

**The Doppelganger in Vladimir Nabokov's *Despair*: A
Psychoanalytical Study**

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Abstract:

This paper analyzes the cultural interpretations and influences surrounding the doppelganger in Nabokov's *Despair*. Also, it investigates psychological consequences, symbolic significance, and literary techniques used by Nabokov in *Despair* by examining the protagonist's fragmented identity and the role of the doppelganger as a commentary on society and human nature. The doppelganger subject takes a prominent stage in *Despair*, crafting a complicated story that dives into the depths of identity, perception, and self-deception.

Nabokov's *Despair* presents a main character who finds himself confronted by his own doppelganger and has no idea how or why this mirror image of himself has appeared. The doppelganger will live its own life; the two characters will show that they are somehow the same person. They share the same identity, live the same life, and have the same personality traits. This study investigates the motivations for a person's use of a second personality and how the double personality allows him to escape his distressing world.

In the light of psychoanalysis, the researcher analyzes the main character and the author's personality, which is mostly the reflection of his protagonist. The doppelganger is an alter ego that some critics believe to have other points of view different

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from those of the character in the story of the novel; hence, the conflict arises between this alter ego and the original.

Introduction:

This paper discusses the concept of the doppelganger in Vladimir Nabokov's *Despair*. The doppelganger is a literary device used in fiction and refers to a complex hallucination that involves the feeling that there is another illusory body of oneself nearby. In this case, the person transforms perspective, seeing the world from an illusory body. The figure most often represents a shadow of a human character, which is generally an uncanny or disturbing figure. This person, haunted by the doppelganger, hallucinates and suffers from a temporary delusion. The characters haunted by a doppelganger are always accompanied by anxiety and psychological instability.

The doppelganger, or dual personality, is a mental process that leads to a weak connection between a person's thoughts and memories. Consequently, the affected person loses his identity, loses a sense of time, and is unable to determine the time as he loses his sense of himself and lives in the subconscious. Double personality disorder depends on a set of factors, including the exposure of a person with a double personality disorder to the trauma of physical or sexual abuse in his childhood, which led him to separate himself from reality. So that the affected person deals with his unconscious self, which is a mechanism that he uses in order to cope.

Methodology:

Double personality is a psychological condition that results in some confusion in the behavior of the person that makes him appear illogical and unnatural to others. The main questions of the paper are: What is a doppelganger? Does dual personality lead to relational and social problems for the person? What are the reasons for this disorder? How is the transition from one personality to another? And finally, is there a treatment? In this paper, the researcher will analyze the significance of the

doppelganger by using a psychoanalytic method to pursue my aim.

The Literature Review:

As for Harrison Lonny Roy" *Duality and the Problem of Moral Self-Awareness in Dostoevsky's Dvoynik (The Double)*", he investigates the problem of duality as it relates to the moral situation of the protagonist of Dostoevsky's *The Double*. Also, Szczepanska Kathryn examines " *The Double and the Double Consciousness in Dostoevsky*"; she treats the idea of the double as grounded in historical and social facts. In Breaw Jon C." *The Aristocrat and the Pauper: Images of Self in Edgar Allan Poe's William Wilson*", expounds upon the paradox of Poe's social and psychological conscience in the context of his aristocratic sensibilities. Also, in Cavagnaro Gabrielle's " *My Dostoevsky, myself: The self-reflective impulse in Dostoevsky's reader*", he cared for self-exploration through the reiteration of a new word that embodies the unique matrix of self. In " *Doubling and Discovery: Vladimir Nabokov's Literary Games*", Nester Robbi explores Nabokov's doubling games throughout his novels, which use doubles as a comic device. Apparently, this is the first study that uses psychoanalysis to investigate the doppelganger theme.

Nabokov's novels are considered a tool for diving deeply into dark minds in order to understand the human psyche. All of his narrators are unstable; some have perversions and obsessions, while others are obviously insane, such as "Smurov" in *The Eye*, "Hermann" in *Despair*, "Kinbote" in *Pale Fire*, and "Humbert" in *Lolita*. All those protagonists display disturbing symptoms of psychosis. Nabokov employs doubling, duplication, and mirroring throughout all of his fiction. The false duplicate, another of Nabokov's favorite ideas, is the central theme in the novel *Despair*.

