

# A Study of Gothic Doubles in the Select work of Margaret Atwood

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**Abstract**— Gothic literature is known for its conflicts and tensions, one of the sources of which is the human psyche. Interpersonal relationships are also sources of conflict in the Gothic mode. Both these are exemplified by the literary motif of the Gothic double, be it in the form of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde or Frankenstein and his monster. The gothic double is either a splitting of the self, or the mirroring of oneself in actions and personality as seen in some other individual. Through such doubles, gothic explores the anxiety about boundaries, whether they are moral, social, or psychological. *The Robber Bride* (1993), a neo-Victorian Gothic novel by Margaret Atwood reworks the conventions of Gothic to explore the psyche of its female characters through the idea of doubles. The paper seeks to examine the psychology of the double, while also understanding its socio-cultural significance. Gothic features like the transgression of boundaries, the interrelationship between the past and present, the uncanny, haunting, and so on will be studied in the context of Gothic doubling. Concepts of psychoanalysis and abnormal psychology will be used for the same. The paper will also attempt to explore the relevance of gender and gothic narrative to doubling and duality. The significance of the mirror motif to the Gothic double will also be examined with respect to the characters.

**Keywords**— *Haunted Self, Gothic Novel, Dissociative Identity Disorder, Self, Doubling.*

## INTRODUCTION

*The Robber Bride* by Margaret Atwood talks about the idea of doubles through three characters, Tony, Charis and Roz. They experience internal doubling, so that are two different parts of their personality, one hidden and other visible. They also show a doubling with Zenia, another psychopathic character who reflects their own persona. The novel explores the idea of doubles from the perspective of social, psychological as well as cultural trauma. It talks about family dysfunction, sexual abuse and religious identity crises, and how it leads to repression and resultant doubling. It examines the impact of parent-child relationship, incest and war on the women's personality, tracing causes for their internal psychological doubling.

The idea of Gothic doubles has been around since the German Schauerroman novel by Jean Paul Richter, called *Siebenkas*. The German Romantic movement influenced the British Romantics like Mary Shelley, who wrote *Frankenstein* (1818). As a neo Gothic novel, there are intertextual references to Frankenstein's monster in it. It also has Victorian influences, like a preoccupation with the New Woman, in the figure of Zenia. She is a post feminist anti heroine, and resembles the archetype of the femme fatale. The Victorian gothic vampire *Dracula* has also influenced the character of Zenia. The Victorian *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is a quintessential gothic novella about the duality of humans. As Robert Louis Stevenson said in it, "man is not truly one, but truly two." Margaret Atwood has stated that her inspiration for writing arose, among other things, from the urge to capture Dr Jekyll-Mr. Hyde duality in humans. As Athena Vrettos highlights in "Victorian Psychology", "over the course of the century, Victorian psychology and Victorian fiction challenged the unity and stability of the self and the coherence of consciousness. Both attempted to map the intricate structures and capacities of the psyche. In doing so, they helped to redefine both consciousness and identity, offering increasingly complex accounts of human behaviour and expansive visions of the human." Margaret Atwood reworks the conventions of gothic doubles in the light of Freudian, Jungian and other psychological ideas in her doubled women characters. As a neo Gothic work, a self conscious use of such ideas abounds in her Gothic novel.

The idea of doubles was explored mostly in Male Gothic novels, until Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert's study *A Madwoman in the Attic*. Jane Eyre and Bertha Rochester, the seeming opposites, had the same underlying life situation. They were victims of patriarchy and Edward Rochester, their characters were studied extensively to examine the duality of gothic heroines. Bertha was said to be Jane's repressed unconscious, her rage against patriarchal oppression. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper" also explored the idea of a woman and her hallucinatory second self which is a projection of her feelings of entrapment in the domestic sphere. *The Robber Bride*, as a woman centric novel, subverts the literary conventions of male protagonists with

little fleshed out female side characters. It examines women's psyche in detail.

