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Implementation of the myth of the cultural hero in the social and political reality of Ukraine

ВПРОВАДЖЕННЯ МІФУ ПРО КУЛЬТУРНОГО ГЕРОЯ У СОЦІАЛЬНО-ПОЛІТИЧНУ РЕАЛЬНІСТЬ УКРАЇНИ

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Written by:

Vitalii Biletskyi¹ <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2818-131X>**Hanna Onkovych²** <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9493-9104>**Natalia Flegontova³** <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-9418-3316>**Zoia Adamia⁴** <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6841-622X>**Artem D. Onkovych⁵** <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2241-3714>

Abstract

The article analyzes populist trends in the modern social and political space of Ukraine, in particular, the process of introducing the myth of the cultural hero. The methodological foundation is Jungian philosophy, which recognizes that social activity is caused by the motivational forces of the collective unconscious (C. Jung, E. Fromm, J. Campbell). The hypothesis is put forward that the political choice of the electorate is a manifestation of the objectification of the universal cross-cultural myth. During the analysis of the architectonics of the corresponding myth, 11 mythologemes were found, combined into a narrative about the evolution of a prominent person. The presence of these mythologemes in the television series "Servant of the People", which contributed to the victory of the young actor Vol. Zelensky in the presidential elections of 2019, was traced. It is concluded that the mentioned cinematographic product covertly influenced the electoral position, forming it by means of instrumental labelling based on a myth imprinted in the subconscious.

Keywords: political myth, cultural hero, mythologeme, collective subconscious, manipulation of mass consciousness.

Анотація

У статті аналізуються популістські тенденції в сучасному суспільно-політичному просторі України, зокрема, процес впровадження міфу культурного героя. Методологічною основою є юнганська філософія, яка визнає, що соціальна активність зумовлена мотиваційними силами колективного несвідомого (К. Юнг, Е. Фромм, Дж. Кемпбелл). Висувається гіпотеза про те, що політичний вибір електорату є проявом об'єктивації універсального кроскультурного міфу. Під час аналізу архітектоніки відповідного міфу виявлено 11 міфологем, об'єднаних у наратив про еволюцію видатної особистості. Присутність цих міфологем у серіалі «Слуга народу», який сприяв перемозі молодого актора В. Зеленського на президентських виборах 2019 року відслідковували. Зроблено висновок, що згаданий кінематографічний продукт приховано впливав на електоральну позицію, формуючи її за допомогою інструментального маркування на основі закарбованого в підсвідомості міфу.

Ключові слова: політичний міф, культурний герой, міфологема, колективне підсвідоме, маніпулювання масовою свідомістю.

¹ Candidat of Philosophical Sciences, Associate Professor, Vasyl Stus Donetsk National University, Ukraine.

² Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, professor, Kyiv Medical University, Kyiv, Ukraine.

³ Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor, Kyiv Medical University, Ukraine.

⁴ Doctor of Philology, Professor, Georgian International University, Sokhumi State University, (Georgia), Tskhum-Abkhazian Academy of Sciences (Georgia).

⁵ Candidat of Pedagogical Sciences, Associate Professor, Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts, Kyiv.

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century, populism has become a widespread form of interaction between citizens and authorities in democratic political systems. Populist consciousness is based on the leader flirting with the masses by speculating on the real needs and interests of the latter. Unsubstantiated promises, demagoguery, maximalism of statements, mandatory criticism of predecessors, a simplified view of life, belief in a panacea for all problems, search for the “Another” (from among immigrants, refugees, political opposition, representatives of racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious minorities, as well as the “rich men” – the financial and political elite), in whom the roots of all troubles are seen – these are just some signs of populism. Populists intuitively feel that they act in the objectively right direction, but, carried away with everyday concerns (winning the election by their leader, eliminating competitors, creating a positive image of their own party, etc.), they often forget about the ultimate goal. Nevertheless, populism is confidently sweeping across the planet, demonstrating that in the conditions of the growing role of political technologies, the populist tactics of dilettantes are no less effective than the competition of experienced managers. more usual for democratic procedures. The coming of populists to power can become a serious problem, because public administration carried out by non-specialists and novices automatically causes a series of crises or even disasters in economic, domestic and foreign political life, negatively affects the material condition of citizens, the legal regulation of their relations, naturally causes dysfunction social institutions, corruption, inflation, decline of public morality, etc.

When people talk about the power of populists, first of all, they talk, about Donald Trump and such a phenomenon as “Trumpism”. However, this phenomenon is not limited by the borders of the United States, and even in Ukraine, we have a pronounced example of how, with the help of populist promises and flirting with the “audience”, a person who previously had neither relevant knowledge and experience, nor skill in managing institutions of the state and society, received the highest political position. Case of Vol. Zelensky is, in Iryna Bekeshkina’s opinion, is an evidence of a high level of development of political technologies, which “created a presidential candidate out of nothing.”

Why, ignoring the basic logic of cause and effect relationships, did a significant part of the

Ukrainian electorate support beginners who are weak in state leadership in the presidential elections in 2019? Political scientists, social philosophers and psychologists are still looking for an answer to this question. The vast majority of them indicate the vulnerability of the mass consciousness to external technical and manipulative influences, the low level of critical thinking and the excessive flexibility of public morality (Biletskiy, 2016a, 2016b, 2018, 2019; Dodonov R., 2016; Dodonov D., 2017a; Dodonov R., 2017b). In particular, it was proven that the broadcast of a specially constructed sprawling mythology, which is based on the collective unconscious, is a basic tool for controlling people during the hybrid war waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

The methods of suppression of critical thinking and the spread of mythology can produce fear, direct hatred, enmity and aggression in the direction needed by politicians. The masses themselves become obsessed with a fanatical political belief in given simple ideas and easily manipulated by corresponding slogans. In this way, instrumental influence on the masses can act as a modern weapon.

Is a similar technology of myth-making the modus operandi in influencing the electorate? Obviously, there is a good reason for heroizing the comedian Vol. Zelensky, endowing him with imaginary qualities of a hero of the nation, an ideal leader, a messiah, and making him the favorite of the presidential race in 2019.

