions of the sublime held by Dacre since for Dacre the sublime natural world was a place that influenced Victoria, whereas Bronte takes a more imperialist approach and asserts that the mountains can be used by Jane for her own—in this case narrative—benefit.

Additionally, while Jane fantasizes about surmounting the mountains, she also recalls "the white road winding round the base of one mountain" and states that she "longed to follow it farther" than she had when she "travelled that very road in a coach" (Bronte 106). This moment highlights another difference between Dacre and Bronte's conceptions of the sublime, since Bronte's heroine equates the mountains with freedom and sublimity, yet she still yearns to follow "the white road" around "the base of one mountain" rather than actually surmounting this sublime space, like Victoria does upon entering the Apennines (Bronte 106). Jane Eyre envisions admiring the sublime from afar, and through this imagined interaction Bronte ensures that her heroine remains in a picturesque point of view.

As David Miall has noted, "Gilpin finds elevated positions unsuitable for the picturesque" and "[f]ar from wishing to dominate nature, Gilpin's stance low in the natural scene is precisely what he requires in order to appreciate the different scales at which the scene is represented to the eye, from the immediate detail...to the distant mountain outline" (Miall 77-78). Although Jane looks at the mountains from Lowood's upper floors, her imagined stance in the natural world is never up into the mountains themselves, but rather observing them from a "stance low in the natural scene" (Miall 77-8). While Victoria actually moves into the mountains, as demonstrated earlier in this section, Bronte enables her heroine to idealize the sublime landscape rather than be overwhelmed by it.

Furthermore, Alexander Ross has observed that in this scene the picturesque description Bronte conjures allows "the reader" to see "Jane in her exile" while also enabling them to "sympathize with her in her longing for an ideal that lies beyond the blue peaks" (Ross 79). And, since "the mountains were also an imaginary-symbolic space to which ideal properties could be attributed" it seems that Jane, in longing to go beyond this "symbolic space" longs for the stability that left her when Miss Temple departed from Lowood (Scaramellini 53). That Jane idealizes and longs for the picturesque rather than the beautiful, or the sublime—as Victoria does—suggests that the internal femininity she wants to regain is a feminine spirit that "does not deal with what is unusual" (Miall 83). This picturesque form of femininity, like the picturesque view described by Gilpin, "is fond of...simplicity...and sees most beauty in her [nature's] *most usual* forms" (Miall 83). Jane's plainness, and desire to match her fiery interior with her plain exterior suggests that the reformation of sublimity Bronte pursues throughout the novel is an attempt to render the sublime into a characteristic more like the picturesque.

While I mentioned earlier that Bronte takes an imperialist approach to Jane's sublimity by suggesting that her heroine can use nature for the purposes of her narrative, Bronte never has Jane move into a position of domination within nature. This indicates that sublimity's link to imperialism that Bronte forged was not one of conquering different lands, but of utilizing a reformed or contained version of sublimity that becomes akin to the picturesque to cure this search and desire to conquer for "what is unusual," and instead find beauty in the "*most usual* forms" of Englishness, both in terms of landscape and women (Miall 83). The power Bronte finds in this picturesque female spirit is again seen in the image of the "white road" that functions as a symbol implying that English culture could 'tame' wild environments, and make

sublime landscapes, like the "blue peaks" surmountable but also safe (Bronte 106). In particular, the whiteness of the road signifies that Victorian beliefs in racial whiteness itself had the power to pave safe passages through otherwise 'dark' landscapes in a way that is highly reminiscent of imperialist notions of bringing British 'civilization' to different parts of the world. That Jane has taken, and eventually travels again, this "white road" suggests that her path to transforming her internal sublimity into the picturesque is the path Bronte believes European imperialism must follow, and utilize this internal picturesque quality to 'civilize' rather than conquer the "savage" 'other' (Sharpe 42). Bronte revises Dacre's assertion that sublimity is a foreign characteristic capable of corrupting white women, and instead views it as a positive trait that can be tamed to British cultural expectations of propriety.

