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Notes on the trickster as a literary character in archnarratives. A brief initial analysis

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Abstract:
The so-called "trickster" is a special and important archfigure in the mythological and fairy-tale images of each civilization and cultural circle. The trickster is a controversial and often (seemingly) contradictory character that belongs to the "culture of popular laughter" (Bakhtin) or picaresque mythology (Kerényi). The aim of this paper is to present a brief initial analysis of the selected characters on a trans-genre and trans-cultural sample of ancient texts.

The research into this topic lies at the crossroads of several scientific disciplines. The core of this subject, which consists of literary science and aesthetics, overlaps with existential semiotics, religious studies and cultural anthropology. Given the interdisciplinary nature and thematological focus of the present study, we can anchor our research methodology to the newly established literary/art science sub-discipline termed *archtextual thematology*.

Archtextual thematology follows the initial conceptual and methodological tradition of the Nitra Interpretative School, with focus on the concept of receptionist poetics and pragmatic aesthetics of F. Miko and Ľ. Plesník. It assumes a critical approach to postmodern relativism and poststructuralist/postmodernist antimimetism. It draws our attention to the literary-scientific (thematological) research of ancient culture-shaping *archnarratives*, such as fairy tales, myths, epics, religious texts etc. According to Čechová, archtextual thematology understands the topic as an "expression/manifestation (mystery) of the underlying experience and super-individually, historically and praxeologically validated wisdom, which underlies and overarches the purely individualistic creations." Its aim is to capture the fundamental models of depiction of synoptic life/existential problem situations and the explicitly or implicitly contained conceptions of the life-world, and our abiding in it (Dasein), and the strategies of coping with it in the most meaningful way" (Čechová, 2017, p. 280).

1. Elementary classification of the trickster

In the archnaratives, the trickster appears as a 1) supernatural (superhuman) character, 2) human character and 3) animal character.

The role of a supernatural trickster is most often seen in gods, semi-gods or demons with magical powers. The supernatural tricksters are mainly found in the myths and genre-hybrid archstories. These characters are the familiar figures from the official pantheon of culture, in which the relevant story emerged: the Greek Hermes and Titan Prometheus, the Hindu Krishna, the Egyptian Isis, the Aztec Huehuecoyotl, Polynesian Maui, Nordic-Germanic Loki or the Christian devil, which is often referred to as *simia dei* (the monkey of God), the ironic counterpart to God.

Although the human trickster does not have supernatural powers, he is a physically or mentally exceptional character that differs in one way or another from other human characters or somehow exceeds them (e.g. through his intelligence, mysterious guidance, access to beings from another world, accidental acquisition of a magical object). In terms of genre, the human trickster is mainly present in fairy tales. In the realistic, humorous and partly magical fairy tales, the role of the trickster is assumed by a clever and cunning scamp, e.g. in the Egyptian Goha, Syrian Djuham, Afghan Abu Khan, Kazakh Aldar Kose, Swahil Abunuvas, and Sherherezade in the Arabic collection *Thousand and One Nights*. In the magical fairy tales, we usually encounter the "stupid hero" prototype – or the so-called "bonehead". For example, the bonehead character in the Scandinavian narratives is represented by Ashlad (Pål or Espen Askeladd), in Slovak it is Stupid John (Hlúpy Janko), and Ivan the Fool (Иван дурак) in Russian tales etc. It is a special portrayal of the trickster character in the narratives whose actions in the plot are inverse: the trickster-bonehead is not the originator of the malicious pranks; on the contrary, he himself becomes a victim of fraud and ridicule because of his simplicity and naivety. For example: *"Ivan the Fool swung his feet from the furnace and begged: 'Give me a horse, brothers, I too want to go and try my luck.'– 'Sit at home, you fool!' his brothers mocked him. 'Where would you go? Just look at this chicken. He would like to join the hawks!' And Ivan burst into tears. So they brought him a scabby horse. 'Go, you fool! You will be a* *laughingstock.' The horse stranded its legs and staggered at every turn, and the people were bursting into laughter."* (On the faithful pony /O vernom koníkovi/, In: Sheer Beauty /Krása Nesmírná/, 1984, p. 18). The trickster-bonehead is always accompanied by happiness. The character is the chosen one, and he effortlessly and often comically and accidentally acquires rare and magical objects that help him become a hero. For example, in the Russian fairy tale *The Flying Ship*, Ivan the Fool builds a magical flying ship that helps him win the Tsar's daughter. He meets an old man along the way. They get engaged in the following conversation: *"'So can you build such a ship?', 'No, I can't.' 'So why do you even go there?' 'There are good people in the world after all, and someone will teach me.' 'I can teach you if you will. Go into the forest, get to the first tree, hit it with an ax, then fall face down and wait. Until you see the ship finished'"* (The Flying Ship /Lietajúci koráb/, In: Sheer Beauty /Krása Nesmírná/, 1984, p. 72). We could grasp this fact – perhaps more accurately – through the semantics of idioms: *"to come to a peeled egg", "to be born under a lucky star"* or *"to be in the right place at the right time"* etc.