One of the key themes in *Despair* is the nature of identity and the concept of doppelgangers. Hermann, the

protagonist, is consumed by a sense of dissatisfaction with his own life and decides to fabricate a plan to switch identities with another man who bears an uncanny resemblance to him. This theme delves into the fragility of identity and the desperation that can arise from a longing to escape oneself. Another central theme in *Despair* is the examination of madness and the fine line between reality and delusion. As Hermann becomes increasingly obsessed with his plan and his mental state deteriorates, the novel becomes a complex exploration of the human psyche.

The plot of *Despair* revolves around the false double. Hermann Karlovich, the narrator and protagonist, is a Russian of German heritage and the proprietor of a chocolate factory who meets a homeless guy in Prague who he believes is his doppelganger. Even though Felix, the alleged doppelganger, appears to be unaware of their resemblance, Hermann argues that it is striking. The main character decides to use the similarity with Felix in a criminal way. Hermann kills Felix, believing that Felix's death will be taken by the authorities as his death and that this could be used to Hermann's benefit. Hermann kills Felix to take the insurance money from him, assuming that he is the one who was killed. Suddenly, it turns out that there is no resemblance between the two men, Herman and Felix, the murder is not perfect, and the murderer is about to be captured by the police in a small hotel in France, where he is hiding.

Nabokov subverts the typical twin theme in *Despair* by having the two men exhibit no likeness at all. Gomez Barreras claims, "His novels do not deal with two characters looking alike. [Nabokov] emphasizes the psychological features of the motif of the doppelganger rather than the physical one. In other words, one of his characters feels he has a double, but in reality, he does not "(2). Felix is a false double for Hermann, at least as far as their physical likeness is concerned, which is the

first criterion of a double. Still, what is similar to the ordinary double tale is the psychological representation of the double as Hermann's projection of the unconscious, his hidden desires, and even fears.

Hermann and Felix have a disagreement. Hermann feels he resembles Felix, but Felix disputes the claims. Hermann asserts that "I had never before supposed it possible that there could exist such a perfect resemblance as that between Felix and me" (Nabokov, *Despair* 9). Gomez Barreras observes that "the doppelganger showed the dark aspect of personality and the repressed personality" (1). Hermann's fears take a bodily manifestation of repressed urges, desires, fears, and limitations. Felix represents Hermann's repressed conscience and hidden wishes.

As Claire Rosenfeld claims, "it is a novel about a man who, believing that a ...tramp resembles him exactly, allows that assumption about the existence of a "mirror image" to dictate the murder of the second self, ostensibly for profit" (175). Hermann is unable to draw the line between the imaginary and the real world. His insistence on a delusional perception of his double is a mental disorder that makes him encounter reality poorly, and this makes him believe he will get away with a murder that he will not get away with.

Hermann has personality disorders, which are characterized by "behaviors that deviate from social norms and expectations. People with personality disorders have intense, unstable emotions [and] a distorted self-image" (Emmelkamp 11). He has an antisocial personality disorder, and persons with this disease are known as "psychopaths." This disorder, according to Frederick Rotgers, "is characterized by rash, irresponsible, and aggressive behavior, which is often expressed by a disregard for others and an inability to abide by society's rules". In addition, "thoughts of murder may arise in conjunction with behavioral disorders, such as personality

disorders and antisocial personality disorders" (196). In other words, people with these disorders commit serious crimes and lack remorse for their actions.

