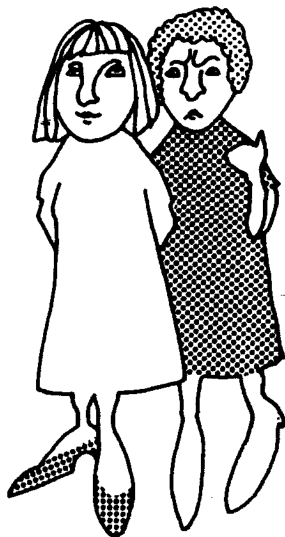
Leveton, E. (2001). The Double. In *A Clinician's Guide to Psychodrama* (Ch.4, pp.51-73) Springer.



4

The Double

A technique originated by Moreno, the double is the most powerful single tool in my repertory. The double stands behind the protagonist with the intention of becoming a part of him so that she can voice something implicit in the scene, as though it were a new feeling or thought just then occurring to him. When she speaks, she must use the pronoun "I" and use masculine pronouns to describe his thoughts and feelings. She is not a separate player in the psychodrama. She must not forget that she is a part of the protagonist.

Before we begin to work with the double, I want to underline the importance of following, not leading. The double is an auxiliary, a helper with the specific job of finding a part of the protagonist that lies just below the surface. In order to achieve her goal, she must try to empty herself of her own reactions and open herself up to the protagonist. She must receive everything the protagonist offers as a cue to what he might be experiencing: his stance, his intonations, his slight shifts in position, his pauses, his sighs. Using all of these cues, she must also be sensitive to the protagonist's reaction to her contributions, so that she can work in a general range of potential

acceptability. While she may want to challenge the protagonist at times, she never wants to lose him. She must stay in touch with the protagonist in order for him to experience her as a true inner voice, not another, different person standing behind him and giving her point of view.

Doubling is a unique method of communicating the nature of conflict and one of the most effective pathways for the expression of empathy. To double is to "put oneself in the other's place." John wants to work on why he is such a pushover with his boss. We ask him to confront his boss and find him timid and soft-spoken, easily ignored by his much more aggressive counterpart. We give him a double who—always within the boundaries of what is accepted by John—acts out his inner fury, shouts at the boss, threatens to quit—shows our protagonist in a dramatic fashion that there is another way to express himself. Tracking John's reactions, the double sees that he is somewhat taken aback initially, but quickly appreciates the rightness of his double's reactions. It takes very little time before John's own voice becomes stronger and he begins to represent himself with a vigor that allows his double to then become a quiet, encouraging internal voice.

When I was a child I developed a game that probably began my doubling. Looking at pictures of old masters, I would assume the physical position and facial expression of persons in the painting. *If I were carrying a spear and my hands tensed to grasp it, my eyes wide open and eyebrows raised, what would I feel? Or, in my velvet gown, my hands idly playing with the lace on my blouse, my eyes cast down—what am I thinking about the man who is looking over my shoulder?*

Our language contains many phrases and metaphors expressing the essence of doubling: *If I were you . . . put yourself in my place . . . put yourself in my shoes.* We want to communicate our actions and our inner experiences. One of the most frustrating aspects of human existence is the fact that we can only express a small part of any experience—only the top of the iceberg shows. We've become so accustomed to our partial vision that often we're not even aware of the rest. The language is filled with a phrasebook of these frustrations: *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde . . . only a bird in a gilded cage . . . putting on a good face . . . still waters run deep . . . shallow brooks are noisy.* When we attempt to explore the inner life of another, we are often brought up short by conventions of superficial communication. *I know how*

you must feel . . . I've felt that way myself . . . I know . . . I've been there. How do you know? How did you feel? Where have you been? Alas, the answers are available only in the rarest of circumstances. Doubling allows us a way to express the inner life.

To varying degrees, each of us is aware of conflicts, dualities, hypocrisies. Yet we often express only one side or one level of a given situation. Our culture places a premium on time, clarity, and lack of ambiguity. We try to say what we have to say clearly and briefly. We try to play unambiguously admirable roles. We are either brave or scared, moral or sinful, good or bad, angry or kind. We seem magically to believe that if we were to let in a conflicting feeling, or worse, to give it expression, all would be lost. Our culture labels feelings as potential harbingers of failure. *If I see someone caught in a fire, I can save him—but I mustn't remember that I'm afraid of fire, too. If I did, I might not be able to act, and if I were to say I'm scared, my chance to be heroic would be lost.* We often suppress emotions that could interfere with something we expect of ourselves. A good mother does not show frustration or anger. Men don't cry. We want to avoid becoming vulnerable. And so we hide tenderness or caring. *Play hard to get, stay cool, give him the cold shoulder.* The more important the hidden emotion, the more likely its suppression contributes to the development of symptoms. Doubling is a way to begin to give voice to the conflict within us.

The double is an inner voice. The voice of conflict, of self-pity, of irony. The double is the coward inside the hero, the saint inside the sinner, the needy child in the lonely eccentric. The double takes a chance on losing control by allowing tears, rage, tenderness. The double can raise her voice. The double can laugh.

