

Cinema's Doubles, Their Meaning, and Literary Intertexts

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Abstract: In his paper "Cinema's Doubles, Their Meaning, and Literary Intertexts" Pilar Andrade analyzes the figure of the double as an element of cinema. Andrade does not take under consideration films in which the double is considered merely as a clinical case with no mystery (for example as in David Fincher's *Fight Club* or Brad Anderson's *The Machinist*) or in which it is used as a useful piece to make the plot without referring to the fantasy world (as in Joel Schumacher's *Bad Company*); instead, Andrade focuses on films that make a clear connection between the *alter ego* and fantasy, including those where this *alter ego* is inside the hero/heroine or character and such films where the former and his/her double would live in a fantasy world as in science fiction. Andrade postulates that the double is a fertile theme included in the fantastic that has been chosen by many writers and film directors to deal with our fears and our anguish but also to embody our desires, although sometimes it has been a helping character as well. The presence of a double is perceived in most cases as a threat, an uncanny appearance, although sometimes the *Doppelgänger* can help. In many cases he forces to question the rules of our ordinary judgement; his potential as a fantastic element rests perhaps on this effect and that is possibly the reason why he has inspired so many directors and writers in contemporary Western culture.

Pilar ANDRADE**Cinema's Doubles, Their Meaning, and Literary Intertexts**

What is fantasy? I propose this brief definition: the irruption of the unexpected in real life. In this way or similar ones defined by various scholars and authors and, in a wide sense, it can be a valid definition for the literary genre during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A definition that approaches the above one by Sigmund Freud is that of the ominous or uncanny (*unheimlich*): the strange irrupting in the quotidian pace of life and generating a feeling of both wonder and terror. Moreover, one of the most important fantastic themes is the double and the appearance of a double, in general, should be perceived as the irruption of an unexpected threat in real life. This fact concerns both identical doubles and resembling ones, and both objective doubles (external from the perceiving subject) and subjective ones (the subject with two or more identities). The fact that the irruption of a double causes certain unease or even a true terror is quite clear in literature, from Guy de Maupassant's *The Horla* to José Saramago's *The Duplicated Man*. This effect upon reception has been studied mostly by the psychiatrists.

Otto Rank was the first to relate the theme to anguish towards death or loneliness; he also suggested that the double showed lack of maturity and it meant a stage of regression to the narcissist self. Both notions of the double complete each other, as when the subject finds impossible to accept death, he/she develops an excessive love to himself/herself or an excessive fear of himself/herself. In both cases the psychological answer would be to produce another identical self, protector or enemy. Rank's theses were developed further by Sigmund Freud and related the double to several growth and maturity stages of the psyche. The double as a shield against death appears generally in childhood, while the double as castration or mutilation belongs to a phallic stage. The double unfolding continuously is linked to repetitive compulsion, simultaneously defensive and offensive, common to children and neurotic adults. The double as conscience or censorship must be placed in an adult or young stage in which the self generates an excessive super-ego. The adult stage can also generate a double as an expression of unfulfilled conscious or unconscious desires. Finally, the double may appear in adult stage also as a self-punishment brought about from the impotence of the subject. Some others such as Carl Jung or René Girard have added complementary or opposed reflections. Nowadays, psychiatry finds the phenomenon in patients who suffer from neurosis, multiple personality disorder, or paranoid delirium. But the double can also be contemplated from a different perspective, because it breaks, as the Romantics knew well, our usual perception of reality. With the presence or appearance of another self or "other," some important doubts emerge questioning first the identity of this double (who are you?), but also and as a counterpart, the very self-identity of the original (who am I?) and of his/her perception of reality (is what I am seeing real? Is it imagination, hallucination?). Thus, the double questions one of the three basic rules of logic: that of the non-contradiction. It makes evident that (being A the original and B the copy) the proposition "A is always equal to A and different from B" is incorrect. An exact copy of a human being works with another proposition: "A is always equal to A and equal to B." As Romantics discovered, a conscience splitting shakes the well-built system of rationalism, introducing new mental patterns, and with them, a new world to decode: the world of modern fantasy. Modern fantasy burst into nineteenth century fiction and continued in the twentieth century and is still prevalent in our age. It also opens out into the visual arts and, following the breach that George Méliès had opened into the cinema.

