UNCONVENTIONALITY, UNRELIABILITY, AND PERMEABILITY IN THE POSTMODERN DOUBLE NARRATIVE

A Thesis submitted to the faculty of
San Francisco State University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree

Master of Arts

In
English: Literature

by
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San Francisco, California
May 2016
I aim to analyze the different ways postmodern theories influence how José Saramago plays with the trope of the double in his novel The Double. The text grapples with the ramifications of postmodern theories that problematize relationships between language/communication, self/other, and author/reader both overtly through the "cooperatively" voiced narrator and more subtly through complex narrative moves. Ultimately, these formal qualities that destabilize the narrative complement the content of the novel, as the trope of the double is one in which the theme of instability is exemplified.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.

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May 17, 2016
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read Unconventionality, Unreliability, and Permeability in the Postmodern Double Narrative by Nicholas Lane Salazar, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Master of Arts in English: Literature at San Francisco State University.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all of the professors and colleagues who helped inspire and shape my work throughout my graduate career.

I dedicate this work to my father.
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Introduction:
Re-Presentation and the Doppelgänger

“Let us wage a war on totality”

—Jean-François Lyotard

José Saramago is by no means an obscure author; his work has gained critical acclaim and a number of awards, most notably the 1998 Nobel Prize in Literature. The majority of his novels have generated fascinating scholarship commenting on his playful critique of subjectivity, identity, and modernity in general. However, clearly lacking from this body of writing on Saramago's work is any sustained or in depth analysis of his novel *The Double*. Despite bearing a title of a popular literary tradition, the novel has somehow evaded any major interrogation by scholars. Although it has been mentioned in some contemporary scholarship (an example being Amit Marcus' exploration of modern Doppelgänger narratives titled “Recycling of Doubles in Narrative Fiction of the Twentieth and Early Twenty-First Centuries”), such attempts are cursory at best. A novel of this depth merits a substantial investigation in its own right, teasing out what are a seemingly endless number of rich networks of signification. In response to this glaring lack of discourse surrounding this novel I aim to illuminate numerous ways one may mine its depths for meaning. This thesis is by no means meant to be conclusive or

1. Sandra Stanley's “The Excremental Gaze: Saramago’s Blindness and the Disintegration of the Panoptic Vision,” Ian Carter's “José Saramago: Latterday Tolstoy?” and Zina Giannopoulou's “Prisoners of Plot in José Saramago's The Cave” are just a few that come to mind. This also excludes any Portuguese scholarship that I could not gain access to.
exhaustive of the material being discussed. Instead, this critical attempt functions
primarily as a call to arms for other scholars to advance on my exploration which
amounts to barely scraping the surface. As will be explained in depth in the chapters that
follow, *The Double* proliferates meaning so nefariously that there can be no dominant
interpretation. My argument is one of observation, taking note of the ways in which this
novel eludes critical mastery. Picking up Lyotard’s battle cry, what follows is one of many
battles in his “war on totality” (46).

In the press release for Saramago’s Nobel Prize, the Swedish Academy writes
“For all his independence, Saramago invokes tradition in a way that in the current state of
things can be described as radical. His oeuvre resembles a series of projects, with each
one more or less disavowing the others but all involving a new attempt to come to grips
with an elusory reality.” This sentiment is both interesting yet problematic, perhaps
indicative of the novels being described. Tradition can be said to play an important role in
the fiction of Saramago, although not just in the greater literary sense of the word, but
also his own authorial tradition. Looking at *The Double* specifically, one can see the
importance of his past works laying the foundation for later ones. Throughout the novel,
Saramago offers offhanded and seemingly random references to his prior works.
Contextualized in a certain way, some light can be shed on this self-referentiality. Again,
this contextualization is done with the full realization that such a grounding is only for
the purposes of explicating a particular kind of meaning from the text, and that meaning,
although based on textual content, is by no means the "main" interpretation, but merely one of many potentialities. Despite this, I must give in to the irresistible invitation the title gives to the literary critic: that of examining the Doppelgänger tradition in literature. If we place the novel in this rich history of writing, we find certain themes rise out of the textual chorus and take center stage, including ideas of subjectivity, identity, and narrative itself. More specifically, we see the novel begin to grapple and take part in a long and ongoing debate that can be grouped—however problematically—under the moniker of postmodernism. Before I jump into the volatile waters of attempting to define and ground a term like postmodernism, I must briefly expand on the history of the Doppelgänger in connection with its contemporary manifestation in *The Double*.

"The double" as a literary motif seems to be as old as narrative itself. For the sake of brevity and relevance to Saramago, I will focus on one of the trope's more potent incarnations: The German Doppelgänger. This Romantic figure has garnered its fair share of scholarship, perhaps the first and most thorough being Otto Rank's *The Double*. In his book-length study of the trope in German literature Rank identifies some key characteristics that define Doppelgänger narratives, then explicates on the psychoanalytic significance of doubles. Rank outlines the various ways texts construct Doppelgängers, stating sometimes "the uncanny double is clearly an independent and visible cleavage of the ego (shadow, reflection)," while in other versions there are "actual figures of the double who confront each other as real and physical persons of unusual external
similarity, and whose paths cross” (Rank 12). Aside from these two differences, Rank suggests that underlying these narratives of the double are a number of recurring elements:

We always find a likeness which resembles the main character down to the smallest particulars, such as name, voice, and clothing—a likeness which, as though “stolen from the mirror” (Hoffmann), primarily appears to the main character as a reflection. Always, too, this double works at cross-purposes with its prototype; and, as a rule, the catastrophe occurs in the relationship with a woman, predominantly ending in suicide by way of the death intended for the irksome persecutor. (Rank 33)

Aside from the aforementioned differences, Rank’s outline is the basic foundation for all Romantic double narratives and the many that come after. A thread that connects all of these doubles in literature is a crisis of identity, something Freud theorizes in *The Uncanny*. For Freud, the unsettling nature of the Doppelgänger stems from the predicament of the “appearance of persons who have to be regarded as identical because they look alike” (Freud 141). The mirroring leads to an identity crisis in that “a person may identify himself with another and so become unsure of his true self; or, he may substitute the other's self for his own. The self may thus be duplicated, divided, and interchanged” (Freud 142). Andrew J. Webber expands on this idea in his book *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature*. Webber writes “the Doppelgänger
operates as a figure of displacement,” in much the same way that Rank and Freud note a displacement of identity (4). Beyond psychoanalytic implications, Webber expands significantly on the narrative effects of doubles in literature.

In light of Webber's insights, we begin to see why such a powerful iteration of the Doppelgänger has manifested itself in the age of postmodernism. The Doppelgänger “troubles the temporal schemes of narrative development and literary history . . . it equally displaces the conventions of genre, by gravitating between forms and styles in cases of what might be called generic doubling” (4). Further, “The Doppelgänger returns compulsively both within its host texts and intertextually from one to the other. Its performances repeat both its host subject and its own previous appearances” (4). Put simply, the Doppelgänger upsets totalizing efforts. Critical attempts to bind interpretations or meaning in neatly defined structures of genre, tradition, and temporality fall short when it comes to doubles. Webber draws attention to a particularly shifty trait of the Doppelgänger, which it shares with postmodern theories. In The Politics of Postmodernism, Linda Hutcheon writes a description that can just as easily be applied to the Doppelgänger as postmodernism: “In general terms [postmodern narrative] takes the form of self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining statement,” which “ultimately manages to install and reinforce as much as undermine and subvert the conventions and presuppositions it appears to challenge” (1-2). When I use the term postmodern or refer to postmodern theory, it is with this definition—along with
Lyotard's—in mind. Postmodernism is more an ongoing discourse than a cohesive set of theories with clear-cut defining features. The many theorists that participate are often contradictory and complex; as Judith Butler points out in "Contingent Foundations," the use of the term postmodern is often used to offhandedly refute and ignore implications from theorists that some would rather not engage with. Despite all of this, I invoke the term because it is necessary to understand Saramago's deployment of the Doppelgänger motif.

*The Double* emphasizes and magnifies the paradoxical qualities of the Doppelgänger in a way that is uniquely the province of postmodernism. Again, the aim of my thesis is not to impose a single interpretation on Saramago's novel; quite to the contrary, I only hope to demonstrate just how problematic such a pursuit may be. *The Double* is an illimitable novel that refuses totalization or grounding in any single reading. Instead, I intend to illustrate the intimate link between the Doppelgänger and the pursuit of postmodernism in Saramago's novel. More precisely, the first chapter will focus on the plot of the novel, identifying how the trope of the double works to tear at the self/other binary distinction. Drawing on postmodern theories concerning language, history, and psychoanalysis, I will look at *The Double*’s reliance on these diverse theories to problematize and interrogate the idea of the totalized self. Through exploring the protagonist's identity crisis, subjectivity is portrayed not as a positive entity, but rather as an external, negatively-constructed illusion. The second chapter—closely linked with the
insights gained by the first—will focus on how the narrative breaks down binaries in identity formation. Just as the protagonist's sense of self disintegrates, so do other subject positions like reader/writer and narrator/narratee. This breakdown continues further in terms of reliability/unreliability and story/discourse. Admiring the paradoxical nature of Saramago's text—and expanding on the narrative doubling of the content—implications regarding *The Double* become all the more important.

Ultimately, this thesis situates Saramago's novel to illuminate (as much as possible) its intertextuality and critical depth. *The Double* is an immensely rich and complex work that interacts with the Doppelgänger tradition historically, narratively, and theoretically. Examining German Romantic Doppelgänger narratives and the later evolutions that become the trope of the double reveals one of the many veins of intertextual complexity. The novel operates paradoxically as both a conventional and unconventional double narrative. This however is not unique to Saramago's text, but occurs in the development of Doppelgänger narratives as exemplified in authors such as Hoffmann, Dostoyevsky, Poe, and Nabokov. However, Saramago's text does not just repeat the same unconventional narrative moves that these authors make, but instead responds to, and expands upon them. Often this is done through overt theoretical musings made by the narrators² about postmodern interrogations of subjectivity, language, and narrative. Saramago is not just interacting with the narrative elements of the tradition, but

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² I use the plural "narrators" because—although constantly shifting and unidentifiable—they refer to themselves as "we." The effect of this narrative move will be explicated in depth in the second chapter of this thesis.
with the content of the double trope as well. *The Double* both adheres to and breaks away from a number of Doppelgänger characteristics. The ways in which the narrative differs from more conventional iterations is arguably a result of postmodern theories that problematize ideas of self, subjectivity, and representation. Postmodernity is often characterized by parody, self-reflexivity, and destabilization. In this sense, the trope of the double lends itself to become the ideal postmodern text. The hope is that this thesis acts as a catalyst in scholarship surrounding Saramago’s novel. Although there are a few articles that can be mined, a novel of this depth and complexity deserves a much more comprehensive exploration. As mentioned previously, the intricacies of this novel are inexhaustible, and I have simply focused on one line of inquiry. In light of the lack of scholarship surrounding this incredible piece of literature, I am attempting to practice an ethical and responsible reading that meets the novel on its own level.
Chapter I:
The Doppelgänger's Doppelgänger:
The Postmodern Double

“Life, my dear Máximo, has taught me that nothing is simple, it just seems simple sometimes, and it's always when it looks simplest that we should most doubt it”
—José Saramago, The Double

Saramago is a champion of complexity. In an interview with Political Affairs, he states “I prefer perplexity, doubt, uncertainty . . . because that is the way we humans really are. A human being is a being who is constantly ‘under construction,’ but also, in a parallel fashion, always in a state of constant destruction.” This particular claim gets at the heart of not only Saramago’s writing in general, but specifically his novel, The Double. There are many ways one can read this novel; depending on the intertextual network invoked, a myriad of different themes rise to the surface as others fade. As a result, there are lines of entry into the novel that prove incredibly fruitful, opening up the novel in fascinating and complex ways. Reading interviews and examining themes across many of Saramago's novels, one begins to notice a pattern. More precisely, the concerns of Saramago's novels mirror the concerns of postmodern theory; in particular, he consistently focuses on the issue of subject formation. With this in mind, it is no coincidence that Saramago has summoned the trope of the Doppelgänger to highlight postmodern questions regarding identity and its problems. Common sense, one of the characters in The Double, distills the various and often contradicting theories that make
up postmodern theory when he reflects “that nothing is simple, it just seems simple sometimes” (120).

The Doppelgänger trope is intimately connected with theories of self. Andrew J. Webber, in his study of the trope titled *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature*, traces the many manifestations of the Doppelgänger and reflects on why it has been such a lasting figure in literary history. In particular, Webber notes how the deployment of the Doppelgänger trope consistently calls into question subjectivity:

[The Doppelgänger] represents the subject as more or less pathologically divided between reality and fantasy in cases of what Hoffmann diagnoses as 'chronischer Dualismus'. As such the figure can be seen to gauge the shifting relations between realist and fantastic tendencies in writing spanning the ages of Classicism, Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism, and Modernism. As an enduring revenant, The Doppelgänger returns to haunt subjectivity in more or less compelling forms throughout the period in question. (Webber 1)

In light of the trope’s essential link with subjectivity, this “enduring revenant” most powerfully manifests in the age of postmodernism. As Webber states, in reference to Hoffmann's “chronischer Dualismus,” the Doppelgänger inherently plays with the idea of the essential knowable self versus the constructed or “fantasy” self. More to the point, the trope of the double consistently draws attention to the tensions that exist between liberal humanist ideas of an “essential” self and more contemporary theories of an “external”
constructed self. Raymond Martin and John Barresi chronicle this shift in their book-length study titled *Rise and Fall of Soul and Self*. Summarized succinctly, “the soul began as unquestionably real and the self ended as arguably a fiction” (5). Although this phrasing sounds particularly dismal, such a move in the philosophy of subjectivity is anything but. Reading Saramago’s fiction through a postmodern lens reveals a moral imperative that runs under his fictional worlds; as opposed to undermining our humanity, identifying the constructed self forms a pathway towards acquiring it.

