

The Double Within: Coexistent Minds and the Fantastic in Ugo Tarchetti

Abstract

This article examines four fantastic stories by Ugo Tarchetti – ‘Riccardo Waitzen’ (1867), ‘Le leggende del castello nero’ (1867), ‘Un osso di morto’ (1869), and ‘Uno spirito in un lampone’ (1869) – and argues for the presence of a double in terms of a co-existence of two minds in the same space, one invasive, the other an unwilling host. Not all instances of co-existent minds are the same, but all overpower and control their hosts to both farcical and deadly ends but also with moral, judicial and instructive consequences. I argue that these are not the external doppelgängers of nineteenth-century fantastic literature that emerge from the host, but internal doubles that are distinguished by their difference rather than their similarity to their hosts, and as a result of which Tarchetti stands out for his innovative take on the theme of the double.

Keywords: Ugo Tarchetti, Fantastic, Italy, Co-existence, Doppelgänger

Introduction

Ugo Tarchetti is a relatively minor figure in the Italian letters of the nineteenth century, but, within Italian fantastic literature, is among the earliest writers.¹ His stories have been discussed in the context of the fantastic (Mangini, 2000), the Gothic (Del Principe, 1996), death and malady (Bárberi Squarotti, 1982; Tateo, 1987) the presence of error (Bonifazi, 1977a; 1977b), the split body (Roda, 2009), and the double.² Indeed, as Di Giulio notes, ‘tra le tematiche più ricorrenti nella narrativa tarchettiana compaiono il doppio, il sogno e la morte’ (1993: 195), and she in turn discusses the double in Tarchetti’s *Fosca* (1869), in which the narrative strategies are ‘per la maggior parte di tipo immaginario-simbolico’ (1993: 197), where Clara and Fosca exist separately as individuals, a variation on a stricter understanding of the double which Frank might label a ‘quasi-double’ (1977: 311).³ Similarly on the topic of the double in Tarchetti, Ruchin casts a wide net in terms of

thematic binary constructions, ‘La matrice del doppio è legata alla luce ed al buio; alla forma ed alla deformità, alla ragione ed alla pazzia, al reale ed all’irreale’ (2011: 139), and also sets up a narrower distinction between two ‘precise funzioni’ of the double in Tarchetti, ‘la prima è una duplicità ‘materiale’ (il desiderio di un’esistenza “raddoppiata”) [...] la seconda, una duplicità ‘spirituale’ che spazia tra passato e futuro’ (2011: 140). Texts such as *Fosca* and ‘Uno spirito in un lampone’ belong to the former category, ‘Un osso di morto’ and ‘Le leggende del castello nero’ to the latter. This article will likewise focus on the double in Tarchetti, but will examine doubles in a literal – and by extension fantastic – rather than figurative, chronological or existential sense according to the approaches taken by Di Giulio and Ruchin.

My claim is that there is a particular kind of double to note in Tarchetti’s fiction, where the fantastic is created by the co-existence of two minds in the same space, where one mind intrudes or imposes itself upon a host mind. Historically, the double is usually found as an external manifestation, a copy of the subject that manifests elsewhere. As Herdman notes,

the true double, or *Doppelgänger* [...] is a second self, or *alter ego*, which appears as a distinct and separate being apprehensible by the physical senses (at least, by *some* of them), but exists in a dependent relation to the original [...] [and] [t]he most characteristic *Doppelgänger* always have a supernatural or subjective *aspect*, which does not imply that, within the scheme of the fictions they inhabit, they have no objective existence. [...] Divided, split or schizophrenic characters are, again, not themselves doubles or *Doppelgänger*, though these terms may become appropriate if and when their division gives rise to a second, sensibly apprehensible personality (even if apprehensible only to the subject) (1990: 14, 15).

The double in Herdman's term is outwardly focused: it emerges from the subject, taking a separate but always related and indeed copied form. By contrast, Tarchetti's are inwardly focused where, instead of expanding into distinct physical objects that become doppelgänger, character minds are compressed by the new addition of another, *different* mind that intrudes and influences the host. These are not doubles proper but doubled, co-existent minds, which counter a more typical articulation of the doppelgänger as external copies of the subject. Tarchetti's doubles moreover retain the aspect of the supernatural that distinguishes the doppelgänger proper, and which places the texts below within the remit of fantastic fiction.