We suggest that in the case of this and similar rapid ascents of political dilettantes and their victory over specialists with great experience, we are also dealing with the manipulation of mass consciousness – a hidden technological influence on society (*Kara-Murza, 2005*). The basis of such influence is the construction and mass implementation of a special mythological narrative with a predetermined goal.

We assume that during the pre-election campaign for the 2019 presidential election, an information product of a manipulative essence, which can be conventionally called an “electoral myth”, was broadcast to the masses. It obviously contained discourses, archetypal patterns that increased the impact of the popularity of a *given* person, created an aura of his chosenness, sacredness, and endowed him with the qualities of an unconditional leader.

We would like to note that if this hypothesis is confirmed during the work, it will be necessary to state the dysfunction of the election institution. Political-technological manipulation of society means changing the very essence of *free conscious* voting. Manipulation turns a critical, mentally mature electorate into a *weak-willed object*, puppet-controlled by activated programs of the collective unconscious.

The purpose of this article is a detailed dissection, highlighting of the architectonics and semantic contexts of the subconscious mythological narrative about an outstanding unique sacralized personality – a “cultural hero.”

Theoretical references or literature review

The direct key for theoretical analysis is the works by V. Propp and J. Campbell. It was these authors who covered the cross-cultural and timeless heroic narrative comprehensively. At the beginning and at the end of the 20th century, they independently presented their integral vision of the myth of the formation of an outstanding person with the gradual unfolding of immanent discourses.

Research Methodology

The methodological basis of the theoretical part of the work is the scientific and philosophical ideas expressed by C. Jung, E. Fromm, V. Propp, J. Campbell, M. Eliade, G. Sorel, C. Levi-Strauss. Having analyzed the architectonics of the mythological component of the subconscious of the masses and peoples, these authors independently reached completely identical conclusions. The classics of psychoanalysis, folkloristics, religious studies and social philosophy believed that the heroic-archetypal narrative is *the universal background of the conscious activity of any modern person*. In addition, it has a powerful influence on political choices, encouraging the electorate to subconsciously prefer persons associated with the mythical hero.

The following analysis and comparison of their positions will allow us to build an interdisciplinary synthetic view of the myth of the cultural hero (Campbell, 2018). A descriptive method will also be used to clarify the semantic content of each of the subsidiary mythologemes.

According to the purpose, we will focus on the search for philosophical and parapsychological literary sources, the authors of which analyze the heroic-mythological component of the collective

subconscious. After that, a theoretical comparative analysis of the approaches to the components of architectonics of the cultural hero myth and their contextual and discursive content will be conducted. This will make it possible to practically track the presence of subconscious semantic blocks in the campaign material that promoted the candidacy of V. Zelensky. If the latter are established, the assumption about the creation of a political myth, artificial sacralization and hidden influence on the masses will turn into a proven fact.

The practical part of the work will consist in the study of the video product, which was broadcast immediately before the elections of the President of Ukraine in 2019. It was in the TV series “Servant of the People” that actor Volodymyr Zelensky *played the role* of a person who became the leader of our state.

The working hypothesis of this study is the assumption that this series was not an entertaining political satire from the very beginning, but was created with a premeditated manipulative purpose. After all, the actor who played the main role of the President of Ukraine a few years later actually became one. And it is unlikely that a mystical coincidence took place here.

To confirm this hypothesis, the method of factuality, content analysis, and a comparative approach are involved. They will make it possible to perform a scientific search and highlight the presence of hidden and therefore manipulative discourses, symbols, events, etc., similar to the stages of the unfolding of the myth of the cultural hero, in the video product.

We would like to note that the philosophical terminological base we use is generally postmodern. The terms that describe the stages of the populist myth and the names of its characters were borrowed from the works of anthropologists, culturologists, ethnographers, and sociologists, which explains the specificity and original articulation of these concepts. Such are, for example, the concepts of the Prophet, Magical Helper, Guardian of the Threshold, etc.

Results and Discussion

Psychoanalytic philosophy, having significantly expanded and clarified the vision of the hidden continuums of the psyche, clearly demonstrated the weight of the *collective* unconscious in the determinism of human behavior. C.-G. Jung (1968, 1996, 2016) and his followers proved that

it is the collective subconscious, structured by archetypes, that determines preferences, sets the criteria basis for evaluating oneself and reference persons, namely family, religious, political, etc. The search for the genetic and ontological foundations of this layer of the human soul led philosophers to the conclusion about its *hereditary* nature (Jung, 1996, 2016; Halbwachs, 2007; Szondi, 2007, Fromm, 2006). In other words, collective unconscious constructs are *fundamentally similar* in all people. They are inherited from the ancestors most distant in time, who lived in clan and tribal societies and used a mythological worldview.

It is important that in parallel with this, during the 19th and 20th centuries, classics of sociology, cultural studies, ethnography, folkloristics and archeology found surprisingly similar behavioral complexes and myths in the everyday and ritual practices of the peoples of the planet (Propp, 2000, 2001; Eliade, 2010, 2018; Sorel, 2012; Levi-Strauss, 1988, 1991). This fact of similarity attracted the attention of psychoanalytic philosophy and made it possible to see *what exactly* was inherited from ancestors. It became possible to clearly associate the constructs of the subconscious with specific practices and beliefs of primitive societies. There was a transition to object-fact analysis of individual subconscious archetypes and mythological narratives.

One of the most notable was the archetype of the Hero (cultural hero) and the corresponding narrative about the formation of the sacred person as a messiah, savior of the people, etc. This mythical narrative was studied in detail by culturologist and folklorist V.Y. Propp and Jungian philosopher J. Campbell.

It is these scientists who give us the direct key for theoretical analysis problem of our research. It was these authors who covered the cross-cultural and timeless heroic narrative comprehensively. At the beginning and at the end of the 20th century, they independently presented their integral vision of the myth of the formation of an outstanding person with the gradual unfolding of immanent discourses.

In addition, it is these authors who give us the most fruitful material, since their visions, firstly, complement each other, and secondly, are systematized in detail. The mutual addition of these authors is that J. Campbell found the same algorithms of the mythological narrative among the legends of the peoples of the world, and V. Y. Propp focused more attention on the identity of the functional characters in the myth

of the cultural hero. Their developments are convenient for our comparative analysis and synthesis of the overall picture of the unfolding of the myth in the subconscious.

