

## EXPERIMENT(ING) ON THE DOUBLE WITH JULIAN BARNES

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### ABSTRACT

The theme of the double has been recurrent in the history of literature. In “Experiment” (1995), Julian Barnes adapts this myth to Postmodernism: multiplicity of voices, reflection on the identity, rewriting of (hi)story, scepticism, irony, experimentation and a need of active readership. Indeed, active readership will be required to see the double but also to dismantle it. For this purpose, this paper analyses the characters of this short story and categorises them following the hypothesis of the neurologist Antonio R. Damasio concerning the construction of the self. The aim of this paper is to deconstruct this short story in order to see how Barnes has been able to create the paradox of a double with only one body and one self.

### KEYWORDS

Active readership, double, multilayered narrative, Postmodernism, self.

### EXPERIMENT(AND)O CON EL DOBLE CON JULIAN BARNES

### RESUMEN

El tema del doble ha sido recurrente en la historia de la literatura. En “Experimento” (1995), Julian Barnes adapta este mito al Postmodernismo: multiplicidad de voces, reflexión sobre la identidad, reescritura de la(s) historia(s), escepticismo, ironía, experimentalismo y necesidad de lectores activos. En efecto, hace falta un lector activo para ver el doble, pero también para desmantelarlo. Con este propósito, este artículo analiza los personajes de este relato y los clasifica siguiendo la hipótesis del neurólogo Antonio R. Damasio sobre la construcción del yo. El objetivo de este artículo es deconstruir el relato a fin de ver cómo Barnes ha podido crear la paradoja de un doble con un solo cuerpo y un solo yo.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Lector activo, doble, narrativa de múltiples niveles, Postmodernismo, yo.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There have been many attempts to define the theme of the literary double. One of the main problems, though, is that it has a very long history that can be traced back to Classical texts and folklore. Precisely, it was its presence in the latter that turned it into one of the key themes during Romanticism. However, far from being worn out, it was taken over by the following generation up to the present day. Needless to say, each period

has adapted it to its own principles and it has resulted in a great variety within the same theme.

This alleged flexibility of the double, however, has not escaped several attempts to categorise it and draw some limits. Nevertheless, if the job of the literary scholar consists in mapping literature and establishing the borders, authors enjoy crossing, blurring or even deleting them. Set in the postmodernist trend, Julian Barnes (Leicester, 1946) sets out a new way of presenting the double in his short story “Experiment” (1995). Thus, the aim of this paper is to deconstruct this short story in order to see how Barnes creates the paradox of a double with only one body and one self.

## 2. A BRIEF DISCUSSION ON THE CATEGORISATION OF THE DOUBLE

Even though several categorisations of the double are discussed below, a full historical account is not intended. Instead, different typologies are explained in order to show that the innovation of Barnes’ double in “Experiment” has not been anticipated by any of them. Furthermore, Barnes’ proposal breaks with the sinister nature of the double and the subjectivity problems that may arise from meeting yourself, common patterns in most categorisations.

To start with, Keppler and his literature of the ‘second self’ is a good example to analyse the definition of the double. He proposes this term to order this category and avoid the uncritical use of the ‘double’ type. Indeed, from the term itself can be inferred what his definition will be like: it is necessary to have two characters with their own and separate identities and bodies. Following this, Keppler develops seven types of doubles and a common element in all of them is that the second self is always a hazy and sinister self (in Vilella 2007: 133-4). Therefore, Keppler’s categorisation requires a revision of the literary corpus in order to determine which ones can be considered doubles and which cannot. For example, according to this perspective, a typical example of a double as *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Stevenson should not be considered as such anymore because the body is the same for both identities.

Doležel, in ‘A Semantics for Thematics: The Case of the Double’, offers one of the most well-known typologies of the double. He distinguishes between three different types. The first is the Orlando theme, also known as “reincarnation”. It consists in having “one and the same individual marked by the feature of personal identity, exist[ing] in two or more fictional worlds” (Doležel 1995: 94). Then, the self would still be the same in all reincarnations.

The second is the Amphytrion theme, also known as “doppelganger” or “identical twins”. It is based on “the coexistence in one and the same world of two individuals with distinct personal identities, but perfectly homomorphic in essential properties” (Doležel 1995: 94). Therefore, there would be two selves but these belong to two characters that only are physically indistinguishable.

