

## Telling Differences: Complicating, Challenging, and Expanding Amit Marcus's Discussion of Clones and Doubles\*

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Amit Marcus's "Telling Difference: Clones, Doubles and What's in Between," an exploration of the differences between clones and doubles in Romantic and post-Romantic fiction—most notably twentieth and twenty-first century science fiction—thoughtfully distinguishes the intra- and intersubjective dynamics of double and original from the more exclusively intersubjective relationship of clone to original. Although the existence of a clone, an "approximately genetically identical" individual (Marcus 363), leads the original to question self-identity, the physical existence of both clone and original is not questioned; thus supernatural explanations for the existence of clones are not involved in such narratives. For Marcus, this distinguishes clones—for which a scientific and therefore rational explanation is accepted by narrator, characters, and readers—from doubles. Double narratives written in the nineteenth century, before cloning was a scientific possibility, allow for the double's identity as separate from the original to be questioned. As Marcus asserts, this intrasubjective aspect of doubles means that they "are fictional entities that most likely cannot actually exist" (364). For these doubles, not only is an intrasubjective explanation possible for narrator, readers, and characters including the protagonist (the double may be a figment of the protagonist's imagination), but so too is an intersubjective and possibly supernatural explanation.

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\*Reference: Amit Marcus, "Telling the Difference: Clones, Doubles and What's in Between," *Connotations* 21.2-3 (2011/2012): 363-96. For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the *Connotations* website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debmarcus02123.htm>>.

Marcus's discussion of the clone narratives and their differences from double narratives is an asset of the essay. Marcus provides examples from clone stories written by men and women in the mid-twentieth to early twenty-first centuries. Using both Tzvetan Todorov's theory of the fantastic and Otto Rank's 1925 *Der Doppelgänger*, Marcus emphasizes that clone narratives do not portend death as doubles do; rather, clones represent immortality, though this representation is "delusional" (381) since neither clone nor original can live forever. In Todorov's theory of the fantastic, a sense of the uncanny develops as readers question the double as internal projection or external supernatural phenomenon. Clones' decidedly external existence removes that sense of uncertainty. Furthermore, Rank's theory eliminates this sense of uncertainty by defining the double as an exclusively internal projection of the original's rejected self, engendering a loathing and disgust in the original that spirals both the original and the double toward death. Thus, Rank's natural psychoanalytic explanation for the fear associated with doubles does not extend to clones and undercuts Todorov's more supernatural explanation for the uncanny element of double narratives.

Given Marcus's interest both in Todorov and in Rank's psychological explanations for fear of copies, my recommendation for this portion of his essay is that he consider applying a more contemporary theorist in addition to Rank—one whose concepts could connect fear of clones to fear of death, bringing this element of the uncanny more deliberately into his analysis of clone narratives. Psycholinguist Julia Kristeva offers a contemporary and psychoanalytic approach to the effect of the uncanniness of the other, such as a clone or double, on the individual. Like Todorov, she focuses her explanation on the mind; like Rank, she notes how death leads the individual to question one's existence as a subject. For Kristeva, the subject encountering something disturbing, uncanny, or abject, is disrupted to the extent that self-fragmentation—reminiscent of the splitting of the self at the mirror stage—occurs. As Kelly Hurley summarizes, the Kristevan subject's response to abject phenomena "disturbs identity, system,

and order” and “elicits queasiness and horror because it reminds one of traumatic infantile efforts to constitute oneself” (138). The subject reaction that Kristeva articulates aligns both with Marcus’s analysis of the intrasubjective fragmentation of original and double and with his explanation of the self-identity crisis that occurs with original and clone.

