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Dexterous Daunting Doppelgängers: A Critique of the Parallel Realism in the Select Fiction of Helen Oyeyemi

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Abstract:

Helen Oyeyemi is a British novelist and writer of short fiction. She is an immigrant from Nigeria. Her fiction encompasses colonial themes, Gothicism and dualities. The lead characters in her writing are prominently young and teenage girls. These characters are placed in the context of diaspora in which they encounter the complexities of multiculturalism. The present paper is an attempt to unravel the theme of duality. This is presented through the portrayal of doppelgängers. The novels of Oyeyemi: *The Icarus Girl, White is for Witching* and *Gingerbread* are taken for analysis for the current paper. Through the representation of doubles and alter egos the plots reflect the characters' hidden aspects and inner conflicts. The motif of doppelgängers serves as a powerful narrative device to delve into themes of identity and the supernatural. The present article will also attempt to bring in the key concepts of cultural studies for a wholesome analysis.

Keywords: Cultural conflict, doppelgängers, race, ethnicity, identity, multiculturalism.

Helen Oyeyemi was born in Ibadan, Nigeria. She migrated with her family to London when she was four years old. The writer developed her passion for reading and storytelling at a very young age. Her interest in writing and in literature kindled her to craft stories during her

school years. Oyeyemi studied Social and Political Sciences at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. During this period she penned her maiden novel *The Icarus Girl* (2005) which deals with the themes of identity, cultural conflict and the supernatural. The author is the recipient of various awards for her literary output. Among other awards, Oyeyemi won the Somerset Maugham Award for *White is for Witching*. She was also identified as one of Granta's Best Young British Novelists in 2013. Oyeyemi's writing is characterised by its inventive use of magical realism, intertextuality and exploration of complex themes such as identity, race and the supernatural. Her stories often blur the lines between reality and fantasy, creating rich, multi-layered narratives that challenge readers' perceptions and expectations. Few other novels of Oyeyemi which deal with myth, fantasy and fairy tales are *The Icarus Girl*, *Gingerbread, Boy, Snow, Bird.*

The heroines that traverse the complicated terrain of identity, culture and the supernatural in Helen Oyeyemi's novels are remarkably multifaceted and intricately crafted. In *The Icarus Girl*, Jessamy Harrison, a little girl of mixed Nigerian and British ancestry, struggles with her dual identities, which result in the psychological upheaval, which was personified in her creepy imaginary friend TillyTilly. The epitome of cultural hybridity is Maja from *The Opposite House*, who struggles to balance her Nigerian and Cuban heritage while residing in London and becoming mixed up in elements of Yoruba and Santería mythology that make it difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction.

Miranda Silver in *White is for Witching* explores themes of racial identity and family history in a gothic atmosphere while addressing mental illness and the ghostly presence of her ancestors in her Silver House. In *Mr. Fox*, Mary Foxe is a metafictional muse who opposes the misogynistic depictions of the title character. She stands for a feminist critique and the transformational potential of narrative. In *Boy, Snow, Bird*, Boy Novak confronts cultural

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norms and personal discoveries as she navigates the complexities of race, beauty and family secrets in a reworking of the Snow White fairy tale.

In *Gingerbread*, Harriet and Perdita Lee explore issues of heritage and the interaction between truth and fantasy while delving into their fanciful family history. They are the epitome of tenacity and inventiveness. In *Peaces,* Otto and Xavier Shin set off on an incredible train adventure. The journey tests their ideas of identity and love while traversing a fantasy world that mirrors their personal lives and interpersonal interactions. Oyeyemi's heroines are exemplary of her narrative style, which blends the real with the supernatural, placing personal conflicts against larger cultural and mythological contexts to create complex and engaging characters in modern literature.

"Doppelganger" is a German word that combines the words "doppel" (double) and "gänger" (walker or goer), which means "double walker." The idea originated in ancient mythology and folklore. German novelist Jean Paul (Johann Paul Friedrich Richter) originally used the phrase to refer to a spectral counterpart of a real person in his 1796 novel *Siebenkäs.* In the intricately knit story, *Siebenkäs*, the main character, switches identities with Leibgeber, a friend who looks like him. Ironically, Jean Paul created two terms to characterise doubles: "doppeltgänger" refers to an eerily similar person, while "doppelgänger" describes a dinner where two courses were presented at the same time. After *Siebenkäs*, the distinction vanished gradually, with "doppelgänger" being the de facto name for any kind of ‘double.’