In this article I analyze the figure of the double as an element of and in cinema. I do not take under consideration films in which the double is considered merely as a clinical case with no mystery (for example Fincher's *Fight Club* or Brad Anderson's *The Machinist*) or in which it is used as a useful piece to make the plot without referring to the fantasy world (such as in Joel Schumacher's *Bad Company*). Instead, I focus on films that make a clear connection between the *alter ego* and fantasy, including those where this *alter ego* is inside the hero/heroine or character, and those where the former and his/her double would live in a fantasy world as in science fiction. All of them show the presence of the ominous within everyday life and in the daily dose of rationalism. The

classic and first film story of the *Doppelgänger* is Stellan Rye's 1913 *The Student of Prague* (*Der Student von Prag*). It takes place in this city imbued by mystery (remember the Golem, this other artificial self, an ancestor of Frankenstein), where the young student Balduin (Paul Wegener) faces his double in the rise to wealth and seduction. This story may be considered either the hypotext of several other filmic texts or the hypertext of a group of romantic and postromantic literary texts. It is a hypotext because it will be the reference text to create visual double stories; it is a hypertext because it takes and mixes together elements from these literary works and fixes them in a very convincing narration. The literary intertexts come from Chamisso, Hoffmann, Musset, and Poe. From Hoffmann, Rye takes the importance of the reflection, which will come to life in the first sequence. Hoffmann developed the idea in *The New Year's Eve Adventure*: a man called Spikher, married to a motherly woman, gives his reflection to a wicked but seductive woman. Some scholars interpreted the story proposing that the division real body versus body reflected comes from the contradiction between the two opposite women and the inability to make a choice that the protagonist shows. In any case, this tale uses the old theme of the image in the mirror meaning the soul of a person, enriching it and placing it simultaneously in a romantic and modern context. For his part, Chamisso is implicit in the film, as much as the theme of the shadow, a variation of the reflection, and the theme of the diabolic pact, which has an important function in his *Peter Schlemihl*. In this text Chamisso combines both elements to create a fascinating a magic adventure in which the hero, Schlemihl, sells his shadow to a grey evil man in return for a "bag of plenty." Rye took the image of the diabolical dealer who gives money for souls (reflections or shadows), adding a slight Jewish touch (as the action takes place in Prague and one episode is even set in the Jewish cemetery) with the long pointed beard and a black and shabby frock coat.

Another intertext for *The Student of Prague* is "December Night," a poem by Musset about a strange orphan dressed in black who looks like a brother and shows up in the most important moments of his life. Rye quotes Musset's text many times and finishes his story using the same ending employed in the poem: the double sits on the tomb of the literary original -- gently consoling it -- as he is the only survivor, although in the film he sits there with a queer expression. Finally, Poe provides the most apparent meaning to the filmic double, through his famous tale *William Wilson*. In this tale the *alter ego* symbolizes the conscience (or the super-ego), a kind of twin which reminds us of Pinocchio's harassing conscience, Jiminy Cricket. He is always there to denounce the mean behaviour of the original, whispering (he is unable to speak loudly for he is only a mental voice!) but in public. Rye's double acts in a similar way, in private: he is first seen after Balduin has written a *billet doux* to seduce the countess who is already engaged to a nobleman; then he will appear every time Balduin tries to go on with his love affair. And although we could think it is kind to try to prevent someone from having an immoral behaviour, nor Wilson neither Balduin consider the double as a friend, but rather as an enemy: "I can be known as Baldouin, but my real enemy is my image reflected," says Balduin even before the duplication. In addition to this obvious meaning, Rye's double is ambiguous enough to offer other connotations. The double can also be contemplated as honour, if we trust one of the interpretations given to Schlemihl's shadow: a man without a shadow (without honour) is a fallen man, worthless to society. In the film, Balduin would have sold his reflection (his honour) and that is why when he promises to the old count not to kill the offended fiancé: his word has no value, and, indeed, his double will kill his fiancé.

This leads us to the last semantic clue that lies in Rye's double: death. Not only the double kills his opponent, but also Balduin will murder the copy -- and therefore he will murder himself, as in Poe's tale. The student was not mistaken when he felt horror the first time he saw his double, as this one bore death. The scene in which both play cards together as opponents prefigures the ending of the film: the double wins, the game and the life. In this sense we could also think about supplanting which is a final effect of some double outlines: in Andersen's *The Shadow*, for instance, the original will be completely taken away, and in Dostoiévsky's *The Double* the original Goliadkin is the victim of a real process of mobbing led by his other self and finishes entering a mental hospital. *The Student of Prague* is, then, an example of narration in which reason and logic are unable to explain and justify facts. The final prosecution in the streets of the old city symbolizes clearly the mental disease of the hero, who loses his grip on reality.

