

AFRO-AMERICAN RAP LYRICS VS FAIRY TALES: POSSIBLE WORLDS AND THEIR MEDIATORS

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Abstract: *The article aims to identify possible worlds and their mediators in their metaphorical, symbolic and archetypal properties in fairy tales and Afro-American rap lyrics. The rap lyrics semantic structure involves a great worlds variety. Some of them intersect with the fairy tale magic worlds. The world of death imagery indicated in the rap lyrics by demetaphorized compound imagery with a naturalistic-physiological component, is associated with the archetypally bound fairy tale “the other world”, denoted by fabulous toponyms and fairy topoi. The mediators of these worlds encompass some magical tools and super-abilities, designated by conceptual metaphors, metonymies and hyperbolized similes in the rap lyrics and by narrative means in fairy tales. The oneiric world is mediated by nominations of hallucinogens in the rap lyrics and sacred food and drinks in fairy tales. While the latter mediators add strength or serve as a means of correction of an evil character, based, respectively, on the narrative motifs of redemption and victory of good over evil, the rap oneiric mediators refer to fear and degradation, indicated by visual oneiric images. The mediators of world of inspiration, not appropriate to fairy-tales, use wings (ability to fly and counteract the gravity), designated by conceptual metaphors. The world of wonderful status transformation, inherent to the rap lyrics, is denoted by the symbols of material well-being, based on the archetypal narrative motifs of the hero transfiguration and reward.*

Keywords: possible worlds, mediators of transition, fairy tales, Afro-American rap lyrics, conceptual metaphor, archetypal symbolism, narrative motifs.

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Introduction

On the one hand, comparison of semiotic spaces of fairy tales and rap lyrics is an easy task, on the other hand, it is quite feasible as these spaces are characterized, oddly enough, by a number of common features. For example, in terms of their common symbolic topoi (Kravchenko, Davydova, Goltzova)¹, archetypal symbolism (N. Kravchenko, H. Brechak²), universal narrative models of the fairytale and rap hero "journey" (Kravchenko, Zhykharieva³), associated with transformation and transition to a new spiritual, sacred or simply profane-material status. In addition, fairy tales and rap lyrics involve various alternative "worlds", structuring their semiotics spaces that researchers point out both directly or indirectly (Kravchenko, Snitsar⁴; Kravchenko, Snitsar, Blidchenko-Naiko⁵).

The intersection of possible worlds in fairy tales and rap lyrics implies, in its turn, the existence of mediators, providing the transition between the worlds. The types of mediators may differ or coincide, revealing their archetypal and symbolic basis.

With that being said, **the purpose** of the article consists in identification and comprehensive comparative analysis of the mediators between fairy tales and rap lyrics worlds. **The multifaceted research objectives** are (a) to identify the types of mediators and their functions in actualizing an implicit meaning of the rap text and the symbolic subtext of the fairytale narrative; (b) to characterize the identified mediators in terms of their metaphorical, symbolic and archetypal properties; (c) to compare the mediators of transition in fairy tales and rap alternative worlds.

The analysis of the latest studies and publications

Taking into account a set of goals and objectives, the research involves three vectored theoretical and methodological basis: 1) works mainly structural-anthropological, concerned with mediation and mediators;

¹ N.K. Kravchenko; T.V. Davydova, & M.G. Goltsova, *A Comparative Study of Fairy Tale and Rap Narratives: Spaces Specificity. Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 9(3), 2020, 155-167.

² N. Kravchenko, & H. Brechak, Archetypal symbolism of African-American rap (based on Tylor the Creator "Foreword"). *Science and Education. A New Dimension. Philology*, 7(60), 2019, 204, 56-59.

³ N. Kravchenko, O. Zhykharieva, Rap artists' identity in archetypal roles of Hero and Seeker: A linguistic perspective. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*. Vol 16, No 4 (in print), 2020.

⁴ N. Kravchenko; V. Snitsar, Cultural archetypes in the construction of "possible worlds" of modern African-American rap (based on Kendrick Lamar's texts). *Euromentor Journal X* (4): 80-92, 2019.

⁵ N. Kravchenko; V., Snitsar, Blidchenko-Naiko, V., Paradoxes of rap artists' role identity: Sage, Magician or Trickster? *Cogito. Multidisciplinary research journal XII* (1): 179-195, 2020.

2) the fairy tale studies, which attempt to classify mediators and other characters with identical properties; 3) a few works focused on comparative characteristics of the fairytale and rap narratives from different research perspectives.

The term “mediation” was first introduced by Claude Lévi-Strauss in “The structural study of myth”⁶ as a means of solving the binary opposition, which can reflect with either contradictions in the world or dichotomies in the human mind –such as night and day, left and right, nature and culture, good-evil, rationality-irrationality, life and death.

Taking into account the fact that the fairy tales’ alternative worlds symbolically correlate with the realm of the dead (V. Propp⁷): the transformation of a rap lyrics hero (a rapper) is also associated with metaphorical death (rebirth in a new social and material status; spiritual renewal as a result of spiritual travel), the research hypothesizes that the mediators are primarily related to the binary opposition “life versus death”.

Another alternative world, also inherent in rap lyrics, is the world of the distorted time-space relationships associated with the hallucinogenic world. The mediators between the real and illusionary worlds are, correspondingly, associated with the opposition "reality – illusion".

