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## THE MAIDEN PSYCHOLINGUISTIC ARCHETYPE (MARVEL CINEMATIC UNIVERSE)

**Summary.** The research focuses on psycholinguistic analysis of a cinematic female archetype verbal portrayal. The characters' narratives are highly defined by the heroines' archetype and personality. The study is based on Jung's idea of the archetype as a recurring image of the collective unconscious, characteristic for different nations, regardless of their culture and language. Each archetype performs a certain function in the plot and possesses a set of motivations, determining the characters' general and verbal behavior. Post-Jungian researchers propose several classifications of psychological archetypes. Among other master archetypes, comprising a typology of characters frequenting in fiction stories and films, Schmidt (2007) defines the Maiden archetype. The Schmidt's typology is compatible with Maslow's hierarchy of human needs. The founding idea of the present paper postulates that the verbal representation of characters comprising the same archetype bears similarities in the narratives and other linguistic characteristics. The aim of the research is to establish the verbal portrayal of the Maiden archetype in contemporary cinematic mythology. The paper examines three superhero films of the Marvel Cinematic Universe franchise: *Black Panther* (2018), *Captain Marvel* (2019), and *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* (2022). The research focuses respectively on the turns of Shuri, Monica Rambeau and America Chavez, female protagonists representing the Maiden archetype in the examined franchise. According to the typology of fiction archetypes by Schmidt, the Maiden archetype is an easy-going, carefree character, distinguished by naivety, dependence on others, and curiosity. The Maiden needs to feel safe, have fun and discover the world around, which defines her narratives about having protection, reassurance, stability, freedom, justice, beauty, and knowledge. The Maiden archetype in the MCU demonstrates an important shift in the female character representation in the mainstream cinema: the new generation of superheroines are Latin-American (America Chavez), black African (Shuri), and African-American (Monica Rambeau). Personal characteristics define their individual narratives.

**Key words:** film archetype, psycholinguistic image, the Maiden archetype, Marvel Cinematic Universe, verbal representation, narrative analysis.

**Problem statement.** Recently there has been a significant increase in the number of female protagonists in moving image narratives, both in film and TV [1, p. 115]. Thus, depictions of female characters in entertainment media have become a perennial topic of interest for researchers. In proportional terms, male narrative characters outnumber female characters roughly two to one. When featured, female characters used to be depicted stereotypically and were likely to be featured in secondary or supporting roles [2, p. 547]. Women were... the barometers of changing

fashion. Like two-way mirrors linking the immediate past with the immediate future, women in the movies reflected, perpetuated, and in some respects offered innovations of the roles of women in society [3, p. 12].

Contemporary cinema reflects the present day society with its behavioral norms. The *Marvel Cinematic Universe* as the most popular and recognizable franchise in the cinematic world presents images equally understood in different cultures throughout the globe. Olufidipe & Echezabal note that the power of female roles is heavily undermined and sexualized both in the *MCU* and generally in films. In the viewer's eyes, these films uphold a patriarchal structure and reinforce social norms that objectify women in their workplace and elsewhere. Being the highest-grossing film franchise of all time and notably one of the most popular, the *MCU* sets an example not only for their competitors, but for their female audience as well. Even though they are fictional, these representations mold cultural standards of female identity that influence behavior [4, p. 12]. However, since 2008 the franchise has been demonstrating a significant shift in the representation of female characters, thus changing their perception by the wide public. Female characters gradually become more active, outspoken, free to act upon their own decisions and pursue their own goals. Their visual representation also changes. The age diversifies greatly, from young girls of four (Morgan Stark in *Avengers: Endgame*) to elderly women of seventy plus (Blind Al in *Deadpool*). The nationality, ethnicity, skin color, race, and even species of the heroines become greatly varied.

