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# CYCLICAL TIME IN FAIRY TALE AND RAP LYRICS: POINTS OF INTERSECTION

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**Abstract:** This paper focuses on cyclical time in modern rap lyrics in comparison with the archaic time of fairy tales. The study is the first attempt to prove the existence of archaic time in a metamodernistic genre. Narrative and stylistic analyses coupled with intertextual and archetypal analyses have revealed the symbolic, narrative, and stylistic devices foregrounding cyclical time with an emphasis on its shared and different manifestations in the genres being compared.

**Key words:** cyclical time, rap lyrics, fairy tale, narrative devices, stylistic devices.

## 1. Introduction

The notion of cyclical time remains unexplored in linguistic and interdisciplinary studies; there exist only a few works, which dwell on archaic consciousness and its reflection in ancient literary sources. However, considering that some mechanisms of archaic thinking, such as symbolization, ritualization, magic, mythologization, and anthropomorphization, are generally inherent in humans (Першин 2013) and embodied in the "ineradicable" archetypes of human behavior (Jung 1969); the study

of those temporal features of modern texts that specifically reinterpret archaic time can be considered a new and promising aspect of research.

Such ultra-modern genres include African-American rap lyrics, whose temporal structure is considered in the article in comparison with fairy tale time associated with archaic consciousness.

This non-standard focus on coupling is linked to three factors. Firstly, time as part of the chronotope reflects the specifics of human perception of the world in interaction with the natural and social environment. The fairy tale chronotope is specified as one-dimensional (Lüthi 1982: 4-7), indefinite, often symbolic and suitable for the Hero and his actions, and marked by the formula "somewhere", "a fairy tale country" (ibid). In rap texts practically unexplored from this perspective, the chronotope can appear as a narrative category tied to the physical time of the past and "responsible" for plot development (in rap lyrics containing a narrative component) (Kravchenko et al. 2020a: 157) and, like a fairy tale, may be symbolic (Forman 2002) and indefinite (linking imaginary space to psychological time). Secondly, in both fairy tales and rap, such interaction is mediated by symbolic imagery iconically related to the structures of collective knowledge and the collective unconscious. Thirdly, poetry (Campbell & Moyers 1988: 286) and, in particular, rap as one of its most spontaneous genres, implies some archetypal meanings encoded in metaphors, images, and symbols. And finally, the juxtaposition of the seemingly incomparable genres is quite consistent with the aesthetics and research principles of metamodernism, which is replacing the last century's postmodern paradigm (Freinacht 2015; van den Akker et al. 2017).

The very idea of comparing a fairy tale and rap lyrics also stems from the fact that their temporal structures overlap (as evidenced by the research data), i.e. their time diffuseness and uncertainty, combination of linear, cyclical, and other time relations, although such parameters are rooted in completely different genre characteristics. The fairy tale narrative is also examined primarily from the viewpoint of its one-

dimensional and indefinite chronotope and an indefinite generalized linear time. The types of archaic time have not so far been researched in fairy tales narratives, neither have they been in rap lyrics, whose temporal structure remains unexplored within a linguistic and interdisciplinary framework.

Taking this into account, the purpose of the article is to reveal the specifics of the temporal organization of modern rap lyrics in comparison with the archaic cyclical time in the fairy tale narrative – with a focus on the narrative and linguistic devices.

## **2. Theoretical background**

Despite the undoubted interest of researchers in the notion of time, temporality, and their linguistic expression, the manifestation of certain features of archaic time in the texts from various historical periods (except archaic texts) still remains outside the interests of scholars.

Based on its purpose, the study rests theoretically and methodologically on three groups of papers:

- (1) interdisciplinary research of the archaically-bound types of time;
- (2) the study of cyclical time within a linguistic framework;
- (3) elucidation of African-American rap poetics and mythopoetics from linguistic and interdisciplinary perspectives.

The categories of space and time are the ever-popular focus on research concerning various literary genres, primarily those with a narrative component. While Bakhtin (1981) (who, in fact, introduces the concept of chronotope into academic use) considers space and time in close interconnection, a number of prominent authors (Лихачёв 1979; Флоренский 2000) study the concept of TIME as an independent one. Among the parameters of the texts' temporal organization established by researchers, two main types of time have been selected, in particular, event-related time as a movement from the past to the future and cyclical time as a time of recurrence, reversibility, restarting

the same over and over again. In a fairy tale narrative, cyclical time reflects the archaic consciousness while in poetry and fictional prose, it is associated with intertextuality, basic narratives, cultural scenarios, and stereotyped plots development. Such intertextuality-bound cyclicity results in the temporal polyphony of the texts (Bakhtin 1981; Derrida 1998).

Starting with Propp's work (Пропп 2009), the fairy tale narrative remains in the focus of interdisciplinary research in the fields of narratology (Кербелите 1991; Holbek 1987; Kravchenko et al. 2020a; Schmid 2010; Volkova 2018), semiotics (Ревзин 1975; Jones 1990; Kravchenko et al. 2021; Volkova 2017), linguistic culturology (Лихачёв 1979; Lüthi 1982; Propp 2009) and ethnolinguistics (Lüthi 1982; Propp 2009) as a key to understanding universals in a logical and, most importantly, symbolical-metaphorical comprehension of the world, regardless of ethnic, temporal, spatial, historical, regional, and geographical backgrounds.

Fairy tale time, which reflects the picture of the world inherent in archaic consciousness, was studied primarily from a narrative perspective in the context of its uncertainty and indefiniteness (Lüthi 1982: 19-20). At the same time, cyclical time in its language manifestations, as is actually known, remains unexplored. Nor has the temporal structure of rap been so far in the centre of linguistic or interdisciplinary research, which mainly concentrates on issues of identity.

Building upon theoretical studies focused on archaic time and its incarnation in a fairytale narrative, the paper attempts to review the distinctive characteristics of such time – with a view to subsequently comparing them with the temporal organization of rap lyrics.

First of all, archaic consciousness involves the cyclical time as "the never-ending recurrence of the same", which "itself pivoted not on the idea of Being but on that of Becoming. Cycles come and go, and what takes shape in the individual cycles

disappears again in the hope of renewed becoming" (Assmann 2002: 18). In the fairytale narrative, the formal-structural manifestations of time cyclicality include rituals (for example, prohibitions that correlate with archaic taboos and their predictable violations, etc.), formality, repetitions (usually a symbolic number of times), the motif of renewal, the Hero's rebirth (going back to the archetypal motif of imaginary death through initiation), the recurrent temporalities, such as the onset of darkness, night, the time of the rooster's crow, etc. being the sign of the cyclical interaction with the "other" world.

The second group of studies, which have contributed to the theoretical premises of this paper, deal with linguistic aspects of time and temporality, which to varying degrees are associated with archaic types of time.

The structure of time within a linguistic framework, as well as the general aspects of how space and time relations are expressed in different languages and cultures were covered by Traugott (1978), Vyvyan (2013). Most of the works considering archaic types of time focus on time and temporality in the ancient world and Bible texts (Brown 2000; Time and temporality... 2004).

These are a few works which approach the issue from cognitive and narrative perspectives and, though marginally, relate to the nature of archaic time. In particular, as a manifestation of cyclical time embodied by seasons of nature, myth, ritual, and ceremony, used as a means of helping a person adjust to a new spiritual transformation. In particular, Volkova studied a reverse perspective as a narrative technique in Amerindian prosaic texts (2016).

The idea of cyclicity as an expected or unexpected feedback underlies the narrative techniques of boomerang and feedback loop, which are studied in the theory of persuasive influence, the relaying of political models (Hart & Nisbet 2012). Linguistically, these narrative techniques were scrutinized while studying the

ecopoetics of Biblical discourse and its narrative space (Жихарева 2018).

Specifically, the technique of boomerang arises as a result of the use of a narrative scheme: an action – its unfolding, the end result and, accordingly, the return to the initial action with positive or negative consequences (ibid.). A feedback loop (Капра 2003) is a circular system of causally connected elements, when information about the result of the impact is returned to its source. If the boomerang effect correlates with the concepts of ACTION – RETRIBUTION, the narrative techniques of feedback loops manifest the concepts of CALL – RESPONSE, which, given the importance of Biblical values corresponds to the transformational changes, the spiritual rebirth of a person and the whole nation (Жихарева 2018: 279).

The issue of the manifestation of cyclical time was touched upon, in our opinion, in connection with the frame modeling of the concepts of LIFE and DEATH in the English Gothic worldview (Prihodko & Prykhodchenko 2018: 192-193) and as part of the conceptual "background, against which the value of time was assessed" (Konnova & Babenko 2019: 118).

Rap lyrics in general and Afro-American rap in particular have recently attracted the attention of scholars from different fields of linguistics and multidisciplinary studies. Rap discourse is being scrutinized within the framework of discourse analysis, which determines the nature of rap identity as a discursive construct (Alim et al. 2005), cultural studies (Richardson 2006), psycholinguistic research with a focus on rap lyrics' psychoanalytic and archetypal dimensions (Hodge 2018). From a linguistic, namely a cognitive-semiotic and stylistic perspective, rap lyrics have been analyzed in their symbolic, intertextual, and archetypal-role characteristics (Кравченко & Бречак 2019; Kravchenko 2019; Kravchenko & Snitsar 2019; Kravchenko et al. 2020b). The rap chronotope in its imaginary manifestation embodied by the concepts GHETTO, INNER-CITY, AND THE HOOD as performing a defining function in constructing the individual and collective discursive identity, was studied by Forman (2002).

The motifs of fate in the cyclical chain "evil – retribution" and the breaking of the vicious circle related to the specifics of cyclical time's narrative expression, were considered in the study of rap lyrics intertextuality based on Kendrick Lamar's songs (Kravchenko 2019).

In the context of comparing fairy tale and rap narratives, the spatial dimension of the chronotope in its metaphorical, narrative, and symbolic manifestations has been studied only in one work (Kravchenko et al. 2020a). However, the specifics of the temporal organization of rap lyrics have not yet been the subject of linguistic and interdisciplinary research, including its comparison with a fairy tale.

Thus, the aim of the paper consists in identifying cyclic time in rap lyrics and means of its expression in comparison with a fairy-tale narrative.

### **3. Methods**

#### *3.1 Database and methods*

The corpus of texts consists, on the one hand, of rap lyrics of the popular American rap songwriters and performers Asap Rocky, Kendrick Lamar, Taylor the Creator, and Juice WRLD; on the other hand, it includes English and Russian fairy tales as well as English translations of fairy tales collected by the Brothers Grimm. The selection of texts under analysis was carried out on the basis of a search for the parameters of cyclicity in rap lyrics and a fairy tale narrative, including:

(1) cross-cutting repeating symbols and motifs associated with cyclicity as return, restart, and reversibility, i.e. (a) nominative units, denotative or connotative semes of 'doom', recurrent feelings and states, cyclical causal-temporal meanings, (b) metaphors and metonymy, associated with the concept of VICIOUS CIRCLE, (c) allegorical images of fate, (d) plot lines related to the Hero's death and revival, reincarnation into animals, (e) well-established fairy tale symbols of rebirth, other worlds, cyclical change of the time of day, etc.

(2) formularity as the cyclicity-recurrence, including (a) repeated fairy tale formula,

(b) recurrent plot elements. In rap lyrics formularity relies on syntactic stylistic devices, including anaphora, ring repetition, etc., associated with rhythmicity and iconically reproducing recurrence and circular movement.

(3) multifaceted devices of intertextuality, implying the cyclical nature of time in the postmodern and metamodern understanding.

The corpus of material includes the texts of rap songs by Tyler the Creator ("Bastard", "WHAT'S GOOD", "Garbage", "New magic wand", "Exactly what you run from, you end up chasing"); Kendrick Lamar ("Backseat freestyle", "Black boy fly", "BLOOD", "Blow my high (members only)", "Complexion (a zulu love)", "Compton", "Damn", "DNA", "Duckworth", "Fear", "Element", "HiiiPoWeR", "Institutionalized", "Lust", "m.A.A.d city"); Lecrae ("Fear"); A\$AP Rocky ("Distorted records"); Imagine dragons ("Radioactive"); E-40 ("Ain't talking bout nothin") and the texts of fairy tales by Afanasyev ("Beauty and the beast", "Marya Morevna", "Silver saucer and juicy apple", "The fire-bird and Princess Vasilisa", "The tale of Ivan Tsarevich and the gray wolf", "Vasilisa the Wise"); Atkinson ("The laidly worm of spindleston heugh"); Haney ("On rejuvenating apples and living water"); Hartland ("The hunted hare"); Jacobs ("Earl Mar's daughter", "The rose-tree"); Lang ("The magic ring"); the Grimm Brothers ("Hans my hedgehog", "Snow White and the seven dwarfs", "The frog-king, or Iron Henry", "The golden bird"); Tibbits ("The baker's daughter"). The number of fragments under analysis is 47.

The **methodology** employed includes a variety of techniques:

(1) stylistic analysis to identify metaphoric or metonymic images associated with the motif of resurrection and reincarnation, as well as occasional rap lyrics and fairy tale well-established symbolic imagery related to reversibility or cyclicity;

(2) elements of semiotic analysis to determine the iconicity of the syntactic structures, as well as the metaphoric or metonymic images associated with time cyclicity (Volkova 2018; Yamaguchi 2016);

(3) narrative analysis (Жихарева 2018; Пропп 2009; Propp 2011) to identify (a)



narrative motifs that rap narrative shares with a fairy tale, i.e. the motifs of death and resurrection, of inevitable doom and constant return of the Hero's fate, fears, etc., as well as (b) narrative principles of the boomerang effect and the "feedback network", the latter consisting in replacing the first link of the negative feedback loop with a new element introducing a new "healthy" cycle (Жихарева 2018), (c) narrative fairy tale formularity and its foregrounding devices;

(4) intertextual analysis to scrutinize the rap lyrics intertextuality devices, which highlight the idea of reversibility and constant recurrence associated with time cyclicality;

(5) contextual and interpretation analyses identify the narrative and verbal means of expressing cyclical time.

### *3.2 Procedures of data analysis*

The study encompasses five consecutive stages of analysis:

1) on the basis of the above selection criteria, to identify the cross-cutting repetitive symbols and motifs associated with the cyclical time of rap lyrics, as well as interpret metaphors and allegories that express the idea of a vicious circle. For example, the phrase "My nightmares are having nightmares" (Lecrae "Fear") expresses the narrative motif of recurrent fear, which is one of the most common in rap lyrics. The meaning of a vicious circle associated with the idea of cyclicality is evoked by the metaphor "Nightmare is a Living Being who sees nightmares", which implies the meaning of infinite repetition: one nightmare gives rise to another, etc.;

2) to clarify the narrative techniques of the boomerang effect and the "feedback network" viewed in the fairy tale narrative and rap lyrics as the implementation of the narrative motifs of an inevitable fate, the vicious circle, and vicious circle breaking; to specify other recurrent cyclicality-bound narrative motifs in a fairy tale versus rap lyrics. For example, in a fairy tale, the vicious circle is usually broken due to a new element introduced into the negative feedback loop – the act of kindness, starting a "healthy" cycle of the "feedback network". In particular, in the Russian fairy tale "Marya Morevna" Koschey forgives Tsarevich Ivan twice, rewarding him for taking pity on

him and letting him drink ("Take pity on me, let me drink!") (Afanasyev 2013: 186);

3) to explicate the differences between the symbolism of a fairy tale and the figurative symbolism of rap associated with the idea of cyclicity. So, in a fairy tale, cyclicity is associated with the well-established conventional symbols that are easily recognized in the semiospheres of various fairy tales: a rooster's cry as a symbol of the disappearance of infernal creatures. In rap lyrics, cyclicity and associated concepts are based on metonymic and metaphorical symbols. For example, the Ghetto often metonymically symbolizes a vicious circle, which one can escape physically but not mentally or spiritually ("*I'm trapped inside the ghetto*") (K. Lamar "Institutionalized");

4) to determine the narrative and stylistic devices of formularity as well as syntactical stylistic means iconically reproducing the idea of cyclicity. For example, in "*Please bang my line, you know I'll answer / Call me sometime (ring ring ring) / Please bang my line*" (TTC "911") ring repetition at the formal level closes the circle, returns to the beginning, thus connoting the meaning of cyclicity;

5) to analyze the rap lyrics' intertextuality devices associated with the cyclical circulation of themes, plots, characters, precedent cultural phenomena and landmarks, musical styles, etc.

#### **4. Cyclical time: Rap lyrics vs. fairy tale narratives**

The temporal structure of rap lyrics comprises different types of time, some of which are also typical of fairy tale narratives. In particular, the paper identifies similarities between fairy tale and rap temporal spaces structured by cyclical, 'suspended', and linear time, which, nevertheless, differ significantly in how they are expressed. The collected data have shown that both in fairy tale and rap lyrics cyclicity of time is manifested by motifs of reversibility of events, the inevitability of moving in a "vicious circle" and restarting a new cycle, as well as by the motif of the Hero's death and reincarnation as another person or animal.

Similar to a fairy tale narrative, the most common means of expressing cyclicity in rap lyrics encompass recurrent motifs, including the archetypal motif of fate and

recurrent fears inherent in human beings. The motifs can be realized, in particular, through narrative techniques of the boomerang effect and the "feedback network".

#### *4.1 Recurring motifs as the cyclical narrativity device*

Frequent repetitive motifs foregrounding the cyclical nature of time as a constant returning to something include:

(a) The motif of the rap artist's constant fear that he feels doomed. In particular, returning to fears – childhood, young adult, today's fears – constitutes the main narrative strategy in Kendrick Lamar's composition "Fear" and self-titled Lecrae's song "Fear" as exemplified by the following lines:

(1) *Wonderin' if I'm livin' through fear or livin' through rap; When I was 27, I grew accustomed to more fear Accumulated 10 times over throughout the years* (K. Lamar "Fear").

(2) *I'm scared of letting go, I don't know what the future holds (...) I'm quite scared of what's right and fair / How I fear an eternity* (Lecrae "Fear").

(3) *If I could go back in time, I would stand and say something like / I ain't never scared, never scared, never scared / I'm lying, I'm scared of these thoughts in my head / I'm scared of possibly pushing people right over the ledge* (Lecrae "Fear").

The motif of the eternal cycle of things, of doom as impossibility to avoid what is predestined:

(a) *"Exactly what you run from, you end up chasing. Like, you can't avoid, but just chasing it and just like trying"* (TTC "Exactly what you run from, you end up chasing").

(b) Motifs presented as antonymic pairs "destruction – restoration" (*"I'm breakin' in, shaping up"* (Imagine dragons "Radioactive")) and "doom / fate – escaping one's doom / fate", "sin – punishment".

As exemplified above, the motif of repeated fear is highlighted explicitly – by verbal and phrasal nominative units denoting the recurrent state and marked by words with denotative or connotative semes of 'fear' (*to be scared, fear, nightmares*). The motif of

cyclicity is highlighted by contrast, particularly, but not exclusively based on lexical antonyms with the actualization of the cyclical causal-temporal meaning and, accordingly, the semes of 'doom' and 'predestination': sin always entails punishment, destruction is followed by rebirth and destruction again, nightmares breed nightmares.

The motif of doom often involves the narrative technique of the boomerang effect. In particular, the idea of predestination becomes a cross-cutting motif in Kendrick Lamar's album "Damn", which clearly traces the causal relationship "sin – punishment":

(5) *"He's gonna punish us for our iniquities, for our disobedience"* (K. Lamar "Fear").

Due to his innate depravity (*"I got dark, I got evil, that rot inside my DNA"* (K. Lamar "DNA")) the Hero from birth is doomed to fear, to suffer (*"We are a cursed people"*), which, in particular, is conveyed by an allusion to the long-suffering Job:

(6) *"Is it for the moment, and will he see me as Job?"* (K. Lamar "Fear").

The boomerang effect in the cyclic chain "sin – punishment" can end only for two reasons: either with the physical death of the lyric Hero, or by breaking out of the vicious circle by destroying its prime cause. In the latter case, the boomerang effect is transformed into the narrative device of "feedback network".

The first possibility is conveyed by the image of a Blind woman from the song "Blood", who personifies the lyric Hero's fate, killing him with a pistol shot.

(7) *"It seems to me that you have lost something. I would like to help you find it". She replied, "Oh yes, you have lost something. You've lost your life!"* (K. Lamar "Blood").

In this regard, researchers take note of a certain similarity of the image of the Blind in Lamar's lyrics with "the mythological motif of fate, associated with the images of Atropos (one of the Greek goddesses of fate cutting the thread of life) and Tyche, the goddess of Chance and Fate, usually symbolized by a blind girl" (Kravchenko 2019:

14).

The second possibility of breaking out the vicious circle consists in the destruction of the karmic hopelessness by introducing a new link "goodness" into the cyclic chain of predetermination. The act of kindness done by the rapper's father returned a hundredfold, because it not only saved the father's life, but also subsequently influenced the life of his son, who, most likely, would have been killed in an accidental shooting:

(8) *"Reverse the manifest and good karma, and I'll tell you why / You take two strangers and put 'em in random predicaments / Give 'em a soul so they can make their own choices and live with it (...) / Whoever thought the greatest rapper would be from coincidence? Because if Anthony killed Ducky, Top Dawg could be servin' life / While I grew up without a father and die in a gunfight"* (K. Lamar "Duckworth").

The motif of breaking the evil chain of a vicious circle through a merciful act is also found in a fairy tale. In the English folk tale "The laidly worm of spindleston heugh", instead of killing the disgusting worm, the prince listened to its pleas to kiss it three times, which breaks the magic spell and ends/stops the cycle of evil was destroyed and the cycle of evil closed, thus resulting in a reversible course of events:

(9) *"O, quit your sword, unbend your bow,*

*And give me kisses three;*

*For though I am a poisonous worm,*

*No harm I'll do to thee...* (Ph. Atkinson "The laidly worm of spindleston heugh").

(10) *"For a third time he kissed the loathsome thing, and with a hiss and a roar the Laidly Worm reared back and before Childe Wynd stood his sister Margaret"* (Ph. Atkinson "The laidly worm of spindleston heugh").

The above example characterizes the breaking of the vicious circle of evil (a girl turned into a disgusting monster is doomed to scare people and be killed) by replacing the negative feedback loop with a new element (feeling pity for the disgusting worm and kissing it) which restarts a new "healthy" cycle of the "feedback network" – the

transformation of a worm into a girl.

In the fairy tale "The golden bird", the cycle of unsuccessful searches for the golden bird by the elder and middle brothers is broken after the younger brother took pity on the fox by not shooting him:

(11) *"The young man was kind, and said, "Be easy, little fox, I will do you no harm", "You shall not repent of it", answered the fox"* ("The golden bird").

As for the boomerang effect, it provides, in our opinion, the main moral and value background of an overwhelming majority of fairy tales. At the same time, the unexpected reverse effect of the boomerang is excluded in a fairy tale narrative, since at the heart of its motifs lies the idea of the struggle between good and evil with the implied ultimate triumph of good over evil.

One of the common motifs in the fairy tale narrative and rap lyrics is the Hero's death and his / her reincarnation as another person or an animal (in a fairy tale it can also be a bird or even an inanimate object). The rebirth of the Hero, which is associated with the restart of a new life cycle, can be carried out as his external transformation and reincarnation as another person – surpassing the previous one in external and internal properties as, for example, in the Russian fairy tale "The fire-bird and Princess Vasilisa":

(12) *"The king bids me dip myself in boiling water" (...) He took a dip and another and jumped out of the cauldron, and lo and behold! – So handsome had he become as neither pen can write nor tongue tell!"* (A. Afanasyev "The fire-bird and Princess Vasilisa").

However, transformation as a metamorphosis into an animal or a bird is much more common, reflecting in this case archaic karmic ideas, as in "Beauty and the beast" (Afanasyev 2013), "Earl Mar's daughter" (Jacobs 2015), "Hans my hedgehog" (Grimm & Grimm 2014), "The baker's daughter" (Tibbits 1890), "The frog-king, or Iron Henry"

(Grimm & Grimm 2014), "The golden bird" (Grimm & Grimm 2014), "The hunted hare" (English fairy and other folk tales 2006), "The laidly worm of spindleston heugh" (Atkinson 2017), "The rose-tree" (Jacobs 2016).

The character may be transformed into an owl as in example 13, a hare (14), a frog (15) or a toad (17), a bird (18), a fox (19).

(13) *"Then a wonderful thing occurred, for the girl became all of a sudden changed into an owl"* (Ch.J. Tibbits "The baker's daughter").

(14) *"When he was out of sight, she soon perceived the hare in the panniers begin to move, when to her utter amazement arose a beautiful young lady, all in white"* (English fairy and other folk tales "The hunted hare").

(15) *"But when he fell down he was no frog but a king's son with beautiful kind eyes"* (J. Grimm & W. Grimm "The frog-king, or Iron Henry").

(16) *"So Lady Margaret went to bed a beauteous maiden, and rose up a Laidly Worm. And when her maidens came in to dress her in the morning they found coiled up on the bed a dreadful dragon, which uncoiled itself and came towards them"* (Ph. Atkinson "The laidly worm of spindleston heugh").

(17) *"No sooner had he touched her than she shrivelled up and shrivelled up, till she became a huge ugly toad, with bold staring eyes and a horrible hiss"* (ibid.).

(18) *"Hush! hush!" the young man whispered. "I was that cooing dove that you coaxed from off the tree"* (J. Jacobs "Earl Mar's daughter").

(19) *"and no sooner was it done than the fox was changed into a man, and was no other than the brother of the beautiful princess"* (J. Grimm & W. Grimm "The golden bird").

Some reincarnations are rooted in totemic beliefs and the idea of rebirth. In particular, a frog ("The frog prince", "The laidly worm of spindleston heugh") carries the idea of rebirth as resembling a fish while being a tadpole; after its death, according to some Slavic beliefs, it is reborn into a flying snake. The bird ("Earl Mar's daughter", "The rose-tree") in Christianity symbolizes the human soul and in mythologies it "is also associated with soul, though implying an additional mythological motif of the

reincarnation of soul into a bird / animal" (Kravchenko 2019: 15).

However, as the data shows, a number of other transformations iconically reproduce the spiritual essence or external reflection of a character in the likeness of certain animals (a white beautiful hare – a white beautiful lady; a wicked witch – a huge ugly toad; a cooing dove – an enchanted prince in love).

In this regard, the paper identifies that in the first case (of the shape-shift correlation with totemic beliefs) the fairy tale plot predominantly rests on the motif of transformation of an animal into a person. In the second case (of some semblance of the image of the animal to the appearance or spiritual qualities of the character turned into it), the Hero continues his life cycle in the likeness of the one he resembled during his lifetime.

As for transformations into a bird or an animal, which are also found in some rap lyrics, such metamorphoses are also usually interpreted as conceptual metaphors – in contrast to a fairy tale, where such transfigurations appear as real reincarnations in one of the "possible worlds":

(20) *"I (...) turned into the big dog"* (TTC "WHAT'S GOOD").

(21) *"I'm a Wolf"* (TTC "Garbage").

(22) *"I'm a bull, red, piss me off"* (ibid.).

(23) *"I'm a hawk in the gym"* (TTC "New magic wand").

At the same time, in our opinion, it is also possible to talk about some similarity between the mechanism of metaphorization in rap lyrics and the choice of animal images. We see similarity in certain iconicity, which underlies both the transformation of the fairy character into a certain animal and the metaphor or metonymy characterizing the rapper through the image of an animal. The difference is that the metaphorical transfer in rap lyrics is based solely on the rapper's self-presentation as part of his image-making strategy. In particular, the image of the Wolf is one of the



most frequent in Tyler's works; besides, this is the name of the rapper's entire album. This image of a cruel beast, which often attacks first, is symbolic for the underground artist Tyler The Creator, who is considered one of the most provocative rappers of recent times, preferring to strike the first blow with obscenities and other provocations.

In contrast to rap lyrics, one of the most frequent fairy tale motifs manifesting cyclicity through similar plot lines repetition includes the motif of the Hero's helper who repeatedly saves his life. In the Russian folk tale, the daughter of a Snake helps Ivan three times to complete her mother's tasks and three times – to escape from the Snake and her husband. In the fairy tale "The golden bird" (Grimm 2014) a fox acts as a magic assistant who repeatedly helps the Hero complete the tasks. In the Russian fairy tale with a similar plot about Ivan Tsarevich and the Gray Wolf, the Wolf helps Ivan Tsarevich three times to complete the task:

(24) *"I have served you well," the wolf answered, "and I will help you again"* (A. Afanasyev "The tale of Ivan Tsarevich and the gray wolf").

Accordingly, the motif of the magic assistant is always associated in a fairy tale with another motif of a difficult task that must be completed by the Hero several times. In fact, the fairy tale motifs are much more numerous and some of them correlate with the structural functions identified by Propp. However, we have focused only on those of them that are always repeated, ensuring the reversibility and cyclicity of the plot elements.

Apart from recurrent motifs and similar to the fairy tale narrative, cyclicity in rap lyrics can also be expressed by cross-cutting repeating symbols. In particular, the concept of a VICIOUS CIRCLE associated with cyclical time is realized through the Ghetto topos, foregrounded as a metonymic (*"I'm trapped inside the ghetto"*) (K. Lamar "Institutionalized") or a metaphorical (*"I live inside the belly of the rough"*) (K. Lamar "m.A.A.d city") symbol of the vicious circle of doom, crime, and drugs.

The spirit of the Ghetto (i.e. the hood) remains in a person for the whole life, again and again returning the rapper to his past, as exemplified by a chiasmus in the following line of verse:

(25) *"You can take your boy out the hood, but you can't take the hood out the homie"* (K. Lamar "Institutionalized"). This phrase is a kind of a "conceptual chiasmus" as its second half is an inverted form of the first half, both grammatically and logically, to parallel the concepts of location and state of mind (by using the conceptual metaphor).

At the same time, basketball and the recording studio are often conceptualized in rap lyrics as the symbols of escape from the vicious circle:

(26) *".....the only way out the ghetto, you know the stereotype / Shooting hoops or live on the stereo like top forty"* (K. Lamar "Black boy fly").

It is impossible to break out of the ghetto without retracing the paths of famous basketball players or musicians, as indicated by numerous allusions to them, in particular, in Kendrick Lamar's "Black boy fly":

(27) *"I used to be jealous of Aaron Afflalo / I used to be jealous of Aaron Afflalo"* (ibid.).

(28) *"That's what she said but in my head I wanted to be like Jordan"* (ibid.).

Similar to rap lyrics, the idea of cyclicity in a fairy tale narrative may also be based on cross-cutting repeating symbols, in particular, the white, red, and black horsemen as symbols of morning, sunny day, and night, which reappear three times as in (29) or spinning, as a recurring occupation of the main heroine, symbolizing the process of ordering and harmonization as in (30):

(29) *"The red horseman galloped past, and the sun rose. The white horseman galloped past the gate on his white horse. Day was dawning. The black horseman galloped past the gate, night fell"* (A. Afanasyev "Vasilisa the Wise").

(30) *"Vasilisa set to spinning yarn"; "the first she set to weaving lace, the second to knitting stockings, and Vasilisa to spinning yarn"* (ibid.).

However, unlike rap lyrics, where the symbols, associated with reversibility or cyclicity, are always based on the author's occasional imagery associated with reversibility only in the context of a particular song, a fairy tale employs the figurative symbolism. In contrast to symbolic imagery, figurative symbolism is associated with well-established meanings consolidated by paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations: on the syntagmatic axis, such symbols form relationships of the type "If A, then B": if fire symbolizes purification and rebirth, then the stove, as a container of fire, can also develop such symbolic meanings metonymically. On the paradigmatic axis, fairytale symbols are ordered through the co-referent names (the symbolic meaning of the border between the worlds can be expressed by images of a forest, a sea, a hut on chicken legs, etc.) and, conversely, by relations "one image – various symbols": an apple is an ambivalent symbol of death (J. Grimm & W. Grimm "Snow White and the seven dwarfs") and life (Long, long tales... "On rejuvenating apples and living water"), as well as magic (A. Afanasyev "Silver saucer and juicy apple").

For example, the cry of a rooster always symbolizes the disappearance of night ghosts and evil spirits and reappearance of light and forces of good; well-established symbols include a golden ball, living and dead water. The stove (in addition to its many other symbolic meanings not related to the idea of cyclicity) is a symbol of rebirth, the purifying power of fire (the chimney symbolizes the road to the afterlife) as in (31). According to Propp (Пропп 2009), in the archaic rituals of many peoples, "burning" leads to the development of unusual abilities, i.e. to human rebirth:

(31) *"The grandfather threw the boy into the oven – there he was turning around in all sorts of ways. Grandfather took him out of the oven and asks: "Do you know what?" "No, I don't know anything "(three times; the oven is red-hot). "Well, now, have you learned anything?"; "I know more than you, grandfather", – the boy replied. "The study is over, the forest grandfather ordered the dad to come for his son" (Пропп 2009: 109).*

The formal manifestations of cyclicity in a fairy tale involve:

(a) formularity, for example, a recurring formula such as "For the morning is wiser than

the evening"; "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the most beautiful woman in England?", etc. and

(b) triality of events and repetition of elements. In particular, in "Snow White" the queen three times disguises herself and three times seemingly kills Snow White, three times Snow White is deceived, and three times Snow White is saved (J. Grimm & W. Grimm "Snow White and the seven dwarfs"); in the "The magic ring" the girl three times put down the candles to climb a stile, and a dog stole them" ("The magic ring and other stories...").

Formularity is also a necessary attribute in rap lyrics as one of the rhythmicity creating devices, stylistically expressed by anaphora as in (32), catch repetition (33), or a whole line of repetitions and in (34):

(32) "*Ain't talking 'bout nuthin (ain't talking 'bout nuthin) Ain't talking 'bout nuthin (ain't talking 'bout nuthin) Ain't talking 'bout nuthin (ain't talking 'bout nuthin) Ain't talking 'bout nuthin (ain't talking 'bout nuthin)*" (E-40 "Ain't talking...").

(33) "*This is king Kendrick Lamar. King Kendrick, and I meant it, my point intended is raw*" (K. Lamar "Compton").

(34) "*Complexion! Two-step.*

*Complexion don't mean a thing! It's a Zulu love.*

*Complexion! Two-step"* (K. Lamar "Complexion (a zulu love)").

In addition to the aforementioned devices, the cyclical time in rap lyrics, unlike in a fairy tale, is also triggered by multifaceted means of intertextuality referring to pre-existing rap lyrics, cultural landmarks referring to recurrent themes, plots, imagery, characters, symbols that the recipients will identify correctly provided they are familiar with the original text.

Intertextuality devices in rap lyrics can be specified by two interrelated criteria: their recognizability and the source text parameter. Based on the first criterion, the paper identifies quotations as in (36) and allusions as in (37), distinguished by their various "proximity" to the source text and, accordingly, by a different recognizability by the

rap audience. Allusion functions in rap texts as a means of intertextuality and a way of parametrizing the meaning. In particular, the text of Kendrick Lamar's song "HiiiPoWeR" contains at least 15 allusions to geographical realia, political movements, human rights activists, musicians, an occult-philosophical association, a children's book "Charlotte's web":

(35) *"This is why I say that hip hop has done more damage to young African Americans than racism in recent years"* (K. Lamar "HiiiPoWeR").

The above quotation from American television channel Fox News, criticizing Kendrick Lamar's performance with the song "Alright", expresses an opinion, which a priori cannot coincide with the author's opinion, however, is cited as part of the discursive strategy of intensifying the protest message contained in the following lines:

(36) *"Lately, in James 4:4 says: "Friend of the world is enemy of the Lord"* (K. Lamar "Lust").

(37) *"Martin had a dream. Martin had a dream. Kendrick have a dream"* (K. Lamar "Backseat freestyle").

(38) *"Roll up, put a ribbon in the sky"* (K. Lamar "Blow my high (members only)").

Example (37) implies an allusion to Martin Luther King's famous speech "I have a dream". In (38) the rap author alludes to Stevie Wonder's song "Ribbon in the sky".

Based on the second criterion, i.e. of the various textual sources rap lyrics refers to, the means of intertextuality are divided into the following groups:

a) the previous rap lyrics, music styles and musicians that influenced the rapper's formation:

(39) *"I'm doing Big Style Willy couldn't touch 11"* (TTC "Bastard").

(40) *"What's the 27 Club? We ain't making it past 21"* (Juice WRLD "Legends").

Example (39) contains a reference to Will Smith's "Big Willie style" album. An allusion to "27 club" in (40) refers to the combined name of the musicians who

significantly influenced the formation and development of rock and blues music and who died at the age of 27. Comparing the allusive implicature with number 21, the rapper emphasizes that modern rap musicians, unlike rockers and blues singers, die before they are 22.

b) precedent cultural phenomena and landmarks:

(41) "*Kill them all if they gossip, the Children of the Corn*" (K. Lamar "m.A.A.d city").

Example (42) contains an allusion to the story of the American writer Stephen King about the teenagers who founded a sect, killing the entire adult population of the city.

(c) precedent characters, i.e. politicians, famous athletes, representatives of show business, civil libertarians, etc.

(42) "*I used to be jealous of Arron Afflalo / I used to be jealous of Arron Afflalo*" (K. Lamar "Black boy fly").

(43) "*Uh, I can feel the bass, uh, I can see the fakes, / Word to T.D. Jakes, uh, word to Pastor Mase and Kirk Franklin*" (Asap Rocky "Distorted records").

Example (42) contains a reference to Arron Agustin Afflalo, a famous American professional basketball player, who became a model person for a rap artist, because he had succeeded in breaking out of the ghetto.

Example (43) contains a reference to the following authoritative figures who are able to appreciate and confirm the rapper's creativity ("Everything I do groundbreak") and a sense of harmony: Dexter Jakes Sr., a television evangelist and producer, Maze (the pseudonym of Mason Durrell Betha), an American rapper, songwriter, and minister, and Kirk Franklin, an American gospel and contemporary Christian singer.

d) borrowings from the New and the Old Testament or allusions to the Bible:

(44) "*All this money, is God playin' a joke on me?*

*Is it for the moment, and will he see me as Job*" (K. Lamar "Fear").

(45) "*Most of y'all just envy, but jealousy get you killed,*

*Most of y'all throw rocks and try to hide your hand*"(K. Lamar "Element").

Unlike in a fairy tale, the idea of reversibility in rap lyrics can also be expressed explicitly:

(46) *"Just remember, what happens on Earth stays on Earth! / We gon' put it in reverse"*. (K. Lamar "Duckworth").

(47) *"One curse at a time / Reverse the manifest and good karma, and I'll tell you why"* (ibid.).

The common devices of cyclical time identified in rap lyrics and the fairy tale narrative are summed up in Table 1.

Table 1. Cyclical time in rap lyrics and a fairy tale narrative: Common devices

<b>motifs recurrence</b>
similar motifs of breaking the evil chain of a vicious circle, the Hero's death and resurrection – metaphoric in rap lyrics and fairy-real reincarnation into another person, animal, or a bird in a tale
<b>image iconicity</b>
<b>narrative techniques of the boomerang effect and the "feedback network"</b>
<b>cross-cutting repeating symbols</b>
<b>formularity</b>

At the same time, each of the identified common characteristics of cyclical time has a certain specificity of its implementation in rap lyrics and a fairy tale, which is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Cyclical time in rap lyrics and the fairy tale narrative: Divergences

<b>narrative motifs</b>	
<b>rap lyrics</b>	<b>fairy tale:</b>
motifs of constant fear the artist is doomed to experience; of eternal cycle of things; of fate and inevitability	motifs of a difficult task that must be recurrently completed by a fairy tale's Hero; of a magical animal helper who repeatedly (three times or many times) comes to the Hero's aid
<b>image iconicity</b>	
iconicity of the metaphoric or metonymic images of the animal to the rappers' self-image	iconicity of the animal image to the appearance or spiritual qualities of the character turned into it
<b>cross-cutting repeating symbols</b>	

occasional symbolic imagery associated with reversibility or cyclicity only in the context of the particular rap lyrics	figurative symbolism with well-established meanings and ordered by paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations
<b>formularity</b>	
formularity-based rhythmicity, stylistically manifested by anaphora, ring repetition, catch repetition, whole line repetitions	a recurring fairy tales' formula, plot elements recurrence: three times events / actions
<b>multifaceted intertextuality devices</b>	

## 5. Conclusions and perspectives

The paper identifies modern rap's temporal features related to cyclical time in comparison with the fairy tale narrative.

Based on a compound research method, which encompassed narrative, stylistic, and pragmatic analyses consistently applied at the ten stages of the investigation, the paper has reached the following conclusions.

Similar to the fairy tale narrative, rap lyrics involve cyclical time along with the specific means of its manifestation.

The common narrative devices, which mark the cyclic time in rap lyrics and the fairy tale narrative encompass recurrent narrative motifs, narrative techniques such as the boomerang effect and the "feedback networks", cross-cutting repeating symbols, the formularity as well as iconicity underlying animal-bound metaphors in rap lyrics, and images of fairy tale animals associated with transformation into a human.

The identified cyclicity devices vary in their semantic content. Typical cyclicity-based motifs of rap lyrics include the eternal cycle of things, fate, and inevitability as well as the constant fear the artist is doomed to experience. Cyclicity-based motifs in fairy tales include a difficult task that must be recurrently completed by the fairy tale Hero and a magical animal helper who repeatedly comes to the Hero's aid, both heavily associated with the basic plot components of the fairy tale narrative.

Common to fairy tales and rap lyrics are the motifs of breaking the evil chains of a



vicious circle as well as the Hero's death, and his or her resurrection – the difference being that in a fairy tale, death and rebirth are postulated as reality in one of the possible worlds of a fairy tale, while in rap lyrics the motif of transformation is understood in a figurative sense – as a radical change in the social and property status of the lyric's at present compared to that of his past.

The motifs of fate and inevitability, of the eternal cycle of things, and of the constant fear the artist will inevitably endure, are associated with poetic time, while motifs of escaping the wicked shackles of a vicious circle and the Hero's death and resurrection, also cyclical in their nature, determine fragments of a rap text, disclosing the motif in question through the description of successive events. Thus, the idea of cyclicity interacts in this case with the linear time of rap narratives.

Cross-cutting repeating symbols associated with the reversibility or cyclicity of the fairy tale and the time in the rap lyrics differ in terms of stability / occasionality. Rappers occasionally employ symbolic imagery, which is understandable and interpretable within the framework of a particular song, while fairy tale symbolism relies on well-established and recognizable connotations.

Formularity in the texts under investigation appears as the manifestation of cyclicity-recurrence, which in a fairy tale is realized through formal-semantic narrative devices, i.e. the repetition of a fairy tale formula and plot elements, whereas in rap lyrics it is based on stylistic means including anaphora, ring repetition, catch repetition, and whole line repetitions, all associated with rhythmicity.

Unlike in fairy tales, and in accordance with the principles of metamodernism (the paradigm within which the rap genre is positioned), cyclical time in rap lyrics also includes intertextuality means, which are specified by two interrelated criteria: their recognizability (explicit quotations and implicit allusions) and the parameter of the source text, including the previous rap lyrics, music styles and musicians; precedent

cultural phenomena and landmarks; precedent characters, i.e. politicians, famous athletes, representatives of show business, civil libertarians; borrowings from the New and the Old Testament or allusions to the Bible.

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TTC – Tyler the Creator

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## **Résumé**

This research presents a comparative analysis of cyclical time and its narrative and stylistic devices in modern rap lyrics and fairy tales. The paper is aimed to prove the hypothesis that the types of time associated with archaic consciousness may emerge in substantially reinterpreted forms in meta-modernistic genres represented by rap lyrics. For that purpose, a combination of narrative, stylistic, and intertextual analyses was employed at the ten consecutive stages of research. Cyclic time in rap lyrics and fairy tales is manifested by (a) common recurrent narrative motifs, such as (i) the Hero's death and resurrection and (ii) the breaking out of the vicious circle; b) narrative techniques including (i) the boomerang effect and (ii) the "feedback network"; (c) cross-cutting repeating symbols and (d) formularity, which in fairy tales relies on repeated formulae and plot elements, and in rap lyrics – on stylistic devices, iconically reproducing recurrence (anaphora, whole line repetitions) and cyclicity (ring repetition, catch repetition). Divergent cyclicity-based motifs include: the motifs of the eternal cycle of things as well as fate and constant fear in rap lyrics and the motifs of a repeatedly completed task and a permanent magical animal helper in fairy tales. Cross-cutting repeating symbols of time reversibility or cyclicity in fairy tales relies on well-established imagery, while rap lyrics utilize occasional symbolic images, interpretable within a particular text or album. Cyclic time in rap lyrics may interact with linear time as a sequence of events in the rap narrative, incorporated through motifs of breaking the evil chain of a vicious circle and the Hero's death and resurrection. In contrast to fairy tales, cyclicity in rap lyrics is triggered by multifaceted intertextual devices reflecting the aesthetics of metamodernism, with its principle of eternal repetition and temporal polyphony.

**Key words:** cyclical time, rap lyrics, fairy tale, narrative devices, stylistic devices.

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