

## Classification of a Self:

### An Essay on Identity in Alphabetical Order

#### **Amy Adams**

The day after my sister's family watched *Night at the Museum 2*, she told me that every time Amy Adams came on as Amelia Earhart, my two-year-old nephew would say, "It's Biz!"—calling out my family nickname. One of my friends calls me Giselle, from Amy Adams's *Enchanted*. And shortly after the movie was released, random strangers commented about our similarities upon meeting me. Once a guy approached and asked if he could take my picture. He saved the photo on his phone as "Giselle".

#### **Bonnie**

In third grade, an older neighbor lady confused me for a Bonnie she knew. She recognized me as Bonnie, addressed me as Bonnie, and asked me about Bonnie's family. I told her again and again I am not Bonnie, I am Elizabeth, but she could not get it out of her mind that the young, small, redhead standing in front of her was Bonnie.

I finally replied that yes, my mother is doing well, thank you.

#### **Chelsea's Friend**

Chelsea and I had only been roommates for a week when I caught her staring at me, again. "You remind me so much of my friend. You look exactly like her. You even act the same." I didn't ask her to elaborate.

## **Doppelganger**

“Here, Elizabeth, come look at this—I’ve found your doppelganger.” Richelle, a coworker, beckoned me to her computer screen where I found pictures of a Conservative columnist with long auburn hair and angular, plastic-frame glasses, like me. Her facial features were similar to mine—fine, longish, pale. “Ever since meeting you, I’ve thought you two look exactly alike. Don’t you think?” I had to admit, this face was the most similar to mine of all the celebrities I’ve been compared to. But now, two years from this conversation, I can’t remember the politician’s name. It might have been S.E. Cupp, it might have been someone completely different. I didn’t keep her name in my mind for long.

## **Ellen Page**

We are both small, sure, but that couldn’t explain the growing swarm of people who took to calling me Juno. What’s really similar are our mannerisms. My roommate started pointing out whenever I did “the Juno look” and begged me to do my impression of a particular scene from the movie involving a Kraken impression. Surfing the web, I found the biographical fact sheet of Juno’s actress, Ellen Page. We were born on the same day, exactly one year apart.

## **Field of Selves**

Wayne Booth examined his multiple selves, titling his autobiography *My Many Selves*. He even included a detailed and extensive catalogue of his various selves, including Cheerful Wayne Booth, Satirist WB, Loyal Husband WB, Subversive WB, Arrogant Bastard WB. In confronting his field of selves, Booth hoped to find a “plausible harmony,” wondering if this harmony will erase his “Self Splits.”

## **Ginger**

I am all too often called a ginger.

A ginger, according to Urban Dictionary: “A human, characterized by pale skin, freckles, and bright red hair. ‘Gingers’ are generally considered to be inferior to their more melanin-rich brethren, and thus deservingly discriminated against. Gingers are thought to have no souls.”

I am not a ginger. My hair color is clearly auburn.

## **Holly**

I live with a girl who looks nothing like me. She has milk chocolate hair, California-tanned skin, and a rounder face shape with apple cheeks and almond eyes. In a photo collage above her bed hangs a picture of her laughing, looking sidelong at the camera, the exposure a little too washed out. Whenever my eyes glance at the collage, that is the only image that I see.

Every time, I think I am recognizing my own face.

## **Isla Fischer**

I have never been told I look like Isla Fischer, yet another actress, a fellow redhead, small and spunky.

## **Julia Roberts**

When I was a pre-teen I had this fantasy that Julia Roberts would adore me. I’d write her a fan letter, and she’d invite me to come visit for summer vacation. She’d discover that we really were very much alike, and I’d become a mini-Julia, replacing my flat auburn hair for her loud red mane, my tiny

mouth for her wide, pretty smile, my 5' frame for her 5'9 slender height. Look, Julia, I'd say. Your first film was released on the day I was due to be born.

## **Knowing**

I know who I am. Right?

## **Lindsay Lohan**

I was ten when Disney's *The Parent Trap* came out, starring twelve-year-old Lindsay Lohan as twins: California tomboy Hallie and poised British Annie. For a while there, people told me I could have been in *The Parent Trap*.

Lindsay Lohan wasn't so bad to be compared to, and then she went delinquent.

## **Me**

Last night I met a younger version of myself walking down the street. I was about seven or eight and at first I recognized me by my memories. At seven or eight, I had splatters of dark freckles consuming my face, deep auburn hair, a small body and a spunk that came out when my guard was down.

I recognized me, but I did not recognize me back. My face has lost its freckles, my hair is growing lighter. My frame is still small and I hope I still have a spunk. The longer my seven-year-old self stood near me on the street, the more of my twenty-five-year-old characteristics I took on. At first, I was young and carefree, wild and filled with wonder, but after a few minutes, I quickly morphed into stressed, neurotic, obsessive jabber about grad school.

