

# The Archetypal Motif of a Doppelgänger in the Cultural and Mythical Traditions around the World

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**Abstract** In the present contribution, we will focus on the archetypal motif of the doppelgänger and its basic typological classification in the world cultural tradition. Our material base will be made up of ancient narratives, primarily myths, magical tales and religious texts from various civilizations and cultural circles. The doppelgänger character is primarily fixed as a narrative phenomenon, but its origins can be traced back to the primitive magical-religious ideas of man. Through their intertextual and intercultural confrontation, we will try to reveal the constitutive principles of depicting the doppelgänger and find out in which narrative situations and subject-motive constellations it is iconized. Based on the results, we will clarify his function and archetypal meaning in the metaphorical code of ancient stories, which have contributed to the formation of the cultural background of humanity since the ancient times. We believe that the universal motif of the doppelgänger represents a distinctive and significant anthropological-narrative phenomenon that reflects the binary (opposite) thinking of man in a traditionally based society, but is also significantly related to the deeply rooted human need to explore and reflect on one's own identity: The doppelgänger in the metaphorical code of ancient stories represents one of the basic existential semantics of human experience.

**Keywords** ancient narratives; archetypal motif; doppelgänger; identity; the concept of opposites

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## Introduction

The doppelgänger character is primarily fixed as a narrative phenomenon (myths, magical tales, superstitions, legends, short stories, novels, etc.), but its origins can be traced back to the primitive magical-religious ideas of man. The universally widespread motif of a doppelgänger is an ancient figurative type that represents one of the basic existential semantics of human experience. Through specific forms of expression and universal narrative images, it appears in the precisely defined subject-motive stereotypes—their identification is the subject of the present study—and on an archetypal level it reflects man’s effort to deal with his own identity and the principle of opposites that surround him in the actual world.

From the point of view of elementary division, the doppelgänger character can be iconized in two models:

(1) The first model thematizes the motif of duality as a mental/psychic similarity or identity of two appearing characters, whose physical shell may not always be identical.

(2) The second model thematizes the motif of duality as a physical/bodily similarity or direct identity of the two appearing characters. The characters—twins, however, are significantly different on the (mental) inside. Their nature is contradictory and oscillates on the boundary between good and evil.

## The Doppelgänger Character in the Mythological-Religious Tradition: Spirit and Soul, Dream and Shadow alterego

Seeing oneself or one’s doppelgänger is a (patho)psychological phenomenon called autoscopy, and especially in the past it was closely connected with sacral and extrasensory experiencing: the soul, spirit or alterego of a person, i.e. a kind of essence of his (sub)conscious identity, becomes independent/separates in a

transcendent form from the physical body either after death or during an altered state of consciousness (e.g. dreams, visions, astral travel, meditation), moves in *other* worlds and comes into contact with various forms of the supernatural.

Among the oldest evidence that could indicate that man has at least some awareness of the existence of a doppelgänger in the form of the spirit or soul from the earliest times of development is a cave painting dated to approximately 14,000 BC in the French Lascaux cave. It depicts a bison with a highlighted vulva, below it a human figure with a bird's head and a staff crowned with a pictogram of a small bird, which probably has the role of a psychopomp—a guide of souls. This mysterious scene depicts a shaman in a trance, dressed in a bird costume, whose soul astrally travels to the realm of the Lord of Animals, or to the realm of (animal) spirits to beg the competent supernatural beings for sufficient game fertility for the next year (Scholz 49). The idea of the soul or spirit as a transcendental doppelgänger has been preserved across the cultures in various forms, including the younger mythological-religious ideas and associated ritual actions. For example, the ancient Egyptians believed that the spiritual doppelgänger *ka* wanders in the afterlife after a person's death and undergoes various trials, including a posthumous judgment. However, the form of the spirit is strictly fixed on the physical appearance of the deceased: if, for example, the corpse is lacking a leg or a head, so is the case with the spiritual doppelgänger (Lexa I. 83). The existential connection between the deceased and his spiritual double is also evidenced by a passage of text found in the pyramid *Transport of the Vessel to the Underworld*:

Who are you, the coming one?  
 I am a magician.  
 Are you whole?  
 I am whole.  
 Are you properly equipped with everything?  
 I am properly equipped with everything.  
 Did you heal your two limbs?  
 I healed my two limbs.  
 Which two limbs are those, magician?  
 It is the elbow and leg. (Lexa II. 41)

Plato pointed out that the immortal soul is man's most valuable possession because it represents his identity and will be preserved even after the physical body is destroyed after death (Plato 80b). In many traditionally based societies, the belief

prevailed that the soul of a person mystically manifests itself not only after death, but also during altered states of consciousness, such as dreaming, meditation or astral travel. What we would call the “dreamy self” today people once perceived as the so-called “free soul,” a kind of alter ego. For example, the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* describes that the soul is in a kind of transitional time-space after death and before rebirth where it experiences all sorts of mystical situations. However, the pre-Buddhist Tibetan religion also recognizes other types of transitional states (*bardo*) in which the soul detaches itself from the physical body: before birth in the mother’s womb, while dreaming, meditating deeply etc. (Grof 14).

While the transcendent spiritual doppelgänger or the soul of a person was perceived as a positive religious-existential phenomenon, the observation of their doppelgängers on the physical plane, or in the form of a shadow (a shadow doppelgänger) was generally considered a bad omen that heralded impending death (George 33). According to folklorist James Frazer, a person’s shadow, as well as its reflection on a reflective surface, are considered a vital part of their identity or soul. They therefore represent a potential danger: their damage and/or destruction manifests itself to the same degree in the physical shell of a person. In addition, however, a potential threat is also posed by the shadow doppelgänger himself, who can embody the evil side of a person (Frazer 171-75). Modern European folklore and the genre literature of the 19th century, i.e. the Gothic novel and horror, operated extensively with this idea (George 35).

Carl Jung includes the mysterious and often ominous doppelgänger among the manifestations of the shadow archetype. He considers it as an autonomous, but negative, inferior and instinctive (shadowy) part of the personality, which embodies or gravitates towards the opposite tendencies than our conscious Self (Jung 8-10).

### **A Doppelgänger as a Phenomenon of Mystical Unity and the Joining of Opposites**

According to folklorist Hasan El-Shamy, in the archaic and traditionally based communities the cult of twins formulated the idea of a doppelgänger. The birth of twins was rather an exceptional phenomenon that often caused concern and fueled superstition: twins were often attributed supernatural powers related to the concept of the opposites because they were perceived as divided parts of a single whole, or as opposite duplicates of an individual. This is also why their birth was accompanied by various ritual acts. In this context, El-Shamy recalls that Jung’s theory of the creative union of opposites—*Coniunctio Oppositorum*—is particularly important when examining the doppelgänger character in culture and art (15-16). Carl Jung claims that opposites can be hostile to each other or attract each other in affection

and love. Their symbols and personifications are abundantly present in mythological texts in various oppositions, e.g. spirit/anima—body, good—bad, alive—dead, active—passive, bright—dark, wet—dry, cold—warm, upper—lower, heavens—earth, fire—water (17) and they also appear in various variations of the masculine-feminine contrast. However, in terms of concretization, e.g. in personifications, such as king—queen, young man—virgin, brother—sister, or color-coded characters (usually black—white, white—red), theriomorphic symbolic embodiments of opposites are also common, e.g. eagle—frog (18-19).