The presence of an internal double, of an invading second self that is different to the subject, does not typically feature among the examples of the double in Western literature or even in the particular case of twentieth-century Italian literature,⁴ with two exceptions. Firstly, Herdman (1990: 146-7), Troubetzkoy (1996: 171), and Laghezza (2012: 144) make note of the double in Maupassant's 'Le Horla' (1887), a 'capolavoro del doppio' (Fusillo, 2012: 285) where, through diary entries, the narrator records the possessive presence of the Horla: 'Je suis perdu ! Quelqu'un possède mon âme et la gouverne ! quelqu'un ordonne tous mes actes, tous mes mouvements, toutes mes pensées' (1979 : 929). This example of intervention is also found in a second case, Gautier's 'Onuphrius ou les vexations fantastiques d'un admirateur d'Hoffmann' (1832), which Fusillo labels a 'rivisitazione ironica del doppio demoniaco' (2012: 146), where an unknown force causes the painter Onuphrius to humorously deface the portrait he is finishing by drawing on a false moustache (Gautier, 2002: 41) and which jerks Onuphrius' elbow at the canvas, but when Onuphrius turns around, 'Il ne vit personne' (2002: 42).

While the particular construction of the doubled mind is fantastic, the fantastic more

broadly in Tarchetti has been discussed in various ways. Tardiola argues that Caillois' model of an irruption of the inadmissible⁵ has little bearing, 'ci accorgeremo ben presto della scarsa, ovvero nulla, dipendenza dei *Racconti* da tali coordinate' and goes further, arguing that 'essi [the *Racconti*] non trovano collocazione precisa in nessuna delle «tavole» proposte dai più brillanti teorici del fantastico' (Tardiola 1989: 96). This latter claim arguably overreaches, as Mariani by contrast errs on the side of an accepted fantastic as proposed by Castex, where he discusses

[il] soprannaturale come espressione della realtà quotidiana che Tarchetti si propone di raggiungere in molti suoi racconti: «l'in vraisemblable donné purement et simplement comme vérité» dice il Castex⁶ a proposito dei fatti soprannaturali che contraddistinguono le pagine di alcuni esponenti del fantastico francese, ma mi sembra che la definizione si attagli squisitamente anche al Tarchetti (1967: 398).

For the most part characters in Tarchetti accept the existence of the supernatural, such as when Vincenzo lives an impossibly long life in 'L'elixir dell'immortalità (Imitazione dall'inglese)', or when the baron of B. in 'Uno spirito in un lampone' begins to metamorphose into Clara the dead servant in front of all and sundry. However, even though the fantastic is not necessarily irruptive, this is not to say that Tarchetti's characters are comfortable with the presence of the fantastic.

This article is divided into three sections. In the first, I look at instances where the characters interact and communicate with their doubled minds, for example through conversation. In the second, I look at cases where the intrusive mind overwhelms the host and exerts a control against which the host cannot fight. In the third, I look at an ambiguous case which stands apart from the above two categories. A final distinction to

note concerns whether the doubled mind exerts merely corporeal influence over its host or whether there is a mental aspect as well, a distinction which spans all three categories. Four texts – ‘Riccardo Waitzen’ (1867), ‘Le leggende del castello nero’ (1867), ‘Un osso di morto’ (1869), and ‘Uno spirito in un lampone’ (1869)⁷ – articulate a range of cases of fantastic doubled minds in Tarchetti. What I will also show is that these doubles perform a function, whether punitive or instructive, that emerges as a result of the pairings of minds, where such intrusions advance the plot and develop the characters.

Doubled interactions

In ‘Riccardo Waitzen’, the eponymous young aristocrat falls for Anna Roof who, before dying, gives instructions to Riccardo on how to call her back from the dead, ‘suona quella sinfonia memorabile di Hummel, le cui note ci ricordano il primo giorno avventurato del nostro amore, e a quel richiamo, io abbandonerò tutto, io volerò ancora presso di te’ (Tarchetti, 1968a: 619). Indeed, one night after Anna’s death, while playing Hummel’s symphony, Riccardo feels elated by ‘questa doppia e misteriosa esistenza’ (Tarchetti, 1968a: 623) as Anna returns to him. He feels her presence within him, a doubled mind, ‘egli si sentiva invaso da un’altr’anima, sentiva la sua esistenza raddoppiata’, which speaks to him without actually articulating a particular sentiment, ‘vi era qualcosa che gravitava sopra di lui senza pesare, che lo investiva tutto senza toccarlo, che parlavagli [sic] senza essere udito’ (Tarchetti, 1968a: 623). It is not Anna’s presence within his mind with which Riccardo interacts the most, but rather where she control his arms at the keyboard as he plays, through which Anna’s voice appear to emerge from the notes and which transports Riccardo back to a moment of happiness with his now dead love.

Prodigio meraviglioso! Le sue mani scorrevano come trascinate, come mosse da una forza estranea, sulla tastiera; le note ne uscivano così limpide, così pure, così simili alla voce umana, e più propriamente alla voce di Anna, che il giovine si sentì rivivere un istante in tutta la più dolce realtà del suo passato (Tarchetti, 1968a: 622-3).