Dealing with the fairy tale possible worlds, Lévi Strauss's mediators are somehow associated with Propp's charming aides, identified in "Morphology of a fairy tale"⁸, because such assistants also symbolize the transition to “the other world”. According to V. Propp¹⁰, the helper can be manifested by animals (a wolf, bird, horse), objects from which helpers appear (a tree, a box), objects that are endowed with magical power (a sword, a pair of boots, water), the magical qualities themselves (the ability to transform into an animal, to travel through time and space, to understand the animals’ language). Some of these objects and qualities-mediators are revealed in the rap lyrics as well, reinterpreted as the conceptual metaphors.

Very few comparative studies of fairytales and rap narratives focus on their symbolism, chronotope and archetypal plot lines (see above) while the issue of mediators between the worlds remain unexplored. Thus, it determines the novelty of this article.

⁶ C. Lévi-Strauss, The Structural Study of Myth. *Journal of American Folklore* 68(270):428–44, 1955.

⁷ V. Propp, *Morphology of the folktale*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011.

⁸ C. Lévi-Strauss, The Structural Study of Myth. *Journal of American Folklore* 68(270):428–44, 1955.

1. Database and methodology

The research data encompass the rap songs of famous American rappers and some Ukrainian, Russian and English fairy tales, whose textual space consists of more than one “alternative world” along with corresponding mediators of transition between the worlds. The data collection criteria involve explicit, metaphorical, symbolic nominations of the various worlds and their mediators, as well as narrative motifs associated with transition from life to death, transformation into animals, the acquisition of supernatural abilities, purification and renewal.

Method of analysis includes textual-interpretative analysis with some elements of narrative analysis (Dundes⁹; Jones¹⁰; Propp¹¹; Zhykharieva¹²) that helps to identify some narrative motifs associated with the transition between the worlds; stylistic analysis (Simpson¹³) to reveal stylistic devices to designate the alternative world and its mediators in the rap lyrics; the **conceptual metaphor** analysis (Lakoff, Johnson¹⁴; Steen¹⁵) by means of which the elements of conceptual blending are included (Fauconnier, Turner¹⁶; Handl, Schmid¹⁷).

Procedures of data analysis consists of 5 stages:

1. Sampling of research material based on the data collection criteria.
2. Identification of an archetypically bound, connected "the other world", prototypically associated with the kingdom of the dead and marked with the names of fairy topoi and fairy toponyms, as well as demetaphorized images and metaphorical hyperboles of the rap lyrics world with an emphasis on common and specific characteristics of the worlds and their linguistic devices.

⁹ J.A. Dundes, 2007, *The Meaning of Folklore* / Bronner, Simon J. (Ed.). University Press of Colorado. Th. Bunce. London: Macmillan and Co., 1878. - 205 p.

¹⁰ R.A. Jones, *Mixed Metaphors and Narrative Shifts: Archetypes*. *Theory and Psychology* 13 (5): 651-672, 2003.

¹¹ V., Propp, *Morphology of the folktale*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011.

¹² O., Zhykharieva, *Ecopoetics of English biblical discourse: concepts, images, narrations*. Kyiv: KNLU (in Ukrainian), 2018.

¹³ P. Simpson, *Stylistics: A resource book for students*. London: Routledge, 2004.

¹⁴ G. Lakoff, & M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

¹⁵ G. Steen; A.G. Dorst; J.B. Herrmann; A. Kaal, and T., Krennmayr, *Metaphor in usage*. *Cognitive Linguistics* 21(4), pp. 765-796, 2010.

¹⁶ Fauconnier, G., & Turner, M., *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books, 2002.

¹⁷ S. Handl, & H.-J. Schmid, Introduction. *Windows to the Mind: Metaphor, Metonymy, and Conceptual Blending*. *Mouton de Gruyter*, 2011, pp. 1-20.

3. Scrutinizing the types of mediators of inherent transition to the fairy tale and rap fabulous worlds in terms of their common and different features along with linguistic and narrative means of manifestation.

4. Identification of the oneiric world and its corresponding mediators of transition in the rap lyrics in comparison with the similar types of mediators in fairy tales, based on the analysis of oneiric visual imagery and fairy tale narrative motifs.

5. Specification of the mediators associated with the artistic inspiration world and their status transformation.

2. Alternative worlds

Since the mediators of the worlds transition presuppose the existence of mentioned above so called alternative worlds, a preliminary stage of the study consists in these worlds' identification in the mentioned above fairy tales and rap lyrics.

The analyzed rap lyrics shed light on five alternative worlds. Some of them are also identified in a few works related to the study of alternative spaces of the rap texts:

(1) the world of the rapper present, which, in opposition to the world of the past, is often associated with his miraculous transformation from a Ghetto boy into a prosperous super-star (about the metaphorical journey of the lyrical rapper in comparison with the fairy tale hero – see in Kravchenko, Zhykharieva¹⁸);

(2) the archetypally bound “the other world”, prototypically associated with the kingdom of the dead;

(3) the oneiric world, which the lyrical rapper immerses himself in search of an imaginary liberation from the earthly vanity, envious people, his struggle for fame and fans;

(4) the world of creative inspiration and uplift, which raises the artist's rap to “heaven” in a metaphorical sense;

(5) the world of spiritual values, most often religious, opposed to the profane world (see in Kravchenko¹⁹).

Some of these worlds with their corresponding mediators of transition intersect with the fabulous fairy tale space, the others are unique due to the semiotic space of rap texts.

¹⁸ N. Kravchenko; O. Zhykharieva, Rap artists' identity in archetypal roles of Hero and Seeker: A linguistic perspective. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*. Vol 16, No 4 (in print), 2020.

¹⁹ N.K. Kravchenko, Biblical intertextuality devices in African American rap texts (based on the Kendrick Lamar's album “Damn”). *International journal of philology*. 16 (2): 12-17, 2019.