### THE GOTHIC DOUBLES IN *THE ROBBER BRIDE*

The female characters in the novel, Tony, Charis and Roz all share a more or less traumatic childhood. They are all victims of absent, alcoholic, neurotic, abusive parents or households. When they meet Zenia, these traumatic memories resurface, since Zenia victimises them in a way which triggers past memories of victimhood. Flashbacks form a part of narrative strategies of gothic literature, since they show an interdependence between the past and present. It has been said that Gothic literature traces the relationship between self and historical trauma. Memories act as the portals which take the characters back to moments when they split.

"History is a construct, she tells her students. Any point of entry is possible and all choices are arbitrary. Still, there are definitive moments, moments we use as references, because they break our sense of continuity, they change the direction of time. We can look at these events and we can say that after them things were never the same again."

Tony, a history professor, deliberates on what she calls definitive moments, and they can be read as moments when the women split into their other halves. Triggered by trauma, the horrors forever alter their sense of self. They keep on lamenting a Freudian lost object, whether it is a mother, innocence or even an old, familiar life.

For Tony, her encounter with Zenia leads to blackmail, money extortion as well as loss of her love interest, a fellow student named West. Zenia is the other woman, someone who is unabashedly evil. She does what she wants, and exercises power without any scruples. Zenia reminds her of her other, buried self. She calls that part of herself Ynot, the opposite for Tony. She created Ynot, an imaginary dark twin, as a child dissatisfied with herself. Her mother wanted her to be someone else, and her father was apathetic towards her. Atwood explores her duality through the idea of Tony's left handed tendencies. Her mother and school teachers force the habit out of her. She finds it hard to adjust to being right handed. She is meek and shy, something she wishes to change. Her feeling of not belonging or being unwanted makes her fantasise about an alternate self, or an alter ego as it were. An alter ego is Latin for second I. The second herself is Tony spelled backwards. Ynot is left-handed, and also says everything backwards. She is taller and bolder. She writes with her left hand, which is forbidden to Tony. Things come easily to Ynot. Tony keeps a secret diary where she writes about this other self. Below her name, Antonia Freemont, She writes Ynot

Tnomeerf. This duality of name, direction and chirality is also symbolic of the duality of her personality at large. She often thinks backwards in her head even as an adult. It is described as the archaic, dream language of her childhood, which recalls a language of the unconscious, outside the realm of the Lacanian symbolic order. It is her double's language, the long buried little girl who cannot fit in. "Tony's other language isn't evil, however. It's dangerous only to her. It's her seam, it's where she's sewn together, it's where she could split apart. Nevertheless, she still indulges in it. A risky nostalgia." That she is sewn together implies that there are two parts of her, which may split apart under duress. There are two parts of her, one seeks approval, belonging and security, while the other throws caution to the wind and acts out her own natural desires. Zenia reflects this second self, and meeting her triggers Tony's shadow self. Tony's other self becomes even more prominent when her mother abandons her. A daughter could be considered her mother's double, since she is a part of her, and has some similarities with her. Atwood notes, this (when her mother left) was the time when her memory divided between what actually happened and what she wanted to happen. The twin, it can be inferred, is a part of her she keeps hidden from others, a result of her perceived lack, what could be called a lost object.

"Anthea was her own absence. She hovered just out of reach, a tantalising wraith, an almost, endowed with a sort of gauzy flesh by Tony's longing for her. If only she loved Tony more, she would be here." Tony is also only almost, not full or complete, a feeling which comes from the absence of her mother, who is responsible for creating a lack in her. Whereas she was born a premature baby who was in a glass box away from her mother for months, the situation did not change much even as she grew up. She cannot altogether let go of her mother. Her doubling is also a result of extreme isolation, which makes her want to create a twin. Her mother is the other, the lost object, and she experiences Freudian melancholia. She laments over the absence of the lost object to the point where she feels broken, as if something is missing. This lack leads to a desire in her to be different from who she is.