Carefully, through the lens of postmodern theories, this chapter explicates why Saramago’s invocation of the Doppelgänger advances the trope in unique and often frustratingly complex ways. Any study of doubles is necessarily a study in subjectivity and representation. In the context of postmodernism, Hutcheon points out that representation problematizes the real/fiction dichotomy: “with parody—as with any form of reproduction—the notion of the original as rare, single, and valuable . . . is called into question” (99). Postmodern parody is especially potent when examining closely guarded concepts like identity. Reading dialogue closely in the novel, it clearly plays with Saussurian linguistics and its role in problematizing our ability to observe “reality.” These insights develop further in a critique of history, interrogating the dichotomy between reality and fiction. These ideas advance into an analysis of subjectivity and identity formation. Lacanian and Freudian psychoanalytic theories reveal how a postmodern critique of the dichotomy between reality and fiction extends into a powerful analysis of
subjectivity and the problems with our need to “totalize.” Ultimately, these theories emphasize the extent—and limits—of representation in how we understand the world around us. Linda Hutcheon, in *The Politics of Postmodernism*, argues “a study of representation becomes not a study of mimetic mirroring or subjective projecting, but an exploration of the way in which narratives and images structure how we see ourselves and how we construct our notions of self” (7). Postmodernism’s focus on representation does not rely on or maintain the original/copy dichotomy, but instead illuminates how representation constructs the very thing it claims to represent. Postmodernism posits that “reality” is understood and constructed through representation, collapsing the dichotomy between reality and fiction in on itself. With this in mind, the Doppelgänger—a trope that extends far back in literary history among many different cultures—powerfully manifests in Saramago’s deployment of the trope in *The Double*.

3. In order to understand how Saramago’s postmodern Doppelgänger narrative reflects a contemporary understanding of the socially constructed self, we must read his text in light of the many iterations of the double that preceded it. It is without a doubt that Saramago’s paratextual title *The Double* invokes the history in an effort to both build and subvert it. As Hutcheon mentions of postmodern parody, “Through a double process of installing and ironizing, parody signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference” (99). Analyzing the ways in which Saramago both adheres to and breaks away from the traditional Doppelgänger narrative, we begin to see how it reflects a contemporary sense of self. The idea of one’s double stepping out of the mirror, as in *The Student of Prague*, no longer seems relevant. Amit Marcus, in his paper titled “Recycling of Doubles in Narrative Fiction of the Twentieth and Early Twenty-First Centuries,” attempts to make a similar point. In his paper, Marcus looks at contemporary double narratives and examines how they both rely on and advance their Romantic predecessors. According to Marcus, modern “Doppelgänger narratives tend to focus on the intersection of the psychological with the scientific or the aesthetic domains, while the significance of the supernatural principle is reduced” (Marcus 188). The ongoing argument throughout Marcus’ paper is that the trope of the double is appropriated to the times that invoke it, so that newer conceptions no longer rely on the supernatural and instead look to scientific explanations that bring the motif up to date. Although I agree with this argument to an extent, I would argue that Saramago’s treatment of the motif has less to do with scientific advancements and more to do with postmodern theoretical advances in conceptions of language, reality, and identity.
I. Summary of *The Double*

The novel begins by introducing the protagonist Tertuliano Máximo Afonso, a history teacher at a secondary school. He is renting a movie suggested to him by a friend, a math professor who works at the same school. Upon watching the film, Máximo (he chooses to go by this name instead of Tertuliano) is generally unimpressed and goes to sleep. He then awakens in the middle of the night due to a disturbing presence in his apartment. He begins to re-watch the film and finds the source of his anxiety to be an extra in the film who looks identical to himself. Here Máximo suffers the first break in his identity and becomes obsessed with attempting to find the name of the actor. This spurs him to watch the production company’s entire catalog, with the hope of deducing the obscure extra’s name. When Máximo finally discovers his identity—Daniel Santa-Clara—he attempts to look him up in the phone book, only to find that the three names listed do not belong to the actor or any relation of his. He decides to write a letter to the production company under the guise of his girlfriend’s name requesting the actor’s information. The company writes back informing him that the actor’s name is really Antonio Claro, and provides his address and telephone number. Máximo then places a call that initiates a disastrous series of events that drive the rest of the novel. The call severely affects Antonio's wife Helena, leading to the degradation of their marriage as well as the need for the doubles to meet face to face. It is important to note that here the book shifts from focalizing through Máximo to focalizing through Antonio, switching
between them throughout the remainder of the narrative. The doubles decide to meet at a
designated location far out of town and find that they are indeed completely identical in
every physical way, right down to wrinkles and scars. Further, Antonio was born thirty-
one minutes before Máximo, making him the original and Máximo the double. Feeling
s slighted, Máximo sends the false beard he wore to their meeting to Antonio as a symbolic
move toward owning his status as a double. Antonio, in an effort to gain some form of
pervasive vengeance on Máximo for ruining his marriage, decides he is going to sleep
with Máximo’s girlfriend (in the guise of Máximo). After blackmailing Máximo into
submission, Antonio takes his clothes and car and drives with Maria da Paz to the
location the doubles first met far outside of town to sleep with her. In a desperate attempt
to gain the upper hand again, Máximo decides he will then take Antonio’s identity—left
behind in the form of his clothes and car—and sleep with his wife. The following
morning, when Antonio does not return home, we find that upon discovering she had
slept with an impostor (due to the tan line on Antonio’s finger that held his wedding ring)
Maria da Paz demands to be driven home and they both end up dying in a car accident
along the way. Distressed, Máximo admits the truth to Helena, that he had treated her as a
pawn in the game between Antonio and himself, and that her husband is now dead. At
first taken aback, she then decides that Máximo might be a better husband than Antonio,
and wants him to take the place of Antonio. Máximo—now Antonio—accepts and the
novel seems as if it will end conclusively. However, in the final pages, Máximo receives a
call from a man that sounds identical to him informing him that he has just watched a film and that they are doubles. This third double (if that term is even applicable) has been hinted at throughout the text but never confirmed until now, and it seems as if the events are going to repeat themselves just as the identity of the characters is repeated. Instead, the novel ends with Máximo agreeing to meet with him, loading a gun before leaving, implying that he has no intention of ending the way the previous Antonio did.

In many ways this plot, summarized so cursorily, reads as similar if not identical to the traditional Doppelgänger narrative as outlined by Rank. We see two doubles, identical in almost every way, working at cross-purposes and as adversaries. Even more traditionally, the ultimate terror for the original involves a loss of agency and the usurpation of a love interest. This occurs in Hoffmann's narratives as well as other noted Doppelgänger authors ranging from Dostoyevsky to Poe to Nabokov. We even have a death in the end that simultaneously kills both the original and copy, revealing the interdependence of one on the other. Excitingly, Freud's notes on the double in The Uncanny are just as applicable—if not more so, as I hope to demonstrate—to Saramago's narrative. Freud notes that part of the uncanny effect of the Doppelgänger arises from the possibility that "unsure of his true self" the original "substitutes the other's self for his own" (142). A loss of agency, or identity, is common to all Doppelgänger narratives. Interestingly, Saramago faithfully adheres to these tenets while subverting them at the same time. Freud mentions Schelling's definition of the uncanny in his book, which is as
follows: “something that should have remained hidden and has come into the open” (148). Such a definition is eerily relevant to a text like Saramago’s. There are more than a few academics who view postmodern theories as nihilistic musings that are nonsensical and better left as fanciful theorizing of the past. Unprepared to grapple with the ramifications of a diverse set of theories that tear at our most deeply held convictions, many—while clearly not all—see postmodern theories as something that should have “remained hidden.”4 If we look closely at Saramago’s doubles, and specifically at the dialogue that runs throughout the novel, we see a Doppelgänger narrative informed and powered by postmodern theory. What makes Saramago’s doubles uncanny is not their identity breakdown alone, but the mirror it holds to our own fragile sense of self.

II. Postmodern Linguistics and the Loss of Reality

Reading both the narrators’ and the characters’ dialogue closely illuminates explicit allusions to Saussurian linguistics and the ramifications his theories carry for identity. First and foremost, the narrators create a very poetic summary of the effect of Saussure’s ideas on linguistics. As Máximo is drifting to sleep at the end of a chapter, his reflects “There are some things you just can’t explain in words” (Saramago 54).

Máximo’s thought prompts the narrators to begin the next chapter explaining his thought

4. Judith Butler tackles this trend in her essay “Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of ‘Postmodernism.’” She states “I know the term from the way it is used, and it usually appears on my horizon embedded in the following critical formulations: ‘if discourse is all there is . . .’ or ‘if everything is a text . . .’ or ‘if the subject is dead . . .’” (3). “The sentence begins as a warning against an impending nihilism” (3). She goes further, explaining that postmodernism “appears to be articulated in the form of a fearful conditional or sometimes in the form of paternalistic disdain toward that which is youthful and irrational” (3). She goes on to explain why the question of postmodernism is important as it pertains to power relations and the trend towards uncritical reliance on problematic foundations.
in detail. The narrators state language "came into the world with a vague, diffuse destiny, as highly provisional phonetic and morphological clusters," and words "insist on passing themselves off ... on behalf of the thing they variably mean and represent" (55-56).

According to Saussure, linguistics up to this point saw words as naming actual things, standing in for their absence. Words corresponded to the essence of the object they represented. However, Saussure theorizes words as not containing essential or positive meaning, but instead being defined negatively in relation to other linguistic signs in a system of language. Saussure's conception of language leads to what the narrators call the "insoluble problem of communication" (56). The narrators sum up the conclusion of Saussure's insights as follows:

the words usurping the place of the thing that, before, for better or worse, they had done their best to express, and which out of came, don't let the mask fool you, the thunderous clatter of empty cans, the carnivalesque cortege of canisters with labels on the outside but nothing inside. (56)

Saussure posits that language is not linked to any external reality, a concept that leads to the realization that language does not reflect, or represent, but instead constructs: "the words usurping the place of the thing." We can no longer think of things containing "essential" qualities that make them what they are. Instead, we are left with empty words, "canisters with labels on the outside but nothing inside." This fundamental dissociation—stated by Saussure as the arbitrary relationship between the signifier and the signified—
extends outwards, haunting the narrative as the ramifications implicate our own sense of self.

Examining Saussurian linguistics’ problematizing of reality develops into a problematizing of identity. When Máximo and Antonio first meet, Antonio comes prepared with a gun he previously states wouldn't be loaded. As Antonio assures Máximo that “It's not loaded,” he responds very seriously that “It's not loaded are just three words that say it's not loaded” (217). This is a passage so simple it is easy to read over as a straightforward statement of fact; however, this dialogue gains significance in light of the narrators’ musings on Saussurian linguistics. The doubles’ verbal exchange represents a dissociation of language from reality—a lack of belief or assurance that words correspond to real things. The disconnect extends to names as well, another thing we often imagine as being inherently linked with identity. The first portion of the novel concerns Máximo's desperate attempt to discover the name of his double, for as the narrators state, “the name is always the first thing we ask, because we imagine that this is the door through which one enters” (18). I would like to emphasize the key word in this passage: imagine. We imagine names as inherently associated with identities. Even as I write this I am citing Saramago's name after quotes because that is how I give credit to a human for words they have written. Postmodern theory challenges such normalized practices. In a particularly enlightening scene, Antonio asks a coworker “What’s the name of the clerk who just helped me, Maria, why, Oh, no reason really, that doesn't tell me any
more than I knew before, And what did you know before, Nothing” (244). This humorous exchange exemplifies why names are in fact no way related to the people we imagine they embody. Antonio knows literally “nothing” more of the clerk by having known her name. Disconnections between names and people is a theme that runs throughout the book, from Máximo first learning his double's stage-name, then his real name, and then taking the actor’s name completely. The shifting playfulness of names in the text offers a nice platform from which to dive even deeper in to the ways postmodern theory informs the identity games that proliferate within *The Double*.

### III. Identity as Fictional History

History, a cherished concept scrutinized by postmodern theory, introduces larger questions of how our identities come to form and maintain themselves over time.

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5. This passage draws attention to the difficult formatting of the dialogue in the novel. As you can see, Saramago forgoes the use of quotation marks or really any kind of signifier for who is speaking. This not only lends a more “spoken” quality to the text, but further demonstrates the breaking down of different barriers that proliferates throughout the text. In this case, it is the barrier between speakers in the novel.