2.1. Fabulous underworld and its mediators: fairy tale versus rap lyrics

In the fairy tales different narrative alternative worlds may correlate with a number of fabulous topoi, such as "Faraway Kingdom", "Underworld", "another country", "in the underwater kingdom", "the three worlds, Above—Below—and Here" (The Butterfly that Stamped), "Kingdom, underneath the earth" as in (1) and even "the Well of the World's End" in (2):

(1) "But first you must follow me boldly into my Father's Kingdom, underneath the earth" (The Magic Ring);

(2) "So she did what the old woman told her, and at last arrived at the Well of the World's End" ("the Well of the World's End").

Much less often the other world is designated in the fairy tales by fabulous toponyms: "Blue Mountains" (The Blue Mountains), The Gold, Silver and Copper Kingdoms, etc.

However, such worlds are always associated with their archaic prototype. The kingdom of the dead is directly pointed out and thoroughly described by Propp (Propp²⁰, p. 360-374) in his "**Historical Roots of the Fairy Tale**". Thus, he suggests that "the course of the development of the tale and especially from the outset (sending to the land of the dead) reflects the idea of death, which seems to be the most "tenacious and capable of artistic processing" (Propp²³, p. 147).

In the rap lyrics, the fabulous underworld, according to some research, emerges either in the form of an anthropomorphic mediator between the worlds, or as metaphorically reinterpreted images of "the deathlike world", the space of imagery death.

In particular, an anthropomorphic mediator, associated with fairy tales and a mythological witch character or **Atropos** (Goddess of Fate and Death), appears in "Blood" rap lyrics by Kendrick Lamar as "a blind woman pacing up and down the sidewalk". Symbolizing either the rapper's Fate or the Death, the blind woman snipped his life with a point-blank shot with words «You've lost your life!" (Kendrick Lamar, Blood).

The images of "the deathlike world" are foregrounded primarily by metaphoric imagery, reinterpreted in its literal naturalistic meaning, in particular, through:

(a) compound imagery in (3), which is built on a realistically exaggerated image of a perforated skull, which may metaphorically designate the rapper's emotional or psychological traumas but in combination with a subsequent metaphoric image of heart covered with ice

²⁰ V., Propp, *Historical Roots of the wonder tale* (in Russian). Leningrad. Available at: https://www.gumer.info/bibliotek_Buks/Linguist/Propp_2/index.php 1946.

it is interpreted in a naturalistic-sensory plane, that is incompatible with life. As a result, the demetaphorized meaning, suggested by the visual image of “holes in a skull” involves de-metaphorization of the fixed metaphor “ice heart” with replacing its basic denotative meaning “indifferent” by a new denotatum “lifeless” / dead.

(b) revitalizing the inner form of the metaphor “Dead alive” as in (3),

(c) the metaphorical hyperbole “I was never alive”, which can mean a lack of interest in life or life joys, is decoded in its literal sense as “immortality” due to an explicitly established causal connection with the main part of the phrase, namely, “I cannot die»

(3) “Holes in my skull, over time / My heart's over ice” (Righteous, Juice WRLD)²¹;

(4) Dead alive, it's in my repertoire, forever even high” (Pain, ASAP Rocky)²²;

(5) “I can't die, 'cause I never was alive” (Can't Die, Juice WRLD).²³

One of the research, peripherally related to the topic under our investigation, claims that the search for the supernatural world correlates in the rap lyrics with the archetypal role of Magician “constructing an illusory world and filling it with supernatural powers” (Kravchenko et al., 2020, p. 179)²⁴. The Magician, in its turn, deals with a set of magic tools, providing a transition between the ordinary and magical worlds.

Both in the fairy tale and rap domains, a *magic wand* stands out among other objects, which are endowed with magical power. Among the universal macrocultural narratives, primarily associated with a fairy godmother magic wand, it is the world-known Cinderella. The lesser known example is “The Princess of Colchester” that is deemed to be a linguoculturally specific fairy tale, where a magic wand opens a passage through a thick thorny hedge to the other world. This example is similar to the one presented in (6) or transform the hero into an animal or bird as in (7).

(6). «*There is a thick thorny hedge before you, which will appear impassable, but take this wand in your hand, strike three times, and say, 'Pray, hedge, let me come through,' and it will open immediately*» (The Princess of Colchest).

(7) “*she draws out from under her cloak a stick, and just touches the girl with it. Then a wonderful thing occurred, for the girl became all of a sudden changed into an owl*” (The Baker's Daughter).

²¹ Juice WRLD, Righteous. Available at: <https://genius.com/Juice-wrld-righteous-lyrics>

²² ASAP Rocky. Pain. Available at: <https://genius.com/A-ap-rocky-pain-lyrics>

²³ Juice WRLD, Can't Die. Available at: <https://genius.com/Juice-wrld-cant-die-lyrics>

²⁴ N. Kravchenko; V. Snitsar; V. Blidchenko-Naiko, Paradoxes of rap artists' role identity: Sage, Magician or Trickster? *Cogito*. Multidisciplinary research journal XII (1): 179-195, 2020.

Similarly, a “New magic wand” rapper-lyrical hero, by means of a magic wand, can change the reality around him and acquires supernatural power over life and death:

(8) “*She’s gonna be dead, I just got a magic wand*” (New magic wand, Tylor the Creator)²⁵.

