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Research Report for *Victorian Doppelgängers*

The 2014 Columbia Library Award has allowed me to begin preliminary research for my second book, *Victorian Doppelgängers*, during two visits to the Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Room this year. This project investigates how Victorian writers understood and employed this literary motif in ways that are radically different from current conceptions of doppelgängers as mere physical twins. What is most fascinating about the Doppelgängers that populate Victorian literature is that their connection is ethereal, psychological, and complex rather than merely physical. Within the figure of the Victorian Doppelgänger, the supernatural and Gothic mingle freely and internal battles between public and private happen both internally and externally. Victorian Doppelgängers not only reveal the shadow selves in motion within us that *fin de siècle* culture deemed unacceptable or even depraved; they also encourage these selves to fight for dominance. One reason this figure was so popular among Victorian writers was that it represented the real threat of relying so much on our public selves that they became more familiar to us than our "true" selves. These figures elicit moments of self-awareness that are at once liberating and paralyzing. Such moments reveal larger cultural fears as well, fears that encourage characters to determine which parts of themselves to liberate and which parts to keep safely hidden away.

There is currently no book-length study of the Doppelgänger that focuses solely or specifically on Victorian literature. The best-known studies of this figure use the following methods to consider the function of the literary double: first, they attempt to divide the Doppelgänger into specific types and give examples of each type at various moments throughout literary history. C. F. Keppler's *The Literature of the Second Self* (1972), for example, has a chapter on each of the following double "types": second self, twin brother, pursuer, tempter, vision of horror, saviour, the Beloved, and in Time. Second, previous studies of the Doppelgänger take a psychoanalytic approach to analyzing this figure's importance in texts from various historical periods. Robert Rogers' *A Psychoanalytic Study of the Double in Literature* (1970) considers the relevance of "psychomania," "the mirror stage," and "the fragmentation of the mind" in the works of Shakespeare, Flaubert, Dostoevsky, and Dickens. Scholarly works that fall into this category resist geographical as well as historical borders. The third category includes studies of the Doppelgänger's German roots and its significance in German literary traditions. Though there are some excellent articles that consider the Doppelgänger in works of one or several authors that I discuss, there has yet to be an in-depth study of the period and nation in which this figure was ubiquitous: Victorian Britain.

In contrast with these previous studies, each chapter of *The Victorian Doppelgänger* will examine the work of two "doubled" authors who contribute to evolving conceptions of the Doppelgänger in British literature between 1837 and 1905. While these sets of writers share some parallel ways of depicting the double, many have rarely or never been discussed together in connection with the Doppelgänger. Indeed, some have not been discussed in this context at all, for my plan is to pair canonical and lesser-known writers whose contributions to the evolution of this literary motif have yet to be explored. Chapter 1 investigates the legacy of the Gothic Doppelgänger figure by contrasting two writers who experiment with this motif in overlapping

ways: Mary Shelley and R.L. Stevenson both depict the dangers and addictive qualities of scientific experimentation, specifically in the powerful creation of alternative "shadow" selves. Chapter 2 examines the connections between two contemporary writers, friends and sometime rivals, Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins. While doubles appear frequently in the work of both writers, I am interested in examining this motif in works such as *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) in which the significance of the Doppelgänger is often overshadowed by speculations about the novel's unfinished ending. Collins reported seeing his Doppelgänger, "Ghost Wilkie," a possible effect of laudanum but also a predominant theme in his novel, *The Woman in White* (1859). Chapter 3 focuses on Oscar Wilde and Mary E. Coleridge, two writers who grapple with the necessary distance between one's private self and public persona, especially for the Victorian writer who fails to fit within rigid expectations of heterosexual masculinity and femininity for the "redundant" single woman. Chapter 4 focuses on the "double art" of Pre-Raphaelite writer Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the duality of narration and tone in poems by Christina Rossetti. Chapter 5 investigates the role of the unreliable narrator in Doppelgänger tales by Joseph Conrad (*The Secret Sharer)* and James Hogg (*The Private Confessions of a Justified Sinner*)*.* The conclusion contrasts these Victorian tales of doubling with contemporary examples such as Chuck Palanuik's *Fight Club* in order to illustrate the enduring literary and cultural influence of the Victorian Doppelgänger today.

In July 2014, I began my research at the Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library. In order to investigate previous theories and definitions of the Doppelgänger, I needed a deeper understanding of the frequently cited work by Otto Rank, *Der Doppelgänger*. Columbia holds an impressive archive of Rank's correspondence with Sigmund Freud. In the "Otto Rank Papers: Cataloged Correspondence," I found a letter from Freud to Edward Bernays in which he refers to "Dr. Otto Rank, one of my best students." Freud goes on to describe "[t]he Austrian psychoanalyst Otto Rank (1884-1939)...as probably the most astonishing of his disciples. Rank was a trained machinist when, at just 21, he became interested in the theory of psychoanalysis" (Freud 1). Also in these papers was Rank's correspondence relating to the translation of the Doppelgänger into English and an interesting remark about Mark Twain and the immortal soul that is relevant to the Doppelgänger, specifically in connection with Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*.

For my chapter on the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the Doppelgänger, I looked at various editions of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poetry and painting, many of which include discussions of how Rossetti's "doubled" art reflects contradictions of the Victorian period that apply directly to his depictions of the Doppelgänger figure. I was especially intrigued by various drawings of "How They Met Themselves" (1851), an illustration that depicts the spectral moment when a man and woman meet their doubles and swoon in horror at this discovery. The first design of Rossetti's "How They Met Themselves" emphasizes the "weird and ghostly conception" of the Doppelgänger. This first pen-and-ink design was lost or destroyed early on; however, Rossetti drew it again for Mr. Boyce in 1860, while honeymooning in Paris. Four years later, Rossetti painted two watercolour versions, one of which was included in the Graham collection and now belongs to Mr. S. Pepys Cockerell. It was last seen in public at the New Gallery in 1897-8 (Marillier).