The doppelganger has been a common motif in literature and popular culture, signifying the duality of human identity and facing one's subconscious. The romantic era saw a considerable increase in its popularity as writers examined the mystical and psychological effects of meeting one's twin. Poe's "William Wilson", Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Double* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* are examples of works that explore this pattern and stress the themes of identity crisis, inner conflict and the uncanny. Since then, the

idea of the doppelganger has changed, infiltrating many channels and captivating viewers with its unsettling and provocative qualities. It is still a potent symbol in psychoanalytic theory, having been extensively explored by Sigmund Freud in his study of the uncanny. It is also a fascinating topic for literary and cultural research.

The doppelgänger is a literary device that works well for examining human dualism since it is frequently employed to personify a character's darker aspects. As in Hans Christian Andersen's 1847 fairy tale *Skyggen*, or *The Shadow*, the duplicate acts as a behavioural negative that contrasts with the protagonist's personality. In the fairy tale, a man's shadow detaches from his body. It gradually transforms into his walking double, exhibiting his whole opposite set of moral and physical characteristics before finally taking his place.

The Double, a novella by Fyodor Dostoyevsky, depicts its doppelgänger as the confident, outspoken mirror image of a meek and antisocial government clerk. Throughout the narrative, the twin intrudes on the clerk's matters, eventually driving him insane. In Edgar Allan Poe's short story "William Wilson," the doppelgänger appears to be there only to make things worse for the narrator. A boy in England goes to school and encounters a child who looks and sounds just like him. Wilson is constantly frustrated by the doppelganger, who tries to stop him from achieving his goals in life. In this instance, the original Wilson is driven by lust and greed and had evil intentions, but his morally pure counterpart foiled them.

In a more realistic explanation, neuroscientists have discovered neurological disorders such as heautoscopy, which cause a person to see their image from a distance. It could account for many situations when the original person saw his doppelganger and no one else witnessed. However, several witness sightings still lend themselves to paranormal speculation. As Crow notes, doppelgängers are supposed to emerge during sleep or illness. It has given rise to the notion that our spirits might be allowed to roam when our bodies are no longer able have control.

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The fragmented and frequently contradictory aspect of modern life is reflected in the use of doppelgängers by authors such as Helen Oyeyemi in contemporary fiction to explore themes of cultural hybridity and the plurality of identity. In the end, these doubles cast doubt on the consistency and durability of individual identities by forcing protagonists to make peace with their fractured selves. Literature continues to explore the dark recesses of the human psyche by presenting the deep and frequently unpleasant realities that lay under the surface through the character of the doppelgänger.

Parallel realism is a type of genre in which a work of fiction uses parallel universe to fictitiously depict the factual experience of existing in several realities. For numerous individuals, their lived reality means being perceived as someone they are not. Science fiction or alternate history does not encompass parallel realities. It is fiction concerning the diversity of the present. The actual value of fiction lies in its ability to explore sensations that are beyond the scope of the dry facts of observable existence.

Parallel realism, sometimes referred to as "magic realism" or "magical realism," is a literary style that skilfully incorporates fantastical or magical elements into a realistic narrative to produce a world where the extraordinary and the commonplace coexist. This genre is well-known and has its origins in the works of Latin American authors like Isabel Allende, Jorge Luis Borges, and Gabriel García Márquez. Parallel realism questions the conventional divisions between reality and fantasy by portraying fantastical elements as an inherent component of reality that doesn't require justification or suspension of disbelief.

Parallel realism blurs the boundaries between what is possible and impossible with its matter-of-fact tone while recounting remarkable happenings, which is one of its main features. Using this method, writers can delve deeper into actual realities and offer critical analyses of politics, history, social norms and human nature — often reiterating how perception and reality are subjective. For instance, fanciful scenes like as a character ascending to heaven and a shower

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of yellow flowers are depicted in Gabriel García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude with the same gravity and attention to detail as everyday occurrences.

