

**PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA**  
*Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research*  
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**Tracing the Development of the Doppelgänger:  
the Uncanny Motif in Edgar Allan  
Poe's "William Wilson" and beyond.**

*An Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for a  
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilisation*

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Academic Year: 2023/2024

## **Dedications**

*This work is a product of immense love and dedication:*

*To thee, Almighty.*

*To my wonderful parents for the happy canny home life.*

*To my brother and sister, for constant encouragement and belief in me.*

*My dear friends, reading this I can already see your smirking smile forming within.*

*To my dear feline companion “smoky”, for bringing joy to my life.*

*To everyone who has helped me along the way I am humbled and grateful for all that you have done for me, your kindness and generosity have not gone unnoticed.*

## **Acknowledgements**

I want to express my deep gratitude to my supervisor, Mrs. HASSAIENE, for her unwavering patience, support, guidance, and help throughout this extended essay. While the writing process has presented its challenges, she has consistently inspired me and infused hope into the darkest moments.

I am indebted to Professor Azzeddine BOUHASOUN for his encouragement and for sparking my interest in this topic.

I would like to express my appreciation to the members of the jury Mrs HOUARI and Mrs YAHIA, for their time and effort in examining my research.

Lastly, special thanks to my uncle the clinical psychologist Mr. Mohamed GOUMIDI for shaping my ideas. Without your guidance Freud would have been a nightmare.

## Abstract

Writers worldwide have attempted to explore myths and legends since they are viewed as symbols that can be used to offer insight into ourselves. Renowned figure in gothic literature Edgar Allan Poe skillfully portrayed the internal struggle within the human psyche in his short story “William Wilson”. With his notable 19th-century short story delves into these themes in a scientific and philosophical manner. The story revolves around the concept of the “Doppelgänger”, associated with terror and sounding uncanny during the times of Poe and his peers. This research aims to provide a comprehensive and compelling explanation of the development of the “Doppelgänger” by arguing that it has lost its uncanny motif in modern times with the appearance of avatars and deep-fakes.

**Key words:**Doppelgänger, Gothic, Uncanny, Avatar, Deep-fake.

## **Resumé**

Les écrivains du monde entier ont tenté d'explorer les mythes et les légendes, car ils sont considérés comme des symboles pouvant être utilisés pour donner un aperçu de nous-mêmes. Figure célèbre de la littérature gothique, Edgar Allan Poe a habilement dépeint la lutte interne au sein de la psyché humaine dans sa nouvelle « William Wilson ». Avec sa remarquable nouvelle du XIXe siècle, il aborde ces thèmes d'une manière scientifique et philosophique. L'histoire tourne autour du concept du "Doppelgänger" comme motif étrange, bien que l'idée des esprits et des doubles persiste depuis des millénaires. "Le sosie", a encore son apparition dans nos temps modernes avec ces avatars et dee-pfake. Cette recherche vise à fournir une explication complète et convaincante du phénomène des individus rencontrant leurs répliques exactes.

**Mots clés :** Sosie, Gothique, Etrange, Profond-faux,

## التلخيص

. لقد حاول الكتاب في جميع أنحاء العالم استكشاف الخرافات والأساطير حيث يُنظر إليها على أنها رموز يمكن استخدامها لتقديم نظرة ثاقبة عن أنفسنا. قام إدغار آلان بو، وهو شخصية مشهورة في الأدب القوطي، بتصوير الصراع الداخلي داخل النفس البشرية بمهارة في قصته القصيرة "وليام ويلسون". من خلال قصته القصيرة البارزة في القرن التاسع عشر، تتعمق في هذه المواضيع بطريقة علمية وفلسفية. تدور القصة حول مفهوم "Doppelganger" كفكرة خارقة، على الرغم من أن فكرة الأرواح والأزواج استمرت لآلاف السنين، إلا أن "The Doppelganger" لا يزال له ظهوره في عصرنا الحديث مع هذه الصور الرمزية والتزييف العميق.

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تقديم تفسير شامل ومقنع لظاهرة مواجهة الأفراد لنسخهم المتماثلة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القوطية ، الخارق للطبيعة، العميق المزيف إدغار آلان بو

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## General Introduction

Throughout history, legends and myths have been used to express the fears and premonitions that exist within human beings. If we view these stories as symbols, they can help us better understand ourselves. The doppelgänger was the center of attention for many writers who attempt to write about this myth, among them Edgar Allan Poe with his “William Wilson”. People are represented by their memories, experiences, relationships and principles. Meeting someone who is likely to dispute such belongings with anyone is the basic paradox in the comprehension of the doppelgänger which revolves around encountering oneself as another person.

My motivation to work on this topic started as a curiosity to know more about the concept of the doppelgänger when I first encountered it in one of the gothic literature sessions. My curiosity grew more intense when I sensed the extent to which the human mind is obsessed with the search for meaning and understanding matters related to strange phenomena. This made me start searching for works dealing with the doppelgänger and check how they dealt with it and what they related it to. I was also reminded of the phrase we all heard at least once in our life: “I saw someone who looks exactly like you!”. Thus I decided to share this interest in the doppelgänger by attempting to study it deeply and more seriously by checking its development in Poe’s times and in the present.

This research work is based on three primary questions that are assimilated into three chapters and they are:

1. According to myths and legends, what are the possible roots and theories about the doppelgänger?
2. How can the notion of ‘Doppelgänger’ be defined as a threat in Edgar Allan Poe’s William Wilson?
3. What does the doppelgänger represent in Edgar Allan Poe’s short story?

After reading the short story multiple times and doing further research on the topic, we have reached these hypotheses;

Firstly, it is believed that humans have a long history with this idea of the bad omens throughout part of Africa, specifically in the Aztec civilizations they had the belief that everyone is carrying evil and good with them. In the case of twins, in order to maintain balance they sacrifice so the other will live peacefully. From this point folklore considered meeting one's double a messenger of death.

Secondly, it is hypothesized that the doppelgänger poses a threat to the existence of the protagonist. William because of his arrogant self he believed that he could control his doppelgänger, but soon begins to perceive him as a rival. He assumes that the doppelgänger is involved in a conspiracy against him, because its presence threatens to annul the identity of its host. This tension between the protagonist and the identical alter ego invariably escalates to the point where it becomes a fight to the death.

Thirdly, it is thought that the figure of the doppelgänger means either an alter ego, a duplicated and identical second self, which may be a supernatural presence or a paranoid hallucination (such as in William Wilson. In this tale of twin-selves, the surviving William Wilson represents man without morality. His double, which constantly interfered with Wilson schemes by whispering caution or truth, represents everything that was wholesome or positive in his personality.

The focus of this research work is on "The Doppelgänger" the uncanny motifs in many literature works to give a comprehensive overview of this phenomenon, we have divided our research into three parts. The first chapter will delve into the origins of the term "Doppelgänger" and explore the various theories surrounding its existence. Additionally, we will investigate its appearance in myths and legends from different cultures, including its influence on art and literature. We will also examine real-life cases of Doppelgänger sightings to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon. By exploring the topic from multiple

angles, we hope to provide a detailed and insightful analysis that sheds light on this mysterious and fascinating topic.

In the second chapter of the analysis, we will delve into the Freudian theory and apply it to the short story. Our focus will be on examining the relationship between the uncanny and the doppelgänger in the story. We will make a concerted effort to provide a comprehensive explanation of the doppelgänger and why it poses such a significant threat to the protagonist. Our ultimate goal is to uncover the truth behind the doppelgänger and explore the likelihood of having our own double. Through our detailed analysis, we hope to shed light on this fascinating topic and provide readers with a deeper understanding of the uncanny and doppelgänger phenomenon.

Finally, as the topic of this research is “Tracing the Development of the Doppelgänger” we will be exploring the fascinating intersection of identity and the digital age. We will delve into the ways in which the internet has transformed the concept of the doppelgänger, a phenomenon that has long been associated with terror, yet continues to captivate people’s imagination. We will be examining the various ways in which individuals create digital avatars and how these avatars can take on a life of their own. We will also explore the darker side of this phenomenon, such as identity theft and the use of deep fake technology for malicious purposes. Overall, this chapter will provide a comprehensive understanding of the doppelgänger in the context of the digital age, and the ways in which it has evolved over time.

To conclude, the methodological tools used to fulfil this inquiry are based on the qualitative research data analysis approach will be used to examine the sources and information needed to understand the research problem better. In addition to the primary source used, a number of secondary sources will be used to ensure the eligibility and reliability of information. These materials include novels, articles, journals, and others. The works cited and the methods of writing, in addition to this research work format follow the

seventh edition of MLA Handbook. Finally the guidance of the supervisor was taken with utmost consideration throughout the entirety of this work.

