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Ambrose Bierce: The Author and the Image of the double in
“The Death of Halpin Frayser,” and “One of Twins”

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Abstract

In this dissertation, I will provide an analysis in depth of the types of doubles presented in “The Death of Halpin Frayser,” and “One of Twins.” Ambrose Gwinnet Bierce decides to use this literary device to portray our inner fears and to present a widely discussed topic: the duality of human beings. With this idea of duality, we refer to the fact that in each of us there are two different worlds that are inherent to our existence and coexist together inside our minds: ‘the conscious’ or ‘rationality’ and ‘the unconscious’ or ‘irrationality.’ Therefore, these two elements, which are the main features of human nature and human identity, have been the center of attention for centuries.

Key words: doubles, duality, conscious, unconscious, human nature, human identity.

Resumen

En este trabajo de fin de grado, realizaré un análisis en profundidad de la tipología del doble en “The Death of Halpin Frayser” y “One of Twins.” Ambrose Gwinnett Bierce utiliza este recurso literario para representar nuestros miedos internos y un tema que ha sido ampliamente debatido: la dualidad del ser humano. Con esta idea de dualidad, hacemos referencia al hecho de que en cada uno de nosotros hay dos realidades que son inherentes a nuestra propia existencia y coexisten dentro de nuestra mente: ‘el consciente’ o ‘racionalidad,’ y el ‘inconsciente’ o ‘irracionalidad.’ Por lo tanto, estos dos elementos, que constituyen los rasgos principales de la naturaleza e identidad humana, han sido el centro de atención durante siglos.

Palabras clave: doble, dualidad, consciente, inconsciente, naturaleza humana, identidad humana.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.- Introduction	5
1.1 Objectives.....	5
1.2 Methodology.....	6
1.3 State of question.....	6
2.- Ambrose Gwinnett Bierce.....	8
2.1 His life and his works.....	8
2.2 His literary influences and literary style.....	9
3.-The double as literary device.....	11
3.1 Definition of the double.....	13
3.2 Typology of the double.....	15
3.3 Procedures to create the double.....	17
4.1.-Analysis of the image of the double in “The Death of Halpin Frayser”	17
4.1.1 The double and its effect.....	17
4.1.2 Rational and irrational interpretation of the plot.....	19
4.1.3 Symbols and themes.....	20
4.2.- Analysis of the image of the double in “One of Twins”	22
4.2.1 The double and its effect.....	22
4.2.2 The plot.....	23
4.2.3 Symbols and themes.....	24
5.- Conclusions.....	26
6.- Works Cited	28
7.- Bibliography.....	29

1.- Introduction

Human nature can be compared to a coin since as coins have two sides (heads and tails), human beings present two different worlds that coexist inside their minds and are part of their personalities: 'the conscious' and 'the unconscious.' Apart from this, when we are around other people, we tend not to present ourselves as we really are and, in some cases, we pretend to be someone we are not. The main reason why we do this is to be accepted by society. This may be considered another indicator of the duality of human nature. Therefore, human duality has been the focus not only of psychology, but also of literature and other academic disciplines. In literature, the figure of the double has been shown traditionally by using an identical twin, but it is not the only way to refer to this theme. Another method employed is to portray a character who suffers from split personality. A large number of literary critics agree with the idea that the double is associated with the distinction of 'goodness' and 'badness', 'God' and 'evil', 'real world' and 'the world of dreams,' 'the conscious' and 'the unconscious,' 'rationality' and 'irrationality,' the sinister aspects of life, and the fear of death. In this paper, I will analyze how human duality has been illustrated in literature and what is the main reason why this aspect is described. To do so, I will pay attention particularly to two short stories written by Ambrose G. Bierce: "The Death of Halpin Frayser," and "One of Twins."

1.1.- Objectives

This paper attempts to discuss a theme that has been analyzed by many literary critics due to its connection with the understanding of human nature. Its main purpose is to present an innovative analysis of the typology of the double in two short stories written by the enigmatic and satiric Ambrose G. Bierce, as these two stories have never been the center of attention, and neither have they been studied from the point of view of the double. Another objective is the discussion and presentation of the reasons why the double is portrayed in literature since it is a very recurrent element that appears in novels, poems, short stories, and even in theater plays. Finally, I will try to answer to this question: 'what can we learn about human nature by studying the double?'

1.2.- Methodology

Throughout this paper I am going to cover the following sections: firstly, I will introduce briefly the most remarkable aspects of Bierce's life that affect his personality and his literary works. Then, I will present the literary influences from which Bierce takes ideas in order to compose his fiction. At the end of this second section, I will discuss Bierce's literary style.

In the third section, I will approach the theoretical studies concerning with the double and therefore, I will explain what the double is, the typology of the double, and the three existing procedures to create the double according to Bargalló, a scholar who studies this topic.

In the fourth section, I will analyze the image of the double in the two selected short stories. Once this has been explained, I will continue with a detailed description of the plot. To finish this section, I will illustrate the themes and symbols that emphasize the importance of human duality.

In the fifth section, I will clarify all the conclusions extracted from the theoretical approach and from my analysis of the double, highlighting the importance of the image of the double as a way of portraying the duality of mankind.

1.3.- State of question

In this part, I will illustrate from which perspectives this author and his literary works have been studied.

In general, Ambrose Bierce's works have been the object of interest for scholars who attempt to discover the literary style in which his narratives may be classified. For example, Robert A. Wiggins states that he may be considered a realist, a neo-classicist, and a romantic in his article: "Ambrose Bierce: A Romantic in an Age of Realism." According to this scholar, if we take into account two short stories "Chickamauga" and "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," both dealing with the American Civil War, we will conclude that Bierce is a realist because of: "his verisimilitude that conveys some sense of fidelity to events as they really happen in real life, his photographic accuracy in these two stories, one

then labels him some sort of realist (1).” Furthermore, in this same article, Wiggins states that he is a neo- classicist in terms of style since he considers that: “the forms of literature had been fixed in the eighteenth century in London (2).” Finally, Bierce style is described as romantic because of his interest on the unusual and ideal (paraphrased from Wiggins 2).

