

TYOLOGY OF FEMALE PSYCHOLINGUISTIC ARCHETYPES IN MARVEL CINEMATIC UNIVERSE

ТИПОЛОГІЯ ЖІНОЧИХ ПСИХОЛІНГВІСТИЧНИХ АРХЕТИПІВ У КІНЕМАТОГРАФІЧНОМУ ВСЕСВІТІ MARVEL

Berezhna M.V.,

orcid.org/0000-0002-3345-256X

Candidate of Philological Sciences,

Associate Professor at the Department of English Translation Theory and Practice
Zaporizhzhia National University

The article proposes a typology of female psycholinguistic archetypes in English-language mass culture films of the 21st century. The study investigates twenty-seven interconnected films of the *Marvel Cinematic Universe* franchise. The typology is based on C. Jung's idea of an archetype being a recurring image of the collective unconscious, characteristic for different people, regardless of their culture and language. The paper revises post-Jungian archetype typologies, and indicates their common and individual features. The classification of 45 master archetypes, created for the analysis of fiction stories and films by V. Schmidt, serves as the basis for the present study. The Schmidt's typology is compatible with A. Maslow's classification of human needs. Each archetype performs a certain function in the plot and possesses a set of motivations that determine the characters' behavior, their psycholinguistic archetype and, accordingly, the image. The eight basic archetypes are presented in binary 'protagonist / antagonist' forms. Antagonists are defined (according to A. Maslow's idea) as heroines, whose basic needs have not been met, which prompts the characters to achieve their goals at any cost, violating generally accepted norms and rules. Each archetype has its individual set of narratives.

In average, female characters in the *MCU* have a ratio of 1:2 / 1:3 to male characters, depending on the film. The Nurturer, the Matriarch, and the Father's Daughter archetypes frequently feature in the *Marvel Cinematic Universe* films. The archetypes self-actualize in the plot through connection with male characters; they support, care for, and unite with male (super)heroes, looking for male approval. However, the number of leading female characters is considerably lower; out of twenty-seven studied films, only two depict adventures of the title female heroines (*Captain Marvel* and *Black Widow*). *Captain Marvel* belongs to the Mystic archetype, characterized by the search for oneself and a connection with the supernatural, interested in the mastery and development of her powers. *Natasha Romanov* embodies the Seductive Muse archetype in the previous films of the franchise, but in her solo film, she switches to the Nurturer archetype.

Key words: psycholinguistic archetype, psycholinguistic image, typology of archetypes, narrative, *Marvel Cinematic Universe*.

У статті запропоновано типологію жіночих психолінгвістичних архетипів в англійськомовних фільмах масової культури XXI сторіччя. Дослідження проведене на матеріалі двадцяти семи взаємопов'язаних фільмів франшизи *Marvel Cinematic Universe*. В основу типології покладено ідею К. Юнга про архетип, як повторюваний образ колективного несвідомого, характерний для людства в цілому незалежно від культури та мови. Наведено типології архетипів, створених авторами різних галузей науки на основі ідеї Юнга; виокремлено їх спільні та індивідуальні риси. В результаті, для дослідження обрано класифікацію архетипів В. Шмідт, створену для аналізу творів художньої літератури та кінофільмів. Вважаємо, що обрана типологія сумісна з класифікацією людських потреб А. Маслоу, а кожному архетипу відповідає певна функція у сюжеті та набір мотивацій, які визначають особливості поведінки персонажів, їх психолінгвістичний архетип і відповідно образ. Вісім базових архетипів представлені у бінарних формах "протагоністка – антагоністка". Антагоністки визначаються у розумінні А. Маслоу, як героїні, базові потреби яких не були задоволені, що спонукає персонажів досягати бажаного, порушуючи загальноприйняті норми та правила. Кожному архетипу відповідає свій набір наративів.

В цілому, жіночі персонажі у *MCU* співвідносяться з чоловічими у пропорції 1:2 / 1:3 у залежності від фільму. Визначено, що для кіновсесвіту «Марвел» частотними є такі жіночі архетипи: «Годувальниця» (*the Nurturer*), «Матріарх» (*the Matriarch*), «Батькова донька» (*the Father's Daughter*). Вони самореалізуються у сюжеті через зв'язок з чоловічими персонажами (піклування, підтримку, союз) та шукають чоловічого схвалення. Втім, кількість головних жіночих персонажів має набагато нижчі показники: з двадцяти семи досліджуваних фільмів тільки два присвячені титульним жіночим персонажам (*Captain Marvel* та *Black Widow*). Капітан Марвел належить до архетипу «Містик» (*the Mystic*), для персонажів якого характерним є пошук себе, опанування і розвиток власних сил і здібностей, зв'язок з надприродним. Наташа Романов в попередніх фільмах франшизи втілює архетип «Спокуслива муза» (*the Seductive Muse*), але у титульному фільмі переходить до архетипу «Годувальниця» (*the Nurturer*).

