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## THE CONCEPT OF THE DOPPELGANGER IN MODERN FICTION A STUDY OF JOSEPH CONRAD AND VIRGINIA WOOLF

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### ABSTRACT

Doppelganger or (the double) is defined or designated as the ghost of a living person. However, it has become a popular device in since the early nineteenth century in the works of some German writers such as E.T.A. Hoffmann and Heinrich Von Kleist In literature, it has gradually taken a profound meaning to represent not simply the double or twin, the mirror image of a character's personality, but often a kind of reversal of it, a negative image, a self which expresses all the darkness and normally in expressible and hidden aspects of the psyche." This study tries to explain the meaning of the double and to trace the germination and the development of this term and its use in world Literature in general and English Literature in particular, also tries to shed light on the doppelganger (double) as a term its effect upon the novelists and then, to focus upon the idea of duality or as it called later on split-personality due to the theories of Sigmund Freud.

**Keywords:**Doppelganger, double, split-personality, consciousness, subconscious.

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### INTRODUCTION

In fact the origin of the *doppelganger* which means "double" is borrowed from German writers such as Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, Tirck, klesit, and E.T.A. Hoffmann who identified "the double with a part of personality," and from there the craze for duality spread from Germany to the rest of the world. (Groom, 1982:13). This German word, which literally means "double-goer" is brought into the language and simultaneously into the literary tradition as a term used first by the novelist Joann Paul Friedrich Richter (1763-1825). His novel *Siebenkas* (1796) tells the story of a sensitive husband who ends his unhappy marriage by feigning death and burial. In many of his works, an intrinsic duality exists. For this novel, Richter has

developed the concept of the doppelganger(Ibid:14). The term of *doppelganger* is deeply rooted in the earliest western literature especially in literary, philosophical, and scientific theories of German Romanticism which meditates the struggle of romantic poet which himself to reach beyond his own existence. In German Romanticism, the concept of the double has been widely used for the sake of comedy through the mistaken identity of character. Naturally, romanticism has given the double its psychological depth by endowing it with the meaning of "the admonishing angel, the good repressed ego, or the tenacious devil. (Frenzel,1992:101). The theme of doppelganger exemplifies the slippage of identity and the fragmentation of the self. Even the modern Gothic

is "a narrative of altered selves and shifting, fluid identities within a metropolis that itself has lost coherence and stability.(Miller,1985:41).

The double, according to the German writers, is a threat to the integrity of the self, and frequently evidence of a Gothic supernatural force at large that brings with it death and destruction.

W. Greenslade, in his book *Degeneration Culture and the Novel,1880-1940*, ponders:

The double or mirrored identity, where subject and "other" are brought into troubling relationship proliferated in the literature of the period: we need to think of Holmes and Moriarty, Van Helsing and Dracula, Marlow and Kurtz, Heysk and Jones. And the idea of two identities inhabiting a single subject, Jekyll and Hyde, stands as a commanding. (Greenslad,1994:72).

Novelists, in turn, dig into the human consciousness to tell the whole truth about their essential nature and to explore those aspects of consciousness. Novelists make the literary work a tangible record of their own psyche. In this respect, the literary work will reflect the feeling, thoughts, and experiences of the writer. Basically, the artistic work will show a sign of psychology whether the writer subconsciously or intentionally reveal it or not. Here, it is worthy to enhance the above idea by citing Carl Jung's statement that any "art is the representation of man's inner self.( Jung,1984:182).

Dealing with the inner conflict of the characters, the literary work, especially the novel, will focus upon the psychological side of the characters as a result they have brought the double theme to a new psychological complexity. Insofar, we have many vivid examples of the novels which totally deal with psychology. Among these are Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Sharer*, and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. In English literature, Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* provide good example of using this technique. As a matter of fact, in modern fiction, this technique of the double can be interpreted in the light

of self, the unconscious self or the ego. Many great novels in the nineteenth century tackle the theme of duality, especially Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The novelists have illustrated this theme in a very simple way, without any complexity when analyzing the characters from within. In other words, there are no references to, or mention of the psychological side of the characters. On the contrary, in the Modern Age and with the appearance of Freud's theories of self, the concept of the double has completely taken a new dimension, that is, the psychological one. (Stevenson,1999:11-12).

Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung have studied the human psyche and stressed the point that the human mind is dual in nature. Originally, Freud has undertaken human psyche and classified it into three categories: id, ego, and superego. Due to the effects of the theories of Freud and his disciple, the general notion of double has changed and been modified. It comes to refer to the alter ego or other self of the prime self. In this respect, the novelists are able to use the double as a technique to solve the psychological crisis of their characters as well as their characters which is more important for them. Marlow and Kurtz, mirror one side of Conrad's psychic. Indeed, the reader will get a better understanding of the psychic of both characters as well as the novelist himself.