The controversial archfigure of the human trickster survived the onset of the medieval era, though, thanks to the Christian Church, in a profaned and censored form. In medieval folklore and authorial creations, the role of the human trickster is assumed by obscure priests and kings, jesters, jugglers, socially rejected knights or bandits, but also cunning and lustful wives, mistresses or prostitutes (Haase, 2008, p. 994). The main plot in the medieval trickster tale is the trickster's effort to satisfy his own physical desires and needs (e.g. sex and food), defamation and satirical criticism of the rulers and official religion (the Christian Church) as the powerful authorities who intimidate and oppress the weak (ibid.). The mythicized Robin Hood of the Old English legends and Till Eulenspiegel (also Tyll Ulenspegel, Dyll Ulenspiegel) from the Germanic and Francophone cultural circuit became the iconic human tricksters of the European Middle Ages and early Renaissance. In his book *Ein kurtzweillig Lesen von Dyl Ulenspiegel, geboren uß dem Land zu Brunßwick, wie er sein leben volbracht hat* (1515), the (most probably) German chronicler Hermann Bote wrote about his adventures. The cultural equivalents of the German trickster Till Eulenspiell can be found in the Antwerp legends (Lange Wapper) or Flemish folk literature (Piercala).

Animals with ambivalent semantic coding can be considered animal tricksters that do the work of their human and supernatural (superhuman) counterparts in the fabulously mythological narrative worlds: on the one hand they are a symbol of cunningness and lickerishness, and cleverness and ingenuity on the other. The role of the animal trickster is most often assumed by a fox (Japan, China, Vietnam, Europe – the medieval fox Reynard); coyote (native America); rabbit (Africa, black America, Europe); monkey (China, Indonesia); corvids such as the raven and crow (Europe, Arctic regions of Eurasia, Greenland-Canadian Innuits) etc. In the narratives of natural and/or native communities and advanced civilizations, whose official religion is strongly influenced by the elements of dynamism, animism and shamanism (e.g. Shinto and Buddhism), the animal tricksters often abound in supernatural powers and/or are perceived as a deity (deification). This for example concerns Raven Kutch (otherwise known as Kutkh, Kutkinaka), the Inuit ethnic archnarratives of the so-called Russian Far East, and the Coyote in the stories of North American Indians.

2. The comical modality of tricksteriads

Comicality is a kind of (un)conscious emotional and/or affective evaluation of the surrounding phenomena in life, which probably conditioned its deep anthropological anchoring in society (Plesník et al., 2011, p. 367). The phenomenon of comicality and laughter was thoroughly analysed by the Russian literary scholar and theorist of culture Mikhail Bakhtin. In his work *François Rabelais and the Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, he draws attention to the existence of the so-called culture of popular laughter that was originally related to the religious-mythological thinking of man. He claims that the culture of popular laughter manifests itself in three main forms: first, the fair or carnival festivities, which generally existed outside the official Christian cult, have ancient pagan roots and clearly reflect the element of playfulness; second, the ubiquitous street talk, for example swearwords that usually pejoratively label and hyperbolize the genitalia, accompanied by swearing, cussing, oaths or folk curses; and third, the works of literary laughter of various kinds narrated either in Latin or in the national (domestic) language (2007, pp. 11 – 14). The specific aesthetic-philosophical undertone of the culture of popular laughter is *pars pro toto* characterized by the so-called Dionysian principle of natural and hyperbolic corporeality, laughter, wanton fun and chaos.

The aesthetic experience of the comic arises from the heterogeneity of the phenomena (in behaviour, in a particular situation, in speech etc.) (Plesník et al., 2011, p. 368). This was already pointed out by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. According to Aristotle, comedy is part of the ugly: “It consists in some defect or ugliness which is not painful or destructive. To take an obvious example, the comic mask is ugly and distorted, but does not imply pain.” (1996, p. 66). In antiquity, the development of comedy gave way to a broad repertoire of comic stories and stereotypical comic characters with hyperbolized physical and personal traits. Aristotle claims that tragedy depicts people in a better light, whereas comedy shows them for what they really are, or worse: “But human character is almost always given by this duality, i.e. in nature, all differ in wickedness and virtue” (1996, p. 61). The literary theorist Jana Waldnerová rightly points out that the history of comical characters was first the history of characters of folk comedy, which drew on various manifestations of physical and moral deformity (2014, p. 38). A comical character is always depicted as incomplete, imperfect in some way, asymmetric, cartoonish, which gives the impression of its indignity and lack of heroism. Comicality and related humour are the most important features of the so-called trickster tales (Haase, 2008, p. 992). This expressive category mostly applies to modelling the actual character of a trickster. His comicality is constituted by the principles of corporeality, hyperbolization and animalization, which often semantically overlap.

