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Sinopsis

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The Culture of the Copy is a novel attempt to make sense of the Western fascination with replicas, duplicates, and twins. In a work that is breathtaking in its synthetic and critical achievements, Hillel Schwartz charts the repercussions of our entanglement with copies of all kinds, whose presence alternately sustains and overwhelms us. This updated edition takes notice of recent shifts in thought with regard to such issues as biological cloning, conjoined twins, copyright, digital reproduction, and multiple personality disorder. At once abbreviated and refined, it will be of interest to anyone concerned with problems of authenticity, identity, and originality. Through intriguing, and at times humorous, historical analysis and case studies in contemporary culture, Schwartz investigates a stunning array of simulacra: counterfeits, decoys, mannequins, and portraits; ditto marks, genetic cloning, war games, and camouflage; instant replays, digital imaging, parrots, and photocopies; wax museums, apes, and art forgeries -- not to mention the very notion of the Real McCoy.

Working through a range of theories on biological, mechanical, and electronic reproduction, Schwartz questions the modern esteem for authenticity and uniqueness. The Culture of the Copy shows how the ethical dilemmas central to so many fields of endeavor have become inseparable from our pursuit of copies -- of the natural world, of our own creations, indeed of our very selves. The book is an innovative blend of microsociology, cultural history, and philosophical reflection, of interest to anyone concerned with problems of authenticity, identity, and originality.

Praise for the first edition

"[T]he author...brings his considerable synthetic powers to bear on our uneasy preoccupation with doubles, likenesses, facsimiles, replicas and re-enactments. I doubt that these cultural phenomena have ever been more comprehensively or more creatively chronicled.... [A] book that gets you to see the world anew, again." -- The New York Times

"A sprightly and disconcerting piece of cultural history" -- Terence Hawkes, London Review of

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Books

"In The Culture of the Copy, [Schwartz] has written the perfect book: original and repetitive at once." -- Todd Gitlin, Los Angeles Times Book Review