Parallel reality stories also frequently use mythology, folklore, and cultural customs to create a strong sense of location and heritage. This blending of the real and the magical can provide the reader a better grasp of the experiences and worldviews of the characters by emphasising historical and cultural circumstances. By doing this, parallel realism offers readers amusement and profound insights into the human condition while also offering a fresh, wider view of the world. By accepting a range of perspectives, parallel realism generally questions readers' ideas of reality and promotes a more flexible understanding of truth. Because of its extraordinary ability to convey difficult ideas through the enthralling fusion of the real and the magical, it was still considered a powerful and timeless genre.

In order to explore identity, duality and supernatural themes, Helen Oyeyemi effectively employs Doppelgängers as a prominent and recurring motif in her works of fiction. Her characters' interactions with alter egos or doubles, who stand in for their secret desires, anxieties, and conflicts, regularly cause the lines between the magical and the real to blur. In *The Icarus Girl*, Tilly, Jessamy Harrison's imaginary friend, is a threatening duplicate who stands in for Jess's internal struggles and the tension between her Nigerian and British lineage. The escalating threat and existence of TillyTilly represent the clash of cultures and the internal turmoil that Jess experiences. Jess goes to the extent of taking a risk in knowing the parallel world of TillyTilly and finally ends up inflicting pain on herself.

In *White is for Witching*, Miranda Silver's eerie family house serves as a doppelgänger, mirroring both her current mental state and the history of her ancestors. Miranda's battle with mental illness and her sense of self and place in the world were reflected in the mysterious force of the house. The Silver House has its secrets, with many doors and rooms. The parallel world tries to trap the women of the house. Finally, Miranda too falls a victim to it. In her

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sixth book, *Gingerbread*, Helen Oyeyemi explores the motif of doppelgänger through the characters, Harriet and Gretel. Druhástrana is a fictional place that exists in a parallel, magical dimension that both mimics and distorts reality, acting as a form of doppelgänger to the real world.

Doppelgängers are more than merely plot devices in Oyeyemi's work; they are a crucial part of her sophisticated topic development, which forces characters and readers to consider the intricacies of identity and the frequently blurred lines that separate fact from fiction. Oyeyemi creates intricate, multi-layered stories that capture the enduring allure of the concept of doppelgängers by delving into the psychological and cultural facets of her characters through these duplicates.

The Icarus Girl, Helen Oyeyemi's debut novel, explores questions of identity, cultural dislocation and psychological trauma while deftly incorporating the concept of the doppelganger into its plot. The protagonists of the novel are eight-year-old Jessamy Harrison, a mixed-race child of British and Nigerian ancestry, and her unnerving imaginary friend, TillyTilly. Oyeyemi explores the intricate relationship between Jess's broken identity and the paranormal through the figure of TillyTilly. She does this by employing the doppelgänger motif to highlight the protagonist's inner struggles as well as the broader effects of cultural hybridity. Jessamy Harrison, who was also called Jess, is one who personifies the duality present in her mixed ancestry. Jess, who is raised by a British father and a Nigerian mother, finds it difficult to fit in with either culture. Her emotional sensitivity and introverted personality further compound this cultural displacement, making her feel alienated in social situations as well as at home. Her identity struggle creates the conditions for TillyTilly, her doppelgänger, to come into effect when Jess travels to Nigeria.

TillyTilly gives Jess company and empathy in the beginning, portraying herself as a friend. However, as the narrative goes on, it becomes evident that TillyTilly is more than simply

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a made-up companion; instead, she is a representation of Jess's latent wants, traumas and fears. TillyTilly plays out suppressed feelings and unsolved problems, representing the darker sides of Jess's personality.This dichotomy stresses the conflict between Jess's Nigerian origin and her British upbringing, mirroring her struggle with her bicultural identity. At her grandfather's house in Nigeria, Jess is quite happy in the company of TillyTilly. They both go to the amusement park in the middle of the night, and TillyTilly magically opens the gates. It surprises Jess very much. Probably a little girl who had spent a lot of her time in loneliness now wants to cherish every moment with someone who could make true what she had wished for so long.

> The gates went backwards with a gust of warm air, and the padlocks fell to the ground, their chains loosened, sunken in the sand. Jess stared at the enormous padlock at her feet, then up at the gates, then at TillyTilly, then around. (*The Icarus Girl* 65)

Jess had always marvelled at the very existence of TillyTilly, but she dare not question her for fear of losing her.

> "I'd just need to explain who you were and then we could—" she began, but TillyTilly interrupted her.
>
> "You can't tell anyone about me, Jessy! Can't you tell that I'm not supposed to be there?"
>
> Jessamy felt as if she were finally getting somewhere.
>
> "So you do live in the Boys' Quarters?" she pressed….
>
> "I do. Sometimes."
>
> She gave a loud sigh, an irritated sigh, (*look what you've done, Jessy, you've made me cross with your questions*) and shaking her head slightly, continued walking.

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> Jess wanted to ask if she lived there with her parents, but it was clear from the set of her friend's shoulders that any further questioning would not be welcome. She blinked, surprised at this traitorous thought. What could have made her suddenly feel so hostile towards Tilly, who was mysterious and almost magical, opening doors that were locked, living in a deserted building next to a whole family of people without their noticing!
>
> "Just don't ask me any more questions. It's not fair. I don't ask YOU any questions," Tilly pointed out.
>
> "Except for when you first came up to me, and you were copying me," Jess reminded her. (61-62)

The idea of the uncanny propunded by Sigmund Freud is important to comprehend the role of the doppelganger in *The Icarus Girl*. When something familiar is made odd or uncomfortable, it can become uncanny and cause cognitive dissonance. TillyTilly personifies this idea of the uncanny as Jess's twin. She exists outside of Jess and yet is a part of her. The presence of TillyTilly makes Jess's psychological trauma worse. Jess experiences a multitude of emotional and psychological problems, such as despair, anxiety and a constant feeling of loneliness. Tilly Tilly's actions frequently reflect Jess's inner turmoil, exposing her worst fears and vulnerabilities. For instance, TillyTilly takes action on Jess's side when she feels intimidated or rejected, which is most of the time destructive actions. This sort of strategy only shows how one's supressed emotions could have the power of destruction.

Oyeyemi uses the doppelgänger metaphor to examine the broader problem of cultural alienation. Jess's experiences in Nigeria, a location that is both foreign and familiar to her, brought her issues with cultural identification to light. TillyTilly, who claims to have a close connection to Nigeria, represented the part of Jess that was associated with her Nigerian

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heritage. Jess's mixed emotions regarding her cultural background are reflected in this relationship's risk and ambiguity.

The book's magical elements, including Tilly-Tilly's extraterrestrial abilities, make the doppelgänger subject even more intricate. TillyTilly has the ability to create misleading pictures, distort reality, and even cause pain. These abilities suggest that she is more than just a product of Jess's mind; rather, she is a supernatural being with free choice. This blurring of the boundaries between the psychological and the supernatural, the real and the unreal, highlighted the novel's exploration of identity and belonging. Additionally, it adds dimension to the doppelgänger concept.

TillyTilly serves as a trigger for Jess's self-discovery journey throughout *The Icarus Girl*. Jess was forced to deal with her fractured identity and the unresolved anguish of her past when she confronts her lookalike. Even while Tilly Tilly's acts are frequently damaging, they eventually force Jess to face her worries and fears. The novel's turning point, in which Jess meets TillyTilly and makes an attempt to take charge of her own life, represents Jess's battle with accepting who she is. Through acceptance and integration of her darker side, Jess becomes closer to a more complete self. This encounter highlights the doppelganger motif's therapeutic potential by showing how addressing one's shadow self can result in personal development and healing.

> "You shouldn't have come back here," TillyTilly told her, before Jess fell (down far, as her father might have said before he got better) so sudden, so sudden . . . she hadn't known it could get this BLACK, and both she and TillyTilly were screeching "Happy Birthday!" as they fell and fell, but this time they didn't crash against the earth as they had before—TillyTilly landed safely somewhere, and Jess just kept on flying. She'd shed her body as if it was some shell that the

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> sea roars through, and yes, she'd said she wanted to fly, but she hadn't meant it, not like this, not when she was soaring through things. (304)

Finally, in her delirium Jess finds herself in the wilderness and experiences self -discovery.

