






## Rap artists' identity in archetypal roles of hero and seeker:

### A linguistic perspective

Nataliia Kravchenko <sup>a</sup> , Olena Zhykharieva <sup>b 1</sup> , Yuliia Kononets <sup>c</sup> 

<sup>a</sup> Kyiv National Linguistic University, Kyiv, Ukraine

<sup>b</sup> Kyiv National Linguistic University, Kyiv, Ukraine

<sup>c</sup> Kyiv National Linguistic University, Kyiv, Ukraine

#### APA Citation:

Kravchenko, N., Zhykharieva, O., & Kononets, Y. (2021). Rap artists' identity in archetypal roles of hero and seeker: A linguistic perspective. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(1), 646-661. Doi: 10.52462/jlls.44

Submission Date:25/12/2020

Acceptance Date:20/02/2021

#### Abstract

The study identifies the archetypal motives of the Hero and the Seeker in modern rap lyrics, demonstrating a certain archetypal basis of the rap artists' identity. The problem of the archetype-identity correlation has been solved through the use of the method prioritizing the discursive role invariant as the index of the artists' both psychic dispositions and cultural-semiotic background, thus performing identity eliciting function. The aim of the article is to identify the rappers' archetypal roles of Hero and Seeker based on the linguistic and narrative devices. Four motive-descriptors underlying the Hero archetype are manifested by role invariants of Champion-winner, Warrior-soldier, prophet / savior and noble rescuer. Each of them is based either on the metaphorical interpretation of rap performance as the sporting contest, a battle at war, the Universe and blessing, or on allusions to precedential characters significant for the rap artists' self-identification. Narrative manifestations of the Hero formation involve five correlations with stages of the Hero's Journey associated with Joseph Campbell's Monomyth: Ordinary World of childhood and adolescence; obstacles and enemies; Inmost Cave as an inner conflict and fears the Hero has to face; metaphorical "death" foregrounded by symbols of "beyond world" or transition space between the worlds; a transfiguration into a new status in a new world of luxury and success, "awarded" by material symbols of prosperity.

*Keywords:* archetypal motives; archetypal role; linguistic and narrative devices; rap artists' identity; rap lyrics

## 1. Introduction

The problem of the formation and manifestation of identity in the subculture of hip-hop and, more broadly, in popular culture remains one of the most relevant in modern interdisciplinary paradigm, since it resonates with the existential search of an individual for himself / his group in relation to the Other and the Others. Within the metamodernistic paradigm (Van den Akker et al., 2017), emerged from postmodernism philosophy, the problem of identity gains an additional ground. Paradoxically blending the message of super-tolerance with an urge to disengage from any paradigm, metamodernistic philosophy of "all-acceptance" (Kravchenko, 2019, p. 12) threatens to a certain

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [olena.zhykharieva@knlu.edu.ua](mailto:olena.zhykharieva@knlu.edu.ua)

extent the sense of identity, as one that involves some collective experience (Howard, 2010), that is, it relies on certain constants.

The search for stable and unchanging parameters in the structure of identity explains the revival of interest to the problem of the archetypes' identity correlation. Taking this into account, the "metamodernistic" identity of the rap artist viewed through the lens of its archetypal patterns is of particular interest both for linguistic and interdisciplinary investigations.

The article focuses on the linguistic and narrative markers of archetypal motives, manifested by rap artists' discourse roles. This approach may be useful in explicating the mechanisms of foregrounding and perceiving archetypal information with a special emphasis on its figurative, intuitive (implicit) and symbolic components, which explains the topicality of this study.

With this in mind, the article bases on the premise that various aspects of the rappers' discursive identity can be explained by a set of archetypes, marked by role motives, revealed through semantic, narrative-structural, conceptual, stylistic and pragmatic parameters of rap discourse. The aim of the article is to identify the rappers' archetypal roles of Hero and Seeker based on the linguistic and narrative devices.

The most common archetypal images in modern rap discourse include the "predictable" archetypes of Rebel, Outlaw (as expressing the rap protest ideology and aesthetics) (Kravchenko & Snitsar, 2019, pp. 83–85) and Lover (inherent to rap lyrics). Less predictable though frequent ones are the archetypes of Sage, Magician and Trickster as well as Hero and Seeker archetypes.

The archetypal facets of the rappers' identity manifested by role motives of Hero and Seeker remain unexplored in linguistic research, defining the novelty of this study.

## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1. Archetypal analysis: The integration of psychological and cultural approaches

The archetypically bound roles are traditionally studied in the framework of the symbolic, narrative or dramaturgical functions of characters rooted in mythology-based Joseph Campbell's Hero Journey (Campbell, 1949) as well as in the abstract role-functions of W. Propp's fairy-tale characters (1968).

