













Category: Arts and Humanities

ORIGINAL

The phenomenon of the outsider as the main character in modern popular culture (on the example of series and films of the 1990s and later)

El fenómeno del outsider como protagonista en la cultura popular moderna (sobre el ejemplo de series y películas de los años 90 y posteriores)

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: studying this phenomenon allows to understand the reasons for the popularity of this character in popular culture. The purpose of the article is to conduct an analysis of the phenomenon in the context of modern mass culture by analysing modern films and series, to reveal its characteristics and significance for the viewer, as well as to consider the impact of this phenomenon on modern society.

Method: the following scientific methods were used in this study: the method of content analysis, the method of scenario analysis, and the method of interpretive analysis.

Results: the results of the study showed how they are depicted in mass culture, how their role has changed over time, their influence on the perception of social and cultural problems, as well as their influence on the formation of an individual's identity and self-determination. The study examines aspects such as conformity, marginalization, and exclusion of outsiders in popular culture. The research uses methods of studying the content of TV series and films, their storylines, dialogues, and images dedicated to the research topic. The analysis of intertextual elements in the scripts of films and series was carried out, which allowed revealing the connections between different works and cultural contexts. An analysis of the social aspects of the phenomenon, such as marginalization and exclusion, was also carried out.

Conclusion: the research has practical significance for cinema and television, as it can help content creators in choosing the main character and shaping his character.

Keywords: Stigmatization; Social Identity; Stereotypes; Exclusion; Inclusion.

RESUMEN

Introducción: el estudio de este fenómeno permite comprender las razones de la popularidad de este personaje en la cultura popular. El propósito del artículo es realizar un análisis del fenómeno en el contexto de la cultura de masas moderna mediante el análisis de películas y series modernas, para revelar sus características y significado para el espectador, así como considerar el impacto de este fenómeno en la sociedad moderna.

Método: en este estudio se utilizaron los siguientes métodos científicos: el método de análisis de contenido, el método de análisis de escenarios y el método de análisis interpretativo.

Resultados: los resultados del estudio mostraron cómo se representan en la cultura de masas, cómo ha cambiado su papel a lo largo del tiempo, su influencia en la percepción de los problemas sociales y culturales, así como su influencia en la formación de la identidad y la autodeterminación de un individuo. El estudio examina aspectos como la conformidad, la marginación y la exclusión de los extraños en la cultura popular. La investigación utiliza métodos de estudio del contenido de series de televisión y películas, sus argumentos, diálogos e imágenes dedicados al tema de investigación. Se llevó a cabo el análisis de elementos intertextuales en los guiones de películas y series, lo que permitió revelar las conexiones entre diferentes obras y contextos culturales. También se llevó a cabo un análisis de los aspectos sociales del fenómeno, como la marginación y la exclusión. Conclusiones: La investigación tiene importancia práctica para el cine y la televisión, ya que puede ayudar a los creadores de contenidos a la hora de elegir al protagonista y dar forma a su carácter.

Palabras clave: Estigmatización; Identidad social; Estereotipos; Exclusión; Inclusión.

INTRODUCTION

In the culture, outsiders are considered heroes whose characteristics differ from generally accepted standards and do not correspond to the norms defined by society, which determine what is considered “normal” and “abnormal” in the social context. Unlike “normal” heroes, individuals who do not fit into the norms arouse interest precisely because they deviate from these standards. In mass culture, they often act as protagonists, who are sometimes presented in the light of social and psychological problems associated with their rejection by society. Such a phenomenon began to manifest itself especially vividly in movies and television series starting from the 2000s and later. The purpose of this article is to study the phenomenon of the outsider in modern mass culture, focusing on his role as a main character in movies and television series, identifying the main patterns and trends of his portrayal, as well as describing the effect he has on the audience. It is important to note that the term “exclusion” was used in the article instead of “exceptionalism”, because it will more accurately convey the essence of the studied phenomenon. “Exclusion” emphasizes that the non-aligned are outside the social mainstream and do not fit into the standards of behaviour and perception, which gives them a special role and significance in mass culture.

For a general understanding of the topic, it is worth noting that an outsider is a character who does not agree with the surrounding reality and standards of behaviour, social norms and rules, as well as moral principles. He is not suitable for the society in which he lives, and therefore cannot adapt to it. In today’s popular culture, the outsider often plays the role of the protagonist, who defines the plot of the work, and acts as the opposite of a vicious, evil society. Many authors have already studied the problem of “outsiderness” in the culture of the XX-XXI centuries. S.S. Severyn and N.M. Kokhan studied outsider art and its interaction with culture.⁽¹⁾ A.H. Sa’di examines in his work the issue of interaction between the West and the East and ideas about the “other”.⁽²⁾ In their article, O.V. Kolisnyk and M.O. Kovalenko investigate naive art and its relationship with outsiders, considering the peculiarities of creative perception of naive artists, their originality, and influence on the development of modern visual culture and design.⁽³⁾ The book by R.S. Bourne examines the role of education in the formation and integration of outsiders in society.⁽⁴⁾ V.V. Sakovska and I.S. Bulak study the psychological aspects of social exclusion.⁽⁵⁾ All these authors in their works deal with topics related to the outsider and its role in culture, and also study the problems of identity, interaction with other cultures, social structures and the role of the body in culture.