> "Don't, Jessy, please," TillyTilly pleaded in a scream that rang in Jess's ears, but Jess ran at her with the wind, an invisible current of fast-moving air behind her, taking her feet nearly off the slippery ground (she didn't hear the silent sister-girl telling her that it wasn't the right way, not the right way at all)
>
> and
>
> hop,
>
> skip,
>
> jumped
>
> into Tilly's unyielding flesh as she clawed at Jess's presence (it hurt them both burningly) back into her herself.
>
> Jessamy Harrison woke up and up and up and up. (322)

Helen Oyeyemi skilfully uses the doppelgänger concept in *The Icarus Girl* to examine problems of identity, cultural displacement, and psychological trauma. Oyeyemi explores the intricacies of Jessamy Harrison's bicultural identity and the ensuing internal struggles through the character of TillyTilly. The doppelgänger is a mirror and a trigger for Jess' path of self-discovery, as she embodies the strange and the supernatural. Jess is eventually able to reconcile her fractured self and progress towards a more coherent and self-accepting identity by facing her doppelgänger. The plot is improved by Oyeyemi's deft use of the doppelgänger motif, which also offers significant insights into the challenges of cultural hybridity and the human mind.

Oyeyemi highlights the psychological repercussions of cultural dislocation by illuminating how Jess's cultural background influences her experiences and interactions. The

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novel's setting, which switches between Nigeria and England, allows Oyeyemi to explore themes of cultural exchange and diaspora. Through Jess's relationship with her doppelgänger, TillyTilly, Oyeyemi figuratively addresses the internal conflicts brought on by cultural hybridity, demonstrating how Jess's dual identity results in feelings of loneliness and fragmentation. Because it explores cultural identity and the challenges of navigating multiple cultural realms, The Icarus Girl is a noteworthy work in the field of cultural studies. It also offers a complex depiction of the complexities of intercultural childhood.

Like *The Icarus Girl, White is for Witching* by Helen Oyeyemi is a haunting exploration of identity, familial history and the paranormal, with a recurrent theme of the doppelgänger. The protagonist of the story is Miranda Silver, a young woman who suffers from a mysterious eating disorder known as pica and was plagued by visions of her mother's ancestors. The Dover residence of the Silver family functions as a living, breathing entity that communicates with Miranda and the other family members. Oyeyemi explores the intricacies of Miranda's personality and the house's dual roles as a character and a symbol of the family's troubled past through the doppelgänger motif.

The protagonist of *White is for Witching* is Miranda Silver, a multifaceted, shattered persona. Miranda's battle with pica, an eating disorder that forces her to eat non-food objects like plastic and chalk, is representative of her efforts to understand and reconcile her complicated ancestry. Her illness may be interpreted as an expression of her wish to establish a connection with the past and her ancestors—especially her recently deceased mother, Lily. The existence of real and symbolic doppelgängers is one way that the outside world reflects this inner struggle.

The relationship between Miranda and her twin brother, Eliot, emphasises the idea of duality even further. Twins themselves often serve as natural doppelgängers in literature, serving as mirror images of one another or as two sides of a whole. Eliot appears

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more realistic and grounded, while Miranda looks ethereal and otherworldly, reflecting their divergent approaches to coping with their mother's death and the effects of the haunted house. The conflicting characteristics of the twins highlight the concept of duality within a single family by suggesting that each sibling represents a unique aspect of the same identity.

The Dover residence of the Silver family embodies the doppelgänger idea and serves as both a backdrop and a character in and of itself. The house represents and amplifies the psychological emotions of its occupants, especially Miranda, and is given a voice in the story. Secret passageways and chambers within the walls of the house represent the family Silver's suppressed memories and secrets. The letter that Miranda receives from the children of the former housekeeper explains,

> Dear Miranda Silver,
>
> This house is bigger than you know! There are extra floors, with lots of people on them. They are looking people. They look at you, and they never move. We do not like them. We do not like this house, and we are glad to be going away. (*White is for Witching* 57)

The home is a tangible representation of Miranda's inner struggle because of its stifling presence and the paranormal activities that take place there, which reflect Miranda's mental state.

The house's relationship to the matriarchal branch of the Silver family highlights its status as a doppelganger even further. The house was inhabited by the spirits of Miranda's great-grandmother, mother, and grandmother, who all have an impact on her.