In particular, mythology-based archetypal roles of central characters in stories, movies and human life (personal narratives) are distinguished by numerous psychological and literary criticism studies (Frye, 2000; Izod, 2001; Pearson, 1995). The characters' role-playing, analyzed in this vein in archetypal framework, is primarily focused on cultural (literary) archetypes, while rap lyrics in its associative and intuitive facets also bases on subconscious patterns, that is on psychological archetypes. Among the academic areas that mostly contribute to the development of the theory of psychological archetypes, priority is given to archetypal psychology (Jung, 1969; Jung, 1976; Pearson & Dollinger, 2004; Indick, 2004) providing analytical tools for identifying and classifying *personality archetypes*, applied in marketing, branding, media research, etc. Moreover, this approach introduced the multifaceted taxonomies of the basic archetypes, based on descriptive motives used in our research for identification of archetypal roles.

Integrative framework for archetypal studies, reconciling the psychological and cultural approaches, is proposed by "neo-archetypal theory" in which archetypes act as a set of mental dispositions whose specific manifestations are shaped by culture and situation (Lindenfeld, 2009). Therefore, archetypes are viewed as: (1) story characters, (2) psychologically motivated mental models like self- or other-schemas and prototypes, operating at an automatic or unconscious level, (3)

triggers of intense emotional responses, and (4) culturally enduring phenomena, which are easily learned and widely recognizable (Faber & Mayer, 2009).

Another input into “reconciliation” of psychological and cultural archetypes has been made by works, which relate archetypes with the life cycle and basic psychological needs both of each human and ethnic group (Frazer, 1922; Propp, 1968) in their responses to the trials of surrounding world (Frye, 2000). In linguistics the study of archetypes is predominantly carried out in the cognitive-semiotic framework aimed at revealing the archetypal basis of symbols, image and metaphors (Bieliakhova, 2014; Tsur, 1992), which can rely both on psychological and cultural archetypes. The most “traditional” genre in the study of archetypes is poetry (Bodkin, 1934; Campbell, 1988 p. 286), where they appear impulsively and thus partly unconsciously (Jung, 1969), embodied in metaphors, symbolic imagery and narrative plot-lines.

Investigations of various aspects of the rappers’ identity mainly focus on its racial and gender dimensions (Hodge, 2018; Donnetrice, 2012; Haaken et al., 2012). However, only a few studies touch on an issue of the archetypal basis of such an identity in its discursive role manifestations, which remains therefore a new and unexplored problem in modern linguistic and interdisciplinary research.

## 2.2. Role functions in identity construction: Different theories convergency

An approach chosen in this article prioritizes the role-playing invariant in identification of archetypes, related to rap artists’ discursive identity. This is due to the fact that discursive roles (a) externalize ‘subject positioning’, cognitively based on the psychic dispositions and cultural-semiotic experience of the role performer, related, respectively, to psychological and cultural archetypes; (b) perform the identity constructive and identity eliciting functions.

Let us dwell briefly on each of the above-mentioned functions of discursive roles. The role choice and role construction are mastered by ‘subject positions’ as representations of various roles and possible selves. Such versions, in turn, are determined, in addition to sets of dialogic practices resulted in identity categories (Sacks, 1992), either by dominant discourses (Bamberg et al., 2011), with socially / institutionally sanctioned role models, or intertextual macro scripts, basic narratives adopted from various semiotic products – from fairy tales and cartoons to theater, fiction, etc., where the cultural archetypes basically come from.

The correlative role-identity facet is explored by Role Identity Theory (Grube & Piliavin, 2000), converged in its results with the Subject Positions Theory (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001), Face-Negotiation Theory (Goffman, 1967; Kravchenko & Pasternak, 2018b; Spencer-Oatey, 2007) and the Membership Categorization Analysis within a conversation analytic framework, focused on the categorical dimensions of roles in interactions (Sacks, 1992; Stokoe, 2012). The convincing results in this vein were obtained by dramaturgical analysis (Stebbins, 2013) based on a role as a central concept used by individuals to present themselves to others and identify one’s function in collaborative construction of institutional, cultural and everyday reality.

Of particular interest to the article are also findings about the identity-building capacity of the role invariants in one-many interaction (Kravchenko, Pasternak, 2018b; Spencer-Oatey, 2007).

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Sample / Texts

The data analyzed in this paper encompass the lyrics of famous Afro-American rap singers and songwriters, i.e. Kendrick Lamar, Taylor, the Creator, Asap Rocky, XXXTENTACION, Juice WRLD.