Reunited once again via ‘quelle melodie così dolci e così patetiche’ (Tarchetti, 1968a: 623), their interaction is one of harmony through music.

In a shift from the musical interaction with Anna, the night-time arrival of the ghost of Pietro Mariani in ‘Un osso di morto’ takes place with a formal politeness, ‘Perdonerete se ho dovuto disturbarvi nel colmo della notte’, to which the narrator hurriedly replies – despite his true feelings of ‘terrore [che] mi rendeva esitante a rispondergli’ – with ‘Oh! è nulla, è nulla’ (1968b: 70). The ghost bows to the narrator’s welcome and turns to fitting the kneecap which he has come to claim, during which time the narrator, in an attempt to salvage his original idea of asking profound questions, tries to engage Mariani in conversation, ‘Che notizie ne recate dall’altro mondo?’ (1968b: 71). Despite the inapt circumstances, given Mariani has come to recover a stolen object, not impart knowledge, the visitation has a distinct Leopardian ring to it. In the ‘Dialogo di Federico Ruysch e delle sue mummie’ (1824), Ruysch is visited by ghosts whom he scolds for waking him, but he then takes the opportunity to ask about death: ‘Mille domande da farvi mi vengono in mente. Ma perché il tempo è corto, e non lascia luogo a scegliere, datemi ad intendere in ristretto, che sentimenti provaste di corpo e d’animo nel punto della morte’ (Leopardi, 1977: 764). Tarchetti by contrast trivialises the exploratory potential of communicating with the dead by having the narrator instead make small talk with a ghost. While the narrator makes his best effort to accommodate Mariani, he is less than comfortable with

the whole situation and when he suddenly awakens he exclaims to himself ‘Ma quale insensatezza! Credere allo spiritismo...ai fantasmi’ (Tarchetti, 1968b: 71). However, the attempt to ignore the suggestion of the fantastic the previous night is quickly undermined due to the new addition of Mariani’s black ribbon lying where the kneecap used to be. Likewise, in Gautier’s ‘Le Pied de momie’ (1840) on which tale Tarchetti bases his own,⁸ the narrator similarly thinks that he has been dreaming until the discovery of an object demonstrates that the dream affected the real world: ‘mais jugez de mon étonnement lorsqu’à la place du pied de momie que j’avais acheté la veille, je vis la petite figurine de pâte verte mise à sa place par la princesse Hermonthis !’ (Gautier, 2002 : 866). The implication that the narrator simply dreamed of his meeting with Mariani is refuted as the kneecap is gone and Mariani’s ribbon remains, meaning that Mariani appears in a dream (read: within the narrator’s mind) but effects real change in the narrator’s waking world. Mariani visits the narrator with the politeness and all the trappings of civility, but to the narrator Mariani is the co-existent presence and unwelcome guest to both house and mind.

A wasted opportunity for new knowledge through supernatural visitation becomes both a source of personal enlightenment and the key to a murder in ‘Uno spirito in un lampone’. Modelled on Erckmann and Chatrian’s ‘Le Bourgmestre en bouteille’ (1862) (Mariani, 1967: 423),⁹ this is Tarchetti’s most in-depth exploration of coexistent minds, and it includes aspects of metamorphosis and, as Del Principe argues (1996: 120), hermaphroditism, all binary structures in a single space: two minds, two physical forms (metamorphosis), and two sexes (although hermaphroditism is not a fantastic component).¹⁰ To this list could be added the thematic juxtaposition of the gothic tale with a murder mystery, and Bonifazi (1982: 96) and Guglielminetti (1977: 27) furthermore argue for the theme of the double in this story, but Bonifazi takes care to

point that ‘non è un uomo doppio, è un uomo più lo spirito della donna che è penetrato in lui’ (1982: 97).

A few months after the death of one his servants called Clara, the baron of B goes hunting one November day and is surprised to find a raspberry bush bearing fruit. Having eaten some raspberries, he begins to feel strange sensations as his mind becomes doubled, taken over by Clara’s ghost. He feels a ‘specie di confusione e di duplicità che provo in tutti i miei sensi [...]. riordiniamo le nostre idee...Le nostre idee! Sì, perfettamente...perché sento che queste idee non sono tutte mie [...]. Parmi di essere un uomo doppio’ (Tarchetti, 1968b: 76). This mental intrusion takes the form of an explicit conflict of natures, ‘due vite che non potevano fondersi, e che lottavano per contendersi il predominio de’ suoi sensi – d’onde la duplicità delle sue sensazioni’ (Tarchetti, 1968b: 80), where the dynamics of power are reversed as the dead servant exercises her authority over her former employer, the local aristocrat. The baron moreover grows aware of the memories and the feelings of this second mind, which open to him perspectives he never knew.