So, the universal cross-cultural monomyth about the Hero, which is observed among all the peoples of the world and is secretly present in any person, contains the following gradually built mythologemes-discourses.

The architectonics of deployment of the mythologemes

1. ***Appearance of the character.*** The transformation of an average person into a Hero is in its early stages. At the moment, the myth shows its *dawn* – a discourse is held that this character is an ordinary person who is engaged in the usual affairs and concerns of their social group. Symbols of *family impoverishment* (poverty), problematic routine life, monotony of existence are used in the mythologeme. There is also the idea that such a life, from which a person must escape, is *unreal, a dream, a delusion*. J. Campbell believes that for further sacralization, the monomyth will contain a picture of the *mysterious* (unusual) *birth* of this person, orphanage, abandonment as an infant, etc. (Campbell, 2018: 249, 253). It is also very likely that this child has *innate signs of a future calling*. The masses are convinced in advance that the future leader came from an environment identical to them. He is, so to speak, “friend”, similar, “almost me”. It should be noted that according to this logic, the appearance of the future Hero at this stage *will not be too expressive*. It should embody as many attributes of general population as possible.
2. ***Awakening and feeling the call.*** The narrative shifts to a discourse of *sudden loss* (or *risk of loss*) of *something important* without which a previous, relatively peaceful existence would become uncomfortable or impossible. This can refer to personal belongings, loved ones, or their health, or work, etc. (“*The Call to Adventure*” according to J. Campbell, 2018: 47-54; “*Trouble and opposition*” according to V. Propp, 2000: 30). As a rule, such an event is accompanied by a meeting with the Prophet of the future journey. Someone or something should *push* the Hero to the need to leave, escape from his previous life, to have a trip, to travel. In the myths of peoples, a wide selection of images of a *teacher, older people, violent sudden weather*

changes, and atypical behavior of animals are reflected. It is interesting that J. Campbell considered *an expressive appearance, old age or even zoomorphism*, which signifies the *chthonic* nature, to be common to the Prophet. There can be several Prophets in the myth and calling situations – that is, the Hero is awakened by a number of chthonic forces. They predict changes, adventures, exit from the usual society, travel and future metamorphoses to acquire supernatural properties or (and) artifacts. The myth shows that the space of these adventures is *extremely mysterious, full of power, energy, and secrets*. This space of the incomprehensible in the mythologeme is associated with images of *the sea, a cave, a mountainous country, an underwater world, an island*, etc. The extreme remoteness of the locus of the future journey and the *disregard of travel time* are also characteristic. This is quite predictable, because the primitive consciousness is atemporal and does not operate with specific units of time.

3. **Refusal of the call.** Hero's call to travel, escape from the usual society *can be ignored* (Campbell, 2018: 54). Then there is a state of stagnation, decline of spiritual forces. This can be embodied in symbols of death, illness, sleep, numbness, freezing, déjà vu, repetitiveness, slowness, routine of being, sadness, etc. From J. Campbell's point of view, the above stages symbolize *the embryonic state* of the Hero, his stay in the womb, birth and infantile state. The next stages of the narrative demonstrate *the formation of a mature autonomous harmonious strong personality*.
4. **Re-encountering with the Patrons.** The state of apathy and depression of the Hero continues until the threatening circumstances of life and the infinitely powerful Patrons still force him to go on a journey ("*Supernatural Aid*" according to J. Campbell, 2018: 60-67; "*Getting a magical remedy*" according to V. Propp, 2000: 36-40). As in the second stage, these persons are personifications of ancestors or chthonic forces, but here, according to analysts, their personifications *will tend to the female appearance* and (or) to zoomorphism. This is probably explained by the fact that totemism and matriarchy historically preceded the patriarchal system. At the same time, if there are several assistants, then the appearance of one of them will be feminized, because the patronage of leaving the womb and ending the embryonic state is associated

with female support. Therefore, it is likely that practitioners of consciousness manipulation will try to use the signs of old age together with power, spiritual energy. There is also a possible plot when the Hero will be helped by dead but authoritative relatives who appeared during a dream or vision. Patrons, *finally awakening the future leader*, give him useful advice on further trials, helpful amulets, tools, magic formulas, prayers, etc.

5. **The beginning of the journey. Overcoming the first threshold.** The activated protagonist begins his journey and almost immediately meets an obstacle, namely a person who prevents him from entering the mysterious country (Campbell, 2018: 67-76; Propp, 2000: 3-88). *The Guardian of the Threshold* is watching so that profane people do not get into the mysterious territory. But the Hero is *no longer* like that. His state of readiness is due to acquired knowledge, obedience to the instructions of his ancestors, loyalty to traditions, possession of ancestral knowledge and useful artifacts. The main character tries out these gifts of the Patrons, engaging in a duel with the Guardian, resists the temptations and wins. The discourse demonstrates the acquired fearlessness, courage of the Hero, his resistance to tricks and ingenuity. Moreover, he wins *not by physical strength, but by self-control, exceptional mental and moral qualities*. Physical victory, actually, is secondary.
6. **Entering the mysterious space.** Analysts are unanimous in the fact that before entering the mysterious space, the Hero needs to be reborn ("*Belly of the Whale*" according to J. Campbell, 2018: 76-83; "*Mysterious forest*", "*Temporary death*", "*Divided and lively*" according to V. Propp, 2000: 36-89). It is necessary to turn from an ordinary, albeit gifted person into a supernatural being. He needs to experience *a symbolic death* and a second birth – *to enter and leave the womb again*. Such a transformation will endow the protagonist with mystical qualities and make him sacred. Therefore, the storyline of the myth plunges the character into a cave, the sea, the belly of animals, a furnace, a black palace, a mysterious and dark world, etc. In our opinion, the adaptation of these symbols for a modern person will look like a long corridor, a mine, a cave, a subway, a submarine, a labyrinth, a tunnel. The mythologeme shows the contrast between the profane world and the "world of wonders" which the Hero enters. After exit



from the other side – from the magical side – he ceases to be just a person and begins to use supernatural properties. But they still need to be consolidated in the process of passing the test.