Charis is a New Age woman who works in a spiritual shop. She deals with the sales of such mystical objects like tarot cards, crystals and scented candles. She has not always been Charis though. She used to be Karen as a child. This is the first sign that Charis is like Tony in some ways. However, Charis is not created willingly as an addition to Karen. Rather, Karen is metaphorically killed, buried in a deep, dark lake which symbolises her unconscious aspect. Otto Rank, the man who was influenced by Freud's study of the uncanny, linked a double with suicide. It was the symbolic killing of the core self as

it were so that a counterpart, a double, could take its place. While Tony's other self is an addition, Charis' is a subtraction. Karen was abused by her neurotic mother before she was taken in by her aunt and uncle. Her uncle abuses her sexually. He assaults her repeatedly and her aunt thinks she is lying about it. The suppressed trauma of the situation triggers Karen's dissociation. A split in her personality occurs when she cannot bear the brunt of her excruciating reality. It is reminiscent of Dissociative identity disorder, a state in which people with extreme childhood trauma withdraw in a shell, and split into another personality, which acts as the protector. She splits open as it were, broken by the violence of her situation, and another person flies out, which she names Charis. Dissociation becomes pathological when the brain fails to recognize the self as the self. It has been described as an "out of body" experience, where a person may see what's happening to them but not feel affected by or in control of their body and mind. Karen describes how she flies out of her body, as Charis takes her place, and watches herself being abused from behind the curtain.

"Then he falls on top of Karen and puts his slabby hand over her mouth, and splits her in two. He splits her in two right up the middle and her skin comes open like the dry skin of a cocoon, and Charis flies out. She flies over to the window and behind the curtain, and stays there, looking out through the cloth, right through the pattern of pink and orange roses. What she sees is a small pale girl, her face contorted and streaming, nose and eyes wet as if she's drowning – gasping for air, going under again, gasping. On top of her is a dark mass, worrying at her, like an animal eating another animal."

She pushes Karen in a lake, as mentioned before. Later on, Charis sees Karen emerging from the lake, and as she comes closer, she turns into Zenia. The water woman is a recurring image in Gothic literature, which links horror to femininity. Water also stands for transformation. In Charis' case, it is a negative one, wherein a part of herself is subtracted, thrown away forever since it damages her sense of self. Karen is a part of herself she would rather forget, as opposed to Tony's Ynot who is desirable. "Karen was a leather bag, a grey one. Charis collected everything she didn't want and shoved it into this name, this leather bag, and tied it shut. She threw away as many of the old wounds and poisons as she could." Karen stands for what is an abject part of her identity, what is thrown away to maintain a sense of self. Julia Kristeva also associates the abject with abominable crimes like rape, which lead to a threatened breakdown in meaning between the self and other. The experience of incest transgresses these boundaries to the point of severe fragmentation. Zenia's presence in Charis' life reminds her of another significant time when she felt

helpless. Zenia kills her beloved pet chickens, dupes her into believing she had cancer, and also seduces her husband, Billy. She vanishes away with him when Charis is pregnant with their daughter. In the wake of this betrayal and abandonment, Karen comes to the surface again. She asks 'them' to die. Karen persuades Charis to commit suicide. The word them here is significant, since she is not one, but two. Karen takes on the role of a quintessential dark double, posing a danger to Charis. More often than not, the hidden double stood for dark impulses. However, Charis controls that urge as she thinks of her daughter, and the grace, kindness and strength that her name means comes to the fore. She pushes away the primitive Id like voice of Karen. Here, her superego or her conscience triumphs.

Roz is initially named Rosalind Greenwood. She lives during a time when being Jewish is considered a danger to society, a shame. So, her parents gave her a Christian name. When the war is over, the Catholic front that their parents had put up is shed off, and she is renamed Roz Grunwald. Roz thinks of herself as a displaced person, someone who is alien in her own body. Perhaps, the radical life change in her life, from being a Catholic to suddenly changing her religion and adjusting in a different locality, to a different house and lifestyle makes her feel so.

