

Bumps in the Night!!!!

Paranormal "U"

Doppelgangers – What are they?

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In May of 2010 the team and I went to Waverly Hills Sanatorium in Louisville, KY for a private investigation and had a great time. When we go on these "pay event" investigations we never know what we will "see", "hear", or learn about the paranormal. It was on this trip that we learned of a term used in the paranormal field, Doppelgangers.

At one point in the night the security guard / tour guide came up to check on us and see how things were going. We were startled and told him, "Oh wow, you startled us. We could have sworn you just went by a few minutes ago." He replied, "Yeah I get that sometimes. I'm told I have a doppelganger here". He went on to say, "Several tour groups have reported that to us and some even report that my doppelganger talks to them".

I left there wondering "what is a doppelganger?", but never really researched it. Then recently I saw a rerun episode of the CBS show "How I Met your Mother" and the entire episode was on doppelgangers. So that brought back that experience and lead me to want to research the topic.

Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary define a doppelganger as a ghostly counterpart of a living person.¹ In an article written by Niki Foster on Wisegeek.com she defines a doppelganger as something that can be the ghost of a living person or any other sort of physical double.² A third source, Wikipedia, define a doppelganger as a tangible double of a living person in fiction, folklore, and popular culture that typically represents evil.³ Even though each definition varies slightly they all agree that a doppelganger means a double of a living person.

How does this happen? After all, the most common perception of a ghost is that it is the spirit of someone who has passed away. How could someone who is living have an apparition of themselves walking around? Studying the word's etymology shows us it is derived from the German, combining the word 'doppel' (double) and 'ganger' (goer) or "double walker". When taken literally, it means one walking in the same manner belonging to an individual. In German folklore, it is thought that seeing a double of oneself walking alongside is an omen of imminent death. It is also believed by some that every individual has a doppelganger, commonly known as a "fetch".

Many legends speak of doppelgangers as being rather malevolent in nature. Beliefs about them vary from being unable to cast a shadow or a reflection to giving ill-intended advice. Some accounts speak of being haunted by one's doppelganger. As far back as Norse mythology, there are legends of the *vardogr*, or apparitions of the living that commit acts in real time before the person has an opportunity to do so.

It is often said that legends begin with a seed of truth. There have been accounts given of doppelgangers from very well-known people that, while not proof positive, certainly make one wonder. Percy Bysshe Shelley, one of the most heralded poets of all time, was said to have been visited by his own doppelganger while he was in Italy. Allegedly the apparition he saw pointed toward the Mediterranean Sea not long before Shelley died in a sailing accident in that very sea.

Other famous doppelganger sightings were Queen Elizabeth I, the French novelist Guy de Maupassant (who was said to have had a story inspired by his phantom), poet John Donne, and several others including Abraham Lincoln. One of the most talked about cases of a

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doppelganger was the story of Emily Sagee. According to an account written by Robert Dale Owen, as told to him by the daughter of a baron, Emily Sagee was a school teacher who lived in present day Latvia during the mid-19th century. It has been said that many of her students saw her doppelganger on several occasions.

Real? Folklore? Or perhaps a combination of both? Regardless, doppelgangers are a fascinating subject which we hope to continue learning more about!

Resources:

- 1 "doppelganger." Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. 2 Mar 2011 <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/doppelganger>>.
- 2 Niki Foster. "What is a Doppelganger?." Wise Geek n.d . 09 Feb 2011 <<http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-a-doppelganger.htm>>.
- 3 "Doppelgänger." Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. 2 Mar 2011 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doppelganger>>.
- 4 "Doppelganger." Crystal Links. 2 Mar 2011. <<http://www.crystalinks.com/doppelganger.html>>.

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