Una nuova coscienza si formò in lui: tutta la tela di un passato mai conosciuto si distese d’innanzi a’ suoi occhi: delle memorie pure e soavi di cui egli non poteva aver fecondata la sua vita vennero a turbare dolcemente la sua anima [...]. La sua mente spaziava in un mondo di affetti ignorato, percorreva regioni mai viste, evocava dolcezze mai conosciute. (Tarchetti, 1968b: 80-81)

Clara’s influence also renders the baron’s world unclear as Clara imposes her own outdated view upon him, where she sees the village that has changed since her death two months previously, ‘Il villaggio non pareagli più quello, parevagli [sic] che ne fosse stato

assente da molti mesi: vide che il campanile della parrocchia era stato riattato di fresco, e quantunque lo sapesse, gli sembrava tuttavia di non saperlo' (Tarchetti, 1968b: 81).

The effects of the fantastic on the baron's mind – this 'irruzione d'un sé femminile nel sé del protagonista maschile' (Roda, 2009: 12) – do not harm him; in fact, the supernatural intervention functions as a moral lesson designed to change his mind and behaviour from his three passions, 'della caccia, dei cavalli e dell'amore' (Tarchetti, 1968b: 73), and performs a judicial function, where, through the baron, Clara identifies her killer in the crowd, a forester who confesses to her murder and to burying the body where the raspberry bush grew.

Overpowering force

In 'Riccardo Waitzen', after time passes Riccardo forgets Anna, but when he is asked to play something at a party, he is shocked when he realises with a 'brivido di morte' (Tarchetti, 1968a: 628) that his singing partner places the music to Hummel's symphony before him. After a moment of immobility, where 'le sue mani erano irrigidite' (Tarchetti, 1968a: 628), he loses control of his limbs as though he were a puppet as they begin to act upon the keyboard under Anna's control:

volle ricominciare, ma le sue braccia avevano smarita ogni coscienza della loro forza e ogni facoltà di governarla; egli percosse sí violentemente sulla tastiera, che molte corde s'infransero e si arricciarono scivolando sulle altre con uno stridio prolungato e terribile (Tarchetti, 1968a: 629).

Anna controls not only Riccardo's arms but also his singing partner, who at this point turns to him and utters the oath that Anna once wrote to Riccardo, '*Tu mi amerai anche*

dopo la mia morte, tu mi amerai per tutta la tua vita' (Tarchetti, 1968a: 629, original emphasis). Anna's ghostly influence is not limited to affecting one mind, but rather is able to coexist with two hosts in the separate bodies of Riccardo and his singing partner, the latter of which also has a disconcerting resemblance to Anna. 'Era lo stesso profilo di Anna, la stessa persona esile e delicata, lo stesso aspetto pensieroso e sofferente' (Tarchetti, 1968a: 628), suggesting that Anna's control of the singing partner subtly alters the singer's appearance to Anna's previous corporeal form. While the narrator states that the singing partner opens the music book 'a caso' to Hummel's symphony, it is more in keeping with the influence she exerts that Anna has caused this page to fall open deliberately at the music that will bring her back. During this second playing of Hummel, Riccardo is punished for abandoning Anna, and whereas their music was harmonious when they played together, here the music screeches where once it sang as Anna takes her revenge. In perhaps a wry addition by Tarchetti, Riccardo dies 'di sincope' (Tarchetti, 1968a: 629), a play on the meaning of 'sincope' as a loss of consciousness, and 'sincope' the musical term syncopation, and an allusion to the discordant music that marks the forced control of Anna over Riccardo.

Before Mariani's meeting, the narrator in 'Un osso di morto' experiences the same kind of corporeal helplessness that Riccardo experiences, although not in such violent terms. The narrator arranges a séance in order to communicate with Federico M, a deceased Anatomy professor, but is also contacted by Pietro Mariani. The ghostly presences in the séance where the narrator communicates with Federico M and Pietro Mariani are incorporeal: the two ghosts each use the narrator as their medium to communicate with the outside world by making the narrator's hand write on the page – two minds in one, one alive, the other dead.

Dopo alcuni minuti d'indugio mi accorsi per sensazioni nuove e inesplicabili che io non era più solo nella stanza, sentii per così dire la sua presenza; e prima che avessi saputo risolvermi a formulare una domanda, la mia mano agitata a convulsa, mosse come da una forza estranea alla mia volontà, scrisse, me inconsapevole, queste parole [...]. (Tarchetti, 1968b: 67)

While the ghosts are in control of his mind and his limbs, they interact through the written page; in this case of a doubled mind, the narrator is voluntarily overpowered as it is the means to communicate with his interlocutors, but the communication itself takes places outside of rather than within his mind. Furthermore, Federico M replies by excusing his absence that paradoxically demonstrates his presence, which has the effect of an out-of-office reply or answerphone message anachronistically present in the late nineteenth century: 'Sono a voi. Mi avete chiamato in cui delle invocazioni più esigenti mi impedivano di venire, né potrò trattenermi ora qui, né rispondere alle interrogazioni che avete deliberato di darmi' (Tarchetti, 1968b: 67).