Doubling presents endless possibilities and because of that, must be used cautiously. Doubling is not an avenue for the expression of one's own emotions unless they fit the person for whom one is doubling. The person who doubles must pay close attention to the cues given by the protagonist. She is there to help the protagonist become aware of conflictual feelings, to help him see alternative ways of expressing emotions. When the protagonist gives signs of rejecting the double and it becomes clear that what the double is saying is not relevant, the double must be flexible and let go of her precious hunch and try something else. (More of this in the section "The stubborn double.") I have observed that argument may not be

a sign of rejection, however. An internal conflict is often expressed authentically by doubling. The surest sign that the double is doing poorly is when the protagonist makes no use of her contributions. She might as well not be there. She only takes up space. The director must give her a cue that leads to better understanding or replace her.

There is one other caution. Doubling is a powerful technique. When a double is successful, she is experienced by the protagonist as an inner voice, not as the other. For this reason, the protagonist often drops her normal defenses. If the protagonist were asked by her mother, for example, or even by a close friend, "Do you ever want to murder your husband?" she'd probably reject the notion out of hand, and tell us that, course she gets angry, like anyone else, but murder, ridiculous! If, on the other hand, our protagonist is confronting someone who role-plays her husband in a scene, and one of the usual endless arguments breaks out, and she hears her double saying, "I feel so frustrated I could kill you. I've thought of it before. I really could kill you," she may well agree with her double and then become frightened because of the intensity of her feeling. The double facilitates the expression of feelings which may be frightening and upsetting for the protagonist. It is important for the double to be aware of this possibility and to include it in her doubling so that, in addition to helping the protagonist to express feelings, she can support the protagonist in tolerating them. She may want to say, after our protagonist has agreed she could murder, "Now I've said it. And I'm really scared. I didn't think I was that kind of a person," or to ask "Did I scare myself? Did I go too far?" Or "Well, I said it, but I would never do it. But I sure feel it now and then! Wow!"

Both the group director and the double need to be aware of the protagonist's vulnerability. The double must carefully judge the protagonist's reactions to her doubling and be prepared either to comment on them or change the course of her doubling. The director must be prepared to find ways of giving the protagonist more control—to interrupt the scene, ask for the protagonist's feelings, send in another double with an opposite point of view, encourage the protagonist to argue with her doubles. Unless caution is observed, the risk is that the protagonist feels manipulated into saying something she wasn't ready to say.

New members of ongoing groups usually learn to double by watching others. Doubling is a natural technique and needs little explana-

tion. In a new group, or with a new member of an ongoing group—let's call her Jane—I usually start by asking Jane whether she will accept a double. When she asks what that is, I try to be very brief in my reply, emphasizing that "doubling is a great deal easier to do than to explain," and that I'd like to ask Carol to double for Jane in order to say some of the things Jane may feel but not say. I may add some of the following sentences: "You know, you can argue with your double or you can agree. It's just the way it goes in our minds sometimes—two sides going at each other. If you feel your double is barking up the wrong tree, be sure to tell her so and tell her why. She may still keep going, but tell her anyhow." I have found the latter to be an important instruction because there often seems to be a misunderstanding on the part of the protagonist that the double is going to "tell the truth" about her. When the doubles are played by psychiatrists, nurses, or other mental health personnel, it is important for the protagonist to know that she does not have to accept what is being said, lest the doubling degenerate into a kind of mental health brainwashing.

I then make it clear that the rule is that only Jane can hear her doubles. Others in the scene with Jane cannot reply to what the doubles say. If Jane wants to say a sentence said by one of her doubles, she has to repeat it herself. This rule is very important because it (1) helps reduce confusion and (2) provides a way for Jane to take responsibility for herself and to make clear what she is willing to say at a given time. The confusion resulting from an argument of two people with their doubles may be overwhelming if all four voices can be answered.

Further, the double may be able to say something Jane can't and deprive Jane of an opportunity to say it herself. It may not happen in this scene. It will happen only if and when Jane feels strong enough to express her feeling but only Jane can decide when and how to take a stand. Jane is demure, while her double tells her husband that she's sick to death of him. Occasionally, by a victorious smile, Jane lets us know that her double is "right on." In order to face her hostile feelings, Jane will need to go one step further than to shyly acknowledge her double: she will have to say the words herself. On the other hand, Jane may not feel the hostile feelings her double attributes to her, or she may not be ready to face them. In that case, it is important for her to be able to talk to her double,

telling her "But I'd never talk to my husband that way. He's been so good to me. Anyway, I don't talk that way," and have her double retreat for the time being.