The New Heroine is on a journey of self-discovery. The idea behind the individuation process is to strike a certain balance between personal interests and the interests of her family, community, society. Human beings cannot develop in isolation, without any external influences: they form themselves in relation to, and in conflict with, their environment. Only by interacting with others does the individual see the difference between self and environment, and only by building oneself into the social structure does one become fully human [1, p. 122]. The present research is rooted in the idea that the verbal portrayal of a fiction character reveals the process of human interaction with the surrounding environment. Therefore, the existing patterns of verbal self-expression, repetitive from character to character of the same archetype, reflect the psychological characteristics and motivations of non-fictional individuals in the society.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Jung's idea of the archetype as a recurring image of the collective unconscious gave rise to several post-Jungian classifications of psychological archetypes, including those of mass culture media. Each archetype performs a certain function in the plot and possesses

a set of motivations, determining the characters' general and verbal behavior. The idea of archetype is compatible with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. According to Maslow, lower needs include physiological needs (food, shelter, sleep, and reproduction), safety needs, needs for belonging and sexual/romantic love, needs for esteem and self-esteem. Higher needs (growth needs) are the needs for self-actualization [5; 6]. Thus, any behavior is motivated by the person's goals, needs, and values. A particular set of motivations defines an archetype. Some needs might be temporary or occasional to account for the character's individual peculiarities.

The character's archetype defines the role of the heroine in the plot, her actions and (verbal) behavior. McAdams [7] defines three layers of personality: 1) personal traits, 2) motivations, goals, values, and 3) narratives, which come as the result of the combination of personal traits and motivations. Further application of the idea to the array of cinematic characters reveals that representatives of the same archetype possess common narratives and verbal characteristics.

Jung [8], Campbell [9], Hall & Lindzey [10], McAdams [11], Mark & Pearson [12], among others developed such generalized images as the Caregiver, the Creator, the Every Guy/Girl, the Explorer, the Hero, the Innocent, the Jester, the Lover, the Magician, the Outlaw, the Ruler, the Sage, and the Shadow (see further Faber & Mayer [13]). The archetypes (with no gender differentiation) represent respectively caring, innovation, ordinariness, discovery, courage, naivety, playfulness, passion, transformation, rebellion, power, wisdom, and darkness. This research focuses on the Innocent (in the terminology by Schmidt, the Maiden archetype). The Innocent is represented by the pure, faithful, naive, childlike character. Humble and tranquil; longing for happiness and simplicity – a paradise. Often a traditionalist; saintly; symbolizing renewal [13, p. 309].

Cowden, LaFever, & Vidars propose a similar female archetype, labeling it the Spunky Kid. The Spunky Kid has moxie; she sometimes hides behind her sarcastic wit, and her lack of confidence may make her play down her best attributes, but she is spirited, cheerful and the most loyal of friends. Quick with a wide grin and a good word, she knows and likes everyone, and the world likes her right back. She is the heroine underdog. People empathize with her. The chips may be stacked against her, but she is not one to give in or give up. Everyone who knows her, loves her – they just can't help themselves. Audiences root for her happy ending. She is creative and willing to explore new ideas, but playing prima donna is not her style. Being part of the team makes her happy [14, p. 68].

According to Schmidt, the Maiden archetype represents female characters distinguished by such characteristics as naivety, optimism, dependence, connectedness to the Mother figure, occasional insight and thirst for knowledge [15].

**Objective.** Despite the availability of several classifications of mass media archetypes, focusing on the characters' psychological characteristics, there has been no attempt to compose a typology of psycholinguistic archetypes to account for common narratives and linguistic elements in the verbal portrayal of characters. The objective of the present research is to establish correlation between the psychological traits of the Maiden archetype characters and their verbal representation. The paper examines three superhero films of the *Marvel Cinematic Universe*: *Black Panther* (2018) [16], *Captain Marvel* (2019) [17], and *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* (2022) [18]. The research focuses respectively on

the turns of Shuri, Monica Rambeau and America Chavez, female protagonists representing the Maiden archetype in the franchise. The life goals and motivations define the archetype, which in its turn forms the characters' narratives and their behavioral reactions (including verbal). Common features define the archetype, while individual characteristics distinguish the psycholinguistic image of a particular heroine. Additionally, the genre and target audience of the film influence the individual verbal representation. To compare the verbal portrayal of the *MCU* Maiden archetype (target audience 12+ or 16+ depending on the film) with the Maiden representation in the family musical fantasy *Frozen* (target audience 2+), see [19].

**Research methods.** The turns of the researched characters in the films were extracted from subtitles, checked against the films' sound to add missing fillers and interjections, and submitted to qualitative and quantitative linguistic analysis. Common verbal peculiarities were established to account for the archetypal characteristics; individual features were defined to reveal personal traits.