Ключові слова: психолінгвістичний архетип, психолінгвістичний образ, типологія архетипів, наратив, *Marvel Cinematic Universe*.

Problem statement. Modern mainstream cinema typically employs archetypes – repetitive, easily recognizable prototypical characters – in their plot stories. The concept of the archetype may provide

important explanations of how people respond to other people, story characters, and media [1, p. 307]. Various authors have proposed their classifications of mass media archetypes, focusing on the characters'

psychological characteristics. However, there has been no attempt to compose a typology of psycholinguistic archetypes to account for common narratives and linguistic elements in the speech of characters. The present paper focuses on the comparative analysis of various typologies of archetypes, basing on the motivation analysis for the characters' prospective (verbal) behavior. Cinema is considered as a means to reflect the present day society with its behavioral norms. The *Marvel Cinematic Universe* as the most popular and recognizable franchise in the cinematic world presents archetypes equally understood in different cultures throughout the globe. It also clearly presents the shift in the representation and perception of female characters by the wide public. Since 2008, when *Iron Man* (the first film of the franchise) was released, many changes have occurred. Female characters have often been confined to supporting roles, thus leaving them with a primitive arch to develop or no journey at all. In other cases, they have been represented as tropes or means for the development of a male character. They also have been regarded as having the same journey as male characters (and looking beautiful to appeal to the male gaze). Consequently, they have been lacking attention or discarded as undeserving research.

Literature review. Reflecting on the idea of archetypes of the collective unconscious, Jung indicates, "it was manifestly not a question of inherited ideas, but of an inborn disposition to produce parallel thought-formations, or rather of identical psychic structures common to all men" [2, p. 158]. Jung described only a few archetypes systematically, regarding them as "fundamentally unobservable". Among the archetypes Jung proposed are the hero, the mother, the child, God, death, power, and the wise old man. Later his notion of repetitive images frequenting different culture tales irrespective of the region, time, or language have found multiple interpretations in typologies of archetypes by authors from different fields, including literary studies.

Jung [3], Campbell [4], Hall & Lindzey [5], McAdams [6], Mark and Pearson [7], among others developed such generalized images as the Caregiver, the Creator, the Every Guy / Girl, the Explorer, the Hero, the Innocent, the Jester, the Lover, the Magician, the Outlaw, the Ruler, the Sage, and the Shadow (see further Faber & Mayer [1]). They represent respectively caring, innovation, ordinariness, discovery, courage, naivety, playfulness, passion, transformation, rebellion, power, wisdom, and darkness. Thus, any behavior is motivated by the person's goals, needs, and values. A particular set of motivations defines an archetype. Baumeister & Leary

note, "the motive literature has been dominated by research on the needs for power, achievement, intimacy, approval, and, to a lesser extent, affiliation" [8, p. 498]. From the three universal human requirements (needs of individuals as biological organisms, requisites of coordinated social interaction, and survival and welfare needs of groups) Schwartz derives eleven motivational types of values: self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, spirituality, benevolence, and universalism [9]. O'Connor & Yballe note, "these "being-values" are simple yet difficult to fully embody in the everyday challenges of life – for example, truth, justice, goodness, beauty, order, simplicity, and meaning or purposefulness" [10, p. 742].

Maslow postulates the existence of lower (deficiency) and higher (growth) needs. Lower needs include physiological needs (food, shelter, sleep, and reproduction), safety needs, needs for belonging and sexual/romantic love, needs for esteem and self-esteem. Higher needs ("being needs") are the needs for self-actualization [11; 12]. In practice, needs are experienced – satisfied or denied, obsessed over or ignored – in a dynamic way... individuals often seek satisfaction on multiple levels simultaneously [13, p. 184]. Therefore, it brings us to the conclusion that a particular combination of needs or motivations guides a certain archetype. Some needs might be temporary or occasional to account for the character's individual peculiarities, but several motivations stay constant to define the archetype.

Schmidt [14] proposes a typology of 45 master archetypes, including eight protagonist and eight antagonist female archetypes, to define leading characters in fiction. She bases her classification on mythology, thus underlining the ever-lasting nature of the archetypes and their duality. Each archetype is represented in the protagonist and antagonist form: Aphrodite (the Seductive Muse / the Femme Fatale), Artemis (the Amazon / the Gorgon), Athena (the Father's Daughter / the Backstabber), Demeter (the Nurturer / the Overcontrolling Mother), Hera (the Matriarch / the Scorned Woman), Hestia (the Mystic / the Betrayer), Isis (the Female Messiah / the Destroyer), and Persephone (the Maiden / the Troubled Teen).

