PERAET 2021
International Scientific Conference «PERISHABLE AND ETERNAL: Mythologies and Social Technologies of Digital Civilization-2021»

THE TRICKSTER AS AN ARCHETYPE IN THE DIGITAL MEDIA SPACE

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Abstract

Trickster is one of the key mythologems in the history of humanity, it's the universal archetypal pattern, which is connecting the features of a cultural hero and a clown-provocateur, a "creative idiot", a cheat and a fool in a paradoxic way. Tricksterization is a key trend of modern media space and social life. Theatricalization and carnivalization of the culture, post-truth in politics, the mass distribution of fake news, pre-election informational wars, the updating of autistic, comic and marginal principles, the profanation of the sacred and the sublime are manifestations of the tricksterization in media space. The trickster in politics and media is distinguished with its "metanormal behavior", a manifestation of the game principle, that helps him to start pressing questions, to undermine ideologies, and to cause heated debates in society. The talk will show how digitalization and the development of gaming technologies are transforming the trickster archetype into a highly demanded model of the media persona. To loudly declare oneself to a character who was not known to anyone yesterday is easiest with the help of a scandal, which is what many bloggers, account owners, but far from only count on. The square figure of the trickster is cheered by the crowd today. There are also two sides to her ambivalence - shadowy, cynical, mocking, destructive, turning everything into chaos, and the other - creative, innovative, driving life and art forward. This internal dichotomy contradicts stagnation and is therefore relevant.

Keywords: Carnivalization, fake news, Jungian archetype, post-truth, trickster

1. Introduction

The digitalization of communication processes has dramatically changed the situation in the media sphere. An increasing place in the information field of digital media is occupied by a virtual personality, an ordinary user turns into a communicator, seeks to create an informational occasion. An example is set by politicians, bloggers, showmen, journalists who use, for example, *Twitter* or *Facebook* as the most important information channel. Private comments become an event, a topic of the day, generate information noise. To loudly declare oneself to a character who was not known to anyone yesterday is easiest with the help of a scandal, which is what many account owners are counting on, but not only they.

Scandalous, abusive behavior, undermining of foundations, violation of boundaries and prohibitions is not an invention of our time. It was formed in ancient times and was described by scientists as behavior characteristic of the archetypal model of the Trickster.

The Trickster is one of the key mythologemes in the history of mankind, a universal archetypal image, paradoxically combining the features of a cultural hero and a jester-provocateur, a "creative idiot", a clown, a jester, a rogue, a fool.

The defining features of trickster behavior in ancient times were ambivalence, a laughing beginning, resourcefulness, cunning, a tendency to pranks and trickery, liminality, proteism, hypersexuality, exorbitant appetite, enantiodromia - transformation into its opposite, connection with the sacred, obscene bricolage (Jack of all trades). In the modern world, the signs of the trickster are the destruction of established foundations and traditions, the introduction of chaos into order, mediation between worlds and social groups, the initiation of sociocultural action, anti-normativity, immorality from the point of view of the ethics of a cultural hero; shape-shifting, "schizophrenic language", wandering (nomadology), sexualization of thinking, provocativeness (Lipovetsky, 2020).

Theatricalization and carnivalization of culture, characteristic of postmodern culture, double standards in politics, post-truth, mass distribution of fake news, informational pre-election wars, actualization of the autistic, comic and marginal principles, profanation of the sacred and the sublime, become manifestations of the tricksterization of the media space. The trickster in politics and the media is distinguished by "metanormative behavior", a manifestation of the playful principle. His actions combine conformism and deviation (Kurowska & Reshetnikov, 2020).

2. Problem Statement

Today, the media person (*homo mediatus*) - a new anthropological type of social subject that manifests itself in mass communication - often has the features of *homo ludens* (playing person), which are enhanced under the influence of global social, cultural, psychological and technological changes. A mediatrickster is a person who, with his provocative behavior and ambiguous statements, raises deep topical issues, undermines ideologies, causes heated debates in society, using mainly media communication and the latest technologies.

A mediatrickster can appear in the media on his/her own, or consciously provoke their reaction, performatively demonstrating his/her position in the field of their visibility. Mediatricksters can be politicians, journalists and bloggers, contemporary artists, writers, entertainers and showmen.

