

**Gothic Doppelgangers and Discourse:
Examining the Doubling Practice of (Re)marriage in *Jane Eyre***

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<1>Many critics discuss the pervasiveness and effect of doubling in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. As Robyn Warhol observes, "the trope of 'doubleness' is everywhere in feminist critics' commentaries upon women writers" (857) and "Charlotte Brontë's novels seem to lend themselves especially well to feminist tropes of doubleness" (858). In noting but a few of these critical works that discuss doubling, often from a psychoanalytic perspective, I must acknowledge two of the most groundbreaking—*The Madwoman in the Attic* and *A Literature of Their Own*. In *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar contend that "Bertha has functioned as Jane's dark double *throughout* the governess's stay at Thornfield. Specifically, every one of Bertha's appearances—or, more accurately, her manifestations—has been associated with an experience (or repression) of anger on Jane's part" (360). Similarly, Elaine Showalter notes 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). In the years since these two famous studies, critics continue to consider Bertha and doubling in the novel in other ways. In Alison Milbank's "Gothic Femininities," she notes the doubling characteristic of the fantastic—the natural doubled by the supernatural, the real transformed into spectral—in the novel (160). Quoted above, Robyn Warhol, in "Double Gender, Double Genre in *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*," close reads passages of both novels, considering realistic and gothic elements of the works, in order to reveal Brontë's resistance of gendered binaries. Taking the concept of doubling in another direction, Julia Miele Rodas suggests that Bertha and Rochester double each other.(1)

<2>Other discussions of *Jane Eyre* position the novel as a reflection of nineteenth-century social practices or cultural codes, with one of the most important being Gayatri Spivak's examination of Bertha as post-colonial other in "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism." After the publication of Jean Rhys's *Wild Sargasso Sea* in 1966 and since Spivak's article first appeared in 1985, many articles discuss Bertha's Creole heritage, her ambiguity as a "white woman," how race and racism complicate her powerlessness. Mary Poovey even equates Jane's position as governess with "white slavery" (131), an interesting doubling of Bertha when one considers Rhys's description of Bertha as a "white nigger." Like Gilbert and Gubar and Showalter, Poovey also privileges Jane's position to Bertha's, noting that Bertha "is Jane's surrogate by virtue of her relation to Rochester" (139). Sue Thomas's *Imperialism, Reform, and*

the Making of Englishness in Jane Eyre, traces the discourse of slavery in England, discusses issues of race, despotism, and marriage, and places Bertha into this context as a slave mistress, a further devalued woman.(2)

<3>Another critical aspect both of placing *Jane Eyre* into a social context and of discussing doubling in the novel is positioning it and its author within Gothic tradition. The reliance on a double, or doppelgänger, might simultaneously place *Jane Eyre* as a work of both Romantic and Female Gothic traditions (McEvoy 27; Fleenor 5). Its questioning of gender and women's place aligns it with gothic sensibilities that Alexandra Warwick calls Victorian Gothic (31). The Brontës also have been associated with Irish Gothic and even their own Gothic tradition (Haslam 83). Juliann Fleenor notes "a major problem of definition of the Female Gothic" in her introduction to *The Female Gothic*: "It has . . . many forms and is a protean entity not one thing. There is not just one Gothic but Gothics" (4). Fleenor goes on to define Female Gothic in a manner that emphasizes the psychological elements often associated with the Gothic, including feelings related to female sexuality (15).

<4>While recognizing that the Gothic, with its uncanny and abject elements, invites a heavily psychoanalytical interpretation, in examining the doppelgänger in regard to remarriage, I contextualize the novel as Female Gothic in a Radcliffean sense: *Jane Eyre* is not a gothic work of supernatural mystery, but of explained natural phenomenon. In 1958, Robert Heilman discussed *Jane Eyre* as this type of Gothic, labeling it "new Gothic," but excluded Radcliffe from this development. More recently, however, Alison Milbank reclaims this element of the Female Gothic for Radcliffe as well as those writers who follow her, explaining, in *Daughters of the House*, that Radcliffe situates gothic horror in the everyday (41). In "Gothic Femininities," Milbank extends Fleenor's definition, noting that the female Gothic element of "explained supernatural," "evokes a spiritual world through unexplained ghostly visions and sounds, yet finally provides a natural origin for all the effects" (157). Thus, while it is possible to read Bertha Mason as part of Jane's sexual psyche, a rational explanation for the mysterious rending of the veil, the maniacal laughter, and all the other mysterious events Jane experiences at Thornfield exists: Rochester's bigamous remarriage kindles Bertha's anger at this attempt to replace her. Kate Ferguson Ellis defines the gothic novel as "distinguished by the presence of houses in which people are locked in and locked out. They are concerned with violence done to familial bonds that is frequently directed against women" (3). While Rochester's attempt at bigamy violates Jane, he also perpetuates a symbolic and physical violence against Bertha, whom Jane would replace, or double. The social practice of remarriage locates the gothic terror of the doppelgänger into the everyday, into the role of second wife, as my examination of Rochester's courtship, marriage, and remarriage reveals.