McAdams [15] defines three layers of personality – 1) personal traits, 2) motivations, goals, values, and 3) narratives, which come as the result of the combination of personal traits and motivations. Narrative inquiry can be an approach that is most relevant to understanding the experiences, actions, motivations, and life journeys of people who are challenged by health, disability, trauma, change,

adaptation, loss, or other significant life challenge [16, p. 865]. Fiction characters are depicted as having extreme experiences in life, which makes them model cases for psycholinguistic investigation. Thus, motivations and narratives are the primal means to define the character's psycholinguistic image and archetype. In the conclusions of the present article, the correlation between the archetype and the character's motivations and narratives is summarized.

The aim of the paper is to propose a classification of female psycholinguistic archetypes frequenting mainstream cinema. The material for investigation consists of twenty-seven interrelated films of the *Marvel Cinematic Universe* franchise. The present paper is a part of a comprehensive research on female psycholinguistic archetypes.

Main findings. In general, female characters in the *MCU* franchise have a ratio of 1:2 / 1:3 to male characters, depending on the film. However, the number of leading female characters is considerably lower: out of twenty-seven studied films, only two are dedicated to adventures of the title female characters (*Captain Marvel* and *Black Widow*) and one to a male and female character (*Ant-Man and The Wasp*). *Captain Marvel* represents the Mystic archetype, as she needs to master her superpowers and reconcile with herself and her past. Natasha Romanoff is the Seductive Muse (for friends) / Femme Fatale (for enemies) in the majority of *MCU* films; in her solo film, however, she represents the Nurturer archetype. The remaining twenty-four films depict the adventures of male protagonists (Iron Man, Captain America, Thor, Spider-Man, Ant-Man, and Doctor Strange) or a group of protagonists consisting predominantly of male characters (*Avengers* and *Guardians of the Galaxy*).

The function of female characters in the majority of the films confines women to the Nurturer, the Matriarch, or the Lover archetypes. The Nurturers are mothers and wives/girlfriends whose role is to care for the (super)hero: Maria Stark (Tony Stark's mother), Frigga (Thor's mother), Christine Palmer (Dr. Strange's ex-girlfriend), Melina (Natasha's adopted mother), Lora (Hawkeye's wife), Meredith (Peter Quill's mother), Gamora (Peter Quill's girlfriend), Ramonda (mother of T'Challa and Shuri). The Matriarchs are usually strong women who are supposed to stand behind strong men [17]: Peggy Carter (for Captain America), Pepper Potts (for Tony Stark), Nakia (for Black Panther) and Jane Foster (for Thor). The Lover is a supporting archetype, representing the hero's love interest (Peter Parker's girlfriend) and being a mere trope to develop the male character's arch.

Another female archetype, often linked with male characters, is the Father's Daughter [14]. She looks for appreciation and often self-actualizes through her connection with men: Nebula and Mantis (in *Guardians of the Galaxy*, *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2*, *Avengers: Infinity War* and *Avengers: Endgame*). However, the Father's Daughters can also strive for connection with a powerful female character. In the case of Yelena Belova (*Black Widow*) and Maria Rambeau (*Captain Marvel*), they want to belong with the adopted family, primarily focusing on Natasha and Carol respectively as the main heroines of the story.

Black Panther (2017) and *Thor: Love and Thunder* (2022) demonstrate a significant shift of female roles in film narratives. *Black Panther* features a comparatively significant number of diverse female characters. There are not only traditional roles like mother (Ramona) or girlfriend (Nakia), but also a younger sister and technical genius, the Maiden archetype (Shuri) and the royal guard's general, protecting the king and leading her army in a battle, the Amazon archetype (Okoye). Valkyrie, who has come a long way from the Troubled Teen in *Thor: Ragnarok* to the Matriarch in *Thor: Love and Thunder*, is nominated as the king for her skills and abilities, not for being married to a powerful man. Jane Foster becomes the Mighty Thor (a combination of the Female Messiah and the Amazon archetype) to save the world and fight the evil.

Clearly, there slowly appears a tendency to demonstrate women as strong, dangerous villains, equals to male protagonists. It changes the stereotypical patriarchal confinements of female characters to mothers, wives, and girlfriends. A realistic villain has motives that are understandable and relatable... This means there are parts of the villain that may take control from time to time and have their own motivations. They may want to be loved, or to be safe, or to prevent the loss of something they care about – and the part of them that feels those things believes the way to do this is to gain power and influence and manipulation. A villain with an internal conflict is an interesting character [18, p. 22]. *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017) and *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* (2022) are the two films with a leading female villain (Hela and Wanda, respectively). Hela embodies the Destroyer archetype [19]; Wanda impersonates the Betrayer archetype.