7. **Initialization.** Currently, the narrative introduces an opponent, an anti-hero, whose image will appeal collectively to the corresponding archetypes of the Thief, Trickster and Chaos. In his attributes, there are allusions to fire, darkness, blood, death, decay, etc. The content of this discourse is to demonstrate the successful passage of the Hero's physical and spiritual tests ("*Initialization*", "*The Path of Trials*" according to J. Campbell, 2018: 83-91; "*The serpent in the story*", "*Serpent absorber*" according to V. Propp, 2000: 183-207). The tasks set before him are almost impossible, but he successfully overcomes them. In this way, he demonstrates a constant ability to supernaturally *establish his order*, by definition, the order of goodness, light, truth, and justice. After victory, the opponent either voluntarily recognizes the priority of the Hero and gives him a gift, or the trophies are obtained after the death of the anti-hero, or the Hero gets them by tricks. This reward will be discussed below.
8. **Union with the ideal woman.** The finale of tests and initialization is the union of the Hero with the Perfect Woman, who until the moment of meeting him, is in a local place of the Magic World ("*Meeting with the Goddess*" according to J. Campbell, 2018: 91-103; "*Bride*" ("*Princess*") according to V. Propp, 2000: 258-265). This place is associated with gold, crystal, white color, spring, well, tower, etc. She is either in a state of sleep or in social isolation. The Hero's victory activates it – liberates, enlivens, awakens. *Finding the Woman* is directed by the myth as *a separate adventure, a quest* during which the Hero cleverly selects her from among other women – similar, but somehow false ones. According to the researchers, the Perfect Woman personifies the images of a mother, sister and wife. The first and last roles are especially important. She must act as the Mother, who is potentially able to be the substrate firstborn for the new Cosmos. The Hero needs to make a lot of effort so that such an independent and proud person becomes his Wife. Marriage has a serious meaning. It symbolizes the integration, the combination into one whole of opposite primals – the knowable one and the one who

knows, the activating and the substrate ones, the force and the guiding subject. "The mystical marriage with the regal Goddess of Peace symbolizes the Hero's complete dominion over life, because the woman is life, and the hero is the master who has come to know it" (Campbell, 2018: 100). So, in the collective subconscious, there is a discourse about the evolution of the *perfectly harmonized* personality of the Hero. He appears as a reference person, a potential all-powerful creator of the Universe. In addition, there is an equally important context – this person *has earned love, gained love*. In other words, the Hero is a *pre-unconsciously* beloved person who orders chaos, a messiah, a source of good, an adjuster of social order and justice.

Let's go further in our investigation, because the myth must return the protagonist back to the people *with a certain gift*. In addition, the return should be *expected* almost frustratingly.

9. **Receipt of reward.** The hero passed the test and exhausted the sense of staying in the Mysterious Space ("*Apotheosis*" and "*Reward at the End of the Path*" according to J. Campbell, 2018: 122-158). The Myth should reward him with a valuable trophy, discovery, or gift that the Hero acquired through fair combat or trickery. In the legends of the world, this treasure is associated with fire, living water, elixir, panacea, rejuvenating apples, magical weapons, etc. There is also a discourse of *extraordinary importance, the exceptional value* of this gift for people and the *urgent need* for it. We believe that during the broadcast of this mythologeme, there will be an appeal to similar symbols, because the collective subconscious of the masses will sensitively resonate with this artifact due to its original fetishism.
10. **Magical escape.** Finally, the Hero begins a return to the ordinary, profane world ("*The Magic Flight*" and "*Rescue from Without*" according to J. Campbell, 2018: 161-177; "*Magical flight*" according to V. Propp, 2000: 298-305). The purpose of this is essentially messianic. A tribe, community or state needs to be given a gift – healing, renewal, prosperity, truth, order and justice. The scenario of the return path can be simple. If the defeated guardians of the talismans authorized the Hero to return home, then he gets there without any obstacles. But a more common adventure plot is the *chasing* a couple. Threshold

guardians and antagonists can prevent the return and the protagonist secretly escapes from them. During the chase, he leaves them behind and leaves a number of obstacles in front of the pursuers – probably three in number (V. Propp, 2000). The purpose of this is essentially messianic. A tribe, community or state needs to be given a gift – healing, renewal, prosperity, truth, order and justice. The scenario of the return path can be simple. If the defeated guardians of the talismans authorized the Hero to return home, then he gets there without any obstacles. But a more common adventure plot is the *chasing* a couple. Threshold guardians and antagonists can prevent the return and the protagonist secretly escapes from them. During the chase, he leaves them behind and leaves a number of obstacles in front of the pursuers – probably three in number.

11. **Return to the world of people.** The return journey of the transformed Hero and his couple will again be through the cave, the sea, the mountains, through the sky (*“The Crossing of the Return Threshold”* according to J. Campbell, 2018: 178-198; *“The decisive obstacle”*, *“The Enthronement of the hero”* according to V. Propp, 2000: 289-292, 298-305). It is possible to embody the named symbols with modern means by attracting the entourage of the subway, airport, tunnel, long and dimly lit corridors, etc., from which *the Hero comes out to the people who have been waiting for him for a long time*. From now on, from the position of the collective unconscious, he not only unites two primals in himself – male and female ones, but is also an inhabitant of two worlds – profane and sacred worlds, personifying them in himself. That is, the myth creates a powerful syncretically whole and extremely harmonious being. He is expected, people want to love him in advance, imitate him, recognize his priority.

It is also important that the Hero, *due to constant transformations*, must have features of a radically different appearance at the end of the journey than at the beginning. He, for example, must get scars, physical defects, signs of torture, trials, maturity (Propp, 2000: 258, 297). Metamorphoses of the hero is *one of the obligatory processes of the monomyth* (Campbell, 2018: 253-290).

Now, let’s move on to the “case of Volodymyr Zelensky” and the practical analysis of the

“Servant of the People” TV series (IMDb (n.d.) *Servant of the People*).

Regardless of our hypothesis about it as a form of delivery of manipulative content, the series had a high popularity rating (Metacritic (s.f.)). That is, the mass *liked* it.

Before the presidential race, “Servant of the People” was watched by more than 20 million citizens of Ukraine (BBC News, 2019) and broadcast in two dozen countries around the world (Hrytcfeld, 2019).