Where Federico M and Pietro Mariani control the narrator within the circumstances of a séance for the specific purpose of communicating with the dead, this is taken to extraordinary lengths in 'Uno spirito in un lampone'. Clara's influence is demonstrably mental, but she also causes the baron to act in ways he would never act himself. For example, the baron is surprised when he finds himself wishing to pick flowers, 'facciamone un mazzolino' (1968b: 76), and then his body obeys, 'il barone allungando la mano senza alzarsi, ne colse tre o quattro' (1968b: 76). The baron is cognisant of another force trying to control his limbs which to begin with opposes his own will with equal force, leaving him motionless, 'voleva ritrarre la mano, e nel tempo stesso voleva allungare di nuovo; il braccio mosso come da due volontà opposte, ma ugualmente

potenti, rimase in quella posizione quasi paralizzato' (Tarchetti, 1968b: 76). On his way back to his castle, the baron greets a lady whom he has never met but whom he automatically calls Caterina, and embraces his servant, even asking 'come sta il nostro barone?' (1968b: 80), all actions over which the baron has no control, and he can only helplessly and passively observe this farcical exchange of roles, trapped within his own body with another mind in control. 'E questa strana duplicità incominciò da quel momento ad estendersi su tutti i suoi sensi; vedeva doppio, sentiva doppio, toccava doppio; e – cosa ancora più sorprendente! – pensava doppio' (Tarchetti, 1968b: 79-80). Interestingly, Clara is also surprised by the actions of the host she is controlling, which she articulates through the baron. When he greets the magistrate's wife, a woman whom he knows well, 'che egli era in intima conoscenza colla signora' (1968b: 78), he asks himself 'Da quando in qua ... io sono solito a ricevere i saluti della moglie del magistrato?' (1968b: 78), a question that Clara not the baron is pondering. The baron, for whom this is a normal greeting is by contrast astonished by this question that he is asking himself (or rather that Clara is asking), 'si meravigliò di essersi rivolta questa domanda' (1968b: 78).

Clara's interaction with the baron is one-sided and for the most part didactic: she causes him to think in new ways, and does not learn from him. There is, however, a momentary respite from her control. As the baron retires for the night, Clara's influence wanes, and the baron feels himself for a moment, 'In quell'intervallo di riposo, le sue idee si riordinarono, egli si ricordò di tutto ciò che gli era avvenuto durante quelle due ore, e se ne sentì atterrito' (1968b: 82).

Exceptionally, in 'Uno spirito in un lampone' the doubled minds gives rise to a doppelgänger proper as Herdman outlines above. Beginning as a co-existent mind, Clara

then transforms the host and begins to attain physical form, ‘pareva che vi fosse in lui qualche cosa che volesse sprigionarsi dal suo corpo’ (Tarchetti, 1968b: 84), or more precisely, begins to alter the surface of the baron’s features such that they change to portray Clara’s face. As the baron approaches the portrait of Clara, pulled by a ‘forza irresistibile’ (Tarchetti, 1968b: 84), his face begins to transform, ‘i suoi profili si modificavano sempre più, il suo volto riproduceva sempre più esattamente l’immagine della fanciulla’ (Tarchetti, 1968b: 84), and Del Principe argues that the portrait functions as a model which the ghost of Clara uses to modify her host’s form: ‘Clara has succeeded in resuming her original appearance by mimicking art’s more permanent and “faithful” representation of her’ (1996: 122-3).

In her work on portraits in late Victorian fiction, Powell distinguishes between two kinds of double that are represented through the portrait, a distinction which post-dates Tarchetti by a decade or two, by which time Powell talks of a ‘deluge’ of magic portrait tales by 1880 (1983: 151). However, Powell’s study, which includes examples such as Poe’s ‘Oval Portrait’ (1842) and which reaches as far back as Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), draws a distinction that relates to Clara:

the portrait tradition really embraces two variants of the *doppelgänger*—one a perfected or degraded second self, a Jekyll or Hyde on canvas; the other a double which is fundamentally aesthetic rather than moral, which contests the “real” self for supremacy and compels it into submission. Wilde uses both in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1983: 158).

While Powell’s argument cannot pertain to Tarchetti historically as he predates the texts mentioned, it provides a useful theoretical perspective. According to these categories Clara’s portrait in Tarchetti does not fit easily under the heading of portrait literature, as

not only is her portrait unremarkable and bears no supernatural trait, but also it does not contest the real Clara for authority as firstly she is already dead, and secondly it rather appears to simply act as a guide for metamorphosis. In this, it compels Clara back into existence, but not into submission.

The double in ‘Uno spirito in un lampone’ features firstly as the doubling of minds, secondly where Clara within the baron becomes a double of herself in the portrait, and thirdly, midway through his transformation, the baron looks at himself in a mirror, and sees his doubled face: ‘Non era piú egli; o almeno vi vedeva riflessa bensì la sua immagine, ma vedeala [sic] come fosse l’immagine di un altro, vedeva due immagini in una’ (1968b: 83). However, these doubled experiences are short lived. Having added her own experiences to those of the baron of B., Clara is ultimately expelled after the baron is giving an emetic – ‘Fu dato al barone di B. una forte dose di emetico che gli fece rimettere i frutti non digeriti, lo liberò dallo spirito della fanciulla’ (Tarchetti, 1968b: 85) –, and no further mention is made as to whether or not her temporary presence has a lasting influence over the baron’s behaviour.¹¹

A case of ambiguity

‘Riccardo Waitzen’, ‘Un osso di morto’, and ‘Uno spirito in un lampone’ cohere by depicting the intrusion of the mind from the point of view of the host (with the exception of Riccardo’s singing partner about whom nothing is said), whereas ‘Le leggende del castello nero’ shows the point of view of the invasive mind. The double in this story moreover takes a different direction because of the theme of metempsychosis,¹² the transmigration of minds, as Ghidetti also notes of this story (1968: 212).

Il tema della metempsicosi è uno dei luoghi ideali ove confluisce l'ossessione del doppio: le famose 'due anime' care a molte religioni e credenze filosofiche. Questo trasmigrare dell'anima che, ad ogni caduta del corpo, passa in un altro, oltre che rievocare il dissidio tra materia e spirito, ricorda altri temi cari a Tarchetti: la metamorfosi e la morte. (Ruchin 2011: 114)

In the story, through a series of dreams and events in his waking world including the mysterious arrival of two volumes of family history, the protagonist Arturo becomes aware of the possibility that he is living through a cycle of lives, passing from body to body. He is explicitly told this in a dream by the lady of the black castle who claims that Arturo has almost used up his eleven lives (while she has only used seven), and that the two books which appeared days earlier at Arturo's family home contain the explanations to Arturo's situation: 'tu hai attraversato undici vite prima di giungere a questa, che è l'ultima. Io ne ho attraversate sette soltanto [...] te ne ho restituito il mezzo, quei due volumi, quelle memorie scritte da te' (Tarchetti, 1968b: 53). As Fusillo notes of the theme of the recovered manuscript, 'La letteratura fantastica mostra una predilezione particolare per il topos del manoscritto ritrovato, in quanto mezzo assai adatto ad autenticare l'inverosimile' (2012: 131). Indeed and to his horror, Arturo confirms his own handwriting in the charred remains of the volumes that his uncle has tried to destroy:

Quale non fu però il mio terrore quando nel rimescolare quelle ceneri vi rinvenni alcuni frammenti che parevano scritti di mio pugno; e da alcune parole sconnesse che erano rimasti intelligibili, potei ricostruire con uno sforzo potente di memoria degli interi periodi che si riferivano agli avvenimenti accentati oscuramente in quei sogni! (Tarchetti 1968b, 54)

As in 'Un osso di morto', where the appearance of Mariani's ribbon confirms a link between the dream and the real world, so too do details emerge in Arturo's dreams that have an impact upon the real world. In both cases, the impossible is signalled by an 'oggetto mediatore', which as Fusillo explains, 'comprova l'attraversamento della soglia che divide naturale e soprannaturale' (2012: 262).¹³ Arturo confirms what he was told in the dream (that in a former life he wrote the family history) by seeing his handwriting on the ancient books that he does not remember writing.

The theme of the doubled mind features in the first of two dreams when Arturo is transported back in time a few centuries, 'due o tre secoli almeno' (1968b: 49), to a valley in which he sees a black castle. Rather than witnessing this scene as himself, the fifteen-year-old Arturo sees through the eyes of a twenty-five-year-old host, 'Aveva venticinque anni [...] Sentiva in me tutto lo sviluppo intellettuale di quell'età, ma ne giudicava col senno e cogli apprezzamenti propri de' miei quindici anni. Vi erano due individui in me, all'uno apparteneva l'azione, all'altro la coscienza e l'apprezzamento dell'azione' (Tarchetti, 1968b: 48-9). Even as the intrusive mind, Arturo still refers to his host in terms that suggests an intrusion *to him*, 'Vi erano due individui *in me*'.