In addition, many classical theories and models do not take into account the changes that have taken place in society in recent decades. For example, the development of the Internet and social networks led to the emergence of new forms of communication and communication that were not taken into account in previously developed models. Also, modern mass culture differs from the culture of past eras, which makes adjustments to the mechanisms of influence on public opinion. That is why new theories and models are being actively developed that take into account all modern changes and phenomena. One of these theories, by D. Centola, is the theory of information dissemination in social networks, which explains how information is distributed on the Internet, how communities are formed and how interaction between them takes place.⁽⁶⁾ In modern cinema and series, outsider characters are actively used, which can cause strong emotional reactions in the audience. However, such characters can also serve as a tool for manipulating public opinion. M. Van Duynslaeger et al. note that with the development of technologies and the appearance of a large amount of information, people have become more likely to be manipulated and influenced.⁽⁷⁾ Through outsiders, it is possible to present a certain ideology, emphasize the negative aspects of a certain group of people, or vice versa, show the strengths of those who are forced to live in a society with deviations. Thus, issues of influence and manipulation of public opinion can also be related to the theme of the “outsider phenomenon”.

T. Alabanza et al.'s article offers creative individuals tools to integrate the outsider concept into their work, providing practical exercises and insights to deepen comprehension and evoke emotional connections in art.⁽⁸⁾ This resource serves scholars by analysing how the outsider theme is utilized in art to engage viewers and raise awareness about societal dynamics. L. Yep's book compiles essays examining outsidership in fantasy literature across genres like fantasy and science fiction, delving into themes of exclusion, societal nonconformity, and the quest for validation.⁽⁹⁾ From a scientific standpoint, the work elucidates how outsider narratives impact readers and can instigate societal change, broadening perspectives on outsidership in fiction and fantasy.

K. Kansteiner and S. König's book focuses on the role of qualitative content analysis in mixed research methods, offering a retrospective on its theoretical foundations, methodological applications, and potential contributions to mixed research designs.⁽¹⁰⁾ This resource is vital for researchers navigating mixed methods research, illuminating the utility of qualitative content analysis in formulating research inquiries and interpreting findings. T.E. Sanders' book examines pedagogical strategies informed by research and psychological principles, aiming to foster an inclusive educational environment that caters to diverse student needs, including outsiders and vulnerable groups.⁽¹¹⁾ By grounding recommendations in scientific insights, the work provides practical guidance for educators and institutions.

D. Church's article analyses cult cinema's portrayal of "freakery" and its cinematic implications, exploring the ambivalence towards cinematic "monsters" and their portrayal across various contexts and interpretive frameworks.⁽¹²⁾ Drawing on Freudianism, postmodernism, and cultural theory, the article offers a scholarly examination of cult cinema's depiction of the "other" and moral dilemmas associated with it. A. Goldstone's article delves into autonomy in modernist literature from Oscar Wilde to Paul de Man, examining theoretical constructs such as art, author, and text autonomy, and their manifestations in modernist literary works.⁽¹³⁾ This study provides fresh insights into autonomy's role in shaping literary canons and invites discourse on its significance in modern literature.

V.Y. Skryabin's article scrutinizes the film "Joker" through a psychiatric lens, analysing its narrative structure, character traits, interactions, and motivations, highlighting the complexity of psychiatric diagnosis within popular culture representations.⁽¹⁴⁾ Offering diverse theoretical perspectives, the article presents a scholarly exploration of how cinema reflects psychology and psychiatry. Across various disciplines like literature, film, sociology, psychology, and art theory, scholars investigate themes of marginalization and exclusion, exploring concepts such as conformity, marginalization, and exclusion, which stem from social maladjustment and adverse conditions, leading to discrimination and social ostracism.⁽¹⁵⁾ Factors like gender, race, social status, and mental health contribute to these processes, illustrating the intricate dynamics between individuals and society.

The purpose of the article is to conduct an analysis of the phenomenon in the context of modern mass culture by analyzing modern films and series, to reveal its characteristics and significance for the viewer, as well as to consider the impact of this phenomenon on modern society.