The actualization of the Trickster archetype in culture and science in recent decades is evidenced by some statistical data. According to the JSTOR (n.d.) digital database, 19 thousand articles in authoritative foreign scientific journals, as well as more than 10.3 thousand chapters of monographs, contain the concept of "trickster". According to the ProQuest Dissertations & Theses (n.d.) database, the problem of trickster is touched upon abroad in more than 600 dissertations and theses.

An attempt has been made on the Internet to create an online dictionary of tricksters, which has absorbed information about almost a hundred tricksters from myths, literature, and art.

3. Research Questions

The main task of this article is to answer the question why the tricksterization of the media space is becoming a key trend of our time and in what forms it manifests itself in modern politics, journalism, art and public life in general.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify patterns and elements of trickster behavior in the modern media space, as well as to expose the techniques of unscrupulous populists and propagandists.

The article is also aimed at revealing the motives and values that underlie the violation of generally accepted norms, and those mechanisms of the myth at the unconscious level that allow the trickster to enjoy the constant loyalty of the crowd, collect countless "likes" on social networks and achieve results where other means do not work.

5. Research Methods

In modern science, there is a whole group of research methods of the Trickster archetype, both on the material of ancient cultures and in modern forms of ideology and humanitarian knowledge (Szyjewski, 2020): anthropological, psychoanalytic, structuralist, semiotic, hermeneutic, sociological and feminist approaches, grotesque carnival view, political science view and others.

The broadest generalization of a number of ideas of venerable scientists was made by Jung (1997), who, in particular, revealed the presence of the "ghost of the trickster" [...] "in mythologies of all times" [...] the trickster "is a "psychologeme", extremely ancient archetypal psychological structure (p. 343). In its most distinct manifestations, it appears as a faithful reflection of an absolutely undifferentiated human consciousness, corresponding to a soul that has barely risen above the level of an animal.

The trickster is "simultaneously superman and subhuman, animal and divine being" (Radin, 1999, p. 347). It is a reflection of the undifferentiated human consciousness, barely torn away from the animal world, a cast of earlier, unconscious states of the psyche. Their presence testifies to the evolution of consciousness, which from now on is able to comprehend the lower stages of its development. Laughter, which always accompanies trickster deeds, is a form of skepticism of a more developed consciousness. This is laughter, including at yourself.

Jung (1997) explains the vitality and indestructibility of trickster models in culture by their origin: "The trickster is a collective image of the shadow, the totality of all the lower character traits in people"

(p. 354). "As soon as people gather in large groups, which leads to the suppression of individuality, the shadow starts to move and, as history shows, can even be personified and find its embodiment" (Jung, 1997, p. 351). In the same work, Jung explains in detail how in the modern world there is a resurrection of trickster models in the individual consciousness, which in ordinary circumstances overcomes the "enchantment with evil." But "darkness and evil did not turn into smoke, simply, having lost their energy, they went into the unconscious, where they remain as long as the consciousness is all right." But if the consciousness finds itself "in a critical or doubtful situation", then the Shadow resurrects and waits only for the opportunity "to appear in the form of a projection onto a neighbor. If the joke and the deception succeed, "between people is instantly created that world of primordial darkness, where everything that is characteristic of a trickster can happen". The scientist finds the best examples of such pranks in "politics" (Jung, 1997, p. 350).

6. Findings

6.1. Politics

Trickster features were inherent to one degree or another in such historical figures as Stepan Razin, Emelyan Pugachev, Ivan the Terrible, Grigory Rasputin, Vladimir Lenin (Nabokova, 2017).

Today, trickster principles are becoming the basis for the concept of government, especially states that claim the role of cultural heroes - world hegemons or regional leaders who push for democratization, rapprochement with the "people" bypassing cultural elites. Baghdasaryan (2008) writes:

The carnival inversion of modern times has led to the tricksterization of power. Previously, politicians were priests and knights. Now they are becoming charlatans. Persons who do not have trickster qualities are rejected by the modern political system. [...] Political regimes evolved from theocracy towards tricksterocracy. (p. 81)

Here we can talk about tricksterocracy - a phenomenon much broader than plutocracy: we are talking about the concentration of powerful political, economic, cultural and symbolic capital in the hands of tricksters, the domination of tricksters at the level of political institutions, economic flows, in the sphere of culture.