Rossetti thought incessantly about lives that one might have led and features these imaginary lives in his paintings and poems. Nowhere is the collision of real life and the hypothetical life more apparent than in "How They Met Themselves," a work that speculates about how our decisions, moral and intellectual, shape our reality. As popular a literature theme

as the Doppelgänger was, it appears only sporadically—and rarely this directly— in painting of this period. Arthur Symons, in his book on Rossetti, describes him as a double artist as well: "He has one soul, divided into two parts, in equal harmony with one another, and his House of Life was decorated, as it has been said, 'with the precise embodiment of dreams'" (Symons 5). Such duality is further expressed in Symon's inclusion of side-by-side paintings of real-life and imagined women. Symon emphasizes the connection between Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite movement as a whole: namely, that he and other Pre-Raphaelite idealists and dreamers who used their power to search for the intangible (Symons 59). "He reveals to us a little, exquisite, pathetic creature, caught in a moment of harmonious movement, as the fee touch the floor between two turns of the skipping-rope. It has passed, it is coming again, it turns in the air, and the thin childish body is arrested as if literally in the air: a ghost of form in a ghost of movement" (Symons 27).

In December 2014, I returned to Columbia to continue my research on Rossetti and Charles Dickens. The Charles Dickens Papers were extremely helpful as they include manuscripts, correspondence, and portraits of Dickens during his lifetime as well as adaptation materials after his death. Many of Dickens's works highlight the struggle and allure of living at least two different lives. Wemmick in *Great Expectations* (1860-61), for example, manages to keep his work and home lives entirely separate, even demonstrating a change in his gait when he is walking away from his job and escaping into his personal world. Similarly, Dickens's use of doubles throughout this novel—Orlick as Pip's darker alter ego and Biddy as the comfortable alternative to the unattainable Estella—also demonstrates Dickens's interest in the idea that an individual's choices can lead to profoundly different fates. He also experiments with the spectral aspects of the Doppelgänger. *A Christmas Carol,* for example, is said to have been inspired by a nightmare of watching oneself as an alternative self, similar to the horror of the moment depicted in Rossetti's "How They Met Themselves." Dickens characters often confront shadows of themselves. As Alexander Welsh explains in *From Copyright to Copperfield:* "The Doppelgänger is in revolt against the deference demanded of the young and ambitious in all societies, but with particular severity in Victorian England" (Welsh 144).

There are also a number of interesting and potentially useful nineteenth-century documents in Columbia's General Manuscripts collection. Alfred, Lord Tennyson's letter to John Forster on 30 Sept. 185- mentions Carlyle and Dickens. These also include an autograph ms in which these lines from the original manuscript of *The Princess* appear on a single page:

Dilating on the future everywhere
Two heads in council, two beside the hearth,
Two in the tangled business of the world,
Two in the liberal offices of life,
Two plummets dropt for one to sound the abyss
Of science, & the secrets of the mind:
Musician, painter, sculptor, critic, more:
And everywhere the broad & courteous Earth
Should bear a double growth of those rare souls
Poets, whose thoughts enrich the blood of the world.
-Handwritten note including lines from Tennyson's *The Princess*, Feb. 1866

There is an interesting emphasis on what is "two" and "double" in these lines, and I plan to compare any changes from the original to various published versions of the poem beginning in 1847, specifically the line about the "double growth of those rare souls Poets." According to

Tennyson, the artist in particular felt deeply the competing pressures of the worldly and the aesthetic, the need to remain firmly planted in reality while also staying in touch with one's artistic vision. This divide is especially distinct, for example, in Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott."

Finally, one unexpected discovery I made was a first edition of Caroline Sheridan Norton's *The dream; and other poems* (New York: C.S. Francis, 1855). Within the pages of this book, which was inscribed Firing Kent, Christmas 1861, I found a copy of Norton's obituary, which I had not been able to locate prior to this visit. Norton died at age 70, a few months after her marriage to William Stirling Maxwell; in her obituary, she is celebrated for her literary accomplishments above her political contributions: "A writer in the *Quarterly Review* as 'the Byron of our modern poetesses,' though she had none of his misanthropy or cold hopelessness" (Caroline Norton-Maxwell, "Obituary"). Today, the reverse of this is true: most contemporary criticism on her political contributions to the improvement of married women's lives in England. These editions will be useful to me as I complete an article on Caroline Norton and the Poetic Bower.

Finally, I looked closely at the following items, which I hope to incorporate into my discussion of these writers: original serial engravings of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, including one of Drood's Ghost; a playbill comparing Edwin Drood to Jekyll and Hyde; a description of Dante Rossetti as one soul, divided into two parts, in equal harmony with one another" (Symons 5); a "doubled" photo of Mrs. Rossetti and Miss Christina Rossetti. In the coming months, I plan to incorporate many of these documents and references into my chapters on the Doppelgänger motif. For example, I will reference the playbill in my discussion of the ghostly Doppelgänger in Dickens's *Edwin Drood*; I will incorporate discussion of Dante Rossetti's "doubled art" into my analysis of the Doppelgänger in "How They Met Themselves." The most valuable thing I gained from my visits to the Rare Book and Manuscript Room at Columbia is an awareness of the broad cultural landscape out of which these texts were created. My time at the RBML has also deepened my interest in and appreciation of archival research while motivating me to continuing doing more of it in the future.

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