

Call for Papers

From Doppelgänger to Avatar and AI: Conceptual and Epistemological Changes in Transdisciplinary Contexts

Universidade Católica Portuguesa | Lisbon
18-19 February, 2027

As a literary term coined by Jean Paul in 1796, the 'Doppelgänger' has haunted literature and other arts for over two centuries. As an idea, however, it has existed for much longer, in mythology and legends. Its terminological similarity with 'Double', 'Sosie', 'Sósia', 'Clone', or 'Avatar' has made it difficult to classify and discuss the vast phenomenology at a scientific level. Over the past decades, the debate has included transdisciplinary approaches in which themes such as alter ego, mimesis, simulation, imitation, repetition, falsification and, more recently, artificial intelligence have supplied epistemological challenges and new theoretical avenues in Comparative Literature, Arts, and Media Studies.

From Plautus's *Amphitruo* we learn that the motif of the double can reveal both comical and tragic aspects in crises of identity caused by supernatural agents. Technological progress enabled the visual presentation of gods, ghosts, and Doppelgänger figures to achieve a new ontological status during the 19th century ('ghost photography'), but especially in early cinema (cf. Rank's seminal essay "Der Doppelgänger," 1914). The Doppelgänger has served as a self-reflexive device in autobiographical literature, in painting, and in photography. Performative aspects of the Doppelgänger can be observed in myth, religion, literature, and online gaming (avatars). Avatars are also used as proxies, (in palliative care, for example), thereby becoming tools - "an extension of man" - in McLuhan's sense. Therefore, the uncanny, for the most part male figure of the literary tradition of Jean Paul and E.T.A. Hoffmann, which has influenced and divided our perception of this motif linguistically and consequently conceptually, will not be the only one discussed in the conference. Several lines of research converge in this transcultural and transdisciplinary project.

We therefore welcome submissions for the following topics:

1. Cognition and Translatability: 'Doppelgänger', 'Double', 'Sosie', 'Sósia', 'Clone' or 'Avatar'? Phenomenological, terminological, hermeneutical, and epistemological challenges from the 19th to the 21st century."
2. Spectral Apparitions, Déjà Vu and Parallel Universe: Double Trouble in Myth, Religion and Science Fiction.
3. Mimesis, Clones, Repetition, Simulation, Imitation, Authenticity and Hyperreality: from biological and psychoanalytical patterns to Auerbach's and Baudrillard's approaches.
4. Female Doubles in Literature and other Arts.
5. Alter Ego, Identity, Usurpation and Digital Doubles in Cinema, Arts and Visual Communication: AI, Avatars, Deepfakes, Digital Gaming and the disinformation campaign called "Doppelgänger".

Keynote Speakers:

Jörg Türschmann (Universität Wien)

Paula Sweeney (University of Aberdeen)

Gerald Bär (CECC / Universidade Aberta)

Organizing Committee:

Ana Margarida **Abrantes** | Gerald **Bär** | Peter **Hanenberg** | Jörg **Türschmann**

Scientific Committee:

Ana Margarida **Abrantes** | Gerald **Bär** | Peter **Hanenberg** | Alexandra **Lopes** | Joana **Moura** |
Margarida **Pereira Martins** | Marília dos **Santos Lopes** | Jörg **Türschmann**

Proposals should be sent to cecc.fch@ucp.pt no later than 4 October 2026, and include:

- paper title
- abstract (max. 300 words)
- 3 – 5 keywords
- name, e-mail address, institutional affiliation
- brief bio (max. 100 words) mentioning research interests.

Notifications of acceptance will be sent by 15 November 2026.

Fees include lunch, coffee breaks, and conference materials:

	Early bird 20 November-15 December	Regular 16 December– 10 January
Researchers	€120	€150
PhD Students	€80	€100