The trickster’s character profile implicitly and explicitly merges the oxymoric categories “human – animal”. The boundary between them is often blurred to such an extent that it is not always obvious to the reader whether the trickster is an animal or an (over)human being with special abilities. These mainly involve the stories of natural and/or pre-writing communities (the Innuits, some of the North American Indian tribes, African indigenous tribes, etc.) where the relationship between man and animal is naturally close, or even existential.

The above is also associated with the frequently thematized trickster’s magical ability to arbitrarily shape-shift from a person to an animal and *vice versa*, but also the animalization of human characteristics and weaknesses. The trickster is quenchless in all possible ways. He is characterized by obsessive eating, alcoholism, sexual lust etc., which, in accordance with the comical-ironic modality of trickster tales, reaches grotesque and bizarrely absurd proportions. For example, in the context of the storyline, hunger is seen as gluttony, desire and perversion as an instinct, ignorance and recklessness as (animal) stupidity, and anger as fury etc. In the context of the build-up of the text in a trickster tale, the aspect of physicality is explicitly or implicitly present against the background of a metamorphic motif: a hyperbolic game with an anatomical (physiognostic) form of the trickster character, the depiction of all forms of consumption and excretion (from “fullness” to “emptiness”), the blurring of lines between life and death as two boundary states of human existence, etc.

An example *par excellence* is the trickster from North American Indian mythology, who is generally portrayed by a crafty amoral coyote. It is an “eternally hungry hero who roams the world and is not bound by any normal concepts of good and evil, is strongly sexually based, is constantly trying to deceive others and is cheated by them” (Radin, 2005, p. 165). The narratives of the passionate, stupid and greedy coyote have a unique poetics (ironic, witty, absurd, pornographic), through which the narrator enhances the trickster’s lickerish and crazy character. For example, in the Crow Tribes story *Old Man Coyote and the Strawberry* (Kojotova jahoda), a coyote sees beautiful girls picking strawberries. Therefore, "*He quickly transferred himself under the earth and under the strawberry bush and caused his penis to project up in the bush among the strawberries* [...] *she called out to her companions, who also tried to pluck it but could not. Some pulled at it, others tried to pluck it. 'Oh no!', cried one, 'the strawberry is crying.' 'No way' said the other, 'it has some milk in itself'"* (Old Man Coyote and the Strawberry /Kojotova jahoda/, In: Old Man Coyote and the Strawberry, In: American Indian Myths and Legends /Duch dvou tváří. Mýty a legendy severoamerických Indiánů/, 2012, p. 88). Sometimes the coyote is displayed with an excessively long sexual organ which proportionally symbolizes his hypertrophic sexual libido: *"He rolled up his penis and put it in a box* [...] *he loaded the box with his penis on his back and walked away. After this* [...] *he saw many women bathing, the chief's daughter and her friends. 'The time has come', exclaimed the trickster: 'I will sleep with a woman!' With that he pulled his penis out of the box and said: 'My younger brother, you shall seize the chief's daughter'"* (Winnebago Trickster Cycle, In: Trickster. Myth about the trickster /Trickster. Mýtus o Šibalovi/, 2005, p. 37).

Because of his insatiable craving for food, the greedy coyote often gets into bizarre and dangerous situations. A cunning and clever fox is the coyote's archenemy and represents his counterpart. In the *Winnebago Trickster Cycle,* inter alia, the coyote's gluttony and stupidity are shown. The hungry coyote Wakdjunkaga slyly convinces the naive ducks to dance with their eyes closed. During the dance, he wrings their necks and bakes them on a grill. While the ducks are being made on the fire, he wants to relax: "*'Now, my younger brother, you have to keep an eye on them* [ducks – added by author] *while I sleep'* [...] *Thus he spoke to his anus. Then he turned his anus to the fire and went to sleep"* (2005, p. 35). However, the foxes smell the delicious duck and eat it. Thus, the stupid coyote loses all his food. As a punishment, he burns his anus, which was supposed to guard the duck, and ultimately devours his own intestines. In another North American Indian story, *The Cunning Fox and Silly Coyote* (O prefíkanej líške a hlúpom kojotovi), a fox convinces the coyote that the reflection of the moon on the water surface is cheese. The fox ties a heavy rock around the coyote's neck so that the coyote can sink to the bottom of the lake and fish out the alleged cheese. The stupid coyote, blindly driven by the desire for food, eventually drowns (In: Stone canoe: Indian Fairy Tales /Kamenné kanoe: indiánske rozprávky/, 1967, p. 112).