**Main findings.** One of the primary criticisms directed at the *MCU* has been its lack of diversity in narratives which centralize the experiences and heroism of white heterosexual men. The *MCU* does feature African-American superheroes (see Falcon, War Machine, Black Panther and Luke Cage, etc.) and female superheroes (see Black Widow, Scarlett Witch and Jessica Jones, etc.), but they are undoubtedly secondary characters by quite some margin and, in the case of women, they are frequently defined by their vulnerability, whether that is physically, psychologically or emotionally [20, p. 33]. The tendency is common throughout the cinema in general.

Nevertheless, Benshoff notes significant changes in the ways that African Americans have been depicted on screen. Those varying images are in many ways reflective of the changing social climate of America over the past century... However, since American cinema for the most part functions under the dominant ideology of white patriarchal capitalism, it should not be surprising to discover that most popular film helps maintain dominant cultural attitudes toward African Americans [21, p. 78]. One of the reasons Hollywood kept African American actors in smaller supporting roles was so that prejudiced audiences would not have to watch an entire movie about a Negro, or worse yet, see a black character who was smart, strong, and independent [21, p. 193]. In this aspect *Black Panther* (2018), the superhero film concentrating on adventures of black characters (Black Panther himself, his queen mother Ramona, his younger sister and technical genius Shuri and the royal guard's female general Okoye) may be considered revolutionary.

Attempts to separate the United States from Latin America (and especially Mexico) continue to this day, as evidenced by the amount of energy and funds spent to police the border between Mexico and the United States. Such attitudes have been reflected over the years in films made in Hollywood. Over the past century, Hollywood films have often reinforced the sense of difference and distance between "them" (Latinos) and "us" (white Americans). Intriguingly, though, some Hollywood movies have also demonstrated a more complex cultural ambivalence toward Latinos [21, p. 319]. In this aspect, the first Latin-American LGBTQ+ female superhero America Chavez is another revelation.

Though the Maiden archetype is not frequent in the *MCU* due to the superhero action genre, it presents a promising starting point for the further character's development. The Maiden archetype

becomes the means to introduce generation next of superheroes to the franchise. A range of young female characters first have only a short appearance as supporting characters to be further disclosed in leading roles. Though age is not a factor when creating this archetype, the Maiden in the *MCU* is usually represented as a child or teenager. In *Captain Marvel* Monica Rambeau is eleven, in *Black Panther* Shuri is seventeen, and in *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* America Chavez is fourteen.

The distinguishing psycholinguistic features of the characters are as follows.

1) The Maiden cares about her relationship with mother. If the Maiden is not close to her mother, she is distraught. In general, the Maiden tries to stay on the good side of others who support and take of her [15].

Appellatives, namely personal names and common nouns, used as vocatives define characters, important for the Maiden. Normally, these are characters on whom the Maiden depends. The frequency of appellatives seems to be directly connected to the trust level of the character. When the Maiden addresses those she depends on, the higher is the frequency, the more she trusts the person and depends on them. Shuri cares much about her brother and mother, thus the frequency of appellatives and their variety. For example, in different situations she calls her brother by the name T'Challa, mockingly greets him 'My King!' and 'genius', and lovingly addresses him 'Brother'. She respectfully calls her mother 'Mother' and desperately 'mama', when Shuri is dismayed and devastated. Monica is also dependent on her mother, thus the informal vocative 'mom'. She also trusts and looks up to Captain Marvel, whom she lovingly calls 'Auntie Carol'. On the other side of the spectrum, America, having lost her mothers in early age, is used to relying exclusively on herself; thus, she does not trust people easily and has the lowest number of appellatives in her turns. She addresses Wong by his name and calls Doctor Strange by his given name 'Stephen'. The latter addressing is highly important for the plot, as it symbolizes the change in America's attitude towards Strange when she finally starts trusting him and accepting her powers.