4. Beauty, Sublimity, and New Modes of Femininity in *Jane Eyre*

Another more nuanced revision between *Zofloya* and *Jane Eyre* is how each author ultimately views white womanhood more broadly throughout the text. As previously demonstrated, Dacre saw 'pure' white womanhood—represented by Lilla—erased when 'fallen' women, such as Victoria, were influenced by foreign people or thought. Bronte similarly critiques foriegn influence on white femininity, as will be shortly seen, although she also finds the 'cure' for 'corruption' in Jane's femininity. After leaving Lowood, Jane arrives at Thornfield hall to work as a governess, and while there are many sublime interactions worth analyzing in her early days there, I concentrate on the section in the novel where Jane is relegated to the sidelines of a house party, and observes the woman she perceives as her rival for Edward Rochester's love—Blanche Ingram. Accompanied by her mother, the Dowager Lady Ingram, Blanche is described as having "dark eyes and black ringlets" (Bronte 220). Before discussing

Blanche in greater detail, however, it is important to comment on her mother, who is, perhaps, more obviously costumed to fit Bronte's designs.

Described as having, "Roman features and a double chin, disappearing into a throat like a pillar; these features appeared...not only inflated and darkened, but...furrowed with pride...She had...a fierce and hard eye...her voice was deep...A crimson velvet robe, and a shawl turban of some gold-wrought Indian fabric, invested her...with a truly imperial dignity," Lady Ingram is a perfect example of an English woman being physically altered by colonialism (Bronte 219). Her stereotypically 'Oriental' costuming—seen in her "crimson velvet robe" and "shawl turban" made from "some gold-wrought Indian fabric"—helps depict Lady Ingram more like a sublime foreign character, such as Zofloya, rather than a member of the English aristocracy (Bronte 219). Additionally, her "darkened" features, "pride," and "fierce...hard eye" all render her more like "the oriental despot" Victoria became under Zofloya's influence, which suggests that for Bronte colonialism as a whole, rather than individual 'other' men, had the power to transform English women into outwardly sublime and 'oriental' characters (Bronte 219).

While both Blanche and Lady Ingram are described in terms of darkness and height—rendering them outwardly sublime characters—neither of them are described as possessing the inner passions that make Jane sublime. As many critics have noted, Bronte indicates that the burgeoning English middle class Jane belongs to is the new face of England and Englishness, whereas the aristocracy, here represented by the Ingrams, has been corrupted by their involvement in imperialism and foriegn exploits. Jane's inward sublimity, that has the potential for cultivation as was previously shown, becomes the English spirit Bronte asserts needs to be re-inserted into British femininity. Women like Blanche and Lady Ingram, on the

other hand, who only display sublimity but do not possess it are, as McKee has noted, "irremediably 'sullied' in their resemblance to foreing and especially dark persons...Rochester...can improve if, under Jane's influence, he cultivates spiritual salvation" (McKee 71).

Jane's inner sublimity prevented her from experiencing what Matti Savolainen and Päivi Mehtonen have noted in their work, *Gothic Topographies*, that "Gothic sensibility in a text frequently indicates an awareness of the tradition of becoming a stranger in one's own...land" (Mehtonen 2). The "Oriental exoticism and fantasy" that Blanche and Lady Ingram embody is precisely how Bronte posits that they've become strangers in England, and why they—like Rochester—are in need of reform "under Jane's influence" or someone with similarly tame sublime characteristics (Mehtonen 2, 15). So, while both Dacre and Bronte fear foreignness, one main revision between them is that Dacre sees foreign sublimity as despotic, and capable of corrupting 'fallen' white women. Bronte, on the other hand, views England's contact with colonized lands and peoples as 'corruptive', but only in a superficial way. That Jane is capable of bringing about "spiritual salvation" with her own cultivated sublimity suggests that for Bronte, contact with foreignness had to potential to disrupt England's exterior—as occured with the Ingrams'—but that there was an equal potential for "spiritual salvation" if England's spirit was guided by women like Jane (McKee 71).