Objectification of mythologemes in the TV series “Servant of the People”

Episode 1. It is not difficult to see that discourses are held here, which are components of the first two mythologemes of the narrative about the formation of a cultural hero. The mythologeme “Appearance of the character” is fully implemented and “Awakening and feeling the call” begins to be partially demonstrated.

The main character, Vasyl Petrovych Holoborodko, appears as a simple ordinary poor person, a citizen of Ukraine, a school teacher. At the same time, *his belonging to precisely Ukrainian society* is emphasized in detail. The symbols of the state are shown with emphasis, the actors reproduce the accent, regionally familiar dialectics.

It should be noted that the fact that at the beginning of the story, *independence is not inherent in the hero* absolutely coincides with the directing of the mythology of the collective unconscious. He has many traits of household helplessness, cowardice, fussiness of the mental state, *he is not married*. That is, he is *not a complete mature personality*. He is funny and laughable, which is also identical to the myths in which the future messiah *first appears as a fool*.

The discourse “Awakening and feeling the call” is presented synchronously.

Right at the beginning of the video product, the viewer sees *Evil*. In fact, it is corruption at both the political and administrative levels. But here it is hypostatized and personified in the person of the oligarchs. The audience is shown their infernal qualities – blue skin color, black clothes, hiddenness from the eyes of other people, communication in the dark (that is, invisibility).

The theory of the architectonics of the myth requires a situation of *crisis and trouble* in which

the people, the hero's family and he himself are. And this is completely reproduced in the series. The protagonist and his family are immersed in *an atmosphere of trouble*. They have limited living conditions, minimal comfort, and the character's low salary is emphasized.

These honest and completely moral persons *suffer* because of Evil (corruption) and dysfunction of social institutions of law, morality and education.

It is also significant that the cinematographic product demonstrates other subconscious narrative symbols. *The threat to the hero's father* is shown here (*the fourth minute of the episode*). At the 12th minute, the hero directly articulates the feeling of the categorical impossibility of staying in the current conditions.

In the 11th and 14th minutes, the video product involves *an alternative reality* in the plot. *Fragments isolated from the course of the plot* are shown, during which meetings of the basic character with a *nameless* but *powerful* person are shown. Later it turns out that this is the Prime Minister of Ukraine Yu. I. Chuyko. He claims that a school teacher becomes the President of Ukraine in an unpredictable way, surprising for the viewer.

This is how *the functional persona of the powerful Prophet* is introduced, who *predicts* the protagonist's acquisition of leadership. This character, as in theory, is endowed with the attributes of calmness, wisdom, prudence, experience and older age. He shows pictures of a radically different life, filled with previously unimaginable benefits, mysterious objects, etc.

It should be noted that *the sudden appearance of an alternative reality from the point of view of depressing effect on the critical mind of the viewer is quite justified*. Let's explain this position separately.

Since viewers understand that such events absolutely *cannot happen* in real life, there are two ways out for them.

First. Observing obvious nonsense from a rational point of view, a person *will lose interest in the series*.

Second. The viewer, intrigued by the appearance of the magical course of the plot, the popularity of the talented actor Vol. Zelensky, with the promise of magical transformations of the character, *will reject the rational level of*

perception. In order not to encounter cognitive dissonance, viewers adjust to *the perception of a fairy tale*. After all, only in it can magic, transformation, prophecies, etc. take place. This level of reflection is characteristic of any person since childhood.

In other words, the creators of the series *instrumentally* make active critical thinking *irrelevant and redundant*. *They turn it off*.

The collective viewer is invited to accept the information *precisely as a myth*. It is suggested to uncritically believe in the myth and contemplate passively. This role does not involve skepticism, self-analysis and criticism, but only affective subconscious reflection and faith.

According to the above statistics of international cinema databases, tens of millions of viewers have chosen this response strategy.

At the end of the first episode, the main character's entourage emphasizes that he needs to run for president. That is, the symbol of the future movement, the *journey*, which is still *denied* by the protagonist, is additionally introduced.

Episode 2. It begins with the given already surreal technique of paradoxical mixing of realities. The character of Vol. Zelensky doubles up and is present in two worlds. Obviously, this is how the discourse of *traveling to a magical world*, characteristic of the mythologeme "The beginning of the journey. Overcoming the first threshold."

In an alternative reality, the protagonist is already *beginning* to be the President of Ukraine – here surprising and unusual events begin to happen to him. But the hero *is not the active subject of these events* – they are secretly managed by a character who performs the function of the Prophet. The latter *guides* the hero through these events, provides patronage. That is, the cultural hero is shown at the stage of formation.

The storyline of the avatar of V.P. Holoborodko as a teacher still dominates. It is here that the manipulative discourses of the mythological narrative unfold further.

In particular, the threat of *losing one's usual existence* through a prohibition of holding a current position increases (*6-7 minutes of the episode*). This threat is formulated as ostracism. Expulsion, exile and the starting point for future metamorphoses are formulated by a functional

character – an evil aggressive woman (the school director).

In an alternative reality (*8th minute*), she emphasizes that V.P. Holoborodko should thank her, as she saw potential in the future President and gave him the initial “push.”

We should note here that it is always possible to emphasize the parallel functions of the characters of “Servants of the People” and the tales of the peoples of the world. For example, this headmistress and the entire female team are completely identical to the evil stepmother and sisters in the famous Cinderella. But the purpose of our article does not allow such distractions.

So, the motive of sending the protagonist on a journey and the beginning of trials in the film is fully formed.

At the same time, the depressing effect on the viewer’s critical thinking intensifies. The alternate reality storyline is evolving. Here the protagonist is shown as a victor over evil, a favorite of adults and children, their idol. According to the folk song (*9th minute*), the earth and people should rejoice because the “son of God” was born. We see that the national folklore that glorifies Jesus Christ was used in the film to deify the hero Vol. Zelensky.

The fact of such an attitude does not cause the protagonist’s outrage. Under the patronage of the Prophet, who already performs the function of Assistant, V.P. Holoborodko continues to adapt as the nation’s leader. So far, the protagonist is shown as a naive and honest amateur.

At the end of the second episode, the hypostases of evil are shown. As before, the effects of their internalization are used – their facelessness, ability to change appearance. Evil begins to feel threatened by V.P. Holoborodko, because this President was suddenly out of control.