3. The creationally destructive dialectics of the trickster's mischief

As an active figure (the agent), the trickster induces conflict and tension in the plot through his actions (mischief). In terms of the typology of fictional characters, the trickster can be labelled as a subversive figure that significantly interferes with the narrative universe by distorting (exceeding) its constituted borders. We also note that the structural semantics of the narrative archuniverse is functional – often conditioned and derived from religious and mythological ideas and ritual human behaviour. According to the American cultural anthropologist and folklorist Paul Radin, the trickster is "the spirit of disorder, the enemy of boundaries – with component elements such as phallic, voracious, sly and stupid. The archaic social hierarchies are exceedingly strict [...] nothing demonstrates the meaning of the all controlling social order more impressively than the religious recognition of that which evades this order, in a figure who is in the exponent and personification of life of the body: never wholly, ruled by lust and hunger, forever running into pain and injury, cunning and stupid in action" (Radin, 2005, p. 192).

The trickster's disturbing (mischievous) behaviour often causes major or minor changes in the configuration of the relevant fictional universe, thus randomly establishing a new (sometimes beneficial, but also unfriendly for the other characters) cosmogonic order. The comicality and (ironic) absurdity of the trickster's actions often arises from the fact that his tricks and jokes often have opposite effects to what was originally intended (the principle of inversion). Simply put, the trickster's aspiration for guerrilla jokery is often seen as help and/or a gift and, conversely, the heroic efforts often end up (even for the trickster himself) in disaster and mockery. In this context, *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales & Fairy Tales* defines the trickster as a creator (category of "good") but also destroyer (category of "evil"), who in his morally ambiguous and deceptive conduct violates the cosmologically established rules of the universe (Haase, 2008, p. 992). On the one hand, the trickster destroys (the obsolete) structure of the mythological fairy-tale world, but on the other hand, this structure is always somehow restored at the end of the story (this motif is significantly linked to the universally applicable religious and mythological ideology of the cyclical concept of time, which is mostly manifested in the sacral destruction and restoration of the universe). The trickster's actions can therefore be labelled *definitio essentialis* as ambivalent: "He is both the creator and destroyer, the one who gives and takes, the one who's lying and playing tricks, but himself is cheated and fooled (...) knows nothing of good and evil, and yet is responsible for both" (Radin, 2005, p. 19). Even the Czech cultural anthropologist Barbora Půtová notes that "the trickster constitutes a new world, reaffirms the social order, moves on the fine line (liminality), embodies the process of change, creative mind and spontaneity, connects the natural world, gods and people, and defines the fourth distinctive dimension of space and time" (2011, p. 90).

The original harmony in the corresponding mythological fairy-tale world, i.e. the restoration of its cosmological structures, occurs either after the final punishment of the trickster (as a violator of the old/traditional but still well-functioning order), or in an etiological ending, which legitimizes (sacralizes) the changes made by the trickster as the newly constituted cosmological order. The trickster oscillates between the function of an evildoer and/or the guilty party (a marauder) on the one hand, and donor/helper (as a positive character) on the other. This is the trickster's crucial character trait, which enhances the comicality of expression and is an important part of his semantic image.

4. Functional forms of the depiction of the trickster

The trickster is a distinctive and unmistakable figure, which is difficult to grasp due to his ambiguous and variable character. Based on the initial analysis, we believe that this archetypal figure is defined by the following universal properties:

- absence of internal development as a literary character
- ambivalence
- cunning
- liminality
- power of transformation
- comic-grotesque poetics

The above properties also condition the structure of the underlying trickster narrative/thematic algorithm: the way literary characters appear on the scene and the definition of their character (exposition) → the trickster causes a conflict by his jokingly fraudulent actions → the trickster escapes from the "crime scene" (exodus). Based on the research of our textual material, we found that the sujet formula in a trickster narrative branches into four variants, i.e. separate modes with their own logical-content sujet scheme: *civilizer* (cosmology); *user* (body and corporeality); *fool* (sacred category); *scamp* (satirical-eschatological principle). From a purely linguistic point of view, we can view the listed functions as information-saturated sememes with a distinctive and complex structure of rendering, and the archfigure of a trickster as an abstract archetypal semantic theme. In brief, let us summarize the basic profiles/definitions of individual functions.