In contrast to the rap lyrics, some fairytale heroes may receive the most diverse symbolic attributes of power, wealth or status from the alternative world. They obtain them either as a reward for successful overcoming challenges during their journey or just as a gift (a rejuvenating apple, a firebird, a magic ring, a crystal ball, a hide-away hat, a panpipe and the wallet that never runs out of money as in the Ukrainian tale “How the tsar's horns grew”)²⁶. The symbolic image of «a magic ball» as a guide to “another world” is found in numerous Russian fairy tales, i.e. “Three kingdoms - copper, silver and gold”; “The Tale of a Brave Man, Rejuvenating Apples and Living Water”, “Go there - I don’t know where, bring that - I don’t know what”, “Animal milk”²⁷, etc. In some English fairy tales the hero may receive a gold horn with nectar («The fairy horn»), the sword («Jack the Giant-killer», a witch's rope («The witch of Fraddam and the Enchanter of Pengerswick»)²⁸, three feathers as in (9),

(9). *Then he told her to take three feathers from under his side, and whatever she wished through them would come to pass* (Three Feathers)²⁹.

According to V. Propp (2011)³⁰, an intermediary function between the worlds can be performed, in addition to objects endowed with magical qualities, by magical qualities themselves.

In fairy tales, magical qualities quite often give a hero an ability to change into animals according to his totemic and karmic archaic roots. For example, a protagonist changes into a serpent in “The magic ring”³¹ or a white hare in “The Haunted hare”. In addition to an archetypally bound narrative motif of transformation, in fairy tales, supernatural power includes the ability to understand the animals’, birds’, trees’ and objects’

²⁵ Tyler, the Creator. New magic wand. Available at: <https://genius.com/Tyler-the-creator-new-magic-wand-lyrics>

²⁶ <https://kazky.org.ua/zbirky/ukrajinsjki-narodni-kazky/och>

²⁷ A. Afanasyev, *Russian Fairy Tales*. The Planet, 2013.

²⁸ *The Project Gutenberg eBook, English Fairy Tales*, by Flora Annie Steel, Illustrated by Arthur Rackham <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/17034/17034-h/17034-h.htm>

²⁹ Grimm, Brothers, *Household Tales* / M. Hunt (Translator). Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2014.

³⁰ V. Propp, *Morphology of the folktale*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011.

³¹ <https://russian-crafts.com/russian-folk-tales/magic-ring-russian-tale.html>

languages as is in (10), which also reflects both an archaic karmic motif of the human reincarnation and totemic beliefs as well.

(10). *He understood what the beasts said, what the birds said, what the fishes said, and what the insects said. He understood what the rocks said deep under the earth when they bowed in towards each other and groaned; and he understood what the trees said when they rustled in the middle of the morning (The Butterfly that Stamped)*³².

Similar to fairy tales, the motif of supernatural qualities is rather frequent in the rap lyrics. The difference is the rapper ascribes these qualities to himself, hyperbolizing his superiority and exclusiveness over others.

In general, it is achieved by creating images of supernatural rapper's capabilities based on the metaphors-hyperboles of his popularity, associated with the donor domains of Galaxy and celestial bodies. In particular, it is the metaphor describing the rapper's ability to dance on the stars in (11), to break the laws of gravity as in (13) and (14), to transform into a monster as in (15).

(11). *And I'm dancin 'on' em stars*

*The galaxy ain't got room for y'all (Blow My High (Members Only), Kendrick Lamar)*³³

(12) *With a Skywalker ridin' 'round solar (I Ain't Got Time! Tyler The Creator)*³⁴

(13) *Trying to stay above water, (HiiiPoWeR, Kendrick Lamar)*³⁵

(14) *I have wings on my back so we don't (take the plane) OKAGA, CA, Tyler The Creator)*³⁶.

In (11), the metaphorical expression "dancin 'on' em stars" consolidates two metaphors: "To Be Globally Famous Is To Dance on The Stars" and "To Surpass (other rappers stars) Is To Dance on them". The implied meaning "fabulous fame" is further emphasized by the hyperbolized metonymy «The galaxy ain't got room for y'all», denoting both the "galactic level rapper's fame" and the uselessness of other rap stars. In the same vein, in (12), the rapper alludes a high level popularity by means of allusion on a Skywalker, the central character of the Star Wars

³² <https://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/79/just-so-stories/1295/the-butterfly-that-stamped>

³³ K. Lamar, *Blow My High (Members Only)*. Available at:

<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/kendricklamar/blowmyhighmembersonly.html>

³⁴ Tyler, *the Creator*, OKAGA, CA. Available at: <https://genius.com/Tyler-the-creator-okaga-ca-lyrics>

³⁵ K. Lamar, *HiiiPoWeR*, Available at: <https://genius.com/Kendrick-lamar-hiiipower-lyrics>

³⁶ Tyler, *the Creator*, OKAGA, CA. Available at: <https://genius.com/Tyler-the-creator-okaga-ca-lyrics>

Universe, combined with the hyperbole designating the rapper's fame going beyond the planetary scale ("ridin' 'round solar).

In (15) the rapper's supernatural power is presented by allusion to a monster maniac who appears after five-time pronouncing his name in front of the mirror in (15).

(15) *Just say his name and I promise that you'll see Candyman (Element, Kendrick Lamar)*³⁷.

Often, the rapper's supernatural power is symbolically implied by his interaction with fire as in (I got that fire, I got that fire, Juvenile)³⁸ or its metonymic manifestations – the sun, light, etc. as in (16-17). Moreover, fire is often used as an integral element of visual space of a clip that leads to multimodality creation and parametrizing implicit meanings that are associated with possible interpretations of the symbol of fire in the rap audience (in I got that fire, Juvenile; Kendrick Lamar; Humble, Kendrick Lamar)³⁹, etc.

(16) *Nah spray cologne, we spray hot metal, cho man! (Royalty, XXXTENTACION)*⁴⁰.