According to Freud, the authors, mainly write of their neuroses. In effect, the literary double becomes in their mind an image of the author's regressive, suppressed, autoerotic unconscious. Robert Rogers sides with Freud's notion when he has shown the theme of homo-sexuality in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* drawn upon Wilde's sexual practices and desires. Also, the sexual repression of Spencer Brydon in *The Jolly Corner* mirrors the suppression of James himself. The traditional literary double is either "a mirror image or a projection of the protagonist. (Reppen,1985:55). And as much can be found in many classic works of nineteenth century literature. There are, indeed, many writers who incarnate Freud's concept of mirror doubles as they were themselves subject to split personality and hallucination. For this

simple reason, E. T. A. Hoffmann, "often, thought he saw before him his living mirror-image, his double, and other spectral figures in disguise.(diment,1994:43). It is quite plausible that in several cases, the phenomenon of a mirrored self can itself mirror the writer's own visual experiences as it is the case with Joseph Conrad, in his novel *Heart of Darkness*, and *The Secret Sharer*.

Using the double as a technique in modern novels is very significant. It shows the importance of psychology in literature by using the unconscious mind of main characters. In this respect, it is worth mentioning that Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* has used the mirror –image, which is one type of double. Whereas in *The Secret Sharer*, he depicts the second type of double. that is, double-by-duplication. In both novels, the double or alter ego plays appositive role in the lives of the protagonists. Both of them. Kurtz and Leggatt, agitate the unconscious mind within their nature. They give the chance to the ego or prime self of the main characters to estimate and discover the hidden self. In both novels, the alter ego or double, Kurtz and Leggatt, leads the main characters, Marlow and the captain to restore the equilibrium inside them. In addition to that they are more mature and more experienced than before as they really gain self – knowledge and-realization.

Depending on the fact that the author or creator can only articulate himself in his creation on one level, will solve the enigmatic relationship between Kurtz and Marlow, while the other level is to reveal the fact that Kurtz is the double of Marlow as well as of the novelist Joseph Conrad, due to the fact that any literary work is the representation of its author's inner self. In this respect, Kurtz reveals the hidden inner self, particularly of Marlow, and Conrad, in the sense that mysteries into the retice of human psyche has been achieved in this novel; Kurtz, as the alter ego of Marlow, was competent to reveal that hidden dark spot within his psyche. Undoubtedly, it is the same hidden dark spot in both Conrad and Marlow. Simply speaking, Kurtz, the alter ego, stands for the subconscious mind of Conrad, the cryptic, shadowy self which snoop beneath the surface of

civilization. In particular, the novel ponders Conrad's state of mind and values about the nature of darkness which obsessed his thoughts for many years. For this obvious reason, David Daiches, in *The Novel and Modern World*, remarks that " the heart of darkness is a symbolic experience of what lies at the heart of much human profession and activities.(Daiches, 1960: 41). Undeniably, Conrad works on his own psyche moral confusion. His experience during his trip to the Congo helped him in forming a base for the writing of *Heart Darkness* Conrad's goal, to be sure, is to manifest how a man can be released from such dream. Thus, one of the remarkable ideological aims of all his fictional works is to annihilate and demolish in the individual, and consequently in the reader, the bondage of illusions, unrealizable ideas and visions instead any glimpse of truth, however dark and unbearable it may be (Ibid: 62). Therefore, his work, to apply Hillis Miller's words, might be called "an effort of demystification. ( Miller, 1966: 19).

It attempts to rescue man from the sense of alienation by lifting the veil of illusion. In this respect, Conrad is always insisting that he is dealing with the most fundamental issues. He mainly focuses upon the inner power of individual talent to be a responsible person. As a matter of fact, Conrad's maturity into manhood is mirrored in this novel, in the sense that the development of his mentality from a strong idealist to an utterly disillusioned person is cultivated or progressed. Thus, one tends to accept Fredrick Karl's inference that if Marlow constitutes the rational state that Conrad has accomplished with maturity then Kurtz, who has devoted himself to the jungle portrays the dreamy, idealist and romantic side in Conrad's disillusioned psyche. ( Karl, 1970:286) . Conrad and Marlow, desire to grasp the reality of their selves; in order words, to uncover what snoops under their urbane features. To achieve this goal, Marlow must go a long voyage in order to encounter his double, Kurtz who symbolizes the dark hidden self in Marlow's subconscious.