Nabokov's mental disorder, which was due to several circumstances, is reflected in Hermann's mental disorder. Nabokov's childhood was full and rewarding. He had experienced stability, love, and wealth in his family. Throughout his entire life, Nabokov underwent great changes in circumstances. After an idealistic childhood in an outstanding family, Nabokov's world was upended due to his father's death, poverty, and finally, his skin disease, psoriasis. This disease led him to a bad condition that made him consider suicide. While this condition was never mentioned in his fiction, it was a recurring theme in his letters to his wife Vera from 1923 to 1977. Nabokov referred to his "damned skin" and to psoriasis that distressed and tortured him as "my Greek" (Pitzer 101). According to Alan Menter, psoriasis is:

A chronic skin disease caused by the immune system malfunctioning and characterized by producing patches of dry, scaly, and red skin. These areas can be very flaky and may be particularly sore and itchy. These can be minimal or very extensive on the scalp, face, and trunk. In addition, redness on the face, neck, that on the visible portions of the body can cause severe negative psychological effects for people with psoriasis (12).

Some researchers show that psoriasis is associated with potentially adverse effects on mental health. People with psoriasis often suffer from depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. The psychosocial implications of psoriasis affect all aspects of patient's lives, including their ability to socialize.

Psychiatric disorders can contribute to psoriasis progression. (Craig 800).

Also, Raishan Bakar identifies certain personality disorders or traits in psoriasis patients, such as a negative or problematic attitude to life, impulsive or avoidant behavior, and less life satisfaction. These reactions are recognized as adjustment disorders due to the physical and psychological impact of the circumstances inherent in the disease itself, pain and itching, and facial or bodily lesions that impact self-confidence (495).

In *Despair*, Hermann is married to Lydia, a sometimes silly and forgetful wife (according to Hermann), who has a cousin named Ardalion. It is heavily hinted that Lydia and Ardalion are, in fact, lovers. Although Hermann continually stresses how much Lydia loves him, he always ignores his wife's infidelity affair. The signs of Lydia's infidelity are always in front of Hermann, but he chooses never to deal with it. Hermann is convinced that his wife will never cheat on him (Leving 187)

To make himself feel better, he wants to believe nothing about her. That is a symptom of an unstable personality. In addition to deception and self-delusion, the narrator is insane. He deliberately acknowledges it:

Tum-tee tum...No, I have not gone mad. I am merely producing gleeful little sounds. The kind of glee one experiences upon making an April fool of someone. And a damned good fool I have made of someone

(Nabokov, *Despair* 24).

Thus, Hermann is a compulsive liar who enjoys telling stories for pure pleasure. The quotation indicates that the

narrator is not merely a big liar but also has an uncontrollable desire for deceit. His great obsession and passion is lying ever since he was a boy. He admits proudly, "not a day passed without my telling some lies" (Nabokov, *Despair* 42). He shamelessly lies to his wife, too; "during the ten years, we lived together, told her such a heap of lies about myself, my past, my adventures" (Nabokov, *Despair* 26). He finds it hard to distinguish reality from his world of hallucinations.

As a result, he suffers from schizophrenic tendencies, hallucinations, and false beliefs. Schizophrenia is "a dangerous mental condition in which people have an aberrant interpretation of reality. Schizophrenia may result in some combination of hallucinations, delusions, and extremely disordered thinking and behavior; Hermann loses his ability to tell right from wrong". People with schizophrenia are more likely to commit acts of violence, including murder (Costello 77). Throughout the novel, Hermann's state declines into a serious mental disorder, ending in a complete loss of sense of identity

Nabokov's mental problem was that he had no money for treatment, which worsened his psoriasis. He had to turn to the oldest folk remedy; bathing in coal tar. As a result, the treatment only served to irritate his skin. Nabokov wrote to Vera about his illness: "My Greek tortures me so much; I don't sleep at night because it itches so furiously- and this greatly affects my mood that I decided to see a doctor since it gets even worse. This idiotic tar has affected me awfully." Poverty negatively affects Nabokov's physical development and leads to a chronic health condition as a result of the lack of money for treatment. According to Maslow, "poverty is defined as the inability of people to meet the requirements of the material minimum." It refers to the deprivation of well-being, which is health and physical security. Furthermore, poverty plays a

central role in triggering depressive symptoms and leading to mental problems (The Psychology 210).