The *trickster – civilizer* is a functional type appearing mainly in etiological, anthropogonic and cosmological myths. Through his deceptive and unpredictable actions, he brings culture and civilizational achievements to the people. Especially in the natural archaic communities, he semantically intersects with other ancient figures – the ancestor and the demiurge – and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish whether he is a human or an animal. Conversely, in cultures with a more developed constitutional state-building institution, where the totemic hypostasis is not so strong, he is usually a (semi)god with a body, or *imago homo*, who usually only has the function of a cultural hero. The trickster – civilizer function differs most distinctively from other functions and it is easy to identify. In order to label the trickster in a story as a civilizer, the story must take place in the so-called mythical age of the birth of the world and, and a certain progressive or regressive cosmological/civilizational change must be evident at the end of the sujet, which the trickster causes (often accidentally).

In the *trickster – user* typological-character function, the trickster appears as physically lustful and dissatisfied, which results in the strictly libido-driven to instinctively animalistic motivation for his actions. It is most evident on the motivic plane of sexuality and hunger/digestion. For the trickster to satisfy his desires for food and sexual intercourse, he uses various tricks, illusions and lies. The poetics of the stories about the trickster – user is thus conveyed on the level of grotesque obscenity, the Dionysian principle of physical and spiritual boundlessness, chaoticism and (excessive) abundance. His crazy and instinctive actions, metamorphic hyperbolic play with the body and traversing of bodily manifestations in the sense of Bakhtin's natural physiologism come to the fore, and the line between the (potent) body and the world, life and death, vitality and old age is completely blurred. This also relates to the fact that the trickster – user maintains a residual connection with the ancient cults of the phallus and fertility, i.e. the mysteries of death and rebirth. The user function is often present as an ancillary function alongside a (dark) civilizer, because he often causes fundamental changes in the universe through his libidinous behaviour.

The *trickster – fool* function is related to the spiritual, supernatural and/or mystical world. He is personified by divine entities as the bearers/legislators of the ideal concept of "higher theological-social truth", which evoke a feeling of unattainability, anxiety and fear. The fool is able to maintain a sacred fragile contact with the sacred sphere, and it is this subtle communication that causes his different and strange behaviour, which the uninitiated (ignorant, unconscious) usually explain as foolishness. In this context, folly is perceived as a stigmatized result of the understanding of a kind of higher mystery (initiation mystery), which is sent by supernatural beings and is otherwise inaccessible to the common man. Under the influence of divine inspiration, the fool controversially criticizes the sinfulness of man and the bodily and material aspects of the world, which is always semantized as something imperfect, impure and inferior in various religious currents and mythological ideas. However, the fool's criticism has a deeper spiritual message – his intention is to correct man and society in an effort to return to the original religious ideals and authentic renewal of the concept of the sacred in the profane world.

The *trickster – scamp* typological-character function is an instrument of folk (collective) criticism directed against the system sanctified by tradition, i.e. the structure of the universe. As the name itself suggests, the trickster plays with other literary characters, makes mischievous jokes about them, makes fun of their shortcomings, and decoronates and traverses the secular and religious authorities. His critique, however, has no deeper (spiritual, mystical) meaning. The aim of the trickster as a satirical mocker is to humiliate the object of his ridicule as much as possible. This fact is to some extent also reflected in the genological line: the fool mostly appears in magical fairy tales and hagiographic legends, while the trickster – scamp is found mainly in the fairy-tale subgenres with realistic and humorous themes, satirical tales or allegorical short stories. Since the scamp often denounces gluttony and promiscuity as socially undesirable human qualities, the boundary between the trickster – scamp and trickster – user can often be blurred, especially if the trickster appears as an animal. However, if a particular story thematizes gluttony and sexual intercourse in didactic and moralizing ways, we are certainly dealing with the mischievous function of a scamp.

The typological-character functions (modes) are not isolated; on the contrary, they are organic components of the complex archetype of a trickster, which represents one of the basic existential semantic themes of human survival. Through the various forms of expression and universal narrative images typical for the respective typological-character functions, it communicates with the recipient at the level of laughter folk culture and/or picaresque mythology.

Conclusion

The so-called trickster is a controversial and often (seemingly) adversarial character. The trickster's "place" in the religious and mythological ideas of each civilization and cultural circuit is justified and indispensable, which also applies to comedy and laughter in human life.

Thanks to the ambiguous complexity of this character, a trickster cannot be easily classed as a positive or negative figure. This is unusual for the fictional characters in archnarratives. His iconization disrupts the petrified (sub)conscious customary standards of portrayal in the classic narrative (the so-called aesthetics of identity /Lotman/): through his humorous and ironic absurd actions, the trickster erratically oscillates on the border of the imaginary axis of good and evil, which strictly constitutes the intratextual and extratextual structure of the ancient narratives. This is the trickster's crucial characteristic trait enhancing his comicality, which is an important part of his semantic image.

