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## TRICKSTER ARCHETYPE IN MODERN MEDIA CULTURE: SHOWIZATION AND DEMONISM

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### ABSTRACT

The paper is devoted to the study of the Trickster archetype in modern media culture. The attention is focused on certain literary texts – the literary heritage of the world (“The Golden House” by S. Rushdie) and Ukraine (“The Black Raven” by V. Shkliar), movies (“Joker” (2019) by Todd Phillips), the personalities of political elite (Donald Trump, V. Zelensky, Prankster Joker, etc.) and others, who made the Trickster archetype one of the key archetypes in the modern world and Ukrainian media space as well as in everyday life. For instance, in Shkliar’s novel “The Outcast. The Black Raven” – the postcolonial embodiment of the national collective unconscious injured by the traumatic Russian expansion, the role of Trickster belongs to the Black Raven – the rebel commander, defender of the Kholodnyi Yar (Cold Ravine). In another novel, “The Golden House” by S. Rushdie, Trickster is represented by twin heroes, tycoon Nero Golden and the Joker. The latter one ran for the US presidency and took office. The poetics of the composition fits into the Gothic novel scheme. Both characters are Gothic thieves demonstrating the “shadow” side of the Trickster archetype. The image of the Joker here is closely connected with American reality by means of movie and show format, where the function of the Trickster archetype is assigned to US President Donald Trump, whose image is also being demonized. In Ukraine, the role of Trickster is assumed by the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky – a comedian and showman accompanied by his colleagues from the “Studio Quarter – 95”. The atmosphere of the show deals with national politics, life and media space. The negation of the new government is reflected in Prankster Joker’s grim jokes over deputies. The global trends towards escalating infernal power of the Trickster archetype, related to the absurd motives,

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the sinister carnival and the madness, are expressed in the movie “Joker” (2019), with its main character Arthur Fleck as a Trickster as well.

Therefore, in modern media space the interpenetration of the semiotic codes of the media, the Internet, culture and real life can be observed. The personality perceives and reproduces these signs. The Trickster archetype has become a mega media image in the collective unconscious. It brought in focus the motives of the show and the game, acquired demonic traits against the background of social dehumanization and socio-political problems.

**Key words:** media, culture, the Trickster archetype, collective unconscious, showization, demonism.

**INTRODUCTION.** The modern global information field is characterized by the tendency towards hybridization and escalation of various phenomena and concepts. It is well known that power is concentrated in the hands of those who have money, possess information and have the most effective means of influencing the mass consciousness. Humanity has become a hostage to the media that support various political forces and fight for high ratings, arranging different shows, “feeding” the population with bubble sensations, fakes and negative stuff. This is a matter of concern for a large number of scholars, in particular, specialists in the field of media culture, mass communication and psychology.

Among the Ukrainian media experts, one should mention M. Vasylenko, V. Zdorovega, S. Kvit, V. Kulik, B. Potyatynik, G. Pocheptsov, V. Rizun whose research papers contain a fundamental analysis of modern global and national media discourse concerning political, power, ideological, genre, creative processes and consumer needs. The accents of media psychology are thoroughly studied by Ukrainian scholars Y. Kalba, V. Lizanchuk, L. Naydionova who explore psychology and spiritual values of personality, mass phenomena, media production needs, features of media culture development under the influence of mass media.

Back in the 1960s, J. Gerbner, a well-known mass communications researcher, developed the Cultivation Theory. Studying the impact of television on consumers, the followers of the mentioned concept compared its social function with the role of religion in pre-industrial society. Watching TV can

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also be attributed to the daily ritual that the elite shares with the masses. Television, like religion, is able to continuously repeat information: myths, “facts”, lessons, etc., in such a way defining the global social order (Gerbner et al., 2002: 44).

Television is a mega-scale information dissemination tool. It helps to create ideologies and myths filled with numerous symbols and semiotic codes. Therefore, well substantiated is J. Gerber’s assumption that the viewers who spend much time in front of the blue screen later become prisoners of the television sign systems with the distorted world outlook (Gerbner et al., 2002).

Since the empirical data and clarifications of the psychological mechanisms of the mentioned phenomenon are not enough, not all the scholars recognize the Cultivation Theory. However it should be emphasized that nowadays, with the active development of the Internet, one can more confidently draw analogies regarding the impact of television “sign” systems and symbols over the viewers.

We live in an age of rapid Internet development. Every year, the number of Internet users is increasing geographically. People spend more and more time in cyberspace, thus being exposed to virtual influence and manipulation techniques.