Kristeva’s theories, however, associate such reactions with death, which Marcus could use to explore his contention that, while clones do not invite an association with death, their “promise of immortality” (382) is ultimately delusional. For Kristeva, anything that splits the subject into the recognition and questioning of “I” and “not I” is abjection, which ties to death. In “The Power of Horror,” she states that the corpse “is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject” (166). A concept similar to Kristeva’s notion of the abject is Marcus’s description of the self-identity crisis which occurs in clone narratives. As Marcus notes, “a baffled sense of self-identity in clone narratives” transpires when the original discovers the clone (375), a discovery that quite literally presents an abject split of “I” and “not I,” thus the questioning of self. Marcus further explains that this results in a “temporary or permanent identity crisis for the original and/or for his or her clone, who are represented as two autonomous subjects” (378). Their encounter is devoid of any of the fantastic elements Todorov identifies as uncanny. Marcus contends that the unsettling aspect of the clone narrative consists of the evil motives of “greed, the desire for revenge, and most importantly, the desire to possess another person and to treat that person as an object, a means to an end” (388). Yet an application of Kristeva’s concept of the abject to the intersubjective relationship of clone and original reveals an association with death—an unsettling, uncanny association that could develop Marcus’s assertion that the specter of death resides mostly with doubles but extends, to a lesser degree, to clones.

In addition to offering this alternate theoretical approach to clone narratives, I also complicate Marcus’s analysis of the intersubjective dynamic in double narratives. To do so, I consider the social commen-

tary possible with the gothic literary convention of the double. Marcus establishes seven over-arching observations on the intersubjective in double narratives, developing both them and his general discussion by focusing on eight double narratives from the nineteenth century, including two by British novelists. Unlike the texts selected for his analysis of clone narratives, these eight works were all written by men about male protagonists and their doubles. Thus, I wish to extend Marcus's seven observations by applying them to two nineteenth-century double narratives in the gothic tradition written by women in order to see if and how they uphold, challenge, or expand these concepts.

The two double narratives I select for this analysis are *Frankenstein* by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley and *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. Both novels are as well-known if not more famous than the two British novels Marcus discusses: Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, which rivals *Frankenstein* in popular lore, and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. *Frankenstein* enables us to consider a woman author's portrayal of a male protagonist and double. *Jane Eyre* provides a woman author's depiction of a female protagonist and female double. Published thirty years apart, *Frankenstein* (1818) and *Jane Eyre* (1847) both fit Marcus's definition of a double narrative based on intrasubjective considerations. In other words, they are not the quasi-double narratives Marcus excludes from his study. Both focus on a protagonist, Victor Frankenstein and Jane Eyre, whose copy in the form of another character may be a part of the protagonist's self. Victor's creature has been read as a "second self" to Victor.<sup>1</sup> Although Jane and Bertha are discussed as two distinct physical entities, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's groundbreaking analysis in *The Madwoman in the Attic* interprets Bertha as a psychological extension of Jane.<sup>2</sup> When read in a psychoanalytic, intrasubjective fashion, both protagonists and their doubles offer a moral warning that the fragmented self brings death or ruin to the original and those whom the original loves.

While *Frankenstein* and *Jane Eyre* qualify as double narratives, they are also novels influenced by the gothic literary tradition with its plot

devices of sublime settings, isolated castles, and *doppelgängers*. In 1958, Robert Heilman juxtaposed a “new” Gothic tradition based on natural explanation for uncanny phenomena with a gothic tradition that relied on the supernatural. Later theorists, such as Alison Milbank in “Gothic Femininities,” align this “new Gothic” with Ann Radcliffe and the women writers who follow her, writers focused on the horror of the everyday. Works by Shelley and Brontë, writers following Radcliffe, can be analyzed as integrating commentary on the horrors of the everyday, thus providing a social rather than exclusively psychoanalytic means to explore Marcus’s observations. As Kate Ferguson Ellis notes, gothic novels “are concerned with violence done to familial bonds that is frequently directed against women” (3). Both *Frankenstein* and *Jane Eyre* invoke gothic conventions, including violence enacted on women characters such as Elizabeth Lavenza, Justine Moritz, Bertha Mason, and Jane Eyre. This is not to say that the male characters in the novels do not suffer violence, for they do, most notably Henry Clerval, William Frankenstein, and Rochester. Rather, Ellis’s statement encourages us to consider if and how the violence against women characters creates a commentary on women’s social conditions. In examining this potential for commentary with an eye toward gender issues, the gender not only of the author but also of the double and the original should be considered. Within this more gendered and social context of the gothic tradition, to what extent do Brontë’s and Shelley’s double narratives support Marcus’s definition of intersubjective doubles?