"Still, even if Roz wasn't a DP, there was something. There was something about her that set her apart, an invisible barrier, faint and hardly there, like the surface of water, but strong nevertheless. Roz didn't know what it was but she could feel it. She wasn't like the others, she was among them but she wasn't part of them. So she would push and shove, trying to break her way in."

It can be argued that the rupture to her personality occurs mainly because of socio-cultural trauma, unlike the other two women.

"There are a lot of Jewish kids at Roz's new school; in fact at this school Jewish is the thing to be. But whereas once Roz was not Catholic enough, now she isn't Jewish enough. She's an oddity, a hybrid, a strange half-person. Her clothes, although expensive, are subtly not right. Her accent is not right either." But that is not all. Roz lives away from her father during the war. When her father returns, her life changes radically, "Now Roz's life has been cut in two. On one side is Roz, and her mother, and the rooming house... On the other side is her father, filling the kitchen with his bulk, his loud voice..."

She is a strange, half-person, Atwood says. Strangeness has a connotation of the uncanny, something which is also associated with the idea of doubling or splitting of the self. As a half-person, Roz is looking for something which will complete her. Her sense of incompleteness also stems from her being, in her opinion,

too good. She is close to the Victorian angel in the house figure. She feels that it restricts her identity so to say. Later on in her life, Zenia fills this incomplete space for her. Her fantasising about Zenia's capacity for evildoing and wishes she could for once, show that kind of rebelliousness. Most of her life, she has only thought of her beauty and ability to please her then husband, Mitch.

"She scowls at herself in the mirror. Her face is silting up, like a pond; layers are accumulating.... in search of her original face, the one she knows is under there somewhere; she comes back feeling toned up and virtuous, and hungry. Also annoyed with herself. Surely she isn't still trying; surely she isn't still in the man-pleasing business. She's given that up. I do it for me, she tells Tony. "Screw you, Mitch," she says to the mirror. If it weren't for him she could relax, she could be middle-aged. But if he were still around, she'd still be trying to please him." This hints at the transformations into another self that women go through various beauty rituals to please men. In the process, they end up being something other than what they really are. They face a kind of duality between who they want to be, and who they are required to be, as they adhere to male fantasies. She thinks,

"Male fantasies, male fantasies, is everything run by male fantasies? Up on a pedestal or down on your knees, it's all a male fantasy: that you're strong enough to take what they dish out, or else too weak to do anything about it. Even pretending you aren't catering to male fantasies is a male fantasy: pretending you're unseen, pretending you have a life of your own, that you can wash your feet and comb your hair unconscious of the ever-present watcher peering through the keyhole, peering through the keyhole in your own head, if nowhere else. You are a woman with a man inside watching a woman. You are your own voyeur."

The idea of man within a woman watching herself which Roz talks about also deals with internalised male gaze, which again blurs the boundary between two oppositions of man and woman. Gender, then, becomes an uncanny aspect of existence with gothic significance. This also implies a blurred distinction between self and other. When Roz contemplates women either being up on a pedestal or down on her knees, she also thinks of the tendency of patriarchy to look at women either as otherworldly angelic creatures or disgusting contempt evoking ones, either goddesses or slaves. The duality or doubleness of women is a limitation when thought from the patriarchal perspective, since women have complex, multiple identities.

"The pressure on her to be nice, to be ethical, to behave well, rays of good behaviour, of good nature, of cluck-clucking good as gold goody-goodness... Either way, she would like to be someone else, she would like to be Zenia." Roz

"tiptoes through the scruples" but wishes to trample all the gender roles and social rules. She wants to be something other than a good mother and a doting wife. "Either way, she would like to be someone else. But not just anyone. Sometimes – for a day at least, or even for an hour, or if nothing else was available then five minutes would do – sometimes she would like to be Zenia."

### DREAMS, DESIRES AND REPRESSED SELVES

Roz wishes to be Zenia, sometimes she dreams of destroying herself in a bomb explosion, and reassembling someone like Zenia out of her own remains. Freud has talked about how dreams are windows to the deepest desires in the subconscious, "a dream is an escape-hatch through which repressed desires, fears, memories seek outlet into the conscious mind."