I make one other rule in the beginning. The rule is that both the double and Jane always use the first person. If the double sees something Jane is doing and says, "You're twiddling your thumbs," she is no longer her double but a person outside of Jane, observing her. If she says, "I'm twiddling my thumbs," she can be perceived as a part of Jane, encouraging Jane to talk further. If Jane then answers, "No, you're wrong, I was scratching my other hand," she has again lengthened the distance between herself and her double, making her double the other "you," not the self. Even in such a seemingly minor disagreement, I insist that Jane keep using "I" as she talks with her double: "No, why would I twiddle my thumbs? I was just scratching my hand." It is very important to keep Jane and Carol from becoming adversaries. They're both Jane. Jane may have internal disagreements, questions. But she's asking herself, not somebody else. When the double is used correctly, Jane is hardly aware of her. She simply uses her to express her own feelings. In order for this to occur, the double must talk in such a way that she can be accepted by Jane. She can't talk simultaneously with Jane or anyone else because then Jane won't be able to hear her. She must listen closely to Jane in order to find the right times in which to speak.

If Jane agrees to let Carol double for her, I usually ask Carol to stand slightly to the side of and slightly behind Jane, and to assume a similar physical position. Carol needs to be near enough to Jane so that she can easily perceive Jane's physical reactions. Carol and Jane must not be face-to-face, since this position seems to enhance the feeling of oppositeness, of two separate people. When Carol, the double, is behind and slightly to the side of Jane, she can more easily be perceived as an inner voice. From Carol's point of view, the scene may go something like this:

Double: (*I'm Jane's double. Now what? How will I know what to do? I don't know what she's thinking. Jane's physical position tells me something about her. Let's see. She's sitting down. I'll sit down. She's crossed her legs; so will I. She's beating a tattoo on the floor with her left foot; I'm doing it. I feel impatient. Maybe that's what she feels. I'll give it a try.*) I'm feeling impatient. I want this to start.

Jane: (*says nothing but nods her head in vigorous assent*).

Double: (*This is the beginning. Now Jane and her husband are arguing. He is riding her about all the money she spends at the shrink's. What a bastard. That's how I feel but she's just sitting there. Tapping her foot again now. I know why she's impatient.*) I wish he'd stop talking. I'm so sick of this kind of talk. But I feel guilty, too. So I just sit here.

Jane: (*ignoring double*) Well, what can I do? I really don't feel right about using the money you earn for my extravagances.

Double: (*Oh, that Jane! No guts at all. I bet she's not feeling all that humble. Maybe I can goad her into speaking up for herself.*) I do feel right about using the money. I just haven't got the guts to say so. And I'm mad at him for bringing it up all the time. And I don't have the guts to say that either. (*Jane doesn't say anything. She looks like she might cry.*)

Double: I'm almost crying because it's the same thing over and over again.

Jane: It's true. I don't know what to do about it.

Double: I'm sitting here the way I always do and you're talking on and on the way you always do and I want to tell you how I'm feeling for a change.

Jane: Well, I do feel hurt because you seem to criticize me so much.

Double: There, I said it. (*She isn't experiencing anger. She's hurt and she said so. She doesn't have that trapped, impatient look anymore. I like that. She seems more real now. They continue the scene. Jane practices saying something of what she's been feeling. Her husband hears her. I am needed a lot less as the scene finishes. I feel satisfied with how it went.*)

SOME STYLES OF DOUBLING

The Neutral Double

This double resembles the non-directive talk therapist. The double is there to understand the protagonist, to validate what she has to

say by putting it just a bit more strongly, and to give her opportunities to look at different choices, mostly by asking questions.

Florence: I want to keep staying at my parents' house and they want me there too.
Double: They really do like it when I'm there.
Florence: Yes, they make such a fuss you'd think I was still in my teens.
Double: Sometimes I feel like I'm still in my teens when I stay with them.
Florence: It's true. It's hard to feel grown up in the house where you were a kid.
Double: Have I felt like a kid lately?
Florence: Yes (*pause*).
Double: How do they make me feel like a kid?
Florence: It's not their fault, it's just the way it is. Mom always watched over everybody and she still does.
Double: Good old Mom. Always watching. Does it bug me some of the time?
Florence: Yes, but there's no point in telling her.

The double does not emerge as a vivid aspect of Florence's personality. Rather, this double blends in with Florence, leading a bit here and there, but always strictly within the framework of Florence's words. If the double has a hunch about something that Florence is not saying, she waits until Florence almost says it and then asks a question. If Florence disagrees, the double will drop the argument. This is of course the most supportive—and, at the same time, the least dramatic—use of doubling. A client who has difficulty accepting what another person says about him or one who is frightened that the double will be able to "read his mind" will have the least difficulty with this type of doubling. Anyone not used to having a double or a protagonist who is showing signs of anxiety can be reassured by these techniques. The client who flatly denies the double's statements and uses them to fall out of role ("That isn't right, that isn't what I think at all") can work more successfully with a neutral double than with other types of doubling. When the protagonist expresses confusion or helplessness, the double can switch to the neutral, supportive role.