METHOD

In this study, an online survey was conducted to collect data from participants aged 18 to 45 years old who self-identified as outsiders in a social sense and had watched at least 5 films or series in which the main character is an outsider. A total of 200 participants were recruited through social media platforms and online communities related to films, TV shows, and popular culture. The survey consisted of both multiple-choice and open-ended questions aimed at revealing the main characteristics of outsiders in popular culture as perceived by the participants, as well as the motives and reasons for why viewers sympathize with such characters. Examples of the survey questions include:

1. What character traits do you consider the most important for an outsider in modern mass culture?
2. What aspects of the outsider's personality interest you or attract your attention?
3. What examples of outsiders from real life do you remember the most and why?
4. What themes and problems are usually associated with the outsider in films and series?
5. Why do you think outsiders have become so prominent in today's popular culture?

The multiple-choice questions were analysed by calculating the percentage of responses for each answer option. The open-ended questions were analysed using qualitative content analysis to identify common themes and patterns in the responses. To achieve the goal of the research, the method of content analysis was chosen, which allows identifying the main characteristics of outsiders presented in the selected series and films. A systematic selection of works was carried out on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Year of issue: 1990-2020.
2. Genre: drama, comedy, fantasy.
3. Duration: at least 30 minutes.
4. Rating: from 6 points on IMDB.

A total of 5 films and TV series were selected, which underwent content analysis. In addition, the following

tools and methods of analysis were used to conduct content analysis: frequency analysis: was conducted to identify the most frequently repeated themes, images, and storylines related to outsiders; content analysis: was conducted to determine the significant features of the characters, related to their difference from the norm. The selection of works that underwent content analysis includes works with outsider heroes, which can be attributed to:

1. "Joker" (2019): the main character Arthur Flack (Joker) is an outsider - a man with health problems who cannot find his place in society.
2. "Black Swan" (2010): the main character, Nina Sayers, is a perfectionist with a complex psyche who faces numerous internal conflicts.
3. "Edward Scissorhands" (1990): the main character Edward is an incomplete mechanical man with scissors instead of hands, who tries to fit into the society of ordinary people and faces rejection from those around him.
4. "Memento" (2000): The main character, Leonard Shelby, is a man who suffers from amnesia and seeks revenge for the murder of his wife.
5. "Rain Man" (1988): Raymond Babbitt suffers from a rare mental disorder - he is capable of brilliant discoveries and predictions, and in general he is a mathematical genius, but in public life he acts like a very limited person who simply could not survive in the modern world without care.

The script analysis method was used to study plots, characters, and dialogues in the selected films and series. Basic plot elements such as the beginning, development, and ending, as well as typical elements like conflict, turning points, climax, and resolution, were analysed. The main characters and characters associated with them were examined, and their characteristics, fates, and motivations were described. Dialogue analysis helped to understand the relationships between the characters and the general theme of the films or series. The interpretive analysis method was employed to study the images and symbols used in the selected films and TV series to represent the main characters and themes related to outsiders.

RESULTS

This section presented the obtained data, which were analysed taking into account the research objectives and hypotheses. Appropriate conclusions were drawn based on the analysis of the received data. In addition, graphs and tables were presented that demonstrate the main results of the survey and reinforce the conclusions drawn. As a result of the analysis of the answers to the questions, it was found that the majority of respondents consider such qualities as independence, creative potential and uniqueness to be the main characteristics of outsiders (table 1). However, it was also found that some respondents associate being an outsider with negative traits, such as inadequacy and aggressiveness. It was also found out that outsiders who show their individuality and are not afraid to be themselves, even if it means being different from others, attract the most attention from the respondents. Respondents also singled out outsiders who face difficulties and struggle with them, but at the same time do not lose their courage.

Table 1. Analysis of the survey of respondents

Question	Answer option	% of responses
What character traits do you consider the most important for an outsider in today's mass culture?	Intellectuality	35 %
	Creativity	25 %
	Originality	20 %
	Sensitivity	15 %
	Other	5 %
What aspects of the outsider personality interest you or draw your attention?	Originality of thinking	30 %
	Unique style	20 %
	Independence	20 %
	Strong character	15 %
	Other	10 %
What themes and issues are usually associated with the outsider in movies and TV shows?	Problems of interaction of social groups	35 %
	Insulation	25 %
	Conflicts with authorities	20 %
	Stigmatization	15 %
	Other	5 %

Why do you think outsiders have become so prominent in today's popular culture?	An increase in the number of different cultures and identities	30 %
	An increase in the number of people who feel alienated	25 %
	Growing interest in unusual and eccentric characters	20 %
	Change of values in society	15 %
	Other	10 %
What examples of outsiders from real life do you remember the most and why?	People fighting for minority rights and social justice	40 %
	People who were able to achieve success, despite their difference from the generally accepted norms	25 %
	People who have become victims of discrimination	20 %
	Other	15 %

Note: the "Other" category includes responses that do not refer to positive or negative attitudes toward outsiders, but may contain other aspects related to outsiders.