However, the process of human and media interaction is reverse. This statement is congruent with the Uses and Gratifications Theory. This theory has been widely developed since the 1940’s in the papers of G. Lasswell, K. Wright, P. Lazarsfeld, E. Katz and others. According to J. Bryant and S. Thompson, the Uses and Gratifications Theory is based on the following principles: audience activity, use of media to satisfy certain needs, dependence of media users’ reaction on social and psychological factors, etc. (Bryant et al., 2004: 155).

The basic postulates of the Uses and Gratifications Theory are based on the hypothesis that people are active media consumers. They choose information being guided by their own motives and needs.

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Various scholars point out the interdependence between mass media and recipients, based on behavioral concepts of “stimulus-response” (D. Watson, B. Skinner, G. Melnik). That is, they take into consideration the principles of skill consolidation. On the other hand, the cognitivists (L. Festinger, A. Bandura, D. Uznadze) note the importance of attitudes and other cognitive components (intelligence, attention, features of the emotional sphere, etc.) in the process of mass media influence over the people and vice versa (Ankhimova, 2015).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS.** Every day we observe the increasing number of web resources, blogs, forums, fandoms, etc. whereas the number of active users united by certain interests and topics raises respectively. These people experience certain feelings and emotions, consume energy, produce it and spread it into the noosphere. The number of hyper-internet-addicted individuals (gamers, those who spend much time on social networks, etc.) is also growing.

Even when it comes to the Internet and virtual social networks like Facebook or Instagram as separate spaces, they exist in the context of specific codes, signs, symbols that are characteristic of them. They operate under certain laws, sometimes understood only by particular groups of recipients. All these phenomena need to be researched since they are an important part of media culture.

Summarizing the investigations of scholars dealing with the Uses and Gratifications Theory, J. Bryant and S. Thompson emphasize that their results are too individualized and therefore difficult to generalize (Bryant et al., 2004: 156). They contain differences in key concepts, inconsistencies in provisions concerning the audience activity and other weak points that need to be addressed. According to the scientists, there is a need in synthesis of the results of different studies (Bryant et al, 2004: 156). R. Ankhimova, describing other theories of interaction between media and audience, argues that none of them is absolute, however complementing each other, they contribute to a comprehensive view of the situation (Ankhimova, 2015).

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Thus, the issue of the media influence on the masses, and vice versa, requires analysis and study.

In my opinion, in order to develop a better understanding of the trends of global media culture, they should be considered from the standpoint of the collective unconscious, namely: archetypes.

Archetypes are the eternal mythological images and symbols inherited by the human collective unconscious.

Such an approach can “harmonize” the contradictions contained in the media effects theories.

The global information field is heterogeneous and inter-penetrable. Lots of data is nowadays being generated there. The power of signs and the potential for “otherworldliness” have significantly increased. It should be noted that a great deal of information is presented in a negative format. Distrust for the authorities, dissatisfaction with the present life, anxiety for the future generate motives of fear and apocalypse. As a result, the worldview in the minds of the masses is demonized.

However, the masses are likely to consume the information they consciously or unconsciously expect. That is the media, culture, and people “feed” each other. Finally, the boundaries between the real and the illusory worlds are neutralized: shows, manipulation, chaos, evil become the leading constants of human existence.

Against this background, as well as due to the global political and economic instability and social dehumanization, quite natural in the multicultural space becomes the actualization of Trickster’s image (trickster – cheater, shifter, swindler). Therefore, the research of the mentioned issue is quite urgent.

The purpose of this study is to determine the role of the Trickster archetype in modern media culture, identify the general trends and media impacts that give the impression of reality showization, develop its infernal perspective.

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Accordingly, the task of the research is to review the socio-cultural context for this archetype, to find interrelations and emphases.

As it is known, in human mythological consciousness the image of Trickster combines the features of folk “clown”, “deceived deceiver”, the hero of carnival culture, the evil joker, breaking the peace and unleashing chaos. Thus K. Jung describes the Shadow in this archetype like all the worst that is in human beings and refers to the devil as God’s ape. He also compared Trickster with a poltergeist, whose evil and senseless tricks are similar to the behavior of a foolish child (Jung,1996).

In this sense, Trickster, as a crooked mirror, reflects the infantile nature of humanity, looking like a child, unsatisfied with the game, and therefore angry and willful. The same thing happens with civilizations, states and nations, – the carriers of the generic Trickster archetypal sems.