This is related to the specific poetics of trickster tales, pertaining to the field of the so-called culture of popular laughter (Bakhtin). The main expressive categories of this subgenre include humour, irony, parody, pornographicity, childishness (naivety) or admonishment of expression. According to Bakhtin, the culture of popular laughter formed an important part of folklore in the primitive communities: "The serious cults coexisted with laughter cults that maligned and mocked the gods; the serious myths coexisted with laughter and humiliating myths, and heroes coexisted with their parodic counterparts" (Bakhtin, 2007, p. 13). The opposition *serious – comical*, including its derivative oppositions *Apollonian – Dionysian*, *mental – physical*, *moderate – hedonistic, arranged – chaotic* in the archnarratives – was figuratively presented as *the true hero – likerish/stupid trickster* and it appears to be an important binary model of the "world view" (Lotman), which closely follows the basic antithesis good – evil in the archnarratives. Bakhtin believes that in the early stages of development of society the two aspects of deity – the world and man (*serious – comical*) – were equally sacred and official (Bakhtin, 2007, p. 13). This is evidenced by many humorous and absurd trickster tales from different cultures (North American Indian Assiniboine, Tlingit or Winnebago Trickster cycles, the Inuit stories about the clever and crafty raven Kutkh, the myths about the sly fire donors and others), which officially mocked myths and rituals, but at the same time had a sacred function and were only told in specific ceremonies. Bakhtin also argues that with the advent of a more advanced class and state system, full equality of the categories *serious – comical* was no longer possible. All laughter forms were shifted into the position of an unofficial cult, and comicality became the main expressive form of the popular experiencing of the world, i.e. the popular (low) culture (ibid.). The expressions of popular culture, for example, carnivals, passion plays parodying the Bible, medieval legends about tricksters or fairy-tale simpletons, continue to retain a strong element of comicality, irony and playfulness, however, their humorous poetry is far away from the ritual laughter of the primitive communities. These manifestations of culture of popular laughter lost the sacramentality of the cult, but retained the human and universal elements distilled in the archnarratives and embodied by the controversial, ironic and absurd archfigure of the trickster.

Endnotes:

[1] This study was made possible thanks to APVV-17-0026 *Thematological interpretation, analysis and systematization of archnarratives as semiotic models of the life-world and existential strategies* (Tematologická interpretácia, analýza a systematizácia arcinaratívov ako semiotických modelov životného sveta a existenciálnych stratégií) and UGA II/3/2020 *The models of transformation in the culture-shaping stories: the trickster as an archfigure and the motive of transformation as a ruse* (Modely transformácie v kultúrotvorných príbehoch: arcifigúra šibala a motív transformácie ako ľsti).

[2]The unconventional prefix "arch-" synonymously replaces the currently connotationally supersaturated and over-(mis)used prefix "arche-" by Carl Gustav Jung (Čechová – Plesník, 2016, p. 7). According to the dictionary definition, the *arci-/arce-* prefix conveys a "strengthening or gradation of meaning of the following part", and/or "old, ancient, old or primal/original" (Petráčková – Kraus, 1997, p. 82 and p. 85; according to Čechová – Plesník, 2016, p. 7). According to Čechová, an archnarrative is a "story or text of a schematic, constitutive and deterministic importance in the development of the respective culture (or its subsystem, area, etc.), it is compositional and it lays down a certain ideological archetype" (...) [Archnarratives – added by author] can constitutionally express a certain attitude to life (in terms of Heidegger's attunement), the concept of life-world and our abiding in it (Dasein) and iconize the basic existential strategies that are most meaningful in this conception of the world (Čechová, 2017, p. 278). Čechová also points out that an archnarrative usually does not have an individually identifiable author. In this effect it is a collectively generated and modified creation. It also features simultaneous intercontinental distribution, which is in line with the Jungian interpretation of intercultural parallelism (ibid.).

[3] These cross-genre ancient narratives have typical characteristics of myths and fairy tales. From a genetic and genological point of view, they represent a kind of developmental intermediate between myth and magical fairy tale. For more information, see Danišová: *The metamorphic motive in archnarratives. The mystery of transformation* (Metamorfný motív v arcinaratívoch. Mystérium premeny), 2020, pp. 20 – 23.

[4] For more information, see Bakhtin: *François Rabelais and the Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (François Rabelais a lidová kultura středověku a renesance), 2007.

[5] For example, laughter and comical elements were an integral part of the Greek bacchanalian festivities of the god Dionysus, the Roman lupercalia, Celtic Samhain, but also the parodic passion plays, fools days, donkey holidays and the so-called Fools for Christ cults (e.g. St. Andrew in Russia, Symeon of Emesa), which were celebrated in Europe despite the strong opposition of the Christian church until the late Middle Ages.

[6] Trickster tales are among the oldest surviving folk sources, and they can be found in every civilization and cultural circle (Seal, 2001, p. 251).