On the basis of the conducted survey, a cluster analysis was conducted, which made it possible to identify 6 clusters of answers to the question about the motives of interest in outsiders in popular culture. Based on the results of the analysis, Figure 1 was built, which reflects the percentage ratio of each cluster in the total number of responses.

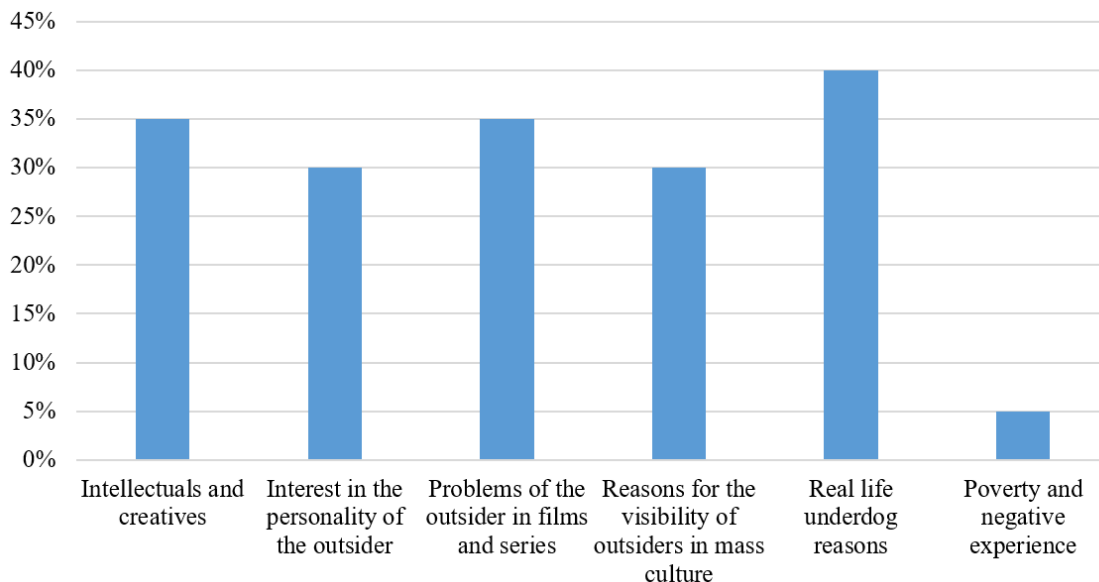


Figure 1. Distribution of topics of discussion of outsiders in popular culture

As part of the study, the phenomenon of the outsider as the main character in modern popular culture was analysed using the example of series and films of the 2000s. During the analysis, certain patterns and trends related to the creation of images of outsiders and their interaction with other characters were revealed. Such patterns and trends include:

1. Intellectual and creative component: outsiders are often presented as outstanding minds or talented artists, musicians. This component can help characters stand out and draw attention to their dissimilarity from others.
2. Social isolation and problems: outsiders are often presented as unsocial or socially isolated individuals. This can lead to conflicts with other characters or attract their attention.
3. Abilities and Skills: Outsiders may have special abilities or skills that help them overcome their differences and succeed. For example, an outsider hero can be an expert in some narrow field, which helps him draw attention to his unlikeness.
4. Adventurous aspect: many images of outsiders are associated with adventure, dangerous situations or unusual journeys. This can help create interest in the character and hold the viewer/reader's attention.
5. Emotional component: Some images of outsiders can evoke strong emotions in viewers/readers, such as empathy or admiration. This can draw attention to the character and make him more memorable.
6. Contrast with society: Some images of outsiders can be created as the opposite of the whole society or group of characters. This can help to highlight a character and create a conflict that is interesting to the viewer/reader.

In general, the results of the study showed that the image of an outsider is often used in literature, media and other areas to convey certain social and cultural ideas, which can affect the perception and understanding of these ideas in society. It helps to draw attention to important social and cultural problems that exist in society, and becomes a powerful tool for changing people's thoughts and behaviour.

It was found that outsiders, represented in mass culture in the form of characters in films, books, television series and other media formats, can influence the images and stereotypes that are formed in society. For example, outsiders are often depicted in films and television series as people who are forced to fight for their place in society, which can lead to the formation of a respectful attitude in the audience towards such people and a more tolerant attitude that differs from the norm in behaviour. Outsiders in popular culture can play an important role in establishing new social norms. For example, in the culture of musical subcultures, such as punk or hip-hop, outsiders can become a source of new trends and trends in fashion, music and other areas of life. In addition, analysing the results of the survey, it was found that outsiders can play an important role in the process of social integration. People who face discrimination and feel like outsiders in society can seek help from various organizations and communities that protect rights and interests. Such organizations can help them find like-minded people and support, which allows them to feel more confident in society and integrate into it. Thus, this study helps to understand that outsiders can find ways of social support and integration, which is important for shaping their place in society.