Nabokov experienced depression, feelings of worthlessness, and passive suicidal thoughts. He once said, "Sometimes I simply thought I was losing my mind". He attributed his depressive symptoms and suicidal thoughts to his appearance concerns, stating, "If I didn't look like such a freak, I wouldn't feel so hopeless and depressed. It [psoriasis] has reached seen dimensions, and it's particularly unpleasant that my face is blotchy too. But the most awful thing is the itch" (Letters 138). In his book, *The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov*, he described his preoccupations with appearance as "severely upsetting," saying:

what makes me feel like a monster, It's because of my skin. I am 42 years old. For the past 20 years, I have been suffering from a severe form of psoriasis, sometimes the scars covered more than 80% of my body. In summer, I could not wear t-shirts or shorts because I was very ashamed of people's looks. It is true that society has not condemned me for this disease, but I still consider myself an ugly creature (125).

Throughout the analysis of Nabokov's words, it appears that he suffered from body dysmorphic disorder. According to Katharine Phillips, body dysmorphic disorder "is a mental health condition where a person spends a lot of time worrying about flaws in their appearance. These flaws are often unnoticeable to others. This disease leads to depression, self-harm, or suicidal thoughts". Furthermore, it is associated with low self-esteem that can result from various factors, including genetic factors, physical appearance, weight, or mental health issues due to childhood sexual abuse (25).

Sexual abuse was another traumatic experience Nabokov exposed. According to Andrea Pitzer, Pedophilia was an enduring preoccupation for Nabokov; he did have some memories of childhood sexual abuse. Nabokov's pedophilia interest is traced to his having been sexually abused by his uncle as a child. In *The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov*, as well as in his autobiographical novel "*Lolita*," the subject of which is child sexual abuse, he used the projection mechanism as a means to convey his experience through the protagonist of the novel (140). According to David Fergusson in the book, "*Childhood Sexual Abuse*":

Child sexual abuse can result in both short-term and long-term harm, including psychopathology in later life. Indicators and effects include depression, anxiety, eating disorders, low self-esteem, somatization, dissociative and anxiety disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder (101).

According to Freud's "*The Aetiology of Hysteria*" hypothesis, "all psychotic disorders can be traced to childhood sexual assaults by parents or caretakers." According to this theory, many psychotic disorders are caused by a repressed memory of sexual abuse as a child. Freud proposed that adults who experienced sexual abuse as children suffer from unconscious memories and feelings incompatible with the thoughts and feelings that constitute their experience. Psychic disorders are a direct consequence of experiences that cannot be assimilated (200).

In *Despair*, the most obvious symptom of Hermann's illness is the delusion of the double. When he sees Felix sleeping on the hillside near Prague, first, he seems to Hermann to resemble a corpse, and next, when he removes the cap from the sleeper's face, he is shocked by the uncanny resemblance of

the tramp to himself "incredible! I was gazing at a marvel; its perfection...filled me with strange awe" (Nabokov, *Despair* 4). Certainly, this resemblance is entirely in Hermann's head since no one observes it. Even when the police find Felix's body, it is carefully arranged by Hermann to resemble him (clothes, haircut, and papers). Thus, the whole plot that Hermann builds is based on delusion. Accordingly, the whole novel is Herman's figment of imagination, where Felix is part of a false belief, a non-existent shadow.

"The shadow" is a concept by Carl Jung that describes those aspects of the personality that an individual chooses to reject and repress. This shadow is often associated with a person's negative emotions. Jung states that "the shadow is the dark region of the personality which is unknown and unrecognized by the ego" (*The Archetypes* 122). Carl Keppler observes that:

Often the conscious mind tries to deny its unconscious through the mechanism of "projection," attributing its own unconscious content (a murderous impulse, for example) to a real person in the world outside; at times, it even creates an external hallucination in the image of this content (140).

In fact, Hermann is preoccupied and obsessed with the idea of the double. It is clear in his constant invocation of the theme of resemblances and his desire to talk about doubles, saying, "I have seen brothers resembling each other, twins. On the screen I have seen a man meeting his double; or better to say, an actor playing two parts, as in our case," even his writing examines the theme of doppelganger (Nabokov, *Despair* 9). He seems unable to shake it off, even when he realizes that the whole plan for the insurance cheating based on Felix's physical

similarity to him ended up a total failure. Accordingly, he encounters "the syndrome of subjective double" in which:

a person experiences the delusion that they have a double with the same appearance, but usually with different character traits that is leading a life of its own.... A double may be projected onto any person, from a stranger to a family member. Subjective doubles are commonly comorbid with other psychiatric illnesses, such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia (Christodoulou 250).