From the 18th minute, the plot is rationalized. The alternate reality is somehow consistent with the real one. Here it is shown how an average poor citizen was able to become the President of Ukraine.

Episode 3. In accordance with our assumption, the characters of powerful Aides are introduced into the plot, that combine the signs of wisdom, spiritual energy, old age, sophistication and the afterlife. These are the ancient Greek philosopher Plutarch and historian Herodotus. Coming to the hero in a dream, they tell him about the need for

a radical change in the state structure in Ukraine. Again, according to the collective unconscious, the cultural hero *must become a king* in the finale of his metamorphoses. Therefore, it is not surprising that Plutarch and Herodotus indicate to the hero that an autocratic system is the best for Ukraine.

The plot of the episode involves the preparation of the hero for the inauguration, which is similar to the stage of *Entering the mysterious space* before the *Initialization*.

The theory of the architectonics of the subconscious requires a new birth (rebirth). In the film, it is implemented starting from the 10th minute of the episode. The hero comes across a lot of new information, manages to undergo a *rejuvenation procedure* in a short time. He is placed in *cardinally new spatial conditions*, including in a closed space, passes through labyrinths, corridors formed of people (analogues of caves, bellies, etc.). All this is very important for a competent influence on the unconscious of spectators.

The verbal information that accompanies the video suggests to the viewer the discourse of the holiness of V. Holoborodko’s hero (*end of the 12th and 17th minutes*).

Having found himself in the mysterious space, V.P. Holoborodko is forced to quickly activate his communication skills, memory, overcome feelings of fear, and concentrate.

The faceless avatars of Evil begin to feel the progressive potential of the protagonist, his ability to defeat them.

Episode 4. The preparation of the Cultural Hero for the inauguration continues, which takes place with the help of functional assistants. The latter introduce the protagonist to numerous trials that will require concentration, a good memory, the ability to observe rituals, developed language skills, etc.

The collective viewer is episodically shown a female character whose functional load is unclear at the moment. Emotional contact with her is currently cool. The main character is divorced from this woman, but has a child together.

Among the assistants, Abraham Lincoln plays a special role here, the mystical meeting with him has a teleological function (*20-21 minutes*). The 16th president of the USA prompts the

protagonist to understand his own messianic role for the Ukrainian people.

At the end of the episode, the inauguration itself is shown, the subconscious analogue of which is, of course, the initiation rite. It is interesting that despite the intense preparation for this ceremony, the protagonist goes through it concisely, not pathetically and not difficult.

The author of the article considers the practical absence of sacred paraphernalia during the inauguration (initiation), as well as the fact of past marriage, as signs that manipulators do not fully master the theory of myth-making. These are their obvious mistakes. Unlike the previous manipulative discourses, the initialization of the Hero in the new space is unconvincing – he does not pass the test, does not metamorphose, does not fight evil, etc.

Episode 5. The analyst can see that the mess continues to progress in the broadcast of the political myth previously consistent with the theory. Episodes disjointed in meaning are demonstrated, the discourses of which would have been appropriate at earlier stages. The mother and father equip the Hero for the journey, providing a magical amulet that is quite appropriate for the Ukrainian mentality (a pin). This, as well as advice and guidance, testify to the reversal of the plot to the discourse of preparation for the journey.

Then, the protagonist overcomes numerous temptations and pronounces his own slogan “Love for work. Honesty. Justice.” This would be appropriate at the testing stage.

He replaces the previous head of state *without a struggle*. The function of the latter is amorphous, this event itself has no meaning. The former President is deprived of power and functionally is not the main avatar of Evil.

The number of functional Aides is growing up to several dozen. Hero’s father and mother suddenly stop demonstrating high moral qualities, greed, middle-classism and the desire to parasitize on their son’s image take over them.

A scene from the past falls out of context. Verbal competitions between V.P. Holoborodko and an old school history teacher, where a high erudition on the proverbs of the peoples of the world was demonstrated. This is not appropriate after initiation, as this is a typical encounter with the Prophet.

Episode 6. The functional persona of Ernesto Che Guevara is introduced as another Magical Aide.

This probably indicates the prolongation of the broadcast of the mythologeme “The Path of Trials” (“Initialization”, “The serpent in the story” etc.).

According to the myth, the character of V. Zelensky *must actually* defeat Evil. This *has not happened yet*. Only after this event can he be subconsciously perceived as a messiah. Che Guevara seeks to cultivate the militant qualities of V.P. Beardless for the radical eradication of Evil, however, unsuccessfully.

The hero, repeatedly called “god” and “savior” does not turn into a powerful hero, remaining an indecisive coward. He does not dare to confront aggressively. The maximum he tries to do is moralizing conversations with secondary personifications of the antagonist – deputies of the Verkhovna Rada, and his own family.

Episodes 7, 8. The discourse of the fight against Evil as a whole receives further development. Among the Mystical Helpers, the role of a hitherto secondary character is strengthened. This is the female avatar of the auxiliary forces – Bella Rudolphivna. She is fully consistent with the theory of myth-making and implies signs of experience, age, wisdom, prophecy, physical strength, and steadfastness. That is, this multi-layered character is associated with the forces of ancestors, chthonic beings and the mother. Her function includes *constant guardianship* of the protagonist. She monitors his appearance, feeds him, quickly provides him with the necessary items, *knows how to anticipate events, possesses any information*, etc.

Along with this, the transmitters of the myth here also assume a number of inaccuracies. For example, the Protagonist sometimes wants to be a teacher at school. But the main incongruity is that the still main magical Aide (Yu.I. Chuyko) *suddenly and radically changes his function*. He turns out to be a corruptor, a partner of the hypostases of Evil.

From this moment on, he is associated with the image of the archetype of the *trickster anti-hero, the insidious Procrustes, the Serpent*. Myth theory *does not categorically provide the space for such reversals and polar changes of functional characters*.

Thus, the cultural hero begins *an intellectual confrontation* with Evil in the person of his recent Aide and wins an interim victory. The selection of the Hero's associates-helpers in the further struggle is successful.

On the second plot background, the improvement of the emotional contact between the Hero and his ex-wife, who still does not play a clearly articulated functional load, is presented. She clearly cannot be a mythological Bride.

Episodes 9-18. The faceless main incarnations of Evil analyze their defeats and build tactics for their countermeasures. Their main goal is to make the Protagonist manageable by finding compromising facts.