> She heard and felt the life of the house; there was light and a smell of candle smoke outside the half-open larder door. There was music upstairs. Her GrandAnna laughed at something Lily said. They were in a good mood, like guests sipping on aperitifs before a main meal. (196)

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These ancestral spirits could have been viewed as Miranda's twins, representing the parts of Miranda's identity associated with her family's past and the expectations placed on her as a Silver woman. The mansion takes on a life of its own due to its haunting past and lingering spirits, reflecting Miranda's inner turmoil and the burden of her inheritance.

Through her interactions with the house and her ancestors, Miranda herself encounters the extraordinary. Miranda experiences instances where she is unable to discern between her thoughts and the voices of the spirits that are residing in the house due to the blurring of boundaries between her identity and that of her mother and grandmothers. This identity blending is a famous example of the doppelganger motif, in which the self was doubled, and it becomes difficult to tell the difference between the original and the double.

In *White is for Witching*, the doppelgänger motif acts as a trigger for Miranda's quest for self-awareness. She was forced to face her traumas, phobias and unresolved pieces of her identity through her interactions with the house's spirits. She was forced to face the aspects of herself that she has denied or suppressed by the home, which is behaving like her twin. An inevitable reckoning occurs as Miranda confronts the home and the spirits. Through confronting her doppelgängers—both the tangible echoes of her ancestors' presence in the house and their psychological ramifications—Miranda starts to comprehend and reconcile the various parts of her personality. Although this process is uncomfortable and dangerous, in the end it results in a stronger sense of acceptance and self-awareness. Miranda hallucinated her mother and ancestral grandmothers having dinner in Silver House.

> Over Lily's shoulder, Miranda counted—four places, four people—Lily made one, Miranda made two, for number three there was Jennifer, Lily's mother, and the fourth was her GrandAnna, her white hair gleaming. Jennifer and GrandAnna sat side by side with their elbows on the table. They leaned forward, anticipating a meal. (126)

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In *White is for Witching*, Helen Oyeyemi uses the narrative of Miranda Silver and her haunted family home in Dover to examine questions of identity, heritage, and the influence of cultural memory. Through the matriarchal lineage of the Silver family and their strong attachments to their English history, the novel explores the intersections of race, nationality, and belonging. The home itself represents the weight of cultural history and the impact of the past on the present since it was haunted by the ghosts of Miranda's maternal grandparents. In addition, Oyeyemi discusses current social topics like, xenophobia and immigration, which highlight deeper cultural conflicts in British society. Discussing the nuances of multiculturalism, Katie Burton in *Telling it Slant* presents that

> In *White is for Witching* Oyeyemi, uses national allegory, borders and spaces to explore the negotiation of a national identity through questions of belonging. The characters of Miranda and Ore convey the anxieties of a postcolonial England striving to identify its 'Englishness' against the backdrop of the idea that England is a multicultural society. (75)

It is possible to interpret Miranda's internal conflict about her heritage and the expectations her family has placed on her as an expression of her eating disorder, pica, and identity crisis. By combining the paranormal with real-world cultural and social issues, Oyeyemi creates a story that critically examines how cultural legacies and the aftereffects of previous tragedies affect individual and communal identities. Through this intricate investigation, White is for Witching is positioned as a dramatic study of the ways that history and culture haunt the present and impact both individual and collective identities. Miranda is still plagued by the Silver women's traumatic past.

Helen Oyeyemi's novel Gingerbread expertly combines the extraordinary with the everyday to produce a compelling and thought-provoking tale. This story revolves around the doppelgänger motif, which recurs both literally and figuratively throughout the novel. The

novel Gingerbread explores how Oyeyemi uses the doppelgänger motif to explore identity, dualism, and the line separating fact from fiction. One of the most obvious instances of the doppelgänger motif in Gingerbread is the relationship between Harriet and Perdita Lee. As mother and daughter, their personalities and ways of living greatly influence and mirror each other. Perdita's quest to unravel the secrets of her mother's past and the mysterious gingerbread recipe paralleled Harriet's path of self-discovery.

The protagonists' encounters with the magical world of Druhástrana, an entirely parallel reality which acts as a mirror image of their more ordinary existence, highlight the concept of duality even more. This parallel universe embodies the idea of the doppelgänger as a dual representation of the same and changed selves, reflecting and distorting their real-life experiences. Oyeyemi examines the mutability of identity and the intricate interactions between many realities as they traverse these parallel realms.

