

Reflection



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Dr. Jekyll's Doppelganger The term doppelganger is a German word meaning 'double walker.' It refers to the idea of a shadow self that legend says exists for each individual. The traditional understanding of the doppelganger is that it is only seen by the individual it duplicates and that it is only seen when it is warning of impending death. However, the idea of a double existing anywhere excited the imaginations of fiction writers such as William Shakespeare, Robert Louis Stevenson, and modern day writers such as Matt Groening. The concept that there could be clones of each of us walking about and living our lives reveals a deep-seated anxiety that perhaps we aren't as unique and special as we like to think ourselves as being. However, even in the stories these masters have produced, the question of how or whether we can establish our identities as human individuals is answered with our experiences and our personal approaches to solving problems. Identical twins such as the characters that appear in Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors create an immediate sense that there is no way we can become individuals as they are duplicates of each other. In this play, the characters are even all given the same names, increasing the confusion of the action of the play and revealing the degree to which we are easily confused with our double. Part of the reason they struggled so much is that their personalities were also very closely matched - both Antipholus characters being hotheads and both Dromios being rather sarcastic. However, it is their experiences that distinguish them as being different as the Ephesian set are already aware of their wives. The doppelganger effect is somewhat subdued in Stevenson's story of The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde because the Hyde character reflects all of the evil that was once a part of Dr. Jekyll leaving the Dr. Jekyll personality to express all the good. Although they both live in the

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same body, making the duplicate nature of their appearance complete, they are very different in their personalities. Like Shakespeare's twins, neither of the characters seems to be fully aware of the other character's activities, remembering them in sketchy detail as if in a dream, again reinforcing my idea that the development of personality is differentiated by experience and personal approach to life events. In Groening's Halloween Simpson's episode that includes " Send in the Clones," the many duplicates of Homer Simpson look identical to him, but they each seem to have their own emerging personality. Some of them are even dumber than the original and some have drives that the original rarely shows even in other episodes. Although they all look alike and are easily mistaken, especially at first, by others as the original Homer, these duplicates are quickly exposed as being clones rather than Homer. However, as the end of the episode shows, it becomes possible for the clones to learn enough about the original to supplant him. While I can see why some people would be worried that a duplicate of themselves would diminish their identity, I don't feel that way. It is impossible for another person, clone, twin or something else, to have lived through all of my exact same experiences with the exact same personalities that shared those experiences with me. Even if they did, it is unlikely that, even with a very similar personality, they would react in exactly the same way I would or reflect on their new knowledge in the same way. While it may be simple enough to come close, my identity is safe in the unique way in which I interpret and interact with the world around me.