Hermann also exhibits symptoms of bipolar disorder. The novel opens with his description: "My hands tremble, I want to shriek or to smash something with a bang.... This mood is hardly suitable.... My heart is itching, a horrible sensation... must be calm, must keep my head. No goods going on otherwise" (Nabokov, *Despair* 2). Hermann's state seems to alternate between elation and extreme anger mixed with dejection, often representing a manic depression or bipolar disorder. Bipolar disorder "(formerly called manic depression) is a mental disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood. These can range from extreme highs (mania) to extreme lows (depression)" (Leonard 7). As a result, Hermann's mood instability will lead to psychopathic passive-aggressive behavior.

Another crucial allegorical element in *Despair* is the use of mirrors and reflections. These literary devices symbolize the distorted perception of reality and the constant self-reflection Hermann engages in throughout the novel. The presence of mirrors acts as a metaphor for Hermann's internal struggle mirrors increases in Nabokov's *Despair*. He is fond of mirrors and frequently uses them as a literary device. Herman is repulsed by the mere mention of the word "mirror," and he "has

a total aversion to this ghastly thing" (Nabokov, *Despair*22). He does not have a looking glass in his room because he fears mirrors. He grew a beard after doing away with his double, Felix, so he could take on his role and disguise himself.

He struggles to conquer his fear of mirrors or, in fact, of himself. He wants to become somebody else by growing that beard and hiding behind it. He claims, "I am disguised so perfectly, as to be invisible to my own self" (Nabokov, *Despair* 28). He adds, "I hide in the natural jungle that has grown out of me. There is nothing to fear, Silly superstition!" (Nabokov, *Despair* 23). He is brave but unable to deal with himself and his twin in the mirror since they may be seen as his conscience and reflection of remorse after murdering Felix.

Despite his serious attempt to escape his image in the mirror, he always sees himself in one of the mirrors around him. Claire Rosenfeld asserts that "his distorted vision does not see himself in the glass but Felix, made in his own image, indicating his crazy assumption about... the tramp who made him: he absorbed him into his being" (181). Later in the novel, he also realizes that: "The beard [which] began to grow was intended to conceal [him] not so much from others as to conceal from himself" (Nabokov, *Despair* 148). In the end, he will inevitably fight himself in this inner conflict.

Hermann does not exist in his former form; he takes on Felix's identity and begins a new existence, occupying the body and spirit of a stranger. He dissolves into Felix's body by transforming himself into Felix by growing a beard and putting on his ragged and scruffy clothes, indicating his mental "deterioration and delirium" (Rosenfeld 185).). Symbolically, Herman's melting into Felix's body represents the loss of self and the descent into madness that he experiences. The melting symbolizes the erasure of Herman's individuality and his surrender to his darkest impulses. His despair to become Felix reflects his desire to escape his own failures and shortcomings.

Ultimately, Hermann's physical and psychological intertwining with Felix's body underscores the novel's exploration of the destructive power of obsession and the devastating consequences of losing touch with one's true self.

Hermann's fears of the mirror are the projection of the author's fears. Nabokov is afraid of confrontation and seeing himself in the mirror because of his skin illness, psoriasis. According to Freud, psychological projection "is a defense mechanism people subconsciously employ in order to cope with difficult feelings or emotions. What the ego refuses to accept is split off and placed in another." Psychological projection involves projecting undesirable feelings or emotions onto someone else rather than admitting to or dealing with the unwanted feelings (196). Also, Jung believes that "psychological projection refers to the feeling of personal inferiority due to some permanent disabilities" (Man 210).