Marcus’s first observation is that “the double and his original display rivalry” (382), with the double following the original, resulting in a fierce competition between the two. Doubles in *Frankenstein* and *Jane Eyre* uphold this element of intersubjectivity. The creature finds Victor’s hometown, stalks him through the Alps until their encounter at Mont Blanc, follows him on his ill-fated trip to Scotland, and tells him “I shall be with you on your wedding-night” (163). He is, and he kills Elizabeth. Similarly, whether we regard Jane as Bertha’s double or Bertha as Jane’s, both inhabit Thornfield. Jane follows in Bertha’s

footsteps in taking up residence there; Bertha creeps into Jane's bedroom to destroy her bridal veil.

Protagonists and doubles in both novels also enforce Marcus's second criterion for an intersubjective double in that the "double tends to desire the 'objects' that are most precious for his original" (382). In *Frankenstein*, the creature's desire for a family—a void temporarily filled by the De Lacey family—inspires him to seek out his creator and creator's family. The potential for happiness other men possess motivates the creature to ask for a mate, for he burns with passion and desires a companion that "'must be of the same species, and have the same defects. This being you must create'" (139). The creature's subsequent rage at Victor's destruction of the female companion underscores his longing and desire.

In *Jane Eyre*, both Bertha and Jane desire what the other values—Rochester. Psychoanalytic interpretations of Bertha, such as Gilbert and Gubar's, reduce her to an expression of Jane's psyche and thus Jane's double. As Jane's double, Bertha wants Rochester's attentions for herself, and rightfully so, considering that she is his legal wife. Her antipathy toward Jane emphasizes that Rochester is *hers*, her legal husband. As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> however, Jane more appropriately functions as Bertha's double: Jane follows Bertha as Rochester's bride. Were Richard Mason not to stop the ceremony, Jane would become a bigamist's illegal second wife. Her desire, therefore, echoes Bertha's for she wants Rochester to love and to marry. So tempting is Rochester's proposal for them to be together in an adulterous fashion, yet so strong is her desire to remain virtuous that Jane flees Thornfield Hall, declaring "'Mr. Rochester, I will *not* be yours'" (278).

That Jane and Bertha can be viewed as either the original or the double reinforces Marcus's fourth observation about double narratives. He asserts that "the double often inverts the hierarchical relations with his original by subjugating the latter's will to his own" (382), challenging the view of who is the original and who is the double. In Brontë's work, Bertha may seem to be a plot device, making Jane the original. As Jane's inverted double, Bertha is the

original wife. Her existence, her very presence, works an effect on Jane, who, though she wants to be with Rochester, will not. Jane subjugates her own passionate desire because Bertha's existence requires her to avoid adultery by leaving. Jane notes that "Mr. Rochester was not to me what he had been; for he was not what I had thought him" (260), for, among other things, she had thought he was free to marry her. Bertha proves otherwise.

Similarly, the creature also dominates Victor's will, drawing increasing parallels between the two of them. Although he cannot convince Victor to complete the female companion, the creature can goad Victor into following him by killing Elizabeth, a vengeful act that leaves them both without a partner in life. After this murder, the creature commands his original's complete attention as the hunted Victor now hunts the creature, fueled by the same desire for revenge that motivated the creature to kill Elizabeth. In the end of the novel, the creature sums up this inverted hierarchy by addressing his dead creator as Walton listens, saying, "thou wouldst not desire against me a vengeance greater than that which I feel. Blasted as thou wert, my agony was still superior to thine" (215).

Despite upholding three of Marcus's observations on intersubjective doubles, *Frankenstein* and *Jane Eyre* challenge his remaining four observations to the varying degrees that each novel can be read as infusing the violence of gothic conventions with social and gendered commentary. For instance, Marcus's third point that the original feels both admiration and hostility toward the double holds for *Frankenstein* with its male protagonists. At first, Victor feels awe and admiration for the creature because he freely chooses to regenerate him, making *Frankenstein* one of the exceptions Marcus notes when saying "the original in most double narratives does not create his double of his own free will" (383). Victor does. He expresses awe as he plans to infuse life into the dead body parts, reveling that "no one can conceive the variety of feelings which bore me onwards, like a hurricane, in the first enthusiasm of success" (52). His excitement quickly dissipates into ambivalence and loathing at his grotesque creation: "I had

desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart" (56). Victor flees his creation and his responsibility to it.