It is impossible to consider the media-cultural context without making a retrospective journey into the literature. Thus, the researchers found Trickster's features in Ukrainian literature, namely in Aeneas – the hero of the “The Aeneid” poem by I. Kotlyarevsky. For instance, D. Chick, O. Chick point out that I. Kotlyarevsky presents Aeneas primarily as a tramp, drunkard, rake, but at the same time, he is a brave Cossack leader. That is, on the one hand, he is a Trickster, while on the other – a culture Hero, living in the time of Cossacks era abolition, under the conditions of Russian colonization, being forced to adjust to it (Chick et al, 2017).

According to Ukrainian literary critic N. Zborovska, who studied the code of Ukrainian literature in terms of psychoanalysis, since our Aeneas prefers drinking and having fun, instead of nation building, it indicates an immature, infantile national spirit (Zborovska, 2006).

Describing the infantilism from the point of view of colonial and post-colonial consciousness, N. Zborovska argues that imperialism is connected with cruelty (sadism), which is also a manifestation of infantilism, whereas an empathy is a sign of mature spiritual courage (Zborovska N., 2006). On the basis of the age

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development periodization of Z. Freud's psychoanalytic theory, where "character" is a result of sexual deviations arising from the fixation of psychotrauma at a certain age, N. Zborovska concludes that in the imperial two polar opposites of perversion are combined – sadism and masochism. That is characteristic of Russian-Ukrainian historical relationships (Zborovska, 2006).

Within the framework of post-colonial studies, quite interesting seems the novel of Ukrainian prose-writer V. Shkliar "The Outcast. The Black Raven" (2009). The main character of the novel – Black Raven, the rebel commander, together with his brothers in arms, protects Ukrainian lands of the Kholodnyi Yar (Cold Ravine) from a hostile invasion of the Soviet empire. In Black Raven, the paradoxical ambivalence of the Trickster archetype and a Culture Hero are combined. The Black Raven is a glorious ataman, brave warrior, "crafty and stubborn enemy" (Shkliar, 2011: 11), haunting the red forces with daring bloody attacks. Ex-staff Captain Chornovus took his cover name after becoming the head of the rebel unit, since he had to get himself a new name, otherwise the Russians could take revenge on his family (Shkliar, 2011: 44). On the top of the horn-beech he saw a crow – a big bird of prey, "so black, that even a blue reflex glinted off it" (Shkliar, 2011: 44).

As known, in the mythological human consciousness the crow symbolizes Trickster's animalistic essence. At the same time, he is a demiurge, a symbol of wisdom, clan system, while on the other hand – a mocker, caviler, chthonic evil, foretold of evil and death (The Myths of Nations. Encyclopedia, 1991: 245 – 247). This bird, wise and old, appears in the novel in momentous events: during the secular funeral of another legendary character of the novel – ataman Veremiah, the birth of his son Yark, at the time of the carnage on his wife – Gannusya, during the farewell ceremony of Yark and Tina – the Black Raven's beloved girl.

The world of the novel is chaos, an infernal and bloody show where the struggle of the Ukrainian rebels with the invaders is pierced with the desperate tragicomic pathos. "The indignation is also provoked by fierce amusement and even playfulness expressed by the bandits punishing the representatives of the

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Soviet regime” (Shkliar V., 2011: 145). In such a manner, their actions are described in the undercover agent’s “Nepytay” report to comrade Bergavinov – the Head of the Cherkasy County Department of the State Political Directorate (Shkliar V., 2011: 145).

According to Y. Chernyakhovska, Trickster is a mythological disharmony, which indicates a “hole in space” (Chernyakhovska Y., 2004). As a demiurge, the Black Raven in the novel creates chaos, while at the same time trying to struggle for a new world – the independent future for Ukraine. As a mediator, the main character is connected with the otherworld, while Ukrainian soldiers Vovkulaka (Werewolf), Gryzlo (Biter), Liutyi (Fierce), Chort (Devil), Chinese Hodya and others represent the monsters. The courageous and smart antics of the infernal Ukrainians against total totalitarian evil are accompanied by shapeshifting and outfit changing that reminds of the staged theatrical shows. During one of the bloody “performances” the rebels attacked the club of Lebedinsky sugar factory where an agitation cultural event took place, and Vovkulak – the leading “joker”-actor had transformed on the stage into “Shelmenko the batman” – the hero of G. Kvitka-Osnovyanenko’s eponymous comedy “Shelmenko the batman” (1841). The character of this novel is a smart dodger, an embodiment of Trickster as well.