The mythologeme "The Path of Trials" receives further development. Associates of V.P. Holoborodko are trying to quickly adapt to unfamiliar workplaces. It is difficult, but they, overcoming difficulties, generally demonstrate energy and morality.

Viewers are shown separate stories about their resistance to corruption. Aides overcome the temptations of power, illegal material goods, money, *treasures*, which are similar to *inherent in fairy tales*. For example, in the Episode 16, gold bars are shown (15th-18th minutes). New personalities of mystical advisers appear, for example, Gaius Julius Caesar, Yaroslav the Wise, Louis XVI. However, these meetings are episodic, sudden and do not develop. An increasingly prominent role among the forces of Good is played by their already mentioned projection – Bella Rudolphivna.

The main character's family continues to function as latent agents of Evil. The protagonist begins a struggle at this level as well – including with his own father and sister. This struggle is weakly effective. It is expressed only in moralizing conversations and monologues. The carried out reforms, which are mentioned in the 17th episode, do not cause significant damage to hypostatized corruption.

In the fight against this evil, the protagonist ignores the interests of ordinary citizens, adopting unpopular laws. An increase in the retirement age, an increase in the rate of excise duties, etc. affects the decline in the popularity of the hero Vol. Zelensky and the risk of public protests.

Episode 19. The Trickster articulates the will of the forces of Evil and threatens the main

character with an artificially initiated popular uprising and removal from office. The hero is asked to directly meet the antagonists and not fight them.

The meeting is happening. The oligarchs are metamorphosing. They already have a completely human likeness, but are called mythical *whales*. In a calm conversation, they unsuccessfully offer a bribe to the President.

No aggressive actions or other confrontations take place.

At the end of the episode, the viewer is offered a new functional female character – Hanna Mykhailivna. Obviously, she personifies the mythical Ideal Woman ("Bride") and combines the signs of youth, health, morality, modesty, self-sufficiency, mystery, etc.

It should be assumed that from this moment (21st-23th minutes) the series will introduce the mythologeme of *Union with the ideal woman* with appropriate discourses. Sympathy develops between the woman and the protagonist. Their meeting and conversation are enriched by a magical entourage – they take place at *night, alone* and are a secret. The female functional tests the Hero. The discourse of *riddles*, typical for a myth, is introduced. The girl gives a choice of *three things*. The main character rejects the excessive one (alcohol). She then emphasizes the importance of the mission of the character of Vol. Zelensky for the people.

From the point of view of the impact on the collective unconscious of the viewer, it is also interesting that the parting is combined with Beauty *entering a closed space*. This is the same as the Bride being in a tower, a crystal coffin, a prison, sleeping, etc. Theoretically, the protagonist will have to symbolically *liberate* her.

Episodes 20, 21. The character "Perfect Woman" radically changes the function. She appears as an agent of Evil, seeks to compromise (seduce) the main character. At the same time, the girl's *magical metamorphosis* takes place. They oscillate on a continuum between the extremes of "virgin" – "harlot" or "Bride" – "Witch."

A powerful attack is made on the virtues of the Hero through the named female functional. The attack is successful. The Hero has artificially initiated lust. The girl gets partial (magical) power over his psyche, due to which he is unable

to effectively fight against Evil, which is corruption. Obviously, here the viewer sees the *culmination of the "Initialization" mythologeme*.

As in the myths of the peoples of the world, the Aide comes to the aid of the protagonist. Bella Rudolphivna suddenly finds herself in the right places and interferes with the magic of seduction.

But to bring mental balance, the efforts of the main Aide are not enough. A second-in-command, namely the ex-wife of V.P. Holoborodko, quickly comes to the rescue. She seeks to restore his moral and mental qualities by activating parental feelings and responsibilities. The joint efforts of the Protagonist and his Aides, including secondary ones, are enough to counteract. The seductress fails.

The emphasis on the mysticism of the Hero's struggle is intensified in his conversation with his son. Oligarchs are called *orcs* here, the need to acquire "*super-power*" is discussed. Functionally, the son is a projection of the madness and rebelliousness of the main character himself – this is said, in particular, in the 3rd minute of the 21st episode. In the conversation, it is decided that the Hero will receive supernatural qualities for fighting *from his son* – that is, he will have them *from his own rebelliousness*.

Episodes 22, 23. After unsuccessful attempts to make V.P. Holoborodko controllable, the oligarchs plan to eliminate him physically. Later, during a television report on the fight against corruption, the Protagonist publicly defeats a secondary projection of Evil, namely the Trickster character. At the same time, there are dynamic magical transformations of the television studio, the appearance of all the characters and, especially, the Evil ones – until they lose their human form.

After the climactic scene of the exposure of Y.I. Chuyko, which lasts about 20 seconds (*15th minute*), the hero of V. Zelensky receives congratulations from those present in the studio. This is how *the discourse of victory over Evil* and, which is no less valuable, *over death*,

because his killing has managed to be prevented, is implemented. Later, the feeling of victory will be strengthened by congratulations and thanks from the father. That is, the mythologeme of *freeing relatives from Evil and reconciliation with the father* is also indirectly implemented.

At the same time, the main antagonistic hypostases *have not been overcome*. The scene of their conversation at the end of the film, accompanied by *flames and hints of cannibalism*, demonstrates wealth and a sense of impunity.

The mythologeme "Union with the ideal woman" is also completed. The young girl symbolically frees herself from Evil and is currently not a functional element of it. This female character is ambiguous, but now she is *purified* and shown in a positive context.

Simultaneously with this, the discourse "Return to the world of people" is also implemented. At the end of the film, the protagonist is shown in a homely family atmosphere and introduces the Bride to her parents. This mythologeme is reinforced by the fact that two of Hero's henchmen also get their brides synchronously with him.

In the table speech, the Protagonist claims that it is the grouping of the family together that is especially valuable, means happiness, and he is ready for such a life forever. Presumably, this is how the shown acquisition of the spiritual integrity of the Hero's personality is performed at the end of the myth.

We should note that the series contains not only a mythological video series, but also *oral agitation*.