(17) *I'm hot, I'm heat to the core like Earth (WHAT'S GOOD, Tyler The Creator)*⁴¹

In (16), using the conceptual metaphor, the rapper associates the force and energy emanating from him with red-hot metal dissemination.

In (17), the rapper compares himself to the Earth's core temperature by means of the simile, exceeding the Sun surface temperature. The implicature, triggered by the hyperbolized simile, is supported by the pun, based on the interplay of the different meanings of the adjective "hot" – as (a) denoting the artist capability to warming up the rap audience (to the Earth's core temperature), and (b) being associated with the "hot hits", and the rap writer hit maker's skills.

In this regard, there is a certain analogy with fairy tales. There is a hero, who is free to handle fire and endowed with supernatural power. In particular, a blacksmith possesses magical power precisely because he interacts with fire: in particular, he can "forge" a voice or a snake teeth

³⁷ K. Lamar, *Element*. Available at:

<https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/kendricklamar/element.html>

³⁸ Juvenile, *I got that fire*. Available at: <https://www.metrolyrics.com/i-got-that-fire-lyrics-juvenile.html>

³⁹ Lamar, K. Humble. Available at: <https://genius.com/Kendrick-lamar-humble-lyrics>

⁴⁰ XXXTENTACION. Royalty. Available at: <https://genius.com/Xxxtentacion-royalty-lyrics>

⁴¹ Tyler, *the Creator*, OKAGA, CA. Available at: <https://genius.com/Tyler-the-creator-okaga-ca-lyrics>

("Ivasyk-Telesyk")⁴². After interaction with fire, it is also an animal that gains supernatural power as a horse in "Tree to Heaven" fairy tale. Having been fed with frying pans, the horse obtains five legs, wings and golden mane and becomes capable to carry the hero, facing danger of fire, through air.

In Ukrainian fairy tales, in contrast to the rap lyrics, one of the narrative motifs is getting a purifying and renewing effect of fire that revives the hero, endowing him with the new best qualities. In the fairy tale "Oh!"⁴³, a lazy young man is burned with a stake (which is archetypally associated with the rite of purification), after which pieces of embers are sprinkled in the form of living water, bringing a revived hero back to life and transforming him into a better person. In another tale "Silk State", the witch burning is connected with a motive of rebirth as shown in (18).

(18) *As the fire broke out, he threw the witch into the flames (...). And I'm not who I used to be. After the fire I am a pure soul.*

In the rap lyrics, the image of fire loses its archetypal ambivalence as an element of rebirth and purification. Fire functions are presented by either as a symbol of rapper's supernatural power (see above), or symbolizes destruction, embodying the rap protest ideology as shown in (19-20).

(19) *We set the roof on fire*

We set the roof on fire

We set the roof on fire (twelfefold key phrase repetition) (Set The Roof, Lil John, Rae Sremmurd)⁴⁴.

(20) *Let's start a fire, watch the entire*

World as it opens up in flames (Christina Milian, Lil Wayn, Start a Fire)⁴⁵.

Table 1. Mediators of transition into fabulous underworld

| Rap lyrics | Fairy tales |
|---|---|
| Fabulous underworlds | |
| The space of imagery death. | The archetypally-bound "the other world", prototypically associated with the kingdom of the dead. |
| Linguistic means of the underworld designation | |
| Metaphorically reinterpreted images of | Fabulous toponyms and nominations |

⁴² <https://kazky.org.ua/zbirky/ukrajinsjki-narodni-kazky/och>

⁴³ <https://kazky.org.ua/zbirky/ukrajinsjki-narodni-kazky/och>

⁴⁴ Lil, John, Sremmurd, Rae. *Set The Roof*. Available at: <https://genius.com/Rae-sremmurd-set-the-roof-lyrics>

⁴⁵ Christina Milian; Lil Wayn, *Start a Fire*. Available at: <https://genius.com/Lil-wayne-start-a-fire-lyrics>

| | |
|--|---|
| “the deathlike world”: deliberately demetaphorized compound imagery, metaphorical hyperbole. | of fairy topoi. |
| Mediators of fabulous underworld | |
| Common | |
| Magic tools (a magic wand), providing transition between the ordinary and magical worlds. | |
| Different | |
| An anthropomorphic mediator, archetypally associated with fairy tales and mythological characters; single attributes of supernatural power: an anthropomorphic mediator, archetypally associated with the fairy tale and mythological characters. | Numerous symbolic attributes of supernatural power. |
| Common | |
| Magical qualities / capabilities | |
| Magical power due to the hero’s / rapper’s interaction with fire | |
| Linguistic and narrative means of manifesting the fire-bound capabilities of the fairy hero / the rapper | |
| Different | |
| Conceptual metaphors and metonymies associated with the donor domains of fire and the input / target domain of the rapper’s force, power and energy; the hyperbolized simile and other stylistic devices; destruction motifs. | Narrative motifs of a purifying and renewing effect of fire on the hero’s transformation. |
| Different | |
| Supernatural capabilities, emphasizing the rapper’s superiority and exclusiveness over other people. | Supernatural capabilities, facilitating fairy tales hero’s interaction with other worlds. |
| Linguistic and narrative means of the supernatural capabilities foregrounding | |
| Metaphors, hyperboles of the rapper’s popularity, associated with donor domains of Galaxy and celestial bodies; allusions of precedential phenomena, related to the characters from the parallel worlds. | Archetypally bound narrative motif of transformation into animals. An archetypally bound narrative motif of understanding the language of animals and inanimate objects. |

2.2. Mediators of transition into oneiric worlds

The hallucinogenic or oneiric world is the most frequently appeared alternative world in modern rap lyrics. Correspondingly, the most common in the rap texts is a group of transition mediators, associated with drugs, alcohol and other mind-expanders that have a hallucination effect on the

rapper, for instance, making him sleep or expanding his mind barriers within his visit "the other world", gaining imaginary temporary freedom as in (21-23).