<5>Thus, in examining *Jane Eyre* as Brontë's rebellious commentary on the conventional marriage model as one that leaves wives in a powerless subject position, I both place the novel into a social context and explore the importance of doubles. In readings of *Jane Eyre* as Brontë's critique of nineteenth-century marriage, one element of doubling that has been considered only tangentially is that of remarriage. By placing the novel within the discourse of this nineteenth-century social practice of doubling I argue that the gothic device of the doppelgänger reveals the

potentially powerless subject positions of both first *and* second wife in that Brontë constructs Jane as Bertha's alter ego, rather than the other way around.

Courtship

<6>On both sides of the Atlantic during the nineteenth century, middle-class white women like Bertha Mason⁽³⁾ were expected to reside in the domestic sphere of the home in the dual role of wife and mother. Such positioning seemingly distanced them from the concerns of the male-dominated marketplace. Yet, seldom is history so uncomplicated or angels so easily idealized. Contemporary studies on the nineteenth century, such as Elizabeth Langland's *Nobody's Angels*, problematize the "separate spheres" ideology in Great Britain by examining the politicized roles of women in social and cultural contexts, arguing that middle-class women held more power within the household than the generalized domestic ideal suggests. Much of the language describing this domestic ideal of marriage in the nineteenth century comes to us from marriage manuals or advice books, many written by men to young women, like those by John Gregory. These texts establish a social discourse of marriage as a practice ideally associated with affection and esteem on the part of the woman and love on the part of the man. For example, *The New Female Instructor or Young Woman's Guide to Domestic Happiness* promotes the combination of character and love as key components of marriage practice. Similarly, in *A Father's Legacy to his Daughters*, first printed in 1789, but reprinted throughout the nineteenth century, John Gregory instructs his daughters that "a married state, if entered into from proper motives of esteem and affection, will be the happiest for yourselves, [and] make you most respectable in the eyes of the world" (61; spelling regularized from *f* to *s*). . While noting that his own wealth gives his daughters the freedom to select a marital partner unencumbered by monetary concerns, Gregory also emphasizes the importance of emotional connection between the woman and the man when entering into marriage. This language of love, romance, or desire, in addition to financial considerations, discursively constructs *ideal* marriage practice. Thus courtship and the resulting marriage would occur between two individuals with a degree of affection for one another.

<7>Rochester's description of Bertha has none of this affection. He defines her as an object, not a beloved wife with the power to act or to run a household. As Rochester explains, his brother and father "thought only of the thirty thousand pounds, and joined in the plot against me" (269) to marry him off to Bertha.⁽⁴⁾ Thus, he tells Jane, "When I left college I was sent out to Jamaica, to espouse a bride already courted for me" (268). At first glance, Bertha is a desirable commodity both for her money and for her accomplishments, but Rochester doubts his emotional attachment. He tells Jane that Bertha "flattered me, and lavishly displayed for my pleasure her charms and accomplishments," and "all the men in her circle seemed to admire her and envy me. I was dazzled, stimulated . . . I thought I loved her" (268). The appeal of Bertha's fortune in addition to her personal charms demonstrate the capitalist element of desire more so than love: Rochester and his family vie for Bertha as a bride, framing her more as an object to be gained within a system of marketplace competition and less as an individual to be valued within the domestic sphere.

<8>Rochester marries for utility—to possess Bertha's wealth—rather than love; his first courtship emphasizes the pecuniary considerations that accompany marriage more than love.

Nineteenth-century marriage and domestic life must consider economics—as warnings about poverty and advice about realistic income like Gregory’s suggest. Nevertheless, conventional discourse constructs an image of man and woman united in love, an ideal image to be sure, but one which nonetheless associates the ideal marriage with love, trust, and fidelity. Michael Gordon and M. Charles Bernstein, in their study of nineteenth-century marriage manuals, confirm the importance of romantic language and love in constructing this discourse. They qualify “love” by saying that these manuals refer “to an emotion much calmer than the ‘cardiac-respiratory’ passion which we now commonly associate with the word,” yet note that love also is described as a “union of hearts as well as hands” (668). The love described in these popular manuals often excludes passionate expressions, promoting a more demure, controlled sentiment rather than one of sexual energies, a subject that, as Michel Foucault notes, frequently went unacknowledged yet was ever-present in nineteenth-century discourses of love. For the most part, the love described in the manuals, Gordon and Bernstein conclude, is calmer and may not be “romantic” prior to marriage but should grow in the marriage.