The potential for English cultural reform brought about by white, sublime women differentiates Bronte from Dacre, and is explicitly seen in Rochester's descriptions of Jane after her introduction to his wife, Bertha, whom he married in Jamaica. Although I again have to skip over many fascinating scenes that prove promising for future analysis, the reason I am moving

from descriptions of the Ingrams to Jane's interaction with Bertha—who is of Creole heritage—is because both of these moments tie in race, empire, sublimity, and femininity in a way that best enables me to contrast Bronte's work with Dacre's. After Jane's marriage to Rochester is stopped by the intervention of Bertha's brother, Mr. Mason, Rochester drags Jane back to Thornfield so she, and the reader, can finally be introduced to his wife. Described as "a big woman, in stature almost equalling her husband, and corpulent besides: she showed virile force in the contest—more than once she almost throttled him [Rochester]" (Bronte 380). This moment is highly reminiscent of the scene in which Lilla is stabbed by Victoria, although here, Bertha's seemingly masculine violence is employed against a man, rather than a woman. Her large "stature," her "corpulent" frame, and implicitly masculine "virile force" are all descriptors that align her with the masculine rendering of the sublime that Victoria also embodies (Bronte 380). However, Bertha is also described as possessing a "pigmy intellect" and as being "intemperate and unchaste" (Bronte 397).

Additionally, Bertha's 'loose' sexuality eventually leads to her being "pronounced...mad" with syphilis, but this attribute of hers aligns her, much like Victoria, with the 'fallen' woman trope in that while both women possess seemingly masculing qualities of the sublime, they also possess a 'dangerous' and 'foreign' femininity (Bronte 398). As critic Jenny Sharpe has noted,

> The particular form of Bertha's insanity bears the signs of an idle plantocracy in the state of decline. Since the self-indulgence of the planter class was considered responsible for feeding its vices, it is not madness that is the cause of Bertha's moral degeneration but rather the other way around—her 'excesses' have strained her minuscule mind to the point of unhinging it. Jane often refers to her own state of mind, when consumed by her

> love for Rochester, as a condition of madness. Yet, it is her superior intellect as well as her recognition of the need for 'laws and principles' that separates her own excesses from Bertha's (Sharpe 46).

That both Jane and Bertha contain "excesses" suggests that in Bronte's eye both women can embody "crushing or engulfing" sublime emotions (Shaw 2). However, Bronte asserts that Jane's "superior intellect as well as her recognition of the need for 'laws and principles….separates" her from being engulfed by sublime "excesses" (Sharpe 46). While both Dacre and Bronte depict a fallen woman consumed by sublimity, Bronte characterizes this woman as distinctly foreign, and maintains that white women—such as Jane—have the capability to avoid the corruption supposedly brought on by being consumed in sublime feelings.

Jane's ability to cultivate her sublimity—an ever occurring process throughout the novel which, as I suggested earlier, begins after she loses the guiding influence of Miss Temple—is further seen in contrast to Bertha's inability to do so when Rochester directly compares these two women. Rochester, expressing his discontent in marrying Bertha and displeasure in being prevented from marrying Jane states, "*this* is what I wished to have...this young girl who stands so grave and quiet at the mouth of hell, looking collectedly at the gambols of a demon, I wanted her just as a change after that fierce ragout" (Bronte 380). Jane's "grave and quiet" demeanor serve as a stark contrast to "the gambols" exhibited by Bertha, but more importantly it is her ability to maintain this demeanour when looking "at the mouth of hell," which Rochester considers to be observing Betha, that differentiates Jane in his eyes (Bronte 380). As Sharpe notes, "[s]ince open revolt threatens the laws of civilized society, Jane's education into adulthood involves learning to control her anger and to channel her desires into a socially

acceptable form of self determination" (Sharpe 42). While Jane in the red room scene, addressed in the last chapter, had a passion and fierceness that more closely resembled "the gambols of a demon" and "open revolt" than her present "grave and quiet" demeanor, and while she felt those passions again rise within her at the absence of Miss Temple, her confrontation with Bertha is a notable moment in that she has finally learned "to control her anger and to channel her desires" as Sharpe suggests (Bronte 380, Sharpe 42). Thus, it seems that the difference between Bertha and Jane is that while both possess an inner rebellion—which the reader will recall is one of the definitions of sublimity addressed earlier—Bronte posits that "[u]nchecked rebellion is particularly identified as the savage response of uncivilized nations" (Sharpe 42). So, while "[t]he young Jane at first finds the concept of Christian endurance difficult to comprehend," her sublimity, by this point in the novel, is cultivated into "self-determination" (Sharpe 42).

