

The Double

By José Saramago

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The inspiration for the major motion picture "Enemy" starring Jake Gyllenhaal and directed by Denis Villeneuve

Tertuliano Máximo Afonso is a divorced, depressed history teacher. To lift his spirits, a colleague suggests he rent a certain video. Tertuliano watches the film, unimpressed. But during the night, when he is awakened by noises in his apartment, he goes into the living room to find that the VCR is replaying the video. He watches in astonishment as a man who looks exactly like him-or, more specifically, exactly like he did five years before, mustachioed and fuller in the face-appears on the screen. He sleeps badly.

Against his better judgment, Tertuliano decides to pursue his double. As he roots out the man's identity, what begins as a whimsical story becomes a "wonderfully twisted meditation on identity and individuality" (The Boston Globe). Saramago displays his remarkable talent in this haunting tale of appearance versus reality.

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The Double By José Saramago Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #212053 in Books
- Published on: 2005-10-03
- Released on: 2005-10-03
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .87" w x 5.31" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 336 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
The double motif, which has fascinated authors as diverse as Poe, Dostoyevski and Nabokov, is revived in this surprisingly listless novel by Portuguese master Saramago. Tertuliano Máximo Afonso is a history teacher in an unnamed metropolis (presumably Lisbon). Middle-aged, divorced and in a relationship with a woman, Maria da Paz, he is bored with life. On the suggestion of a colleague, one night Máximo watches a video that changes everything. The video itself is a forgettable comedy, but the actor who plays the minor role of hotel clerk (so minor he isn't listed in the credits) is Afonso's physical double. Soon Afonso is feverishly renting videos, trying to find the actor's name, while hiding his project from his suspicious colleague, his lover and his mother. Finally tracking the man down, he suggests a meeting. The actor, a rather sleazy fellow, resents Afonso's presence, as if his identical appearance were a sort of ontological theft. Soon the two are in a competition that involves sex and power. Narrating in his usual long, rambling sentences, Saramago suspends his characters and their actions in fussy authorial asides. Afonso has several hokey "dialogues" with "common sense"; his situation, which might be the germ for an excellent short story, is stretched out far beyond the length it deserves. This semi-allegory is certainly not one of Saramago's more noteworthy offerings.
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From Bookmarks Magazine
The Double received decidedly mixed reviews. Certain critics applaud the urgency with which Saramago questions the nature of identity in our current age and the "what if" scenario. Others believe that Shakespeare, Dumas, and Nabokov have more effectively employed the twin construct. No one denies that Saramago is a brilliant, engaging writer who has earned his eminent standing. However, most reviewers conclude that neither Afonso nor his double, Claro, are fully developed characters with vital inner lives. They are little more than devices through which Saramago funnels his existentialism. Although Costa receives across-the-board kudos for her faithful and elegant translation, many readers will ditch Saramago’s labyrinthine prose halfway through.

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From Booklist
The 1998 winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature continues to garner a reputation and readership far beyond his native Portugal. His latest novel is a provocative meditation on identity: specifically, the story of how ordinary history teacher Tertuliano Maxim Afonso awakens one morning to find a video that he's rented but not yet watched playing on his VCR. And one of the characters--the actor playing the role, that is--is the spitting image of Tertuliano, as he appeared about five years ago. Tertuliano is divorced, lonely, depressed--in other words, susceptible to filling in his time and mind with an obsession, which this situation quickly becomes. He decides to track down the actor who is his double, with disturbing, even dire, consequences. Saramago's typical stream-of-consciousness technique, although not easy for complacent readers, is beautifully lyrical here ("the first, subtle wash of early-morning lightness") and, at the same time, burrows deeply within the protagonist's thought process--entirely suitable and even necessary for such a cerebral yet shockingly personal exploration of what truly makes an individual unique and the concept that somewhere in the world it's possible that one's exact physical double exists. *Brad Hooper*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Alfred Zoeller:

The particular book The Double will bring you to definitely the new experience of reading a new book. The author style to spell out the idea is very unique. Should you try to find new book to study, this book very ideal to you. The book The Double is much recommended to you to see. You can also get the e-book from your official web site, so you can easier to read the book.

Will Cathcart:

Many people spending their time by playing outside with friends, fun activity together with family or just watching TV all day long. You can have new activity to enjoy your whole day by examining a book. Ugh, do you consider reading a book really can hard because you have to take the book everywhere? It all right you can have the e-book, delivering everywhere you want in your Touch screen phone. Like The Double which is having the e-book version. So , why not try out this book? Let's find.

Jessica Palmer:

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Larry Luis:

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