A significant part of modern political leaders in the past were showmen. Today they use show business techniques and elements of scandal in their election campaigns and activities in key positions in the state. Few people avoid vocabulary in their speeches, which was traditionally considered to be marketplace. "It's reasonable to argue that jokes are beneficial to public welfare as a normal part of social interaction - jokes are a healthy coping mechanism. Bans on everyday humor create rather than prevent stress. Such a policy is doomed to failure," writes the correspondent for the daily left-liberal English newspaper *The Guardian*.

In real politics, there are many examples of media tricksters that journalists point to. For example, Donald Trump constantly used trickster strategies in his election campaign, calling his opponent "Crooked Hillary Clinton", and continued to exploit the aggressive and brutal trickster style of behavior as President (Chernenko, 2019). More than 70% of Donald Trump's statements during the election

campaign were assessed by the Politifact project as lies or distortion of facts. Nevertheless, according to public opinion polls, Trump was considered more honest and trustworthy than his opponent, Hillary Clinton. The popularity of the use of the term "post-truth" in relation to politics is connected with his presidency.

An illustrative example of Trump's metanormative behavior was the refusal of the US President to participate in events in Poland in connection with the 80th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II and his interview with *Newsweek,* in which he conveyed "congratulations" to the Polish people without noticing the meaning of this tragic date for the whole of Europe.

In the 2020 presidential campaign in the United States, lost by Trump, all previous traditions were turned upside down. The bipartisan contenders focused on denouncing and belittling the identities of their opponents. Perhaps the incumbent President of the United States has never been subjected to such attacks and direct persecution as was the case with Donald Trump. He became the hero of numerous Political Cartoons. Cartoonist Rob Rogers accused Trump of burying truth, honor, rule of law, compared him to the "scarecrow" of Democrats, Korean Kim Jong-il.

Since the victory of the 45th President of the United States, the ruling elite have stood in opposition to the victorious Republican who bypassed the Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. On the side of Clinton then came the owners of media holdings, computer bosses and Hollywood stars. Almost the majority of media people spoke out against Trump, created parodies of the President, poisoned him on social networks, and then simply blocked the accounts of the incumbent President. In the US Congress, an investigation was conducted on the "Russian trace" in Trump's election campaign, and nothing was found as a result. The final act of the high-profile presidency was the storming of the Capitol by a motley crowd of Trumpists, led by a made-up actor with a naked torso and a horned helmet.

Trickster types also take place in Ukrainian politics: Viktor Yushchenko, especially after the alleged poisoning, Viktor Yanukovych - "the president in exile", Petro Poroshenko, Volodymyr Zelensky, who, before being elected president, was widely known as a comedian, producer and screenwriter. At least during the reign of the first three, the corrupt behavior model, conditioned by the state of consciousness and the creative principle of the trickster game, was most clearly manifested.

6.2. Journalism

A striking example of mediatrickstering is the morally and consequentially ambiguous satirical journalism of the French weekly Charlie Hebdo. The magazine publishes non-conformist cartoons, reports, discussions and anecdotes. The editorial board takes secular, democratic, atheistic and leftist positions, ridiculing politicians, the ultra-right, Islam and Christianity. After the memorable terrorist attack, the editorial office at Charlie Hebdo abandoned cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad.

Another example is prank journalism. Vladimir Kuznetsov and Alexey Stolyarov, known to the public as Vovan and Lexus, call themselves the founders of prank journalism - a symbiosis of prank calls and socially significant investigations. They are playing tricks on the phone of famous people, including major politicians: Recep Erdogan, Petro Poroshenko, Boris Berezovsky, Mikhail Gorbachev, Elton John, John McCain, in order to get the necessary socially significant information from them. In their latest trick, Vovan and Lexus, on behalf of V. Zelensky, played a prank on French President Emmanuel Macron, who

in this telephone conversation approved the idea of rapprochement between Ukraine and Russia and the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Some journalists and broadcasters use trolling, irony and banter to show the ignorance of their famous guests, highlight their ignorance of significant issues and undermine their claims to power, the status of standards and opinion leaders.

In 2020, Rep. Jason Spencer, member of the Georgia House of Representatives, was forced to resign after appearing on the satirical television show *Who Is America*? In this show, on the instructions of comedian Sasha Baron Cohen, he shouted the politically incorrect word "nigga" and ran with his bare bottom. Sacha Baron Cohen hosted the show as Colonel Mossad, without revealing his real identity. He spoke with Spencer about possible ways to counter terrorism and convinced him that bare butt could scare terrorists who are allegedly afraid of any manifestation of homosexuality.