In modelling the outsider phenomenon, it is possible to use psychological factors that lead to the formation of such personalities. In this context, modelling should be understood as the study and analysis of psychological factors that can lead to the formation of such personalities, as well as the application of this knowledge to create more realistic and reliable images of outsiders in artistic works. For example, in the article by V.S. Sula and N.V. Frolova, there is a statement that people who have low self-esteem and feel insecure in society often become outsiders.⁽¹⁵⁾ They may also experience fear of rejection and avoid socializing with other people. Authors L. Frelich et al. claim in their work that the social environment in which they grew up can play an important role in the formation of outsiders.⁽¹⁶⁾ For example, children who have been isolated from society may turn out to be different from the standards, as they do not have the opportunity to learn to communicate with other people. Negative social stereotypes and prejudices can also lead to some people being excluded from society and becoming outsiders. By analysing the results of the survey, it is possible to understand which aspects of outsiders are most interesting to the audience, and use this information to create content that will be interesting and relevant to the target audience. Also, it is possible to use the results of the survey to conduct further research in this area and build a marketing strategy. In addition, the study found that viewers often empathize with and identify with outsiders, thus experiencing their stories and enjoying watching such works. This may explain the popularity of such series and films as "Edward Scissorhands", "Rain Man", "Joker".

Thus, the results confirm the tendency of contemporary popular culture to use outsiders as protagonists and suggest that such characters can have a strong influence on the viewer. As a result of the analysis of films with the outsider phenomenon in mass culture, common trends and patterns in the representation of outsiders were revealed. These characters, deviating from normative standards and social expectations, face internal conflicts and misunderstandings of those around them. Their interactions with other characters and ways of overcoming problems help to reveal the role of outsiders in the plots and themes of these films. Such an analysis opens a wide panorama of changes in the representation of outsiders over time and its significance in cinematography. It is possible to familiarize oneself with a scientific study devoted to this issue in Table 2. Such an analysis opens a wide panorama of changes in the representation of outsiders over time and its meaning in cinematography.

Table 2. Analysis of a sample of works

Name	Criterion	Analysis
Joker	Genre	Dramatic psychological thriller
	Key turning points	Fleck's first murder
	Emotional impact	A wide range of emotions: sympathy, compassion, disgust, anxiety
	Important topics	Violence, indifference of society, desire for recognition, social rejection
	Social significance	Study of social problems and their impact on the psyche and behaviour of the hero
	Psychological significance	Study of mental disorders and transformation of the main character
	Cultural significance	Reflection of social norms and values, formation of the Joker's image and symbolism
Black Swan	Genre	Psychological thriller
	Key turning points	Nina loses control over reality and fantasy, which has fatal consequences for her mental state

Edward Scissorhands	Emotional impact	A wide range of emotions: tension, anxiety, fear, and instability.
	Important topics	Mental disorder, striving for perfection, temptation, sexuality, sacrifice, and duality of personality
	Social significance	Study of the representation of mental disorders in cinematography and their influence on the perception and understanding of such conditions by society
	Psychological significance	A study of the effect on the audience's ability to recognize, understand and express their emotions
	Cultural significance	A study of influences on development and change in contemporary culture, including fashion, art, and media
	Genre	Fantasy and melodrama
Memento	Key turning points	Edward falls into the environment of ordinary people
	Emotional impact	Anxiety and tension caused by empathy and compassion for the main character
	Important topics	Self-knowledge and self-identification
	Social significance	Tolerance and acceptance of differences
	Psychological significance	Study of the process of self-determination and the search for identity through overcoming internal and external obstacles
	Cultural significance	The study of society's reaction to something unusual, different from the norm
Rain Man	Genre	A dramatic thriller
	Key turning points	Leonard Shelby realizes that his search for his wife's killer is repeating itself in history, and that he has already taken this path based on the information he has given himself through tattoos and recordings
	Emotional impact	Anxiety and unpredictability
	Important topics	Study of the topic of memory in the context of the main character, the inability to remember new information
	Social significance	Ability to provoke discussion and awareness of the importance of memory and its role in life
	Psychological significance	An in-depth study of memory, perception and cognitive processes
Rain Man	Cultural significance	A revolutionary storytelling style in which events unfold in reverse chronological order. Understanding how the past shapes personality and life in the present
	Genre	Tragicomedy
	Key turning points	Charlie Babbitt learns about the existence of his brother Raymond, who suffers from autism with savant syndrome
	Emotional impact	Sympathy, sympathy
	Important topics	Reception of people with mental and neurological disorders
	Social significance	Discussion and awareness of the problems of socialization of people who have certain neurological disorders
Rain Man	Psychological significance	Raises questions about human nature, the influence of the environment on the psyche
	Cultural significance	Raising the issue of attitudes towards people with autism, the impetus for the development of Tom Cruise's acting career, numerous awards won

This analysis of the films made it possible to draw scientific conclusions about changes in the way outsiders are represented in mass culture. A systematic approach to analysis was used, taking into account a variety of cinematographic works, as well as a critical look at their depiction. This film analysis provides an important scholarly basis for understanding the role of outsiders in contemporary popular culture and reflecting their transformation over time. The image of an outsider can be created with the help of various elements that will make his character interesting and memorable for the viewer. Intelligence and creativity can give a character outstanding talents and successes, while social isolation can draw attention to the suffering and pain of an outsider. Abilities and skills can help a character overcome social isolation and find their place in the world, while the adventure aspect can give them importance and uniqueness. The emotional component allows creating an emotional connection with the character, which makes it memorable, and the opposition to society can create a conflict plot and give the character more importance in the context of the story. All these ingredients help to create the image of the outsider, which is always an important element in many works of art, because it allows focusing on the individuality and quirkiness of human nature, which is always interesting for the audience.

Based on the analysis of the materials, a framework was developed, a systematic approach to the classification and organization of data, in this case, images of outsiders in culture and media. This framework made it possible to classify different images of outsiders and helped to better understand their role in culture and media.

Four types were classified:

1. A rebellious outsider is a character who refuses to conform to the rules or standards of society and fights against the existing order, often using radical or unconventional methods. In the film “Joker”, the main character Arthur Flack becomes a symbol of rebellion and stands against social inequalities and corruption in the city. “The Big Lebowski” - the character of Jeffrey Lebowski refuses to follow conventions and influences the surrounding events with his unpredictable actions.

2. A heroic outsider is a character who is outside society, but decides to use his supernatural abilities to help people and protect the world from evil. The famous film “Edward Scissorhands” offers a story in which the main character Edward, a mechanized man, tries to socialize in ordinary society. “Guardians of the Galaxy” is a group of outsiders that, includes Pitt Quill, unite to protect the galaxy from evil. A lonely outsider is a character who lives apart from others and feels alienated from society, he uses his loneliness to find his place in this world. In the cult film “Memento”, the main character, Leonard Shelby, lives in constant oblivion and loneliness, trying to find the truth about his past. “Inception” - the main character is Dom Cobb is also a lonely outsider, as his mastery of stealing information leaves him isolated from the world around him.

3. An aesthetic outsider is a character who rejects the standard norms of beauty and fashion and develops his unique vision of the world through his style and individuality. In the film “Black Swan”, protagonist Nina Sayers goes beyond conventions and expresses her aesthetic vision through dance. “Genius” is a film about the life of the writer Thomas Wolfe, who acted as an aesthetic outsider because of his vision of the world and style of literary creation. Analysis of literary and cinematic works showed that these categories are widely represented in culture and media, and their use can have a certain influence on the formation of the image of an outsider in public consciousness.

Thus, the results of the study showed that outsidership is an important phenomenon in modern culture and can influence the formation of identity and social integration of young people. In the process of research, it was found that images of outsiders in popular culture can be presented in various ways, including distorted and stereotypical representations, as well as some more accurate and realistic portraits. An example can be the film “Black Swan”, where the main character, Nina Sayers, is in a constant search for her identity and struggles with internal conflicts. This film demonstrates how being an outsider can affect the mental state and emotional stability of an individual. In addition, the study revealed several factors that influence the formation of images of outsiders in popular culture, such as ideology, stereotypes, media technology, and marketing.

The results of a qualitative study showed that in modern popular culture there are many images of outsiders, which can be presented both positively and negatively. Among them, it is possible to highlight the images of hipsters, goths, emos, anime fans. Mention of these images of outsiders is a well-known fact in modern mass culture and can be found in various sources, such as movies, series, music, fashion. Each of these images has its own characteristics that allow people who they are assigned to express their individuality and stand out against the background of others. However, not all images of outsiders are perceived positively in modern mass culture. For example, in the film “Joker”, the main character, Arthur Flack, is depicted as a social outcast and a psychological case. His character experiences a series of tragic events that led to his descent into insanity and criminal activity. The film “Joker” shows how the image of an outsider can be associated with violence and social maladjustment, which creates complex ethical and moral dimensions for the perception of such a character. During the study, it was found that some images, for example, images of drug addicts, alcoholics, rapists, and other antisocial characters, can be perceived as unacceptable and cause rejection. It has also been found that some images of outsiders, for example, images of social dissidents and activists, can be despised and unacceptable to certain social groups, however, at the same time, they can play an important role in shaping public opinion and inspiring people to social change.