The Humorous Double

This double—well suited to my own style—is rendered effective by a quality that often deadens a psychodrama: the colorless, flat quality of the protagonist. The humorous double can exaggerate Florence's slow, quiet way of talking in order to get her to see what she is doing. Style is very important here. Humor always requires a light touch. The double must have enough sensitivity to stop and adopt a more serious style when necessary. She has to be at ease with her own sense of humor before she can use it therapeutically. If she inhibits what she's doing because she thinks Florence will be hurt or embarrassed, Florence will sense her inhibition. They will get stymied. On the other hand, she may be comfortable enough to go ahead, knowing that Florence might be taken aback at first but in the hope that she will be accepted momentarily.

Florence: There's not any point in telling my mom that it bugs me when she waits up for me all hours of the night. She'd still do it.
Double: There's no point in telling mom anything.
Florence: Well, I wouldn't want to hurt her feelings.
Double: I'm a very good girl. I don't hurt people's feelings.
Florence: It's true. I've just never been the kind of person who could just speak up and say anything.
Double: I'm too good.
Florence: I don't mean it that way.
Double: I don't even have any bad thoughts. At least not about my mother.
Florence: Oh, shut up!
Double: She's really getting to me now! I'm going to see if I can get out of this. But what if I hurt my double's feelings?
Florence: No, I'm not worrying about that. (*Laughs.*)
Double: What do I want to say to my mom about the other night?
Florence: I'd like her to just leave me alone more. Let me come and go as I wish.

The humorous double uses exaggeration in a good-natured attempt to bring emotions or defenses into awareness. John says, "I

don't think I could even talk to my wife about this." His double says, "I'd probably disappear," or "I'm really weak" (slumping in his chair in an attitude of total weakness), or "My God! I might get angry and then she might get angry and then what?"

Mary complains about her loneliness. Her double may say, "No one else has ever felt like this. This is really unique. Because this is the kind of loneliness you can't do anything about." Or, "I certainly wasn't going to call anybody to talk about this. That would have spoiled it."

John says, "I've given up telling my kids what to do. They're over eighteen. They're on their own." His double says, "Now I just tell them how I expect them to run their lives. I don't tell them what to do. Just Dan about watching what he eats—he's overweight—and I want John to work with me, and I don't think Jane is ready to get married. That's all."

The most important aspect of humorous doubling is the double's willingness to be flexible. The double must know when to stop. The director can assist by encouraging John to fight with his double if he doesn't like what he's saying or ask John whether he understands the group's laughter and, if not, to ask what it was about, etc. When successful, this double often stimulates change. *It's hard to continue doing the same thing seriously once you've laughed at yourself in public. You're in this group where they're all supposed to be serious about their problems and everybody's laughing. Maybe it's not so bad as all that.*

The Empassioned Double

Psychodrama helps express feeling. Often, the protagonist's intense, passionate emotion is betrayed by her tension, body posture, or the tremor in her voice. But she can't express what she feels. Her voice remains quiet, her words colorless, her body posture rigid. The double, on the other hand, is free to express strong feeling. The double may exaggerate in order to show the protagonist a way to come out of hiding, to express emotion through language and the body. The cautions are many. The double's personal feelings about expressing strong emotion are important. *If I can't tolerate the expression of strong emotion myself, I'll be pretending or overacting and I'll distance, rather than teach. . . . I don't want to become so wound up in my portrayal*

that I forget that I'm doubling for someone else. The double must continually check with the protagonist and use any opportunity that may help the protagonist express the emotion herself.

Florence:	I'd like my mother to leave me alone more. Let me come and go as I wish.
Double:	I want her off my back! I'm sick of being watched!
Florence:	She doesn't mean it that way.
Double:	I know she doesn't mean it that way but I feel it that way. Christ, why do I have to worry about her all the time! She does what she wants to do.
Florence:	I'd like to tell her to stop being so nosy.
Double:	I'd like to tell her I'm sick of it. But I'm afraid.
Florence:	Why am I so scared to get mad at her?
Double:	Why? Why? It's easier to think about that than to get mad at her, that's for sure. And I am really angry. (*Yelling.*) I'm sick and tired of being treated like a little kid!
Florence:	(*breaking out of the scene and looking at the director*) I wish I could talk that way. (*Laughs.*)

At this point, the director must pay close attention to the double and the protagonist. She may ask Florence to pick someone to play the role of her mother. (If this process looks like it may take long enough to break the dramatic tension, the director may wish to pick someone to play Florence's mother.)

The director says, "Here's your mother, Florence. How about trying to say some of the stuff that's hard for you to say. Use whatever your double said that fits and say it to your mother."

The double also stays in the scene and continues to model strong emotional responses for Florence. The rule that only Florence can hear her double helps encourage Florence to become bolder.

The empassioned double reduces conflicts to their bare essentials. John wants to talk about the "relationship" between himself and his wife. Jack, doubling for him, tells her: "You don't love me," or "I've hated you for years," or "I'm jealous of the kids," or "I love you and I want you and I think you're going to leave me."