Maslow describes self-esteem as "the need for self-respect in the form of self-love and self-confidence." Also, he asserts that "without the fulfillment of the self-esteem need, individuals will be driven to feel inferiority" (Motivation 156). Nabokov's serious health condition led him to feel inferior throughout his life. An inferiority complex encompasses feelings of inadequacy or inferiority. These feelings, according to Adler, result from an actual physical defect. Adler suggests that "the basic psychological element of neurosis is a sense of inferiority" (The Individual 189). In other words, people who suffer from chronic low self-esteem are exposed to experience psychotic disorders. Nabokov acknowledged having a disease, saying:

The first time I had what was later determined to be a mild epileptic seizure – acute anxiety in the pit of my stomach and in my chest, accompanied by a dazed sensation, and followed by a bewildering

and alarming sense that I was entering a kind of a parallel universe. Finally, I was diagnosed with Temporal Lobe Epilepsy. I was stunned (The Stories 82).

Maslow states that psychological health is not possible unless the essential core of the person is fundamentally accepted, loved, and respected by others and by oneself. Self-esteem allows people to face life with more confidence and optimism, achieve their goals, and self-actualize (A Theory 65). Vera made a spectacular entrance into the life of her husband. She proved to be nothing less than his full creative partner. As a result of Nabokov's wife's love and acceptance of him despite his hard circumstances, Nabokov was able to accept his sickness, even conquer it, and begin his new life as a well-known author. Maslow thought that a person's desire for acceptance could outweigh their need for self-actualization. Acceptance may create the conditions needed for change. He also asserts that "a human being would naturally blossom into his best self in an atmosphere of unconditional love and acceptance" (A Theory 88).

Consequently, the disease had a positive effect on Nabokov's life and work. According to Adler's theory, "the sense of inferiority serves as a positive motivating factor that makes him strive to improve himself in an effort to overcome the negative feelings of inferiority." Also, he suggests that the hallmark of an inferiority complex is that "people are always striving to find a situation in which they excel," where "the unconscious works to convert feelings of inferiority into feelings of superiority" (The Science 234). Moreover, Rogers believes that humans have an innate tendency to reach their full potential and that they have the power to change whatever their circumstances and challenges are (23). Jung also suggests that "we all have instincts that push us to grow toward completion

or to become the best possible version of ourselves" (Symbols 143).

Hermann, in *Despair*, is a perplexing and reluctant individual. On the one hand, he longs to start a new life by getting rid of all he owns, yet he is terrified of the emptiness and the prospect of beginning again. This is evident in his dream, which is a metaphor for his inner feelings:

I was standing in the middle of a long passage with a door at the bottom, and passionately wanting, but not daring to go and open it, and then deciding at last to go, which I accordingly did; but at once awoke with a groan, for what I saw there was unimaginably terrible; to wit, a perfect empty, newly whitewashed room (Nabokov, *Despair* 43).

Sigmund Freud's theory suggests that dreams represent unconscious desires, thoughts, and wish fulfillment. Also, Jung argues that dreams do not deceive or lie but present the truth about the individual. Dreams allow for the understanding of a person's thoughts and emotions. Accordingly, this dream is a projection of Hermann's unconscious, hidden desires, and fears. This room represents his free mind without any restrictions after killing Felix. Also, he is terrified by these thoughts, for he may not bear a load of his conscience, and his wishes are contradictory. At the same time, he wishes to return to his original life, as he admits: "[I was] comfortable in my old self; the disorder there is far...Quite a happy past, I dare say" (Nabokov, *Despair* 12).

However, in some places, Hermann questions the reality of this resemblance with Felix: "for a moment I had the impression that it had all been a delusion, a hallucination that never could he have been my double...for a moment, he appeared to me as like me." Hermann subtly hints at his mental

state and even has moments where he questions the accuracy of his perceptions. He even wonders if Felix is real when Hermann "found [himself] thinking that Felix could not come for the simple reason that he was a product of [his] imagination" (Nabokov, *Despair* 64, 70).

The *doppelgänger* represents an encounter with his dark side because Hermann feels they look exactly alike, but the other man, Felix, does not see the resemblance at all. Hermann projects himself onto Felix's creation, a lookalike in his mind, only to kill him so that he can kill himself, metaphorically. By killing Felix, Hermann attempts to get rid of the restrictions of the society he lives in, his trivial wife, and his life.