The general rule regarding originals not creating their doubles is the one rule by which *Frankenstein* does not abide, perhaps because this act of giving life enables Shelley to offer a commentary on a horror in her society. U. C. Knoepfelmacher argues that *Frankenstein* is "a novel of omnipresent fathers and absent mothers" (90). Frankenstein's creation removes women from the reproductive process. Others note how the novel can be read as a condemnation of pseudo-scientific methods such as galvanism, alchemy, and natural philosophy, going past the bounds of acceptable knowledge.<sup>4</sup> The inseparable and deadly ends for Victor and his double in this context not only uphold the two final tenets of double and original intersubjectivity, but also underscore Shelley's critique of scientific methods of procreation substituting for women. Even though Victor flees, in keeping with Marcus's sixth observation, he cannot escape from the creature, even on his honeymoon. Marcus notes that the two "*become* inseparable because they treat each other as if the one's very being were dependent upon the other" (384). On the one hand, Victor's revenge depends upon the creature, and this quest gives his life new meaning. On the other hand, the creature encourages Victor to hunt him by leaving provisions to sustain Victor in the colder northern climes, thus making sure that he now has the full attention of his family that he so desired. Their symbiotic relationship culminates in the death of both creature and creator in the catastrophic ending which Marcus identifies as the seventh aspect of the intersubjective double/original relationship. Victor's death, brought on by his masochistic pursuit of the creature, will result in the creature's death as well, for one cannot live without the other. Upon Victor's death, the creature declares that "my work is nearly complete" (214); all that remains is his own suicide. He tells Walton, "he is dead who called me into being; and when I shall be no more, the very remembrance of us both will



speedily vanish" (214). *Frankenstein* fulfills these final two observations of inseparability and the double-death ending because Shelley violated the typical approach to a double in having Victor willingly make his own and then suffer the consequences of this hubris, which includes the violent death of Elizabeth. These violent consequences of Victor's choice add Shelley's social commentary on the bounds of scientific knowledge and its potential threat to women to the warning about self-fragmentation Marcus associates with double narratives.

Brontë's use of the gothic convention of the double offers social commentary on the potential dangers of matrimony, undercutting all four remaining observations on intersubjective relationships, perhaps because her work features female protagonists. Unlike Victor, neither Bertha nor Jane creates the other, in this sense upholding the fifth guideline that the original does not create the double which leads the original to experience the double as violence. However, *both* the double and the original in *Jane Eyre* are created by another: Rochester manipulates both women, reducing Bertha to a madwoman and Jane to her replacement, working violence against each within the common and familial bond of matrimony. Without any consideration for complicating aspects of Bertha's behavior,<sup>5</sup> including his own indifference to her, he locks her upstairs, dismissing her as the beast that she becomes. As Elaine Showalter explains, "much of Bertha's dehumanization, Rochester's account makes clear, is the result of her confinement, not its cause. After ten years of imprisonment, Bertha has become a caged beast" (121-22; see Brontë 272). Also in total disregard to Jane's feelings, as well as morals and laws, Rochester positions her as Bertha's successor—her double—by almost entering into a bigamous union with her. That neither woman willingly casts herself as a double of the other enables Brontë to criticize women's lack of agency, thus complicating the application of Marcus's fifth observation to these doubles.

Brontë's social critique of Rochester's marital power also undercuts the concept that the original alternately admires and despises the double, resulting in ambivalence. There is nothing ambivalent about

Bertha's destructive actions in Jane's bedroom. She certainly does not admire her rival; however, it remains ambiguous as to whether the rending of the veil targets violence at Jane or if, like Bertha's other violent acts, it focuses on Rochester. The hostile action in her replacement's bedroom can be read as Bertha's "veiled" warning to Jane to reject a marriage to one as capable of violently imprisoning a wife as Rochester. Likewise, Jane neither admires nor despises Bertha. When Jane first sees her rival, she offers no harsh judgment, wondering instead "what it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell" (257). Later, as Rochester attempts to explain his actions, Jane pities Bertha, telling him: "It is cruel—she cannot help being mad'" (265). Jane's subsequent departure rejects Rochester's devious plan for bigamy or adultery and affirms Bertha as his legal wife.