I quickly walked away, leaving me broken, thinking it best I leave before I adulterate much more of myself with myself.

## **Names**

When I google “Elizabeth Brady,” I find a shoe designer in New York, an MD in Connecticut, attorneys. RateMyProfessors.com lists three other Elizabeth Bradys, in Florida, Pennsylvania, and Louisiana. Plus me. I wonder about these other Elizabeth Bradys. Does our name determine some sameness about us?

I also love shoes, lived for a summer in Connecticut, worked for the Attorney General. Of the professors Elizabeth Brady, two teach in the Communication field and the third in Behavioral Sciences. I teach writing. I am a writer, communicating about behaviors.

## **Occupied**

Elizabeth Brady is *me*.

## **Pisces**

With a February 21 birthday, I am a Pisces.

“The Pisces personality is hard to pin down, it is very mysterious and elusive. Pisces are molded by their surroundings, they incorporate their experiences and surroundings into themselves. Even though Pisces will offer to make everything right, do not allow them to take on all your problems because they will lose their identity in your situation. Pisces are prone to drug addiction and indulging lifestyles because of their eternal search for themselves.”

The image of Pisces is two fish swimming in opposite directions, which represents the “duality within Piscean nature.” Even though they are a pair, in every language but one the word Pisces is singular—one fish containing two selves.

## **Quilting**

Last Christmas, I watched my mother turn a pile of scraps into one piece, stitching square to square, four inches of seams at a time until she accumulated enough for a lap quilt. She showed me how to bind the layers together—topper, batting, backing—forming one blanket.

Hunching over the quilt, my mother leaned her head far to the left—a longstanding habit of hers. In photographs, the leaning always appears most strongly; every picture of her features a big smile on a tilt.

Lately, my neck aches at the end of the day. I’ve been leaning my head far to the left when listening to lectures, when writing, when talking to friends.

## **Redhead**

We are better able to see the individual differences between those of our own ethnicity—the own-race bias. On the other side of the coin is the other-race effect: our inability to recognize differences between individuals among those of other ethnicities.

Redheads come in orange, strawberry blonde, copper, auburn, manufactured. There’s the typical Scotch-Irish curling flames, or straight and thin. Not to forget about thick and frizzy, and any combination of colors and textures. Some redheads can tan; most can’t. Eye colors have options, too: green, blue, hazel, or gray.

Even encompassing its variations, red hair is the rarest natural hair color. Perhaps my red head is my ethnicity. Maybe blondes and brunettes and everyone in between only see me through the other-race effect. I am recognized as *not* them; I am recognized as “redhead.”

### **Snowflakes**

From their conception of water vapor around a speck of dust, and then on to crystallization, mixed with continual condensing, gravity, temperature, time, and humidity, no two snowflakes are identical. To a naked eye, many white drops may look incredibly similar, but upon closer inspection, every snowflake claims its own place within snowflake identity.

### **Twins**

My younger sister is six years my junior. She has brown hair that blondes fiercely in summertime, and she likes to keep it short. I have auburn hair I have never dyed and wear as a flowing sheet around my shoulders. She has brown skin that browns more in any amount of sun. My white legs are only capable of reflecting sunlight. She is an hourglass; I, a rectangle. She has large brown eyes and is quick to smile; my small hazel eyes observe the world and I sometimes forget I can be seen.

During the summer of 2008, our family went on a trip to the East coast. My sister and I were inseparable, often walking with one of our arms slung over the other’s shoulder. When we visited one historical site, the tour guide asked my dad, “Are those two twins?”

### **Unique**

Jacques Lacan identified the Mirror Stage: the point of self-discovery we make as toddlers

playing with our reflection in a mirror—when we finally recognize the shape in the mirror is ourselves. We start to form an impression of ourselves, newly able to recognize our physical appearance and place in our surroundings.

“Because we have not yet learned language or learned to take on the images that the rest of society has for us, [this] is the very first such image that we take on and is a unique experience. All other self-images occur after we have learned language and started interacting with others, and so all other self-images are constructs of *other*.”

### **Variant**

A form or version of something that differs in some respect from other forms of the same thing.

### **Which of These Things is Not like the Others**

I am the seventh child in a family of ten kids, plus Mom and Dad. I am the only redhead. Growing up, my older brother loved to tease me, to tell me I was switched at birth with another baby in the hospital. A brunette, probably.

### **Xerox**

“Copycat” was the worst insult as a kid. Now my best friend and I are merging, saying the same thing at the same time, favoring the same expressions, employing identical intonation. I do the same thing with my boyfriend. And my sister.

Who’s copying whom?



**You**

Not me.

**Zoology**

The structure, evolution, classification, habits, and distribution of all animals. In 1758, Carl Linnaeus started binomial nomenclature for zoology, the systematic naming of species according to their traits. From binomial nomenclature, we get *Homo sapiens*, or *Person redhead*, or *Brady elizabeth*.