[7] The impression of comicality is sometimes reinforced by the trickster's names. The characteristics that denote his stupidity or cunning are dominant: Ivan the Fool (Russian fairy tales *The Humpty-Back Little Horse /*O vernom vraníkovi/, *Golden Bristles /*Svinka Zlatoštetinka/, *The Flying Ship* /Lietajúci koráb/), Simpleton (Indian fairy tale *The Simpleton and his Donkey /*Prosťáčik a jeho osol/) or *Wakdjunkaga*, which in the language of the Winnebago Indian tribe literally translates as "misleading", "fraudulent" (Radin, 2005, p. 142). According to Dvořáková, a name expressing the characteristics of its bearer is typical of the comedy genres (2005, p. 86), which includes stories about tricksters, the so-called trickster tales. However, a trickster does not need to be identified as a fool or a sly scamp based on his name only. His (self-)identification can also be delivered to the reader through monologues or dialogues with an informative function. For example, *"It's me, Ivan the Fool"* (The Humpty-Back Little Horse /O vernom vraníkovi/, In: Sheer Beauty /Krása Nesmírná/, 1984, p. 20),*"Isn't this why they call me a trickster?"* (The Winnebag Trickster Cycle, In: Trickster. Myth about the trickster /Trickster. Mýtus o Šibalovi/, 2005, p. 36), *"You are crazy, Loki, have you lost your mind*" (Lokasenna, In: Edda, 2013, p. 135); *"You have a mind too, but Ero doesn't"* (Ero and Turk /Ero a Turek/, In: Serbian Folk Tales /Srbské lidové pohádky/, 1959, p. 307). In the Corjack story, the mother and her cub/child have the following conversation: "*'I would like to eat at Kutkinak the Raven.'' Far be it from you,' the mother said in fear. 'The Raven is a clever bird, he would trick you'*" (About Clever Raven Kutkinak and the Stupid Kamak /O bystrom havranovi Kutkinakovi a hlúpom kamakovi/, In: About the wise Chadaun and three suns and other tales. The tales of Volga, Ural and Siberia /O moudrém Chadaunovi a třech sluncích a jiné pohádky. Pohádky povolžské, uralské a sibiřské/, 1983, p. 215).

[8] The stories about tricksters often include the theme of death and rebirth. For example, we can mention the story *How raven Ememkut won the daughter of the sun man* (Ako havran Ememkut získal dcéru slnečného muža) by the Koryakskoye Inuits living in a remote area of northeastern Russia. The main character of the plot is the trickster raven Ememkut, the son of the famous trickster raven Kutkinak, who when visiting his sisters is first split in half by a clover and then animated. In the above story of the North American Lakota Indians *Coyote, Iktome, and the Rock* (Kojot, Iktome a skala) a trickster coyote is punished for his folly by being squashed and flattened out like a rug, but he ultimately revives himself to his original form.

[9] The first causal model (from evildoer to hero) is illustrated in the story from North-Germanic mythology. Trickster Loki persuades a shady builder to make a propositional bet with the gods. The builder makes the following proposition to the gods: if he manages to build a defensive wall around Asgard (the seat of the gods from the Aesir family) only with the help of his magical horse Svadilfari no later than in two winters' and one