At that time, in Lebedin many “responsible Soviet workers” were eliminated, and therefore the agent Antropov in his information summary to the local Cheka unit (Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, Profiteering and Corruption) called this event a “nationalist sabbath” (Shkliar, 2011: 51).

Unfortunately, most of the Ukrainian soldiers – defenders of the Kholodnyi Yar, died in an unequal struggle with the satanic imperial forces.

Ataman Black Raven was fortunate to escape from the Red Army who pursued him in the Motronin Monastery, by jumping into an underground cellar. After exploding the entrance to the caves, he “found his way” in its labyrinth and managed to get out (Shkliar, 2011: 379). A moment after the explosion, the raven swooped down from the cross of the Saint Ivan Zlatoust church. He sat at its intersection, observing the events – and suddenly the bird’s heart had

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stopped. The death of an old bird symbolizing the father of the genus and in the novel – the father of the nation, bespeaks fatal fate for the Ukrainians.

The Black Raven appears to “organize a new detachment and fight until at least June 6, 1925.” (Shkliar, 2011: 379). Later on “the Black Raven’s gang” was liquidated, and Moscow did everything to destroy the memory about the Ukrainian rebels and the very idea they were fighting for.

In terms of the military aggression of imperial Russia against Ukraine, which has started since 2014 with offence, non-recognition of the enemy’s involvement in events and lasts until today, the demonic course of history repeats itself. This situation reminds of the tragic events from historical past described in the novel. Therefore V. Shkliar’s “The Outcast. The Black Raven” due to the Trickster archetype and owing to the sinister symbolic signs, reproduces the collective postcolonial “trauma” for the nation, while at the same time being providential of the current situation in the country.

The best-seller was recently followed by the release of “Black Raven” movie (2019) directed by Taras Tkachenko.

The child may be frightened by his own actions, feel external threat, and then in the collective unconscious, the images of monsters emerge, transforming due to the modern culture in sinister clowns, like Pennywise from S. King’s novel “It” (1986) or super-villains from a number of Batman movies with the Joker (“Batman” (1989) directed by Tim Burton) among them.

Subsequently, this anti-hero becomes the character of “The Golden House” novel by famous British writer Salman Rushdie (2017), where the Trickster archetype is embodied in the same manner, since Joker (the name comes from the name of a playing card) means prankster.

The Golden House can be considered as a Gothic novel, a sinister, and at the same time, kitschy story of the collapse of the family of Mumbai billionaire immigrant Nero Golden, and in a broad sense – a requiem for American culture. At the same time, it is the longing for the lost paradise, “golden age” of

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myths, extinguishing world, where “eternal values” are no more respected and human existence is transformed into a horrific and tragic farce.

Nero Golden in the novel is a gothic thief, “fantastic Monster”, “Frankenstein”, whose biography is shrouded in mystery.

In 2009, a man with his three sons moved to New York, settling down in the former estate of the banker Franklin Murray in Greenwich Village, Manhattan, which has since then become the “Golden House”.

Trying to get rid of the past, the family disavowed their homeland, identity and real names – they are all “dressed” into pseudonyms – masks from the ancient history and mythology. The father took the name of Nero – bloodthirsty Roman emperor; the eldest son became Petronius (Peter), in the memory of Roman writer Gaius Petronius, author of the first “Satiricon” novel and Nero’s contemporary. The middle son took the name of Apuleius (Apu), following the Roman Lucius Apuleius, the author of “Metamorphoses, or the Golden Ass”, while the younger boy became Dionysus (D), by the analogy to the ancient god of viticulture, fruitfulness and vegetation – Bacchus). Cults and mystical ceremonies in honor of Dionysus were associated with exalted orgies. This mask adds an infernal connotation into the novel, symbolizing the world of Bacchanalia, sabbath, orgy of the demonic forces.

Fake, imaginary pseudo-personal characters and the “palace of illusions” they live in, that is the “Golden House” represent the whole America. The country here is the center of profane masks (Superheroes, Super villains in comics and movies, etc.) and illusions, being similar to the pseudo-reality of the “Truman Show” movie (1998), and the whole world creates the impression of simulacrum.

Moreover, the “Golden House” in the novel is a sinister locus that transforms itself either into a ghost house, or into the fairy house of the witch – Baba Yaga (the young Nero’s wife, the Russian Vasilisa Arseneva (Vasilissa the Beautiful from the fairy-tale)). At the end of the novel, the house was burned down and, according to the Gothic laws, fell into ruin.