The third is explicitly coined the theme of the double. It arises when two alternate embodiments of one and the same individual coexist in one and the same fictional world” (Doležel 1995: 94). In addition, Doležel considers it “the central, most conspicuous member of the thematic field of doubleness” (1995: 94). The double’s intrinsic feature, then, is that the same character can be present in two different embodiments in the same fictional world. The main difference between the Amphytrion theme and the theme of the double is that in the former, a self corresponds to each body; in the latter, either the same self can be in two different bodies or two selves are in the same body. Needless to say, such purity is rather odd and many medial cases can be spelled out. However, such prototypes help mapping the theme and labelling all cases in a position or between two of them.

The second distinction deals with the way the double is constructed. The double can arise from two separate individuals who are fused in the double; from the splitting in two of an originally simple individual; or from a metamorphosis process (Doležel 1995: 97-8). Bargalló adapts this categorisation and puts it in a rather simpler way as fusion, fission and metamorphosis (1994: 17). Doležel, though, still goes further and states that “the true essence of the theme can only be carried by simultaneous doubles” because their “face-to-face confrontation” is the best way to “exploit its full semantic, emotive and aesthetic potential” (1995: 99).

At this point it is enlightening to borrow Vilella’s concept of the “implicit double”. He reflects on the evolution of the theme of the double throughout literary history and takes a rather open-minded standpoint. For this purpose, he coins the “implicit double”, a concept that makes evident the impossibility of the pure double. Instead, all instances will be positioned somewhere in relation to that notion, even though such notion cannot be delimited (2007: 24). This perspective will let us discuss “Experiment” as a double even though for some scholars it would not be so.

### 3. “EXPERIMENT”

Julian Barnes’s experiments within the literary field are widely recognised (Guignery 2006: 1) and the theme of the double could not be an exception to it. Indeed, “Experiment” is not innocently entitled as such since it refers both to the actual experiment that takes place in the story and to the experimental use of form by Barnes. Indeed, Moseley considers it “Barnes’s finest short story” because “it’s witty, oblique, and sophisticated” and “in many ways it recapitulates themes and motifs from the novels” (1997: 162). It appeared for the first time on *The New Yorker* in July 1995 and was published in 1996 in *Cross Channel*, a collection of short stories by Julian Barnes.

The narrator tells the story of his uncle Freddy after his death and the publication of *Recherches sur la sexualité. Janvier 1928-août 1932*,<sup>1</sup> confirming Freddy’s presence in one of the Surrealist discussions. There, Freddy participates in one experiment in which he

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter, this work will be simply referred to as *Recherches*.

must tell the difference between an Englishwoman and a Frenchwoman by having blindfold sex with them. After this, he meets Kate and marries her. It is at the end of the story that the nephew realises that, according to *Recherches*, an Englishwoman referred to as “K.” was sometimes involved in the Surrealist experiments. Although it is only hinted through an analogy with wine, the suggestion is that the French and English women were actually Kate. The narrator’s function is to put order to the changing and even contradictory memories of his uncle and construct a coherent retelling with the inestimable support of *Recherches*.

Some could argue that this story is only a revision of the Amphytrion theme. In fact, it is true that just as in the comedies of errors, there is finally a correspondence one body/one self at the end of the story. However, in this case what is revealed at the end is that three embodiments (Kate, the Frenchwoman and the Englishwoman) correspond to one and the same individual (Kate). In addition, even when it can be considered an instance of the theme of the double, it is not produced by any of the processes mentioned below (fusion, fission and metamorphosis) and still can be argued that it reflects on the three processes at once. It could be the fission of Kate resulting in two different embodiments that, afterwards, are fused again to recover the original individual, Kate. Moreover, it could be even considered a case of metamorphosis in which the individual is presented in up to three different forms.