On the opposite side we can find texts where the author has chosen a rational explanation. In these cases the notion of "fantastic" fits in with the definition of the term given by Tzvetan Todorov: the fantastic happens when we are not sure if something is real or just imagination. This point of view is developed mostly in the genre of the thriller and we can find an excellent sample in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, based on the French novel *D'Entre les morts* by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac. In the first part of the film a woman called Madeleine (Kim Novak) appears to be possessed by a dead woman whose portrait she venerates. In the second part Madeleine is supposedly dead (she fell from a bell tower); another woman, Judy, bearing the same physical features and a similar voice, is found by the policeman (James Stewart) several months later. The first phenomenon can be explained resorting to the genes: Madeleine might be a distant relative of Carlota, the woman in the portrait. But how could we explain the second fact? How could a person be an exact copy of another, unless she is a twin or a clone? And in this film she is neither of such. Hitchcock has untangled the mystery with his celebrated cleverness, adding the well-known ending: Madeleine-Judith are the same woman, having deceived the police pretending to be the wife later murdered. The female character acts then as a double reincarnation of another woman and as a double of the murdered wife, but also as her own double because she was indeed the murdered woman. When the policeman first meets her she is overall a lovely woman; when he meets her later, she is the double of this lovely dead woman. This implies two delusions for the policeman: first, he is mistaken when he thinks Madeleine is his client's wife and then he is mistaken when he thinks Judy is a woman different from Madeleine. In addition, he is wrong at the beginning thinking that Madeleine is someone's reincarnation. All these mistakes in the interpretation of facts will cause the real vertigo, representing the anguish towards an uncontrollable gnoseology. Reality slips out of the hands of those who want to decipher it with rational weapons. Eventually, as we mentioned before, the policeman happens to know the truth: he could not reasonably be deceived by a woman. This would have been too hard to accept. In any case, double and fantasy are here used together beneath this perfectly symbolic title, *Vertigo*, that points not only to a physical disability or to the somatic display of a psychological trauma, but also to the incapacity to see clearly and to interpret lucidly the reality. Hitchcock's film deals with an "objective double," that is, a double not of the main character who provides the main point of view, but of a secondary character: a woman (the object of the male glance).

An interesting novel that offers also a plot about an objective double is *Bruges-la-Morte*, written by the Belgian author Georges Rodenbach at the end of the nineteenth century. In this text a man married to a woman with beautiful red hair loses his wife but meets another one, red-haired as well. The second woman is then a double of the first, as she is used to replace the former or to replace the void left by the former. But when the second woman breaks the rule that forbids her from touching the dead woman's hair, the husband's violence bursts forth and he kills his new wife. As in Rye's film, the double is a threat that must be excluded from society, in this case because of a sacrilege she makes unwillingly. Otherwise, the fantastic is set here in a misty town so as to fit with the doubts about our perceptual ability, thus allowing the rise of mystery.

If we look for a commitment between rational explanation and magic event defying the rules of logic, both in the same story, we can think of Christopher Nolan's *The Prestige*. This film is a hybrid example of doubles where the audience must accept both the rational and the irrational or supernatural approaches because there are two doubles who struggle for the best magic trick and whose rivalry will lead them to create the most amazing trick of disappearance. However, their two tricks have different mechanisms: one of them is based on help by a twin while the other works with a magical engine that literally duplicates a person. The theme of duplication invades the plot: the two magicians have similar aims and goals, even if their moral evolution will be contradictory; one of the magicians has a twin; the other magician creates clones with his engine and, after each representation, kills his clone to prevent the trick from being discovered. As a matter of fact, the natural double helps to build a healthy life, while the artificial double serves self-destruction. Several themes related to the *Doppelgänger* take place through these elements: the part of goodness and wickedness lying in the human being, the strong union that ties the couple of biological twins, and also the tragic doom that threatens the double's life. This last feature is not so common, per-

haps it is less frequent than the one that forces the original to withdraw, but it runs along the whole film from the beginning. In fact, the heap of top-hats spread on the floor, in the first shots, pictures sadly the handful of clones that will be killed in a savage way, drowned in a fish tank, by the evil magician (Hugh Jackman). The double is sacrificed in order to keep the secret of the trick, as in primitive cultures twins were sacrificed to prevent rivalries and disorders that might arise from their existence.