The distinctly gothic imagery of death and reassembling, grotesquely, her body has a significant purport of self transformation-

"Sometimes she has a dream about Zenia, Zenia taking shape in the corner of Roz's bedroom, reassembling herself from the fragments of her own body after the bomb explosion: a hand, a leg, an eye."

Roz desires to embody the Lacanian jouissance that Zenia signifies through a fantasy of violent resurrection, as seen in her dreams. Her world of irrationality, desire and magical illusion is beyond the realm of the symbolic, the law of the father in Lacanian terms. That Roz dreams of being killed in a bomb explosion suggests her desire to die, at least metaphorically. It can be linked to Otto Rank's idea of double linked with suicide, since it implies a killing off of a crucial self, only for another one to take its place. Tony also dreams of herself underwater, going deeper and deeper until she comes across a deep, dark chasm she cannot jump off of, a dead end so to say. She realises that the underwater was her own mind. It is symbolic of her subconscious and unconscious, parts of herself which make her feel uncanny. She wakes up feeling like she is choking and suffocating, which again points to the fact that unhealed traumas in her mind have been haunting her. The chasm she cannot jump off from is eerily reminiscent of the hill her mother asked her to go tobogganing from. She never could, only watched her mother slide off the hill, vanishing from her sight. It foreshadowed her mother's leaving her forever. The chasm she cannot plunge into stands for her mother, and the place where she has vanished, leaving Tony behind.

### ZENIA, THE OTHER WOMAN

Zenia appears in their life like a mystery without origins. As someone who has no backstory, she is strange and unsettling. Even her name, Atwood notes, sounds like Xenia, a Greek word for stranger. This word suggests the Freudian idea of the uncanny. She exemplifies the trickster figure, a shapeshifter, someone who revels in delusions and lies. She deludes her victims, men and women alike, into thinking that she is like them, she is what they need. The crux of Zenia's destruction lies in her ability to mirror or become a double for her victims. In fact, Zenia herself is a mirror. She reflects the women's stories in her own fabricated life story with an artist's flourish. She makes Tony, Roz and Charis feel like a kindred spirit, a fellow sufferer. She tells Tony that she was used as a child prostitute by her own Russian emigre mother, knowing Tony's love for history. She meets Charis in her yoga class, telling her she has cancer and was abused by West, seeing through Charis' need to tend to and fix someone. She tells Tony that her father saved her from the Holocaust. She also acts as a journalist, aware of Roz's interest in fashion and the magazine she owns. She goes on to blackmail Tony into giving her a thousand dollars. She takes over Roz's magazine and kills Charis' chickens. She also lures away all three of their husbands. Mitch, Roz's husband, dies because of her.

One of the possible interpretations of the word Zenia is guest. All three women take her into their lives and minds as a host. While they treat her as a guest, she turns out to be parasitic, preying on their minds and souls, quite like a vampire. She becomes a part of them as it were. The distinction between guest and host is blurred. She also seduces their husbands and lovers away. That is yet another way in which Zenia encroaches upon their lives.

Zenia is a contradiction, since she is both seductive and terrifying, evil and very pleasant. She wears a mask as it were, of weakness, passivity, victimhood, innocence, earnestness and so on. Hiding underneath her veneer of sanity is an insane monster, a dysfunctional woman filled with hatred, contempt and disgust. She only sees people as pawns, as sacrificial lambs. She seeks nothing but her own selfish ends, money as well as other women's lovers and husbands. As someone who has no empathy or normal emotional responses of vulnerability and sadness, she lacks a coherent sense of self. She obliquely admits so when she tells Tony that she has no good feelings, and that The internal splitting in Zenia is not between good and evil. Rather, there is only evil on the inside and a facade of goodness on the outside. Roz thinks it'd be nice to tear her mask away.