Unlike Dacre, Bronte therefore sees the sublime as a characteristic existing both within and without England, but Jane's progress in cultivating sublimity, and Bertha's lack thereof ultimately suggests that "racial purity is identified with an English national culture" and that "as a true English woman, Jane embodies the new honesty and national pride that will guide England in its overseas social mission" while also curing the domestic 'corruption' that has occured as a result of contact with the foreign sublime (Sharpe 46-7). That out of all the female characters within the novel Jane and Bertha were the most notably sublime finally indicates that, unlike Dacre, Bronte sees white women as capable of controlling the sublime and using "a socially acceptable form" of this passion to correct the supposedly negative influence of uncontrolled foreign sublimity in both English colonies and within England itself (Sharpe 42). So, unlike in the scene where Victoria's unchecked sublimity results in the death of white womanhood

itself—as represented by Lilla—Jane's ability to control her sublimity renders her a white, female character capable of curing the effects of 'fallen' sublime women like Victoria or Bertha, in Bronte's work. Thus, for Bronte the sublime when embodied by white women is a curative rather than corrupting force, and has the capacity to restore England from a foreign 'contamination' that both authors seem wary of.

Concluding Remarks:

The novels *Zofloya*, by Charlotte Dacre and *Jane Eyre*, by Charlotte Bronte, both explore connections between sublimity, white womanhood, and 'foreignness'. Dacre and Bronte, while writing at different points in the British imperial project, produced novels that work well for a comparative analysis since they both explore the aforementioned themes by employing similar tropes and plot lines. In particular, the Gothic tropes, objects, and setting shared between these books enabled a comparison to determine how each author envisioned the Gothic sublime affecting white female characters. Additionally, Victoria and Jane's respective interactions with other women provide scenes to compare each author's interpretation of what 'proper' femininity should look like. Similarly, the role of 'foreign' or 'othered' characters in these novels also enables an assessment of changing perceptions regarding nonBritish peoples, and the impact of colonialism on British identity as envisioned by both authors. Finally, by situating each work in historical circumstances, this paper demonstrated how events outside of Britain—such as the Haitain Revolution or expanding British empire—influenced Dacre and Bronte's perceptions of sublimity. Ultimately, it becomes evident that Dacre maintained a traditional view of sublimity as a masculine concept inextricably linked to Islam and, in her eyes, evil. For Dacre the masculine and racial qualities she links with the sublime become corruptive when embodied by white women. Bronte, while similarly concerned about the influence of foreign thought on British society, saw the controlled sublime as a salvational, and a beneficial attribute in English women.

To make this argument I examined several key scenes in each novel, and compared them side by side. Chapter one focused on the connection between sublimity and the unconscious mind. For Dacre, Victoria's dreams were important, because the sublime Zofloya first appeared to the reader and heroine in a dream. I selected the dream scene for analysis, because it succinctly represents Dacre's opinions about foriegn men and thought that are maintained throughout the rest of the novel. Zofloya's contact with Victoria in an unconscious state of mind allowed me to draw several conclusions. Firstly, Dacre saw foreign men and thought as having the capability to enter Western consciousness through 'fallen' or deviant white women. Secondly, Victoria's initial withdrawal from Zofloya, but subsequent submission, demonstrates Dacre's fear that sublime people or ideas have the power to sway an initially reluctant audience. Finally, by having Victoria cast out from the beautiful garden in her dream, Dacre warns her audience that embracing sublime or foreign thought—as Victoria does—leads to ostracization from the European domestic sphere.

In *Jane Eyre*, on the other hand, Bronte explores sublimity and the unconscious in the red-room scene. Unlike Dacre's interpretation of sublimity being an external force creeping into European thought, Bronte suggests that the sublime resides—albeit forgottenly—in England itself. The red-room's fiery interior, a model of sublimity that resembles Jane herself, functions to demonstrate Bronte's belief that the sublime is an internal characteristic in need of control rather than an external force to be warded off. Additionally, the red room experience causes Jane to faint, but the difference between her unconsciousness and Victoria's is that the sublime induced Jane's reaction whereas Victoria's dream was used by a sublime figure to gain access into her thoughts. This revision on Bronte's part suggests that while sublimity is located within

English domestic life, without learning to control it an individual can still be overwhelmed and incapacitated by such a feeling.