(21) *I see the feelin' the freedom is granted as soon as the damage of vodka arrived (Kendrick Lamar, Swimming Pools (Drank))*⁴⁶

(22) *Doin' cocaine with my black friends, uh*

*We'll be high as hell before the night ends, yeah (Juice WRLD Black & White)*⁴⁷

(23) *«hypnosis overdose on potions» (Juice WRLD, Nintendo)*⁴⁸

Transition to another fairy tale world is associated with sacred food and drink as attributes of initiation, provided by hallucinogenic mediators. In this regard, the researchers argue that "foodways are important in our connections with the supernatural because the food cycle itself – from seed to table and onward – is one of the very most fundamental sets of natural and social patterns, and is interlaced with others like it" (Lloyd, 1995, p. 61).⁴⁹

Thus, the state of intoxication in the English fairy tale "The Fairy Banquet"⁵⁰ blurs boundaries between the worlds, as a man acquires the ability to see creatures from another world. Having drunk water from a well, a hero gains the ability to understand the language of animals ("The mountain that reached the sky"). In "The Green Children" fairy tale, young children with green skin, fed with "human" food, obtain a usual skin color.

There is a substantial difference between mediators of transition in the alternative worlds of fairy tales and rap lyrics as we can reveal the mediators' unequal impact on the nature of human transformation when the latter depends on the quality of the target worlds. Thus, in the vast majority of cases found in the fairy tales, sacred food adds strength, ability, or serves as a means of punishing or given a hero a lesson. In particular, the herb in «The two serving damsels» strengthens the hero on his way to overcoming obstacles. After the king and his daughter eat magic apples, horns grew on their heads, which served to their repentance and change⁵¹.

⁴⁶ K. Lamar, *Swimming Pools (Drank)*. Available at:

<https://soundcloud.com/topdawgent/kendrick-lamar-swimming-pools>.

⁴⁷ Juice WRLD. *Black & White*. Available at: genius.com/Juice-world-black-and-white-lyrics

⁴⁸ Juice WRLD. *Nintendo*. Available at: <https://genius.com/Juice-wrld-nintendo-lyrics>

⁴⁹ T.C. Lloyd, *Folklore, Foodways, and the Supernatural. Out of the Ordinary: Folklore and the Supernatural* / ed. by B. Walker. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1995, pp. 59-71.

⁵⁰ The Project Gutenberg eBook, *English Fairy Tales*, by Flora Annie Steel, Illustrated by Arthur Rackham <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/17034/17034-h/17034-h.htm>

⁵¹ <https://kazky.org.ua/zbirky/javorova/jak-u-carja-rohy-vyrosly>

On the contrary, the mind-expanding drinks and food introduce a rapper into the world of death, imminent karma, fear and degradation, which can be expressed either explicitly as in (24)

(24) *Started pack smokin', good dope rollin'
Maybe Mary Jane'll help me put the pills down
Dead inside, catch a look at my ghost*

*Numb the pain, take these Percs to the mouth and the nose (Juice WRLD, HeMotions)*⁵² or through visual-oniric imagery as is exemplified by (25).

(25) *Spit (means "to rap" – authors) like my last breath: casket rap, six deep,*

*Eyes closed, the black is back, out come the 'Lac with flats,
After that, bottles I can't pronounce,
Like, "How you ask for that?"*

*Why you ask for crack (...)? (ASAP Rocky, 1 Train)*⁵³.

In above (25) visual-oniric imagery, expressing the rapper's mental state, integrate a number of stylistic devices, including:

(a) the occasional simile, comparing the process of rapping (splitting) influenced by alcohol and crack, with the last moment before the rapper's imaginary death (denoted by idiom "last breath");

(2) the pun, exploiting two meanings of polysemantic words "casket": collection of musical masterpieces and rectangular coffin, the second meaning being enhanced by the subsequent detached construction "six deep", alluded to the usual burial depth;

(3) an image of Cadillac with curtains on the windows («Lac with flats»), usually symbolizing a funeral procession,

(4) some vocabulary designating inevitability of plunging into darkness («the black is back») and associated with the image of a deceased person ("eyes closed").

The search for illusory freedom from problems in the real world ("Life's too hard, I take the easy way and overdose" (Nintendo, WRLD)⁵⁴, «But I don't need love no more / I'll be fine, sipping wine (Everyday, ASAP Rocky)⁵⁵, as a rule, turns into an obsessive feeling of impending danger and death as is exemplified by (26-27)

(26) *"I was born to drown, I was born hell-bound";*

⁵² Juice WRLD, *HeMotions*. Available at: <https://www.metrolyrics.com/juice-wrld-hemotions-juice-wrld-ml-video-wfk.html>

⁵³ ASAP Rocky, *1 Train*. Available at: <https://genius.com/A-ap-rocky-1train-lyrics>

⁵⁴ Juice WRLD, *Nintendo*. Available at: <https://genius.com/Juice-wrld-nintendo-lyrics>

⁵⁵ ASAP Rocky, *Everyday*. Available at: <https://genius.com/A-ap-rocky-everyday-lyrics>

“I got cash, but I can't take that with me after death” (Nintendo, WRLD)⁵⁵,

(27) “Bloody ink on my pad spelled suicide” (Phoenix, ASAP Rocky)⁵⁶, as well as inner emptiness, metaphorically designated as a hole in a chest as in (28), lack of life as in (29) and physical disintegration (30).