summer's time, they must give him the goddess of love Freya, the sun and the moon. Loki gleefully convinces the other gods to accede to this one-sided bet. With the approaching deadline, the wall is almost complete. Only then the gods realize that Loki has fooled them (again) and plot to kill him. In order for Loki to save his life, he transforms into a beautiful mare and lures the builder's magic horse Svadilfari away. The builder who cannot finish the wall in time without the help of his horse, loses the bet and Loki – a gray mare – gives birth to an eight-legged foal with supernatural powers. This fastest horse in the world can run on water and in the air. The death horse Sleipner is another important element in North-Germanic mythology, and is a faithful companion of the supreme god Odin (Vlčková, 1999, pp. 142 – 143 and p. 203). The evildoer → hero model can also be found in the North American Indian *Winnebago Trickster Cycle* where the trickster's actions are motivated by rage and desire for revenge although in the end of the plot it has positive consequences: the coyote man Wakdjunkaga wears his penis of abnormal dimensions rolled up in a box on his back. One day he hears a chipmunk mocking him obscenely: *"'What are you packing Trickster? It's your penis that you're packing! Howá!' he said. 'What a bad one he is* [...] *You will die, you homely thing that said that.'"* (Radin, 2005, p. 56). The chipmunk, however, manages to hide in a tree. The angry coyote pulls his limb out of the box and puts it into the cavity in the tree trunk to catch the chipmunk. The chipmunk bites off the coyote's penis without hesitation, and the coyote completely succumbs to anger. He mindlessly chops up the trunk and stomps the chipmunk to death. He picks up the remains of his penis and scatters them around, and these turn into lilies of the valley, lilies, water lilies, potatoes, beets, artichokes, beans, rice and oysters. And the narrator adds: "*That is why men's penises are so short."* (ibid.). The last example of the first causal model (evildoer → hero) is the Moorish myth about the trickster's unheroic theft of the life-giving fire, which eventually proved (cosmogonically) beneficial. In the story *How Maui brought fire to Tonga*, the trickster Maui is portrayed as a lazy wretch, who just wanders about the beach and bathes in the ocean while his father is gone all day and brings home the bacon in the evenings. One day Maui decides to follow his father. He finds out that the father passes through a mysterious tunnel to Bulota – the realm of spirits. Here he meets with his father and works with him for some time in the field. However, the lazy Maui gets tired of work quickly. The father sends him for fire – the life-giving energy and a prerogative of spirits and gods. Maui gets the fiery coals from the supernatural old man, but is reckless and deliberately quenches them out of curiosity. He then returns to the old man's hut and asks for more. The old man is infuriated by Maui's audacity and stupidity and refused to give him the embers. Maui beats him up without hesitation. The embers are not enough and he's greedy for more – he steals an entire burning log from the sacred fire pit, which burns his hands when escaping back into the world of people: *"He dropped the log on the ground, but the grass caught fire, soon followed by the trees and houses, and clouds of smoke billowed over the island of Tongatapu. Finally, the fire went out by itself. But small pieces were preserved, so the people of Tonga could cook food and stay warm at night"* (How Maui brought fire to Tonga /Ako Maui priniesol na Tongu oheň/, In: The myths and legends of the Pacific /Mýty a legendy Tichomoří/, 2002, p. 135). As a cultural hero in the Moorish mythology, Maui gives people the fire, the first fishing nets and string instruments. His power to create *faciem mundi* (face of the world) is also captured in the myths about Maui fishing islands out of the ocean where the first people settled, and forming mountains and valleys with his bare hands. However, Maui's effort to facilitate people's lives does not always pay off. According to Moorish mythology, Maui kills the goddess of death Hin by deceit because he naively hopes to provide immortality to the people. He is also confronted with failure when trying to imprison the sun in the sky to extend the day for the people (Seal, 2001, pp. 170 – 171). Such stories reflect the second causal model of the trickster's actions (hero → evildoer). This second model is also found in the Itelmen (ethnic group living in the territory of Kamchatka) story *About Kutkh the Raven and his Sons-in-Law* (O havranovi Kutkhovi a jeho zaťoch). Kutkh gives one of his daughters to the North Wind as a bride. After the wedding, a deep winter falls on the entire country and people suffer greatly. The trickster therefore gives his second daughter to the South Wind, which brings warmth to the country. Kutkh praises the second son-in-law excessively and the offended North Wind leaves the country. However, under the long-term domination of the South Wind, the snow melts and turns into mud. The stored food becomes mouldy, grass rots in the mud and the herds of reindeer have nothing to feed on. Here, the trickster's actions clearly depend on the second causal model, i.e. donor → evildoer. Kutkh's foolish actions are rectified by his daughter. She sends her son to bring the North Wind back to Kamchatka and restore its original (Arctic) climate.

[10] The theme of (cruel) punishment for the trickster's violation of sacred boundaries and cosmological structures can be found e.g. in *Edda*, a collection of mythological Norse poems. According to the dialogic poem *The Loki's Dispute* (Lokasenna) with a framework structure, the gods with their servants are invited to the hallowed halls of the rock giant Ægri. The bored trickster Loki cannot stand the peaceful and cheerful atmosphere at the celebration. Gradually, he offends all the gods and accuses them of cowardice, incest, fornication, witchcraft (for more details, see *The Loki's Dispute* In: Edda, 2013, pp. 131 – 145). Loki is finally driven out of the celebration by Thor who threatens him with death. The short epilogue that follows the poem describes Loki's escape. He turns into salmon, but is found by the gods and punished severely: Loki is tied to a stone by the bowels of his son Nara and a snake is hung above his head. According to Snorri Sturluson, who compiled the Edda poems in the early 13th century, Loki was originally punished by this punishment for the crafty death of god Balder. A similar punishment befalls Prometheus who slyly steals fire from the gods despite the ban.

[11] For more information, see Lotman: *The structure of the artistic text* (Štruktúra umeleckého textu), 1990, pp. 326 – 327.

[12] For example, among the North American Indians, the narrator who wanted to tell a myth about a trickster, had to have a special permit or the so-called traditional narrator law. The strict rules were also applied in the oral transmission of sacred trickster tales: the new potential narrator had to pay the original narrator an adequate reward (e.g. tobacco) for the story. The new narrator was then strictly forbidden to change the content of or episodes in the story (Radin, 2005, p. 121).

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