The study of literary sources also confirmed that outsidership is an important phenomenon in modern culture. For example, in literature and film, outsiders are often presented as heroes who fight for their ideals and principles. These images can inspire viewers and readers to think about social and cultural issues. The article by V.Y. Skryabin analyses the behaviour of the Joker character in the film and tries to diagnose his mental state using scientific theories and concepts.⁽¹⁴⁾ The article uses research from the fields of psychiatry and psychology to analyse the character and his behaviour, such as diagnoses of schizophrenia and depression, concepts of social isolation and trauma, as well as an analysis of the relationships of the characters in the film and their effect on the Joker. In general, the article presents a scientific approach to the analysis of a film character and his behaviour using psychiatric theories and concepts. R. Žigo uses cultural history to depict the decomposition of man and his reintegration into the animal world.⁽¹⁷⁾ Analysis of the film “Black Swan” is carried out through the prism of philosophical concepts such as body totalization, dream analysis and the relationship between the body and the brain.

Research by R.M. Gregor analyses Christopher Nolan’s film “Memento” from a philosophical point of view.

⁽¹⁸⁾ It is argued that the film allows viewers to experience the “present moment” in an amnesiac character who

cannot create new memories and maintains his memory by writing notes on his body. The study highlights the impact of this experience on identity and consciousness, and also examines a number of ethical issues related to the character's heroic actions and the moral dilemmas that arise as a result of his actions. One of the key findings of the study is that the film "Memento" offers viewers the opportunity to experience the "here and now", which can be useful for understanding one's own consciousness and identity. It is important to note that Carl Jung's theory of personality archetypes can help explain why an outsider character can be so attractive to a viewer or reader.⁽⁶⁾ According to this theory, archetypes are universal symbols and patterns of behaviour that embody certain features of human nature. The outsider can be perceived as the archetype of the "lone warrior" who is independent and opposes the traditional values of society. According to the study of S.S. Severyn and N.M. Kokhan, psychological theories of personality, such as Carl Rogers' theory of self-actualization, can be useful in understanding how an outsider character develops his individuality and self-esteem, which may be undermined in a society where he does not feel accepted.⁽¹⁾ Self-concept theories, which examine how people perceive themselves and their roles in society, and how this may influence their behaviour and emotional state, may also be useful. Therefore, consideration of psychological theories of personality can be useful in understanding the topic of outsidership in culture.

The described features and patterns, in turn, cause a certain effect on the audience. Outsiders can be perceived as deeper and more interesting characters, causing sympathy and empathy in the viewer. In addition, they can serve as role models and inspiration, especially for young people who may identify with outsiders and feel insecure in society.

DISCUSSION

The analysis suggests that outsiders in today's popular culture, especially in series and films of the 2000s and later, play an important role and are highly popular among viewers. It was found that in most cases, outsiders are presented as charismatic individuals with outstanding abilities and a peculiar style of behaviour. Such characters often attract the attention of the audience and arouse interest with their unusualness. The analysis also confirms the results of the works of other authors who investigated the phenomenon of the outsider in modern mass culture. For example, W. Conklin distinguishes several types of outsiders: "amazing", "self-sufficient", "loners" and "rebels".⁽¹⁹⁾ The analysis identified different types of outsiders, and it was observed that they are found in most modern films and TV series. The focus is on several patterns and trends associated with outsiders in contemporary popular culture. First, outsiders are often presented as the main characters of films and TV series. Second, the outsider can be used as a means of allowing the viewer to empathize with a character who is facing problems that the viewer can identify with. This can trigger an emotional response in the viewer, which in turn can increase viewing quality and engagement. However, the analysis also revealed some negative aspects of the use of outsiders in popular culture. For example, some movies and series can reinforce stereotypes and prejudices related to outsiders. In such cases, the outsider may be portrayed as a retard or a misfit, leading to increased social and cultural inequality. Moreover, the use of outsiders can cause a mismatch between the perception of reality and the fictional world, which can lead to misinformation and misunderstandings in society. Thus, it is necessary to more consciously use outsiders in mass culture, taking into account their positive and negative aspects. Using outsiders can help the viewer better understand themselves and the world around them, but can also reinforce stereotypes and prejudices if used inappropriately. The study drew attention to the fact that outsiders in today's popular culture are often presented as protagonists trying to find their place in society and overcome their problems. These characters were found to have a number of characteristics such as unattractive appearance, social isolation and low self-esteem.