In the mythologies, twins of different sexes often form a couple (even married) embodying the opposite male-female aspects of a single whole. For example, the Greek goddess Artemis (the Roman Diana; goddess of the moon, hunting, wild animals, womanhood) and her brother Apollo (the god of the sun, art and /male/ rationality), the Egyptian goddess of the sky Nut and her brother/husband Geb, the god of the earth, Japanese goddess of the sun Amaterasu and her brother/husband Tsukuyomi, the god of the moon. The personified oppositions, which express different forms/contents of one single whole, also often appear in the mythological-religious ideas in the form of divine duality or trinity (Thompson motif A116.2. Twin Goddesses or Trinity of Goddesses). For example, in Greek mythology, three divine sisters often present several aspects of one whole, usually the unity of a woman's life - virginity, mature fertility and old age (Ranke XII. 426). Hekate, the Greek goddess of childbirth, magic and demons who embodies the opposite of life and death, is also depicted with three heads. Janus, who probably belongs to the oldest Latin gods, is also referred to as *Janus Geminus* (Janus the Gemini). He was originally depicted with four heads (quadrifrons) and later with two (bifrons). His ambiguity is expressed by the transition from one state to another: he was the god of thresholds, gates and entrances (lat. *ianua*— “door,” “entrance”; *ianus*— “passage,” “arch”); his heads symbolized change, time and transformation (Roman, Roman 289). For example, he represented the past changing into the future, the transformation of a child into an adult, the transformation of the moon/night into the sun/day. He was often worshiped at social events that included the concept of growth, change and something new, e.g. during the new year, at the birth of a child, wedding, sowing and harvesting.

Binary opposites are very often present even within a single gender line in the personifications of a good and bad brother, and/or in the form of twin brothers/twins, a good and bad sister or a beautiful virgin and an ugly old woman, while a negatively conceived character always acts as a shadow double, or in the Proppian function of an *antagonist*.

### **Brothers—Twins**

The characters of twins are quite frequent in ancient stories, and the motifs associated with them can be found in a wide geneological range: from myths to fairy tales and legends. Folklorist Stith Thompson indexes the motifs of twin brothers, for example, under the number A116 Twin Gods (I. 77), A515.1.1. Twin Culture Heroes (I. 77), B241.2.8.1. Newly-born Divine Twins Cared for by Mother of Tigers (I. 405), D1347.3.1. Magic Pills Insure Birth of Twin Sons (II. 189), F523 Two Persons with Bodies Joined/Siamese Twins (III. 139), H61.1. Recognition of Twins by Golden Chain Under their Skin (III. 378), K1311.1. Husband's Twin Brother Mistaken by Woman for her Husband (IV. 382), K1921.2. Queen Changes her own Ugly Twins for Slave's Pretty Sons (IV. 455), M369.7.1. Prophecy: Birth of Twins (V. 63) etc.

Siblings (mutual doubles) either succumb to extreme rivalry (polarization, dissimulation, differentiation) or ideal cohesion (symmetry, assimilation). They thus embody the representations of a dualistic world view, which can be in tension and conflict, or in harmony and complement each other symbiotically. This negatively or positively charged emotional status in the relationship of the siblings is semantically transparently manifested in their destinies (at the level of the plot) and in their characters and physical appearance (at the level of the character), which can be diametrically different or the same (good—bad, handsome—ugly, living—dead, supernatural/divine—mortal/human or visual similarity, sharing the same fate, bodily symbol confirming their connectedness and prominence) (Ranke II. 845). The twin brothers are therefore always configured on two relational planes, which Jung already discussed in connection with his concept of opposites:

An axis built on the relationship of mutual love and help.

A sacrificial and ideal bond between the brothers can be observed, for example, in Greek mythology between Castor and Polydeux, i.e. between the brothers dubbed Dioscuri. Their sibling bond is so strong during life that they remain together even after death. The cultural equivalents of the Dioscuri are e.g. the Germanic divine twins Alkins, often appearing in the form of deer, the Latvian divine twins Dieva deli, the sons of the supreme god Dievas or the Vedic Ashvins. Although the Ashwin twins are different in nature—one is warlike, and the other is drawn to magic—their relationship is nevertheless cohesive. The symmetry of twin brothers is also explicitly captured in the hagiographic legends in which twin brothers often share the same fate. For example, St. Kosmas and St. Damian study to become doctors, but are beheaded for their actions and faith. In many legends, the names of the twins

are nearly identical phonetically or graphically, which reinforces their connection. For example, St. Crispinus and St. Crispianus are shoemakers, but they do not accept money from the poor for their work because of their religious beliefs. Both are martyred and beheaded, like other martyrs such as St. Gervasianus and St. Protasianus. However, some legends also thematize the animosity between the twin brothers and their contrasting character and mutual conflict stems from faith in God and the Church. For example, St. Wenzel is killed by his wicked brother (Ranke II 853-54). The harmonious relationship of two twins is also thematized in the French poem *Amis and Amil*, which dates back to 1114 at the latest (the poem, which is on the genre border of *chanson de geste* and a hagiographic legend, is part of the work of the Benedictine monk Radulph Toltario).

An axis built on the relationship of mutual hatred and antagony.

An important role in the archnarratives is played by the polarized constellation of a good—bad brother, servant—master, worker—sloth, demigod—demon, which are represented by the roles of a hero and antagonist in terms of Propp's functional typology. In the case of the birth of male twins, one of them is usually a cultural hero, and his *doppelgänger* contradicts him, i.e. represents a different and usually averted way of life. In the mythologies, the twin brothers are often rivals and their conflict often ends with the death of one of them, e.g. the dark god of the desert Sutech dismembers his brother Usir, the god of fertility and agriculture, or the bolder and more powerful Romulus kills his brother Remus, and the jealous Cain kills Abel (Ranke II. 855-56). A similar polarity can also be found in other religious-mythological ideas. In Zoroastrianism, the supreme god Ahura Mazda (Lord of Wisdom) fathered the divine twins. One of them is called Mainyu (Holy Spirit), the other Angra Mainyu (the god of lies and darkness). Their mutual enmity and fights are portrayed in the hymns of the Avesta (El-Shamy 15). The good and virtuous brother and his shadow *doppelgänger* often appear in the roles of cultural heroes and anti-heroes, whose actions shape the existence of people in the cosmos. For example, in Melanesia, the hero To Kabinana creates fertile fields, hunting and musical instruments, tuna, edible plants and builds the first hut, but his brother To Korvuvu, who acts as a negative character and the shadow of his heroic brother, brings death, wars, hunger and incest, creates deep gorges and high mountains, a shark and a funeral drum (Meletinskij 192-93). The equivalents of such a figural pair can also be found in the Australian Kulin tribe. The cultural hero Bunjil appears in the form of an eagle and his twin is a wild, stupid Palian in the form of a bat and/or raven. Both brothers are at odds with each other. In the narratives from the New Hebrides in the Pacific, Tagaro serves as a good and wise hero, while Seqematu is

his stupid and useless brother. In ancient mythology, we find such a contradiction in the character of the cunning Prometheus who acts as the protector of the people, and in the character of his stupid pleasurable brother Epimetheus who succumbs to Pandora and brings misfortune to the people (Meletinskij 189-98). The semantic theme of duality, represented by the twin brothers, also permeated the totemic system: for example, according to the totemic-cosmological ideas of the Bedouin tribe Awlād Ali from the northwest coast of Egypt, their community is structured into two phratries (a coalition of genera or clans within one tribe), founded by the twins Al-'Abya (translated as Ali-White) and Al-'Ahmar (Ali-Red). Although they were born as twins, each represents a different and opposite half of the whole, which is already indicated by the semantics of their names: the first brother was calm and fair-skinned immediately after birth, while the second was agitated and had a reddish complexion. These physical and personality attributes were inherited by their descendants (El-Shamy 14).

### **The Twin Brothers in the Fairy Tale Genre**

The characters of the twin brothers also appear in the genre of magical fairy tales, while the fairy tale type classified in the Aarne-Thompson-Uther International Catalog of Fairy Tale Types as 303 The Twins or Blood-Brothers (Uther 183) is considered particularly important.

According to the ATU catalog, the birth of twin brothers is often preceded by a miraculous conception (drinking from miraculous water, eating miraculous food, etc.), which is often accompanied by an attempt by the antagonist character to eliminate the brothers. In many stories, the uniqueness of doppelgängers is confirmed by animals with supernatural powers that accompany them everywhere and are bound to them by a special bond. The animals are either born at the same time as the brothers, or the mother animal gives the babies to the brothers for not killing her. In adulthood, the doppelgängers go out into the world. They go their separate ways, but they agree on a sign of life as a sign of unity: if one of them is in mortal danger, the water becomes cloudy for the other, a tree or plant dries up, a knife stuck in a tree where the brothers are separated rusts up, etc. The first brother liberates the princess from the yoke of the monster (dragon, troll, warlock, etc.), exposes the false hero who wants to take credit for his deeds, and finally marries the princess. Later, however, he falls into the trap of a witch who turns him into stone. Then a sign of life appears to the other brother, and he comes to the rescue. The princess cannot tell one brother from the other (her husband) and wants to spend the night with him. However, the other brother places a sword between them,

dividing the bed into two halves. When the other brother defeats the witch and frees the cursed brother, the princess falsely accuses her brother-in-law of rape. The first brother then kills the second out of jealousy. However, he later discovers the sword in the bed and realizes that his brother was innocent. He therefore revives him with miraculous water (Uther 183-84).

Philologist Friedrich von der Leyen places the origin of the fairy tale about two brothers in the period before the migration of peoples, but folklorist Waldemar Liungman is of the opinion that its origin is even older and refers to the Egyptian fairy tale *About the Two Brothers*, which demonstrably dates back to around 1250 BC. Therefore, he considers the region of Asia Minor, or the region of northern Syria, to be the epicenter of the origin of the type ATU 303 fairy-tale, from where the sujetal invariant spread through the Byzantine culture to Italy and from there to the rest of Europe (Ranke II. 914). In the oldest Egyptian tale *About Two Brothers* the wife of the older brother Anpu disrupts an otherwise prosperous sibling relationship and accuses her brother-in-law Bata of rape. Angry Anpu decides to kill his younger brother. Bata discovers his brother's intentions in time (he is warned by a magical talking cow) and manages to escape from his house. In a fit of rage, Anpu chases the innocent Bata. When he finally catches up with him, god Fra Harmakhuti (Sun Horus) conjures a river with crocodiles between the brothers as an insurmountable obstacle. Bata tells Anpu what really happened and clears his name by cutting off the hand he used to swear his innocence and throwing it to a crocodile. The warm brotherly bond is thus restored. Subsequently, Bata cuts his heart out of his body and places it on the highest flower of a cedar tree. He then issues the following instructions to his brother: if one day his beer turns murky, it will be a sign that someone has cut down the cedar tree with Bata's heart, and he has died. Anpu will then have to come to help. Bata then bids farewell to Anpu and leaves the Cedar Valley (the mystical name for the underworld). In the underworld, the gods create a woman for Bata, but he dies because of her betrayal. However, Anpu, whose beer is murky according to the prediction, comes to his brother's aid. He finds his heart, throws it into the water, and Bata comes to life.

The ATU 303 fairy tale type is widespread worldwide, which is also confirmed by other variants, e.g. by the Italian story *Two Merchants' Sons*, which is published in Basile's collection *Pentameron*, the Brothers Grimm's fairy tale *Two Brothers*, the Indian fairy tale *The Prince and the Fakir* or the Japanese fairy tale *Shippeitaro*.

### **The Doppelgänger as an Antagonist and Liar**

The motif of recognizing the true identity of one of the featured characters

frequently occurs in magical fairy tales. Folklorist Stith Thompson classifies the variants of this motif in the section H0—H199 Identity Test: Recognition (III. 370). In connection with the doppelgänger character, variants of the motif about the revelation of identity are combined with the motifs indexed in the section K1800—K1899 Deception by Disguise or Illusion (IV. 428), while the motif K1881 Absent Person Seems to be Present/Doppelgänger can be considered a particularly significant motif (IV. 447): a deceitful character steals another character's bodily identity using charms, a costume or a mask in order to obtain various benefits, favors, items, etc. on their behalf. In general, the motive of identity theft and misuse belongs to a set of motif complexes, the narratological axis of which is derived from the metamorphic motive "transformation as a trick" (Danišová 39).

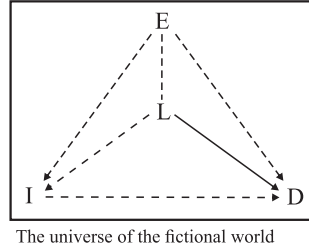
From the point of view of the logical-causal sequence of the narrative, the motif of transformation as a trick consists of four invariant sequences that assume the repetition of the functions of the acting characters—*liar*, *character with* and *executor*. It involves the following sequences:

- (1) *Exposition*. The liar who most often appears in the Proppian function of an antagonist, experiences scarcity and looks for a way to eliminate it. Scarcity in this context appears as a desire, most often for sexual intercourse, food, a precious object, but also as a desire for a social-power status, a comfortable and economically secure life or the elimination of an undesirable character.
- (2) *Collision*. A liar devises a trap and uses spells or a costume/mask to steal and misuse the identity of another character from the fictional world. This character is either a specific character that the liar has strategically chosen and becomes his doppelgänger (e. g. because of his powerful authority, attractive physical appearance, close and intimate relationship with the character that the liar wants to harm, i. e. deceive it), or accepts any general/typological identity that will not appear suspicious to the deceived character, e.g. old man, king, or mother. In the newly acquired (stolen) form, the liar sneaks unnoticed into the favor of his victim and damages it (misuses, kills, robs, etc.) through lies.
- (3) *Resolution of the conflict*. The liar's true identity and intentions are revealed by the deceived character or his helper.
- (4) *Conclusion*. An executor enters the scene and sanctions the liar's actions. The deceived character is freed from the harmful influence.

The doppelgänger as antagonist and a liar—a diagram of triadic relationships between the characters:

**Legend:**

- = the universe of the fictional world
- E** = executor
- L** = liar
- I** = character with required identity
- D** = deceived character



The relationships between the characters interact in the respective narrative universe in two triadic diagrams. The internal triadic system of relations between the characters L, I and D is dominant and marked with thick lines; the external triadic system of relations between the characters E and I, L, D is not part of every narrative and it is marked with thin lines.

The internal triadic relationship system: the interaction between the liar and the victim/ deceived character is primary (indicated by a thick solid line in the diagram;  $L \rightarrow D$ ) because it conditions the emergence of other secondary relationships between the functional roles of action (indicated by a thick dashed line in the diagram). These are the relationships between:

- the liar and a character whose bodily identity is stolen ( $L \rightarrow I$ ),
- the character whose identity is stolen and the victim ( $I \rightarrow D$ ),

The external triadic system is not a fixed part of the motivic complex of transformation as a trick. It captures the relationships arising from the function of an executor who:

- punishes the liar for his deceitful and harmful behavior ( $E \rightarrow L$ ),
- protects the injured victim ( $E \rightarrow D$ ),
- projects the character whose identity was stolen by the liar ( $E \rightarrow I$ ).

For example, in the ancient story of the Tiryinthian king Amphitryon, Zeus (liar, L) uses spells to assume the appearance of Amphitryon (character with stolen identity, I) to have intercourse with his beautiful wife (the deceived character, D). Similarly, Sisyphus (liar) impersonates King Laertes (person with an alienated identity) in order to have sex with his newlywed Antikleia (deceived character) on their wedding night. He supposedly conceived the mythical Odysseus from the lie itself (Ferry 406). In an ancient Indian story, which is part of the epic *Mahabharata*, four

gods—Indra, Agni, Varuna and Yama (liar) take the form of the hero Nala (character with stolen identity) to confuse the princess Damayanti (deceived character) in choosing a husband (Mahabharata 133). In the Greek-Jewish *Testament of Solomon*, we find the story of how the demon Asmodeus (liar) takes the form of King Solomon (person with stolen identity) in order to dishonor his harem (deceived character). Likewise, the hero Siegfried (liar) from the Old Germanic chivalric epic *The Song of the Nibelungs* impersonates his master, King Gunter (character with stolen identity) to help him fulfill his marriage to the powerful Brunhilda (deceived character). The hero Amis (liar) from the Old French poem impersonates Amil (character with stolen identity) in order to win a duel on his behalf and his wife (deceived character). In the Scottish chivalric novel *Roswall and Lillian* a malicious servant (liar) steals the identity of Prince Roswall (character with stolen identity) to gain his social status and win the hand of Princess Lillian (deceived character) in a tournament.

The model of transformation as a trick, in which the liar becomes the doppelgänger of the main character, is often part of the invariant plot outline of the fairy tale type ATU 403 The White and The Black Bride (Uther 236-37). The main actors of this fairy-tale type are two female characters in a face-off both in terms of their character and visual look: an elderly malicious and physically unattractive woman hurts a beautiful and virtuous young girl out of envy to win her rich (often royal) husband for herself or her ugly daughter. Both female characters compete with each other in love and the pursuit of an economically and existentially advantageous marriage with a rich lord or king. Their relationship always moves along the axis of competition and exploitation (Ranke XII. 423). The male protagonist always chooses a younger, prettier and nicer maiden as his wife, which stirs envy in the other physically and mentally unsatisfactory female character. The tension between the aggressor and her hated victim culminates when the narrator lets the male figure (the royal husband or rich pretender who holds a “protective hand” over the victim) leave the scene. At this moment, the aggressor actively intervenes in the action and eliminates the competitor either by turning her into an animal or murdering her, and the victim is transformed into an ethereal, usually aquatic, being after death. When the aggressor (in the function of a liar with regard to the above-mentioned diagram) gets rid of her competition, she assumes the appearance of her victim (a character with stolen identity) with the help of spells and takes her place or turns her ugly daughter into a heroine. The aggressor lives next to an unsuspecting man (deceived character) through cunning trickery and gets the heroine’s advantages, which, however, are not rightfully hers. In the final part of

the sujet, the heroine transformed into an animal/ethereal water creature or an animal acting as her helper, reveals the aggressor's crime to her deceived husband. He ultimately reveals the false doppelgänger—the black bride—and recognizes the real identity of the true white bride (transformed by spells), thus restoring her human form. In some narratives, the male savior also fulfills the function of an executor and punishes the antagonist for her actions (usually by death).

The aforementioned invariant outline of the fairy-tale type ATU 403 can be found, for example, in the Slovak fairy tale *Brother Deer*, Russian tale *The White Duck*, Serbian tale *Evil Stepmother*, Lusatian tale *Beautiful Sister*, and Grimm's tale *Brother and Sister*.

## Conclusion

In the submitted paper, we have addressed the archetypal motif of a doppelgänger and its basic typological classification in the cultural traditions around the world, which we have examined on a sample of myths and magical tales, and to a lesser extent also religious texts.

The doppelgänger in the metaphorical code of ancient stories represents one of the basic existential semantics of human experience. Through specific forms of expression and universal narrative images, he appears in precisely defined subject-motive stereotypes. In principle, a doppelgänger can be a positive character—an immaterial and transcendent emanation of a person's essence (his soul, spirit, dream alterego), or a negative character (a shadow, shadow alterego), which embodies the opposite part of human personality and represents danger. The doppelgänger's character is often related to whether he/she is understood on a physical or mental level in the text.

The doppelgänger can express:

1. symmetry and symbiosis of two different parts of one whole,
2. asymmetry and tension of two different parts of one whole,
3. a positively attuned duplicate of the original character, amplifying the set of their heroic/positive traits,
4. an ominously attuned duplicate of the original character, which intensifies the character difference between these characters in the functional roles of a hero (*character with stolen identity*) - antagonist (*liar*).

Either way, the ambivalent character of a doppelgänger reflects man's effort to deal with his own identity and with the principle of opposites that surround us in the world of today. A doppelgänger is an active character in the story and often has a disturbing function. His existence is always mystified and shrouded in a certain

aura and mystery. Therefore, his presence in the text usually indicates a supernatural plot.

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