Sports commentator Dmitry Guberniev ridiculed the conceit of the singer Olga Buzova, who criticized the football players on Match TV. During the dialogue, he unexpectedly asked her the question "Have you stopped drinking cognac in the morning?" from Astrid Lindgren's story about Carlson and thus brought the previously self-confident artist to hysteria and tears.

Journalist Ksenia Sobchak ridiculed the political ambitions of the ex-soloist of the group *Tatu* Yulia Volkova, who is running for deputy. In an interview for the documentary, Sobchak asked Volkova what she thinks about the so-called "Dima Yakovlev's law" prohibiting foreigners from adopting children from Russia. Volkova did not know anything about the law, and Sobchak with a serious air distorted its essence, as if it was a law prohibiting children from playing football next to the roadway. Volkova succumbed to the trick and agreed with the journalist that such a law is fair. Ignorance of the legislative framework and information agenda presented the aspiring politician in a negative light in front of TV viewers and potential voters.

6.3. Culture and Art

Cinematography shows an incredible interest in antiheroes and tricksters. The Scandinavian god of deception Loki appears in many Marvel Cinematic Universe films, where he appears as a mockingbird, a rogue, a villain (Bassil-Morozow, 2017). These are such films as *Thor* (2011), *The Avengers* (2012), *Thor 2: The Kingdom of Darkness* (2013), *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017), *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018) and *Avengers: Endgame* (2019), as well as the series *Loki* (2021).

Another striking example is the Oscar-winning film *Joker* (2019), which focuses on the transformation of a loser clown into a mad killer (Kutovaia & Mikhailovskaya, 2020; Skryabin, 2021). In the satirical comedies *Borat* (2006), *Bruno* (2009), *Dictator* (2012), *Borat 2* (2020), the main characters performed by actor Sasha Baron Cohen are fools and freaks. Without knowing it, they ridicule prejudices and reveal various expressions that are recognized as not tolerant, discriminatory, hostile to minorities.

In the black comedies *Deadpool* (2016) and *Deadpool 2* (2018), the protagonist constantly jokes obscenely, parodies noble superheroes, disguises himself as a woman, communicates ironically with the audience on the other side of the screen, destroying the "fourth wall" (Moss, 2016). Charming, half-insane trickster girls appear in *Suicide Squad* (2016), *Suicide Squad: Mission Bash* (2021), *Birds of Prey: The Fantastic Story of Harley Quinn* (2020), *Cruella* (2021).

Writers Venedikt Erofeev, Yuz Aleshkovsky, Vladimir Sorokin, poet and artist Dmitry Prigov, artist Oleg Kulik, Dmitry Nagiyev, Nikolai Fomenko, directors Konstantin Bogomolov, Dmitry Chernikov and others quite consciously choose trickster models of behavior and creativity. The trickster role was used by writers E. Limonov and G. Grass (Kuznetsov, 2019).

The feminist actions that attract the most attention are the actions of women-tricksters, characterized by their outrageousness, often have a well-thought-out philosophical and cultural-historical basis, for example, performances by the *Pussy Riot* group. On the other hand, performances of the group *Femen* are often aggressive and profane.

In myths, male tricksters often change sex and give birth (remember Loki and Wakjunkagu), the heroes of rogue novels also occasionally dress up as women (Simplicissimus). In modern media myths, this trend has found a new breath. Today, playing with gender is one of the outrageous creative strategies of bloggers, musicians and artists to attract attention. So, the shocking singer Lady Gaga, who proclaimed herself the Mother of Monsters, came to the MTV VMA ceremony in the form of a man (her alter ego) and even used the men's toilet. Rapper Morgenstern in 2020 was awarded the "Woman of the Year" award from one of the fashion magazines and went out to receive her in a woman's outfit. The rapper explained his provocation with a love of fun.

Blogger and singer Danya Milokhin regularly dresses in women's dresses in comic videos on her social networks. He came to the Muz-TV award in 2021 in an androgynous image: the left part of his attire was a dress, and the right part was a man's suit. Tricksters often use their bodies for tricks, and in a grotesque way. Loki in myths tied his scrotum to the beard of a goat in order to amuse the Scandinavian Nesmeyana - the goddess Skadi. Contemporary artist Pyotr Pavlensky nailed his scrotum to the paving stones on Red Square in order to shock people and make them reflect on political apathy (Walker, 2017).