<9>What has this to do with Jane? Brontë couches Jane’s courtship to Rochester in language that echoes his courtship of Bertha, setting up Jane as Bertha’s doppelgänger and sending a warning about his second marriage. In the nineteenth century, the second wife reestablishes the gendered division of labor in the family idealized in marriage manuals and advice books, an ideal Bertha and Rochester’s courtship and later marriage already questions. Despite the likelihood that many women might marry a widower, particularly given the high mortality rates of women during childbirth, the advice books give scant if any attention to the practice of remarriage. After all, when focusing on marriage, discussing the death of one’s spouse or the spouse’s previous mate brings in a morbid component not in keeping with the more genial tone of such documents. Moreover, although remarriage reinscribes the ideal family unit of mother, father, and children, discussions of the practice differ from the idealized portrait of love and domestic felicity associated with a first marriage.

<10>William A. Alcott’s widely-published *The Moral Philosophy of Courtship and Marriage* perhaps offers the most extensive discussion of remarriage. In a chapter entitled “Are Second Marriages Desirable?,” Alcott explains that second marriages are not to be encouraged but rather to be “only on occasions, as a matter of duty” (72). Alcott echoes St. Paul, who in I Corinthians 7. 7-8 (*The Holy Bible. King James Version*) discourages widows from remarrying if at all possible: he eschews selfish motives such as love, and emphasizes the importance of doing one’s duty to God and to any children by remarrying. Alcott concludes by declaring that women are “beings whom God has designed to be helpers, through a long life of labor, in the advancement of his kingdom and the world’s latter-day glory” (75). His biblical discourse positions women in general and second wives in particular as help-meets who tend the domestic sphere and labor under religious principles. His language constructs a power relationship subordinating the second wife to her husband and his children, and Alcott sheds little ink discussing love, aside from labeling it a selfish motive for remarriage. Unlike the idealized version of first marriages, based to some extent on love, remarriage subordinates love to duty. Alcott tempers the privileging of duty by also considering age, noting “where there are no children, and the parties are far advanced in life, and suppose themselves already sufficiently wise, so that the family school can no longer instruct them, the case is altered” (70). Only if the importance of childrearing as a

reason justifying a dutiful remarriage ceases to exist may a couple enter into a remarriage for more selfish reasons.

<11>Jane is not needed to fulfill obligatory duties of the second wife: Rochester employs Mrs. Fairfax to manage his home and could hire a new governess to be with Adele. Because Rochester has no legitimate heir from his first wife (if she were really dead), he could enter into a second marriage for love—for his own selfish motives. Instead of just love, though, Rochester's language and his toying with Jane suggest that this courtship is about possession, much like his in his first conquest. This time, Rochester wants to possess Jane for his own happiness, unconventional motives for remarriage that cast a shadow over his attempts to woo her. Despite his more positive feelings for Jane, he courts her as indirectly as he courted Bertha, in that he never expresses his feelings for Jane outright until his proposal. Instead, as Milbank points out, Rochester's courtship of Jane takes "the form of cruel power-games, such as making her sit in the room where he flirted with his beautiful and aristocratic supposed bride" (*Daughters of the House*, 144). On another occasion, after meeting Jane upon her return from her aunt's funeral, Rochester teases her, leading her to conclude that she "was nothing to him," that he has a great "power of communicating happiness," and that he has thrown a few crumbs to her on which to feed (215). Even his most direct conversation with Jane prior to his proposal occurs when he is disguised as a gypsy fortune-teller, trying to trick Jane into revealing her love. Jane aptly notes "you have been talking nonsense to make me talk nonsense. It is scarcely fair, sir" (178). Despite Rochester's questioning of the sincerity of Bertha's displays of affection, he contrives an incredibly artificial situation to force Jane to reveal her feelings, to put her on display as Bertha was.

<12>This doubling between Jane and Bertha further contextualizes how Rochester toys with Jane in the garden proposal scene. Again, he begins by tormenting her into tears by threatening to send her away to Ireland to serve as a governess there, adding "I shall never see you again, Jane . . . I never go over to Ireland" (221). While critics like James Phillips read this exchange as Rochester's desperate attempt to encourage the reticent Jane to speak her love, once she does, declaring herself his equal, the greater selfishness of Rochester's proposal, his wish to lead Jane into bigamy, shadows this seeming expression of love. Jane declares, "You are a married man—or as good as a married man, and wed to one inferior to you—to one with whom you have no sympathy—whom I do not believe you truly love; for I have seen and heard you sneer at her. I would scorn such a union" (222). While Jane alludes to Blanche Ingram, her words, at another level, refer to a greater truth—Rochester's relationship with Bertha. Rochester scorns Bertha and never truly loved her. Jane *will* scorn a union like Rochester's previous loveless marriage.