Other female villains are secondary or supporting. In *Iron Man 3* (2013), Maya Hansen is the Backstabber and Ellen Brandt is the Betrayer. In *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014), Nebula is the Backstabber. In *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2* (2017), Ayesha is

the Gorgon [20]. In *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015), Wanda Maximoff is the Betrayer. In *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018) and *Avengers: Endgame* (2018), Proxima Midnight is the Gorgon archetype. In *Captain Marvel* (2019), the Supreme Intelligence is a supercomputer summoning the form of the late Mar-Vell to Captain Marvel; she represents the Overcontrolling Mother archetype. In *Black Widow* (2021), all the black widows and Antonia Taskmaster Dreykov represent the Gorgon archetype. The Betrayer and the Backstabber archetypes demonstrate women stereotypically as being traitorous and disloyal, while a high number in the Gorgon archetype (the protagonist embodiment of which is the comparatively low in numbers Amazon) demonstrate negative perception of the archetype.

In *Captain America: The First Avenger* (2011), Lorraine is a mere trope, a representation of the Femme Fatale archetype attempting to seduce Steve Rogers. In *Ant-Man* (2015), Lang's former wife Maggie is not a villain, but an antagonist representing the Scorned Woman archetype. In the same film, Hope van Dyne first opposes Lang, representing the Backstabber archetype, later she resolves her old traumatic misunderstanding with her father and befriends Lang, shifting to the Father's Daughter archetype. In *Doctor Strange* (2016), the Ancient One is a complicated character with dubious morale; thus her main archetype is the heroic Female Messiah, while her secondary archetype shifts from the Mystic to the Betrayer and back.

The following films have no female villain: *Iron Man 1* (2008), *The Incredible Hulk* (2008), *Iron Man 2* (2010), *Thor* (2011), *The Avengers* (2012), *Thor: The Dark World* (2013), *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* (2014), *Captain America: Civil War* (2016), *Black Panther* (2018), *Spider-Man: Homecoming* (2017), *Spider-Man: Far From Home* (2019), *Spider-Man: No Way Home* (2021), and *Thor: Love and Thunder* (2022).

Several female characters are allowed to have their individual journey. Maslow postulates that one of the ways to self-actualizing and internal growth (which in my opinion often corresponds with a character's journey in a fiction story) is to find "something to admire, to sacrifice" oneself for, "to surrender to, to die for" [21, p. 42]. Usually, it coincides with a transcendence experience for the character, either

enforcing or changing the archetype (or its valence). Tragic losses or other serious changes in the character's life cause a drastic change in the heroine's arch and archetype. Sometimes only valence changes and the character shifts from villain to hero (redemption story) or from hero to villain (contamination story). In rare occasions, the archetype changes altogether. For instance, it occurs to Natasha Romanoff when she shifts from the Seductive Muse / Femme Fatale archetype into the Nurturer. She stops searching for romantic love, having accepted the idea that family is an unattainable perspective for her. Instead, she concentrates on taking care of her friends, thus replacing the need for romantic love with the need for motherly affection. Her Nurturer's ultimate transcendence experience occurs when she sacrifices herself during the Avengers' mission to bring back half of all living creatures, snapped away by Thanos.

Conclusion. Each archetype has a function to perform or a goal to pursue. Aphrodite is connected with romantic/sexual love; she searches for it or wields it like a weapon. Her narratives are those of love, sex, seduction, female power over males. Artemis needs to fight irrespective of the fairness or reasons of the battle. She cares about truth, justice, equality, (self-)esteem, and achievement. Athena strives to belong with some group, to be appreciated. Her themes are those of belongingness, camaraderie, acceptance, dependence, and recognition. Demeter's goal is to take care of someone; it varies from mothering to smothering. She turns to the topics of nutrition, comfort, safety, protection and reassurance, dependence, stability, love, and affection. Hera's life goal is to rule and govern. She is anything from a loyal wife to a ruthless dictator. Her narratives are those on order, (self-)esteem, achievement, respect, obedience, hierarchy, tradition, and structure. Hestia strives for self-development, focusing on self-actualization, self-fulfillment, connection to the divine, elements, mysticism, inner powers or talents, knowledge, balance, and solitude. Isis is a mentor; she enlightens others and (supposedly) leads them to the greater good. Her narratives are those of meaning, salvation, knowledge, sacrifice, growth, and development. Persephone needs to have fun and grow. Her themes are those of joy, wonder, (self)discovery, safety, protection, knowledge, acceptance, and support.

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