And yet, more often than not, trickster antics are verbalized. These are eccentric lyrics of the songs of rappers Husky, Gnoiny and Morgenstern, musical groups *Leningrad* and *Little Big*. The invectives, buffoonery and scandalous antics of these musicians are focused on the trickster model as a taboo breaker and troublemaker.

7. Conclusion

Today, the interest of the mass audience and researchers in the trickster archetype is actively growing. The trickster figure is becoming more and more popular and in demand in modern literature, art, and mass culture.

The image of a politician, like any public person in the twentieth century, was shaped by the official media, which gave the prominent figure the qualities and properties of a "mythological" character. The creation of a halo of greatness, wisdom and philanthropy around the rulers of states was based on centuries-old traditions dating back to the rhetorical practice of Isocrates. Today, in an age of broad capabilities of networks for relaying all aspects of personal life, video recording of a person in a public space, audio recording of all speeches and the endless possibilities of the Internet to preserve the information that they try to hide and delete, the capabilities of image makers are increasingly questioned.

Thanks to the existence of social networks, the widest layers of the population have the opportunity to publicly speak about the current political situation and the media personalities who shape

it. The relationship between the government and the people was accurately described by Pushkin: "The earthly power is hateful for the rabble // They only know how to love the dead ...", since government has always been based on the mechanism of suppressing the personality and limiting personal aspirations. Without these restrictions, the social mechanism would not have been possible, but freedom of speech and expression was somewhat limited by arbitrariness and systems of suppression.

The crowd observes various comical manifestations in the behavior of representatives of the ruling elite and has long no longer believed in their heavenly origin. Endless ridicule, hating, trolling, the desire to ridicule or make ridiculous all the decisions made by politicians, that is, tricksterization, are becoming commonplace not only in social networks, but also in independent media, even in quite high-quality press.

Politicians striving for popularity among the broadest layers of voters themselves often resort to trolling opponents, to buffoonery and clowning for the needs of the crowd. Populism forces politicians to make unrealizable promises, to do things that are not typical of their lifestyle (extreme sports [B. Johnson], stunts [V. Zhirinovsky], staging [D. Trump], playing musical instruments [B. Clinton] and etc.), flaunt the intimate aspects of life [K. Sobchak as a presidential candidate].

Trickster is an adventurous personality type capable of generating illusions. Hence the characteristic features of the trickster policy of the new elites: cynicism, opportunism and proteism, manipulation of consciousness, and practical jokes.

Modern journalism has long confused documentary and fiction genres. Science fiction, hypothesis, provocation, offensive hint, ambiguity are widely used as trickster strategies.

A certain shift has taken place in the culture of postmodernity: if before the trickster mask adorned the faces of the heroes of literary works or participants in theatrical actions, today this mask belongs to the writers, artists and actors themselves in real life.

The interest of the artistic intelligentsia and philosophers in the trickster figure is not accidental. Politics and social life itself made this archetypal model overly relevant for reflection and artistic experimentation.

Pluralization, secularization and digitalization of public life, the growth in the number of plutocratic, imitation democratic and authoritarian regimes, globalization and the development of the entertainment industry have become the drivers of modern tricksterization.

According to one of the Russian politicians: Double standards, hypocrisy, duplicity, triple standards, political correctness, intrigue, propaganda, flattery, slyness are widespread not only in politics. [...] The trickster, the rogue, the deceiver, the player are the central characters of both artistic narratives and real historical events. [...] Fake moves are a basic skill of a football player and boxer. Military cunning is the main weapon of the commander. Cunning is the valor of a spy. Treachery is an unallowed technique in the struggle for power. [...] In general, hypocrisy is disgusting, effective and inevitable" (Surkov, 2017).

The square figure of the trickster is in demand today by the crowd. Tricksters are the heroes of our time (Kovtun, 2017), the coming era of transpolitics, transaesthetics and transsexuality (the terms of J. Baudrillard). There are two sides to the ambivalence of these characters - shadowy, cynical, mocking,

destructive, turning everything into chaos, and the other - creative, innovative, moving life and art forward. This internal dichotomy contradicts stagnation and is therefore relevant.

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