<13>Even after their engagement, Jane fights against a relationship not on her own terms as an equal when Rochester treats her as an object of conspicuous consumption, suggesting she wear jewels and be dressed in satin and lace. Milbank points out that Rochester's "references to himself as a sultan" and the gifts he insists on giving Jane bespeak "possession and control" (*Daughter of the House*, 144). Jane recognizes Rochester's objectification of her, his turning her into another bauble that he can possess, as he did Bertha. As Shirley Foster aptly notes, Bertha expresses Brontë's "scepticism [sic] about marriage itself, from the woman's point of view" (73).(5) The framing of Bertha as an object to be gained rather than the beloved wife of

marriage manuals offers a discursive critique of the idealized position for wives presented in these texts, and Jane's subsequent fight to escape her own objectification echoes Bertha's clawing at the attic door. Although Rochester eventually desists in his attempts to dress Jane, he warns her that he has relented only temporarily. Rochester reifies his future second wife as he does his first, stating, "Once I have fairly seized you, to have and to hold, I'll just—figuratively speaking—attach you to a chain like this' (touching his watch-guard)" (238). Rochester's language foreshadows his objectified description of Bertha in the attic, even alluding to entrapment, and applies it to Jane, undercutting a language of love which would otherwise give the wife—be she the first or the doppelgänger second wife—some authority as one who manages a household and raises children. Within Brontë's female gothic tale, first and second wives can both be trapped and held prisoners by their husbands.(6)

Marriage and Remarriage

<14>The socially constructed ideal that love, heart-stopping or otherwise, grows in marriage has not happened in Bertha's marriage to Rochester. During courtship, Rochester and his family set Bertha up as an object with no agency of her own. In their marriage, his disdain for Bertha further debilitates her. According to Rochester, Bertha's mental instability and infidelity precipitates the disintegration of their marriage and of any love he thought he felt for her. Yet he also tells Jane that Bertha "has now for ten years made a wild beast's den" in her third story chambers (272). To be fair, after her marriage and arrival at Thornfield, Bertha *acts* mentally unstable; however, Rochester's choice of words is disingenuous, as if Bertha chose to live on the third story, locked in with only Grace Poole to keep her from leaving. As Elaine Showalter rightly observes, "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"(121-2).

<15>Rochester wants Jane to pity him in his first marriage to a woman whose behavior warranted confinement, but consider this part of his explanation of Bertha's behavior and their failed marriage:

"her nature [was] wholly alien to mine; her tastes obnoxious to me; her cast of mind common, low, narrow, and singularly incapable of being led to anything higher, expanded to anything larger . . . kindly conversation could not be sustained between us, because whatever topic I started immediately received from her a turn at once coarse and trite, perverse and imbecile." (269)

On one level, this passage denotes the absence of the affection and esteem that ideally accompany a marriage match. Their union, based on the social discourse of marriage, should not have taken place. On another level, though, this passage could be read as the story of a marriage that did not succeed because the husband and wife had differing tastes, differing opinions, and, perhaps fairly commonly in the nineteenth century when women were not as schooled as men, differing levels of education that would lead to a different level of conversational ability. "Obnoxious," "alien," "common, low, narrow," "incapable," "coarse," "trite"—these words not only demonize Bertha but also convey Rochester's expectations for a wife: if she fails to satisfy

him, that wife is dismissed linguistically and physically. For him, Bertha is no Honoria, nor the obedient wife described in Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*. In Rochester's view, Bertha is a monster, thus deserving the treatment she receives.

<16>Jane's subject position as potential second wife, a doppelganger to the first, suggests her marriage, too, could result in such powerlessness. The doppelganger element emerges from remarriage discourse in the nineteenth century because even with an appropriate interval of bereavement prior to remarriage, friends and family of the previous spouse may resent the new partner as an affront to the first marriage. The husband may select his second wife out of duty in order to have someone to tend to his children. He may even love her, but she may still be seen as a substitute—real or imagined—for the first wife. Alan Macfarlane points out, "there was thought to be an element of adultery, or overlap of sexuality, about the affair, even though the first spouse was dead" (232). Indeed, Thomas and Mary Gove Nichols in *Marriage* propose to end the institution of marriage altogether. They respond to objections that second attachments are adulterous—and to related concerns over how multiple spouses will interact in Heaven—by suggesting that Heaven is not so limited in its relationships. The doppelganger motif, the doubling of the first wife by the second wife, reverses the typical consideration of Bertha as Jane's repressed psychological alter ego. The comparison between Jane and Bertha makes the second wife the doppelganger of the first, setting up Brontë's critique of marriage as also a warning about remarriage. The greatest source of terror in Jane's engagement, and in a society in which divorce is discouraged and infrequent, is the discovery that the first wife, defined by her husband as dead, *lives*.

<17>Rochester's use of violent and denigrating language, and, subsequently, the comparative language of remarriage, continues when he and Jane stand before Bertha in her attic cell after the aborted wedding ceremony. Characterized as a "clothed hyena," a "maniac," a "strange wild animal," growling and snatching with a wild mane, Bertha runs "backwards and forwards" on all fours and "whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell" (257). Rochester relies on Bertha's physical contrast to Jane to grant authority to his explanation, to justify his bigamy. He proclaims "'This is what I wished to have' (laying his hand on my [Jane's] shoulder): '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'" (258). With these words, replete with food imagery and implications of swallowing up and possessing, Rochester describes Jane "just as a change" from Bertha, an interchangeable alternative to his wife.

<18>"Just as a change" accomplishes two comparative functions for Brontë: first, it establishes Jane as doppelganger to a dehumanized, powerless wife. Second, this phrasing also is a far cry from Rochester's pronouncing Jane to be his equal, as he did in his proposal when he declared, "My bride is here . . . because my equal is here, and my likeness. Jane, will you marry me?" (223). Now in the attic, instead of granting Jane a subject position equal to his own, Rochester places her "just" a little higher in value than the wife he regards as a demon. As he vilifies Bertha as a demon from hell, his speech further imbricates remarriage: hell may be not just Bertha's chambers and appearance, but the marriage which reduced her to this condition. Rochester, not Bertha, may be the demon. Brontë's polysemous language plays with this

possibility, contextualizing remarriage as less than ideal by comparisons to the first marriage and setting up Jane as Bertha's replacement in a remarriage scenario. As Bertha's husband speaking to Jane, Rochester possesses the linguistic authority to cast Bertha as an "other" to him, a maniac, a lunatic, with no power of her own to gain a liberating subject position or to act outside her confined space on the third floor of Thornfield. He claims that his wife, "the true daughter of an infamous mother,—dragged me through all the hideous and degrading agonies which must attend a man bound to a wife at once intemperate and unchaste" (269-270).(7) If the first marriage is a bad one and remarriage doubles the first marriage, then this second marriage cannot revitalize the domestic sphere. While critics often view Jane's escape from Thornfield as a gothic escape from a castle of imprisonment or from sexual energies and bigamy, Jane's escape should also be contextualized as an escape as from a "remarriage" that would install her as a double to a powerless wife.

<19>Even prior to Bertha's discovery, these discursively comparative moments between Bertha and Jane—the development of the second wife as doppelgänger motif—intensify as the planned wedding ceremony draws closer. The night before her wedding, Jane thinks, "Mrs. Rochester! She did not exist: she would not be born till to-morrow, some time after eight o'clock A.M.; and I would wait to be assured she had come into the world alive before I assigned to her all that property" (242). Ironically, Jane imagines a Mrs. Rochester with property, in contrast both to her own poor and plain condition and to laws giving a married woman's assets, like Bertha's, to her husband. Jane hesitates to embrace the title of "Mrs. Rochester" for herself. Bertha—Mrs. Rochester—is born, discovered after 8 a.m., but is herself depicted *as* property, not one who once possessed it. With this contrast, Brontë uses the comparative discourse of remarriage to disrupt domestic ideology: neither the first nor second wife is able to occupy the idealized role of "angel" in Rochester's house, and neither receives the respect from this husband which would elevate them to that position. Brontë sets up Jane to be Bertha's doppelgänger should Jane become Rochester's second wife under these circumstances, which is the true gothic horror potential in remarriage.

<20>Moreover, the violence Rochester introduces into the household continues as Bertha, in turn, behaves aggressively toward Jane, competitor for Rochester's brand of "affection." Jane explains that her night-time visitor "removed my veil from its gaunt head, rent it in two parts, and flinging both on the floor, trampled on them" (250). More than a dream, a psychological manifestation of Jane's subconscious, Bertha recognizes Jane as a rival and realizes the threat this rivalry poses to her existence, her limited, if any, power as Rochester's first wife. Rochester ascribes the destruction of the veil to "vague reminiscences of her own bridal days" (273). Indeed, it is not hard to imagine that Bertha remembers her wedding and acts in order to hurt Rochester and Jane; her destructive actions are understandable given her circumstances. In "Marriage in *Jane Eyre*: from Contract to Conversation," James Phillips reads the destruction of the veil as a representation of the physical aspect of marriage, the broken hymen, and notes that "if *Jane Eyre* communicates with the genre Cavell calls remarriage comedy, it is because what is at stake is not the fact of virginity (the traditional stakes of a first marriage), but the reconciling power of conversation" (212). The gothic overlay of the doppelgänger disassociates *Jane Eyre* from remarriage comedy. Jane's agency, her ability to choose, to control herself, represented in part by her virginity, remains an issue in this potential remarriage. As a result, there is far more symbolized in the rending of the veil than the reconciling power of conversation: the rending of

the veil symbolizes the competitive and comparative structure of remarriage, replete with “veiled” warnings to the new bride about the dangers of that second marriage. Bertha’s destruction of Jane’s veil represents the doubled and competitive elements of remarriage, perpetuating the gothic violence that challenges “ideal” domesticity. Rending the veil in two, Bertha reminds us that there are two wives, the second a doppelganger of the first.

Remarriage *Redux*

<21>Fortunately for Jane, Brontë does not marry her off to Rochester under these circumstances. Instead, on the morning of the wedding, Richard Mason, with the authority granted to him as Bertha’s brother, accuses Rochester of bigamy. Just as Rochester played language games to demonstrate his mastery over Jane, now Mason exerts his power over Rochester by preventing the bigamous union. Rochester admits that “bigamy is an ugly word!—I meant, however, to be a bigamist . . . I have been married; and the woman to whom I *was* married lives!” (256, emphasis mine). Rochester’s language, his use of the past tense, dismisses Bertha as deceased, someone to whom he is no longer married, at least in his own mind. These words, too, work a symbolic violence on Jane, silent and caught in the power struggle between these two men, just as Bertha was and still is.

<22>Knowing what we know about Bertha’s existence as a wife casts both the scene in the attic and Jane’s flight from Thornfield in an entirely new light. Rochester’s language in this passage reinforces the gothic convention of the doppelganger. He degrades Bertha when comparing her to Jane and does so in Bertha’s presence. While Rochester applies the discourse of the hysterical woman to Bertha, blaming her for her own imprisonment,⁽⁸⁾ Brontë’s account intimates *other* explanations for such behavior, explanations inextricably linked to women’s lack of agency and limited opportunities within marriage. Taken far from her home and demonized as a monster, Bertha, as Jane tells Rochester, “cannot help being mad” (265). Shirley Foster states that “the figure of Bertha Mason offers perhaps the most revealing comment on matrimony at this point . . . It is never directly stated that Rochester has mistreated Bertha and thus exacerbated her insanity, but his extreme aversion to her . . . hint[s] at the possibility that his conduct towards her may not have been blameless”(91). Speaking so vehemently and comparatively of his aversion to Bertha in front of her constitutes a direct example of Rochester’s mistreatment of his first wife, much as his “just as a change” description belittles Jane. Had Rochester entered into a bigamous remarriage to Jane, Jane would take her place as his next victim, not as an idealized “angel in the house,” but as the next demonized and devalued illegal bigamous wife. Rochester would have “fairly seized” her, and attached her to his chain.

<23>Jane’s sympathetic reaction to Bertha, rather than Rochester, further defines the interconnectedness between the two women as that of a gothic doubling. As Rachel Ablow notes in *The Marriage of Minds*, in a nineteenth-century context, “sympathy was increasingly identified with the private sphere” and functioned “as a structure through which the subject is constituted in relation to others” (3). Ablow argues that novels effectively conveyed sympathy. Jane’s capacity for sympathy for a rival who has sought to harm both her and her beloved not only undercuts Rochester’s depiction of Bertha, but also emphasizes the connection between the two women created by Rochester’s remarriage attempt.

<24>At the very least, Bertha's relationship to Jane offers a warning about the draining aspects of (re)marriage—the loss of even limited authority on which to act. Though Bertha's symbolic rending of the veil suggests an antagonistic relationship, Laura Donaldson insists that we “read Jane and Bertha as oppressed rather than opposed sisters”(75), not unlike Lizzie and Laura, not unlike doppelgangers. In *Between Women*, Sharon Marcus explains that though rivals compete, they also connect. Moreover, as Helena Michie observes, there is an attraction and a competitive repulsion in women's power relations. On the one hand, Jane sympathizes with Bertha as she learns how Bertha has been defined and dehumanized by others. On the other hand, if not for Bertha's warning, Jane's fate could double that of the first wife. As noted previously, just as Bertha has very little means to make her presence and rightful place as wife known other than the symbolic destruction of Jane's veil, so too Jane has little authority with which to act or negotiate in her relationship with Rochester until after Bertha injures him. Upon discovering Bertha's existence, and noting her warning, Jane flees. She flees a marriage in which Rochester would have possessed her to secure his happiness without thought to her own in a bigamous union, much as he used Bertha to secure his financial standing. The similarity between Bertha's subject position as entrapped first wife and Jane's as poor governess/manipulated bride drive Jane from Thornfield. Jane will not be a wife or mistress in such a bigamous relationship nor will she take her place as Rochester's second wife until Bertha has cleared the way and is out of the way. Jane refuses to continue any relationship with Rochester, to become a doppelganger of his first wife, rejecting remarriage as an institution far more horrific than ideal.

<25>Jane only occupies the position as Rochester's second wife after the circumstances of all three of them have drastically changed. These changes are the result of the final actions Bertha has any power to take. Bertha, on her first outing at Thornfield after Rochester's failed remarriage attempt, in the words of the innkeeper, “made her way to the chamber that had been the governess's—(she was like as if she knew somehow how matters had gone on, and had a spite at her)—and she kindled the bed there; but there was nobody sleeping in it fortunately” (376). These actions suggest that she *does* know what went on. Symbolically, Bertha's destruction of Jane's bed destroys Thornfield, echoing her earlier attempt to burn Rochester in his bed and suggesting that enflamed and misguided sexual passion like Rochester's will destroy him and the household. Laura Donaldson asserts that Bertha's suicide “constitutes an act of resistance not only to her status as a woman in a patriarchal culture but also as a colonized object” (76). Bertha's suicide should not be read as a helpless victim's unfortunate death, but rather as the final act afforded Bertha's limited agency, an act of symbolic violence against those who do not acknowledge her as an individual and a wife, but as an object. Bertha's imprisonment and treatment, which demonized her as a wife, produce her resistance, a power of her own, which unsettles the idealized image of marriage with its passive “angels.” In setting the fire and fleeing to the roof, out of hiding and symbolically on top of the house, Bertha emasculates Rochester, who not only suffers life-altering injuries but who also finally acknowledges her as an individual, calling her by name.

<26>Had Rochester bigamously remarried Jane, this union would not have recreated an ideal first marriage, for that did not exist. However, with Bertha's death and her destruction of Rochester's sight, she provides Jane with the opportunity to accept the position of wife and mother, to enter into a remarriage that grants the second wife more agency than the first. Though he can still call Jane to him, Rochester is now in the position of a dependent. Whereas Bertha

acts to destroy his sight, Jane may act to restore it, continuing the discursively comparative construction of remarriage. Jane's ten years of marriage to Rochester at the novel's close have been far different than Bertha's ten years at Thornfield. The sight Rochester regains is not just that of his physical vision, but that of new insight into domestic partnership. Instead of chaining a wife to him to satisfy his interests and needs, as he did with Bertha and meant to do with Jane, he now depends on Jane, which chains him *to her* and results in a more equal relationship than did his empty avowal of equality during his proposal. In fact, Peter Bellis, in his discussion of vision as power in *Jane Eyre*, goes so far as to suggest that Jane and Rochester's marriage, now based on Rochester's blindness, allows Jane not just to be an equal but to dominate the marriage (648-9).⁽⁹⁾ In the last few pages of the novel, Brontë replaces Rochester's earlier language with discourse that reflects how Rochester depends upon rather than dominates Jane, for, as Jane herself notes, she "was then his vision, as I am still his right hand. Literally, I was (what he often called me) the apple of his eye" (397). While these final pages could be read as promoting an idealized version of (re)marriage, Brontë offers this vision of (re)marriage only after almost four hundred pages of warning, and only after the husband is punished and changed, so that his remarriage now will be nothing like his previous marriage or his first remarriage attempt—before the losses of his sight, of his limb, and of his first wife. Thus, Jane avoids making a marriage mistake after learning of Bertha's, for Jane's opportunities within such a marriage were, initially, no different from Bertha's. Jane's return to Rochester may restore a domestic sphere of husband, wife, and children, but not before Rochester becomes a more humble husband, not before Jane acquires more recognized authority in their relationship, and not before Brontë problematizes the subject position of wives by examining remarriage, ultimately casting it as a doppelganger of a loveless first marriage unless circumstances drastically change.

<27>Like other Female Gothic writers, Brontë situates otherwise gothic elements into the everyday. Like Jane Austen with her satire in *Northanger Abbey*, Brontë suggests *this* world is horrific. In *Jane Eyre*, the horrific world is Bertha Mason's. Terror is not inflicted on Rochester and Jane by Bertha, but *by Rochester* on Bertha and later Jane, fashioning the first wife as powerless and the second as her potential doppelganger. Brontë undermines remarriage as a practice that re-establishes an idealized marriage by taking this comparison to its abject end, tyrannizing Jane not with the memory of a beloved first "angel," but with the actually present first wife, a representative of all the symbolic violence misrecognized in (re)marriage. Rochester's ill-fated remarriage attempt brings this horror to the forefront of the novel. In keeping the first wife alive, the doppelganger element in *Jane Eyre*, in addition to the psychological or mythic resonance it awakens, allows Brontë to subvert discourse on marriage with a discourse of remarriage that exposes the often powerless subjectivity of the both the first and the second "angel in the house."

(1) For more on narrative strategies that consider doubling, note, among others, Lori Pollock, "(An)Other Politics of Reading *Jane Eyre*." *Journal of Narrative Technique* 26.3 (Fall 1996): 249-73; Joan D. Peters, "Finding a Voice: Towards a Woman's Discourse of Dialogue in the Narration of *Jane Eyre*," *SNNTS* 23.2 (Summer 1991): 217-36; Vicky Simpson, "'The eagerness of a listener quickens the tongue of a narrator': Storytelling and Autobiography in *Jane Eyre*," *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 4.3 (Winter 2008); Patricia Lorimer Lundberg, "The Dialogic Search for Community in Charlotte Brontë's Novels," *Journal of Narrative Technique* 20.3 (Fall 1990): 296-317.(^)