Jane tells her husband, "Our trouble is that we don't communicate." Mary doubles for her and says: "You haven't talked to me

about anything but business in fifteen years," or "I can't stand your silence another day. Sometimes I think I'll scream just to get some noise into the house!" or "I don't even think you know who I am anymore. You and the boys and fishing, me and the girls and PTA, and money. That's all we talk about. Who are you?"

John says, "I think we've drifted apart." His double Jack says, "I don't think you want me to touch you anymore," or "You're cold with me. I'm scared of you."

Jane says, "I think we've drifted apart." Mary, her double, says, "You don't see me as a woman anymore. I'm the lady that talks to you at breakfast and dinner and keeps your house and your children clean. I want you to hold me."

Mother says, "My children are members of the new generation. I don't understand them." Her double says: "I've failed with them. They're all crazy and they'll come to no good." Or, "They don't appreciate me. After all I've done for them. And now I'm all alone and they don't care." Or, "I'm furious with those kids. They use the house, my money, my car. And I let them. I'd like to throw those leeches out, them and all their friends."

Love. Anger. Tenderness. Self-pity. Protectiveness. Fear of death. Fear. So often, strong emotions become the subtext of a superficially banal conversation; they are betrayed only by a gesture, a tightening of the body, a breath quickly drawn, an "inappropriate" tear. The double's role is to bring the subtext to the surface. The advantage is that John's and Mary's cues are easy to read. We want to be known. *If my double is on the right track, I'm rooting for her to keep it up. If she's wrong, I tell her right away or I don't respond or I get bored. But it feels really good when she's saying something I need to say.*

The greatest obstacle to teaching humorous and empassioned doubling is our culture's caution about being "emotional." People who are free enough, open enough, loud enough, and soft enough to express strong emotions are hard to find. Those who judge the latter uncool, corny, or soap-operatic (depending on the age group) abound.

The Oppositional Double

Whenever our protagonist makes a suspiciously strong statement—especially when protesting too much—the double argues the opposite point just as vehemently.

Florence:	I hate my parents.
Double:	I love my parents, they take care of me.
Florence:	I'm tired of my boyfriend. I'm going to tell him I can't take his drinking anymore.
Double:	I love him. At least he lets me take care of him. No one else does.
Florence:	I'm not going to drink anymore. I know now that it's just stupid. I have to confront my problems.
Double:	I can't confront my problems. They're too terrible. I know I'll drink some more.

Sometimes this technique is used with two doubles:

Florence:	I don't know what I'll do when my mother-in-law arrives.
Double 1:	I'll tell her to leave.
Double 2:	I'll tell her to stay.
Florence:	I just can't face her. I'll leave a message with one of the kids.
Double 1:	That'll get her!
Double 2:	But what if I hurt her feelings and she gets upset?

These doubles intend to surprise Florence: to confront her with feelings which she has but does not usually admit to others or even herself, to show her alternatives, to entice her into conducting arguments she never thought possible. The director's job is to encourage Florence to argue with her double, lest the scene be one-sided and Florence simply let her double talk on without facing any of the conflicts implicit in her ambivalence.

Physicalizing the Double

Just as body language can be used as a way to gather information about how it feels to be the protagonist, the double's body language can show the protagonist another part of himself. Most often, the double gets her cues from the protagonist. If there is any inconsistency between what John, the protagonist, says and how his body looks, the double has a chance to dramatize his body language.

John: (*sitting very stiffly, hardly moving a muscle in his face as he talks*) I like people. I always have. I'm easy-going.

Double: (*mirroring and exaggerating the nonverbal cues*) I like people but I don't like them to come very close. I don't let them see very much of me.

John: That's not true. I have very good friends.

Double: (*in a monotone voice*) It's just that if I moved my face it might upset them. (*I know that John alternates between a show of great bravery and independence and total collapse—to the extent that he needs periodic hospitalization, and I use this information to make a point.*)

John: I've learned a lot here and I think I'm going to be alright this time.

Double: (*looking very weak, slouched down in the chair, speaking in a small voice*) But what about me? Who's going to take care of me when I get nervous?

John: Come on, I'm not so nervous anymore.

Double: (*leaning over and grasping John's hand*) I feel really helpless, somebody has to do something for me.

John: (*undoing the double's hands, beginning to laugh*) Come on, take care of yourself, you baby.

Double: But I'm the baby part of John. I need somebody (*clasping John's hand and sliding onto the floor, hanging on to him in an obvious attempt to drag him down*).

John: Look, you can stand up on your own two feet. (*He disentangles himself and looks around the group, helpless, exasperated, amused.*)

Group members and the director team up to encourage him to fight the double, who has started to drag him down again. The struggle continues. John wins. John's physical victory over his double is cheered by the group. This is one instance where I do not insist that both double and protagonist use the form "I." It is clear that the double is playing a specific part of John, a part with which John is in great conflict. If this conflict takes the "I'm trying to get rid of you" form, it is realistic enough. There is no doubt that John is struggling with a part of himself.