## **Chapter One: The Birth and Life of the Doppelgänger**

“It looks just like you, down to the last detail. It’s you but it’s not you, it’s an inverse mirror image, a double, an alter ego, a simulacrum, a clone. It’s you your shadow self, your evil twin, your most significant other, your dark half. It’s your doppelgänger”(Meehan 3).

As Humans we have a long history with the fear from the lookalike, a fear that started when the human saw his reflection on water for the first time. The idea of spirit doubles has been present in human culture for thousands of years and can be traced back to many ancient civilizations. This fascinating concept is deeply woven into the fabric of ancient legends, stories, artworks, and literature by various authors. One of the most well-known concepts related to spirit doubles is the doppelgänger, a German term that still has relevance today. It refers to a person who looks or behaves like another person, often to the point of being mistaken for them.

The doppelgänger has long been a source of fascination and fear, inspiring countless stories and works of art throughout history. This theme has appeared in literature for centuries but is especially popular in works of Gothic fiction. It is hardly surprising, that the doppelgänger, has brought a great deal of symbolic effects around it: superstitious, mythological, religious, philosophical, and psychological. The following chapter will give an overview about the doppelgänger with its origins and explore where this fear really comes from starting with myths of twins also how art and literature were influenced by this phenomenon.

### **1.1. Literature Review**

Before delving into the chapter content, it is worth examining a few things about the key elements of the present research work topic. Edgar Allan Poe is widely recognized as a significant influence of modern literature. His literary works include various popular genres, including horror and detective fiction. Critics have often viewed Poe’s personal life and work as intertwined, emphasizing his adeptness in expressing his inner self as noted by G.R.

Thompson “Poe’s subject is the precariously logical human mind he has a power to touch the unseen, the unconscious, to suggest the demonic in mankind and its nature” (Thompson82).

While some critics, such as Yvor Winters, sought to erase Poe from literary history, his works are still crucial to our understanding of modernism in world literature. In an essay titled “Edgar Poe’s Tradition” Herbert Marshall McLuhan remarked, “While the New England scholars were reading Plato and Buddha next to a tea cozy, and while Browning and Tennyson were creating a narrow-minded atmosphere for the English mind, Poe stayed connected to the intense emotions of his time. Alongside Baudelaire, and long before Conrad and Eliot, he delved into the heart of darkness” (17).

Poe’s works reveal the influence of earlier literary figures such as E.T.A. Hoffman and Ann Radcliffe, as well as an alignment with the Romantic movement of the early 19th century. His impact can be discerned in the works of subsequent writers like Ambrose Bierce and H.P. Lovecraft, who belong to a distinct tradition of horror literature initiated by Poe. In addition to his contributions to the horror genre, Poe is credited with pioneering science fiction and the detective story. Poe’s writings, particularly his horror tales like “The Black Cat,” “The Cask of Amontillado,” and “The Tell-Tale Heart,” plumb the psychological depths of the characters. Poe’s use of a first person narrator presages the psychological explorations of later writers such as Fyodor Dostoyevsky (Palmer Cobb).

“William Wilson”, the selected literary piece that inspired the writing of the present research work, is the story that distinguishes itself from Poe’s other gothic works. It is set in a large Elizabethan house in England, where a proud young man from a noble family attends school and encounters a life-altering experience. He refers to the school as a gothic prison and meets another boy whom he cannot surpass in superiority. This encounter leads to the realization that he is being haunted by his own doppelgänger or lookalike. The story culminates in a final confrontation between the two Williams, resulting in a surprising and memorable twist. Ultimately, the tale leaves a lasting impression, emphasizing the idea that

one's conscience and inner moral voice cannot be escaped. In the climactic encounter, the narrator victory over his doppelgänger, only to discover that his own body is the one lying stabbed and bleeding when he looks into a mirror.

The concept of the doppelgänger has been a recurring theme in literature and has been explored in various works such as *The Double* by Jose Saramago, *The Likeness* by Tana French, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde. Upon reviewing previous scholarly works on the doppelgänger, it is the last novel that has been discussed repeatedly in order to understand the human mind and the doppelgänger; however, the notion of the doppelgänger remains somewhat ambiguous.

For instance, in Samia Hadjar Zegrer's master thesis entitled "The Doppelgänger as an Aspect of Gothic in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*" the doppelgänger is not discussed in all its dimensions, with the term being attributed to the German writer Jean Paul and its emergence during the same period as the Gothic novel. Zegrar notes that the doppelgänger is a common theme in Gothic and horror literature, particularly from the nineteenth century, and is rooted in the anthropological belief in man's apparent duality: "The doppelgänger is a term or an expression invented by the German writer Jean Paul (*Siebenkas*, 1796). The term 'doppelgänger' emerged around the same time as the Gothic novel, as it is a common theme in Gothic and horror literature, mainly from the nineteenth century, and is based on the anthropological belief in man's apparent duality" (17).

She provides a basic definition of the term and emphasizes its role as a gothic feature in literature, accentuating the tension or conflict it introduce into a story: "Therefore, the doppelgänger introduces a tension or a conflict in the story. The doppelgänger behaves in a way that threatens the main character's life, despite his best attempts to reverse his double's behavior. Often the tension is internal, with a character trying to comprehend himself through his doppelgänger" (Zegrar 19). In other words, the doppelgänger creates both external and internal conflicts, threatening the protagonist's life and prompting deep self-reflection.

Boudjemaa Farouk, in his master thesis, offers a different perspective about the same novel, connecting it to the human psyche through the concept of “the shadow”. This analysis delves deeper into the psychological implications, presenting a new angle from which to understand this intriguing literary motif. The concept of the shadow and the doppelganger are somehow similar both reflect the inner trouble of the human mind

He notes:

In other words, the shadow is the unacknowledged part of the psyche; everything one doesn't see in themselves and comes to repress in due time will lead to the ever growth of the shadow, mirroring the conscious of their personality. Similar to the Ying Yang symbol, each individual carries a dark and light side to his psyche. Nevertheless, one must not equate dark with evil but rather uninvestigated; the shadow contains so much potential and talents that haven't been unburied yet. Significant traits may end up in the shadow, too. One can shed light on this dark aspect of the self-using the lantern of consciousness; the shadow is a colossal reason in the way every individual do certain things in life without having a firm understanding on the reason why he does them.(19)

It is worth mentioning that Boudjemaa in his research highlights an important idea about a type of the shadow which is the collective one that has to do with the dark side of the archetype of the self: “it is the shadow of the god image; in the Christian tradition, it would be the devil, and that has always been personified and felt like nothing to do with the human being. It has transcended human evil to an entity much worse close to the demonic realm” (Boudjemaa15). This illustrates the importance of acknowledging one's personal shadow to prevent it from spreading to the collective. Hitler and the Nazi party exemplify how ignorance of the personal shadow can result in shadow possession, as described by Carl Jung. Awareness of the individual shadow is crucial for the well-being of a society, reflecting the



idea that small-scale issues can influence larger systems, aligning with the microcosm–macrocosm analogy.

One more concept relevant to the present research work is that of the uncanny which is heavily present in the works of Poe, especially in “William Wilson”. However, according to Matthew Van Winkle in his article “Uncanny and the Ghostly Double in Frankenstein” it was mentioned that the concept of the uncanny is not limited to the works of Edgar Allan Poe. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* delves into the uncanny as the monster, with its human-like appearance but unnerving divergence from humanity, challenges our understanding of what it means to be human. Similarly in an article named “The Yellow Wallpaper: A Horror of the Female Body” Toni Wein claims that in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” the protagonist’s getting insane within the seemingly benign confines of a room blurs the line between reality and hallucination, creating a deeply uncanny atmosphere. Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* explores the uncanny through the protagonist’s transformation into a monstrous insect, disrupting familiar human experiences and relationships.

In Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* the eponymous house becomes a site of uncanny occurrences, blurring the boundaries between the supernatural and the psychological. Furthermore, the works of H.P. Lovecraft, such as “The Call of Cthulhu” involve readers in a world of cosmic horror and existential dread, evoking the uncanny through encounters with incomprehensible entities and forbidden knowledge. Across this diverse array of literary works, the uncanny serves as a potent narrative tool, compelling readers to confront the enigmatic, unsettling, and inexplicable facets of human existence which in all cases, it poses a psychological threat: a threat to one’s grasp of reality (Windsor 11).

Using Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytical ideas is done to explore the connection between the concepts of the doppelganger and the uncanny in “William Wilson”. The latter

dives into the human mind, showing hidden feelings and memories. The main character's dual nature represents a battle between life and death instincts, leading to a more balanced personality. As it is mentioned in an article entitled "The Uncanny Imp: An Analysis of Freud's Uncanny in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Imp of the Perverse* and *William Wilson*" Poe's stories, like "William Wilson" and "The Imp of the Perverse" offer complexity and sophistication often missed in quick looks. Freud's psychoanalytical ideas, especially the uncanny, give us a way to explore the deep psychology in Poe's stories, especially in "William Wilson".

Freud's uncanny and perverseness concepts help us understand the strange doppelgänger story in "William Wilson". Comparisons made between Poe's work and Freud's ideas strengthen the link between fiction and groundbreaking psychological theories. Using the idea of the uncanny deepens the study of themes in literary works like "William Wilson" It helps us understand characters and stories in more detail and sparking conversations about the complexities of human behavior and the hidden mind shown in literature. Thus using the idea of the uncanny in our work improves how we understand Edgar Allan Poe's "William Wilson". By looking at the dual nature of characters, hidden emotions, and psychological conflicts in the story, can give us deep insights into the strange elements in Poe's work.

In light of all this, we can say that in the present research, the focus has shifted to a deeper exploration of the concept of the doppelgänger associated to the uncanny motif in the story. The aim is to gain a better understanding of both concepts by drawing connections between the doppelgänger and twins since moving beyond its basic definition and origins to uncover the roots of its frightening nature. Additionally, the research will emphasize the juxtaposition between twin myths and "deep-fake" technology, which presents a fascinating paradox that, captures people's attention in the era of cloning.

## 1.2. Definition of the Doppelgänger

### 1.2.1. Origins of the Doppelgänger

Doppelgänger is a term that originates from German folklore, which refers to a supernatural apparition of a living person, distinct from a ghost. It is believed that every living being has an invisible replica or spirit double, which can be seen by the person themselves or by others, and encountering one's doppelgänger is often considered a sign of impending doom or an omen of death. This belief is ancient and widespread, and has been a part of various cultures throughout history. The word was introduced by German author Jean Paul in his 1796 novel *Siebenkas*. While the term was coined in the late 18 century, myths of spirits doubles have persisted for thousands of years. The concept of the doppelgänger has become a popular theme in horror literature and movies, and has taken on many complex forms. German writers coined the word Doppelgänger (from Doppel-, meaning "double" and -gänger, meaning "goer") to refer to such specters (Merriam-Webster).

For instance, in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel *The Double* (1846), the protagonist, a poor clerk named Golyadkin, is driven to madness by poverty and unrequited love, and eventually sees his own wraith who is better at everything he fails at, eventually leading to his own demise. Similarly, in E.T.A. Hoffmann's novel *Die Elixiere des Teufels* (1815-16), a well-known story about a doppelgänger, the protagonist experiences a series of supernatural events that leave him questioning his own sanity. Overall, the existence of doppelgängers has been a topic of fascination for centuries and continues to intrigue and terrify people to this day. "William Wilson" story is also one of the attempts to write about myths and legend. Through it the narrator explains that this tale will explain his turn to evil: "Men usually become bad by degrees. But I let all goodness fall from me in a single moment, as if I had dropped a coat. From small acts of darkness I passed, in one great step, into the blackest evil ever known" (1), he emerges feel superior to his classmates, except for

one student. According to the narrator, this student bears exactly the same name: William Wilson.

### **1.2.2. Theories Related to the Doppelgänger**

Historically speaking, humans have exhibited a persistent fear of doppelgängers individuals who look almost identical to themselves. Across different cultures, twins have been considered to be supernatural children, often left behind instead of human infants as people could not fathom how two babies could come from the same womb in which twins were considered evil even in their mother's womb.

Furthermore, as scientists searched for answers on how left-handedness came to be, they had a theory that lefties might have started as twins in the womb. After years of research, their hunch was found to be true. It turns out that most lefties were once twins, and this discovery has inspired many to learn more about the fascinating world of fetal development. Although it is a rare occurrence, the notion that we start as two peas in a pod, fighting for survival in the womb, is a reminder of the incredible journey we all take before we enter the world (Vuoksimaa et al).

Every pregnant woman carries *two* children in her womb. But the stronger will not tolerate the presence of a brother with whom he will have to share everything. He strangles him in his mother's belly and, having strangled him, he eats him, then comes into the world alone, stained with that original crime, doomed to solitariness and betrayed by the stigma of his monstrous size [...]

We [twins] alone, you understand, are innocent. We alone came into this world hand in hand, a smile of brotherhood on our lips. (Tournier 142)

While some cultures celebrate the birth of twins, others view it as ominous. For instance, in the Aztec civilization, it was believed that all humans possess good and evil within them. However, in the case of twins, one of them would have good in them while the other would be evil. To maintain balance, the Aztecs would sacrifice the evil twin so that the

remaining one could have both the good and the evil within them. This practice was a part of their religious beliefs and rituals(Al Daheeh :007:05).

In an article “Yoruba Customs and Beliefs Pertaining to Twins” it was noted that in Africa, the Yoruba people of Nigeria hold twins in high regard due to their perceived supernatural abilities, treating them with utmost respect and importance. According to their belief, twins are the souls of ancestors who have chosen to return to the earthly realm, making them a blessing and a gift from the gods. Twins are given special names that signify their strong connection to the spiritual realm, where they are believed to be intermediaries between the living and the ancestors. As such, they are thought to have the power to bring good fortune, prosperity, and fertility to their families.

Families with twins are highly regarded within the community, and the birth of twins is celebrated with great joy and festivities. The community and even neighboring villages come together to feast and celebrate the new arrivals. In the unfortunate event of one or both twins passing away, their souls are believed to continue to exist and have an influence on the living. Therefore, the parents or surviving twin take responsibility for caring for the deceased twin’s soul. They do this by caring for the *ibeji*(s), which are wooden statuettes representing the deceased twins.

These statuettes are symbolically washed, fed, and clothed regularly to ensure that the deceased twin’s soul remains satisfied and that their blessings and protection are still given to the family. This twin belief system provides the community with a means to cope with the high perinatal loss of twin babies while honoring and remembering the deceased twins. It also helps maintain a connection with their spiritual presence. Overall, the Yoruba society holds twins in a special and revered position, reflecting the belief in their unique spiritual significance (Fernand et al.134).

Twins have been the subject of countless myths and legends. One of the most fascinating and eerie aspects of these tales is the idea of the *doppelgänger* the concept that has

been a source of fear and fascination for centuries, and has been explored in literature, art, and even popular culture. The fear of the lookalike, or the idea that one's own identity could be threatened by someone who looks just like them, is a deeply rooted human instinct that continues to capture our imagination to this day.

### **1.2.3. The Doppelgänger in Different Cultures**

According to *Meeting the other in Norse myth and legend*, there exists a fascinating concept of “vardøger” which refers to a spirit double that is said to precede a person's arrival at a particular place. As per this belief, the vardøger is believed to perform actions and be seen by others before the actual person arrives. In other words, it is said to be a kind of premonitory phenomenon that serves as a precursor to the person's arrival, and it is often regarded as a harbinger of good fortune. The vardøger is often described as a benevolent entity that is only interested in helping the person it precedes, and its presence is usually considered to be a positive sign (McKinnell).

In the realm of Japanese folklore, there exists a fascinating and eerie notion known as “Nigawarai” which is believed to be a manifestation of a person's doppelgänger. This mysterious phenomenon is often associated with ill fate, bad luck, or even an impending death. The concept of Nigawarai is deeply rooted in Japanese culture and has been the subject of many stories, myths, and legends throughout the ages (Yokai).

In the rich and diverse Arabic folklore, there is a captivating idea of a supernatural creature called the “Ghoul” or “Shapeshifter” mentioned in *An Encyclopedia of Fairies: Hobgoblins, Brownies, Bogies, and Other Supernatural Creatures* by Katharine M. Briggs, this being is thought to have the power to change into a human form and perfectly imitate their looks. This captivating notion has intrigued many fans of Arabic folklore and has inspired numerous tales and myths. Similarly, a doppelgänger is typically an exact replica or counterpart of a living individual, often perceived as a foreboding or eerie presence. A

shapeshifter's ability to take on a human appearance can cause bewilderment and suspicion, as it can mimic people. The doppelgänger is often viewed as a sign of misfortune or disaster, causing distress and unease for the person being imitated (361).

### **1.3. The doppelgänger and the Identical Twin**

Wieland Schwanebeck in his book *Literary Twinship from Shakespeare to the Age of Cloning* presents a new perspective on literary twinship, which has often been treated as a less important subject compared to the doppelgänger though they are strongly connected. The book explores the role of twins in shaping farce, detective novels, and dystopian science fiction. It shows how the literary portrayal of twins has been repeatedly reinvented as a pathological and cultural type, especially during times when other fields of discourse were forming. The book highlights how the representation of twins in literature served as a battleground for ideological debates, particularly concerning kinship and reproduction.

In the same book *From Shakespeare to the Age of Cloning* by Wieland mentioned an important idea about the lookalike. He expresses it in this challenging way: "Ask anyone to think of two people who share a near-absolute physiognomic similarity, and chances are they will picture a pair of twins. Yet behold a pair of identical twins in more detail and, once your initial 'shock of likeness' has passed, you will end up scanning them for differences rather than similarities" (16).

This is to say that if anyone faces the challenge to draw a mental portrayal of two identical individuals, the first image that would likely come to mind is that of a pair of twins. At first glance, one might find the resemblance striking. An instant later, their mind goes automatically to try and find differences to draw the distinction between the two.

Despite their almost indistinguishable appearance, upon further inspection, one would inevitably begin to scrutinize every detail of their features in search of any subtle differences that might set them apart from one another. Basically, the human mind is always searching for

similarities and differences, and even though twins might look the same at first glance, one can be intrigued by the challenge of finding what sets them apart.

In Edgar Allan Poe's "William Wilson" the protagonist encounters his doppelgänger for the first time, a boy remarkably similar to him in many ways. He notes, "Slowly I gained control over all who were not greatly older than myself — over all except one. This exception was a boy who, though not of my family, had the same name as my own, William Wilson" (9). The protagonist soon discovers even more uncanny similarities, including that they share the same birth date: "My anger grew stronger with every happening that showed that William Wilson and I were alike, in body or in mind. I had not then discovered the surprising fact that we were of the same age; but I saw that we were of the same height, and I saw that in form and in face we were also much the same" (11).

Despite these similarities, he identifies one crucial difference: "I could find, indeed, but one weakness. Perhaps he had been born with it, or perhaps it had come from some illness. No one but me would have made any use of it against him. He was able to speak only in a very, very soft, low voice. This weakness I never failed to use in any way that was in my power" (10). This singular difference becomes a point of exploitation for the protagonist, highlighting the competitive dynamic between the two.

The people's faces are marked by the experiences they have had in their lives, and these marks have a noticeable impact on their appearance. Some of the twins appear more fatigued and worn-out compared to their siblings; others deliberately choose to style their hair differently, while some exhibit characteristics that reflect their sub-cultural affiliations, accidents, and personal histories, such as tattoos, haircuts, gaps between their teeth, scars, and wrinkles.

According to Freud, "the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (124). It is worth noting; however, that Freud does not mention twins when talking about the uncanny. He focuses more on



things like doubles. It appears that twinship is full of paradoxes: resemblance makes one look for differences, and since twins are each other's mirror image, people give them a unique status despite the fact that they are not unique.

In his book *The Story of Lynx* Claude Lévi-Strauss notes that in many parts of the world, twins are considered as supernatural beings that have superpowers and can control anything.

Twins predict the weather and even command it; they cause or stop the rain, the wind, and storms. This raises the question of whether the belief in this connection stands alone or is rather part of an ensemble, from which it would be arbitrary to separate it... Thus twins were thought to have the gift of divination: they could throw spells, transform themselves into supernatural beasts, and make epidemics and other ills that befall livestock and gardens go away; they could cure certain illnesses; they were immune to bites of venomous animals; and they could give success in hunting, fishing, and so.(119)

#### **1.4. Doppelgänger in Art and Literature**

The influence of legends and myths on art and literature throughout history has been a source of inspiration for many. From ancient times to the present day, the concept of the doppelgänger has fascinated artists and writers alike, giving rise to a rich and diverse cultural legacy. The representation of the doppelgänger in various art forms has evolved over time, reflecting different interpretations and perspectives. This enduring fascination with the idea of a double self is a testament to the power of the human imagination and the enduring appeal of myth and legend.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *How They Met Themselves*, a sketch from 1851 and a watercolor from 1864, is one of the most well-known portrayals of doppelgängers. In the

piece, two medieval lovers come across their identical appearances, which possess a supernatural glow, while strolling through the forest at twilight. The male lover is taken aback and draws his sword, while the female lover appears to faint. Rossetti was inspired by works such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Romaunt" of Margaret' and Poe's "Silence", which contain doppelgänger imagery.

Egon Schiele's "The Self Seers (Death and Man)" Two figures are shown in the painting, one of whom is obliquely recognized as Schiele. There is no distinction between this figure and the other except for the dark cloth that drapes over his shoulder, arm, and legs. The second man is nestling up to the first, a shadowy, almost insubstantial figure peering out of the picture across the first man's shoulder. His gestures and facial expression are slightly different. The picture's title is confusing because it doesn't seem to relate to what the painting is about. Nonetheless, the concept of this piece of art is the doppelgänger, who could have a mystical aura. In *Death and Man*, first published in 1911, the motif of the doppelgänger as a premonition of death is specifically present. Here, the pale and shadowy alter ego is a threatening harbinger of death, and the treatment has a visionary eeriness on the subject of the painter and death (Wilkes).

The idea of a person's double or lookalike has been a recurring theme in literature for centuries. Numerous works of fiction have explored this theme in various ways, such as Jose Saramago's *The Double* (2002), Tana French's *The Likeness* (2008), and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde (1890), among many others. Robert Louis Stevenson's novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the most well-known literary doppelgänger is depicted. Another instance of a doppelgänger can be found in Poe's "William Wilson" where he highlights the concept of an alter-ego- the psychological double that exists within all people's minds in which the narrator has been harassed by his own doppelgänger or lookalike

As it was, I could not be happy under his eyes that always watched me. Every day

I showed more and more openly that I did not want to listen to anything he told

me. I have said that, in the first years when we were in school together, my feelings might easily have been turned into friendship; but in the later months, although he talked to me less often than, I almost hated him. (12)

To conclude, through this chapter we attempted to delve into the multifaceted nature of the doppelganger by tracing its origins, cultural interpretations, and significant presence in art and literature. To achieve this, we began by defining the doppelganger and exploring its roots in folklore and myth, highlighting how different cultures perceive and portray this enigmatic figure. We extended the discussion on this matter by overviewing the relationship between doppelgangers and identical twin by emphasizing the psychological and symbolic parallels that have captured human imagination. This exploration paves the way for understanding the doppelganger's profound influence on human consciousness and its thematic relevance. To move our analysis a bit deeper, the next chapter focus will be on Poe's "William Wilson", using some of Freud's psychoanalytical ideas, particularly the concept of the uncanny, to explore the deep psychology of the protagonist and examine the human mind through the examination of Wilson's complex mind.

## Chapter two: William Wilson's Dark Half

For centuries, the idea of encountering one's double has intrigued and terrified people, leading many writers to explore the topic in their works. Poe, the selected author in his "William Wilson", delves into the narrator's growing obsession with his double, culminating in a chilling climax. His narrative explores the darker aspects of the human psyche, which is one of the main concerns of this chapter. Drawing on the Freudian theory, this chapter will focus on analyzing and highlighting the connection between the uncanny and the doppelgänger. Another concern of this chapter is related to comparing Poe's double to Dostoevsky's Mr. Golyadkin. This will be done through exploring the differences between the two characters going deeper into the significance of the doppelgänger.

### 2.1. Freud's Analysis of the Uncanny

In real life, the uncanny is often rooted in psychological and anthropological factors, while in literature; it can be generated by various literary techniques and devices. These definitions of mental states and feelings associated to the *Unheimliche* resonate with some of Edgar Allan Poe's principles and motifs, particularly those found in his story "William Wilson".

To effectively explore the dark side of William Wilson, Poe's main character, Freud's analysis of the uncanny proves to be highly significant. This is due to the fact that his essay "The Uncanny" offers a clear understanding of this figure. Despite the existing fact related to the rarity of psychoanalysts delving into such phenomena, Freud considered it essential to address it. Although he initially aimed to touch on only a few aspects, Freud ultimately offers a deep explanation about the uncanny in his essay. This detailed exploration allows for a deeper comprehension of the psychological basis and eerie nature of the doppelgänger in Poe's work (1).

Indeed, in his article “The Uncanny” Freud expresses the belief that ‘The uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar’ ( 1-2); just as Juraj Schweigert in his article “The Uncanny: The Double as a Literary Convention” notes that the uncanny is related “...to the seeming opposition of concepts, the familiar and the unfamiliar, or rather the canny (that which is known – “canned”) and the uncanny” (Schweigert 3). Freud and Schweigert highlight here the concept of the uncanny that refers to a certain type of fear that arises from something that is familiar yet strange at the same time. This is similar to an old childhood toy that suddenly comes to life! Imagine a kid’s toy that never moved to start moving and talking to its owner. This can be very terrifying!

According to Freud, the concept of uncanny is closely connected to the idea of repetition. He argues that when something is repeated over and over again, it can create a sense of unease and discomfort in the observer. This can apply to a wide range of things, including events, situations, objects, and even works of art. In fact, Freud states that it is “...the constant recurrence of similar situation...” (18), that makes it uncanny. Essentially, what he is saying is that familiarity can breed a sense of strangeness or eeriness, especially when coupled with certain other factors, such as ambiguity, unpredictability, or inexplicability.

Freud also relates the uncanny in his article “The Uncanny” to “[t]he German word *Unheimlich* which is obviously the opposite of *heimlich*, meaning “familiar,” “native,” “belonging to the home”; and we are tempted to deduce that what is “uncanny” is frightening precisely because it is not known and familiar”(2). The German word *Unheimlich* presents a profound insight into the human psyche. It suggests that fear arises from the unfamiliar and unknown and those we can overcome this fear by seeking familiarity and belonging in our lives. By embracing what is known and familiar, we can cultivate a sense of security and confidence that empowers us to face the unknown with courage and resilience(2).

The concept of *Unheimlich* highlights the importance of familiarity and feeling at home in our lives. By recognizing and embracing what is known and familiar, we can create a sense of comfort and security that allows us to face the unknown with courage and confidence. Freud assumes that the idea of the uncanny manifests itself in different ways in real life as compared to its portrayal in literature. According to him, in real-life situations, the uncanny can arise due to the resurgence of infantile complexes that were previously repressed, triggered by some impression. It can also manifest when primitive beliefs that were once overcome seem to be confirmed once again. On the other hand, in literature, the uncanny can be experienced in various other ways. Freud suggests that fictional works often present a world that is governed by distinct aspects that can contribute to the uncanny experience (17).

In the context of William Wilson, Freud's theory of the uncanny can be used to shed light on the darker aspects of the way Poe builds his narrative about William Wilson. The protagonist's encounter with his double can be seen as a manifestation of his repressed desires and his internal moral conflicts, which Freud might interpret as the resurfacing of infantile complexes. The eerie presence of Wilson's doppelgänger serves as a constant reminder of his suppressed guilt and unacknowledged facets of his personality, creating a profound sense of unease. "It was Wilson; but he spoke no longer in a whisper, and I could have fancied that I myself was speaking while he said: 'You have conquered, and I yield. Yet, henceforward art thou also dead—dead to the World, to Heaven and to Hope!'" (28-9). This climactic moment encapsulates the uncanny fusion of the self and the double, revealing the protagonist's inner turmoil.

In "William Wilson", Poe skillfully crafts a story where the boundaries between reality and the super natural blur, intensifying the uncanny effect. The protagonist's double not only challenges his actions but also forces the reader to confront the unsettling possibility of an internal struggle within themselves, mirroring the eternal conflict between the id, ego, and super-ego. This is evident when the protagonist describes his double's influence: "He

would try to guide me; he would often try to stop me from doing things I had planned. He would tell me what I should and should not do; and he would do this not openly, but in a word or two in which I had to look for the meaning. As I grew older I wanted less and less to listen to him” (12). This passage highlights the protagonist’s growing resistance to his double’s moral guidance, symbolizing the tension between his baser instincts and his conscience

## **2.2. William Wilson vs. Edgar Allan Poe**

Edgar Allan Poe is most widely known for his production of stories which can be considered Gothic due to the presence of haunted places, supernatural themes and other topics which entertain by means of “curdling the blood” (Hayes78). He was often praised for his use of psychological horror in his stories, which he achieves through the use of first-person narratives. This technique allows him to create an original experience for readers, drawing them into the characters’ situation and providing a closer look at their psyche. Poe’s ability to weave realism into his tales is what makes them so chilling and captivating for readers.

While doppelgängers may not be as terrifying as some of Poe’s other works, they are still quite strange. Imagine coming face to face with yourself, only to realize that the person looking back at you is not quite right. This person, who is a spitting image of you, wants something from you. They want to control you, impose their will on you, and make you do things you do not want to do. This is the kind of horror that Poe is able to convey so well in his stories. There are different opinions on Edgar Allan Poe’s legacy. Some people focus on the positive aspects of his life, such as his successful marriage, military service, and hard work as a writer for various magazines. However, others view him as a man who was constantly at war with himself, battling demons like drinking and gambling. This internal conflict is reflected in his stories, such as the two William Wilsons (Wilson).

### **2.2.1. William's Double as the Super-Ego**

The Id, the Ego and the Superego are well-known concepts in Freudian philosophy. According to Freud's personality theory (1923), the human mind is divided into three parts, each with distinct goals that often conflict with one another. This creates an inner tension that affects the way humans behave, and this is particularly evident in the short story "William Wilson" by Edgar Allan Poe.

The id represents our primal urges and instincts and is controlled by the pleasure principle. It seeks immediate satisfaction and will do whatever it takes to achieve it, regardless of the consequences. In "William Wilson" this dynamic is evident when the narrator states, "I was left to be guided by my own desires. I became the master of my own actions" (7). This reflects the protagonist's giving up to his primal urges, leading to his mastery over his own decisions and actions. The ego, on the other hand, is more rational and is responsible for finding ways to satisfy the id's desires in a way that is socially acceptable and does not lead to negative consequences. For example, if someone wants to eat a whole cake, the ego will find a way to do it in moderation or at a socially acceptable time, like a birthday party.

The Superego is an extension of the ego, and its function is to suppress the urges of the id. It develops the idea of what is right and wrong and is responsible for the feelings of guilt and self-reproach that we experience when we do something that goes against our moral compass. In "William Wilson" the superego manifests in the form of the protagonist's double.

For example, during a card game, the room suddenly went dark and a mysterious figure entered. Despite the darkness, the figure's presence was palpable. In a soft, unforgettable voice that sent shivers down the protagonist's spine, he announced: "Gentlemen, I am here only to do my duty. You cannot know the true character of the man who has tonight taken a large amount of money from Mr. Glendinning. Please have him take off his coat, and then, look in it very carefully" (18).



In summary, the concepts of the Id, the Ego, and the Superego provide an insight into the workings of the human mind and shed light on the inner conflicts that we often face. By understanding these concepts, we can gain a better understanding of our own behavior and make more informed decisions that align with our values and beliefs. The relevance of “William Wilson” story lies in the way Poe identifies the different parts of the mind before Freud developed his theories. He dissects these parts to demonstrate how they change and contrast with each other. In “William Wilson” the Superego is represented by the separate double of the main character in which he was always watched by his shadowy lookalike. When practicing as a card sharpener his lookalike discovers the fraud and when he was at the party looking for the married woman his double stop him “Suddenly I saw her; but as I was trying to get through the crowd to join her, I felt a hand placed upon my shoulder, and that ever-remembered quiet voice within my ear” (20). While the Id and the Ego are embodied by the original “William Wilson” Poe’s personification of these parts of the mind allows him to highlight the clashes that occur within individuals.

The personification of the parts of the mind also emphasizes how one cannot be fully human without all parts working together. If you kill one part, as William Wilson does, you are no longer alive and have effectively died. “In me you lived — and, in my death— see by this face, which is your own, how wholly, how completely, you have killed — yourself!” (21). This aspect of Poe’s story reveals the interconnection of the different aspects of the human mind and how they are important to our existence.

### **2.2.2. The Threat behind the Doppelgänger**

Every person is a complex combination of their memories, experiences, relationships, and principles, which together form their unique identity. However, imagine coming face-to-face with someone who disagrees with you on all of these crucial aspects. In his article “Self as Other: The Doppelgänger” GryFaurholt delves into the fascinating dilemma of understanding the doppelgänger concept.

The central basis of this motif poses a paradoxical question that challenges our understanding of identity and self-perception. “I must identify as ‘I’ that which is not me. The case of the split personality belongs to the oedipal stage which states the necessity of demonizing the socially unacceptable sides of the self; I must other as ‘not-I’ that which is myself”. The idea of encountering oneself as another seems impossible, as it implies that the ‘I’ and the ‘not-I’ are somehow identical, which is a logical impossibility.

Faurholt highlights the inherent tension between the self and the other, which is at the heart of the doppelgänger motif. This tension is not only intellectual but also emotional, as it forces us to confront our deepest fears and insecurities. The doppelgänger motif, therefore, represents a fascinating exploration of the human psyche and our relationship with us and others.

A concept found in mythology and literature, the doppelgänger is frequently portrayed as the protagonist's twin or alter ego. But rather than strengthening the protagonist's character, the doppelgänger poses a threat to their very survival. This is because the protagonist's distinct identity is in jeopardy because of the opposing qualities of the split personality or the uncanny resemblance of the identical alter ego. Because of the threat it poses to its host's identity, the doppelgänger is frequently interpreted as a death omen. As one scholar put it, “The doppelgänger is indeed a harbinger of death, because its presence threatens to annul the identity of its host”(Faurholt).

### **2.2.3. Dostoyevsky’s Double and William’s**

In Edgar Allan Poe’s short story “William Wilson” there are some striking similarities to Fyodor Dostoevsky’s novella *The Double*. In the latter work, the protagonist Mr. Golyadkin is haunted by his exact double, which becomes the most important factor in his life. This doppelgänger causes him to feel surrounded by enemies, driving him mad with paranoia and fear. As he struggles to maintain his sanity, Mr. Golyadkin is forced to confront the fact that he cannot coexist with his double. “Either you or I, one or the other, but both of

us together is impossible!”(189), he exclaims, realizing that only one of them can. The similarity between the two works is that both protagonists experience an eternal struggle with their doppelgängers.

However, in “William Wilson” the protagonist’s double represents his moral sense, trying to make him a better person. In contrast, Mr. Golyadkin’s double is trying to steal his life from him, making him feel as though he is losing his grip on reality. Despite the different interpretations of the doppelgänger motif, both authors explore the same fundamental question related what happens when one faces his/her own doppelgänger, and how one copes with the consequences.

The idea that Golyadkin senior could be a mentor to his doppelgänger gives him a momentary sense of mastery, but soon after, he starts to see him as a rival and, already plagued by persecution delusions, starts to think that the doppelgänger is plotting against him. Every time this tension between the protagonist and the same alter ego builds, it always reaches a breaking point and turns into a fight to the death. In an absurd attempt to challenge his twin to a duel, Golyadkin senior actually engages in the last confrontation found in Poe’s “William Wilson.” (Faurholt)

## **2.3. The Truth behind the Doppelgänger**

### **2.3.1. Narcissism Relating to the Double**

One of the world’s leading anomalistic psychologists, Professor Christopher French, explains that people suffering from mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, as well as other conditions such as brain tumors, can cause them to hallucinate versions of themselves or other people. This makes them go through what is known in psychology as heautoscopy. “It is also common in people with epilepsy, especially right before they are about to have a seizure” he says.

The phenomenon of the double is explained by Rank through the Greek myth of Narcissus, as well as its later interpretation by Freud. The myth tells the story of a young man who falls in love with his own image reflected on the water's surface and dies when he realizes that this love cannot be fulfilled. Psychoanalysis views narcissism, the double, and death as interconnected, much like the myth. Psychoanalysis is built on oppositions and dualities, and therefore sees man's mind as a collection of forces that are in conflict with each other.

Sigmund Freud in his book on Narcissism *The Freud Reader* mentioned that the person with a Narcissus personality is unable to love others. They only feel happy when they are loved, as it boosts their self-esteem. In contrast, a person who loves others is humble and has low self-esteem. They give up some of their self-love for the sake of loving others

A "Narcissus" is impotent in the sense that he is incapable of loving. His pleasure is derived only from being loved, as this state raises his self-regard: "There turn of the ... to the ego and its transformation into narcissism represents, as it were, a happy love once more". On the other hand, the one who loves is a humble person with low self-regard; and he abandons a part of .(561)

The narcissistic type of character is portrayed in "William Wilson", for example. Not only does William indulge in his own beauty and think he was better than everyone: "In truth the hotness of my character and my desire to lead and command soon separated me from the others"(8), but like Narcissus, he is also unable to love; he can obtain pleasure only from being loved. Yet, he is a very attractive man, which is another by-product of narcissism, as those who have renounced some of their own ego are fascinated by people like William.

In the present chapter we went through explaining how the idea of encountering one's doppelgänger has captivated and unsettled people for centuries. We stopped at the way in which Poe delved into the transformation of the narrator into malevolence. Using Freud's exploration of the doppelgänger was done to shed light on its association with the uncanny.

Furthermore, by drawing parallels between Dostoevsky's doppelgänger and Poe's work, a deeper understanding of the human psyche was more or less achieved, particularly in relation to Freud's concepts of the id, ego, and superego.

In the coming chapter we will go a bit beyond "William Wilson" to see how deep-fakes, who are extensions of doppelgängers, do also make people feel uneasy. They can create pictures and videos that seem real but are actually fake. This mix of familiarity and fakeness can be really creepy. The aim is to delve deeper into this angle of the uncanny.

## **Chapter Three: Between Myths of Twins and “Deep-Fake”**

The juxtaposition of twin myths and “deep-fake” technology creates an intriguing intersection of ancient storytelling and modern digital manipulation. This chapter explores these connections through the lens of Edgar Allan Poe’s “William Wilson,” addressing questions about identity, the nature of the self, the enigma of the double, and ethical concerns surrounding reality manipulation. These issues extend beyond the digital realm to ancient myths and narratives like Poe’s story. At the heart of this exploration is the fascinating paradox of the doppelgänger; a phenomenon that has long been associated with terror, yet continues to captivate people’s imagination. One more concern of the present chapter is related to illustrating that the concept of the doppelgänger is evolving; it is losing its frightening and terrorizing aspects and transforming into a means through which people seek fame, have fun, and escape their reality.

### **3.1. Everybody Wants to be Someone’s Doppelgänger**

The concept of doppelgängers has always been fascinating to people all around the world and in literary works. A doppelgänger is an individual who looks strikingly similar to another person, but they are not related in any way. The reasons behind the desire to be someone’s doppelgänger can vary from person to person and from character to another. For some individuals, it might be a form of flattery or validation of their appearance if they resemble a well-known figure or someone admired by others. However it was not the case with Poe’s protagonist.

### 3.1.1. Escapism and “William Wilson”

In “William Wilson” Poe delves into deep and complex themes of duality, identity, and the struggle against one’s own nature. Throughout the story, we see the protagonist struggling to cope with his doppelgänger, who represents all of his negative traits and impulses. This haunting presence leaves the protagonist feeling unsettled and desperate to escape, but he ultimately realizes that he cannot run away from himself. The story presents several forms of escapism, each highlighting the protagonist’s desperate attempts to escape from his inner turmoil. The protagonist turns to gambling, debauchery, and other vices as a temporary release from reality, but these distractions fail to provide lasting relief from his inner conflict.

At one point, he even seeks to escape his troubled past and the influence of his doppelgänger by pursuing a classical education, but even this pursuit ultimately fails to provide him with the escape he seeks “I went to study at the famous school called Eton. I had partly forgotten my days at the other school, or at least my feelings about those days had changed”(14). In the end, the protagonist’s ultimate act of escapism is his own death. Unable to reconcile the duality within himself, he chooses to end his life as a final escape from the torment of his double. However, even in death, he finds no relief, as his doppelgänger continues to haunt him in the afterlife.

Overall, “William Wilson” is a powerful exploration of the futility of escapism and the inability to escape from one’s own inner demons. Despite the protagonist’s various attempts to flee from his troubled identity, he ultimately discovers that true escape is impossible, and he is doomed to confront himself for eternity. The story serves as a warning tale, reminding us that we cannot outrun our own nature and that true peace can only be found through introspection and acceptance.

For some individuals nowadays, the desire to be someone’s doppelgänger stems from their inclination towards escapism and fantasy. This means that they feel a strong urge to escape from their own reality and drown themselves in the persona of another person. Such

individuals may view adopting the identity of someone else as a way to experience a different life, free from the constraints of their own. For them, being someone's doppelgänger could be a form of escapism, a way to live out their fantasies of being someone else in a safe and controlled manner. This desire may stem from a variety of reasons, including a need for excitement or a desire for a more fulfilling life. Whatever the reason, the desire to be someone's doppelgänger is a fascinating phenomenon that highlights the complexity of human nature and our innate desire for novelty and adventure.

### **3.1.2. The Doppelgänger, Attention and Opportunities**

Desiring attention and fame through being someone's doppelgänger is quite common in today's celebrity-focused culture when people aspire to be like someone they admire or idolize. They may seek to embrace the traits or qualities they admire in that person. Being seen as their doppelgänger could serve as a way to achieve this. Some individuals desire to be someone's doppelgänger for the attention and potential fame it can bring. Resembling a well-known figure can attract public attention, media coverage, and opportunities for career advancement or social status.

In the age of social media, individuals who resemble celebrities or famous figures often gain attention online. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube provide avenues for people to showcase their resemblance and attract followers who are interested in seeing "celebrity look-alikes." Moreover, Resembling a well-known figure can open doors to various opportunities in the entertainment industry. Some doppelgängers find work as impersonators, performers, or models, capitalizing on their resemblance to gain recognition and potentially even fame from being celebrity stand performer(0:18:58"el daheeh").

### **3.2. The Mystery of the Doppelgänger**

The concept of doppelgängers is a fascinating paradox that has captured the attention of many. It is a complex idea that has a deep-seated fear in many cultures. The fear is often



associated with approaching doom or supernatural forces, making it even more terrifying. Meeting one's double is believed to predict a sinister fate, perhaps even death, which makes it a daunting prospect. Naomi Klein in her book *Doppelgänger: a Trip into the Mirror World* mentioned:

Doppelgängers, however, are not only forms of torment. For centuries, doubles have been understood as warnings or harbingers. When reality starts doubling, refracting off itself, it often means that something important is being ignored or denied—a part of ourselves and our world we do not want to see—and that further danger awaits if the warning is not heeded.(18)

Despite these ominous connotations, the idea of having a double is undeniably alluring. The intrigue of seeing oneself mirrored in another is a reflection that challenges one's sense of uniqueness and individuality. The doppelgänger concept blurs the boundaries between self and other, prompting introspection and existential questioning. It forces us to confront the unsettling possibility that we are not as singular as we believe.

### **3.2.1. Real Life Cases of the Doppelgänger**

Naomi Klein touched an important angle in this subject which is related to gamers' digital doubles. She provided an interesting story about Former Trump campaign manager and chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon is currently employed full-time as a propagandist for authoritarian and neo-fascist movements in Brazil and Italy. Before joining the Trump team in the 2000s, Bannon gained experience in multiplayer gaming while working in Hong Kong for Affinity Media, formerly known as Internet Gaming Entertainment. He said to the filmmaker Errol Morris that he was astounded by how authentic these games seemed to the players and how their avatars—digital duplicates of themselves—seemed more real than they actually were.

For instance, he talked about a hypothetical “Dave in Accounting” who leads a mundane life but transforms into “Ajax,” a gun-toting evil-slayer, when he is at home with his

gaming console. Bannon asked, “Now who’s more real”—Dave or Ajax? While you might say Dave, Bannon saw it differently. According to Bannon, gamers create digital selves that are a more idealized version of themselves, where they can control things digitally that they can’t in the physical world. He said that Dave should let Ajax take over and become Ajax in his life. “I want Dave in accounting to be Ajax,” Bannon told The Atlantic’s Jennifer Senior.

Adam Golub, a professor of American Studies at California State University, Fullerton notes that “[t]his kind of idea of a second self has actually been present in a lot of folklores and mythologies throughout the world.” Today, we use the term to simply mean someone who closely resembles us but is not related to us. It is a curious phenomenon that piques our collective attention in a powerful way. In today’s world, online groups dedicated to finding one’s doppelgänger have more than 10 million registered users. While many people participate in these groups just for fun, others seek their stranger twin for more personal reasons(Klein 106-8).

The themes of identity, belonging, and human connection are evident among those seeking their doppelgängers. Some express the desire to find someone who represents the sibling they never had or one they had lost. They want to feel a connection with someone who understands them and has experienced what they have because they resemble one another. The documentary “Twinning” follows pairs of stranger twins who found similarities and connections that went beyond their physical attributes. “I had a brother who was 15 months older than me,” says NathaniëlSiri, a French Canadian, in the documentary. “He unfortunately died when I was three”NathaniëlSiri, and his doppelgänger Edward Toledo, originally from El Salvador, found each other through the documentary. While they may differ in cultural background, they share a similar energetic personality and are both dancers.

Toledo believes that doppelgängers are also connected in personality aspects of themselves. They sometimes think and act the same way, creating a weird connection that he cannot explain. Erica Arsenault-Dicks, an administrator for a “find my doppelgänger” group,

believes that people are looking for both a twin and a soul twin. They want to feel understood and connected to someone who behaves and acts like them without speaking. The desire to find a doppelgänger can be rooted in the search for belonging and human connection. After watching the documentary, the director wonders if there is another version of her out there, and if she makes documentaries too. The idea of a doppelgänger piques our curiosity and imaginations, making us wonder what other versions of ourselves exist in the world(Wainwright).

Not limited to works of literature or art, the doppelgänger also occurred in certain instances of real life. Many people assert that they have encountered their evil twins. Abraham Lincoln's experiences are among the most noteworthy, according to Noah Brooks' account in *Washington in Lincoln's Time* (1895). One day, following his election in 1860, Lincoln returned home to find himself reflected twice in the bureau mirror. Lincoln saw, almost to full length, that there were two distinct and separate images on his face. He stated, "...nearly at full length; but my face had two separate and distinct images" (122) despite the fact that one of the images was slightly paler than the other, by about five shades. His wife was extremely concerned and told Lincoln that she believed the paleness of one of the images was a bad omen. She was worried that he would serve his first full term but would not live to complete his second.

The short story "Lui?" ("He?") by French novelist Guy de Maupassant was prompted by a disconcerting encounter with a doppelgänger in 1889. De Maupassant claimed that as he was writing, his body double came into his study, sat down next to him, and started telling him the story he was writing. The story of "Lui?" is told by a young man who, after catching a glimpse of what appears to be his body double, is certain he is going insane. The story turned out to be somewhat prophetic for de Maupassant, who claimed to have had multiple encounters with his doppelgänger. After attempting suicide in 1892, de Maupassant was

admitted to a mental health facility near the end of his life. He passed away the following year.

### 3.2.2. The Double in “William Wilson” and the Age of Internet

In Poe’s story, the protagonist, William Wilson, comes across his doppelgänger, a mysterious double who shares his name and birth date. This double appears to symbolize his conscience or an alternate version of himself that he cannot escape. The doppelgänger’s presence disrupts Wilson’s life, leading him to question his own identity and mental stability. The narrator believes he represents the evil, unstable aspects of human nature savoring the fact that he, “was left to the guidance of my own will, and became, in all but name, the master of my own actions”(7). This theme of duality and the internal struggle is central to the story.

Deep-fakes, which use artificial intelligence to create highly realistic yet fake images and videos, similarly challenge the concept of identity. They have the ability to create convincing digital replicas of people, making it difficult to distinguish between the real and the fake. Just as Wilson is haunted by his double, individuals in the modern world can be haunted by their digital doubles, which can be used to manipulate reality and deceive others. The celebrated activist and public intellectual Naomi Klein had just such an experience she was confronted with a doppelgänger whose views she found abhorrent but whose name and public persona were sufficiently similar to her own. This is what she wrote in her book *Doppelgänger: A Trip into the Mirror World*.

The notion of the doppelgänger, the other, our mirror self, comes up repeatedly throughout. Klein claims that her book is an attempt in which she uses her own doppelgänger experience to learn about the double: “So that is what I have done. Rather than push my doppelgänger away, I have attempted to learn everything I can about her and the movements of which she is a part” (20); which she defines the doubling culture by: “A culture crowded

with various forms of doubling, in which all of us who maintain a persona or avatar online create our own doppelgängers—virtual versions of ourselves that represent us to others” (23).

In stories concerning Doppelgänger, reflections or projections that deviate from their original form and take on perilous lives of their own are frequently featured. *The Shadow*, a fairy tale written by Hans Christian Andersen in 1847, tells the story of a man whose shadow comes to life and moves to replace him. Comparably, a poor student sells his reflection to move up the social ladder in the silent horror movie *The Student of Prague* (1913), only to have that reflection destroy him. These tales frequently act as cautionary ones, suggesting that one should exercise caution to avoid becoming overly attached to his/her projection. (dokumen. Pub)

### **3.2.1.1. Technology, Doppelgänger and Creating Deep-Fake**

Deep-fake technology has been making headlines lately it involves creating realistic looking videos or images by superimposing someone’s face onto another person’s body or altering their appearance. This technology has the potential to be used maliciously, spreading misinformation or creating deceptive content. It is a sophisticated application of artificial intelligence that allows the creation of fake videos or audio recordings of people saying or doing things that they never actually did in real life. This emerging technology has raised concerns about its potential to spread misinformation, manipulate public opinion, and undermine trust in the media and information sources (“Deep Fake Technology” 1).

The connection between deep-fake technology and the concept of identity lies in the manipulation and mirroring of individuals. Deep-fake technology blurs the lines between reality and fiction by creating seemingly authentic representations of people. This is similar to the way twins are seen as two versions of the same person. Both twins and deep-fake technology involve a kind of doubling or replication, whether in the form of a biological twin or a digitally created doppelgänger. This has led to fears that deep-fake videos could be used to create chaos and confusion, or even to discredit individuals or organizations. The potential

for these videos to be used to spread disinformation and undermine democracy cannot be ignored.

In Poe's story the doppelgänger serves as a constant reminder of Wilson's misdeeds and act as a force of moral retribution. Wilson's attempts to deceive and manipulate others are continually thwarted by his double. The story explores the psychological horror of being unable to hide from one's own darker impulses and the fear of exposure. Deep-fakes, a modern tool for deception, capable of manipulating public perception and spreading misinformation. They can be used to impersonate people, fabricate events, and alter truth. The use of deep-fakes can evoke a similar psychological impact, causing individuals to doubt what is real and fear the potential exposure or manipulation of their own image or identity.

In her book Naomi mentioned an important idea about this deep fake culture that if Mark Zuckerberg's vision for the "Metaverse" comes to realization, where we are all represented by personalized animated avatars to our banks and friends, things will only get more complicated than they already are. This was the case in March 2022, when Yoon Sukyeol was elected as the new president of South Korea. As part of his campaign, the conservative politician released a deep fake version of himself called AI Yoon, which was created by his younger campaign team.

According to The Wall Street Journal, some voters found the fake politician—whose untruth was openly acknowledged—to be more likable and authentic than the real one. A video of AI Yoon that Lee Seong-yoon, a 23-year-old college student, saw online led him to believe that he was real. He claimed it can be boring to watch to Mr. Yoon speak at debates or while on the campaign trail, but that he now spends his free time watching AI Yoon videos and finds the digital candidate to be more likeable and relatable because of the tone used. (Klein)

As a result, he said he will be voting for Mr. Yoon whose digital double was created by a Korean firm called DeepBrain AI Inc. According to John Son, one of its executives, their

work is “a little creepy, but the best way to describe it is that we clone the person” (109). In other words, the “Metaverse” envisioned by Mark Zuckerberg could lead to a world where personalized animated avatars become the norm. Indeed, in March 2022, Yoon Sukyeol became the new president of South Korea, and as part of his campaign thanks to his deep fake version created by the Korean firm Deep Brain AI Inc. This fake version of the Korean President was found to be more relatable and likable by some voters, influencing their decision to vote for Mr. Yoon. The digital double played a significant role in attracting many students’ votes and ultimately helped Yoon win the elections.

### **3.3 Doppelganger : Reality, Myths or Manipulation**

It is quite common for you to receive a comment from a friend that you look exactly like someone else. However, it is important to remember that this perception is subjective. You know yourself best, having seen your own face every day since you were born. When others see you, they may notice a few similar features that stand out to them and equate that with looking exactly like another person. This does not necessarily mean that you bear a striking resemblance to that person, but rather that your friend is making a comparison based on their own perception. Therefore, you should not take such comments too seriously or base your self-image or identity on them.

It is quite common to receive a comment from a friend saying that you look exactly like someone else. However, it is important to remember that this perception is to a great extent subjective. This does not necessarily mean that you bear a striking resemblance to that person, but rather that your friend is making a comparison based on their own perception.

It is a wonder how two people can look so alike without being twins. This question has been a subject of discussion in literature, myths, and psychology for ages. However, scientific facts can shed some light on this. According to Joseph McInerney, the executive vice president of the American Society of Human Genetics, any two people chosen randomly share

99.5% of their gene sequence. But it is the remaining half that plays a significant role in making us unique.

This half contains 16 million nitrogen bases that are responsible for creating human features such as the color of our eyes, skin, and height, among others. Michael Sheehan, an assistant professor of neurobiology and behavior at Cornell University, has recently concluded that our faces have evolved due to the importance of individuality to our species. In his study, he stated that humans exhibit phenomenal diversity, a trait not seen in any other species. It is like a Rubik's Cube with endless possibilities for variation. Embracing your individuality is key, as it is what sets you apart and makes you special.

In conclusion, Chapter Three was the space through which we explored the multifaceted nature of the doppelgänger in the context of the digital age. We began by examining the modern desire to be someone's doppelgänger, driven by escapism and the pursuit of attention and opportunities. This phenomenon reflects a deeper psychological need to explore alternate identities and escape the constraints of our everyday lives. We then delved into the enduring mystery of the doppelgänger, looking at real-life cases that blur the line between coincidence and the supernatural.

By revisiting the concept of the double in Poe's "William Wilson", we connected these age-old themes to contemporary issues. Additionally, we investigated the role of technology in creating digital doppelgängers, particularly through deep-fake technology. This exploration highlighted the ethical and philosophical implications of such advancements, raising questions about authenticity, identity, and manipulation in the digital era. Overall, this chapter has shown how the doppelgänger motif remains relevant and compelling, adapting to new contexts and continuing to challenge our understanding of self and reality.



## **General Conclusion**

Numerous literary works have explored the theme of doppelgängers in various novels. The concept of the doppelgänger, a literal or symbolic double set in opposition to one of the characters of the story, has been explored in literature for centuries, particularly in Gothic fiction. While many authors have touched on this theme, Edgar Allan Poe has his special interpretation of this matter.

One of the points of attraction in one of his seminal writings is “William Wilson” which is the focus of the present research work, where he attempted to offer a more profound understanding of the human psyche. The conflict that the protagonist of the story has with his doppelgänger is a symbolic representation of the inner turmoil that humans experience, as seen through the lens of Freudian psychoanalysis.

Another concern in this research work is to provide a comprehensive analysis of this fascinating topic. By delving into the origin of the term “Doppelgänger” and exploring the various theories surrounding its existence it was possible to explore the appearance of this phenomenon in myths and legends from different cultures, including its influence on art and literature. Additionally, we examined real-life cases of Doppelgänger sightings to gain a better understanding of this mysterious and fascinating topic.

Using the Freudian concepts of the id, ego and super ego enable us to examine the relationship between the uncanny and the doppelgänger in the story. The focus is on providing a comprehensive explanation of the doppelgänger and why it poses such a significant threat to the protagonist. The goal is to uncover the truth behind the doppelgänger and explore the likelihood of having one’s own double.

A bit far from psychology, the researcher tried to draw the readers’ attention towards the ways the internet has transformed the concept of the doppelgänger, a phenomenon that has long been associated with terror yet continues to captivate people’s imagination differently. In various ways individuals create digital avatars; these avatars can take on a life of their own

that shows a darker side of this phenomenon, such as identity theft and the use of deep fake technology for malicious purposes. Overall, doppelgänger stories have not disappeared; instead, they have taken on new forms in the digital age, evolving in intriguing ways over time:

In conclusion, this research work is to explore the doppelgänger phenomenon in depth. The human mind is obsessed with the search for meaning and often wonders if there are really 40 versions of us walking on earth. Thus in order to have answers we have shed light on the psychology behind the desire to be a doppelgänger for famous personas and to understand the phenomenon as a mental illness rather than just an uncanny motif in Gothic novels. However, what sets this work apart and makes it distinctive is the unique perspective from which we approach this phenomenon. Instead of merely examining the doppelgänger as a recurring motif in gothic literature, we delved deeper into its origins and we explored its evolution in modern times.

Overall, this study has shown that the doppelgänger motif remains a compelling and relevant subject, continually adapting to new contexts and challenging our understanding of self and reality. By integrating historical, literary, and technological perspectives, we have gained a comprehensive understanding of the doppelgänger's enduring fascination and its implications for the modern world. By doing so, we could provide a better understanding of the loss of the uncanniness in the modern times, in a world where we chose to control our doppelgänger before it controls us.

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