Apart from Wiggins, there are other scholars who offer different approaches to this writer and his literary works. For example, Arthur M. Miller discusses the influence of Edgar Allan Poe on Bierce’s writings in his article: “The Influence of Edgar Allan Poe on Ambrose Bierce.” In this article, he argues that although Bierce was constantly accused of imitating Poe, he did not have any problem on accepting it, emphasizing the significance of literary tradition. Besides, the other two critics who establish a comparison between Poe and Bierce are Percy H. Boynton and Harold Williams. On the one hand, Boynton claims that: “his shorter narratives inevitably suggest Poe (89).” On the other hand, Williams indicates that: “Mr. Bierce is a disciple of Poe (477).”

Another group of scholars decide to focus on the collection of short stories that deal with events of the Civil War. They study different elements used by Bierce in these narratives. All these short stories are included in *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*.

Another important scholar called Sharon Talley studies the obsession of the author with death, and how he portrays this theme in his short stories. All these aspects are included in his article: “Childhood and the Fear of Death in Ambrose Bierce.”

However, if there is someone that has put all her attention on this writer, that is Sonia Santos Vila who has published a book titled *La narrativa fantástica de Ambrose G. Bierce*. In this book, she explores Bierce’s biography as an attempt to grasp some pieces of information that can shed light on Bierce’s personality and literary style. Once she analyses this, she approaches the collection of short stories included in *Can such things be?* Firstly, she distinguishes the following types of short stories: those which an irrational interpretation, those with an ambiguous interpretation and the ones with a logical or rational interpretation. Considering those with an irrational interpretation, we are offered a secondary classification into these subtypes: psychological fantasy, pseudo-scientific fantasy, and supernatural fantasy. Then, she describes the sections that these narratives present. Finally, she focuses on symbols, themes, characters, narrators, and setting. Thus, her book has been of service to perform our analysis.

Therefore, as I have commented throughout this section, there is a large number of scholars who are interested in this author but none of them have developed an analysis of the image of the double appearing in Bierce's *Can such things be?* collection. For this reason, my approach to the theme may be considered innovative, although the image of the double has received a lot of attention, but no one has attempted to study the typology of the double in "The Death of Halpin Frayser," and "One of Twins."

2.- Ambrose Gwinnett Bierce

In this second section, I will summarize the most relevant aspects of Ambrose Bierce's life and literary work. Besides, I will illustrate his literary influences and style, highlighting the importance of his career as a journalist which is something that affects his writing style in several ways. For example, by the introduction of irony, sarcasm, and satirical comments.

2.1.- His life and work

Bierce was born in Meigs County, Ohio on June 24th 1842. He was the sixth son of Marcus Aurelius Bierce, and Laura Sherwood Bierce. After Bierce's birth, his parents lose three of their children which is going to affect Bierce's bond with his parents in a very negative way. Bierce enjoyed spending his leisure time reading at his father's library. However, if there is something that influences his life, his writings, and his personality; that is his participation on the American Civil War which with time becomes an inspiration for his work. It was in 1859 when he joined the Kentucky Military Institute. Besides, he participated in several battles such as Laurel Hill, Rich Mountain, Carrick's Ford, Chickamauga, Missionary Ridge...After the war, he finds a position in San Francisco and begins his career as a journalist, writing for News Letter, for example.

1871 is the year of the publication of his first literary work titled *The Haunted Valley* and in this same year he marries Mollie Day. In 1873, Bierce publishes *The Friend's Delight*, and *Nuggets and Dust* using the pseudonym Dod Grile. In 1886, he began writing *The Devil's Dictionary*. In 1891, *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians* is published. In 1903, he published a book of poems titled *Shapes of Clay*. However, it

was not until 1908 when he began preparing a collection containing his complete work. It seems that he is doing it to have a version including all his writings before leaving his country.

Bierce disappeared in 1913 in Mexico and where he died is still a mystery that remains unsolved, although many researchers have suggested that he might have been killed at Ojinaga battle in 1914, supporting Pancho Villa's side at the Mexican revolution.

2.2.- His literary influences and literary style

Considering his literary influences, Sonia Santos Vila, Terrence Rafferty, and Arthur M. Miller agree on the fact that Edgar Allan Poe is a writer that determines Ambrose Bierce's writing.

Terrence Rafferty suggests that we should place Bierce "between Poe and Lovecraft (20)," whereas Sonia Santos indicates that: "no cabe duda de que Hoffman y Poe están en Bierce (21)." However, if there is a scholar that analyses the features that Bierce inherits from Poe, that is Arthur M. Miller in "The Influence of Edgar Allan Poe on Ambrose Bierce." This author makes a comparison between Bierce's and Poe's literary ideas regarding the short story in which he indicates that both writers agree on the length, the fact that the short story must be read at one sitting, the unity and totality of effect (136-137). Besides, when Miller studies the plot of some short stories written by Bierce, he claims that:

"the plots just compared each typify a different kind of influence: (1) a studied use of Poe material, combined it with another theme taken elsewhere, resulting in a powerful story being constructed; (2) a short incident closely following the plan of a Poe tale, imbedded in a longer narrative [...] (3) a romantic "echo," on general lines, at the beginning of a story (143)."

Finally, he pays attention to the literary devices used by Poe that were imitated by Bierce: "[...] both authors employing the same instrument to produce horror occurs in the use of a cat on the head of a corpse (143). Furthermore, we are explained that both writers share the same ideas regarding "realism, probability, and the use of coincidence (Miller 149)." However, "in practice he incorporated plot fragments, devices, and ideas once used by Poe (Miller 149)." Therefore, there is no doubt of the influence of Poe on Bierce since as Miller illustrates, Bierce was

and admirer of Poe: “having accepted Poe as the leading arbiter and expert in the field of the short story, he wrote after his leadership, and tried to excel him (150).”

Finally, Sonia Santos Vila indicates the influence of Hoffmann and Poe on Bierce pointing at the importance of the setting and Gothicism, and claims the following: “No cabe duda de que Hoffman y Poe están en Bierce, fundamentalmente en el tratamiento de los angustiosos espacios de interior y en las recreaciones de las atmósferas góticas de sus narraciones (Santos 21).”

However, in this section we should also illustrate the importance of Bierce and to whom his writings influence. Philip M. Rubens and Robert Jones indicate that Bierce’s writings have influenced different writers as: “[...] George Washington Cable, George Sterling, Stephen Crane, Jack London, Ernest Hemingway [...] (73).”

In brief, Bierce imitates Poe’s writings reusing themes and devices that this author has previously employed, but at the same time adds freshness, wit, sarcasm, irony, and in some cases humour to his narratives. On the other hand, Bierce’s literary significance can not be measured, but we can become aware of it by reading the literary works of a diverse group of writers belonging to different periods and literary genres. This implies that as Bierce is writing under Poe’s influence, another group of authors are composing stories following Bierce’s literary style.

Regarding his literary style, many scholars have tried to classify Bierce’s writings as being either realist or romantic. However, if we want to make a good classification of this author’s works, we must take into account each of them separately as if they were independent units. Basically, because each of the short stories has its own features and defining elements. Therefore, classifying them as belonging to one literary style or another makes no sense.

Many critics have illustrated that his writings are part of Realism, while others claim that they belong to Romanticism. For example, Robert A. Wiggins claims that: “Bierce is a realist only if one judges him by one or two stories most frequently reprinted in anthologies [...] (1).” Besides, according to his own criteria: He was a neo-Classicalist in matters of style (2).” Finally, he also pays attention to the fact that Bierce can be regarded as a: “romantic in matters of subject (2).” On the other hand, Sonia Santos considers that: “la ficción bierciana combina elementos del Romanticismo, Realismo y del Modernismo (20).”

However, another aspect that we need to look at in order to comprehend why a writer style is as it is, we must observe the literary tradition to which the author is exposed. In the case of Ambrose G. Bierce, the fact that his father owns a library determines his access to literature. One of the scholars that analyses the literary tradition to which this writer is exposed is John R. Brazil, who studies which literary styles influence our man of letters. According to him: “On the one hand were the traditions of western journalism and the frontier humorist. On the other were the traditions of Victorian belles-lettres, especially as championed by Bret Harte (225).”

In conclusion, we can distinguish different groups of scholars and critics, those that say that Bierce is a Realist, those that consider him a Romantic, and another group that believe that he is neither a Romantic or a Realist, but that in his writings we may find a combination of both literary styles.

To finish this section, I would like to enumerate some features that can be seen in the collection of short stories in which “The Death of Halpin Frayser,” and “One of Twins” are included. Some of these characteristics are: the description of the mental decline of the characters as a way of portraying the deterioration of human beings, the horror of existence, misanthropy, the pessimistic view of the world, the use of irony, sarcasm, the employment of wit, the theme of death, the influence of Gothicism, terror, the exploration of the unconscious, irrationality, and the observation of the dark side of human nature.

3.- The double as literary device

As I have already stated, the image of the double has been portrayed not only in literature but in other areas of knowledge as psychology and medicine. The first instance of the double and the most obvious type is the identical twin which has been the focus for doctors but used also in many literary works to present this theme.

Therefore, the interest that this element provokes is part of the history of humanity since many primitive cultures and peoples from all over the world have had several beliefs regarding the double. This idea implies that this theme is not new, but it has been in the mind of people since antiquity. As Otto Rank explains in *El Doble*, many cultures have established an association of the soul with the shadow. This means that their own shadow represents their soul. Besides, apart of the shadow, other

primitive peoples have perceived their reflection as a representation of the double. However, the most interesting and shocking fact is that, in the majority of the cultures in the world, meeting one's own double is an indicator of the coming of death: "[...] Entre los indios y griegos hallamos, por ejemplo, la regla de no mirar el propio reflejo del agua, ya que esta acción pronto producirá la muerte (Rank 108)." These superstitions that are once part of culture will become part of literature since in many narratives dealing with this theme, the character that encounters his double comes to a sticky end, usually dead.

We may conclude that the idea of the double emerges as part of the tradition of primitive peoples, and it can be found in all the cultures in the world. These peoples believed that they had to show respect to their shadows, and reflections because if they did not, they were to suffer the consequences.

At a certain point, these superstitions become part of literature since culture can not be separated from literary works. As we all know, prose and poetry attempt to reflect the ideas of the historical period in which they are produced. However, it is during Romanticism that the theme of the double experiments its peak since it becomes the focus of attention of many writers.

If we put all our attention into literature, an early example of this literary device is the myth of Narcissus in which a young and beautiful man falls in love with his own reflection in the water. Although it is not the only story in which this theme is introduced. Other instances are: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, "William Wilson," and some Greek and Latin plays as *Amphitryon* by Plautus. But we have to answer this question: why does the double is introduced as literary device? In order to answer this query, we need to take into account that human beings have always been trying to know more about their own nature and identity. Therefore, it may be an attempt to discover the reality behind the 'who am I?' issue. Maybe, if we explore the double in literature, someday will be able to know who we really are.

Another reason why this device is employed in literature is connected with the fact that it contributes to the depiction of human duality. Our mind operates in two different modes: 'the conscious' and 'the unconscious,' 'the public and the private sphere,' 'reality and dreams,' 'reason and sentiments,' 'rationality and irrationality,' and 'the soul and the body.' Each of us is a particular mixture of these elements. Depending

on the situation and the people we are with, the former element or the later will dominate us.

Considering the classifications of the types of doubles, we must say that there are many different points of view since each critic has his or her own perspective regarding this issue. Therefore, the critic we select to do our analysis will determine the results of it. In this section, I am going to focus on Bargalló's theory on the double, Otto Rank's perspective, Juan Antonio Molina Foix, Lawrence M. Porter, Gillis, and Rebeca Rodrigo Jiménez. All these scholars have attempted to define the concept, and some of them have tried to explain the types of doubles that we may face in any literary work.

3.1.- Definition of the double

In order to explain the concept of the double, I will consider the different definitions that critics have given as an attempt to clarify this theme. Besides, I would indicate the similarities and differences stated by the scholars mentioned in the previous section (section 3). Thus, in the following paragraphs, I will present several definitions that several scholars have provided in order to shed light on this issue.

On the one hand, Rebeca Rodrigo Jiménez on her degree final dissertation presents these ideas concerning the double:

“[...] este fenómeno consiste en ser consciente de la existencia de otro ser idéntico a sí mismo y que simboliza una amenaza. [...] aunque el doble se identifique con lo siniestro, también se adhiere en casos puntuales a la comedia, con los equívocos entre gemelos. El *otro* irrumpirá en el plano real, en la cotidianidad, borrando los límites con lo imposible. [...] observamos la aparición del *otro yo* que nos es de sobra conocido y, sin embargo, genera la sensación de extrañamiento (10).” “Con el tiempo, de la comicidad se pasa entender el doble como encarnación de lo tenebroso que habita en el hombre o como presagio de muerte (12).”

As Rodrigo Jiménez has stated the double consists in being aware of the existence of someone that is physically identical to us and represents a threat. Besides, the double is related to the idea of the sinister. When the double appears, our reality seems to disappear. The apparition of the double is something that we can not explain and makes us feel uncomfortable. Fantastical events become part of our reality. On the other hand, the double is firstly used to create comical situations and later, it becomes a representation of the vices of mankind and a sign of the arrival of death.

On the other hand, Juan Antonio Molina Foix explains the following regarding the origin of the concept of the double, usually called *doppelgänger*: “Jean Paul Richter quien lo forjó en 1796 en la novela *Siebenkäs*. Originalmente era *doppeltganger*, literalmente “el que camina al lado” o “el compañero de ruta [...] (10).” As this autor indicates the word *doppelgänger* was used for the first time in a novel written by Jean Paul Richter. Besides, this same author explains the idea of duality:

“Según las concepciones homéricas expresadas en la *Ilíada* y la *Odisea*, el hombre tenía una existencia doble, una en su aparición perceptible, la otra en su imagen invisible, que solo se liberaba después de la muerte (11).

Thus, the idea of the double has been always found in human mind; for example, by the belief that every individual had a visible and invisible image, appearing the last one, when the person dies. Finally, when looking for an interpretation of the meaning of this theme, this explanation is given:

“El doble se convierte así en la encarnación de todo lo malo que llevamos dentro de nosotros y nos negamos a aceptar: la exteriorización del infierno íntimo cuya amenaza concreta radica en la posibilidad de que nos suplante, actúe en nuestro nombre y nos aniquile (Molina 21).”

From all these observations, we may infer that the image of the double is a representation of all the badness, human vices, and traumas that we have inside ourselves and we deny accepting. Furthermore, it is seen as a threat since it can act in our place and destroy us.

Another scholar that focuses on this aspect is Bargalló Carraté, who defines the double as:

“[...] el Doble aparece de repente, cuando el yo ha tenido experiencia del Otro (de lo otro) dentro de sí. El doble es el equivalente de la máscara (12).” “El tema del doble se refiere, en principio, a la existencia de <otro>, que duplica la existencia de un personaje, repitiendo sus rasgos u oponiéndosele de manera simétrica (251).”

Thus, the double is connected with the existence of someone else who has the same features as an already existing character or someone whose features opposed the ones presented by an already existing character.

Taking into account Otto Rank's *El Doble*, he associates the idea of the double with one's own shadow and reflection: “Por lo tanto la idea del doble aparece asociada con la

sombra y el reflejo de uno mismo (35).” Besides, he adds that: “[...] el motivo del doble, que por un lado le asegura la inmortalidad, y por otro anuncia amenazadoramente su muerte (18).” Therefore, the existence of the double guarantees immortality, but at the same time acts as an indicator of a character’s own death.

Considering another scholar named Lawrence M. Porter, he says the following concerning the image of the double:

“he is a convenient metaphor for the secret life of the mind. He is the projection of a character’s inner tendencies. They represent the emergence of a supposed aspect of the personality of which the protagonist was previously in ignorance (318).”

Finally, Gillis explains that:

“in a literary character, it expresses symbolically an inner division or struggle. American critics and writers use the word in two senses. It can mean the external appearance symbolic of inner division, or a fully internal suppressed aspect of a person’s character at variance with his external action and expression (7).”

In conclusion, as all these definitions have illustrated, the double is related to the mind of characters, to the inner fears and feelings, to the repressed material that we hide in our mind, and to our traumas. Thus, it seems to relate to Freud’s concept of the unconscious as the place where our mind stores our traumas, fears, and instincts. Furthermore, most of the scholars agree on the fact that meeting one’s own double is an indicator that death is approaching us. Maybe, it is associated with this theme because in the society in which we live finds out all our thoughts, emotions and instincts; it might try to annihilate us since some of the ideas that we have in our mind are not socially accepted. Besides, I would like to highlight the fact that hurting our double is seen as something negative because it is connected with our identity. Thus, if we hurt our double or destroy it, we are not only destroying it, but also ourselves.

3.2.- Typology of the double

Considering the image of the double, a large number of critics have tried to clarify the types of doubles that we may encounter in any literary work. Thus, in this section, I will describe the typology of the double established by some scholars. Although, I would like to emphasize that the amount of classifications is huge, and I will just pay attention to a few of them.

Firstly, I would like to begin with Bargalló's typology and Rodrigo's amplification of it. On the hand, Bargalló explains that:

“[...] en el mito de los gemelos se aprecian dos nociones que se mantienen a lo largo de la historia de la literatura: una, narcisista, por lo que cada gemelo se convierte en el espejo del otro [...] (13).”

Besides, he adds: “En el desdoblamiento se da un solo individuo, una sola identidad (16).” After Reading all these statements, we may infer that Bargalló divides the doubles into two types; the first one would be represented by an identical twin, and the second one is generated within an individual who seems to have different personalities. Thus, there are two types of double, the first is presented by a physical double; for example, a character who has a twin brother or sister. Whereas in the second type, a character suffers from split personality. On the other hand, if we pay attention to Rodrigo's ideas concerning this theme, she claims that there are two types of doubles:

“Doble ajeno: se refiere a aquel que el protagonista descubre como mero espectador, es decir, la duplicidad persigue a alguien conocido y no a sí mismo. Doble personal: el protagonista, en ocasiones el propio narrador, es quien sufre un desdoblamiento de personalidad o la aparición de un ser idéntico a sí mismo (Rodrigo 15).”

This implies that she distinguishes between two types. The ‘extraneous double’, in which the protagonist is a spectator and discovers that somebody else has a double; while, the second type refers to the ‘personal double,’ in which the protagonist himself or herself suffers from split personality or observes the apparition of someone identical to him or her.

Apart from these scholars, Lawrence M. Porter has described that:

“Literary doubles may also be represented by icons of the protagonist: shadows, portraits, reflections, statues; siblings, twins, and other persons who are physically similar to him [...]. A second class of doubles, also visible to others beside the protagonist, are characters who may not physically resemble him but who complement his personality and who together with him illustrate diverse possibilities for behaviour [...]. Finally, there is the subjective double. Sometimes he is hallucinatory; in any event, he seems to have no independent existence apart from his associated main character, and he exerts a mysteriously strong influence upon that character (318).”

As we have seen in these classifications of the double, each author has his or her own point of view regarding this aspect, and all the interpretations are equally valid.

Besides, I would like to add that I have chosen to illustrate these authors' ideas because I will make my own analysis using their theoretical approaches.

3.3.- Procedures to create the double

In this section, I will only consider Bargalló's theoretical approach to the theme since he is the only scholar that has studied this issue. Bargalló establishes three different methods to generate the double, particularly the one who suffers from split personality, called also personal double if we focus on Rodrigo's dissertation. Thus, Bargalló claims the following:

“El desdoblamiento se produce por tres procedimientos diferentes: a) por <<fusión,>> en un individuo, de dos individuos originariamente diferentes. B) por <<fisión>> de un individuo en dos personificaciones del que originariamente no existía más que una. C) por <<metamorfosis>> de un individuo, bajo diferentes formas aparentes que pueden ser reversibles (17).”

Therefore, we may create the double by fusion, fission, and metamorphosis. While fusion is produced when two separated individuals are turned into a single one. This means that it is as if the two were joined. On the other hand, fission is originated when from a single character, two different ones are generated. And finally, metamorphosis refers to the transformation that a character, originally represented as a human being, has to suffer in order to be something else. Some examples of this type are depicted in *Metamorphosis* by Kafka and in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde.

4.1.- Analysis of the image of the double in “The Death of Halpin Frayser”

In this section is where I am going to illustrate my own analysis of the image of the double: typology and effects of using this literary device. Apart from discussing this issue, I will present the themes, symbols and the plot of this short story.

4.1.1.- The double and its effect

If we classify the type of double that appears in this narrative, applying Bargalló's theoretical approach, we are dealing with a character who suffers from split personality. Whereas if we use Rodrigo's analysis, we are studying a personal double.

On the other hand, the procedure that has been employed to generate this double is fission since in the protagonist two different personalities coexist together: 'the conscious Halpin,' and 'the unconscious Halpin.' Finally, the last classification that we can make of this character; following Lawrence M. Porter's approach, is that the author employs a subjective double since the protagonist is not the same when he sleeps and when he wakes up. This implies that it is as if we would have two versions of this character: 'the conscious Halpin,' and 'the unconscious.'

In this narrative, the double is not represented by using twins, but by a single person who symbolizes the duality of human beings. We infer this after discovering how Halpin is when he is sleeping and when he is not. Once we have read the text, we find out that when the protagonist is in the world of dreams; his guilt, emotions, and his unconscious side are awoken. But when the protagonist is not asleep; all this seems to vanish from his mind. Therefore, when he is controlled by his conscious side, he does not think about his passions, and his mother; whereas, when his unconscious side takes control of himself, Halpin's instincts, inner emotions, and everything that has been hidden inside of his mind becomes apparent and observable by the reader.

If we explain this in more detail, we must emphasize that the 'conscious' Halpin is not aware of his feelings. For example, he does not know that he feels guilty because of not having followed his mother's piece of advice about not going to California. Whereas, the 'unconscious' Halpin is the part of the personality of the character in which his passions, feelings, and dreams are found. Probably this is the reason why while he is sleeping, readers become aware of his passion for literature, and of the existence of his inner fears and emotions. All these elements are part of Halpin's premonitory dream, in which thanks to the apparition of his dead mother, we may figure out that she is still present in his life; although, she only appears in the mind of the 'unconscious' Halpin. Thus, when the character is on the world of dreams, we are in contact with his instincts, passions, fears, and everything that is included in his soul. Whereas, when Halpin is not asleep, we get to know only what the protagonist wants to show us.

4.1.2.- Rational and irrational interpretation of the plot

Firstly, I would like to introduce a brief summary of the plot, and then I will illustrate the two possible interpretations of the plot.

In “The Death of Halpin Frayser,” the protagonist, who belongs to a family with a good social position and has studied law when what he enjoys is literature, is at the forest and loses his bearings; for this reason, he is obliged to spend the night sleeping there. After having a dreamless sleep, he wakes up and pronounces the name of a woman he does not know. Then, he falls asleep again and has a very vivid dream in which he must choose which path he is going to follow. He enters a path that has been abandoned and seems to guide him towards evil. In this path he has chosen, he discovers a shallow pool filled with blood. Besides, he feels that he is not alone there and consequently, he writes a poem to be left there as a way of presenting his fears and feelings in that situation. While he is composing it, he is nervous as he notices that someone is approaching him. Before he has the time to finish it, he sees his dead mother in the garments of the grave. It is later, thanks to the employment of flashback that readers discover Halpin’s relationship with his mother, with whom he does not have the usual mother and son bond. For their weird relationship, they are taken for lovers. Besides, we find out why Halpin is at this forest which is the consequence of different misfortunes. One day Halpin decides to go to California, without paying attention to his mother’s premonitory dream in which something terrible happened to him, after abandoning his house to go to San Francisco. There, he is kidnapped to work as a sailor, and it is not until six years later that he is taken back.

At the end of the story, a sheriff and a detective are looking for a man who has cut his wife’s throat since the one who finds him will be given five hundred dollars. These two men go to a place called the ‘White Church’ because the killer has been seen there as the woman is buried in the graveyard that is around this building. While they try to discover the grave, they perceive the body of a man who has been brutally assassinated. With the body, they find a notebook containing the poem that Halpin has composed before being killed. Lastly, when they are about to go, they discover the grave where the woman is buried.

Considering the two interpretations of this short story; on the one hand, there is a logical explanation and on the other hand, there is an irrational explanation of it.

Paying attention to the logical or rational one, if we follow the rules of the real world, we may consider that the man who has killed Halpin's mother is the one who assassinates him too. Therefore, Halpin would have seen his mother as a premonition of what is going to happen to him. Therefore, the fact that he observes his mother would be taken as his mother's message advising him to abandon the place. However, the image of his mother would be part of his dream, and not of reality.

Taking into account the irrational explanation, we would be obliged to leave aside the rules of reality since we have to believe in the existence of spirits and ghosts. In this interpretation, it would be Halpin's dead mother who kills her son as she is looking for revenge after having been assassinated.

4.1.3.- Symbols and themes

Regarding the main themes portrayed in this short story, the most important ones are death, fate, guilt, literature, mother and son relationship, role of dreams, medical aspects, the supernatural, and ghosts and spirits.

Death is the most relevant theme illustrated, as it is part of the title of the story and it is also presented by the quotation at the beginning of the narrative. From this quotation, it is indicated that death is something that changes people and makes them worse than they were when they were alive and what is more, the reader is told that those who return from death have no affection, but only hate. Therefore, it is a way of giving hints to readers of what they are going to find in the plot. Furthermore, the protagonist himself ends up being killed, so somehow death appears at the beginning of the narrative and is at the same time what closes it.

Fate is another important theme which marks the path of the story. The protagonist, Halpin is in the wrong place at the wrong time. From the very beginning, the narrator with his words lets readers infer that something terrible is about to happen. Moreover, everything seems to have been prepared in advance for Halpin's death.

Guilt is shown in the emotions that the protagonist has while he is dreaming. Halpin attempts to discover the reason why he feels as he does. Maybe, he feels this

way because he has abandoned his mother in order to go to California, and then things get complicated and he has to be away from her for many years. Later, when he has the opportunity of going back home, he does not go. This is probably the reason why he feels guilty.

Literature is portrayed in the short story when the protagonist composes a poem imitating his grandfather's literary style. Besides, we are told that the protagonist shares with his mother his passion for literature as they both enjoy reading. Thus, we may interpret this as Bierce's defence of literature and literary tradition as it is a central aspect in the narrative.

The mother and son relationship is a very shocking element in this narrative since the bond that they share is not the usual one. For example, this is made explicit when Halpin calls his mother 'Katy' instead of mom or mother. Furthermore, it is explained that people mistake their relationship and usually take them for lovers.

Another key theme is connected with the role of dreams since dreams seem to have a particular meaning. The protagonist has a premonitory dream at the forest in which he sees a red pool and plants covered with blood. Besides, he feels that he is not alone in this place. On the other hand, Halpin is not the only one who has this kind of dream, but also his mother who thinks that if her son abandons the house, his life will be at risk. Dreams, and the unconscious indicate that things are not going to end up well. Thus, this implies that if we interpret them, we can discover the hidden ideas of our mind.

Medical aspects are also illustrated since Halpin's mother uses it as an excuse to try to convince her son of taking her with him. Therefore, she alleges that she suffers from rheumatism and neuralgia and maybe she can feel better in California.

The last two themes are related to the supernatural and ghosts or spirits. Spirits are part of Halpin's and his mother's dreams. Considering the supernatural, we will have to take into account the irrational interpretation of the plot in which we have already explained that Halpin is murdered by his dead mother.

If we have a look at the symbols in this narrative, there are plenty of them. Thus, I will enumerate the most important ones and then, I will interpret them to discover the

different hidden meanings. Firstly, dreams may be considered a symbol since they are as pieces of advice for the protagonists. Somehow, they announce in advance what is about to occur. Secondly, the night which is the time of the day when we are more exposed to the supernatural. Thirdly, the colour red indicates the guilt of the protagonist. As we have already said, Halpin is not happy with his actions, particularly with having abandoned his mother with whom he has a very close relationship. Fourthly, natural phenomena and changes in the weather serve as another indicator of the supernatural and the arrival of evil. Thus, the apparition of spirits causes changes in the sky, for example clouds appear and a thick fog. Finally, the last symbol is the colour white, which is traditionally associated with innocence and purity, but in this case, it represents an irony. At the end of the story, the sheriff and the detective who are looking for the killer of a woman go to a place called the 'white church.' In this place, they discover the corpse of a man who has been brutally assassinated. Thus, Bierce connects this place which is supposed to be sacred, with a place filled with badness and evil.

4.2.- Analysis of the image of the double in "One of Twins"

In this section, I will focus on "One of Twins," another short story in which we find the image of the double. Although, in this case, the author decides to present the traditional type, and the most commonly used in literary works. Thus, in this chapter, I will classify the double following Bargalló's, Rodrigo's, and Lawrence M. Porter's criteria and I will analyze its effect. Then, I will summarize the plot and finally, I will consider the main symbols and themes to have a clearer understanding of this literary work.

4.2.1.- The double and its effect

If we pay attention to Bargalló's classification, we are dealing with a very simple type of double which is symbolized by an identical twin brother. However, we must mention that in this case, duality is not represented in this way to make the audience laugh, as in the Latin and Greek theatre plays, but to make them think of the existing connection that unifies the two brothers. Besides, Bargalló explains that this type of double is also called *doppelgänger*. Therefore, in "One of Twins," as Bargalló indicates: "cada gemelo se convierte en el espejo del otro (13)." In this short story, the twins are physically identical. For this reason, they are usually mistaken by their parents, friends,

colleagues... Besides, their parents called them 'Jehnry,' an invented word created by combining their real names 'John' and 'Henry.' From this, we can infer that they are part of the same. It is as if they were only one person. On the other hand, considering the procedures to generate the double, according to this same critic; fusion is the technique employed to create the double, since the twins seem to be part of the same individual, and at the end of the story, only one survives to narrate the events.

Applying Rodrigo's analysis, we are dealing with what is called 'the personal double,' since the protagonist is the one who experiments the image of the double and explains what happens to his twin brother. Finally, regarding the last author that we are going to consider for this classification is Lawrence M. Porter. Following his theoretical approach; the type of literary double in this narrative is the pair of twins.

If we interpret the effect of the double in "One of Twins," it is used to present the duality of human beings to illustrate that in our personality there are positive and negative aspects. It is true that in the classic period, the twins appear in comedies with the purpose of making people laugh. Therefore, in this short story, Bierce is changing totally the point of view. Here, there is no a comical effect, but the emphasis is on the connection among twins and how sometimes we are not able to understand certain events that are part of our reality. Thus, sometimes events escape the boundaries of knowledge.

On the one hand, whereas John does not consider the consequences of his acts and does not hesitate to poison his fiancée, his brother Henry seems to represent a man who thinks before making any decision. Probably, that is why Henry avoids telling his brother that he has seen his to-be- wife in the company of another man. Thus, by using this pair of twins, we are offered a complete vision of human nature. In life, we have two options: we may follow our instincts and assume the consequences of our actions, or we may think before acting and making the wrong decision. Therefore, John symbolizes instincts and emotions, and Henry, reason.

4.2.2.-The plot

In this narrative, we are explained what has happened to a pair of twin brothers called Henry and John. These two brothers are physically identical that even though

their parents try to distinguish among their children, they are unable of doing so. For this reason, they decide to name them Jehnry in order to indicate that it seems impossible to tell them apart. When they grow up, the twins lose both their parents and they make the decision to stay in California so, they work and live there. One day, while Henry is walking down the street; a man stops him to ask if he would like to go to his house for dinner. Even though, Henry does not know who the man is, he says that he will go. Then, the protagonist visits his brother at work and tells him what has happened. It seems that the man is John's colleague at work. Finally, it is John who goes to his colleague's house claiming that he has a very good friendship with this man. A few months later, John is engaged with his colleague's daughter and thus, they are going to marry, but things go wrong for the couple when Henry finds out that his brother's fiancée is cheating on him and is having an affair with a younger man. Although, when Henry discovers his future sister-in-law's infidelity, he does not say anything to his brother. Finally, the couple die in terrible circumstances. On the one hand, John commits suicide by shooting himself on the chest with a gun and his to-be-wife dies poisoned. From all these events, readers may infer that John has been the one who has poisoned his fiancée after guessing that she was not being loyal. Probably, he would have found out after observing his brother's attitude towards his future wife.

4.2.3.- Symbols and themes

If we take into consideration the symbols employed by the author in this short story, there are three from which the central themes of the text are generated, i.e. the night, the wound in the chest, and the double. On the one hand, the first one is associated with death as it is at night time when Henry's brother and his fiancée die. Besides, this time of the day seems to be when the supernatural becomes more and more evident. Basically, the supernatural event of this story refers to the moment when Henry, being at his bedroom, begins to feel awkward and uncomfortable. Moreover, he has the feeling that something terrible and cruel is about to happen. It is as if evil is at the place waiting to participate in the life of this pair of twins. However, we have to wait until we are close to the end of the story to find out how evil itself has become a character in this narrative. Thus, at the end, evil has introduced itself into John's body and soul, and as a result, he poisons his fiancée and commits suicide without considering the consequences and suffering that this is going to cause to his brother. On

the other hand, the second symbol is as we have already mentioned above, the wound in the chest. Thus, as we can read in the story, John commits suicide by shooting himself on the chest. If we take into account that our heart is placed on the chest, and traditionally, drawing a heart on the wall represents love, in this case, the meaning of this is changed as it may stand for 'betrayal'. In order to clarify and justify this idea, I would like to emphasize that John presents a wound in the chest because the love he feels for the lady has obliged him to put an end to his life after discovering that his future wife is being unfaithful to him as she is having an affair with another man. Therefore, it is as if love has finished with his life, metaphorically speaking. Besides, as we may infer from the reading, she does not plan to tell him about it, so she wants to keep it privately. However, we do not know if it is her attitude which betrays her, or if it is John-Henry's connection as it is as if they are part of the same individual, i.e. as if they are one. In brief, the wound at John's chest is a clear sign of how love has hurt this man since he is dying of the pain he feels after the discovery of his fiancée's treachery. Finally, the double is another symbol that represents the duality of human beings and the fact that we are made of an odd combination of virtues and flaws. In this case, while John gives voice to a man who is totally guided by his inner instincts, Henry is more sensible and avoids telling his brother the truth. Somehow, he is more thoughtful as he represents a man who considers the different options he has before making a decision. Maybe, the reason why he does not explain it to his brother is just not to cause him any harm.

Another element that we must illustrate in this section has to do with the themes conveyed on the narrative. The themes are: betrayal, revenge, human duality, death, love and falling in love, engagement and marriage, the supernatural, and catastrophe. In the first place, betrayal is presented when John's fiancée is unfaithful to him even though she is going to marry him. Secondly, revenge responds to the way John reacts after discovering his fiancée's affair. John decides to poison her and commits suicide. Thirdly, human duality is shown by a pair of twins, who are physically identical, but react to life in a very different manner. Fourthly, death seems to be the only solution that John gives to his personal circumstances. Fifthly, love and falling in love is what causes the catastrophe. Besides, John and his fiancée's relationship seems to be untrue, as she is being adulterous even before marriage. Somehow, it is as if she has never been

in love with whom she is going to wed. Regarding the theme of engagement and marriage, it is portrayed as something that can not be fulfilled and as what creates misadventures. Basically, in this case, John breaks his engagement in the worst way. Seventhly, the supernatural refers to the strange force that pushes together this pair of twins as they are able of feeling if the other is at risk at any moment. Moreover, this implies that it is as if they share body and mind. Lastly, the theme of the catastrophe appears throughout the whole short story as there is always something negative about to happen. In order to illustrate this, readers are told that the twins lost both their parents and had to be separated from the rest of their family members after it. Later, John would commit suicide because of his fiancée's betrayal.

5.-Conclusions

In brief, in the first sections of this paper I have tried to cover some theoretical approaches that literary critics have established in order to classify and reflect on the theme of the double. Besides, the first important idea regarding this topic is that this literary device has been included in many literary works all over the world, so it is not only included in a fixed set of literary works. Probably, the main reason why it has been largely used in literature is that it helps us to reflect on human nature and identity. Moreover, these two aspects have not only been part of novels, tales, and poems; as they have been also studied by other groups of specialists such as philosophers and sociologists. Therefore, the innovative element of this dissertation is not the theme itself but our application of the theoretical approaches to two short stories by Ambrose Bierce and our explanation of the employment of this element. As it has already been stated, these two stories, which are "The Death of Halpin Frayser" and "One of Twins," make use of two different types of literary doubles. In order to distinguish among them, we have considered Bargalló's explanation on the typology of the double and his procedures to generate it, Rodrigo's dissertation which is based on Bargalló's theory, and Lawrence M. Porter's article on this theme. If we need to justify why we have selected these authors to do our analysis, the main reasons would be the clarity in the description of the typology, and the fact that we consider that their classification is exhaustive, very complete and easy-to-be applied to the texts.

Regarding the short stories, whereas, in “The Death of Halpin Frayser,” we find a character who suffers from split personality since he behaves in a way when he is asleep and in another when he is awoken, in “One of twins,” the method to present the theme of human duality is to portray the story of a pair of twins. However, the classification of the typology of the double as we have already mentioned depends on the scholar’s point of view. This means that there is a great variety of approaches to the topic and each of them is perfectly correct and can be adapted to the literary analysis. After doing a close reading of the two selected stories, we can conclude that the literary device of the double is employed in order to contribute to the description of human nature. This implies that it is used to show how our personality is made of a combination of several aspects which may be positive and negative, i.e. virtues and defects. On the other hand, another key idea is that inside each of us, there are instincts but there is also reason. However, we are the ones who decide which part becomes visible and dominates over the other. In brief, human beings are split into what we called ‘dualities’: ‘the conscious and the unconscious,’ ‘reason and emotion,’ ‘goodness and badness,’ and ‘rationality and irrationality.’

The third conclusion that we have obtained has to do with the importance of the author’s life in his work. As we have seen, Bierce loses some of his siblings during his childhood which can explain his obsession with death as it becomes the central theme of the two short stories that we have analyzed. Furthermore, his point of view regarding marriage is very pessimistic as he thought that his wife was cheating on him and finally, he divorced her. This negative point of view of marriage and love may be seen in “One of Twins.” Therefore, the historical period and the author’s background become crucial when the literary work is produced as we may see many references to the civil war in Bierce’s stories since it is something that really influences his life. Thus, when we compose prose or poetry, we include elements of our own life experience on it, sometimes without noticing.

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