6. However, it can be argued that names are significant as symbolic nodes for invoking intertextual networks. Take Tertuliano for example, “a name with a classical flavor that time has staled” (Saramago 1). On the first page of the novel the name Tertuliano take on symbolic importance as a potential site of inquiry. The name is important enough to garner special attention on the first page of the novel. Perhaps this is because Tertuliano can be read as “of the Tertullian.” A reference to Tertullian is significant because he is an important Christian scholar from 155 – 240 AD. An interesting intertextual reference because Tertullian is known for being the first to reference the Holy Trinity in Latin Christian writing. Perhaps there is then little surprise that the bearer of the name Tertuliano is the member of a trinity himself as the result of his two doubles in the narrative. Similar effects from other names are sure to expand if I was to continue reading this novel in the tradition of religious writing. This mode of interpretation is entirely valid when taking into account Saramago’s explicit participation in the tradition in the form of his book *The Gospel According to Jesus Christ*. Such an investigation, although fruitful, is simply beyond the scope of this paper.
Máximo is not a history professor by chance; just as his double works as an actor, a field wholly concerned with the ability to take on a fictional identity, so too is Máximo’s career closely linked with identity. Hayden White, in an essay titled “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact,” articulates a theory of history that attempts to acknowledge its often-overlooked narrative component. More specifically, he demonstrates that although historians use historical artifacts, writing history involves relying on narrative conventions:

[Historical] events are made into a story by the suppression or subordination of certain of them and the highlighting of others, by characterization, motivic repetition, variation of tone and point of view, alternative descriptive strategies, and the like—in short, all of the techniques that we would normally expect to find in the emplotment of a novel or a play. (White 182)

Even more radically, historical narratives are in fact “fictional” in the sense that events

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7. It is interesting to note here an interesting paper by Stefan Andriopoulos, titled “The Terror of Reproduction: Early Cinema's Ghostly Doubles and the Right to One's Own Image.” In this article, Andriopoulos analyzes the legal arguments that arose around early cinema and the fear of a new technology that had uncanny possibilities. The fact that Saramago's protagonist is first introduced to his double through film may seem like just one more coincidence in a novel built on coincidences, but with the history of the discourse surrounding early cinematic history in mind, the intent becomes clear. Andriopoulos cites an early protest by Hermann Duenschmann who “deplored the movie actor's loss of control over his or her artistic creation” (1). Further, Andriopoulos brings up an argument by Georg Cohn that equates film with the double, stating that film “shows not only the frozen, mute traits of one single moment; instead, it copies man in his motion, in his actions . . . the cinematograph which listens to our actions should not be allowed to publicly ape us, like a double” (4). What these arguments illuminate is the fear of a loss of agency that one feels when one imagines oneself being filmed and replayed to people and in places one will never know, as if a double of oneself is off running around the world. Ironically, in Saramago's novel, since Máximo is not an actor, his viewing of his double in a film is a very real signifier that there is a physical double of himself out in the world, and not just a cinematic one.
are handpicked and placed in a certain order, which produces a narrative that is anything but objective. As White states, “Properly understood, histories ought never to be read as unambiguous signs of the events they report, but rather as symbolic structures . . . that ‘liken’ the events reported in them to some form with which we have already become familiar in our literary culture” (187). History is not objective but implicated in ideology and linguistic interpretation. Saramago, as before with Saussurian linguistics, poetically summarizes this in a statement by Máximo's mother reflecting on a childhood history class: “All the textbook did was collect together the free-flowing fantasies of the person who had written it, and there was clearly little difference between these fantasies and the ones you could find in a novel” (132). For Máximo's mother, reading a history book of past events long removed from living memory emulates reading a piece of fiction. Carolina's philosophical musings go even further, extending into identify formation and postmodern conceptions of self: “it seemed to her that all these things were pure imaginings and that if the teacher had those imaginings, she could have them too, just as she occasionally found herself imagining her own life” (132). Carolina imagines the narrative of history as identical to her narrative of self; or, to use White's words, history is a narrative imagining that places “real” events and people in a particular order that tells a particular story. Carolina goes a step further, stating that our identities are also reliant on narrative imaginings just as history is. In an interview with Katherine Vaz of BOMB magazine, Saramago states that memory is key to our identities:
There cannot be any writing without memory. Writers are constantly nourished by what they remember—in fact, everyone is. Memory is our deepest actual language. It’s our storehouse of riches, our gold mine or diamond mine, and we need to keep it open, to keep in mind the importance of childhood events that will somehow condition our life and character as adults. What would happen to someone who forgot those experiences? If we have no memory, we are nobody, and nothing is possible.

Nabokov, another author of doubles, echoes this sentiment by titling his autobiography *Speak, Memory*. Interestingly, his original title for the book was *Conclusive Evidence*. The latter title implies that memory offers evidence of our having existed; even further, the original name implies the historical narrative made up of our life events is in fact the foundation for our sense of selves. These ideas demonstrate how seemingly separate fields like linguistics and history are core parts of understanding how identity is formed and maintained.

**IV. Identity as Re-Presentation**

Lacanian and Freudian theories of identity formation inform Saramago’s doubles, advancing them beyond the Cartesian paradigm that sees the self as whole unto itself. The postmodern fractured self depicted by the novel theorizes an identity founded on representation. Saramago writes multiple allusions to Lacanian models of formation of self. Lacan’s famous lecture/essay, titled “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function
of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," outlines a critical moment in ego formation particularly relevant to the trope of the double. The mirror stage consists of "an identification, in the full sense that analysis gives the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image" (Lacan 2). The image is the reflection of the baby in the mirror. The baby sees in his or her Gestalt a more controlled version of her-or-himself that looks like the adults that surround him/her (2). The child's identification with the imago functions as a crutch for the prematurely birthed human (3-4). The identification is a meconnaissance, or misrecognition, a particularly important idea in considering the Doppelgänger. As Lacan states, "our experience shows that we should start from the function of meconnaissance that characterizes the ego in all its structures" (6). The ego is based on a misidentification from the beginning. Our entire sense of self is defined by "other." There is no essential self from which "I" emanates according to Lacan; rather, the "I" is defined externally, by mistaking what-we-are-not as what-we-are. As with most Doppelgänger narratives, mirrors figure heavily in The Double. However, instead of simply generating doubles as in The Student of Prague, or being painful reminders of the original's counterpart as in Dostoyevsky's The Double, mirrors are allusions to psychoanalytic theory and the externally constructed self.

One powerful occurrence of this new relationship with mirrors unfolds when Máximo first views his Doppelgänger. Staring into a mirror, a disturbing thought occurs to him, "if the man who played the part of the clerk at the reception desk were here . . .
the face he would see would be his face” (Saramago 27). Máximo proceeds to use a marker to draw a mustache like the actor's on the mirror and “at that moment, Tertuliano Máximo Afonso became the actor about whose name and life we know nothing, the teacher of history in a secondary school is no longer here, the apartment is not his, the face in the mirror has another owner” (28). The language that communicates this loss of identity is fascinating. As Lacan posits in his description of the Mirror-Stage, what happens here is a “full identification.” Máximo fully takes in the external image as his own self, precisely what Freud identifies as one of the primary uncanny aspects of the Doppelgänger. Máximo misrecognizes the image in the mirror as his own, therefore, “the cure in this case was to close the eyes, not his own, but those reflected in the mirror” (28). The narrators make quite clear that the image in the mirror is not Máximo's, but instead “other.” Máximo's misidentification mirrors his loss of ego and identity as a result of his double. Since the formation of the ego from the beginning is based on a misrecognition of the mirror-image other as self, the existence of another human who looks identical to that mirror image fundamentally usurps that identification. Just as Saussurian linguistics shows how language derives meaning negatively through difference, so too does Lacanian psychoanalysis theorize that our notion of self is based on a similar process. Language was originally thought to reflect real things exactly as mirror images were thought to reflect real people; however, postmodern theories flip those relationships so that instead of reflecting, they construct.
Another mirror scene in the novel underscores the significance of value arising through difference. Máximo purchases a false beard in order to move about his double's neighborhood without being recognized. Looking at himself in a mirror, Máximo is shocked “by his having a whole new sense of himself, as if, finally, he had come face-to-face with his own authentic identity. It was as if, by looking different, he had become more himself” (164). Paradoxically—a realm this novel conjures up regularly—Máximo misrecognizes and identifies a foreign mirror image as his own self. However, unlike the disturbing loss of self that occurs when his mirror image resembles the actor in a past form, this new image is unique and therefore fulfilling. As long as the mirror image is singular it fulfills the purpose of creating illusory wholeness. The narrators explain it is in “difference” that Máximo becomes “more himself.” Máximo immediately feels an “urgent need to preserve the image,” so that “he could say to himself, This is me” (164).

Drawing attention to the illusory nature of the “whole” and defined self, Máximo is immediately concerned with finding a way to preserve his fleeting identity. This scene illustrates an externally defined subject as Máximo attempts to create a lasting external proof of his own “internal” sense of self. After going to get a portrait taken of himself, he orders a dozen wallet-sized images which he subsequently burns in his kitchen sink “so as not to have himself multiplied” (164). Máximo’s actions call to mind Hutcheon’s statement that “photos are still presences of absences” (91-92). Photos represent a paradox embodying both presence and absence. Máximo’s frantically trying to preserve
his fleeting “unique” identity through reproducing it in a photograph becomes all the more absurd. The photograph, by reproducing the image, not only destroys its original uniqueness but becomes a reminder of the absence that occupies the place of self. The postmodern lack that makes up identity is precisely what Lacan theorizes in his essay “Of Structure as an Inmixing of Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever,” published in *The Structuralist Controversy*.

**V. Subjectivity as Fundamentally Fractured**

Lacan's sophisticated explication of his theory on subjectivity ultimately subverts totalizing foundations in exactly the way Saramago's deployment of the Doppelgänger trope does. Mentioned earlier, there is an intimate relationship between the insights gained by Saussure in regards to language and Lacan's theories of subject formation. In fact, Lacan states quite blatantly that “the unconscious is structured as a language” (188). “What does that mean?” he questions his audience. Lacan explains the importance of this insight, arguing that “the question that the unconscious raises for you is a problem that touches the most sensitive point of the nature of language, that is the question of the subject” (188). The subject is a problematic concept for Lacan, both psychologically and linguistically. “The subject,” he argues, “cannot simply be identified with the speaker or the personal pronoun in a sentence” (188). This, for Lacan, gets at the larger issue of the unconscious, which is “that something always thinks” (189). According to Freud, the unconscious is “above all thoughts,” which Lacan problematizes by specifically stating
that those thoughts are “thinking with words” (189). By aligning the unconscious with language, Lacan argues that a problem for one is necessarily a problem for the other. Lacan states “it is necessary to find the subject as a lost object” (189). Lacan further specifies that “more precisely this lost object is the support of the subject,” a structure of sorts. Again, by using structure, Lacan is able to theorize about psychological questions through the lens of language. The problem of a structure that holds up the subject is that theorists have “put forward the idea of unity as the most important characteristic trait of structure” (190). Numerous postmodern theorists take issue with a unified structure. Lacan views totalized structures as a “scandalous lie,” since “it is the principle of analysis that nobody understands anything of what happens” (190). In other words, unity masks the reality that we are implicated—even constructed—in a vast network of power relations, floating “down the river, from time to time touching a bank, staying for a while here and there, without understanding anything” (190). Here Lacan expands on the implications of critiquing a unified self.

Lacan puts forth the idea that unity exists as a repetition, not a unit in and of itself. Using the mathematical concept of counting and integers, he explains that “Counting is not an empirical fact” (191). Lacan posits that counting is not whole in-and-of-itself. Lacan uses the formula “(n+1)” to explain the concept of counting and how integers are

8. There is an interesting parallel to this numerical aspect of Lacan’s theory in The Double where Máximo’s coworker, a math teacher, comments on the idea of teaching history and linguistics backwards in an effort to find the source. He states “I don’t think these methods would work with arithmetic, the number ten is stubbornly invariable, it didn’t even have to be a nine first nor is it consumed with ambition to be an
constituted. Identifying that “it is this question of the ‘one more’ that is the key to the
genesis of numbers and instead of this unifying unity that constitutes two in the first case
I propose that you consider the real numerical genesis of two” (191). That genesis is
repetition. In a classic deconstructive move, Lacan inverts the numerical binary of 1
followed by 2 and argues that “it is necessary that this two constitute the first integer
which is not yet born as a number before the two appears” (191). Lacan argues that “the
question of the two is for us the question of the subject . . . the two does not complete the
one to make two, but must repeat the one to permit the one to exist” (191). This translates
into the subject because “the unconscious subject is something that tends to repeat itself”
(191). The repetitive unconscious invokes Freud’s conception of the repetition
compulsion. Freud wrestles with this mysterious drive in depth in Beyond the Pleasure
Principle, but I feel Lacan gets to the heart of the repetition compulsion in this essay.
Interrogating unconscious repetition, Lacan states “the sameness is not in things but in
the mark which makes it possible to add things with no consideration as to their
differences” (192). This “mark,” Lacan argues, “has the effect of rubbing out the
difference, and that is the key to what happens to the subject, the unconscious subject in
the repetition” (192). He specifies that searching for this missing subject is pointless as
the subject is always lost in the repetition: “In any case, the subject is the effect of this
repetition in as much as it necessitates the “fading,” the obliteration, of the first

eleven” (79). Lacan might argue that in fact the ten would not exist on its own so “stubbornly.”
foundation of the subject; which is why the subject, by status, is always presented as a divided essence" (192). I must pause here and reflect on the significance of this insight in terms of the uncanny and the Doppelgänger.