The problem in “Experiment” is that the coherence one body/one self is maintained throughout the whole narrative and the ambiguity comes from the field of discourse. This unity would be enough to be discarded as a double if we follow Keppler’s categorisation. In this case, though, duplicity is exclusively created through language: the reader, just as the narrator who reads *Recherches* and listens to his uncle’s version, can only access the story through language. One of the key facts is that neither Kate nor her embodiments are ever given the chance to talk. Therefore, the reader is not presented with any subjectivity crisis because the only point of view regarding what happened in the hotel room is Freddy’s. Wittily, Barnes places the key to the mystery as the concluding words by the narrator:

Apparently if you take a magnum and decant it into two separate bottles and put them into a blind tasting, then it’s extremely rare for even wily drinkers to guess that the wine in those two particular bottles is in fact the same one. People expect all the wines to be different, and their palates therefore insist that they are. She said it was a most revealing experiment, and that it almost always works. (p. 62)

Thus, the enigma itself is not presented to the reader till the end of the story, when the narrator refers to the evidence of *Recherches* concerning “K.” and the reader is given the key to solve it. Indeed, the fact that the narrator talks about wine when he could perfectly talk about his uncle’s experience leaves the door open to the reader’s interpretation. This aspect is one of the trademarks of Postmodernism and has become progressively accepted as a relevant aspect of the literary experience from the reader-response criticism. For example, Fusillo claims active readership as the last step to determine whether a case of

duplication can be actually considered a double (in Vilella 2007: 149). Blumenberg, commenting on the construction of myths, states that “myth has always already passed over into the process of reception, and it remains in that process no matter what violence is applied in order to break its bonds and to establish its final form” (1990: 270-1).

Certainly, visibility is the key word for the recognition of the double in this story: both the reader and Freddy are blindfolded in the experiments they take part in, respectively. Although Freddy still experiences it through his other senses, he does not provide any information about it except concerning smell, leaving the reader uninformed: “They both wore scent as a matter of fact. Quite strong scent. Not the same, of course” (p. 59). Yet, this indication is used to stress the difference between the two women. The effect is that Freddy prevents the reader from thinking they could be the same woman. This sets the dynamics of overt/covert: for something to be made apparent, something else must be concealed (Vázquez 1994: 57).

Other feelings he might have had are silenced because they deal with a taboo subject, sex: “Always made it a rule never to snitch on my lady friends” (p. 59). It is when his nephew throws some light on it that ambiguity emerges from silence: the analogy between the wine and Freddy’s experience is clearly drawn but, at the same time, the narrator cannot either confirm or deny it, but only suggest it. In addition, the analogy goes further and points to an important similarity within this story: both identity and wine change through time.

If wine sets the frame for the story both at the beginning and at the end, whisky sets the mood of the narrative. Uninhibition is required for the revealing of a tale that Freddy has “never told a living soul” (p. 54). The narrator proves to be wrong and drinking does not “simply help you bear the pain of things not happening” but in this case will eventually make things happen (p. 52).

Indeed, the theme of the double is already mentioned when the narrator quotes the transcript of his uncle’s participation in the discussion with the Surrealists. Freddy (addressed as “T.F.”) is asked about the principal differences between sexual relations with an Englishwoman and a Frenchwoman but he is unable to answer because he has not done it yet. Then, he makes a contribution that focuses on identity, another mainstay of Postmodernism:

“T.F.”: I used to look at these twin sisters, who were in all visible respects identical, and ask how far that identity continued.

Andre Breton: You mean, if you were having sexual relations with one, how could you tell it was she and not the other?

“T.F.”: Exactly. At the beginning. And this in turn provoked a further question. What if there were two people – women – who in their...

Andre Breton: In their sexual movements...

“T.F.”: In their sexual movements were exactly the same, and yet in all other respects were completely different.

Pierre Unik: Erotic doppelgangers yet social dispartes. (p. 50-1)

At the end of this dialogue, Freddy is still asked again to confirm he has not been in bed with a Frenchwoman. The insistence on this fact is just to disguise the real intentions they have in Freddy participating in a Surrealist experiment. The narrator reflects on this then says that:

when scientists employ volunteers to help with their research projects, they often withhold from these participants the true purpose of the test, for fear such knowledge might, wittingly or unwittingly, affect the purity of the process and the accuracy of the result. (p. 62)

Then, the Surrealist group plays a joke and paradoxically, makes Freddy perceive an “erotic doppelganger” by actually blindfolding him. The reader is invited to join the game to guess what actually happened, struggling through several narrative filters. By doing this, Barnes achieves a multiplicity of voices in a theme that has been basically monovocal, focusing on the identity crisis that the individual suffers when s/he knows about the presence of his/her own double. In addition, he also subverts the traditional double because the portrayal is deprived from a voice of its own. Paradoxically, the theme of the double becomes more subjective and objective at the same time. On the one hand, by filtering the experience through several layers of narrators, the double is more objective. On the other hand, since the double requires active readership to be completed, it is rather subjective because this depends on the reader’s interpretation. The relationship objectivity/subjectivity has been turned upside down: the reader is not offered a piece of writing where an individual wonders about his/her identity. Instead, the reader has the power to decide whether the character must be considered a double or not.