The Maiden in the *MCU* is often deprived of parent(s)' love. In Monica's life, there is only mother. Shuri loses her father due to a terrorist attack; later she loses her older brother, who has temporarily become the father figure in her life. America is blaming herself for the accident that long ago separated her from her mothers. Family problems influence the Maidens' moods. Teenagers oftentimes feel angry and guilty from real or imagined transgressions, and many are willing to punish themselves. Failure is an effective self-punishment for real or imagined crimes [22, p. 62]. That is the case of America Chavez. She blames herself for what happened to her mothers. *America: I didn't lose them. I killed them... Okay, I opened a portal with the powers I can't control and sent them to a random, probably deadly universe, with no way to escape.*

As the result, she struggles with mastering her powers, being the cause of the accident. *America: I can travel the Multiverse... That's the problem. I don't know how. Can't control it. Only happens when I'm really, really afraid.*

2) Safety and security is what motivates the Maiden. She needs to know that there is someone there to catch her if she falls. Whether she has faced the harshness in life or not, or if she is rich or poor, she knows she needs someone to support her [15]. It explains the Maidens' narratives on needing safety, reassurance, support, and approval.

*America: Wait. 'Sup? Strange: 'Sup. America: Made some sparks. Strange: Great. Your parents would be proud. I hope you'll get to show 'em one day.*

*Shuri: If you're going to take on Klaue... you'll need the best the design group has to offer. Exhibit A. T'Challa: My design. Shuri: Old tech. T'Challa: Old? Shuri: Functional, but old... Now, look at these. Do you like that one? T'Challa: Tempting.*

*Captain Marvel: Your mom's lucky. When they were handing out kids, they gave her the toughest one. Lieutenant Trouble. Monica: You remembered.*

If she ever faces a traumatic situation, her need for security and protection will grow [15].

*America: Then the demon caught up with us. I thought you'd protect me... but you didn't. / That thing was trying to kidnap me. It's like a henchman who works for a demon. All we knew is that they wanted to take my power for themselves. / How do I know you won't betray me like he did? / You saved me.*

*Shuri: First Baba. And now my brother. Mama, we didn't even get to bury him.*

3) The Maiden loves to meet new people and have new experience. Everything new and different catches her eye. She is never bored [15]. Edelstein notes that teenagers feel receptive to new people and ideas [22, p. 65]. Thus, Monica immediately befriends aliens, whom the adults are distrustful of. The Maiden is curious and attracted to everything new, she needs knowledge, thus the numerous questions in her turns to acquire information about the surrounding world.

*Shuri: Did he freeze? / Are they Jabari? / Who are you taking with you to Korea?.. You sure it's a good idea to take your ex on a mission?*

*America: Did you blow it with your Christine?.. Why?.. More complicated than being chased by a witch through the Multiverse?*

*Monica: Did you see her? / Auntie Carol? / Green transforming aliens? / Like what? Show us.*

The narratives of learning and teaching are frequent in the turns of the Maiden characters. She might be cocky about the knowledge she possesses.

*Shuri: Good morning, Sergeant Barnes... How are you feeling? Come. Much more for you to learn. / You were a great pilot. Don't worry, I'll guide you through it. It's just like riding a hoverbike.*

*America: Rule number one of Multiversal travel, you don't know anything... Rule number two, find food. Preferably pizza.*

The Maiden is usually very insightful and often proclaims her ideas on what is right or wrong. She teaches the adults about the truths of life.

*Monica: Testing brand-new aerospace tech is dangerous... and you used to do that. That's what I'm saying. You have to go! You have a chance to fly the coolest mission in the history of missions... and you're gonna give it up to sit on the couch and watch Fresh Prince with me? I just think you should consider... what kind of example you're setting for your daughter.*

The Maiden sees beauty in unconventional things, considered ugly by the majority. *Monica (talking to aliens): No way. You guys have the best eyes. Don't ever change your eyes.*

4) The Maiden lives a charmed, playful life, unconcerned with annoying daily errands and problems [15]. She stays positive. She jokes. Thus, Shuri's function is to provide a comic relief in grieve, ceremonial or solemn situations. In the first scene, the family is mourning the late king T'Chaka and Shuri lifts the spirits by teasing

her brother for being awkward in the presence of his love Nakia. In another scene, she is defiant with Everett Ross and calls the white agent 'colonizer'. In yet another scene, she jokes with her brother. *Shuri: Try them on. Fully automated. Like the old American movie Baba used to watch. And I made them completely sound absorbent. Guess what I call them. Sneakers.*

Her humor may take on sarcastic tones.