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The chronicler (chronographer, gothic archivist) in the novel is the Golden's neighbor, a young filmmaker Rene Winterlinden, who keeps a record of the Golden family and gradually unravels the tangle of their secrets, watching the recession of the genus and collapse of the "Golden House". He dreams to become a movie director and make a film about them.

Tycoon Nero Golden in the novel is a criminal, manipulator, villain (Trickster), who has his earned capital by laundering the dirty money of the mafia (his nickname was "dhobi" – washer) and real estate speculation. In India, he collaborated with the Mumbai mafia. Eventually this made him a hostage of circumstance. The hero was forced to help the terrorists who murdered numerous victims. For his crimes, according to the Gothic canons, the metaphysical punishment was expected for all his family – degeneration and death, which, in fact, had happened.

The problems of Nero's children indicate the degradation their family. The eldest son Petronius is an intellectual, successful programmer, however suffering from autism, agoraphobia and alcoholism.

The middle son Lucius Apuleius is a talented artist. Mysticism and psychotropic drugs are integral parts of his life and work. Apuleius cut Petronius out with a sculptor Ubu Tuur, a girl he loved, causing psychological trauma to his brother. Petronius took revenge by setting fire to the gallery where Ubu's works were exhibited. Apu senses the fatality of the Golden family and their future collapse by intuition. The artist has bizarre visions and phantoms that are reflected on his canvases. He has problems with the left eye retina: it seems to him that his right eye sees true reality, while the left one – distorted.

Dionysus, Nero's illegitimate son, was taken into the family when he was a small child. The older brothers did not accept "Mowgli" (that is how they nicknamed him) into the family. The young man felt their superiority, and that is why he suffered from the inferiority complex. However, D's main psychological feature was the inability to find his own gender identity, which destroyed him.

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In the beginning, the terrorists whom he cooperated with, killed his first wife at the Taj Mahal Hotel.

Subsequently, dressed in a female evening dress, in the garden, in front of Ria's girlfriend and other people, Dionysus committed suicide. He survived the peak of the crisis, lost the hope of finding himself in many identities imposed by a tolerant society.

Fate brought Petronius to Halloween party. There he died at the hands of psychopath Kinski, who, wearing Joker's mask shot the people from AR-15 during the Halloween celebration, which is symbolic.

Ill fate urged Apu to return home. He was tortured by the ghosts of the country he used to live in, his lost past. He wanted to pacify them and turn the darkness away from the Golden family. However, it did not work. In India, the Mumbai mafia, took revenge upon Nero by killing Apuleius and his girlfriend-sculptor.

Shortly, in the fire set in the Golden House by the "old friends" from the mafia, Nero Golden, an old and very exhausted man, and his young wife Vasilisa died.

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The woman managed to save her son. Vespasian, the "Golden Child" was her and Rene's son, although Nero considered him his own child until he discovered the truth.

The personality of Nero Golden as a Trickster is extrapolated in the novel to the political events in the US, since the character is the Joker's twin. He also embodies Trickster taking part in the presidential race, competing for the position with Batwoman superhero. The Joker resembles current US President Donald Trump. His name also means a playing card (trump), besides Trump is a showman, producer, TV presenter, connected with show production, masquerade and entertainment. He is also a mega-successful real estate businessman.

In the "Golden House" novel, the Joker represents chaos, sinister clown, the embodiment of demonic powers. The presidential race he participates in, from the author's point of view, reminds of a horrific phantasmagoria. The madman

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received support precisely because he was mentally disturbed, not despite this fact. Knowledge was equal to ignorance, top became bottom, and the man who was entrusted the codes from nuclear weapons – a green-haired, white-skinned laughingstock with a red mouth looking like a wound. The person who has asked the military commission for four times why is it so bad to launch nuclear weapons (Rushdie S., 2019) is coming to power. Reality turns into a comics, into an infernal joke, notions are substituted, acquiring the connotation of discrepancy and evil. Providentially, it approaches the world of George Orwell's dystopia "1984".

Finally, in 2016, the Joker won, became president, and American reality, according to the narrator, started to transform into a radical lies: platitude, hypocrisy, vulgarity, violence, paranoia.

The movie made in Rene's imagination was over. Together with his beloved girl Suchitra and little Vespa – the "magic child" whose guardian on the behalf of Nero Golden becomes a young man (an aspect of the Wiseman archetype and defender of the family represented in Trickster) the characters disappear in the "circle of life".

In real life, in terms of Donald Trump as an incumbent US President, the Trickster archetype exists beyond the literary text, not only in the cultural space, but also in the form of a hyperbolized socio-political media image. Donald Trump is associated with Trickster in a variety of research papers and media, pointing out his furious charisma, contradictory figure, and the energy of chaos embodied in this politician.

Thus in *The Baffler* magazine, he is compared to Loki, a Scandinavian god of rowdyism, pranks and deception, who is also the embodiment of Trickster. Trump is being accused of hatred of women, racism, involvement in crime etc. Trump is considered to accumulate the dark mental streams of Americans (Pein C., 2016).

American scientist Randy Fertel argues that Trump embodies an extremely dark version of the Union archetype. The scholar mentions tyranny, cognitive

dissonance in his management style and rhetoric that defies any logic. In his view, since Trump is a narcissist, he distorts the Hero's path. The Trickster archetype in him acquires destructive sense. He wants to assert himself, to turn the presidential traditions and norms upside down, to destroy the achievements of his predecessor (Fertel R., 2018). Trump-Trickster embodies the Dionysian origin, the Tias (Bacchanalia), and serves as the destroyer of culture (Fertel R., 2018).

Soon in 2019, the well-known showman, producer, actor, director of the comedy "Studio Quarter-95" Volodymyr Zelensky had joined the run for presidency together with the incumbent at that time president Petro Poroshenko and other candidates. Earlier, he had already "tried" himself as a head of state in the Ukrainian comedy series "Servant of the People" (2015 - 2018), playing the role of history teacher Vasyl Holoborodko, who became president of Ukraine. In real life, the cognominal political party "Servant of the People" supports V. Zelensky during the presidential race where the future politician wins over Petro Poroshenko. Supporters of Petro Poroshenko demonize his opponent, insisting that behind V. Zelensky there is a "shadow" of Ukrainian oligarch Igor Kolomoisky, blaming him for the lack of political experience and "pro-Russian" orientation. Nevertheless, the majority of the population did not feel any economic improvements within the state and blamed certain individuals from Petro Poroshenko's team for corruption. The electorate desired new faces in power, that is why Volodymyr Zelensky defeated the former President of Ukraine by a large margin – 73.22% against 24.45%. We should remind that the election campaign – 2019 looked like a show (debate on the stadium etc.). Therefore, the "signs" of television and other media were mixed. They formed a powerful burst of information collective energy and created reality.

Since V. Zelensky's professional activity prior to his presidency was connected with the show and comedy performance, taking into account his youth and lack of knowledge in political affairs (the child aspect of the archetype), the incumbent President of Ukraine is also associated with the Trickster archetype.

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Appointment of his colleagues from the “Studio Quarter – 95” – Serhiy Sivokho, Maxim Tkachenko, Serhiy Trofimov, Serhiy Shefir and others – to executive positions creates an effect of state power showization. The lack of experience in policymaking among government officials adds an element of chaos into the power exercising process. Contradictory policy regarding the situation in Donbas and relations with Russia, together with the failure to fulfill election promises made by the President and his team, have led to disappointment in certain share of voters.

According to a survey conducted in Kiev International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) from February 8 to February 18, 2020, V. Zelensky's ratings have significantly decreased. Only about 44.2% of those who have made their choice are now ready to vote for him (KIIS, 2020).

Against the background of global disappointment of Ukrainians connected with the lack of significant positive changes in the socio-economic sphere, the appearance of another Trickster in the domestic politicum in spring 2019 – a mysterious prankster named Joker, provoking and evil joking over deputies is considered to be a sinister counterpart of the acting power, the alter-ego of its general image.

To a scandalous head came Joker's disclosure of Bohdan Yaremenko, Mykola Tyshchenko and Alexandra Klitina. Prankster's hiding under a mask of a top official in order to obtain damaging information is a part of the show and fully fits into Trickster's characteristics.

From the very beginning, the Joker is within the view of many Ukrainian media, which at this time means even greater escalation of this collective unconscious archetype.

The echoes of Trickster's archetype influence on the image of the Joker, we can also observe in a rather aggressive advertisement of an international bookmaker's sports betting company. Famous Irish athlete Conor Anthony McGregor played a leading role in their commercial (The Telegraph. News, 2019). These advertisements can also be seen everywhere in the Kiev subway.

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Encouraging to play for money, offering bonuses for newcomers, the advertisers due to visual images, popular personalities and agitation appeals, try to create an illusory sense of courage, strength, and will to victory in the recipients. Particularly vulnerable to this manipulative influence are the poor segments of population and teenagers.

That is how the surrounding reality turns into a mad gambling and sinister delusion.

Pari-match had also offered to guess the number of “Oscar-2020” nominations which Todd Phillips’ movie “Joker” (2019) was expected to win (Parimatch, 2019).

Tragedy, exclusion, absurdity of existence, social injustice give rise to evil and madness, embodied in the character of the aforementioned psychological thriller – stand-up comic – loser Arthur Fleck (Joker) – the representation of already known Trickster archetype.

In the center of events is the imaginary city of Gotham, located on the edge of apocalypse. At the beginning of the movie, the media constantly broadcast news of the following content: “The city is full of garbage, it turns into a landfill”, “When we thought it couldn't be worse, the city was attacked by super rats”, “What is this world coming to?”

In Gotham, in slums, in awful conditions, along with his paralyzed mother lives Arthur Fleck, who dreams of becoming a famous comedian, but works as a clown-for-hire in a small company.

The hero’s life motto is: “Put on a happy face”, which he learned from childhood on the advice of his mother. However, Arthur is chronically unlucky in life, moreover, he has mental problems.

Falsity of the existential mismatch between the real and pretended existence creates a painful psychosomatic reaction in the hero – a compulsive syndrome – continuous uncontrollable outbursts of laughter. In such circumstances, it is

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evident that Arthur's stand-up jokes are not funny or understandable to the public. In the evenings, he watches TV together with his mother.

News broadcasted on the television, reported in the newspapers and TV shows are the main background of the film, which creates the illusion of reality showization.

Arthur's mother prefers watching TV shows with businessman and politician Thomas Wayne – one of the front-runners for the post of mayor in the election campaign. She once used to work for him. Every day the woman writes letters to him, hoping he will help the family get out of trouble but never receives any answer. Arthur's favorite is the talk show "Live". The show host is the famous comedian Murray Franklin – his idol. Franklin invites stand-up comedians to take part in his show. Arthur also wants to get there.

A tragic chain of events had turned Arthur's world upside down. One day, doing his job in a clown costume, he gets beaten up by a mob of teenagers. After that, a colleague presents Arthur with a weapon so he can now defend himself. However, while entertaining children at a hospital in a clown suit, his gun fell out of his pocket and frightened children. Arthur was fired after this incident. Whereas his colleague did not admit that this was his gift and made Arthur the scapegoat instead.

At the same time, the city cut off social services funding. Fleck had lost psychological support. When on a late-night subway ride Arthur, dressed in a clown suit, met three young drunken clerks who accosted a girl, he had a fit of compulsive laughter. Arthur's strange reaction provoked the aggression in young people. They attacked him, but Fleck had a weapon. Being frustrated, he shot them all.

This event resulted in a resonance in the city among the poor and marginalized people. The clown killer received surprising support. They were actively discussed in the media, especially after Thomas Wayne's speech defending the murdered clerks. He believed that support for the killer was provoked by the

envy of the disadvantaged people towards more successful ones. The first ones he called “clowns”.

Resentment and dissatisfaction with the living standard among Gotham population grew like a snowball. Numerous protests and riots took place in the city, causing closure of some enterprises. People took to the streets wearing masks of clowns, following the Clown from the subway. He became their hero. Thus, the destructive Trickster’s energy was consolidated, and even launched a new movement with the slogan “Eat the rich!”

In such situation, the hope that Thomas Wein’s pseudo-hero could save the city, was in vain. Wayne and Fleck are not only polar forces, but also twins according to the movie. In addition, Arthur’s mother considered Thomas Wayne to be his father.

Arthur Fleck, who felt like garbage (the garbage in the film is a symbolic connotation), for the first time in his life realized his significance in such bizarre circumstances. This inspired him to further crimes: the murder of a colleague who caused his firing and his mother, who was in a coma. Fleck learned that his mental problem was her fault. The woman was treated in the mental ward for delusional psychosis and narcissistic disorder. She got there because she and her cohabitants threatened the health and well-being of her adopted child – Arthur. The boy was found attached to a battery, exhausted, with a head injury.

At the end of the movie, the hero appeared on his dream show with Murray Franklin, where he called himself the Joker and confessed of killing the young people in the subway. He motivated the murder by the fact that they were terrible. Since when everyone around is horrible, it can drive anyone crazy. The TV show ended with a sinister and spectacular effect – the murder of Arthur Murray Franklin. In his opinion, the show host wanted to laugh at him. “What do you get when you cross a mentally ill loner with a society that abandons him and treats him like trash?” He asked Franklin. – “I’ll tell you what you get. You get what you deserve!”