The lines between fact and fiction are blurred in Oyeyemi's novel, resulting in a narrative environment where many realities cohabit and intertwine. The doppelgänger motif relies heavily on this blurring since it tests the protagonists' ideas of who they are and who they are not. The protagonists' perception of themselves is complicated by the existence of Druhástrana as a parallel reality. It suggests that their actual selves are multifaceted and not confined to a certain reality.

The doppelgänger concept is frequently referenced in the characters' interactions with different forms of themselves or their life. These exchanges highlight the variety of identities and the potential for change. For example, the gingerbread itself could be seen as a doppelgänger, representing both the familiar and the unfamiliar. It serves as a link between other worlds and realities, highlighting the characters' dual nature and the potential for transformation brought about by their experiences.

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The doppelgänger element in Gingerbread also contributes to the exploration of the characters' more profound psychological states. As the duality of their identities, fears, and wants was revealed, their inner lives were shown in a rich and complex manner. This analysis of internal conflict adds psychological depth to the narrative and emphasises the struggle between various aspects of the self. Harriet's experiences with Druhástrana's magical elements and her interactions with them, for instance, reflect her internal struggles and the complexity of her identity. By examining how the characters' internal conflicts affect their actions and perceptions, Oyeyemi probes these psychological depths through the doppelgänger notion. Because of the interaction between their dual identities and several incarnations, their psychological landscapes are depicted in a dynamic and complex manner.

Helen Oyeyemi uses the doppelgänger motif in Gingerbread to examine identity, dualism, and the line separating fact from fiction. Oyeyemi has employed reflecting imagery, parallel worlds, and character relationships in her examination of the complexities of the self and how our identities are shaped by both internal and external forces. The doppelgänger, which symbolises the multifaceted nature of identity, is a powerful illustration of the intricate relationship between the different aspects of the self and the ability to change. By using the doppelgänger motif across the entire book, Oyeyemi creates a multi-layered, intricate narrative that invites readers to explore the depths of their own identities and the dualities that influence them.

Helen Oyeyemi has examined the key concepts of cultural studies in Gingerbread. Through the characters of Harriet and Perdita Lee, the author analyses the themes of hegemony, representation, identity, globalisation and hybridity. Further, the novel adeptly blends reality and fantasy through excellent storytelling and provides an intense exploration of how cultural narratives shape and are shaped by individual and collective identities. The power dynamics within the Lee family and their interconnectedness to the parallel realistic world of Druhástrana

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highlight the subtle ways in which cultural hegemony operates. A rich field for examining representation and identity is created by the depiction of Druhástrana and its residents. The fictional nation of Druhástrana, with its own traditions and social mores, offers a place to see how the real world reflects and warps well-known cultural cliches. One of the main components of the novel's examination of identity is Perdita's journey of self-discovery. She struggles with her identity as she solves the secrets of her mother's stories and her family's past. As the author describes the made-up location,

> *Druhástrana (druhástranae) is the name of an alleged nation state of indeterminable geographic location. Very little verifiable information concerning Druhástrana is available, as there have been several prominent cases of stateless people claiming Druhástranian citizenship under a form of poetic license, and other, yet more unfortunate cases in which claims to Druhástranian citizenship or ancestry have been proven to result from false memories or flawed cognitive information. (Gingerbread* 18-19)

Finally, the characters comprehend their authentic self and find a real purpose in their life. The novel provides a more profound understanding between power and identity.

In the three novels namely, *The Icarus Girl, White is for Witching and Gingerbread,* the shade of doppelganger is predominant and the characters are defined and determined through the parallel realism. The doppelgangers are none but their alter egos. A comprehensive conclusion arrives in each story and the plots arrive at their wholesomeness. In *The Icarus Girl,* Jess is presented as a confused and self-contemptuous girl in the beginning. After her encounter with the cultural complexities, her alter ego embraces a new and clear dimension of life. Miranda in *White is for Witching* is shown pining to get united with the Silver Women and thus seeks all means to do so. She weakens her physical self to the extant

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where her mental state gets affected and she was finally trapped into the house where she could find her ancestral mothers. Harriet and Perdita Lee in *Gingerbread* understand themselves through their exploration of Druhástrana.

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