Although Hermann notices certain facial differences, he argues they are the same. Hermann has always been conscious of their physical disparities, stating:

I possess large yellowish teeth; his are whiter and set more closely together, but is that really important? On my forehead, a vein stands out like a capital M imperfectly drawn, but when I sleep, my brow is as smooth as that of my double. And those ears... the convolutions of his are but very slightly altered in comparison with mine: here more compressed, there smoothed out. We have eyes of the same shape, narrowly slit with sparse lashes, but his iris is paler than mine (Nabokov, *Despair* 24).

Hermann believes Felix is his mirror image due to his belief in *doppelgängers*, but it is actually his awareness reflecting distorted visions. "For some ten seconds, we kept looking into each other's eyes. Slowly, I raised my right arm, but his left did not rise as I had almost expected it to do. I closed my left eye, but both his eyes remained open." Instead of perceiving himself and the environment as they truly are, he

relies on his own mind, which repeatedly produces false doubles. Herman has a complicated personality. Despite being from the upper-middle class and having all one could want, his soul is plagued by his demons. Herman has everything he wants, yet he has no fundamental values. He's hollow on the inside. Hermann states, "I was absolutely empty" (Nabokov, *Despair* 20, 12). It can be explained as spiritual emptiness, emotional blankness, and a lack of self-realization and satisfaction.

The process of psychological dissociation may be seen in Hermann's persona, and mental dividedness is portrayed by the double, Felix, who is not evil this time. Hermann, in turn, is undoubtedly the wicked one. He is the one who decides the fate of both by killing Felix. In this sense, Hermann is supposed to be Felix's evil self that destroys him. Jung asserts that the self is complex:

Where good and evil are simply complementary opposites, each a necessary condition for the existence of the other. In his doctrine of the shadow, he defines the double as neither good nor bad but as a "replica of one's own unknown face" (*The Archetypes* 126).

Accordingly, Hermann seeks his double to merge with him and take over his role as a victim or outcast in society. Felix does represent his unknown face, but his repressed self-frustrated by social inhibitions.

Hermann and Felix are almost direct opposites of each other. Felix is "the happy one," which implies that Hermann is dissatisfied and unhappy. They are "the fortunate brother and the luckless brother" (Nabokov, *Despair* 16, 78). As for the social hierarchy, they represent the two extremes of a scale. They are on different rungs of the social ladder; Felix is at the bottom, while Hermann is in a higher position. So, they are in

diametrical opposition as far as their social standing is concerned. Although there is a huge difference between the two in their social standing, they are both in different ways. Felix lacks material prosperity, while Hermann is spiritually poor. However, Felix is seen as the "happy one," and as a result, Hermann tries to take his place and live his life. He desires to discard his past life and start a new one. He longs for the sort of life Felix has, while at the same time, he is terrified and agonized by the same.

Hermann also boasts about having the capacity to be in two places at once in his mind. He has the mental ability to imagine himself in many settings. His imagination is so vivid and developed that he can have a real-life bodily sensation of being in two places at the same time. Because he redoubles himself by mental projection, this talent might be viewed in terms of the double. In the end, he loses his sanity, sense of self, and identity, which leads to murder. These two faces of Herman mirror his inner conflicts and struggles. Furthermore, this physical split accurately reflects his mental division (Giroud 179).

Until the end, Hermann refuses to believe that the foolish murder of Felix failed because he and Felix bear no resemblance. Instead, he complains, "all that disgusting mess is due to the inertia, pigheadedness, prejudice of humans, and failing to recognize me in the corpse of my flawless double". However, once Hermann reads the newspaper involving the death of Felix, "he realizes that his masterpiece was no more than a poorly planned murder." As a result, he becomes confused. Hermann begins "trembling all over, strangled by rising sobs, convulsed with fury" and goes into an anxious state. (Nabokov, *Despair* 142, 180). Nabokov believes that consciousness confronts difficulties in being aware of its limitations. Accordingly, what Hermann sees and fails to notice

is not indicative of what his sensory abilities are capable of but what his consciousness is desirous of (Norman 198).