#### 4. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SELF

As it has been pointed out, the novelty in this short story is that we find a double but there is just one body and one self corresponding to it. It is the way others perceive it, rather than the personal experience what makes its existence possible. Indeed, the way this narrative is structured lets us talk about a self that is made up of the different voices which are present in the story. For this purpose, Damasio’s hypothesis proposing that the self is built in stages will prove very useful (2010: 180). Indeed, a fragmented vision of the construction of the self is what allows the double to emerge. Thus, Damasio’s hypothesis will help to deconstruct the internal structure of “Experiment”, characterised by a parallel construction of both the self and a multilayered narrative. However, the different stages proposed here should not be taken as mere labels but as critical categories that will let us, in general terms, decipher the intricacies of the self thanks to the knowledge of the human brain that an acclaimed neurologist as Antonio Damasio has.

#### 4.1. The protoself

The protoself is the first stage in the building of a conscious mind. Damasio defines this stage as “an integrated collection of separate neural patterns that map, moment by moment, the most stable aspects of the organism’s physical structure” (2010: 190). To put it in simpler words, the protoself is the set of images that we have in our mind of our own body. It consists of the interoceptive component and of the sensory portals (Damasio 2010: 190). The former is responsible for the primordial feelings like hunger, thirst or pain. The latter is what lets the following stage develop because it is through the sensory portals that the self can perceive what is outside the body. However, up to this stage, the protoself is not in charge of, for instance, seeing but of moving the eye musculature and adjusting the size of the lenses to make sight possible (2010: 197).

The case of Kate and her embodiments can be assimilated to the protoself. We cannot access anything of their consciousness. Indeed, her nephew describes her as if “there was something gauzy-scarved and secretive about her” (p. 51). There is no doubt that the secret it refers to is her past but it could also refer to the deepest stage of the self.

Kate’s embodiments are actually described in purely physical terms. Their only function is to be part of the experiment, performing sex. In addition, the allusions to duplicity when comparing the Frenchwoman and the Englishwoman reinforce the sense of ‘the stable aspects’ of the self Damasio refers to when the protoself is defined. Both of them were given the same instructions and the only differences that Freddy can tell is that they use different perfumes (probably dictated by the Surrealist group so that he did not suspect it was the same woman) and that the French lass licked the raindrops from his face. Freddy tells that it had rained both days but only one of the two women reacts this way. Is it enough to establish they are not the same person? This question about the possibility of change brings our discussion to the next stage of the self.

#### 4.2. The core self

As the sensory portals are what let the mind interact with the outer world, they are also held responsible for the construction of the core self. Perspective is defined from the sensory portals and once the protoself has access to the objects that surround the body, there emerges a primordial feeling of “knowing the object”. The saliency of an object makes necessary the presence of a subject which experiences it (Damasio 2010: 203). For example, when one drinks wine, the wine changes the protoself in the sense that the protoself cannot focus just on the body anymore. Instead, the existence of this salient wine requires a self that drinks it: the core self. Therefore, the core self results from the changes that the object causes to the protoself. Subjectivity is its immediate effect and it appears when “a protagonist is available in the midst of other mind contents” and, at the same time, is coherently linked to these (Damasio 2010: 201).

Subjectivity is what makes an individual feel unique. However, the theme of the double questions this uniqueness. The narrator criticises his uncle because he considers that to

wonder if two women make love in the same way is “one of those questions you tend not to ask” (p. 56). Having a conscious mind means perceiving yourself as univocal. As the narrator says, the individuality of others is not questioned, in part because of “a fear that if you do that to them, they might start thinking the same back about you” (p. 56).

In this case it is Freddy that can be taken as an example of the core self. When he is blindfolded, he is deprived from seeing what his ‘lady friends’ look like. For this reason, they are perceived as doubles because Freddy feels them in the same way but he is told they are two different women. He is not deprived from seeing only, but from the ability to stress the similarities. This looking for differences is what makes Freddy notice that the Frenchwoman licked the raindrops while the Englishwoman did not. Freddy’s memory of the Frenchwoman licking the raindrops is due to the saliency this fact had when he felt it.