(28) *There's a hole in my chest*

There ain't nothing left (Nintendo, WRLD)⁵⁵;

(29) *Blame it on the weather and the narcos / Take my breath, take my heart, take my soul, nothing left* (Nintendo, WRLD⁵⁷).

(30) *Chaos I create,*

I come apart (I Come Apart, ASAP Rocky)⁵⁸.

Table 2. Mediators of transition into the oneiric worlds

| Rap lyrics | Fairy tales |
|---|---|
| Alternative worlds | |
| The hallucinogenic world. | The fabulous “another world”. |
| Mediators of transition | |
| Types of mediators | |
| Hallucinogenic mediators, associated with drugs, alcohol and mind-expanders, introduce a rapper to the imaginary "other" world. | Sacred food and drinks. |
| Means of the mediators' expression | |
| Explicit nomination of hallucinogenic mediators. | Narrative motifs of supernatural abilities. |
| Mediators' functions | |
| To introduce the world of death, imminent karma, fear and degradation. | Add strength, ability, or serve as a means to punish or train a hero. |
| Linguistic and narrative means of the mediators' functions foregrounding | |
| Different | |
| Explicit nomination of mental condition. Stylistic devices that construct visual-oneiric imagery to designate the rapper's foreboding of death. | Narrative motifs of struggle between good and evil, victory over evil narrative motifs of a villain character, correction and redemption. |

⁵⁶ ASAP Rocky, *Phoenix*. Available at: <https://genius.com/A-ap-rocky-phoenix-lyrics>

⁵⁷ Juice WRLD, *Nintendo*. Available at: <https://genius.com/Juice-wrld-nintendo-lyrics>

⁵⁸ ASAP Rocky, *I Come Apart*. Available at: <https://genius.com/A-ap-rocky-i-come-apart-lyrics>

2.3. Mediators of transition to the worlds of artistic inspiration and status transformation

In addition to the oneiric world and the “world” associated with the kingdom of the dead, the rap lyrics can include two other alternative worlds – the world of artistic inspiration and the world of status transformation.

The world of inspiration, opposed to the world of earthly concerns, does not intersect with the fairy-tale worlds. The mediators of transition (in order to creative dimension) are often conceptualized as the attributes of a free flight, which overcomes gravitation as in (31).

(31) *Fly with the birds in the wind, (...)*

I just wanna soar through the space, let the wind hit my face

Till there's nothing left in the gas tank, I don't wanna crash.

You can buy a car, you can buy many things,

You can buy happiness but you can't buy wings,

But you can't buy a pair of wings, aerodynamic,

To stay cloud level (Pilot, Tylor the Creator)⁵⁹.

To explicate the metaphors, denoting the state of creative inspiration, the paper applies for the blending theory analysis – considering that there are no conventional metaphors associating the rap creation with soaring in space such as having wings or flying with birds at the level of the clouds. Input source domains in (31) is “to feel inspired while rapping”. The “generic” space, uniting the interrelated target inputs “to have wings”, “to soar in space”, “to fly with birds” and the source input “to feel inspired” is the “feeling of freedom from everything earthly”. As a result, two intersecting inputs are projected into a new kind of blended space: “to rap” is understood by the rap artist as to soar / fly through the space by means of a pair of wings and to feel the cloud level. At the same time, the involvement of wings images, birds and a free flight (as mediators between the world of the earthly gravitation and “the other world” of absolute freedom from earthly concerns) is additionally prompted by association with the conventional metaphor “on the wings of success”, conveying the feeling of a person who attains his desired aims.

In another song, exemplified by (32) the input domain of the metaphor “to rap / to flow is to levitate” appears as “to hover in the air in defiance of gravitation” The source domain is not verbally explicated while is associated with the process of creation, due to presuppositional knowledge about the rapper’s special attitude to creativity, based on the

⁵⁹ Tyler, the Creator, *Pilot*. Available at: <https://genius.com/Tyler-the-creator-pilot-lyrics>

context (hypertext) of the Kendrick Lamar's lyrics ("I'm talkin' fear, fear of losin' creativity" (Kendrick Lamar, Fear)⁶⁰.

(32) *Levitate, levitate, levitate, levitate (...)*

For free won't get you high, no, no, no

Two keys won't get you high, no, no, no

Bentleys won't get you high, no, no, no

Bars won't get you high, no, no, no

Levitate, levitate, levitate, levitate (Kendrick Lamar, *Levitate*)⁶¹.

Another alternative world (that is inherent to the rap narratives) is the world of the miraculous status transformation that is always opposed to the world of the rap hero past and mediated by the symbols of material well-being. For instance, "All white Gucci suit" (Juice WRLD, Righteous)⁶², "luxury car", "diamond in the ceiling", "marble on the floors" (Kendrick Lamar, DNA)⁶³, "a penthouse and a beach home" (Asap Rocky, M's)⁶⁴.

As it is pointed out in the research on the archetypally based motifs of the rappers' identity, the hero has to overcome the abyss "between the ghetto world and the world of luxury". He overcomes challenges, gets a fight with his external and internal enemies, and with himself. Thus, he wins an award –transfiguration into a new status in the new world of luxury and success. The example is given at the end of the rapper's life journey (Kravchenko, Zhykharieva, 2020)⁶⁵.

*Now we live it up, driving with the rooftop missin' (Empty, Juice WRLD)*⁶⁶.

(34) *come a long way from a hundred dollars a month*

*To a hundred mil' in a day (Compton, Kendrick Lamar)*⁶⁷

(35) *Straight (...)*

*From a peasant to a prince (King Kunta, Kendrick Lamar)*⁶⁸.