I do not suggest using this type of doubling with inexperienced group members. John needs to trust his double. If he loses, he hears

his double saying, "I guess I'm not so strong after all. I can't even get this double of mine on his feet." Winning isn't easy because the double can be just as stubborn as he is. The struggle is outrageously theatrical. Both double and protagonist have to be willing to risk appearing ludicrous. The goal is to anchor the message in John's body. Once he has actually struggled with this helpless part of himself it's harder to forget it, or to forget that he is strong. If John is depressed, engaging him in this battle is an almost certain temporary cure. *It's hard to stay depressed when your blood's rushing through your head, your breath is coming fast, and the crowd is cheering you on to victory.* This is an exercise in trust. John must accept his double as representing a part of himself—that is necessary for any doubling—but he must also trust his double not to hurt him or let him get out of control.

The Double as Counselor

Often, psychodrama grants a magic wish: "If I only could have thought then what I think now. If I only could have told him that then. Psychodrama gives the protagonist a chance to take time out, right in the middle of an argument. Florence and Fred are going at it:

Florence:	You do this to me one more time and I'm leaving.
Fred:	You don't mean you'd leave me over a little thing like coming home late because I had to work overtime?
Florence:	Oh no you don't! I'm not going to get caught arguing with you again. You know it isn't the first time! We've argued about this over and over again.
Florence's double:	There I go, caught right in the argument I wanted to avoid.
Director:	Florence, why don't you take some time out with your double to think about what you want to do next. Maybe you two could walk around together, talking about this situation. Fred, could you just wait while they do this? I'll give you and your double a chance to do the same later.
Florence:	It's true, I always say I'm not going to argue and then I do.

Double: What do I really want?
Florence: I want him to apologize.
Double: That's what I want him to do, what do I want?
Florence: I want him to see I'm right.
Double: What do I want? What am I feeling?
Florence: I feel so hurt and I wish he could see that.
Double: Could I tell him that?

At this point the director asks Florence to talk to Fred again, starting the scene on a new level.

The main objective of the double as counselor is to disentangle the protagonist from the repetitive game, from winning or losing since, chances are, both mean losing. The counselor's hope is that Florence will become aware of the pain which underlies the quick repartee. The counselor-double lets Florence know she can take time out, that real feelings can be stated, that the same old argument can change and become productive.

The Collective Double

There are many times—the best times in psychodrama—when the group becomes a true audience, following each moment as though each one of them was playing a role. As director, I can see they are taking sides. In the center of the room, Joan is accusing her husband, Hal, of being unwilling to respond to her emotionally. She is crying. I look at the other people in the group, totaling about 25. Many of the men are showing physical signs of anger. Teeth are clenched, jaws set, fists clenched. The women on the other hand, look frustrated and outraged. Some are raising their brows in an exasperated expression and looking at each other and nodding in sympathy. Joan just can't seem to get her point across, but they understand. They've been there. When the scene between Joan and Hal has gone as far as it can go, one of my options is to let the group join in a "collective double." I usually begin by commenting on what I've observed.

Director: I can see a lot of strong reactions here. You are feeling for Joan or for Hal. People seemed really involved in what Joan and Hal were doing. For now, I don't want

> you to talk about what you were feeling. Instead, I'd like you to put yourself in Joan or Hal's place. As Joan or Hal, what would you like to say right now? Start by saying who you are and then say what you feel needs saying. "I'm Joan and I just don't know what's happening," for example. People usually join in easily. "I'm Joan and it seems so obvious that I have to show all the emotion in this family." . . . "I'm Joan and I'd like to get you into a good argument because at least it would show you're alive." . . . "I'm Hal and I'm tired of your nagging" . . . "I'm Hal and I can't do anything right."

Some men begin to take the woman's part and vice versa. John says, "I'm Joan and I really feel stuck. I'm doing the best I can and everyone is down on me." Mary says, "I'm Hal and I'm afraid. I'm really angry and if I let that stuff out I don't know what I'd do."

While the group is doubling, I assess Joan's and Hal's ability to listen. If the scene has left them frustrated and confused, and if either one of them is the kind of person whose confusion quickly builds to a paranoid feeling (*None of them understand, they're all against me*), I may want to limit the time of the collective double, or I may want to add some controls for Hal and Joan. Before we begin, I may tell them that I'd like them to just listen to the others for awhile, but if listening becomes difficult to let us know. I may simply ask them to comment if I notice a strong reaction. Or I may make a rule that Hal or Joan say a sentence in response to each of their doubles. If that is the choice, a voice from the group is always followed by Hal or Joan. Hal and Joan can express their reactions as they occur and the overwhelming cumulative effect of a dozen different Joans and Hals is avoided.

If Hal and Joan seem to me to be able to tolerate the ambiguity and confusion arising from the collective double, I ask them not to comment while the doubling is going on, just to listen. The group can then let off steam, building on each other's comments to say many of the things that they have held back both during the scene and with their own spouses.