The sample comprises 135 items selected from 29 songs. The selection has been based on two principal criteria: 1) availability of key words or concepts (designated metaphorically, symbolically or allusively) associated with motive-descriptors of the Hero or Seeker archetypes: the list of descriptors is contained in studies on the theory of psychological and cultural archetypes (Faber & Mayer, 2009; Jung, 1969; Pearson & Dollinger, 2004; Shadraconis, 2013), and also follows from the definitions of archetypes available in the literature; 2) availability of narration component as narrative development of the rap song is one of the inherent conditions for both the formation of the Hero and the search-travel of the Seeker. The research material would look much more presentable if all fragments identified on the basis of the indicated criteria were included in it. Unfortunately, only a part of the material was used, since for ethical reasons we excluded from the sample the fragments containing vocabulary and other types of diseuphemization.

### 3.2. *Instruments*

The article relies on a comprehensive theoretical framework that encompasses archetypal analysis in linguistic framework (Bieliekhova, 2014), elements of narrative analysis (Propp, 1968; Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Jones, 2003; Zhykharieva, 2014; Zhykharieva, 2018) together with contextual interpretative analyses, methods of stylistic analysis (Simpson, 2004; Zhykharieva, 2018), and pragmatic analysis (Bach, 2012) as well as analysis in terms of conceptual metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Steen et al., 2010).

Stylistic analysis has been employed to identify stylistic imagery-creating devices foregrounding archetypically bound discursive roles. Narrative and contextual interpretative analyses are applied to reveal narrative structures associating the Hero's lifepath in rap narrative with the archetypal plot of the Hero journey with its main milestones.

Analysis from the point of view of conceptual metaphors is aimed at exploring metaphorically encoded concepts underlying the roles of Hero and Seeker in rap lyrics. Pragmatic analysis is used to derive discursive implicatures that restore semantic coherence, violated by apparent incongruence of sequential semantic links and its corresponding cooperative maxims flouting.

### 3.3. *Procedures of data analysis*

The study is intended to verify the general hypotheses that rap narrative is organized by archetypically bound role invariants that determine the linguistic and narrative devices within the rap texts. The paper operationalizes the concept of role as a discursive manifestation of one of the archetypal motives marked by interrelated conceptual-semantic, narrative, figurative-symbolic and stylistic parameters of rap discourse.

The collected data are analyzed as follows:

1. The rap narratives have been segmented into units of utterances coherent either thematically or, mostly, associatively. To identify associatively coherent pieces of information we relied on metaphors, allusions, similes and other stylistic devices creating symbolic imagery.
2. Identified segments are interpreted upon criterion of their association with particular role invariants of the rap-narrator / protagonist.
3. Each role is compared with a specific motive-descriptor it is intended for.

The identified role-descriptors correlations are further applied to specify different archetypes.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. The Hero Archetype: multifaceted role structure

Hero Archetype is manifested by a set of discursive roles of Champion-winner, Warrior-soldier, prophet/savior and noble rescuer, embodying the archetype motives' structure. Such roles are consonant both with the cultural archetypal pattern of the Hero (Brunel, 1992; Raglan, 2011) struggling against external evil to restore justice in the world, and with the psychological archetype of Hero, aimed to harness and tame his "inner dragons" in the long-hoped-for and expected triumph of consciousness over the unconscious (Jung, 1969, pp. 151–181; Pearson, 1995).

The first facet of the Hero's motives involves the discursive roles of prophet, savior, Champion-winner and Warrior-soldier. We borrowed the concept of motive from the interdisciplinary neo-archetypal theory (Faber & Mayer, 2009; Jung, 1969; Pearson & Dollinger, 2004; Shadraconis, 2013), in which motives/motivations, generalizing universal characters, plots, behavioral models, social values etc., determine the structure of each archetype. Motive is to be distinguished from motive-recurring theme – a concept, used in narrative analysis.

The role of Prophet is foregrounded by conceptual metaphors: (a) SAYING IS CREATING (WORDS / TEXTS = THE UNIVERSE), which refers to the ability of a word (text) as a semiotic code to construct reality, and (b) SONG IS BLESSING, which bases on the similar creative / inspiring effect of the song and blessing (see examples in italics in the table 1). Both metaphors foreground the implicit meaning about the influence of the rapper's art on the minds and souls of his fans.

The roles of the Prophet are homogeneous in their functions with the role of the Savior of a certain group / community, whose values are associated with the collective component of the rapper's identity, lexically indexed by inclusive pronouns *you*, *we*, etc. as in: "*Tell me when destruction gonna be my fate, Gonna be your fate, gonna be our faith*" (KL, DNA), "*Forgetting all the pain and hurt we caused each other in these streets, If I respect you, we unify and stop the enemy from killing us*" (KL, Mortal Man).

The role of the Savior often marked by allusions to precedential characters associated in a particular group / community with the champions of human dignity as it is shown by Table 1.