(2) For more on Bertha and racial issues in *Jane Eyre* see, among others, Cora Kaplan, *Sea Changes: Essays on Culture and Feminism*. London: Verso, 1986; Patricia McKee, "Racial Strategies in *Jane Eyre*," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 37 (2009): 67-83. Other social contexts into which critics have placed *Jane Eyre* include contextualizing Bertha and the novel with nineteenth-century freak shows, reading Bertha from a disability studies position, contrasting Jane and Rochester's conversational relationship with contractual marriage discourse, and placing Jane within discourse and social ideology surrounding governesses and class. See Chih-Ping Chen's "'Am I a Monster?': *Jane Eyre* Among the Shadow of Freaks," *Studies in the Novel* 34.4 (Winter 2002): 367-384; Elizabeth J. Donaldson, "The Corpus of the Madwoman: Toward a Feminist Disability Studies Theory of Embodiment and Mental Illness," *NWSA Journal* 14. 3 (Fall): 99-119; James Phillips, "Marriage in *Jane Eyre*: From Contract to Conversation," *Brontë Studies* 33 (Nov. 2008): 203-217; Esther Godfrey, "*Jane Eyre*, from Governess to Girl Bride," *SEL* 45.4 (Autumn 2005): 853-871; Chris R. Vanden Bossche, "What did *Jane Eyre* Do? Ideology, Agency, Class and the Novel," *Narrative* 13. 1 (January 2005): 46-66.(^)

(3) The definition of "Creole" in terms of color and racial origin is subject to much debate. As a point of reference, the OED definition of "Creole" may help to explain, in part, Rhys use of the term "white nigger" in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.(^)

(4) All citations taken from Charlotte Brontë. *Jane Eyre*. 1847. Ed. Richard J. Dunn. 2nd ed. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1987.(^)

(5) Foster goes on to say, "With sober realism, she points to the glaring disparities between the ideal and the actual. Husbands may be cruel or selfish (and she knew several such cases), and wives may discover too late that they have trapped themselves in an intolerable situation, their dreams of love transformed into nightmares of bitterness and hatred" (73).(^)

(6) Maurianne Adams notes the discursive play on master and governess throughout the Thornfield section as part of Jane's quest for self-mastery and governance in "*Jane Eyre*: Woman's Estate," *The Authority of Experience: Essays in Feminist Criticism*. Ed. Arlyn Diamond and Lee R. Edwards (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1977): 137-159.(^)

(7) Nineteenth-century medical discourse constructs the woman unable to control her emotions, and thereby unable to regulate and manage her household, as hysterical. Bertha's behavior before confinement as well as her later attacks on Rochester and Jane have been linked to the menstrual

cycle. See Showalter 120-1. Showalter also discusses lunacy and divorce laws as does Phillips. For further discussion of a woman's reproductive cycle see, among others, Charles Rosenberg and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Woman and Her Role in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of American History* 60 (September 1973): 332-356. See also Elaine and English Showalter, who contend that the myth of menstruation must be considered when examining literature on women in "Victorian Women and Menstruation," *Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, Ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1972): 38-44. Thomas Laqueur discusses the evolving view of women's bodies from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth century. He notes that "the political, economic, and cultural transformations of the eighteenth century created the context in which the articulation of radical differences between the sexes became culturally imperative" (35). As scientific language describes the body and menstruation, "sexual pleasure as a sign in the flesh of reproductive capacity fell victim to political exigencies" (35). For instance, the idea that menstruation "was a minimally disguised heat" meant that "women would behave like brutes were it not for the thin veneer of civilization" (30-31), a veneer which Bertha, as othered Creole, lacks. See Thomas Laqueur, "Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology," *The Making of the Modern Body: Sexuality and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, Ed. Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Laqueur (Berkeley: U of California P, 1987): 1-41. See also Cynthia Eagle Russett, *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989).(^)

(8)Foucault traces this "hystericizing" of women, a description evident in the writings of Brontë's nineteenth-century contemporaries Herbert Spencer and J. McGrigor Allan. Admittedly, illness becomes a way for some middle-class Victorian women to act, to gain agency, by *not* performing their expected domestic role. However, Brontë's depiction of Bertha's "illness" initially does not grant the first wife any recognized power; it cages and confines her within the domestic space, though she eventually will disrupt this space.(^)

(9)Numerous studies discuss issues of sight and vision in Jane Eyre. For a discussion of sight and disability see Elizabeth J. Donaldson, "The Corpus of the Madwoman: Toward a Feminist Disability Studies Theory of Embodiment and Mental Illness," *NWSA Journal* 14.3 (Fall 2002): 99-119. For other discussions on this issue see also Mary Winkler, "'But it is a True Thing': Vision and Creation in the Work of Charlotte Brontë," *Seeing and Saying: Self-Referentiality in British and American Literature*, Ed. Detley Gohrbandt (Berlin: Peter Lang, 1998): 27-40; Amanda Witt, "'I Read it in Your Eye': Spiritual Vision in *Jane Eyre*," *Victorian Newsletter* 85 (Spring 1994): 29-34; and the aforementioned Peter J. Bellis, "In the Window-Seat: Vision and Power in *Jane Eyre*," *ELH* 54.3 (Fall 1987): 639-52.(^)

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