Marlow, who narrates four of Conrad's novels, is considered Conrad's alter ego, an experienced and thoughtful captain with sunken

cheeks, a yellow complexion, and an ascetic who is honest, smart, rough and sympathetic. Simply put, he is delineated as a civilized man who always speaks in a gentle manner and a good example of a man of his time. In fact, the accountant of Kurtz provides an alarming case study of what man can become when freed from all inhibiting social restrictions. Hence, Marlow's journey can be seen as a spiritual journey to unify himself or at least to restore the balance between the two selves; prime self and hidden self. Thomas Moser, a critic, ranks Marlow's quest for self knowledge that must be doubled by the alter ego to detect the psychological truth. (Moser,1957:1-28). Concerning his journey. C. B. Cox holds that the expedition down the Congo which Marlow makes parallels the classic expedition to the under-world. Throughout his voyage, Marlow will pass the circles of hell, the Company station, the central station and the inner station where he confronts his alter ego, Kurtz, the devil incarnat. (Cox.,1947:47-8). As a matter of fact, these station represent the psychological state of Marlow's own psyche. Indeed, the inner station mirrors the innermost recesses of Marlow's own psyche, in which he encounter his double and he changes due to that confrontation.

Conrad's *The Secret Sharer* trying to show how Leggatt, the midnight visitor is the double of the captain, representing the captain's own repressed impulses. Conrad's used of the doppelganger theme in this novel invites the reader to consider or ponder his\her own duality, and to struggle for a balance between the rational and irrational, since Leggatt represent the more brutal, irrational side old man, while the captain represent the more civilized and refined one. *The Secret Sharer* draw on Conrad's personal experience of his First command on the *Otago* which lasted from February1888 till 1889. In 1912 in the volume *Twixt Land and Sea, Together with "A Smile of Fortune" and "Freya of Seven Isles"*, *The Secret Sharer* was published. Concerning the origins of its story *The Secret Sharer* owed to events that happened on the *Cutty Sark* in 1880, when the first mate murdered a man under his supervision. But, the story was based on tales he heard less than two

months after the crime on the *Cutty Sark* was committed. He probably read in July-August 1882 about the trial in *London Times* since he was in Falmouth at the time. (Najder,1983:156).

*Twix Land and Sea*, indeed, contains three long stories written for magazines from 1902 to 1911. *The Secret Sharer* is one of the great tales in the English language, and the other-*Freya of the Seven Isles* and *A Smile of Fortune* thought not major works, yet, have a right to be read more than once. The novel is, undeniably, one of Conrad's best stores and can be regarded as a main key story in his work. To cite David Daiches's words, it is "a story of an incident in a young captain's first command told with a quiet precision which both localizes it in time and place with absolute conviction. (Levendon, 1997:163).

The literal surface of the is very vivid; it deals with them of the double, while, the implied meaning is highly psychological, which as one can see, gives a new dimension in the analysis of the characters as well as the novelist. In this tale, the term of the double which has been used by Conrad is classified to define certain things. First of all, Conrad, the novelist, has used the "double-- by duplication," to cite Pieer's own term, to show us that Leggatt is the double of the captain /narrator, as the surface meaning reflects that.

Ernest Hemingway's technique, of the iceberg, is a good example in which one part appears above the surface of the sea while the other or the rest is hidden. Hence, the hidden meaning or psychological interpretation indicates that Leggatt is the double of Conrad himself, as his personality is reflected in the character of the young captain. Simply because writers, mainly reveal their instinctual or repressed selves in their books, often without realizing that they have done so as Robert Roger points out.

Throughout [our] reading of the *The Secret Sharer*, it is seen that Conrad has created Leggatt as the "double" of the young captain. In addition, the captain repeatedly refers to leggatt as "my second self," "my other self," or "my secret self." Moreover, he addresses him early in the tale as "The secret sharer of my cabin," and in its last sentence "

the secret sharer of my cabin and of my thoughts." In fact, the word "double" has been used twenty times throughout the novel.

Even the first proposed title "The Other self" or "The Second Self" evokes psychic doubleness, and provides readings that focuses mainly on the mystery of personality, "the threats and the opportunities of self-division, the strenuous labour of integration. (Conrad,1997: 25). The psychological aspects can be seen in the tale and the preoccupation clearly revealing itself in the title and the numerous references in the itself to second selves and double. The double, Leggatt, is distinguished by another quality which is his capacity to take responsibility. In effect, it is this capacity which the narrator admires and tries through identification to acquire something. Thus it is worthwhile to refer to identification from a psychological point view. Thus, in *The Secret Sharer*, both Conrad and the young captain identify themselves with their alter ego, Leggatt, to acquire the positive qualities which enable them to go on and prove themselves. Both Conrad and the nameless captain regard this voyage as a test of themselves both as men and captains. Here, it is worth mentioning that the mirror image or self reflection in *The Secret Sharer* is the most definite and evident mirror-image of the captain. Since the moment of their meeting, the nameless captain associates himself with Leggatt "the shadowy, dark head, like mine, seemed to nod imperceptibly above the ghostly grey of my sleeping suit. It was, in the night, as though I had faced by own reflection in the depths of a somber and immense mirror. ( Kirshner,1963:121) .