Freud notes that repetition is the source of the double's eerie effect. However, Freud struggles to fully explicate why this repetition elicits such a powerful uncanny effect. Lacan's problematizing of structural unity and identity leads him to define the subject as the result of a repetition. The subject forming repetition is not a simple repetition however, because each iteration erases the previous one, creating a constantly eroding foundation. For Lacan, the self is constituted by a "lack." How does this illuminate the uncanny effect of the Doppelgänger? Lacan's (very complicated) explanation of the subject as a result of repetition that erases difference is precisely why the double is so unsettling. The Doppelgänger does not merely illustrate the possibility for a destabilized identity or substitution, it reflects, or reveals, the very repetition that founds subjectivity. The Doppelgänger's usurping of agency from the original mirrors the unconscious taking agency from the conscious mind. The trope of the double reveals the Doppelgänger on which our identities are founded.

Lacan's revolutionary theory, hinted at and incorporated in subtle ways throughout Saramago's text, ultimately ends up being stated quite plainly by the narrators.

9. In *The Uncanny*, Freud identifies one uncanny aspect of the Doppelgänger is "the fact that anything that can remind us of this inner compulsion to repeat is perceived as uncanny" (145), because "in the unconscious mind we can recognize the dominance of a *compulsion to repeat*" (145). Lacan seems to be explicating and explaining this unconscious repetition compulsion as necessary to construct our egos.
Commenting on the vast human history of grappling with identity, the narrators state that “the movements and gestures people make have not changed very much . . . since that immemorial day when a human face first saw itself in the smooth surface of a pond and thought, That's me” (250). Despite the passage of time and advancement of human innovation, “Now, here, where we are, where we have our existence, even after the passing of four or five million years, those primeval gestures continue to be monotonously repeated, oblivious to any changes in the sun and in the world illumined by that sun” (250). As “advanced” as human development has become, humans repeat the problematic misrecognition over and over again despite theoretical paradigms, which question that very process. Referring to the Doppelgängers of the narrative—and to anyone attempting to reconcile the hypercritical stance of postmodern theory with their own sense of self—the narrators state:

They did not fall into the ingenious temptation of saying, That's me, for fears have changed a lot since then and doubts have changed even more, now, here, instead of a confident affirmation, all that emerges from our mouths is the question, Who's that, and probably not even another four or five million years will be enough to provide an answer. (251)

The narrators’ insight provides the core of why Saramago's invocation of the trope of the double is so unique. Prior to postmodern discourse on subjectivity, there was a safe distance between the uncanny Doppelgänger of fiction and the reader safely outside in
reality. Postmodern interrogations of the boundary between fantasy and reality illuminate the two realms interconnectedness. It is from "our" mouths—the postmodern constructed subjects—that the fundamental existential question takes shape: "Who's that?"

The fractured self produced from an unconscious and unknowable lack manifests itself in other moments in the text. A particularly amusing scene is a conversation between Máximo and his externalized conscience called common sense. Common sense enters the novel—and he does enter as if a physical character, opening doors and exiting rooms—in order to try and convince Máximo not to pursue his Doppelgänger. Máximo explains that "he'll never be a stranger" to which common sense replies "We're all strangers, even us" (24). Common sense's comment posits there are aspects of ourselves that we can never know. Even Máximo's own common sense, generated from his own thoughts, is a stranger to him. "We're all strangers," with only imagined fictional senses of self and even poorer constructions of other peoples' identities. Listening in on Máximo's thoughts about Maria, the narrators comment that he is acting "as if she were his beloved, and we know that she is not, or she is and he doesn't know it, or perhaps..." (200). Even our omnipotent narrators cannot discern if Máximo's feelings are genuine because even Máximo himself is completely unaware. The human lack of awareness is of course always there, but through the fantastic illusion of a totalized self, we manage to keep any potential existential issues at bay. Máximo, with his core sense of self shaken by the existence of an identical double, cannot so easily maintain a stable self.
VI. (In)Consistent Identity

Martin and Barresi address an issue of personal identity that deals with change and permanence. In quite the opposite vein of Lacan's embracing of the fractured self, early theories of subjectivity were concerned with totalizing the self. A paradox of totalization occurs when we accept that people change over time, but still consider them fundamentally the same person. Questions of identity permanence arise in Máximo when his coworker, the math teacher, quite nonchalantly mentions that he seems to have been acting differently:

But you haven't been the same since you saw that film . . . you're different, But I'm the same person, Of course you are . . . But that doesn't mean I've turned into another person . . . Then I don't know why you keep insisting I'm not the same person . . . Well, I am the same person, Now you're the one who's insisting . . .

(142-143)

The math teacher and Máximo's condensed exchange demonstrates a renewed anxiety in regard to permanence in personal identity. Because Máximo's sense of self is destabilized due to his encounter with his double in the film, seemingly innocuous statements have a profound effect on him. The narrators join in on the debate of permanence when they muse that "appearances, while not always as deceptive as people say, not infrequently belie themselves, revealing new modes of being that open the door to the possibility of real changes in a pattern of behavior, which, generally speaking, had been assumed to be
defined already” (12). The narrators’ thought is a fancy way of saying that contrary to our notions of self that are masked under totalizing appearances, people often act in strange ways that run counter to our understanding of them. In short, people change, and contrary to appearances of consistency, are often unpredictable.

The novel extends this change over time to the identity of the Doppelgänger trope, as *The Double* paradoxically reproduces and simultaneously subverts elements common to its prior iterations. For example, the relationship between the original and double in the novel is at first clear and typical. The Doppelgänger exists solely as antithesis of the original, with no “self” of its own. Further, the Doppelgänger always subverts the intentions of the original in a multitude of nefarious ways. *The Double*, however, progressively complicates who the original or duplicate is; and even when it comes close, both entities have lives and identities of their own outside of the Doppelgänger relationship. For most of the novel we—the readers—are under the impression that Máximo is the original as he is the focalizer of the novel. Because the novel is told through Máximo’s point of view, the reader assumes he is the original. However, contrary to the behavior of originals, Máximo’s language and actions are more akin to Doppelgänger. When Máximo first makes a call to his double, he realizes “that he enjoyed the idea of prolonging and increasing the atmosphere of mystery the phone call must have created,” and concocts further “strategies for approach and siege” (160-161). War-tinged language like “strategies” and “siege” frames Máximo clearly in the role of
aggressor in the Doppelgänger relationship. Antonio also reflects on the aggressive nature of Máximo, commenting that “cinema doubles come when they are called, and this one has invaded our house” (182). Again, we see Máximo taking on the role of nefarious double as opposed to the victimized original. The narrators comment on this shifting relationship:

just in case you think that, because we have known him longer, we harbor some special preference for Tertuliano Máximo Afonso, we would point out that, mathematically speaking, as many inexorable probabilities of his having been the second-born hang over his head as over Antonio Claro's. (193)

Both Máximo and the reader fear this probability. As the narrators explain, “the fact that he was the discoverer of the supernatural miracle we know so well had given rise in his mind, without him noticing, to a kind of sense of primogeniture” (175). The reader believes that Máximo is the original because up to a certain point he had been the only focalizer of the story, and the trope of the Doppelgänger has led us to believe that grants him the credential of “original.” However, a binary like original/duplicate is bound to be complicated in the postmodern milieu that produces this mind bending narrative.

Binary systems of meaning prove very problematic as the school of deconstruction illuminates. Judith Butler gives a profound breakdown of the binary original/duplicate in her essay titled “Imitation and Gender Insubordination.” Butler interrogates the common political attempt to discredit LGBTQ identities by calling them
imitations or copies of hetero normative ones. She argues that "logically, this notion of an 'origin' is suspect, for how can something operate as an origin if there are no secondary consequences which retrospectively confirm the originality of that origin?" (313).

Paradoxically, "the origin requires its derivations in order to affirm itself as an origin, for origins only make sense to the extent that they are differentiated from that which they produce as derivatives" (313). Here, Butler uses a now classic deconstructive move of demonstrating how one—often privileged—part of a binary is in fact dependent on its other half for existence; identical to the classic Doppelgänger narrative, where the original, in killing his double, kills himself. A critique of this original/double relationship occurs in Saramago's text as well. Both Máximo and Antonio are concerned with "the troubling question of who is the duplicate of whom" because either one of them could be the original and the other "nothing but a mere and, of course, devalued repetition" (174-175). However, the original/duplicate dichotomy is challenged in precisely the same way Hutcheon argues postmodern parody upsets such claims: "With parody—as with any form of reproduction—the notion of the original as rare, single, and valuable . . . is called into question" (99). After discovering that Máximo is in fact the duplicate of Antonio by merely thirty-one minutes, he does not feel consumed but instead redeemed. The narrators add that Antonio "realizes that the roles they have been playing up until now have been switched" (249). Despite being a duplicate of Antonio by a small margin of time, the relationship between the two continually flips back and forth, exactly as Butler
states in her deconstruction of the original/copy binary: “the entire framework of copy and origin proves radically unstable as each position inverts into the other and confounds the possibility of any stable way to locate the temporal or logical priority of either term” (313). The endless repetition and inversion is exactly what happens in the textual version of this diabolical relationship that is The Double.

Máximo no longer plays the role of aggressive and malevolent double; instead, Antonio takes the offensive, and in a classic Doppelgänger move, targets Maria da Paz. Such a vindictive move, fueled by “malevolent ideas of personal revenge,” places Antonio—the original—into the role of the double (253). Incessantly exchanging roles in the relationship between original and double progresses to the point that they literally take on each other’s identities. When Antonio takes on the identity of Máximo in order to sleep with Maria, Máximo takes on the identity of Antonio in order to sleep with his wife as a strike against him. Since Antonio dies in the car accident alongside Maria, Máximo is the one who dies, not Antonio. Paradoxically, the death of Antonio as Máximo both negates and fulfills the end of the classic double narrative. Marcus argues that Saramago subverts the traditional double narrative “in which the ‘original’ murders his double (or vice versa) and then realizes that by doing that he has at the same time committed suicide—the double being an immanent part of himself” (Marcus 198). Although the murderous intent is not present and Antonio—in the guise of Máximo—dies in an accident, the simultaneous death remains. The accident kills both Antonio and Máximo, who
paradoxically are able to live on in the form of Máximo as Antonio. The narrators inform
the reader that in his grieving, Máximo “transformed into Antonio Claro for the rest of his
life” (304). Here, Máximo becomes both duplicate and original, in the sense that Máximo
was the duplicate and Antonio the original. This “final” flip and combination gives the
illusion that identity has finally been solidified. As the narrators state, “Tertuliano
Máximo Afonso may have changed his name, but he continues to be the same person
whom we accompanied to the video shop” (307). The death of the double/s allows
Máximo to gain his identity once again as the only original. However, such a conclusion
would mean no lessons were learned from postmodern theories that argue identity is
constructed through infinite repetition. The novel delivers on this postmodern promise,
for when the reader thinks all is settled, Máximo—or Antonio now—receives a familiar
phone call. The caller, a person with an identical voice, is informing him that he has seen
him in a film and is convinced they are absolutely identical in every way. And thus, with
poetic flourish, Máximo grabs Antonio’s gun, setting in motion a repetition of the prior
events in the narrative.

VII. Conclusion: Interrogating Repetition and Representation

Repetition is the thread that runs throughout this argument. Postmodernism
emphasizes the importance of repetition in the form of representation. Distilled down to
such a concept, postmodernism enhances the themes of the Doppelgänger. As Hutcheon
states, “a study of representation becomes not a study of mimetic mirroring or subjective
projecting, but an exploration of the way in which narratives and images structure how we see ourselves and how we construct our notions of self” (7).\textsuperscript{10} Replacing “representation” in this statement with “Doppelgänger” does not affect its meaning. Webber argues that “The Doppelgänger, even in what appears to be its Romantic heyday, is essentially a post-Romantic figure—a revenant returning to the present in order to displace it into the past” (11). I would extend that even further, arguing that the Doppelgänger is not just a post-Romantic figure, but a distinctly postmodern one. With the trope’s focus on representation, parody, identity, and deconstructing binaries such as fiction/reality, the Doppelgänger embodies postmodernism. Hutcheon zeros in saying that “the very word ‘representation’ unavoidably suggests a given which the act of representing duplicates in some way” (32). At the core of postmodernism is an interest in doubles, representation, and the way these mechanisms pervade all of philosophy’s greatest questions and problems.

*The Double* is interested in these issues as well. Saramago handles the trope with its vast history in such a way that the Doppelgänger gains new and unprecedented power. It is the trope’s rich history that allows it to reach such great heights in this postmodern iteration. Additionally, the trope reveals how postmodern theories build on one another and lead to radical ramifications for conceptions of identity, self, and subjectivity.