**Table 1.** Hero Archetype: Discursive roles of *Prophet* and *Savior*

The linguistic markers of archetypal roles	Discursive role	Supporting data
To inspire people and teach them some sacred knowledge: metaphorically marked or implicated lexically  <i>metaphors:</i> SAYING IS CREATING; SONG IS BLESSING	a role of Prophet	" <i>Salute the truth, when the prophet say</i> " (KL, DNA);  " <i>Feelin' like a vigilante or a missionary</i> " (AR, 1Train);  " <i>But a prophet ain't a prophet 'til they ask you this question</i> " (KL, Mortal Man);  " <i>Yeah, I was put here to lead the lost souls</i> " (Juice WRLD, Empty);  " <i>I try to prevail, but when I preach, I only hurt their sales</i> " (AR, 1Train);  " <i>Let these words be your Earth and moon, you consume every message</i> " (KL, Mortal Man);  " <i>I freed you from bein' a slave in your mind, you're</i>

To defeat what threatens his community: explicit slogans; allusions to precedential characters significant for the rap artist's self-identification	a role of Savior	<p><i>very welcome, You tell me my song is more than a song, it's surely a blessing</i>" (KL, Mortal Man).</p> <p><i>"How many riots can it be until them Black lives matter?"</i> (TTC, Foreword);</p> <p><i>"Nat Turner would be so proud of me"</i> (TTC, I Ain't Got Time!);</p> <p><i>"Want you to love me like Nelson, want you to hug me like Nelson"</i> (KL, Mortal Man);</p> <p><i>"The ghost of Mandela, hope my flows stay propellin'"</i> (KL, Mortal Man).</p>
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If the evil materializes into an external enemy or adversary, then the Hero becomes represented in the rap lyrics by the roles of Champion-winner and Warrior-soldier (see Table 2).

The role of Champion-winner is foregrounded by a conceptual metaphor RAP PERFORMANCE IS SPORTING CONTEST, which embodies the ideas of struggling for a position in show business and superiority over other players (*"Getting fit, I'mma win the chip"* (AR et al, Runnin).

The role of Warrior-soldier relies on the metaphor RAP PERFORMANCE IS BATTLE AT WAR implying the similarity between show business (or, more broadly, life itself) and the battlefield (*"I said I'm 'bout to go to war"* (TTC, See You Again)) as it is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Hero Archetype: Discursive roles of *Champion-winner* and *Warrior-soldier*

The linguistic markers of archetypal roles	Discursive role	Supporting data
<p>Always achieves goals struggling for a position in show business: metaphorically displayed by the images of sports player – mostly boxers' <i>metaphor</i>:</p> <p>RAP PERFORMANCE IS SPORTING CONTEST</p>	the role of Champion-winner	<p><i>"I just win again, then win again like Wimbledon"</i> (KL, DNA);</p> <p><i>"Soon as the bell go ding, doe</i></p> <p><i>I'll be in the ring though, we can shoot cinco"</i> (AR et al, Runnin).</p>
<p>fighters visible and invisible enemies <i>metaphor</i>:</p> <p>RAP PERFORMANCE IS BATTLE AT WAR</p>	the role of Warrior-soldier	<p><i>"I carry traits of a traumatized soldier"</i> (AR, ITrain);</p> <p><i>"I'mma flex, yes, I'm the best, I'm the veteran"</i> (AR et al, Runnin);</p> <p><i>"Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, soldier's"</i> (KL, DNA).</p>

According to the universal cultural tradition, the Hero has high moral principles and usually distinguished between good and evil, justice and injustice. However, in rap narrative the concepts of "evil" and "justice" are often interpreted in a rather specific way – as a "fair" retaliation of the "lyrical hero" to his envious and imitators, which does not always correspond to moral principles: *"I'mma shake his brain, I'm gon' never rest"* (AR et al, Runnin).

On the other hand, in addition to the metaphorical representation of the Hero's victories in the sports arena and on the battlefield, the role of the winner in rap lyrics is usually marked with symbols of the rapper's success and prosperity: *"Gotta see how I'm chillin' once I park this luxury car"* (KL, How Much a Dollar Cost), *"You see fireworks and Corvette tire skrrt the boulevard"* (KL, DNA),

“Sippin’ from a Grammy, walkin’ in the buildin’, Diamond in the ceilin’, marble on the floors” (KL, DNA).

To demonstrate a convincing victory, the plot of an unhappy and impoverished childhood is used, in contrast emphasizing today’s achievements of the rapper winner (“From ugly to comfortably, suddenly (...) Times was so ugly and now I’m comfortable” (AR, Suddenly). In addition, the transition point from an unhappy hopeless childhood to a prosperous adult life is in a certain way associated with the archetypal plot of the Hero’s initiation, which also involves some correlations with other stages of the Hero’s Journey.