*Ross: Right. Okay, is this Wakanda? Shuri: No, it's Kansas.*

The Maiden stays a child inside. She does not want to grow up [15].

*Shuri: When you said you would take me to California for the first time... I thought you meant Coachella... or Disneyland.*

On the other hand, the Maiden can be an impatient, petulant, whiny child.

*America: Ay! How is this so much harder than a Multiversal portal?*

*Monica: Why can't I listen, too?*

5) Freedom to be herself is the most valued thing in her life. She has to express herself and her desires [15]. Hence, the Maiden is often blunt and has no filters while expressing her opinion or string of thoughts.

*America: Gotta say, of the two Doctor Stranges I've met so far... you're not my favorite.*

*Strange: We have experience of the Multiverse. Most recently, there was an incident with Spider-Man. America: What man? Strange: Spider-Man. He has the powers of a spider. Wong: Hence the name. America: Gross. Does he look like a spider? Strange: No. No, more like a man. Wong: Climbs walls, shoots webs. Strange: Yeah. Bingo. America: Out of his butt? Strange: No. Well, maybe, I don't know. Honestly, I hope not. America: Super weird.*

As all teenagers, the Maiden has enthusiastic reactions of all kinds, both positive and negative. She tries to hide feelings, but emotions are not under control [22, p. 60]. She often uses exclamations and empty adjectives to express both positive and negative emotions of joy, excitement, surprise, anger, impatience, or fear. The examples indicate openness and sincerity of the characters.

*Shuri: You can do this, T'Challa! / Yes! Yes!*

*America: No, no, no! / Look out! / Hey! Hey!*

*Monica: Auntie Carol? Mom, it's Auntie Carol! I knew it! Everyone said you were dead! But we knew they were lying. / No way! That's so cool!*

Being a teenager, the Maiden uses colloquial forms. Informal way of communication can be regarded as another manifestation of love for freedom, especially when she is talking to adults in formal situations.

*America: Holy shit, you married Christine? / This universe sucks. / Crap. Maybe it's not free here. / Yeah, you don't wanna get stuck in there. It's really hard to eat.*

*Monica: No way! That's so cool! / Whoa. No. Uh-uh. Definitely not.*

As she values her freedom, she might be disrespectful towards authority of any kind, traditions and rules, considering them restrictive. Thus, Shuri finds ceremonies oppressive and jokingly flips off her older brother, the future king, whom she is supposed to respect. In the scene before the ritual inaugural combat of T'Challa, she complains about the traditional attire corset being too tight, thus demonstrating her striving towards modern way of living, condescend attitude towards the outdated traditions and the role

of women in them. The corset is a symbol of the oppressed female position in the traditional patriarchal society. *Shuri: This corset is really uncomfortable... so could we all just wrap it up and go home?*

The Maidens' teenage desire for freedom is sometimes demonstrated by the eagerness to argue [22, p. 62].

*Shuri: How many times do I have to teach you? Just because something works doesn't mean that it cannot be improved. T'Challa: You are teaching me? What do you know? Shuri: More than you.*

*America: I'm from another universe. How do you know my stomach works the same as yours?*

6) Teenagers are prone to show sensitivity towards others [22, p. 65]. Therefore, the Maiden cares about the others' feelings and feels sorry for their misfortunes. She can be protective.

*Shuri: Great! Another broken white boy for us to fix. This is going to be fun.*

*Monica: They can stay here with us. Can't they, Mom? Maria Rambeau: They won't be safe here, baby. Auntie Carol's right. They need their own home.*

*America: This Stephen is different. He is. It doesn't matter about all the other Stephens.*

7) Adolescence brings a sense of invincibility and unlimited power, so young people are more likely to take chances [22, p. 55]. The Maiden takes risks because she feels invulnerable and pushes others to follow her on her exploits. She does not realize the danger that lurks in the world. Trauma can be a rite of passage for her, opening her eyes to reality and forcing her to find that she has a big heart and a great capacity to be a healer and a guide for others [15]. The Maiden archetype has a big potential for development of the character arc, thus being a base from which the female character evolves. Shuri's potential is revealed in the sequel *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, when she dons the mantle of her late brother and becomes the Black Panther. Very often, the Maiden needs to be forced to stand on her own two feet. She needs to support herself and make commitments. She needs to be aware of the harshness of life and take off her rose-colored glasses. In *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* America needs to master her abilities by believing in her strength.