The second chapter moved beyond exploring where each author located sublimity, and concentrated instead on how sublime feelings specifically influenced Victoria, Jane, and the other women they encountered in their respective novels. For Victoria, this encounter primarily centers around how she responds to the natural world and how she comes to kill the emblematically beautiful Lilla. The sublime mountain landscape Victoria finds herself in leads to her masculinization and racialization, as both the terrain and Zofloya coax the sublime characteristics within Victoria further out. Sublimity transforms Victoria into an 'othered' character who transgresses racial and sexual boundaries within the social order Dacre seeks to uphold. Victoria's 'otherness' leads to increasingly depraved actions until she finally kills Lilla, the representative of white femininity in Dacre's text. Lilla's death serves as the most important of many warnings in *Zofloya*, and Dacre cautions her audience that if foreign, sublime thought is embraced—as Victoria embraces and embodies it—then it will overpower and destroy European social order.

For Bronte, on the other hand, embodying the sublime does not lead to racialization or masculinization. In fact, it functions nearly as the reverse by becoming a curative property possessed by Jane Eyre. Rather than moving Jane into a sublime landscape, as Dacre does with Victoria, Bronte keeps her heroine in the picturesque realm. Jane, like Victoria, becomes more like the landscape she inhabits, and the picturesque introduces a sort of control on her inner sublimity. Jane's learned ability to keep the sublime at bay, much like Bronte keeps the sublime landscape at a distance from the reader and her heroine, enables Jane to channel the positive

attributes of sublimity into her personality without losing control of herself, as she did in the red-room. Finally, rather than being the cause of white womanhood's destruction—as is the case in *Zofloya*—sublimity becomes a key component to Bronte's definition of the ideal English woman. Especially in comparison with Blanche, Lady Ingram, and Bertha Rochester, it becomes evident that Bronte finds Jane's cultivated sublimity to be the essence of the "English spirit," and that this attribute differentiates her from women 'tainted' by foreign influence or nonEnglish heritage (McKee 68). Thus, while both authors are concerned about the influence of foriegn cultures on British society, Bronte sees sublimity as the key to preserving the "English spirit" whereas Dacre views sublimity as the root cause of social upheaval (McKee 68).

The topic of sublimity in relation to white womanhood is important to explore in both these texts because each of these novels mirrors larger cultural anxieties surrounding understandings of femininity as well as the impact of colonialism on English society. By comparing these novels side by side, it becomes apparent that—despite their many differences—both authors sought to portray their own version of the future in which European society was increasingly connected to other people and places. The fictional experiences of Victoria and Jane serve as two contrastingly imagined displays of white women asserting some form of control.

Sublimity, a traditionally masculine concept, was used as the character trait possessed by both heroines that enabled Victoria and Jane to exert this control over their desires. For Dacre, this experiment goes horribly wrong and her work suggests that sublimity would corrupt both white women and English society due to its supposedly negative link—in her mind—with Islam and 'otherness'. Bronte ultimately posits sublimity as a beneficial characteristic for English

women, although in her mind it needs to become a controllable characteristic. Once this control is exerted, however, Bronte sees sublimity as the essence of the "English spirit" (McKee 68).

This project has offered an in-depth analysis of critical scenes within *Zofloya* and *Jane Eyre* in an attempt to demonstrate the revisions made to the concept of sublimity in relation to white womanhood from Dacre's work to Bronte's. While I chose scenes that reflected themes found throughout both pieces, or that served as paradigms for the novel as a whole, the scope of this paper made it impossible to fully assess each text. The most obvious future direction for this research would be to do a more comprehensive analysis of both these works, and to analyze the novels as a whole rather than selected scenes.

Another interesting avenue to explore might be analyzing other Gothic literature, written by female authors, with sublimity and white womanhood in mind. By looking at a wider array of literature, a timeline charting different interpretations of sublimity in relation to white, female characters might be produced, and said timeline could be compared with important turns in British colonialism. This work would contribute to already extensive post-colonial discourses, but it would add a new lens by examining how a singular concept changed—in the imagination of British authoresses—over time. By examining how British women manipulated or upheld a masculine literary concept, a new understanding of English women's desired, imagined, or possibly real place in British colonialism would emerge.

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