"Roz takes Zenia's face, pulls down on it as if it's putty. Some nice jowls, a double chin, a permanent scowl. Blacken a few teeth, like children's drawing of witches." She implies that Zenia is a wicked person in hiding, an evil witch. At other times, Roz thinks of Zenia as a monster, another gothic motif. It is reminiscent of Frankenstein, an intertextual reference typical of neo-Gothic novels.

"My own monster, thinks Roz. I thought I could control her. Then she broke loose." Just as Frankenstein is Viktor Frankenstein's monstrous double, so is Zenia Roz's.

"Still, Roz can picture the stitch marks, the needle tracks, where the Frankenstein doctors have been at work. She knows the fault lines where Zenia might crack open." This suggests that Zenia is an illusion. She also has fault lines, like Karen is split open into two, or Tony is sewn together at the seam. However, Zenia's internal duality is a result of her false self. Just as Frankenstein is sewn together with different people's organs and body parts, Zenia derives her identity from fragments of other people's life stories, and on another level, derives her sustenance from vital parts of their lives (romantic relationships, financial resources and so on), whether it is psychological or physical. Ultimately, all three women feel the urge to kill Zenia. The fierce, vindictive side of themselves emerges. Tony, a meek and shy person, has violent fantasies of shooting Zenia on her forehead or using a cord drill to kill her. She even graphically imagines cleaning the mess of the dead body left behind. This is when Ynot, her dark twin, comes to the fore, the barbaric woman with a sword in each hand, a leader of a horde of warriors. Charis wishes to push her off a cliff. The nurturer, the feminine compassionate side of her is overtaken by a need to annihilate and destroy. Karen's anger and desperation strikes at the forefront of her mind, taking over as it were.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF MIRRORS TO THE DOUBLE MOTIF

Zenia often appears as glass reflections, real or imagined. She also appears as a mirror image. For example, Charis first spots Zenia after five years in a mirror, walking behind her. She wonders if Zenia is a delusion or reality. Tony sees Zenia's blue eyes staring back at her in the mirror. A mirror often stands for one's desires in fantasy tales. Zenia is the kind of woman the other three abhor, but also secretly wish to be. She exemplifies their desire for power, beauty and sexuality. Zenia, as a mirror herself, shows what the women could be. They could be someone beyond the boundaries of their self-entrapment, and the mirror acts as a tool to achieve just this. Anxiety about boundaries is an important preoccupation of gothic literature, and the mirror is a key symbol to explore the same, in reference to self and other.

“As with any magician, you saw what she wanted you to see; or else you saw what you yourself wanted to see. She did it with mirrors. The mirror was whoever was watching, but there was nothing behind the two-dimensional image but a thin layer of mercury.”

This makes sense, since the critic Jorge Luis Borges states that ‘mirrors unsettle our demarcation between truth and falsehood. They double the self, they mock the defining characteristics of who we are. They upend our sense of self.’ This is what Zenia does to the women by turn. By the time she’s done, the women are broken, and wonder about the truth and falsehoods of Zenia. By leaving them with scars of her manipulations and exploitations, she topples their sense of self. ‘She’s here. We are holding her. We can’t let her go.’ Tony deliberates. They’re also holding her within them.

When Tony, Charis and Roz meet up at a restaurant called The Toxique, they see Zenia after her supposed death, shockingly alive. Tony first spots her in the mirror. As a horror device, a mirror becomes a liminal space through which the dead cross the threshold over to the living as it were. Symbolically, this crossover accompanies the eruption of the three women’s other self. Tony wonders, since Zenia was supposed to be dead five years ago,

“What is she doing here, on this side of the mirror?” Tony struggles to contain her morbid excitement in the wake of Zenia’s sighting, when she returns home immediately after. Tony’s other self starts to overpower her. She uses the mirror to get back to her socially accepted self.

“Tony checks her face in the hall mirror, settling it into what she hopes is her normal expression.” The mirror motif as a struggle between the self and other is also experienced by Charis.