⁶⁰ K. Lamar, *Fear*. Available at: <https://genius.com/Kendrick-lamar-fear-lyrics>

⁶¹ K. Lamar, *Levitate*. Available at: <https://genius.com/Kendrick-lamar-untitled-07-2014-2016-lyrics>

⁶² Juice WRLD, *Righteous*. Available at: <https://genius.com/Juice-wrld-righteous-lyrics>

⁶³ K. Lamar, *DNA*. Available at: <https://genius.com/Kendrick-lamar-dna-lyrics>

⁶⁴ ASAP Rocky, *M's*. Available at: <https://genius.com/A-ap-rocky-m-lyrics>

⁶⁵ Kravchenko, N., Zhykharieva, O., (2020). Rap artists' identity in archetypal roles of Hero and Seeker: A linguistic perspective. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*. Vol 16, No 4 (in print)

⁶⁶ Juice WRLD, *Empty*. Available at: <https://genius.com/Juice-wrld-empty-lyrics>

⁶⁷ K. Lamar, *Compton*. Available at: <https://genius.com/Kendrick-lamar-compton-lyrics>

⁶⁸ K. Lamar, *King Kunta*. Available at: <https://genius.com/Kendrick-king-kunta-lyrics>

Status transformation often occurs with fairy-tale heroes. However, unlike rap lyrics, it does not create a separate reality in the space of the fairy-tale text, but it is a consequence (reward) of the hero's overcoming trials associated with the fairy tales parallel world or its inhabitants (“Molly Whuppie and the double-faced Giant”⁶⁹, “Ivan the Fool”⁷⁰).

Table 3. Mediators associated with artistic inspiration and status transformation worlds

| Rap lyrics | Fairy tales |
|---|---|
| Alternative worlds | |
| The world of artistic inspiration | _____ |
| Mediators of transition | |
| Wings; ability to fly and to counteract the pull of gravity. | _____ |
| Linguistic means of the world designation | |
| Synonymic conceptual metaphors: “to create rap is to have wings”, “to create rap is to soar through the space”, “to create rap is to stay cloud level”, “to create rap is to levitate”. | _____ |
| Alternative worlds | |
| The world of the miraculous status transformation | Status transformation, which does not form a separate alternative world, but is an external manifestation of the hero inner renewal after his interacting with the magical world and its representatives. |
| Mediators of transition | |
| Explicitly designated symbols of material well-being, based on the narrative motifs of the hero transfiguration and reward. | |

5. Conclusion

The article clarifies the problem of mediators between the worlds of Ukrainian, Russian, English fairy tales and Afro-American rap lyrics. It is considered within the framework of their metaphorical, symbolic and archetypal characteristics.

The article has reached 4 main findings. *First*. The rap lyrics semantic space may include different worlds, such as the world of the rapper's present that is associated with his miraculous transformation in

⁶⁹http://www.gutenberg.org/files/17034/17034-h/17034-h.htm#MOLLY_WHUPPIE_AND_THE_DOUBLE-FACED_GIANT

⁷⁰ http://lol-russ.umn.edu/PopLit/the_tale_of_ivan_the_fool.htm

comparison with his Ghetto past; the world of imagery death; the oneiric world, mediated by hallucinogens; the world of artistic inspiration and the world of spiritual values.

Second. It is revealed that the world of imagery death, designated in rap lyrics by demetaphorized compound imagery and metaphorical hyperboles, is associated with the archetypally-bound “the other world” in fairy tales, prototypically corresponding to the kingdom of the dead and denoted by fabulous toponyms and fairy topoi. Similar to fairy tales and rap mediators of transition between the ordinary and magical worlds, they use magical tools and abilities, including the ones that are the result of the hero’s interaction with fire. However, it is performed differently in the rap and fairy tales according to the criterion, respectively, single / multiple magical abilities and their functions. Linguistically, the rapper’s supernatural power is marked by conceptual metaphors and metonymies which are associated with the donor domains of fire and the target domain of acquired power and energy as well as a number of hyperbolized similes and other stylistic devices. In contrast to fairy tales, where the fire-bound capabilities of the fairy hero rely on narrative motifs of purifying and renewing effect of fire, the fire images are based on the motif of destruction in rap lyrics. The other supernatural abilities are foregrounded by metaphors-hyperboles of the rapper’s popularity, with the donor domains of Galaxy and celestial bodies while the fairy tale domain involves the archetypally bound narrative motifs of transformation into animals and understanding the language of animals or inanimate objects to gain the same aim.

Third. The rap lyrics oneiric worlds are mediated by drugs, alcohol and mind-expanders, while in fairy tales, sacred food and drinks are used associated with the narrative motifs of supernatural abilities. Unlike some fabulous oneiric mediators that add strength or serve as a means of punishment or correction of an evil character, based on the narrative motifs of the victory of good over evil and redemption, the rap oneiric mediators are introduced to the world of death, fear and degradation by means of some visual oneiric images.

Fourth. The world of inspiration, opposed to the world of earthly concerns, is not appropriate in fairy-tales. Its mediators include wings; ability to fly and counteract the pull of gravity, designated by the conceptual metaphors: “to create rap is to have wings”, “to create rap is to soar through the space”, “to create rap is to stay cloud level”, “to create rap is to levitate”. The world of wonderful status transformation is denoted by the symbols of material well-being, based on the archetypal narrative motifs of the rapper’s transfiguration and reward in rap lyrics. In fairy tales, the same narrative motifs are not constitutive for the separate world

of status transformation and relate to the hero interaction with the magical world and its representatives.

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