Thus, the double represents the author self-division as a result of his miserable life. Freud suggested that the double is a projection and reflection of a character's inner thoughts and ego, and it may be seen as an examination of two aspects of the same personality. It stands for both "good" and "evil." Exchanges with a doppelgänger may make the other character suspicious and feel oppressed by their prospective replacement since the doppelgänger poses a danger to their livelihood and status in society. Therefore, the perplexing nature of this phenomenon is typically observed or conveyed from the perspective of the first character. That is, the confusing nature of this phenomenon is normally perceived or related from the first character's point of view; the principal character becomes aware of the second character, who often threatens, displaces, or triumphs over the first (The Uncanny 123).

Through applying psychoanalysis on Nabokov, he suffered from childhood trauma as a result of their bad environment and miserable upbringing. Rogers was a believer in the importance of upbringing, stating that "the human mind was blank at birth and that educating the individual and exposing them to experiences would define the information of the mind and build a store of knowledge" (112). According to Freud, "the unconscious is the repository of traumatic experiences, emotions, unadmitted desires, fears... and unresolved conflicts... this unconscious comes into being at an early age." He explained by saying, "The unconscious part of [the] mind has an impact on an individual's behavior because being the host of anxiety, memory, pleasure, clash pain, etc." These memories do not disappear because the individual repressed them, and these repressions affect the individual's behavior. Repression of feelings leads to dissociation personality, which usually develops as a coping mechanism for

trauma (The Unconscious 89). This disorder "most often [occurs] in children subjected to chronic physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, in a home environment that's frightening or highly unpredictable." An individual uses dissociative mechanisms to endure a traumatic experience and cope with stressful situations throughout their life (Salter 243). In other words, for many people, dissociation is a natural response to trauma that they cannot control.

Symptoms found along with dissociation in victims of traumatic abuse, often referred to as consequences of abuse, include anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder, in addition to low self-esteem, somatization, substance abuse, self-harm, and suicidal actions. Somatization is conceptualized as an ego defense, the unconscious rechanneling of repressed emotions into somatic symptoms. The term somatization refers to body dysmorphic disorder: wherein the afflicted individual is concerned with body image, and the disorder is manifested as excessive concern about and preoccupation with a perceived defect in their physical appearance (Briere 90).

According to Erikson, "the environment in which a child lived was crucial to providing growth, adjustment, and a source of self-awareness and identity." An identity crisis comes in the form of later life cycle stages and various life events. Depending on the individual, particular life events, such as the death of a loved one, job loss, moving, and being exposed to child sexual abuse, cause imbalance and lead to identity crisis. An identity crisis may cause feelings of frustration, being stuck, or a lack of meaningful progression. Furthermore, an identity crisis leads to feelings of depression or anxiety, making people feel unsatisfied with themselves and their lives (*Identity, Youth* 188). As a result, Nabokov's writing of psychological stories served as a reflection of their actual experiences, upbringing, and challenging lives. Indeed, the

three novels are a vivid embodiment of the states of mind of the authors.

Conclusion:

The researcher comes to the conclusion that the doppelgänger device serves as a tool to explore the depths of the human psyche. With the appearance of a duplicate character, often accompanied by supernatural elements, authors delve into the subconscious mind and the hidden desires or fears that reside within. The doppelgänger becomes a vessel for the exploration of repressed emotions, hidden motivations, and psychological disturbances. Through this device, authors create an atmosphere of tension and suspense, as characters are forced to confront their darkest secrets and face the consequences of their actions.

Also, the doppelgänger technique solves many of the challenges that the author of the tale encounters when describing his characters and what they symbolize in terms of social, cultural, and psychological aspects. Literary works function as a means of better understanding human nature. When novelists create psychological novels based on their experiences, they discover a deeper meaning in their lives and gain a better understanding of their inner conflicts as well as the universe around them. There are similarities between the novel that was examined and the life of its author. In other words, the main character of the novel is a representation of the author's mental state. The most interesting aspect of this paper is that, despite its lack of familiarity with psychoanalysis, Nabokov depicted the human psyche in detailed descriptions in his novel.

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