When Zenia tells Charis that Billy has fallen for her, Charis is in shock. Her repressed self emerges.

“It’s Karen, it’s banished Karen. She has travelled a long distance. Now she’s coming nearer, with that cowed, powerless face Charis used to see in the mirror looming up to her own face, blown towards her through the darkness like an ousted ghost, towards this house where she has been islanded, thinking herself safe; demanding to enter her, to rejoin her, to share in her body once again.” The mirror acts as a channel, a medium through which the self and the repressed other meet. Later on, Charis sees a dream before meeting Zenia. Taking the dreams as receptacles to the unconscious idea further, she sees Zenia on the other side of her mirror.

“Zenia sees Charis and motions to her, and Charis goes close and then closer, and she sees the two of them side by side in the mirror. Then Zenia’s edges dissolve like a

watercolour in the rain and Charis merges into her. She slides her on like a glove, she slips into her like a flesh dress, she looks out through her eyes. What she sees is herself, herself in the mirror, herself with power.” Charis finds this dream empowering, as having experienced the desperation in face of sexual abuse from a man, she longs to yield power and reclaim her agency the way Zenia has always done. For Tony, the mirror means a part of herself which longs to transgress, to follow her desires even if they are against the codes of propriety and good behaviour.

“Mirror, mirror on the wall, Who is the vilest of us all? Take off a few pounds, cookie, and maybe I can do something for you.” Roz asks, expressing her desire to be evil, to transgress herself.

Zenia might as well be a mirage since she is described to have no roots. The distance and out-of-reach quality of a mirage applies to her since nobody has access to her real identity, her parentage, place of birth, and so on. It feels like the characters have gotten closer to her, but then she vanishes from their life altogether. Tony notes that she has created violent contradictions. But Zenia is a contradiction unto herself.

### DOUBLING AS A NARRATIVE STRATEGY

Doubling does not just happen at the level of women’s characters. It also occurs at the narrative level. The novel shows uncanny repetitions in the narrative, a certain circularity, where we see the gradual opening up, trust building and betrayal of trust, as well as flashbacks of disturbed childhood repeating thrice in the novel. This repetition builds the tension and reinforces fear for Zenia, a woman capable of destroying lives in a myriad of ways. The similar patterns lead to a feeling of *deja vu* in the reader. Each character ends up dreaming of Zenia just before their visit in the hotel, and also refusing to give in to her manipulations. Even the titular Robber Bride is a double of the Grimms’ Robber bridegroom, pointing to the idea that gendered connotations of victim and victimizer have been subverted.

### CONCLUSION

In the end, Zenia leads to a reintegration of the split selves in all characters. As women, they become more complete, being forced to confront their childhood traumas and smothered selves. Carl Jung has stated that true progress can only occur through the acceptance of one’s shadow. Zenia’s presence in their life enables this transformation for the three women. They realise that the power and unbridled freedom they envy in Zenia are also a part of themselves. They are neither victims nor aggrandizers, but complex and

nuanced women. When she realises that she can no longer spin webs of fictional stories to trap the three women, Zenia loses her identity as a trickster who triumphs through delusions. She ends up dead in the end, drowning in water.

*The Robber Bride* explores many different binaries through the idea of Gothic doubles- sane and insane, male and female, good and evil as well as self and the other. Doubling is a result of Gothic anxiety. The blurring of boundaries in the characters' psyche as well as between Zenia and others is a cause of fear in the novel. It leads to what Sigmund Freud calls the uncanny, or the eruption of the unfamiliar and strange into what was hitherto considered safe and familiar. The novel also achieves this through childhood traumas. The paper has explored the idea of duality through the context of doubles. It has established the relevance of the symbolism of mirrors, dreams and reflections and haunting to the Gothic double. It also states that doubling has not only a psychological, but also a gendered and narrative significance. Ultimately, the novel reinforces Emily Dickinson's lines, "One need not be a chamber to be haunted." One's self, concealed beyond another self, is enough.

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