#### 4.1.1. Rap lyrics and archetypal plot of the Hero journey: unexpected correspondences

Rap lyrics quite often contains confessional motives “about childhood”, which imply a meaning about the impossibility of coming from the ghetto to achieve such success: “This is Paula’s oldest son, I know murder, conviction, Burners, boosters, burglars, ballers, dead, redemption” (KL, DNA), “My la familia go hard Down to my inlaws, they oulaws with no laws” (AR, 1Train); “My mother raised me a single parent” (TTC, Bastard), “I used to be bullied for honor classes” (TTC, Bastard). In this regard, most rap narratives are built as contrast storylines about the past (with the recurrent motives of fatherlessness, misery, prison, drugs), and prosperous present of the rapper-protagonist, which involves the implicit antithesis between the concepts “poverty – wealth” and “humiliation – superiority”: “When I was 9, on cell, motel, we didn’t have nowhere to stay, At 29, I’ve done so well, hit cartwheel in my estate” (KL, DNA); “Member, I ain’t ever have no home. Now I got a penthouse and a beach home” (AR, M’s).

If to compare the phase of the rappers’ childhood or adolescence with the archetypal milestones of the Hero’s travel, a number of interesting observations suggests itself. Firstly, this phase of the “past” is absolutely necessary in order to show the transfiguration (metaphorical rebirth) of the hero, which is possible only “in contrast” to the status that he / she had in the past. Secondly, the obligatory moment in “heroization” is overcoming the obstacles, one of which is the seemingly insurmountable gap between the ghetto world and the world of luxury. Overcoming this abyss, the Hero fights both with circumstances / trials and with external and internal enemies, which is identified by roles of the champion-winner, the warrior-soldier and *the fighter with oneself*, and wins an award – a transfiguration into a new status in a new world of luxury and success.

Consequently, despite all the differences in values, ultimate goals and stages of the path, the Hero’s lifepath in rap narrative is associated with the fairy tale archetypal plot and Campbell’s Hero’s Journey.

In particular, the rap protagonist transformation is often conceptualized in terms of “death-rebirth”. Signs of metaphorical or hypothetical death primarily include words explicitly indicating death, dying, suicide attempts (“Lord knows is I’m dyin’, baby” (KL, Loyalty); “I cut my wrist and play piano cause I’m so depressed” (TTC, Bastard); “Bury me alive” (KL, Radioactive); “Would you know where the sermon is if I died in this next line?” (KL, Mortal Man); “Dead alive, it’s in my repertoire, forever even high” (AR, Pain); “Bloody ink on my pad spelled suicide” (AR, Phoenix).

The associations with death are foregrounded by various stylistic devices. Thus, “Some food for thought? This food for death” (TTC, Bastard) relies on a metaphor “Death is animated, it needs food as a regular supply of energy”. At the same time, as a second part of enumeration, following another metaphor “food for thought”, it simultaneously implies the idea of digesting the death, to obtain the full understanding of it.

The simile “cold blood like the winter” in “My wrist is all red from the cutter, Dripping cold blood like the winter” (TTC, Bastard), violates the ontological / common sense presuppositions (Kravchenko, Pasternak, 2018a) “blood cannot be cold in a living person”. The incongruence is

reinforced through the connotative meaning associated with a word “winter” (“cold is an attribute of winter”). From viewpoint of pragmatics, inconsistency is overcome by discursive implicature “it’s about the world of death”, which, in turn, is triggered by a violation of all cooperative maxims: quantity (it is unclear why blood is cold), quality / truthfulness (it is implausible / requires an explanation that the hero’s blood is really cold), style / manner (it is ambiguous and obscure what is really meant) and contextual relevancy as blood dripping from a cut wound cannot be cold (out of the context, the expression “blood as cold as winter” would not be a violation of semantic coherence, i.e. characterizing a rapper as a cold-blooded person). The maxims’ flouting triggers the implicature about the world of death (additionally maintained by the connotative meaning about winter as a period of temporary death).

The concept of “death” is also foregrounded in rap narratives by symbolic images associated with “beyond world”. In this case some symbolic images identified in rap texts are rooted in psychological archetypes of “woods” and “sea / ocean” (associated with both “the other worlds” and transition space between the worlds), “dead flowers”, etc. For example: “*How much land can it be until I run in the ocean? (...) See, I was in the woods with flowers, rainbows, and posies, Fallin’ outta my pocket, but ya’ll want to know if I swam to cool down (...) And if I drown and don’t come back. Who’s gonna know?*” (TTC, Foreword).

Thus, the images of *forest* and *sea* are loaded with archetypal symbolism as being associated in different cultures with the boundary space between this world and “the other worlds”. Moreover, the forest, described by Tyler, the Creator, is filled with flowers – a symbol of circulation: birth, life, death and rebirth: “*I was in the woods with flowers*”. At the same time, a flower (especially a plucked one) symbolizes the transience of being and transition to non-existence: “posies falling out of my pocket” added by the image of the rainbow traditionally symbolizing the transition and transformation: “*See, I was in the woods with flowers, rainbows and posies*”.