In the song that plays at the end of the last episode, it is claimed that "he will soon be elected", that "he", the character of Volodymyr Zelensky, is the one whom "the people want", "the servant of the people". As is known, an artificially created real political party has a similar name. And the actor of the comedy genre Vol. Zelensky became the President of Ukraine not only on the screen, but in actual reality.

Table 1.

Implementation of the discourses of the mythological story about the “Servant of the people” in the episodes of the video product.

Order of mythologemes	Name of the narrative mythologeme	Implementation of a mythologeme in episodes.
1	Appearance of the character	Episode 1,7
2	Awakening and feeling the call	Episode 1, 2, 3
3	Refusal of the call	Episode 1
4	Re-encountering with the Patrons	Episode 3, 4
5	The beginning of the journey and overcoming the first threshold	Episode 2, 3
6	Entering the mysterious space	Episode 2, 3
7	Initialization	Episode 2, 4, 6, 9-23
8	Union with the ideal woman	Episode 19, 23
9	Receipt of reward	
10	Magical escape	
11	Return to the world of people	Episode 23

Conclusion

Based on the purpose of the research and the working hypothesis, we can formulate the following conclusions.

1. The comparative analysis of the philosophical vision of the collective unconscious myth about the cultural hero and the heritage of cultural studies about the sacred initiation practices of the ancestors turned out to be fruitful. This analysis made it possible to combine numerous common positions of philosophers and culturologists and to synthesize an algorithm for unfolding a mythological narrative about an outstanding and extraordinary personality. This unconscious inherited story can be conditionally divided into eleven mythologemes-discourses. They show the gradual evolution of a person – from a typical profane to a sacred, expected and unconditional leader.
2. A detailed content-analytic study of the video product, after the broadcast of which the popularity of Volodymyr Zelensky increased rapidly, confirmed the working hypothesis. The series “Servant of the People” objectively and undeniably contains patterns, symbols and discourses inherent in the myth of the cultural hero. The sequence of unfolding of the plots also corresponds to the architecture of the mythological narrative. All basic discourses in the series are reflected (see Table 1).
3. The series “Servant of the People” not only structurally, in terms of form, but also essentially, in terms of content, is nothing more than a sprawling mythological narrative. The creators of this video product actively use means of suppressing the critical mind of the viewer and accustoming them to believe in a fairy tale plot. Tuning the psyche of the mass of adults precisely for the consumption of a magical story takes place through the demonstration of a doubled reality. A powerful influence on the subconscious is also carried out by repeatedly demonstrating symbols that are inherent in chthonic beings, otherworldly entities, supernatural forces, etc.
4. The classification of this mythological narrative undoubtedly refers it to heroic myths. It does not belong to any of the other categories (etiologial, cosmogonic, totemic, eschatological ones etc.) according to the plot of the story. This type of myth pursues only one specific goal, namely the heroization of the protagonist. The narrative, by taking a profane person through a typical evolution, eventually forms the image of a sacred persona, a hero, a leader, and a legitimate ruler. Since the persona of the hero was created by the acting skills of Volodymyr Oleksandrovich Zelensky, the expected sacralized President of Ukraine after the broadcast of the series is associated with him. The epithets “God”, “son of God”, “Savior”, etc. in the series are addressed to V.P. Holoborodko, and in reality to V.O. Zelensky.
5. Victory of V.O. Zelensky’s success in the elections is not the result of his political or organizational skills. It is also not the result of his pre-election activities, such as trips to the regions, speeches at rallies, traditional debates, etc. The rapid increase in his rating occurred immediately after the broadcast of the highlighted and analyzed myth. So, the cause-and-effect relationship seems quite obvious. The successful instrumental influence on the mass subconscious

logically imprinted the political belief that film actor Volodymyr Zelensky is a messiah, a pre-loved and expected leader. Therefore, the series “Servant of the People” is a means of broadcasting an artificial political heroic myth. The successful application of mass consciousness manipulation technology can be considered a fact.

6. Along with this, it is necessary to draw a conclusion regarding a number of mistakes and improprieties committed by the creators of the campaign series. As can be seen from Table 1, two stages of the narrative were ignored and not supported by the corresponding mythologemes. The protagonist himself did not undergo any metamorphosis, a number of characters changed their function polarly, the number of characters of supernatural Aides and Patrons increased unnecessarily, the main personifications of Evil were not defeated, the story was not completed. On the one hand, this is justified commercially, because it gives the opportunity to continue the popular series. But from a theoretical point of view, it is impossible to change the monomyth about the cultural hero imprinted in the subconscious by the will of the filmmakers. A monomyth cannot be changed, understated or told episodically. Any inconsistency in the transmission of the narrative, according to the classics, will lead to a negative consequence.
7. Therefore, the unfinished manipulative influence on the subconscious of the masses probably does not allow to definitively identify the real person of V.O. Zelensky with his character. Therefore, the effect of manipulative sacralization, heroization of his person will not be permanent, although it had the necessary effect for winning the elections. The imperfect myth only temporarily raised his electoral rating to the maximum possible. The euphoric perception of him as a flawless leader who will magically bring some actual benefits to everyone has its natural limitations. Having maintained his own popularity for some time thanks to the social inertia of mass opinion, V.O. Zelensky will be forced to demonstrate his competence in all areas of political skill again and again in order to maintain the rating.

Thus, the proof of the hypothesis about the initially manipulative nature of the “Servant of the People” series indicates the strengthening of populist tendencies as a natural moment of the process of democratization of Ukrainian society.

However, Russia’s full-scale armed aggression significantly corrected the situation. It would be difficult to predict the ups and downs of the presidential rating if the President, for example, decided not to stay in his post in the most critical initial period of the war, when there was a real threat to his life. The war united the Ukrainian nation, the vast majority of political parties stopped the populist struggle for spheres of influence in the parliament, and expressed rather restrained slogans aimed at uniting all levels of power for the common victory over the invader. What is happening in Ukraine after February 24, 2022 can be described by the concept of “uniting around the flag” (Kuijpers, 2019). It is fair to say, though, that the principled and strong-willed position of Vol. Zelensky in the defense of Ukraine gives him the moral right to hold this flag with dignity. At the same time, it can be predicted that in the future it may become the subject of secondary heroization of this character as an archetypal fighter, warrior, martyr, etc. However, this political myth-making is the subject of another study.

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