The difference between the protoself and the core self are indeed what makes the Englishwoman different from the Frenchwoman. The object (the raindrops) changes the protoself (the Englishwoman) so that she develops into the core self (the Frenchwoman). The raindrops are a reality that the individual meets twice but which only is salient once. It makes sense that she does not act in the same way one day and the following if she is said to perform two different roles. This slight change could be considered the crucial event that marks the possibility of a double when the correspondence one body/one self is maintained throughout all the story. Language is the tool used to create the fiction of a double but what makes it plausible is that the Englishwoman and the Frenchwoman are represented in different stages of the self.

This categorisation of the characters placing them under a determined stage of the self does not mean that they are underdeveloped. Except those that have some kind of pathology regarding consciousness, everybody has a completely developed self. What is intended here is to categorise them depending (1) on the position in which they are placed in the multilayered narrative and (2) on the information we are provided about them.

#### 4.2.1. Memories

Felt experiences are not just interpreted by the core self but also recorded as images. In this story, memories are double-edged because they are contradictory and complementary at the same time. This paradoxical situation allows creating the illusion of the double and since it is perceived as an illusion, it can also be questioned. For this reason, it is convenient to distinguish between the two kinds of memories that are mentioned depending on the source. On the one hand, the discussion published in *Recherches* can be considered a fixed memory because it is an alleged transcript of what was said. Needless to say, it is a text that could be manipulated as well: the conversation has been filtered through the Surrealist group itself in the first instance, and then José Pierre has been in charge of editing the manuscript materials. The fact that “no record of the results obtained has survived” (p. 61) makes the reader suspect that those results never were recorded because the experiment ended up in marriage, considered an “anti-

surrealist” word (p. 49). On the other hand, there are Freddy’s memories. These belong to a type called “autobiographical memory” because it is “an organised record of past experiences of an individual organism” (Damasio 1999: 199). Actually, these past experiences are memorised core self experiences.

Therefore, *Recherches* is a memory of “perceptual images” in the sense that directly records what the core self would have perceived in that moment. Freddy’s memories, however, are “recalled images” because they require a remembrance of those “perceptual images”. The main difference is that in the former, it is assumed that the real event can be accessed as it really was whereas in the latter, time has affected Freddy’s remembrance of the facts. Damasio states that “whenever we recall a given object, [...] we do not get an exact reproduction but rather an *interpretation*, a newly reconstructed version of the original. In addition, as our age and experience change, versions of the same thing evolve” (1994: 100).

In fact, the narrator observes that Freddy’s “history didn’t always begin in the same way” (p. 45). This variance is remarkable regarding how he met the Surrealist group: in the three versions he offers, his joining is due to a misunderstanding while drinking wine. In the first version, Freddy is a wax polish sales rep and when he is asked what his area of activity is, he replies “*cire réaliste*” (p. 45). In the second version, he acts as navigator in a motor rally and when he is asked what he is doing in Paris, he answers very politely “*Je suis, sire, rallyiste*” (p. 45). Finally, in the third version he is drinking a Reully and when he is asked about what he is drinking, he translates literally from English taking the idiomatic model “I’m on the beer” to say “*Je suis sur Reullys*” (p. 45-6). All versions offer homophonous instances of “*surrealist*”: just as the double, one cannot be distinguished from the others. Thus, it is impossible to decide which version is the one that really happened.

The narrator notices that the first is the preferred version and that the last seems the most implausible version, “but then the quotidian is often preposterous, and so the preposterous may in return be plausible” (p. 45). Therefore, the narrator takes a sceptical position and invites the reader to join him, introducing comments that only inspire distrust towards what his uncle is telling. For example, “I did not believe my uncle” (p. 54), “working up some new embellishment” (p. 55) or “What could be more transparently an invention? Paris, youth, a woman, *two* women, a hotel room in the afternoon, all set up and paid for by someone else?” (p. 57-8). In fact, suspicion is evident even when the memories are coherent, “It always was a Panhard when he told this version. I used to divert myself by wondering whether such consistency on my uncle’s part made this element of his story more likely to be true, or more likely to be false” (p. 53). Damasio insists that “these recalled images tend to be held in consciousness only fleetingly, and although they may appear to be good replicas, they are often inaccurate or incomplete” (1994: 101).