Comparing the results of this study with the results of other studies, it can be seen that many authors pay attention to similar characteristics of outsiders. For example, in the work of T. Alabanza et al., it is emphasized that outsiders often feel like losers and do not find their place in society.⁽⁸⁾ The study pays attention to changes in the perception of outsiders over time. It was revealed that earlier outsiders were more often depicted as victims of society, and now they are increasingly presented as heroes who are ready to fight against stereotypes and find their place in society. D. Centola studies social interactions and the influence of the social environment on people's behaviour, but from different perspectives.⁽⁶⁾ The author focuses on the diffusion processes of behaviour in social networks, where a behaviour can become more acceptable if it is performed by several people belonging to a social group. The article, on the other hand, explores the phenomenon of outsider identity and its role in culture. Both studies indicate that a person's behaviour and identity can be significantly more influenced by the social environment. The participant in this study is quantitatively oriented, while the researcher uses a qualitative research method. The difference in approaches and the results found can be explained precisely by this.

Examining changes in the representation of outsiders over time is also an important issue that was explored in this paper. In the past, outsiders in a culture could be seen as undesirable elements that should be excluded from society. However, cinema has made a significant contribution to changing this stereotype, showing many

examples of outsiders as complex and interesting characters. Here are some examples of films where outsiders were portrayed as unwanted elements of society:

1. "The Elephant Man" (1980) - this drama tells the story of John Merrick, a man with severe physical disabilities. He was excluded from society because of his appearance, but his kindness and intelligence changed the perception of other people.
2. "The Green Mile" (1999) - based on the novel by Stephen King, this film tells the story of an African-American death row inmate who has supernatural powers. He faces rejection and violence because of his difference.

These films illustrate how outsiders were portrayed as undesirable elements of society in the past of cinema. However, over time, cinema began to pay more and more attention to the complexity and curiosity of such characters, their inner world and the ability to change the environment with their actions and values. However, over time, the attitude towards them has changed. Today, outsiders are generally seen as individuals who may have valuable qualities and unique abilities. Using the example of modern films and series, it can be seen that outsiders often act as the main characters who overcome their fears and overcome obstacles on the way to their goal. This shows that outsiders have not only become more accepted in society, but also play an important role in creating popular images and myths in mass culture. Overall, the analysis confirms that outsiders are important characters in contemporary mass culture. They help to better understand various social and cultural problems and find new ways to solve them. Comparing the results of this study with the works of scientists from other countries shows that interest in outsiders as main characters in popular culture is a global phenomenon. For example, research by K. Kansteiner and S. König emphasizes the importance of qualitative content analysis in mixed methods research, and reveals various ways of using qualitative content analysis in popular culture, including the analysis of outsider heroes.⁽¹⁰⁾

In their research, L. Frelich et al. studied the influence of certain factors on the academic motivation of immigrant students, in particular the influence of the sense of belonging and the outsider phenomenon.⁽¹⁶⁾ Although the research described above emphasizes the importance of social connections for immigrant students and their motivation for a social approach, the authors also studied the phenomenon of the outsider. They examined this phenomenon as a protagonist in contemporary popular culture and found that it is associated with individualization and marginalization in society. They also point out that outsiders can evoke empathy and identification in viewers/readers, but can be stigmatized and discriminated against in real life. Some studies also suggest that the representation of outsiders in popular culture may reflect changes in social norms and values. For example, if in the past there was a value of conformity and obedience to norms, today there is more recognition of the individuality and uniqueness of the individual.⁽²⁰⁾ However, some critics express concerns about the representation of outsiders in popular culture. Some researchers believe that outsiders are often portrayed in the media in an extremely negative light, which can lead to stereotypes and discrimination in real life. Also, using outsiders as main characters can become too formulaic and predictable, which can reduce the audience's interest in such characters. Overall, the research confirms the trend of using outsiders as protagonists in contemporary popular culture, and also shows that the representation of outsiders can change over time, reflecting changes in values and social norms. However, it is necessary to take into account the potential dangers and limitations of using outsiders in popular culture.

CONCLUSIONS

This article focuses on the rise of outsiders as protagonists in contemporary popular culture, focusing on TV series and movies since the 2000s. The article discusses their rise in popularity and positive portrayal, their changing attitudes in society, and their profound impact on audiences. They often serve as symbols of individuality and inspiration for those who feel marginalized. Although some perceive outsiders negatively, associating them with traits such as aggressiveness, most admire their independence and resilience in the face of adversity. This study suggests that outsiderism can be seen as a positive trait that allows individuals to overcome stereotypes and embrace their true self.

The findings have practical implications for film and television makers, offering ideas for creating authentic outsider characters. They also contribute to the understanding of the role of outsiders in society and their influence on people's behavior. Although the study achieved its goal of exploring the phenomenon of the outsider in contemporary popular culture, further research is needed to find out how cultural differences and societal shifts affect the perception of outsiders and how they evolve in different social environments.

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