When the doubling is over, there are several options. If Hal and Joan have not been talking, I ask them to do so. They need to

express some of the feelings they've held back during the collective double—a one-way conversation always builds up frustration in the listener. I want to know what it was like to have so many doubles. If I find out that it was upsetting, I'll want to work now on Hal or Joan's feelings of being misunderstood by the group. If I find out that it was interesting or exciting, I'll want to know what Hal or Joan learned, what or who particularly touched them. I may then want to go back to working with Hal and Joan, starting a new dialogue with a sentence that Hal learned from the collective double.

I often use the collective double as a way of arriving at some closure after a difficult scene. No matter how ill-matched the people, how tenaciously stubborn the fighters, how well-rehearsed the conflicts, the group's expectation of a psychodrama is that there will be a resolution and "they will live happily ever after." (More about this in "Closure," chapter 16.) However, in actuality, an enactment often ends in an impasse. Hal and Joan continue the game ad infinitum; he is strong and silent, she rants and raves, neither gives an inch. The frog remains a frog and the princess a princess. The group is frustrated and disappointed. In the collective double, group members have a chance to vent frustration without directing it against Hal and Joan or the group. John may be inclined to say, "Joan, why don't you lay off him? All you ever do is pick fights." This would nail us tightly into the middle of the blame frame; Joan would feel attacked and attack back and the hopelessness of the discussion would pervade the room. If on the other hand, John says, "I'm Hal and I just feel so attacked by Joan, I don't know what to do," the content is the same but Joan is not being attacked; instead Hal is being invited to deal with his feelings. John may be inclined to say, "This group isn't helping. They aren't getting any better." Obviously, this is a tempting pathway for venting frustrations: It isn't that I'm not working at changing, it's that the group isn't helping me. If John says instead, "I'm Hal and I feel like nothing's changing. We're just doing the same thing over and over again," the problem of responsibility for change is laid on Hal's own shoulders, where it belongs. The collective double serves to clear the air. Group members have a chance to say what they've been storing up. Once the feelings are out, there's less need to blame or to insist on magic solutions. We are free to experience each other as people embroiled in complicated interactions occurring on many levels. We've each of us felt some of what Hal and Joan are stuck with. It isn't easy.

The Stubborn Double

All methods of doubling can be used by the same person during the same scene—consecutively, interchangeably, what you will—and all of them can be botched by the stubborn double. Nothing is worse than the double who cannot take no for an answer.

Florence: I'm sorry to see them leave.
Double: I'm angry at them.
Florence: I'm not angry at them. I'll miss them.
Double: I'm really angry at them.
Florence: I don't know, I just don't feel angry at them.
Double: I still feel angry, really angry.
(*Etc., etc.*)

Obviously, this scene can go on forever. If the double is insensitive to the protagonist, she may become a sort of psychological saleslady, putting pressure on Florence, who either does not have or is not ready to face the feelings her double attributes to her.

The double does not lead. She is there to help the protagonist become more aware of her feelings, and help her see alternative choices. The double must never force her own individuality on the protagonist. She takes her cues from the protagonist. Florence could play her role in the scene without the double. The double could not be in the role without Florence.

Doubling for Florence I am filled with questions: *How would I feel if I were Florence? There. I said how I'd feel. Is she accepting it? No? Should I give it one more try? Was it a bored lack of acceptance or a passionate denial? If it's the latter, I think I'll give it one more try. Is she tensing up? Is she aware of it? Am I making her uncomfortable? Too much so to keep working? Can I be quiet and see where she takes this scene for a little while? Can I wait for her to give me the next cue?* The more questions I ask, the more material I gather for doubling, the less stubborn I'll be.

DOUBLING AS AN ADJUNCT TO THERAPY

Because doubling is one of the most flexible instruments of psychodrama, its use is easily extended to therapy. I have used doubling during sessions of both family and individual therapy. I use it most

frequently for one of two reasons: either because someone is not talking, or because he's talking too glibly. In the first case, my questions are answered with silence; in the second, I find myself wishing for a quiet moment. In both instances, continuing to talk seems to make matters worse.

I had been seeing the Jones family for several weeks without making any headway with their fourteen-year-old daughter, Julie. While the rest of the family talked about problems they had with each other, or tried to talk about their problems with Julie to me, Julie just sat. She seemed alert and sensitive, but questions directed to her were usually answered with a sullen shrug of the shoulders—at most, a quick "yes" or "no." Needless to say, the family had originally come in because of their concern with Julie, who had got into a conflict with her parents over drugs.

For one of our sessions, the father had brought in a tape recording of Julie when she was allegedly on drugs and stated that he wished to play it for me. His tone was so judgmental that I had the feeling that if I cooperated with him, Julie would never open her mouth. I moved over to sit near her and said, "Julie, I have a hunch you want to say something to your dad about playing the tape." Julie, of course, shrugged her shoulders disdainfully. I continued, "Maybe we could do it together. I'd like to think out loud with you about the tape, first. I'll just be another part of you, OK?" Julie looked puzzled but didn't object.

