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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: #547001 in eBooks
- Published on: 2005-10-03
- Released on: 2005-10-03
- Format: Kindle eBook

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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:

Charles English:

This The Double is great book for you because the content and that is full of information for you who also always deal with world and also have to make decision every minute. This specific book reveal it information accurately using great coordinate word or we can claim no rambling sentences inside. So if you are read this hurriedly you can have whole information in it. Doesn't mean it only offers you straight forward sentences but tough core information with attractive delivering sentences. Having The Double in your hand like keeping the world in your arm, facts in it is not ridiculous a single. We can say that no guide that offer you world with ten or fifteen moment right but this e-book already do that. So , it is good reading book. Hi Mr. and Mrs. active do you still doubt which?

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William Moreau:

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