Arturo is aware of his host's intellectual maturity – as the baron of B also feels imbued with new perspectives from Clara – and he separates out the reality of the dream and the waking world: 'tutte quelle esperienze, tutti quegli ammaestramenti che il tempo mi avrebbe fatto subire durante gli anni che segnavano quella differenza tra l'età sognata e l'età reale' (Tarchetti, 1968b: 48). Brandolini also notes the temporal distinction and a split between two types of character that create a double: 'si profila una frattura temporale tanto netta da realizzare quello sdoppiamento tra io «come sognatore» ed io «come personaggio nel [...] sogno» di cui ha parlato Frye' (1998: 426). The coexistence of two

minds in 'Le leggende del castello nero' differs here in a further way from the other examples mentioned above which blurs the boundary between the categories of dialogue with the double and overwhelming force. On the one hand, Arturo is simply passively aware of the experiences of his host, and does not actively engage in dialogue. In fact, he feels as though his mind is being intruded upon, not the other way around. On the other, Arturo is unable to control the actions of the older host, as 'camminava per uno scopo determinato, prefisso' (Tarchetti, 1968b: 49), and so in this regard he is the only example of an invasive mind that is powerless, and furthermore he finds himself against his will in the mind of another. In turn, by going back a few centuries, Arturo enters a mind that has died by Arturo's present time of 1830, meaning that in contrast to the other examples of co-existent minds in Tarchetti, Arturo is a living mind that enters the mind of a dead forbearer. Arturo could be seen as a doppelgänger but not in Herdman's more traditional terms. Given the claims the transmigration of mind from body to body present in the story, it is implied that in his first dream Arturo inhabits the mind of an ancestor from a past life. In this sense there are two similar minds in the same space, but they are not identical, as the host Arturo enters has different experiences to him: they are related but not copies of one another.

When the following night Arturo returns to the castle in his dream, now no more than a ruin, he does not see through the eyes of his ancestor, but as his fifteen-year-old self, and the lady of the castle addresses Arturo directly and by name. She correctly reveals the date of Arturo's eventual death in 1850, and even though he never forgets the experience, Arturo convinces himself that his overactive and youthful imagination has run wild. However, years later, the chance discovery in northern France of the real ruins of the castle from his dreams, together with a conversation with a local shepherd who

tells ‘un racconto terribile, un racconto che io non rivelerò mai’ (Tarchetti 1968b: 55), results in illness and a mortal dread.

The effect of Arturo’s experiences is to confuse reality with his memories and flashes of déjà vu as Arturo tries to come to terms with his impending fate.

Vi sono delle rimembranze nella mia mente che non possono essere contenute in questo limite angusto della mia vita, per giungere alla cui origine io devo risalire la curva degli anni, risalire molto lontano... due o tre secoli... Anche prima d’oggi mi era avvenuto più volte ne’ miei viaggi di arrestarmi in una compagna e di esclamare: – Ma io ho veduto già questo sito, io sono già stato qui altre volte!... questi campi, questa valle, questo orizzonte io li conosco! (Tarchetti, 1968b: 42)

Arturo’s view of reality is mediated through experiences which he cannot be sure are his, and which lead him to question the limits of an identity that he can claim as his own because of his dreams which are, as Del Principe succinctly puts it, ‘equipped with truths capable of shattering reality’ (1996: 86). Significantly, it is the experience of the second dream, where Arturo is himself, not the first dream as a co-existent mind, that is principally responsible for his mental deterioration. In other words, the experience of Arturo being co-existent with his own self from a former life does not equate with a moral or didactic function that co-existent minds elsewhere in Tarchetti perform.

Conclusions

In Tarchetti, the simultaneous co-existence of minds and the collapsing together of two concepts normally held apart (life and death¹⁴) results in doubles that do not reflect their hosts but contrast with them. These are, to recall Herdman, not ‘dependent’ but rather

independent doubles, and as a result, what emerges is a distinct power imbalance where the host struggles against the new presence, even in the case where paradoxically Arturo thinks it is his mind that is being invaded. The fantastic has by and large a negative effect upon the characters, and inflicts either humiliation or madness. The doubled mind in Tarchetti, a 'fantastico « mentale »' (Calvino 1995: 1660) to use Calvino's term to the extent that such a double exists within the mind of Tarchetti's characters, does not articulate traits of the self for reflective purposes but is used as means to act upon the real world through mental influence and corporeal force. These invasive processes are not symbolic doubles nor do they denote a mental condition, but operate through supernatural intervention that perform a morally instructive or punitive function, and do not portray instances where two minds of living characters come together, but where one dead character invades the mind of a living one. Not only does a divide collapse between the separate spaces of two minds, but also between two states of being dead and alive. And from this consistent binary interplay between Tarchetti's favoured themes of the living and the dead emerges a conflict between the supernatural and the real, where the doppelgänger in Tarchetti is defined by the difference between the double and its original not its similarity. Departing from a traditional engagement with the doppelgänger in fantastic literature, Tarchetti playfully experiments with the double, with an internal rather than external focus, one that provides new perspectives to the inner conflicts felt by the intrusion of the fantastic. This is not to say that the internal double is unique to Italian letters and to Tarchetti, but rather that within the panoply of doubles in literature, this form is rarely deployed and for which Tarchetti stands apart by developing the theme of the doppelgänger in a way left unexplored by other writers both within Italy and without.