One more stage associating the Hero’s path in rap narrative with archetypal storylines is Inmost Cave as the fears and doubts the Hero has to overcome. The rap Hero primarily faces and thus fights the fear of losing popularity, fans, inspiration, money: “*What if my accountant ain’t payin’ my taxes? Fillin’ his pockets and IRS show up asking me questions (...) What if my music too weird for the masses? And I’m only known for tweets more than beats*” (TTC, November); “*Y’all don’t even know about my existence, it’s like I’m dead to you*” (TTC, Pilot).

However, without overcoming internal fears, the Hero cannot move on. Becoming a part of Inmost Cave, real fears and feelings are conceptualized metaphorically in metaphoric models (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Hero Archetype: Discursive role of the fighter with oneself

The linguistic markers of archetypal roles	Discursive role	Supporting data
To fight own fears / thoughts / feelings <i>metaphors:</i> THOUGHTS ARE SEPARATE FROM THE BODY, ABLE TO HIDE; INNER FEARS / COMPLEXES ARE PRISON; FEAR IS SEPARATE FROM THE ONE TO WHOM THEY BELONG;	the role of the fighter with oneself	“ <i>It was always me vs the world</i> ” “ <i>Until I found it’s me vs me</i> ” (KL, Duckworth); “ <i>I feel like my thoughts in the basement</i> ” (KL, Feel); “ <i>I come apart, this can’t last forever</i> ” (AR, I come apart); “ <i>My mind, body, soul imprisoned</i> ” (AR, Everyday); “ <i>I practiced runnin’ from fear, guess I had some good luck</i> ” (KL, Fear); “ <i>I’m on my convict, don’t drop bars, I drop prisons</i> ”



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FEELING IS POISON;	(AR, 1Train);
FEAR IS A PERSECUTOR;	<i>“Feelin’ of fallin’, of fallin’ apart with</i>
FEAR IS A DESTRUCTION;	<i>Darkest hours, lost it (...)</i>
FEAR IS AN ADVERSARY;	<i>The feelin’ is toxic, I feel like I’m boxin’ demons”</i>
FEAR IS A SUPERNATURAL POWER;	(KL, Feel).
FEAR AS A LIVING BEING;	
FEAR IS GRAVITY, WHICH DOES NOT LET FLY UP.	

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Consequently, the rap Hero overcomes in the space of rap discourse a number of stages, reminiscent of the archetypal milestones of the Hero’s journey in Joseph Campbell’s *Monomyth*: detachment of the world of childhood and adolescence, fighting enemies, overcoming Inmost Cave, experiencing a metaphorical “death” and transfiguration into a new status of a “super star” with corresponding “awards” (fame, money, etc.).

However, as opposed to fairy-tail or mythological transformation of the Hero, resulted, first of all, in his spiritual rebirth, the rap protagonist evolves at the ‘consumer’– mundane level or, at least, experience a psychological emancipation from the past. In rare cases in the process of transition, the author-performer solves (or define) a problem of meaning and purpose of life at the transcendental or sacred levels as in K. Lamar’s “Damn”.

The archetypal theme of the Hero’s Journey brings Hero closer to the Seeker.

#### 4.2. *The Seeker Archetype: wanderer or experimenter?*

The Seeker archetype resides on two principal discursive roles manifesting archetypal motives of wandering along the roads of life and searching for freedom, discovery and the unknown.

##### 4.2.1. *The role of Explorer: experiments with forms and meanings*

The role of Explorer in rap lyrics is manifested conceptually, lexically and stylistically. Words, appropriate to this role, denote the concepts of the “unknown” and “freedom”. Thus, in the lyrics “Levitate” a key verb metaphorically designates the artist’s striving to free himself from all life addictions and temptation:

*Love won’t get you high as this*  
*Drugs won’t get you high as this*  
*Fame won’t get you high as this*  
*Chains won’t get you high as this*  
*Juice won’t get you high as this*  
*Crew won’t get you high as this*  
*Hate won’t get you high as this*  
*Levitate, levitate, levitate, levitate (KL, Levitate)*

In a similar vein, a search for unattainable, absolute excellence is consistent with the Explorer’s archetypal motive in “Pilot” by Tyler, the Creator, which is embodied by a set of conceptual metaphors: WINGS ARE EXCELLENCE IN RAPPING; WINGS ARE INSPIRATION, WHICH CANNOT BE BOUGHT. But wings alone are not enough to be at the “cloud level”, that is “beyond”

wings. Further developing metaphorical comparison of creativity (in rapping) with flying the rapper implies his exceptional place even among the best: “*I’m in first class*” means “I am among those who have wings – among first-class rappers”, “*but I feel like coach*” means that, “unlike all others, my work knows no boundaries, it is on a cloud level”:

*You can buy a car, you can buy many things*  
*You can buy happiness, but you can’t buy wings*  
*You can buy a parachute, you can buy a parrot*  
*But you can’t buy a pair of wings, aerodynamic*  
*To stay cloud level*  
*That’s why I’m in first class but I feel like coach*  
*Cause I’m in first class but I feel like coach (TTC, Pilot)*

From a stylistic point of view, the role of the Explorer involves the use of unusual semantic-stylistic devices. The integration of different expressive means can be illustrated by the lyrics “1Train”, “Mortal Man” which employ:

- (a) puns: “*Barely even conscious, talkin’ to my conscience*” (AR, 1Train); “*Murphy’s Law, Generation X – will I ever be your ex?*” (KL, Mortal Man)
- (b) unconventional simile: “*Is this relationship a fake, or real as the heavens be?*” (KL, Mortal Man); “*I hold grudges like bad judges*” (KL, Mortal Man); “*Gettin’ deeper in these flows like conches*” (AR, 1Train),
- (c) antithesis:  
*In a ballpark with all sharks and a blindfold*  
*I rhyme cold, my K hot, your 9 cold,*  
*That bark like K9’ on (AR, 1Train)*

In (c) the trailblazing experiments with stylistic devices rely on the interplay of different meanings of words “cold” and “hot”. The rapper alternately ascribes to himself the characteristics of “cold” and “hot”, using the adjective “cold” as a positively connotated word related to his masterly ability to rhyme / to rap (“cold” in a meaning “awesome”, “top-of-the-line”). However, in the same phrase the adjective “cold” attributed to the rapper’s opponents is interpreted in its negative meaning (as “weak” and “useless”), thereby creating an antithesis to Kendrick’s “hot” rapping.

Moreover, in the same passage, the rapper also uses a pun based on two allusive meanings: the first one refers to his name, abbreviated as “K”, and the second hints at another abbreviation K-9, associated with a police dog from the movie “K-9”. Correspondingly, by using stylistic devices Kendrick implies that the enemy’s gun “barks” in the same way as a dog from K-9 whines. In other words, it makes no sense to take seriously the “flow” of the rapper’s opponents. In addition, “cold” and “hot” are employed here in their direct meanings: while the Kendrick’s gun is hot as it is always “in action”, the weapon of his enemies is cold since it is not being used. At the same time, it is completely transparent that hot and cold pistols metaphorically indicate the skill and popularity of the rapper and the futility of his opponents.

The role of Explorer, viewed through the prism of its archetypal motive and linguistic markers is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Seeker Archetype: Discursive role of *Explorer*

The linguistic markers of archetypal roles	Discursive role	Supporting data
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Search for freedom, discovery and the unknown, going beyond the pale; markers: experiments with meanings and forms <i>metaphors</i> : TO RAP IS TO BE SKY-HIGH; RAPPING IS FREEDOM; RAPPING IS LEVITATION.	the role of Explorer	<p>“Create, explore, expand, conquer” (AR, Praise the Lord (Da Shine);</p> <p>“Yeah, I make the rules, I ain’t following the dress code” (AR et al, Runnin);</p> <p>“Everything I do groundbreaking” (AR, Distorted Records);</p> <p>“Moonwalkin’ on the sun, barefoot, with shades on” (AR, 1Train);</p> <p>“‘Cause comparatively speakin’, my reach is beyond the bubble</p> <p>That they put me in, my vision’s beyond the Hubble’s” (AR, 1Train).</p>
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4.2.2. *The role of Wanderer: metaphorical comprehension of life as the wandering*

Another archetypically bound role of the Seeker is the role of Wanderer marked by means relating (explicitly or metaphorically) to the archetypal image of the road, symbolically associated with Life as an eternal movement, a road without end, foregrounding the conceptual metaphors LIFE IS A ROAD and LIFE IS A JOURNEY: “How many cars can I buy ’til I run out of drive? How much drive can I have until I run outta of road? How much road can they pave until I run outta land?” (TTC, Foreword).

Viewed through the lens of the Hero’s journey, the archetype of Wanderer is indispensable stage of becoming the Hero, related to the change of his status during his life journey. For example, Asap Rocky’s lyrics “1Train” metaphorically correlates with a change in the status of the protagonist, which is foregrounded by his use of various vehicles: from the metro train in his “past” life to Lambardzhini in his present.

Sometimes the Wanderer’s archetypal motive of “search for the meaning of life”, is revealed by the role of the pilgrim-seeker of God, which is not quite usual for rap texts. In its turn, the motive “search for God” correlates with one of the archetypal story lines in a quest for identity as it is pointed out by W.L. Howard (2010).