A special cinematographic case of the double's theme is offered in *The Double Life of Veronique* by Krzysztof Kieslowski (1991). The film takes place in an ambiguous way, not in the two fields of fantasy and reality simultaneously, like in *The Prestige*, but in a field between them. It tells us about the life of two similar young girls, Polish and French, respectively (both played by Irène Jacob), who never meet but have a strange feeling of not being alone, as if they were always supported by another person. Each girl has the hunch that someone, a thousand kilometres far away, has the same thoughts and wishes, and even the same glamorous projects for life. Secret affinities have been established between them that only one, in the end, will discover. The plot develops in the romantic tradition, but dissolves simultaneously into the modern world serving as the film's frame and scenery. Another interesting feature in this case is that destiny or a mystic power binds the two people together for a noble reason: one of them will give the other enough data to choose correctly in life and to avoid death. The experience of the first will serve the second to skip a dangerous path. The first girl, the Polish one, dies of a heart attack when she is performing in a concert: she was not able to learn enough to realize that, for her, a more relaxed job would have saved her life. Then the second girl, the French one, will receive an anonymous black shoelace -- belonging in fact to the Polish girl's folder of music notes. The symbolic meaning or the hidden sense of that shoelace comes up when it is placed on the French girl's cardiogram, exactly over the line that describes the beats of her heart.

Establishing this link between the two Veronikas, Kieslowski could also have tried to reflect on the search for the other, meaning the search for anything that stands out of the solipsistic sphere of the self. Both characters are confused and unsympathetic human beings, whose only light is the feeling of not being alone: it seems that only when they discover the other's reality (in the French girl's case), they do assume their own identity and the existence of the "other." In the same way as Hitchcock's semantic gist was fixed to the spiral as metaphor, here it is the variety of lenses and glasses that mediate vision. From the beginning the eye of the camera, identified with one character or the other, perceives the objects in an inverted, deformed or imperfect way. This does not happen very frequently but it does so at crucial moments of the film. These defects of vision lead, on the one hand, to the mediated perception of the world each girl has, since they see through the other's vision; and on the other hand, to the idea that each one is the reflection of her alter ego. The deformed image suggests then the soul's affinity, the mysterious correspondence between the girls, the Polish one and her double, or vice versa.

In literature the beneficial double seems to be less frequent. A valuable instance could be the novel *The Secret Sharer* by Joseph Conrad. In this book a ship captain has to prove his skills in a new ship and with a new crew. Unexpectedly a man comes at night to the ship and is hidden by the captain in his cabin; some clues in the text allow us to suppose that he is the captain's double. He will stay with the original, hidden from the crew, until the test of competences has been passed, that is, until the captain has saved everybody from a certain shipwreck. A psychological interpretation would indicate how, in this novel, the double is a mental creation of the hero, who has a trial to overcome and needs to prove his authority. The double would be the embodiment of the fear and weakness he feels. That would also explain the fact that, when the test is over, the double disappears. It would even allow a Freudian interpretation, because the first time he sees his double, the hero thinks that he is a kind of beheaded body, and mutilation/castration, according to Freud, symbolizes fear of the powerful father (authority), or fear of death. This double is also a beneficial one, similar to Kieslowski's example: while he is there, he helps the protagonist not to feel lonely and relieves the anguish of being under pressure. And when he leaves, his hat, a white hat on a shadowy sea, helps the captain to dodge the dangerous and symbolic black reefs.

Another and particular group of double stories are those which either offer a rational solution inside their own fictional universe or those that do not need this solution at all. This happens of course with the old marvellous tales and legends (which, by the way, would be out of Todorov's definition of the fantastic) and also with science fiction. In this last genre, robots, cyborgs, and other replicants that deal with human dreams and aims and which are, in this sense, doubles, the more usual alter ego is represented by the clones. Michael Bay's striking utopia (or distopia?) of society in which a colony of clones are used as organ banks or hired wombs, in his film *The Island*, shows the fact that concerns us here: the apprehension that links genetic manipulation that creates clones and natural manipulation that creates twins. The same reluctance commented on previously towards two equal brothers lies behind a couple of clones. The horror towards another self emerges also when someone is confronted with his/her clone, even if he has requested it, as in this film. The scene in which the original Tom Lincoln (Ewan McGregor) finds his clone Lincoln 6 Echo (his "life insurance") at home illustrates this phenomenon. Again, in this case the original will react wickedly, trying to kill this harmless "Doppelgänger despite himself."

On the contrary, in literature the theme of cloning has not been frequently explored, with exceptions such as J.H. Rosny's *L'énigme de Givreuse* (1917) and Ken Follet's popular *Third Twin* (1997). Yet another theme very close to this one has been more fortunate in literature: supplanting, and many authors dedicated their efforts to write about doubles who supplant originals. In Plautus's *Amphytrion*, and his at least thirty-eight different literary versions to Anthony Hope's *Prisoner of Zenda*, supplanting often raises questions which are similar to these noted in the former double stories, although the frame of the text is comedy where tragic nuances are mixed with comic effects as gods are taking part in the comedy. This happens overall in the scene in which Jupiter appears before Amphitryon. The god has previously seduced the man's wife, under Amphitryon's guise, and now wants to mock the harassed husband who cannot understand. His fury and his amazed attitude do not make us laugh, like in the scene where the servant Sosia faces his own double. The clone, even if he is a god as in this case, is perceived as negative for he has lain with the wife. A variation of supplanting might be the changeling, which in West European folklore occurred when the offspring of a fairy, troll, elf, or other legendary creature that has been secretly left in the place of a human child. A well-known example occurs in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where Titania and Oberon are fighting over the possession of a changeling boy, and because of their argument, nature is in upheaval, and all the subsequent action of the plot ensues. Other examples are Yeats's poem "The Stolen Child," Mew's *The Changeling* (1916), Lovecraft's *Pickman's Model* (1927), among many others. Frequent episodes of changeling occur in the *Star Trek* series.

Supplanting literary stories may then be considered not only intertexts of supplanting film stories, but also intertexts of clone film stories. Perhaps *The Prince Ganzgott and the Singer Halbgott* (Arnim, 1818) would be a remote ancestor of *The Whole Town is Talking* (John Ford, 1935). Also related to the supplanting theme are the stories about soul exchange. The tale *The Distances* by Julio Cortázar or *Story of the Late Mr. Elvisham* by Wells deal with this subject. In the first story the soul of a rich and bored girl goes to a body of a wretched poor woman; in the second one, a young student finds himself in the body of a wealthy old man who wants to live longer. The bored girl will then know the struggle for life; the old man, now young, will die shortly afterwards in an accident. Cortázar's tale wants to be not only a curious story but also a social reflection and even a meditation on chances in life. Well's tale is rooted in the romantic tradition and deals with the human desire to avoid death, at any price. And there are also texts in which no rational explication is provided but which do not belong to the science-fiction genre, because they take place in a perfectly known and ordinary environment. They could be considered "neofantastic" stories, in the sense Alazraki gives to this word. A baroque example is *O Homem Duplicado*, a novel by Saramago. In this text the original, Tertuliano, who lives in a modern city, makes up his mind to murder his double because he will not let people know that he is not unique -- he is a moral coward, the narrator says. We can think that Tertuliano is in fact refusing alterity in the big modern city, otherness represented by his alter ego and by his nice girlfriend; as we know, contempt for alterity is paradoxically a common phenomenon in the contemporary megapolis.

Under the label of "double" is not only included *autoscopy*, which embraces all the types I discuss here, but also double identity, that is to say, the cases in which the same person bears two identities inside her/him. The prototype of this kind of texts is Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* I referred to previously and a very similar plot is developed in Théophile Gautier's *Le Chevalier double* (1840). Gautier tells us about a knight having two tendencies inside him, the good and the evil, until the day he can fight and kill the bad tendency embodied in a red knight. This outline would also be used by Italo Calvino in his work called *Il visconte dimezzato* (1952). A more modern version of the psychological combat in a New York dwelling is represented in *The Jolly Corner* (1908) by Henry James. This text bears many autobiographical elements but it can also be interpreted as a psychological adventure about a man who comes home after a long stay abroad and finds his double in the abandoned family house. He wonders what he would have been like if he had stayed there instead of going away and concludes that he would have been like his double, a tragic and sad man. The process of going through the other virtual life (embodied in the ghost-double) helps him to understand that he made the correct choice. As we can see, doubling very often means a *descensus ad inferos*, providing in James's case the strength to bear the rest of his life, and to find the woman he loves. This plot is interesting to me because, even if it is not a pure example of double identity, it deals with the virtual possibilities that lie in a human destiny and reflects on the nostalgia or the guilt left by non-accomplished possibilities.

In cinema, the most famous film about the double identity is perhaps *Psycho*, an unforgettable analysis of a multiple personality disorder. But as I mention at the beginning of my paper, I am not focusing on stories in which the double is a clinical case, for they do not wholly belong to the fantastic. Other interesting films such as *Primal fear* (George Hoolit, 1996) or, more recently, *Unknown* (Simon Brand, 2006), deal with similar concerns but must also be placed outside the fantastic. On the contrary, plenty of fantastic stories indeed are stories about possession. The history of film offers many interesting examples, from *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse* (*The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*) by Lang to *Session 9* by Anderson. They are all significant because they use cinematographic resources to solve problems that concern the fact that one person (one image) is really two (although the same image). Perhaps Hoolit's provides the wittiest solution in his film *Fallen*. The first important feature in this film is the methods used to create an atmosphere of reality in which the supernatural event will take place. These methods come from realist literature which developed close descriptions of the environment, extradiegetic or homodiegetic narrators, common and real places, allusions to quotidian life, and so on. Hoolit uses similar resources and locates the action in a New York or a slum in the U.S.; he also profits from the classic frame provided by police stories. Perceived naturally by the audience, the presence of the police, the night, the wet streets, and the sound of sirens replace descriptions and banal dialogues. In this real world of a conventional reality arises the unexpected. The most important feature of the film is the use of specific cinema resources to solve identity problems, as suggested before. Hoolit uses voice-over in an original way to make the audience think that this voice belongs to the character on the screen, when it really belongs to a kind of spirit whose comments run all over the film. We could presume, then, that the policeman (Hobbes, interpreted by Denzel Washington) who is telling the story, is guilty or even that the plot is about corruption. The end shows that two identities have to be dissociated: the devil's spirit who makes the comments and the policeman, who is trying to kill the first. Although if the dissociation is not easy to discover, Hoolit has added another element which gives provides clue to help understanding: the image. Increasingly, he introduces a deformed image every time the spirit looks around and every time the camera looks through him. The difference between this anomalous glance and the normal one gets clear when the spirit possesses a cat and the camera has to approach the floor (a technique which could be related to the great story of possession in Kubrick's *Shining*).

At this point I cannot but mention the master of queer worlds, the creator of disconcerting and nightmare atmospheres, David Lynch. Obviously the double is an obsession to him and remains tightly related to these odd worlds. Like Hoolit, he leans sometimes on a thriller to start the story. In *Twin Peaks*, for instance, two murders start an enquiry that will end abruptly when a very different plot begins. And we can add other techniques of characteristic of fantastic and horror cin-

ema, such as music, range restriction, quick zooms on an object or face, adequate lighting effects or intelligent chiaroscuros, the climate created at night, etc. Lynch has also a very personal technique to create supernatural situations: he associates two images, apparently disconnected, that can be inserted in an ominous world parallel to the real one. It is not exactly the equivalent of a literary metaphor (there are indeed filmic metaphors of this kind) but of an irrational analogy used with a clearly fantastic aim. The film maker, like the surrealist poet, wants to introduce supra-reality into the real world of the plot. We can see this trick in, for instance, the scene with the old couple in *Mulholland Drive*. The way they laugh after they have seen off the young protagonist is exaggerated and by no means motivated by the previous events. This laugh, in fact, connects with the unreal realm, the pure fantastic, represented also with the usual symbols of Lynch's work: blue objects, the theatre, the dwarf, etc. However, the matrix of *Mulholland Drive* and *Twin Peaks* is the double. In both movies the two main characters are women, different and complementary. Throughout the story they will become connected and, particularly in the first film, the couple appears to reflect a twin relation. That is the reason why when they split up one of them must die -- tragedy is always prowling around in twins' stories. Lesbianism in this film seems to subsume under the double's theme, and from there it leads, paradoxically, to a reflection about unity, because attraction for the other means at last attraction for oneself, a narcissist tendency and, as a result, death-drive, out of the reality. We can also point here, however briefly, to another important duplication: the more intellectual one made between the author (the real man) and his alter ego (the writer or director). Borges in literature, Cukor in cinema (*A Double Life*, 1947) have given good examples of the complexity of this variation, and some decades ago, King wrote *The Dark Half*, anchored in the fantastic and quickly adapted to the screen by George A. Romero (1993).

In conclusion, the double is a fertile theme included in the fantastic that has been chosen by many directors and writers to deal with our fears and our anguish but also to embody our desires, although sometimes it has been a helping character as well. The presence of a double is perceived in most cases as a threat, an uncanny appearance, although sometimes the *Doppelgänger* can help. In many cases he forces to question the rules of our ordinary judgement; his potential as a fantastic element rests perhaps on this effect and that is possibly the reason why he has inspired so many directors and writers in contemporary Western culture.

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