**Conclusion and prospects for further research.** The obtained results demonstrate that the psycholinguistic images of Shuri (*Black Panther*), Monica Rambeau (*Captain Marvel*) and America Chavez (*Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness*) are greatly determined by the Maiden archetype and distinguished by the following linguistic characteristics. The Maiden needs to be safe, have fun and discover the world around, which defines her narratives on having protection, reassurance, approval, freedom, justice, compassion, amusement, beauty, and knowledge. She depends on other characters and the Mother figure is important in her life; hence the frequent usage of appellatives and vocatives, defining those who provide and care for the Maiden. The Maiden is curious about everything around; hence numerous questions and requests in her turns. She stays positive and jokes; her sense of humor is predominantly light and teasing. She values freedom to be herself; hence colloquial style, blunt expression of opinion and stream of consciousness in her verbal portrayal. The Maiden's speech is informal, simple, humorous, insightful, emotional, frank and often chaotic to reflect her attachment to the Caregiver archetype, curiosity, and optimism. Individual narratives of coping with guilt and failure (for America), supremacy of African culture and rightful place for women in designing high-end technology (for

Shuri), and following in the footsteps of great parents (for Monica) reflect personal characteristics of the researched characters. The emergence of new heroines demonstrates a gradual shift from the white heterosexual patriarchal society towards a more diverse multiracial, tolerant gender-neutral global community.

Among the prospects of the research is the composition of a comprehensive typology of female psycholinguistic archetypes, featuring in the highest-grossing English-language films of the 21st century.

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#### Бережна М. В. Психолінгвістичний архетип «Діва» (у кіновсесвіті Marvel)

**Анотація.** Дослідження зосереджено на психолінгвістичному аналізі вербального портрета кінематографічного архетипу жіночого персонажа. Наративи персонажів значною мірою визначаються архетипом і особистими якостями героїнь. В основу дослідження покладено уявлення Юнга про архетип як повторюваний образ колективного несвідомого, характерний для різних націй, незалежно від їх культури та мови. Кожен архетип виконує певну функцію в сюжеті та керується набором мотивацій, що визначають загальну і вербальну поведінку персонажів. Послідовники Юнга пропонують декілька класифікацій психологічних архетипів. Серед інших головних архетипів, що входять до типології персонажів художніх оповідань і фільмів, Шмідт (2007) визначає архетип «Діва». Типологія Шмідт сумісна з ієрархією людських потреб Маслоу. Основна ідея цієї статті полягає в тому, що вербальний портрет персонажів, які належать до одного архетипу, має подібність у наративах і мовних характеристиках. Метою дослідження є визначення вербального портрета архетипу «Діва» в сучасній кінематографічній міфології. У статті розглянуто три фільми про супергероїв із франшизи кінематографічного всесвіту Marvel: «Чорна пантера» (2018), «Капітан Марвел» (2019) і «Доктор Стрендж у Мультивсесвіті божевілья» (2022). Дослідження зосереджено на репліках Шурі, Моніки Рамбо та Америки Чавес, жіночих персонажів, що втілюють архетип «Діва» в досліджуваній франшизі. Згідно з типологією архетипів Шмідт, «Діва» – це присмий у спілкуванні, безтурботний персонаж, який вирізняється наївністю, залежністю від інших, та допитливістю. «Діва» прагне почуватися в безпеці, розважатися та відкривати світ навколо, що визначає її наративи про захист, підтримку, стабільність, свободу, справедливість, красу та знання. Архетип «Діва» в кіновсесвіті Marvel демонструє важливу зміну в репрезентації жіночого персонажа в мейнстрімовому кіно: нове покоління супергероїнь – латиноамериканка (Америка Чавес), чорношкіра африканка (Шурі) та афроамериканка (Моніка Рамбо). Особистісні характеристики героїнь визначають індивідуальні наративи.

**Ключові слова:** кіноархетип, психолінгвістичний образ, архетип «Діва», кіновсесвіт Marvel, вербальний портрет, наративний аналіз.