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Fleck considered himself a fighter against Thomas Wayne, against a system that establishes moral laws and decides what is funny and what is not. Comedy is subjective – that is how Fleck thought. While the life of a loser comedian is a comedy as well, as he defined it. However, in such circumstances, his existence looked like an absurd comedy, which turned into a horror show. In this show, he became a leading villain actor who took revenge on people and the world for his own inferiority – a demonic figure.

Evil multiplied by the evil of dissatisfied citizens caused a terrific explosion of collective evil that spread through the city, turning Gotham City into an infernal bacchanalia – fires, fights, murders, outrages, crazy dancing among the ruins and fire.

Gotham City in the movie becomes a grotesque, hypertrophied nightmare invariant of a real world, reflecting its troubles and social problems.

**CONCLUSIONS.** Therefore, it should be noted that literary texts, cinema, mass media, interpenetrating into each other get feedback from information consumers. Influencing each other, they feed each other. Thus, modern reality is changing under this influence. Archetypes play a significant role in such process. The manifestations of the Trickster archetype in modern media culture are studied based on examples from various spheres of culture and real life. It is observed how the Trickster is represented in the collective unconscious of mankind. It is found that nowadays in the media space, due to the interaction between the media, the Internet, culture with its symbols and signs, as well as the realities of life surrounding the person, perceiving these codes and reproducing them, the Trickster archetype exists as a mega media image. Show, game, chaos, carnival have become integral attributes of life, affecting global and domestic media culture. Insecurity of the modern world, social crisis phenomena, and negative information flows have lead to the fact that reality is perceived by an individual as a hostile, sinister environment, being accumulated in the collective unconscious in the Trickster archetype, which acquires demonic features.

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## АРХЕТИП ТРИКСТЕРА В СУЧАСНІЙ МЕДІАКУЛЬТУРІ: ШОУЇЗАЦІЯ ТА ДЕМОНІЗМ

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### Анотація

Статтю присвячено дослідженню архетипа Трикстера в медіакультурі сьогодення. Увагу в статті зосереджено на окремих літературних текстах – надбаннях світової (С. Рушді «Золотий дім») й української словесності (В. Шкляр «Чорний Ворон»), кінофільмах («Джокер» (2019) Тодда Філіппса), персоналіях реального політика (Дональд Трамп, В. Зеленський, пранкер Джокер та ін.) тощо, завдяки яким архетип Трикстера став одним із ключових у сучасному світовому й українському медіапросторі і житті. Так, у романі «Залишенець. Чорний Ворон» В. Шкляра – постколоніальному втіленні травмованого російською експансією національного колективного несвідомого, у ролі Трикстера отаман-повстанець, захисник Холодного Яру, – Чорний Ворон. В іншому творі, «Золотий дім» С. Рушді, Трикстера уособлюють герої-двійники – магнат Нерон Голден і Джокер. Останній балотувався на виборах на пост американського президента та отримав посаду. Твір за поетикою вкладається у схему готичного роману. Обидва персонажі – готичні злодії, що демонструють «тіньовий» бік архетипа Трикстера. Образ Джокера тут тісно переплетений з американською реальністю у форматі кіно і шоу, де функція архетипу Трикстера присвоєна американському президенту Дональду Трампу, постать якого теж демонізується. В Україні функцію Трикстера бере на себе Президент України Володимир Зеленський – комедійний актор і шоумен у супроводі колег по цеху зі «Студії Квартал – 95». Атмосфера шоу овіює національну політику, життя та медіапростір. Негації нової влади віддзеркалюються у зловісних жартах над депутатами пранкера Джокера. Загальні світові тенденції до ескалації інфернальної сили архетипу Трикстера, пов'язані з мотивами абсурду, моторошного карнавалу і божевільням, втілені у фільмі «Джокер» (2019), головний герой якого Артур Флек теж уособлює Трикстера. Тож у сучасному медіапросторі спостерігається взаємопроникнення семіотичних кодів ЗМІ, Інтернету, культури і реального життя. Особистість сприймає і відтворює ці знаки. Архетип Трикстера перетворився на мега медіаобраз в колективному несвідомому. Він сфокусував мотиви шоу та гри, набув демонічних рис на фоні дегуманізації людства і соціально-політичних негараздів.

**Ключові слова:** медіакультура, архетип, Трикстер, колективне несвідоме, шоуїзація, демонізм.

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