Our narrator is not the same person whom one meets at the beginning of the tale. He is a changed man, a man of word and action who "establishes his personal authority and self-confidence. (Phelips,1938:35).

Through the intrusion of Leggatt into his life, the captain perceives or comprehends that he is not a threat that must be a simple being, a counterpart who makes human relationship possible. The matters is different with Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* from the point of view that Septimus is Clarissa's dark double at

the same time. In this respect. Septimus, Clarissa's double stands for or reflects the objectification of the deadness of her soul as well as of the deadness of contemporary civilization.

Virginia Woolf has been celebrated as an innovative novelist and radical who broke with the aesthetics of earlier generation and challenged their values. In her words, Virginia Woolf has always stressed individual reaction and individual sensibility, making the individual human consciousness (with the subconscious beneath it) the of the action. (Hoare, 1938: 53).

With Virginia Woolf, the case is different, simply because she has adopted the third type of double: split-personality. Using the technique of the stream of consciousness, *Mrs. Dalloway*, is a highly psychological novel. In her novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) the novelist "represents the first complete triumph of technical excellence. In( Phelips,1938:359). this novel, her technique has reached maturity though *Jacob's room* (1922) marked the first big step in the direction of this new technique. She focuses upon what is more important. In this respect the character and plot in the old sense disappeared, while feeling, impressions, random thoughts and reflections are predominate in her works. (Church,1963:87).

Mainly, she uses the technique of the "stream of consciousness" and it is defined as a novel that takes as its subjects the flow of the stream of consciousness of one or more of characters. *Remembrance of things past*, by Marcel Proust, is regarded as a psychological novel which has an enormous effect on many novelists. Thus, the main subject of these novels is precisely the inner thoughts and emotions of the character rather than any external events. Freud's influence is more obvious in Woolf's novel. In spite of the fact that both writers have used their personal experience to depict the theme of the double, yet, one senses the instability of Mrs. Dalloway's psyche. Her psychological crisis has been reflector through the character of Septimus Smith, her double. Clarissa Dalloway finally identifies of Septimus Smith, herself with the lunatic war victim, Septimus. He has agitated the dark point within her

psyche he naturally stands for Septimus, in turn leads to the self-destruction of Mrs. Dalloway is the most schizophrenic English novel in the modern age. In short, Man should discover his hidden psyche through identifying his/her self with alter ego or double to gain the quiet normal balance between the two selves: prime self and hidden self. Man must transgress the animalistic desires which are kept in subconscious mind. In this respect, any person who tries to find his/her double is only to satisfy or fulfill certain follies within their personality. yet, Man must see the brighter side in his double as it is understood as a psychological phenomenon, which represents the lost, hidden, or denied aspect of the personality. In short, one of the ways to interpret the Doppelgänger theme is to see Clarissa and Septimus as mourners and opposite sides of the same coin. Margaret Church asserts that "Clarissa feels like Septimus; his act of self destruction intensifies her sense of beauty and of fun, but she does not perceive the unity in all experience which the other perceives.

#### Conclusion

The concept of the double, has been discussed and defined as it has appeared in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is obvious that writer of the nineteenth century did not use the double as a technique in their novels, but only as a manifestation of human nature. Deep inside them, they wanted to discover and know themselves due to the fact the unexamined self is not worth living. The problem of knowing oneself remains a constant human endeavor in all times. It is, indeed, very essential to discover ourselves as well as life. Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung have studied the human psyche and stressed the point that the human mind is dual in nature. Originally, Freud has undertaken human psyche and classified it into three categories: id, ego, and superego. Due to the effects of the theories of Freud and his disciple, the general notion of the double has changed and been modified. It comes to refer to the alter ego or other self of the prime self. In this respect, the novelists are able to use the double as a technique to solve the psychological crisis of their characters as well as their own problems. They, simply

focus upon the inner conflict of their characters which is more important for them. Besides, they have planted themselves within their characters. For instance, Joseph Conrad has planted his own psychological crisis partly in Marlow and partly in Kurtz. In other words, both of them, Marlow and Kurtz mirror one side of Conrad's psyche. Indeed, the reader will get a better understanding of the psychic of both characters as well as the novelist himself.

Using the double as a technique in modern novels is very significant. It shows the importance of psychology in literature by using the unconscious mind of the main characters. In this respect, it is worth mentioning that Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* has used the mirror-image, which is one type of the double. Whereas in *The Secret Sharer*, he depicts the second type of double, that is, double-by-duplication. In both novels, the double or alter ego plays a positive role in the lives of the protagonists. With Virginia Woolf, the case is different, simply because she has adopted the third type of double: split-personality. Using the technique of the stream of consciousness, *Mrs. Dalloway*, is a highly psychological novel. Freud's influence is more obvious in Woolf's novel. In spite of the fact that both writers have used their personal experience to depict the theme of the double.

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