After all, memories are images of the same order that hope images or fiction images. The narrator notices that when he rebuked his uncle “for the contradictoriness of his

memories, he gave a contented little smile. ‘Marvellous, the subconscious, isn’t it?’ he replied. ‘So inventive’” (p. 46). However, his nephew does not seem to find it so extraordinary and undertakes the function of the last stage of the self.

### 4.3. The autobiographical self

This last stage in the constructing of the self can be simply posed as the coordinating mechanism that is able to use the memories and place them in a chronological line so that they become a narrative. Precisely, a narrator is required to put the two accounts in a dialogic relationship so that the double arises. This last state of the self, then, establishes a relation with the previous stages because it places the memories as objects that interact with the protoself, resulting again in the pulses of the core self (Damasio 2010: 212). The autobiographical self is the ultimate stage but it does not mean that the self becomes stable and monolithic once this state is reached. On the contrary, the dynamics of the self are “continuously and consistently reconstructed” but it is so common and automated that “the owner never knows it is being remade” (Damasio 1994: 240).

Freddy is an extreme example of the last statement: his autobiography is reconstructed by himself although he does not seem to be aware of it. However, his nephew is the best representative of the autobiographical self. Certainly, it is not his autobiography but his uncle’s biography. Nevertheless, he seems to appropriate this story in order to reconstruct it, throwing some light on the darker parts. Yet, what he can confirm are mere details that are not excessively significant and he must imagine what happened because he has no access to the actual images. He can only resort to what his uncle told him and contrast it with what appears in *Recherches*. The rewriting of history can be seen in “‘T.F.’, contrary to the subsequent meanderings of his subconscious, was actually in Paris on holiday” (p. 46) or “There were about a dozen participants according to my uncle; nine according to the *Recherches*” (p. 47).

The narrator has no other option than recognising the limits his narrative can reach, “I resented the fact that my uncle had clammed up, leaving me with nothing but *The French lass licked the raindrops from my face*” (p. 61). On this, Damasio concludes that “I will never know your thoughts unless you tell me, and you will never know mine until I tell you (1999: 309). We are tied to our self and its correspondent perspective for life, so that we will never experience the conscience of another without our self filtering it (Damasio 1999: 305). This introduces the impossibility of talking on behalf of others.

## CONCLUSION

The fact that the story is filtered through different narrative layers lets the narrator decide on what is said and what is not. However, it would be a mistake by the reader to abandon the scepticism with which he encourages us to read the story. Even when “a few of the quotations by Breton and Aragon, translated into English, are indeed authentic and can be found in the original text” (Guignery 2006: 121), we should not trust the narrator

blindfold. He addresses the reader to the Session 5(a), “relegated to an appendix” (p. 49). Although such appendix does not exist, it is significant that the Annex 5 in *Recherches* appears as “Enquête sur l’amour” in the index of the book (Pierre 1990: 211). Indeed, Freddy sees marriage as the culmination of love (p. 49). Far from being casual, this idea links this short story to a universal theme that Barnes has referred to very often, as in “Parenthesis” within his well-known *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*.

In addition, this short story and the topics developed are picked up in the next novel he published: *England, England* (1998).<sup>2</sup> It is in this novel where he applies the theory of the simulacrum of Baudrillard and still pays special attention to the idea of memory. Indeed, he opens the novel with a sentence that invites us to explore the construction of the self in that novel as well: “What’s your first memory?” (Barnes 2000: 3). Then, it could be argued that this short story was actually an experiment previous to a novel: the double will not be an Englishwoman but the whole of the country.

Although other contemporary British authors have rewritten the myth of the double, most of them have just rewritten previous novels dealing with this theme (Onega 2008). However, Julian Barnes’ merit regarding “Experiment” is that he sets out a new model to construct the theme of the double. Contrarily to what Moseley states, “without postmodern play it raises the old question of truth and its verifiability” (1997: 162), this paper defends that the double he provides is perfectly adapted to the main lines of Postmodernism: multiplicity of voices, reflection on the identity, rewriting of (hi)story, scepticism, irony, experimentation and a need of active readership.

In fact, this last feature is crucial for the disambiguation of “Experiment” and the perception of the double depends on the interpretation of the reader. However, this ambivalence of possible interpretations eventually results in a constant updating of the myth because questioning it is another way of keeping it alive.

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<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, “Experiment” was published in *Cross Channel* and the island where most of the action of *England, England* occurs is in the English Channel.

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