Notes

¹ Roda gives Tarchetti status among early writers, calling him the ‘vero padre del genere fantastico in Italia’ (2009: 11); see also Moretti (1977: 103). There are some antecedents to Tarchetti’s collection ‘Racconti fantastici’ (1869) including Capuana, who published ‘Il dottor Cymbalus’ in 1867, two years after Tarchetti’s ‘Il mortale immortale (dall’inglese)’ was first published in 1865 before being republished as ‘L’elixir dell’immortalità (Imitazione dall’inglese)’ in 1868. For further work on Tarchetti, particularly on his use of Anglophone sources that veer into plagiarism see Venuti (1992) and McLoughlin (1993), and Mura (2008). For works of fantastic literature in nineteenth-century Italy, see the two anthologies Ghidetti (1985) and Melani (2009). For criticism on the fantastic that spans both centuries, see Caltagirone and Maxia (eds) (2008), and Lazzarin et al. (eds) (2016). For work on the fantastic in the twentieth century see Lazzarin (2004); Amigoni, (2004), Hipkins (2007), and Sica (2013).

² For work on the double more broadly, see also Fusillo (2012) and for work on the double in Italian literature see Dolfi (ed)(2001) and Laghezza (2012).

³ Others have likewise studied *Fosca* by considering the two characters who complement or reflect the other: Bonifazi argues that the text ‘propone subito la duplicità, il doppio aspetto della donna, due donne, di cui l’una è l’opposto dell’altra’; ‘Non c’è dubbio che Clara e Fosca siano le due parti contrapposte di un *double*’ (1982: 103-5); Roda notes something similar: ‘Ancorché romanzo non fantastico, *Fosca* si lega per mille fili al genere o modo in questione, a partire dalla situazione di *double* che vede Clara funzionare da doppio positivo di Fosca, e a sua volta Fosca da doppio negativo e mortifero (2009: 21).

⁴ In her study of the double in twentieth-century Italian literature, Laghezza (2012: 284) provides an interesting – although figurative – example of the intrusion of a *dog* identity in Elsa Morante’s *Araecoli*: ‘Tornava l’estate; e intanto, s’era introdotta nella nostra casa una presenza animalesca, invisibile, che di giorno in giorno se ne impadroniva. [...] Sembrava addirittura di avvistare la sua pelle maculata, e il suo muso vorace che si affacciava di sotto i mobili. E io, sebbene inetto a percepirla, pure in qualche modo –

forse attraverso i pori – ne avvertivo la specie indistinta, quale un'intrusione ferina, innominata, che magicamente (a intervalli sempre meno radi) s'incorporava in Aracoeli' (1982: 235).

⁵ 'le fantastique est rupture de l'ordre reconnu, irruption de l'inadmissible au sein de l'inaltérable légalité quotidienne, et non substitution totale à l'univers réel d'un univers exclusivement miraculeux' (Caillois 1965 : 161).

⁶ Mariani references page 77 of Castex's work, where the original reads very similarly: 'l'invraisemblable est donné purement et simplement comme vérité' (1951, my emphasis).

⁷ All quotations come from Tarchetti (1968a, 1968b), and this essay will proceed thematically rather than chronologically.

⁸ Many note that this story is modelled on Gautier's *Le Pied de Momie* (1840). See Roda (1991: 48) and Ruchin (2011: 115). This story by Gautier is reproduced in the appendix of the English translation of *Fantastic Tales* (Tarchetti, 2013: 157-169).

⁹ Reproduced in English in the appendix of Tarchetti (2013: 139-156).

¹⁰ Pieri goes so far as to qualify the baron as 'il primo "transessuale" della letteratura italiana moderna' although he does explore this idea of primacy further (2006: 132).

¹¹ Nor is any further mention made of the portrait. After the baron identifies Clara's killer, it performs no further function in the story.

¹² Bonifazi also labels Clara's ghost in 'Uno spirito in un lampone' as 'trasmigrato in un lampone' (1982: 96).

¹³ See also Ceserani (1996: 81-82).

¹⁴ A concurrence which Del Principe also notes often recurs in Tarchetti (1996: 47).

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