\textsuperscript{10} Walter Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” also grapples with the idea of representation and the loss of authenticity and originality that comes with it. As Hutcheon states, “with any form of reproduction—the notion of the original as rare, single, and valuable . . . is called into question” (99).
Specifically, we see Saussure's theory of language extend and reach into other disciplines well beyond linguistics. Derrida, in “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences,” identifies the gravity of this moment as an “event” (247). Saussure’s theory creates a paradigmatic shift in how theorists look at the idea of structure, value, and meaning. Saussure takes what was previously a very real presence and turns it into a radical absence. More specifically, this theory leads Lacan to theorize a presence wholly founded on a fundamental absence. This disconnect between language and reality manifests in The Double in the form of philosophical asides and ironic discourse between characters. Scattered throughout the novel are fissures and cracks that allude to the “rupture”—to use Derrida's words—between reality and language that Saussure's theories create. Characters often find themselves unable to communicate their intentions, words falling short of their intended meaning. The narrators poetically refer to the disconnect between sign and signifier as a “carnivalesque clatter” of words no longer filled up with any essential or positive content. Names paradoxically drive the narrative while also losing their importance. Máximo is consumed with discovering the name of his Doppelgänger for the first half of the novel, only to discover his fake name first, and just as arbitrarily his real name later. He goes so far as to take on Antonio's name by the end of the novel. However, as the narrators state, “Tertuliano Máximo Afonso may have changed his name, but he continues to be the same person whom we accompanied to the video shop” (307). Names do not escape the postmodern revelation that signifiers bear
only an arbitrary relationship to the illusory signifieds. Despite this loss of presence, this “carnivalesque clatter,” language is still key to how we understand our world.

Postmodern discourse posits that language structures, and therefore constructs, the world. As Helena innocently states at the end of the novel, “Words are all we have” (321).

The ramifications of Saussurian linguistics reverberated into psychoanalytic theory in the form of Lacanian psychoanalysis. The interaction between the Doppelgängers of this novel and the eroding of their identities mirrors the “lack” of Lacanian ego formation. For Lacan, just as words no longer contain any essential qualities, neither do people. His conception of the mirror-stage theorizes that from the beginning we are defined by a primary misrecognition of our mirror-image “other” as self. Our ideas of a unique, original, and essential self are in fact an illusion and mistaken identification of an external other for internal self. Lacan’s concept runs throughout the novel in the many different mirror scenes and interactions between Máximo and Antonio.

The reason Máximo is so disturbed originally by his double is not because of the loss of agency that ensues, but because of the immediate loss of self. Why? If our egos are founded on an internalization of our mirror-image—and for that to have any value it must be unique and different—then when that image ceases to be unique all meaning is lost and identity disintegrates. Hence, only when Máximo sees himself with his false beard can he feel he has regained his “authentic” self. His physical uniqueness forms his identity externally through image as opposed to internally through soul. The ability to
look in the mirror or at pictures of ourselves and say “that’s me” is a linguistic and narrative illusion. Carolina’s musings in her history class, where she compares the narratives of history to the narratives of her own self, emphasize the fantastic nature of identity. Because barriers between fiction/reality are blurred to the point of bleeding into one another, postmodernism provides a powerful lens for examining identity in *The Double*. “Real” identities are founded on a “fictional” narrative and identification with a re-presented mirror-image.

Lacanian psychoanalysis goes a step further, arguing that our subjectivity lies in our unconscious, and that our unconscious is “structured as a language.” At the core of our subjectivity is a lack, according to Lacan. More specifically, there is a repetition, an infinite chain of signification, in our unconscious that produces the illusion of subjectivity. Thus the Doppelgänger is the uncanny physical manifestation of the unconscious phenomena that construct subjectivity. Again postmodern representations of subject formation take place in the novel in a variety of ways. The unknowability of our own identities is emphasized as characters are constantly left baffled by actions or thoughts that seem outside themselves. The narrators chime in often commenting on how although we come to “know” a person through his or her repeated actions, they still contain the ability to act in mysterious and often unpredictable ways, forcing us to question whether or not we can know a person and by extension ourselves. For Lacan the idea of the totalized and whole self seems a “scandalous lie.” The characters in the novel
behave in often contradictory or unexpected ways, drawing attention to the fact that patterns of behavior do not necessarily correspond to a concrete identity. Martin and Barresi frame this problem as identity permanence. How can we admit that people change and yet still have a sense that they are fundamentally the same person? This is a problematic question that is not answered in Lacanian psychoanalysis or any other theory of subjectivity. Hutcheon comments that with postmodern fiction, “boundaries may frequently be transgressed . . . but there is never any resolution of the ensuing contradictions. In other words, the boundaries remain, even if they are challenged” (91).

Postmodern theories identify and problematize paradoxes and problematic binaries, but do not seek a progression beyond them. The problem of identity proves an insurmountable question “since that immemorial day when a human face first saw itself in the smooth surface of a pond” (Saramago 250). And as the narrators so reassuringly comment, “probably not even another four or five million years will be enough to provide an answer” (250).

Postmodern theory’s problematizing of the original/duplicate relationship proves very pertinent to the Doppelgänger trope. How can the classic double relationship exist in a time where the original/duplicate binary has been flipped and stripped of any real meaning? Saramago responds by constructing a Doppelgänger narrative where the doubles themselves constantly flip from original to duplicate, acting as the physical embodiment of a theoretical argument. The reader is led to believe that Máximo, as the
focalizer and first to discover the uncanny Doppelgänger, is the original of the two doubles. However, the narrators caution the reader not to rest on such problematic foundations and such fears are confirmed when an exchange of birth time reveals that Máximo is in fact the duplicate of the original Antonio by thirty-one minutes. Máximo’s status as duplicate makes partial sense as he behaves like the classic Doppelgänger that aggressively usurps the original’s agency. But this role switches when Antonio takes on the aggressive role and seeks to steal Máximo’s love interest, another classic Doppelgänger move. Even the ending, where by the original kills himself by killing his double, is explained through deconstructive theories. Both Máximo and Antonio die in the end of the novel, literally and theoretically, only to paradoxically live on as well. Just as Hutcheon comments, postmodernism points out the paradoxical relationship between binaries, but those binaries remain just the same. The Doppelgängers of The Double are deconstructed, destroyed, and simultaneously continue infinitely as only a postmodern Doppelgänger could.

Perhaps most importantly, this novel’s insights extend well beyond the page. As a fictional representation of some of the most problematic theories of postmodernism, The Double provides an approachable lens through which to view some very important insights. The ideas represented in this novel are ideas that run throughout all of Saramago’s fiction. It is precisely these ideas that are important. As Saramago states in the Paris Review interview, “I am less and less interested in speaking about literature
these days. I guess that would appear to be a contradiction because I write, and if I write books, what else should I speak about? Well I do write, but I was alive before becoming a writer and I had all the concerns of anyone else living in the world.” When questioned about being an optimist, he responds to the contrary stating “I am a pessimist, but not so much that I would shoot myself in the head.” Which is to say, ideas are important for Saramago and his texts, and those ideas represent a grave view of the state of humanity. If there is one thing to be gained by this study of The Double and by extension the study of representation, it is that critical rigor is of the utmost importance for an ethical and responsible life. Trouble arises when we view things as simple or self-explanatory, especially in regard to identity. Many atrocities have been committed— are currently being committed—under the premise that identity is a stable, totalized, and easily perceived. We must take common sense's statement to heart “that nothing is simple, it just seems simple sometimes, and it's always when it looks simplest that we should most doubt it” (120).
Chapter II:

The Postmodern Narrative:

Language as Doppelgänger

"Let's get back to real life, and leave aside these fantasies and fictions"
—José Saramago, *The Double*

The last chapter explores postmodern theories and fiction and how they interrogate the line between fiction and reality. Saramago's *The Double* actively inverts binaries closely linked with the realms of objectivity and subjectivity. The Doppelgänger trope, as Saramago deploys it, amplifies postmodern theories of representation and repetition through the story of doubles. *The Double* probes multiple dimensions of the novel further emphasizing the instability of previously stable constructs. As Lyotard argues, postmodern theory criticizes totalizing gestures. The constantly shifting and illusory identities of the characters in the novel illuminate the limits of attempts to totalize. Interestingly, the form of the novel mirrors the plot's critique of totalization. Linda Hutcheon, in *The Politics of Postmodernism*, writes that "postmodern representational practices that refuse to stay neatly within accepted conventions and traditions and that deploy hybrid forms and seemingly mutually contradictory strategies frustrate critical attempts (including this one) to systematize them, to order them with an eye to control and mastery—that is, to totalize" (37). Hutcheon's insight draws attention to numerous issues with Saramago's novel and using the term "postmodernism" as an
analytical lens. Postmodernism questions totalizing gestures—like grouping disparate theories under a particular name—precisely the way I have deployed it up to this point. However, I turn to Derrida to help explain how a theorist can use problematic language without sacrificing critical rigor. In “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” Derrida states that an “event” has taken place, “if this loaded word did not entail a meaning which it is precisely the function of structural—or structuralist—thought to reduce or suspect. But let me use the term ‘event’ anyway, employing it with caution and as if in quotation marks” (247). I too use the term postmodern “with caution,” as a stand-in for more specific theories I explicate as the argument unfolds. To call The Double postmodern, I am drawing attention to its plurality as opposed to limiting its potential readings. Saramago writes his novel so abysmally that the formal aspects mirror the thematic content, frustrating any move towards totalization. Roland Barthes offers another way a theorist can handle such a playful text.

Roland Barthes’s book-length essay, S/Z, is difficult to pin down or contain in any one category. The text occupies multiple genres simultaneously. In that sense, S/Z is the perfect text through which we can begin an approach to The Double. The one definitive aspect of the essay is its championing of the writerly text. The idea of the writerly text fuels the critical content of the essay, as well as structures it. Barthes states “the writerly text is not a thing,” but instead, “a perpetual present... the writerly text is ourselves writing” (Barthes 5). Basically, no single person can produce a writerly text. Instead,
Barthes' "writerly text" functions as both noun and verb, drawing attention to the relationship between writer/critic, author/reader, narrator/narratee (all categories that *The Double* attempts to upset). The word Barthes uses is interpretation, but with the added note that "to interpret a text is not to give it a (more or less justified, more or less free) meaning, but on the contrary to appreciate what plural constitutes it" (5). So the writerly text, an elaborate interaction between writer and reader, is ultimately a specific form or literary criticism that includes an ethical responsibility. A responsible reader hunts for and appreciates plurality, fostering an outward motion and allowing meaning to proliferate without encumbering or boxing it in. As Barthes explains:

In this ideal text, the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds . . . the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable . . . the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language.

(5-6)

The writerly text and the relationship it represents between reader and text is multifarious to the extreme, and revels in that ambiguity. Barthes' essay is about meaning; both the text's proliferation of meaning and the reader's construction or recognition meaning without limiting it. The position created for the reader is an absolutely paradoxical one to be placed in, but must be maintained nonetheless. To interpret meaning a reader needs to
stand on some foundation, but only momentarily, knowing full well it is only provisional, and that numerous other foundations are available from which to draw and establish meaning. Similar to Derrida's use of quotation marks around his use of "event," a responsible reader places similar quotation marks around interpretations, rendering them more nonce than conclusive. In this sense, Saramago's novel represents the ideal writerly text, as it facilitates the kind of relationship and engagement that Barthes describes. Therefore, the goal of this analysis is not to hold or grasp on *The Double*, but instead focus on just one constellation within the "galaxy of signifiers" that the novel constructs. The precise network of signification consists of the many narrative tools Saramago uses to upset formal definitions and any characteristics that might render his text stable or easily totalized; like the identity of the protagonists, such ideas are problematic and collapse under close scrutiny.

Using various complex narrative techniques, *The Double* proliferates meaning, refusing to be pinned down or hemmed into one concrete reading. One way in which this text lends itself to this propagation is through its breaking down—and making permeable—different narrative barriers. The novel plays with levels by transgressing the line between discourse and story, utilizing paratextual devices, and deploying *mise en abyme*. Further, the narrative metalepsis and metafictional elements tear at the relationship between narrator and narratee. The text draws in the reader only to suddenly
"bare the device,"\textsuperscript{11} drawing attention to the act of reading a fictional narrative. The narrative builds pressure through its constant motion simultaneously bringing in and pushing back the reader. Perhaps most importantly, the narrators of the text complicate the narrative through their unique position that plays with narratology's many attempts at identifying narrators with complex taxonomies that nevertheless fall short. The narrators' constant referral to themselves as "we" has multiple functions; significantly, the use of "we" illuminates the fact that the reader plays just as important a role in the text as the narrators, much like Barthes' conception the writerly text. The text's treatment of time compounds the complexity of the reader's position. The text often switches between past tense to present, generating a feeling for the reader of watching the events unfold along with the narrators, only to be reminded by the metafictional devices and return to past tense that the fictional events have already happened. Further, the narrators' constant questioning of narrative choices—and defending them to the reader—calls into question their reliability. The narrators often imply that they are omniscient and have knowledge of all the events of the story, yet they also admit not knowing certain aspects of the narrative. Finally, the novel's breaking down of barriers and rendering permeable different boundaries reflects the identity crisis of the protagonists creating the above mentioned confluence where form and content blend and reflect one another. Just as the identity between Máximo and Antonio is made increasingly permeable through the text,

\textsuperscript{11.} This phrase is coined by Viktor Shklovsky.
the identity between narrator and narratee is made permeable as they both read and write the text. In what Hutcheon describes as a common characteristic of postmodern narrative, Saramago's novel paradoxically both critiques and enforces narrative elements. As Hutcheon argues, “the present and the past, the fictive and the factual: the boundaries may frequently be transgressed in postmodern fiction, but there is never any resolution of the ensuing contradictions. In other words, the boundaries remain, even if they are challenged” (72). The Double relies on all kinds of complex narrative maneuvers—as will be discussed in detail—in order to subvert totalizing attempts. The effect of the instability on the reader fosters an ethical stance, a way of reading that requires absolute critical rigor, constructing readings in order to appreciate complexity, not master it. In doing so, the reader gains a skill that is as important outside of the text as it is inside, as such distinctions are no longer relevant.

1. Translation and The Double

Before I dive into the subtleties of the narrative, I think it is important to address a critical hurdle: translation. I am writing this thesis with an English translation of Saramago's original text O Homem Duplicado. In a text that makes the relationship between doubles and originals its main occupation, the relationship between an original text and its translation becomes significantly more exciting. The issue of translation raises numerous problems that prove difficult to resolve. However, the text's thematic content and use of doubles provide a tentative resolution to these concerns. Reading in
translation draws attention to a variety of analytical issues: Who is the author of the text, Saramago or his translator Margaret Jull Costa? What constitutes the “identity” of the text so that it can be called the same one despite being translated? Does translation construct a completely new text? Can arguments made about the English version of the text remain true of the Portuguese version? Is the text paradoxically both Saramago's and not Saramago's? More important, do these questions find themselves limited to translated texts or do they extend to all texts in general? Does any text ever belong to its author? Do we as readers in fact construct meaning along with the author, simultaneously reading and writing the text as we perform an interpretive act? The list extends indefinitely. However, since the novel’s main theme is subjectivity, textual identity becomes significant.

Leena Laiho, in an essay titled “A Literary Work — Translation and Original: A Conceptual Analysis Within the Philosophy of Art and Translation Studies,” provides a succinct explanation of a number of different approaches to conceptualizing the identity of a text, and more importantly, a way of grappling with translation in postmodern literary studies. Laiho frames her topic a question: “Can the identity of a literary work of art be retained when the work is translated?” (296). Laiho prefaces this by stating her goal is not to provide an answer, but to instead look at a number of different voices in the translation discourse that grapple with this question. Laiho approaches this by asking “what constitutes the identity of a literary work” (296). For many theorists, Laiho claims,
“Creating . . . is linked to the identity of literary works” (297). This key premise is something postmodernism, and Saramago's text, problematizes. However, it will be beneficial to first reflect on some of the theories already interrogating translation and textual identity. Laiho uses Borges' “Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote” as an exemplary text in her discussion. In this text, Menard reproduces Cervantes' text word for word which begs the question of whether or not Menard's text is its own work or a copy of Cervantes' piece. As Laiho posits:

> The question is now: Do we have only one literary work here? Alternatively, do we have two different works because so many factors are different: author, time of writing, culture, language, although the two are formally identical? In other words, is the combining factor—the textual sameness—more decisive for identification than the separating factors? (297-298)

There are multiple ways to approach the dilemma, and each is valid depending on the theoretical premises the interpreter holds. Nelson Goodman is quoted as believing “A literary work . . . is . . . the text or script itself. All and only inscriptions and utterances of the text are instances of the work” (298). Although Emily Dickinson scholars may be troubled by such a definition, in the context of translation, this sentiment leans towards seeing translated texts as completely new works of art. According to Goodman, textual identity cannot be maintained across different languages. Initially difficult to grapple

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12. Due to the nature of Dickinson's original manuscripts, many early editors and publishers of her work were forced to edit and change original wording and format. If Goodman is correct, anything other than the facsimile publications are not actually the writings of Dickinson; an interesting idea to reflect on.
with, Goodman’s definition aligns with the insights made in the novel and postmodern theory.13

Many theorists offer up alternative definitions to Goodman's, but Susan Bassnett seems to be the most pertinent to this discussion. According to Laiho, Bassnett's view runs against the older understanding of translation: “traditionally, the original was prioritized, and the translation was seen as its ‘inferior copy’” (304). Although Bassnett’s view seems to be the present view as well, she argues Borges’ text is an “illustration of ‘the absurdity of any concepts of sameness between texts’” (304). For Bassnett, being a postmodern theorist, the idea of the original is no longer relevant. Similar to her, Jiří Levý argues that translation is “artistic reproduction,” that it “is simultaneously interpretation and creation” (306). The translation’s paradoxical status means that “the reader could be reading a translation as if it were the original but still knowing it is not” (306). Levý’s argument aligns with how contemporary readers approach translated texts. In the context of Saramago's *The Double*, a text that explicitly problematizes the relationship between the original and the duplicate, the role of translation in textual identity is very important.

13. In an interview, Margaret Jull Costa states that “Many people are very suspicious of translations – 'Of course, it’s only a translation;' 'I wonder what it says/sounds like in the original'; 'In this other translation, it says...' – and those are, in a way, all valid comments, but I always find them terribly wounding, because I want to create a text that has its own integrity, that is, miraculously, both true to the original and true to itself. And that is the miracle of a good translation, not to be invisible, but to be as seductively fresh and original as the original.” Thus we have the paradox of a reproduction that is both unique and also a copy. Hutcheon argues it is the role of postmodern theory and texts to interrogate these boundaries, but not offer any solutions. As Levý states, we must simply recognize the paradoxical status of translated texts without focusing on outdated binary structures like original/duplicate.
II. Illusory Authors: Who Reads and Who Writes?

As a result of theorists placing the emphasis of textual identity on creation, they necessarily anchor texts to their authors. The relationship between author and text is something postmodern literary studies explicitly problematizes, most infamously in Barthes' "The Death of the Author." Although paratextual elements, like placing the author's name on the cover along with all kinds of plagiarism and copyright laws, imply that the author is alive and well, Saramago's text refuses to uphold such problematic ideas. *The Double* interrogates neat connections using the narrators of the text and their constant referral to themselves as "we." Susan Lanser, in her doctoral dissertation titled *Point of View as Ideology and Technique: Women Writers and Narrative Voice* and later expanded on in a book-length study, refers to this specific technique as "communal voice." However, Lanser argues that this type of narrative voice is used mostly by female authors in an effort to embody a "collective female identity" (Lanser 455). Since Saramago is obviously not a female and therefore not attempting to invoke a collective female identity, Lanser's identification of the narrative tool is only helpful in that it assigns a useful term with which to refer. The narrators' use of the collective voice as employed in *The Double* results in an entirely different effect.

*The Double's* communal voiced narrators function as a device that breaks down the narrator/narratee binary as well as problematizing attempts to anchor textual identity through authorial subject positions. An effect of the nefarious narrative voice is that it
subverts any assurance as to who is in fact authoring the text. The paratext of the novel
provides additional evidence interrogating textual identity. Particularly relevant to the
communal voice of the narrators is an epigraph from Laurence Sterne's *The Life and
Opinions of Tristram Shandy* that reads “I believe in my conscience I intercept many a
thought which heaven intended for another man.” The epigraph is multifunctional: First,
the quote creates an intertextual allusion—to be discussed in greater detail later—to
another famous metafictional work, informing the reader to expect similar narrative
qualities in this work. Secondly, the quote from Sterne's work invokes a particular paper
written by Georges Poulet titled “Criticism and the Experience of Interiority.” A summary
of Poulet’s argument is necessary in order to understand its relation to *The Double's*
communally voiced narrators.

Poulet's paper, published in *The Structuralist Controversy: The Language of
Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, attempts to discover how a critic should deal with the
objectivity/subjectivity of reading. A quote that will help illustrate the article’s relevance
to *The Double* is stated in the introduction: “In short, the extraordinary fact in the case of
a book is the falling away of the barriers between you and it. You are inside it; it is inside
you; there is no longer either outside or inside” (Poulet 57). The “falling away of
barriers” is important as the complex narrative devices of *The Double* all function to
transgress and break down barriers. Poulet is interested in the phenomenon of reading, or
the mental activity. He states that when reading, “I am someone who happens to have as
objects of his own thought, thoughts which are part of a book I am reading, and which are therefore the cognitions of another. . . I am thinking the thoughts of another. . . But I think it as my very own” (Poulet 59). Poulet describes a collapse between narrator and narratee where the narratee becomes the narrator. Similar to Sterne’s quote, Poulet states “in a certain sense I must recognize that no idea really belongs to me. Ideas belong to no one. They pass from one mind to another as coins pass from hand to hand” (Poulet 59). Sterne’s quote at first seems random—the idea of having a thought that is not your own or meant for you—but in light of Poulet’s argument, the quote takes on greater relevance to the topic of identity that runs throughout the text. Poulet advances his argument to greater depth when he begins to interrogate subjectivity in the act of reading: “whenever I read, I mentally pronounce an I, and yet the I which I pronounce is not myself. . . I am on loan to another” (Poulet 60). Further, “the work lives its own life within me; in a certain sense, it thinks itself and it even gives itself meaning within me” (Poulet 62). Poulet’s conception of a shared mind does not limit agency, he asserts, “I begin to share the use of my consciousness with this being whom I have tried to define and who is the conscious subject ensconced at the heart of the work. He and I, we start having a common consciousness” (Poulet 63). Moving beyond the blatant issues associated with assigning a gender—and a male one at that—to the mysterious narrative mind, the link between Poulet’s argument and the effects of The Double’s use of the communal voice are illuminated: “we” does not involve a complete takeover of one’s consciousness by
another—as the use of “I” would seem to suggest—but instead a commingling. The Double's use of “we” resonates with Poulet's argument and seems to respond to the criticism he receives during the discussion that follows his presentation of his paper.

René Girard takes issue with Poulet’s methodology when applied to metafictional texts (although he does not refer to them as such). In particular, Girard questions “what Professor Poulet seems to assume to be the archetypal act of reading which is identification with the author” (Girard 82). In other words, Girard is skeptical of the idea that every text seeks a suspension of disbelief and immersion into the story world. Instead, Girard finds another part of reading to be concerned with “fascination” (82). He argues further, “in the case of the novel, it seems to me that the itinerary of the hero is always a shift from this fascination to a realization that the printed text, the work, is really a human act” (83). Girard draws attention to the fact that some texts—metafictional—draw attention to their status as fictional texts being written and do not seek this identification that Poulet outlines in his paper. The Double acts as a middle ground and constructs a narrative situation that embodies Poulet's dual consciousness without the problematic identification with the author (or textual entity). Communal voice is perhaps not exactly what the narrators in The Double are using, since the “we” is not attempting to unify under any definable community. It is more accurate to identify this technique as a cooperative voice, in that the narrator/narratee both work together towards the goal of creating the (writerly) text.
The cooperative voice not only breaks down the narrator/narratee relationship, but destabilizes the larger textual identity as well. Laiho explains that “creating” is intimately connected with the “identity” of a piece of literature. The ability to ground the identity of a work to its author or creator lends a sense of stability to the object. However, postmodern studies problematizes anchoring the text to the authorial figure. Even more dubious, translation incorporates a second creator to whom the textual artifact can be linked. The Double’s use of “we” prevents further anchoring to the narrators as well. The reader can never deduce who is in fact narrating the text. There are hints strewn throughout the novel, but they are often paradoxical and point to many different directions ranging from the actual person named Jose Saramago, to the authorial figure, and even to the reader. The shifting narrative situation reflects the disintegrating identities of the protagonists, and more generally a postmodern identity that becomes increasingly illusory. There is a confluence between form and content; how the novel is written resonates with what the novel is about. Focusing on the relationship between narrator and narratee, the text’s use of metalepsis magnifies the cooperative voiced narrators’ effect on the reader.

III. (Real)Time in Fiction

The Double’s use of metalepsis disturbs temporal consistency and further problematizes the distinction between writer/reader and narrator/narratee. Gérard Genette describes metalepsis in his book Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method, stating “some
of [narrative metalepsis] ... play on the double temporality of the story and the narrating ... as if the narrating were contemporaneous with the story and had to fill up the latter's dead spaces" (Genette 235). The narrators' use of “we” to draw in the reader, paired with the contemporaneous relation of events as if they are happening before the reader’s eyes, creates the illusion that he or she is indeed watching/writing/reading along with the narrators. The temporal immediacy of the events erodes previously stable subject positions. For example, a breakdown between narrator and narratee occurs when the narrators state “everything depends on what steps Tertuliano Máximo Afonso takes today. However, the procession, as people used to say in times gone by, is just about to leave the church. Let's follow it” (Saramago 25). The narrators' use of “Let's” draws the reader in as co-narrator. The role however, is not consistently maintained. The narrators rant in complex philosophical asides, which they explain are necessary because nothing was happening in the text and they had to “fill up” the “dead spaces.” In a potent metafictional moment, the narrators explain that “responsibility for this tedious piscine and linguistic digression lies entirely with Tertuliano Máximo Afonso for having taken such a long time to put *A Man like Any Other* in the VCR ... A narrative abhors a vacuum” (83). Narrative authority is no longer with the author or the narrators, but instead the character Máximo. The narrators had no choice (agency), “responsibility ... lies entirely with Tertuliano.” Ever-changing narrative authority undermines critical attempts to anchor the text to an authorial position, since it is not clear who controls the
textual creation. Additionally, the scene’s metalepsis blends fiction and reality. In fiction, time is relative to the text; minutes, seconds, even days go by with simple phrases. Time in “reality” ticks away steadily and consistently. The narrators assign reality-like qualities to a fictional space when they claim they have to fill up on occupied space in the novel. Another example of this handing-over of authorial control to Máximo occurs when the narrators discuss his girlfriend’s relevance to the story: “as for Maria da Paz, whether or not she continues to be a presence in these pages, for how long and to what end, is up to Tertuliano Máximo Afonso, he knows what he will say to her . . .” (58). The mix between self-referentiality and metalepsis creates a complex and paradoxical situation. “Pages” refers explicitly to the fictional text while the narrators hand over creative control to a character who exists as a construction of said fictional text. The narrators relinquishing of power directly contrasts later statements. For example, they tell the reader “it is legitimate to say that what will be has been, and all that’s lacking now is for it to be written down” (193). If everything in the text has already happened, how then do characters take charge of the narrative? Further, how can the novel take place in the past while the narrative occurs in the present: “this was precisely what Tertuliano Máximo Afonso was engaged in while we, with reprehensible frivolity, have been discussing . . .” (111). Again, the narrators imply that time in the novel is ticking away just as incessantly as time in the reader’s reality.

IV. Metafictional (In)Consistency
Paradoxically, the temporal metalepsis in *The Double* functions to both draw in and push back the reader, drawing attention to the act of reading a fictional narrative. Metafictional moments target the reader directly engaging him or her in an internal dialogue that is simultaneously external, similar to the conversations between Máximo and his externalized common sense. The first metafictional break happens early in the novel, as the narrators explain their use of Máximo instead of his full name: “mainly because the word Tertuliano, having appeared so recently, only six lines previously, could do a grave disservice to the fluency of the narrative, anyway, as we were saying . . .” (4). Explaining the textual choice strips the reader of the authoritative power he or she has as interpreter and co-creator of the text. The narrators bring the paradox of reading to the forefront of the reader’s mind, confronting him or her with the problem of being a creator of the text in one sense and having absolutely no control over the text in another. Even worse, the narrators who do control the text are incredibly inept. The reason for the explanation—to avoid marring the fluency of the narrative—is exactly what the explanation does. Another interesting moment of metafictional paradox transpires when the narrators describe Máximo's living room: “there they were, solid and impassive, the two tall, crowded bookshelves, the framed engravings on the walls, to which no reference has been made until now, but which are nonetheless there, and there, and there, and there” (15). The reader is put in a unique position of being in the text and outside of the text, having no idea what the room looks like except for what the narrators describe. And
even they admit they are doing a poor job as no mention of these engravings preceded this passage. Interestingly, the language used to describe the forgotten engravings imagines the reader in the room with Máximo and the narrators. Reading the passage, we visually see the narrators pointing “there, and there, and there, and there.” The language upsets any kind of stable subject position. The reader is consistently placed into roles of authority and then reminded of just how little authority her or he has, or placed inside the text through the “we” of the narrators’ cooperative voice only to be reminded that the reader is in fact outside of the text through explicit discussions on narrative choices.

A particularly powerful example of this destabilizing arises when the levels between narrative and story collapse. Although the passage is quite verbose, it exemplifies the narrative instability that the text attempts to foster:

There are moments in a narrative, and this, as you will see, has been one of them, when any parallel manifestation of ideas and feelings on the part of the narrator with respect to what the characters themselves might be feeling or thinking at that point should be expressly forbidden by the laws of good writing. . . the violation. . . can mean that a character, instead of following, as is his inalienable right, an autonomous line of thought and feeling in keeping with the status conferred upon him, finds himself assailed quite arbitrarily by thoughts or feelings that, given their provenance, cannot be entirely alien to him, but which can, nonetheless, prove, at the very least, inopportune and, in some cases, disastrous.
This was precisely what happened to Tertuliano Máximo Afonso... the narrator's unfortunate thoughts about his physical features and the problematic possibility that, should he reveal the necessary talent, they might, at some future date, be placed at the service of the dramatic or cinematic arts, unleashed in him a reaction that it would be no exaggeration to describe as one of horror. (Saramago 82-83)

The passage makes numerous complex narrative moves that require some teasing out. The first is the metafictional break that the reader comes to expect, “There are moments in a narrative,” the present being “one of them.” Even more powerful, the narrators direct the reader explicitly stating “as you will see,” distancing them from the co-author position created by the preceding “we.” However, just as the narrative reinstates one barrier, that of the narrator/narratee, another is transgressed, discourse/story. Previously the narrators' position has been the cooperatively voiced third-person omniscient—sometimes limited through the focalizer of Máximo or Antonio—placing them outside of the story world. However, in this scene—due to a temporal alignment between the discourse and story levels—the narrators' thoughts influence the character's thoughts. Intriguingly, the events of the story are said to have already been written, as the narrators state, “what will be has been, and all that's lacking now is for it to be written down” (193). How then can the narration effect the character if, as the narrators claim, they are “mere transcriber's of other people’s thoughts and faithful copyists of their actions” (189). The narrators’ referral to “the narrator” as if the they themselves are not the ones who
committed the violation of levels further problematizes the situation. What exactly is conversing with the reader then? The author? An as yet uncategorized textual entity? No answers reveal themselves, which may itself be an answer. Just as the narrator/narratee subject positions stabilized they are upset through the narrators’ shifting identities. The constant fluctuation mirrors the incessant unsettling of the protagonists’ identities and more generally the postmodern constructed self. The narrators can never be pinned as a single identifiable figure, embodying the plurality the text proliferates.

V. Reliably Unreliable

Although analyzing unreliability has become something of an old trick in literary studies, I find that in the context of this novel it is particularly fruitful. Focusing on the paradoxical nature of the narrative situation in *The Double* illuminates larger themes that drive the novel. Unreliability was first identified by Wayne C. Booth in his book *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, where he outlines how a narrator can be unreliable about facts or values. In an article written by James Phelan and Mary Patricia Martin, titled “The Lessons of 'Weymouth': Homodiagesis, Unreliability, Ethics, and *The Remains of the Day,*” they seek to extend the definition of unreliability. In particular, they take issue with the fact that “there has been virtually no debate about the efficacy of the reliable/unreliable distinction itself and no comprehensive account of the varieties of unreliability” (Phelan & Martin 90). Which is to say, the importance of unreliability exists in its effects on the text, not its existence or nonexistence. Identifying whether a
narrator is reliable or not is insufficient, what remains is articulating the influence unreliability has on the text and the reader. Diagnosing unreliability proves increasingly difficult, to the point that even Suzanne Keen, in her book *Narrative Form*, chastises critics for essentially being poor readers: “as will be seen below, interpretations of the reliability of the narration often hinge on accurate descriptions of the narrative situation” (Keen 42). If Interpretations do in fact “hinge” on precise definitions of narrative situations, *The Double* presents quite the task with a paradoxical narrative situation that refuses to be pinned down. However, thanks to the reliability of these unreliable narrators, examples from all over the continuum of unreliability abound throughout the novel. As Lanser describes in her book *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction*, unreliability is a spectrum, and just because a narrator is unreliable in one section of the novel does not imply unreliability across the entire work. The narrators in *The Double* are openly unreliable about their ability to narrate which often comes in the form of their self-conscious defense of narrative choices. Although, unreliability also takes the form of narrative ineptness, as mentioned previously when the narrators break the discourse/story level and change the course of the novel.

Contrary to the narrators’ claim that they are “mere transcribers,” they blatantly admit at one point that “There is some doubt as to whether what we have just written, from the word ‘Honest’ to the word ‘need,’ was actually generated by Tertuliano Máximo Afonso’s own thought processes” (162). Instead of correcting these lines, the narrators
explain that “since these words, and what lies between them, represent the holiest and
purest of truths, it seemed a shame to pass up the opportunity to set them down” (163).
The narrators intentionally act unreliably for the sake of setting down an important
“truth.” Ironically, an example of reliability occurs when the narrators, listening in on a
conversation between Máximo and the Headmaster, explain that “absorbed in these
visions, the history teacher had not heard the headmaster’s first words, but we, who will
always be around lest anything be missed, can safely say he did not miss much” (73).
However, their later claim that Máximo “was obviously led by some thought of his own
that we failed to catch” contradicts their prior moments of narrative prowess (204).
Constantly shifting from omniscient to limited, from expert narrative ability to
unintentional lack of control of the text, the narrative situation—like the narrators
themselves—continually rebuff totalization. Can we classify them as unreliable? Perhaps,
at particular moments. But even that is shaky in light of the narrators paradoxical
distancing themselves from the actual narrator of the text. Abysmal enigmas folding into
one another, building and constantly subverting interpretive grasps. Unless the
interpretive move is to recognize and catalog the ways the text subverts proliferates
meaning. Postmodern theory provides a provisional lens that makes sense of paradoxical
narrative qualities. Insights gained are never limited to this particular text, but instead
speak to all texts in general. Although *The Double* proves quite explicitly problematic, all
texts escape totalization. Interpretive acts depend on which network of signifiers being
tapped into. And those networks are vast, even infinite according to Barthes. The novel’s outward movement collapsing barriers between narrator/narratee, author/reader, reality/fiction, is strengthened by another playful aspect of the text: intertextuality.

VI. Breaking Beyond Textual Boundaries

Intertextuality takes a number of different forms within this novel. One example is *mise en abyme*, or mirrors in the text. Narrative theorist Suzanne Keen states that this device “invites interpretation of a small part of a narrative as a focused representation of the whole in which it appears” (112). Saramago's mirrors function as intertext because they incorporate the films Máximo watches throughout the novel to discover his Doppelgänger. For example, the first film Máximo watches, *The Race is to the Swift*, involves a “plot full of misunderstandings, hoaxes, mix-ups, and confusions” (Saramago 3). On one level, the description of this film is easily applied to the novel; *The Double* contains mix-ups and confusions about not only character identity but narrative identity as well. Another mirror is *Death Strikes at Dawn*, an allusion to the death of Antonio and Maria which occurs at dawn. *Phone Me Another Day* plays with the novel's use of phones in mix-ups and confusions, not to mention many of the character's never answer those phones and that the third double indeed phones another day. A particularly powerful intertextual title is of course the name of the novel itself.

*The Double* functions as a paratextual device and invokes an entire intertextual network of narratives that encompass the Doppelgänger trope. *The Double* boldly takes
up a narrative tradition along with all of its prior incarnations. As mentioned before, Saramago's treatment of the trope is paradoxical as it simultaneously adheres to certain tenants while subverting them. For example, in the end of the novel, the death of one double results in the death of both. However, both continue to live on in the form of Máximo taking on Antonio's identity. Saramago's text also involves two men who look identical but it is impossible to discern who is the original and who the double. Both characters take on the role of the duplicate throughout the work. The Double also advances narrative techniques that began in previous iterations of the trope. For example, Edgar Allan Poe's “William Wilson” complicates the link between original and double as well. Poe confounds the relationship between the two identical doubles by making the traditional Doppelgänger the focalizer of the narrative. Throughout the entire story, the “original”—who is also the narrator—commits nefarious acts; however, his Doppelgänger subverts his agency through the interruption of these acts. In a sense, the role between original and Doppelgänger is switched. A similar move is made in Saramago's text, although much more complicated as chapter one explained in detail.

Saramago's shifting textual boundaries draws from another famous Doppelgänger narrative: Despair, by Vladimir Nabokov. Despair—and The Double—play with Hoffmann's narrative structure in The Devil's Elixirs, exaggerating the potential unreliability of the text. The narrative frame of Despair is identical to The Devil's Elixirs; both novels are presented as true stories re-presented by fictional editors. Using
paratextual forewords as part of the overall fictional texts, they problematize the reliability of the content. These forewords draw attention to the status of the work as a text and problematize ideas of representation. Are these events true or fictional? Who is in fact authoring the text? How much creative license have these editors taken in representing the text to the reader? Fictional forewords generate numerous questions. In the context of Despair, unreliability proliferates through multiple levels of the work. Aside from the foreword and the fictional editor, the narrator and protagonist's reliability is often presented as unreliable in the same way as Saramago's. The opening line of Despair reads, “if I were not perfectly sure of my power to write and of my marvelous ability to express ideas with the utmost grace and vividness . . . So, more or less, I had thought of beginning my tale” (Nabokov 3). Because this sentence opens the novel, contrary to the narrator’s qualifying statement, it is how the tale begins. The narrator’s intrusion, highlighting the fact that we are reading a “tale,” keeps the reader from suspending disbelief and entering the fictional world. Ironically, the narrator does not command his prose as masterfully as he so boldly claims. Amit Marcus argues that the ending of Despair subverts reader expectations, mocking the traditional end of the Doppelgänger trope. Although possible, reading Despair in connection with Saramago's novel, the ending acts as a nuanced adhesion to traditional double narratives rather than outright subversion. Hermann in fact dresses up Felix in his likeness, murders him, and takes on his identity. The fall of Hermann (now Felix) occurs precisely because of this
identity inversion, contrary to Marcus' argument. I stress this point because part of the
narrative complexity of Saramago's treatment of the trope results from this progression in
the double tradition of complicating—while still adhering to—the conventions of the
trope. Part of the paradoxical nature of double narratives and an effect of the trope itself,
incessant problematizing occurs most powerfully in Saramago’s postmodern duplication.

Saramago borrows from both narratives in the Doppelgänger tradition and his
own previously written narratives. The self-intertext complicates even further the
cooperatively voiced narrators. Discussing the lonely living situation of the novel's
protagonist Máximo, the narrators comment that:

What one mostly sees, indeed it hardly comes as a surprise anymore, are people
patiently submitting to solitude's meticulous scrutiny, recent public examples,
though not particularly well known and two of whom even met with a happy
ending, being the portrait painter whom we only ever knew by his first initial, the
GP who returned from exile to die in the arms of the beloved fatherland, the
proofreader who drove out a truth in order to plant a lie in its place, the lowly
clerk in the Central Registry Office who made off with certain death certificates.

(2)

Each of these seemingly random lonely characters are in fact protagonists from
Saramago’s previous novels. The first is the portrait painter, a direct reference to his text
*Manual of Painting & Calligraphy: A Novel*. This text deals with similar themes of
identity that are explored in *The Double* without the very powerful aid of the Doppelgänger trope. The general practitioner who returns to his homeland refers to Saramago's novel *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*. This novel also represents a powerful example of intertextuality which alludes to famous authors like Fernando Pessoa and Jorge Luis Borges. The proofreader refers to his novel *The History of the Siege of Lisbon*, in which the protagonist deliberately changes a historical event in the text they are editing. This intertext expands on the relationship between history and fiction that Carolina explores in *The Double*. The last intertext mentioned explicitly is the clerk from his novel *All the Names*. The novel deals with numerous themes in *The Double*, most notably issues of agency and fate. Another subtle allusion to Saramago's work occurs towards the end of the novel when the narrators remark that the idea Máximo has while in the shower felt:

as if a long-delayed blessing had just descended from the shower, as if another purifying shower, not the one enjoyed by those three naked women on the balcony, but the one enjoyed by this man, shut up alone in the precarious safety of his apartment, were, with the flow of water and soap, compassionately freeing his body from the grime and his soul from fear. (271)

The shower is a reference to a very powerful scene in his novel *Blindness*, which again deals with similar themes of identity and language. Explicit—though easily overlooked as a result of their blunt deployment and assumption of the reader—moments of reference to
other works by Saramago create a rich intertextual network that deepens the themes addressed in *The Double*. Employing the help of novels written over the course of over thirty years allows for greater thematic development. Beyond that, the issue of textual identity is complicated further, as understanding these references depends on a reader's familiarity with other works by Saramago. More paradoxical, we must first understand those other texts as independent in order for Saramago to deploy them within the context of *The Double*. In classic postmodern problematizing, the narrative intertextuality both relies on and subverts textual boundaries critics use to stabilize textual identity.

**VII. Conclusion: Praising Plurality**

With all of this in mind, let us return to Hutcheon's succinct description of the postmodern narrative: “postmodern representational practices that refuse to stay neatly within accepted conventions and traditions and that deploy hybrid forms and seemingly mutually contradictory strategies frustrate critical attempts (including this one) to systematize them, to order them with an eye to control and mastery—that is, to totalize” (37). From the outset, my approach to *The Double* had to shift in order to sustain itself. How can I write a thesis on a text that frustrates critical attempts? As opposed to imposing a reading on this very complex novel, I identified one of a vast network of intertextual networks and observed what meaning was set free within it. For the purposes of this exploration of narrative, I tap into numerous theoretical texts that *The Double* both overtly and subtly invokes. As a result, certain themes become increasingly significant:
namely, the impossible task of totalization. Just as the plot deals with the nefariousness in postmodern constructions of self, the novel’s form plays with subject positions and attempts to anchor textual identity. The form and content are effectively Doppelgängers of one another, constantly subverting each other's stability.

Translation makes establishing textual identity particularly difficult. For some critics, analyzing only a translated text constitutes a fundamental critical error, a lack of authenticity and rigor on my part. However, in light of what the novel has to say about the relationship between originals and doubles, reading in translation only magnifies the thematic content. Postmodern questions regarding textual authority and authorial intention are made even more relevant as a result of reading a work with essentially two authors. Keeping with the overarching theme of identity and totalization, reading in translation emphasizes problems with using authors as arbitrary anchors for maintaining textual identity. Further, in light of the vast amount of contradictory theories in the field of translation studies, what exactly allows us to refer to a text as a whole and complete artifact is up for debate. Reading in translation leaves up to question who is in fact the author of the text; is Costa the author of a new text inspired by Saramago's? Is Saramago still the author despite the changes necessary when translating from one language to the next? Further, issues of representation and textual meaning become more potent. Postmodern theory problematizes the location of meaning previously thought to be in the text. Barthes and Poulet argue that meaning is something much more complicated,
existing in a type of relationship between the reader and the text. If that is so, reading a
translation involves reading a textual reinterpretation of another text, as translating
inherently involves interpretation. How then do we maintain that a translation is still the
same text as the original? Such questions remain unanswered, and Saramago's text
demonstrates their lack of importance. More specifically, distinctions between original
and duplicate are irrelevant as organizing constructs. Just as it ultimately becomes absurd
to discuss who is the original or Doppelgänger of the text, so too is discussing who is the
real author of the text. The paradox of anchoring identity extends into the narrative
situation as well.

The narrators' referral to themselves as "we" refutes any critical attempt at
stabilizing their identity or reliability. At times, the narrators use the voice of Saramago,
referring to other works written by the same author. Contrastingly, they are the writers of
the text, commenting on textual decisions. Sometimes the narrators are in the text and
simultaneously outside of it, having frank discussions with the reader. Paradoxically, they
often assign guilt for narrative transgressions to the "narrator" of the text as if they
themselves are not the ones in that position. Beyond that, the novel's treatment of time
affects the "we" casting the reader as co-narrator of the text. As a result, textual identity is
further destabilized as narration refuses to be anchored to any single entity. The
cooperatively voiced narrators often make contradictory statements or are outright
unreliable, admitting that they missed certain events. They even go so far as to give
narrative power to the characters themselves, commenting on how it is up to them and their actions to decide how the plot will unfold. Ultimately, the narrators remain amorphous and illusory just as the authorial position is constantly shifting, subverting any totalizing effort on the part of the critic. Again, the complex narrative situation—with all its attempts at subverting any stable reading—can at least be recognized and appreciated within the context of postmodern theory. Pliable frames constructed by Barthes, Derrida, and Hutcheon allow for multiplicity and variety. Derrida refers to language’s proliferation of meaning as “play,” and Barthes names it “writerly.” Call it what you will, the name matters little. The effect of such fluid devices force readers to confront paradoxical ideas. I know the text *The Double* “exists” in a sense because I am writing a critical analysis of it. However, I always maintain in the back of my mind that the “text” to which I refer is only a construct, and arbitrary collection of words that are simultaneously present in the text but also present in the vast intertextual network it relies on to produce meaning.

Not only does Saramago’s text make ample use of his own prior works, but he invokes an entire literary tradition as well. Why the Doppelgänger? As previously mentioned, the Doppelgänger is a trope that is intimately connected with issues of identity, precisely one of the themes *The Double* invokes. Reading the novel with a postmodern lens, it makes sense that Saramago would deploy a trope that is fundamentally based on issues of representation. In addition, examining previous works that use the double reveals a tradition of progressively greater narrative complexity. Even
one of the founding texts of the tradition, *The Devil's Elixirs*, constructs complex paratextual devices that Nabokov later uses to emphasize questions of subjectivity. Identified earlier, Saramago advances these devices. Nabokov creates multiple layers of dubious identities: the author, the author of the foreword, the author of the “original” text that the author of *Despair* is representing, the narrator of the text. Saramago combines all of these complex positions with one single word: “we.” We, the author, the narrator, the reader, Saramago himself; these are only a few of the potentially infinite subject positions contained in that one infernal pronoun.

All of these complex narrative tools result in raising consciousness and appreciation of instability. “Sensible people are like that” write the narrators, “they tend to simplify everything, and then, but always too late, we witness their astonishment at the great diversity of life” (16). Many argue that the goal of postmodernism is to put into focus the instability on which our worldviews are founded, hence Lyotard’s “war on totality” (46). With seemingly blissful ignorance, we stride through our lives with a confidence that reality is not only a knowable thing, but a thing our worldviews accurately correspond to. What is gained by calling into question such confidence? How do we progress by understanding identity as a social construct? A linguistic illusion? Removing the text from the anchor of the author accomplishes what exactly? Handing over the authority of meaning to the reader empowers whom and to what end? Perhaps the answer to these questions points cynically towards nihilism. On the contrary, I read an
ethical imperative in these seemingly negative conclusions. We can no longer accept our world as if it is the world. Postmodernism argues we have a moral obligation to adhere to a critical rigor that is constantly calling into question foundational statements and claims. "names are not persons" writes Saramago in *Manual of Painting and Calligraphy*. The goal of totalizing moves is to gain power over something. To be able to point and say with full confidence that you know something’s essential identity is a powerful claim. For Saramago, knowing his increasingly pessimistic attitude towards humanity near the latter half of his life, it is logical that his texts become potent critiques of totalization. "If we are cruel," asks Saramago in an interview in *The Paris Review*, "how can we continue to say that we are rational beings? . . . This is an ethical issue that I feel must be discussed." Humanity’s inability to behave rationally highlights the importance of postmodernity and the ethical imperative of critical rigor. We must constantly be questioning, constantly interrogating foundational claims. Totalization subverts critical thinking. Contrary to the narrators' wish that we "get back to real life," we must realize that such a thing in fact is no different than "fantasies and fictions."
Conclusion:

The Need for Problematizing and Paradoxes

“I don't think we did go blind, I think we are blind . . .
Blind people who can see, but do not see”
— José Saramago, *Blindness*

Saramago's invoking of his novel *Blindness* in *The Double* hints at its importance in the thematic content of the novel. When the narrators reference *Blindness*, they bring with it the ideas and additional intertextual networks attached to it. *Blindness* is a particularly powerful reference when cast with other postmodern theories and texts constantly alluded to in *The Double*. *Blindness* is ultimately a text that reflects on the “blindness” that occurs when we attempt to totalize and simplify. In our attempts to master the world around us, we eventually fall prey to fictions masked as reality. *The Double* draws attention to the paradox that results from this reliance of reality on fantasy.

As chapter one explicates, the trope of the Doppelgänger is intimately connected with subject formation. Saramago's filtering of the tradition through postmodern theories that destabilize and subvert totalization magnifies the many issues involved in constructing identity. The novel's content paradoxically continues the traditional Doppelgänger narrative while also critiquing its shortcomings. Written in a time where theory problematizes the relationship between originals and doubles, the Doppelgänger relationship changes as well. Máximo and Antonio are constantly changing roles, frustrating attempts to discern who is the original and who the double. The many identity
crises of the protagonists go beyond simple misidentification of self for other. As Lacanian psychoanalysis suggests, the uncanny feeling we get from doubles stems from the mirror it holds to our own subject formation. Our identities are founded on a misrecognition of “other” for “self.” Even more to the point, subjectivity is the product of unconscious repetition that masks a fundamental lack. Identity continually slips away just beyond the horizon.

Chapter two delves further into the narrative itself, examining the ways in which the text doubles the story. This textual doubling serves to further destabilize the text and emphasize the postmodern theme of subverting totalization. Looking at theories of translation, grounding the text to any single author becomes problematic. Further, the ambiguous and contradictory narrative situation further complicates any attempt to ground the texts narrators. Explicating on textual unreliability and metafictional moments, The Double continually subverts traditional literary analytic frames for mastering texts through specific interpretations. In what postmodernism has come to appreciate, the text's multifarious nature refuses to foreclose meaning and instead confounds any attempt to exert mastery of it. As a result, my analysis has taken the form of an observation, cataloging the many undulations of this serpentine text. The thematic content of The Double, contextualized in a number of different postmodern theories, highlights the importance of fiction in constructing what we call “reality.”

This represents the most important effect of The Double. Looking at the zeitgeist
of contemporary global politics, it seems that cultures across the world have collectively
turned their back on the potential insights of postmodernism and are relying increasingly
on problematic foundations. For example, that the United States can declare “war on
terror” without adequately interrogating the term and what it represents is ethically
problematic. Countless atrocities have been and are currently committed under the
premise that such a term speaks to some essential quality on the part of the person being
identified by it. A minor reflection on the history of the term and its relationship to the
binary terrorist/freedom fighter might lead to some hesitation on just how concrete terms
like “terrorist” are. The point being, The Double encourages us to be critical of totalizing
concepts that oversimplify very complex ideas. Postmodernism, despite its contested and
hotly debated history, at the very least conveys an ethical responsibility to question
incessantly. Uncomfortable as this may be—constantly shuffling and critiquing
foundational premises—it is absolutely necessary if we are to avoid repeating mistakes
we think ourselves far too progressive to repeat.

This thesis on The Double is anything but exhaustive. The material provided by
Saramago in The Double can sustain much longer and sustained critical interpretations
than can possibly be included in such a limited format. Especially when taking into
consideration the seemingly unexplained lack of scholarship on this text. My primary
goal in analyzing this novel was to scrape the surface for what rich critical interpretations
it is capable of proliferating. The novel could just as easily be placed into a Portuguese
writing tradition or Metafictional writing tradition or religious writing tradition as opposed to a Doppelgänger writing tradition; and I am sure equally as compelling readings would ensue. At the very least, explicating the postmodern themes that run throughout the text will hopefully shed some light on the importance of fiction and the humanities in our current cultural climate. Reading critically and questioning incessantly, although at first seemingly nihilistic, is perhaps the only way of grappling with the uncanny postmodern present.
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