"Let's see, I'm Julie," I said, beginning to double, "and Dad really brought the tape! I didn't think he'd go through with it. Wow! I am really mad. Doesn't he know I have feelings?"

Julie's eyes brightened a little.

I was concerned about Julie's father. Would he see me as taking his daughter's side against him? So far, he looked interested. I continued, "I'm really upset and when I'm upset I just can't talk. Especially not to them."

Julie nodded her head in surprise.

"Which doesn't mean I don't have anything to say. I really do want to talk to Dad about bringing that tape, don't I?"

Julie nodded again, more vigorously.

Here's my chance, I thought to myself. "Could I take a chance on saying it even if he doesn't understand it? Just to get it off my own

chest? What do I want to say to Dad?" There was a long pause; Julie looked at me; I gave her an encouraging look.

"You shouldn't have brought that tape, Dad."

Julie began to vent some of her anger. At last, the silent treatment was over. Dad moralized in response, telling Julie he had made and brought the tape for her own good.

Again, I doubled for Julie, "See, talking doesn't do any good. I tell him I'm upset and he doesn't even hear me. He just goes on in the same old way. Why should I tell him anything? I don't think he knows I'm upset, even."

Julie nodded her head vigorously.

I made another attempt to get her unstuck. "Could I ask him if he has any idea what I'm upset about?"

Julie agreed and let her dad know that he was humiliating her.

Dad acknowledged her embarrassment. A beginning was made. During further sessions with the family, I used doubling not only with Julie, but for the parents as well.

Doubling enabled me to get out of the "teenager versus grownups" game and show my empathy for Julie without either patronizing her or validating her symptoms. In talking with the family later, I found that my fear of her dad's resentment had been groundless. He had suffered Julie's silences so long that any answer from her—even if it was negative in feeling and coming to him via the therapist—was a relief.

Doubling helps work with teenagers whose first reactions to therapy reflect their rebellious relationships to authority. Asked the usual questions ("What brings you here? . . . How are you feeling about that? . . . What can I do to help? . . . Could you tell me more about that?"), the teenager often responds with stubborn silence, or answers contemptuously. He is well rehearsed in these routines; doubling throws him off. Surprisingly, the teenager who refused to answer "How are you feeling?" often begins to respond when faced with a therapist double, who, sitting beside and a little behind him, says, "I feel terrible. Why did I have to come?" Teenagers are not the only subgroups likely to respond to therapy with recalcitrance. The person of a different race, the prisoner—anyone who feels that the system's cards are stacked against him—will respond more easily to indirect techniques.

My next example comes from individual therapy. During the few months I had been seeing Steven, each of us had changed how we saw the other. To begin with, I viewed him as an unusually literate, articulate young man, cleverly setting intellectual traps for me. There were subtle allusions, tests of memory, tests of my ability to tolerate his liberal views. I had passed with flying colors and we had spent the first few weeks sharing a delightful excitement. He was a smart client, I was a smart therapist; we were well matched and enjoyed jockeying for position. To my chagrin, this phase lasted longer than I had expected. Steven was reluctant to enter the realm of feelings. The closest we could get to his blocking of emotion was to talk about the trap. He knew that even when he wanted tell me something he was afraid of, he found himself blocked by distrust not only of me, but also of his own ability to recount the incident truthfully. There were traps within traps. Talking about this process wasn't enough; Steven continued dry and aloof, unable to get in touch with what I suspected were overwhelming feelings of loneliness and despair.

As we talked about his difficulties with his whiny, self-abnegating, mousy mother, it was obvious that he understood her problems and his own reactions to them—and that understanding wasn't enough. His talk was devoid of feelings. I began to sense a kind of sneering contempt in his intellectualization and began to double.

Eva: If I'm you, I'm really bored with telling this story. I've told it to shrinks before. It never does any good, right?

Steven: (*laughs*) Right.

Eva: I'm sick of my mother's whining and I'm sick of my own whining.

Steven: I don't whine. (*Steven objects strongly; I let him know by a nod of my head that I hear him.*)

Eva: I don't whine like she does, thank God for that. But I'm sick of talking about things. About her. It never does any good.

Steven: That's for sure.

Eva: I feel strongly about her but I don't show it.

Steven: I don't know what I feel. (*His mouth gets a stubborn look.*)

Eva: I really hate her.

Steven: It's true. I remember going into her bedroom and taking one of her favorite scarves and stuffing it in the garbage

> can. (*Finally, Steven is in touch with his feelings. He is speaking with a great deal of vehemence now.*)

Doubling proved to be one of the only pathways to emotion. For the rest of the hour, Steven was in touch with a part of himself he had locked away: the hate-filled little boy, afraid to talk back to his mother for fear of hurting her, yet filled with rage at her selfishness, her self-destructiveness, her weaknesses. We could now see some of the roots of his own lifelessness and his continuing fear of asserting his anger, especially with women.

Doubling can be the heart of psychodrama. These vignettes represent some of its uses in various settings.