Jane's ability to flee Thornfield Hall shows how this double and her original can separate, perhaps because, unlike Victor and his creature, they did not create each other and are more physically distinct than other doubles Marcus discusses. As a result, their ability to lead separate lives also precludes both of them dying in a catastrophic murder/suicide. Instead, Rochester suffers redemptive injuries in the fire that precipitates Bertha's suicide, a final act of agency that allows Jane to marry Rochester as a legal second wife without moral compromise. Jane now marries a husband who must depend on her, more evenly balancing the power dynamic in the marriage and lessening the threat of violence against her within that familial bond.

So what implications arise for Marcus's observations from their application to two double narratives written by women? First, the potential impact of the gender of the author when assessing nineteenth-century literature should be acknowledged. Nancy Armstrong notes in *Desire and Domestic Fiction* that "the history of the novel cannot be understood apart from the history of sexuality" (9). Elizabeth Langland contends in *Nobody's Angels* that "women were active in *producing* representations and so became prominent players in the historical scene" (6) and that in terms of "cultural currency as opposed

to economic capital, women dominated Victorian society" (7). An analysis of nineteenth-century double narratives should include a discussion of both women authors and female doubles and their originals. Thus, an extension of Marcus's analysis to women authors in addition to Brontë and Shelley could provide a more complete picture of nineteenth-century double narratives. Moreover, taking into account the influence of the gothic tradition on an author's use of doubles, male or female, may reveal more for doubles and originals than a focus on the supernatural or self-fragmentation: it expands the analysis to social context and commentary. Whereas Shelley's and Brontë's works follow some, if not most, of the intersubjective principles Marcus provides, they also challenge some of them in a manner that leads to a social critique aligned with gothic horror, particularly violence against women. Marcus may want to further study women originals and their doubles, particularly in works written by women, to see if an expansion of these intersubjective markers is warranted. My brief foray into such an analysis suggests that it is a warranted and important extension of the solid foundation he offers for analyzing not only doubles and their originals but also clones and theirs.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See among others, Gerhard Joseph, "Frankenstein's Dream: The Child as Father of the Monster"; Rosemary Jackson, "Narcissism and Beyond: A Psychoanalytic Reading of *Frankenstein* and Fantasies of the Double"; Peter K. Garrett, *Gothic Reflections: Narrative Force in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*.

<sup>2</sup>In addition to Gilbert and Gubar, see among others, Morteza Jafari, "Freud's Uncanny: The Role of the Double in *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*"; and Elaine Showalter who, in *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists*, states that "Brontë's most profound innovation [...] is the division of the Victorian female psyche into its extreme components of mind and body, which she externalizes as two characters, Helen Burns and Bertha Mason [...]. Brontë gives us not one but three faces of Jane" (113).

<sup>3</sup>See Diederich, "Gothic Doppelgangers and Discourse."

<sup>4</sup>See, among others, Kate Ellis, "Monsters in the Garden"; Robert Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England*; David Ketterer, *Frankenstein's Creation: The Book, the Monster, and Human Reality*; Peter Dale Scott, "Vital Artifice"; Marc Rubenstein, "The Search for the Mother in Frankenstein"; William Veeder, *Mary Shelley and Frankenstein*.

<sup>5</sup>Bertha's context has been explained in terms of race, most famously by Gayatri Spivak in "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." For more on Bertha and racial context in *Jane Eyre* see, among others, Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*; Cora Kaplan, *Sea Changes: Essays on Culture and Feminism*; Patricia McKee, "Racial Strategies in *Jane Eyre*." Other social contexts into which critics have placed Bertha include considering her and the novel alongside nineteenth-century freak shows in Chih-Ping Chen's "'Am I a Monster?': *Jane Eyre* Among the Shadow of Freaks"; and, reading Bertha from a disability studies position in Elizabeth J. Donaldson, "The Corpus of the Madwoman: Toward a Feminist Disability Studies Theory of Embodiment and Mental Illness." English and Elaine Showalter relate Bertha's behavior to women's hormones in "Victorian Women and Menstruation."

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