The feeling of separation from God and search of “restoration following repentance” (Howard, 2010, p. 30) is one of the main motives of the Kendrick Lamar’s album “Damn”:

*I’m talkin’ fear, fear of losin’ loyalty from pride,  
‘Cause my DNA won’t let me involve in the light of God,  
I’m talkin’ fear, fear that my humbleness is gone (KL, Fear)*

The role of Wanderer with its corresponding archetypal motive and linguistic means is specified in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Seeker Archetype: Discursive role of *Wanderer*

The linguistic markers of archetypal roles	Discursive role	Supporting data
Wandering along the roads of life in search of new meanings and sensations; marked by explicit and metaphorically interpreted archetypal image of road and	the role of Wanderer	<p>“Travelin’ through the infinity, uh” (XXXTENTACION, Infinity (888);</p> <p>“I just wanna soar through the space, let the wind hit my face” (TTC, Pilot);</p>

travelling, i.e. by air, to other worlds, between worlds

*metaphors:*

LIFE IS ROAD;

LIFE IS JOURNEY;

LIFE JOURNEY IS SEARCH FOR GOD

*“Driving fast the wrong way, I swear life is like a one-way”* (AR, Ghetto Symphony);

*“Flying through the purple sky*

*And I’m in a different world”* (AR, Kissin’ Pink).

## 5. Conclusions

The article contributes to the problem of the archetype-identity correlation, viewed through the prism of the archetypal motive-descriptors that are identified through an invariant set of rap artists’ roles.

The role invariant is prioritized in the research as an “intermediary link” between the archetype and rap artists’ discursive identity since it externalizes psychic dispositions and cultural-semiotic background of the role performer, thus exercising identity eliciting function. At the same time, it performs the identity designing function since by involving rather unexpected archetypes of the Hero and the Seeker as the “attractive” versions of selves the rappers attempt (subconsciously or intentionally) to overcome too simplistic public stereotypes about themselves thus employing a specific impression management strategy, which somehow affect the desire of rap audience to identify themselves with rap identity. Archotypically bound role invariants shape interrelated conceptual-semantic, narrative, figurative-symbolic and stylistic parameters of rap discourse.

Four motive-descriptors underlying the Hero archetype correlate with corresponding role invariants of Champion-winner, Warrior-soldier, prophet / savior and noble rescuer. The role of Champion-winner metaphorically combines the conceptual spheres of rap performance and sporting contest. “Warrior-soldier” bases on the metaphorical interpretation of rap performance as a battle at war. Prophet / savior is designated explicitly and by conceptual metaphors “SAYING IS CREATING / WORDS ARE THE UNIVERSE” and “SONG IS BLESSING”, which foreground the discursive implicature about the influence of the rapper’s art on the minds and souls of his audience. The role of noble rescuer is indicated by slogan-type rap recitative and allusions to precedential characters significant for the rap artist’s self-identification.

Rap narrative reconstitutes at least 5 from 12 stages of the Hero’s Journey associated with Joseph Campbell’s Monomyth: the first stage is Ordinary World of childhood and adolescence, which is often reinterpreted in rap texts as the main obstacles the rap artists face on the path to their present-day success (the role of winner). The second stage is the enemies the Hero must fight (the role of warrior-soldier). The next identified stage is Inmost Cave as an inner conflict, doubts and fears the Hero has to face. Sometimes the Inmost Cave is not limited to the inner world of the Hero, and acquires the characteristics of “external” evil (for the Hero’s inner group, mankind, Universe). In this case the Hero takes on the roles of the noble rescuer or a prophet. The next stage involves experiencing a metaphorical “death” designated either by words to denote death, dying, suicide attempts or by symbolic images associated with “beyond world” or transition space between the worlds, i.e. “woods”, “sea” and “dead flowers”. The last stage is a transfiguration into a new status in a new world of luxury and success resulted in the Hero’s “an award” by symbols of material prosperity.

Motive-descriptors underlying the Seeker archetype are manifested by role invariants of Wanderer and Explorer. The role of Explorer bases on the metaphorical interpretation of “perfection in rapping” as supernatural, unattainable states (levitation, staying at the cloud level). It is also characterized by

experiments with meanings and forms in creating non-standard stylistic devices: puns, simile, metaphor and antithesis. The role of Wanderer relies on the archetypal image of the road as a universal metaphor of a person's life.

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#### AUTHORS BIODATA

**Kravchenko Nataliia** is a Doctor of Science, Professor at Professor I.V. Korunets Department of English and German Philology and Translation at Kyiv National Linguistic University, Ukraine. Research interests are: discourse analysis, theoretical pragmatics, identity and role analysis, intercultural communication, cognitive and conceptual analysis.

**Zhykharieva Olena** is a Doctor of Science, Associate professor at Professor O. M. Morokhovsky Department of English Philology, Translation and Philosophy of Language at Kyiv National Linguistic University, Ukraine. Research interests are: cognitive linguistics, biblical studies, eco discourse.

**Kononets Yuliia** is a Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate professor at Professor I.V. Korunets Department of English and German Philology and Translation at Kyiv National Linguistic University, Ukraine. Research interests are: discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics.