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Hollywood: The stereotypical symbol of success and fame

Holivudas – stereotipinis sėkmės ir šlovės simbolis

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Abstract

Proliferation of the Hollywood production in the world has proved its significance and powerfulness as the major global influencer that aspires people to achieve their dreams. Showing to the world “a perfect life,” the American dream factory has become a cultural symbol of a luxurious world that attracts people with fame, riches, everlasting youth, and beauty. As a specific sign, formed in the process of abstraction and reduction of social knowledge, the symbol of success and fame is mediated by consciousness, memory and associative relation to the lifestyle, activity and personal characteristics of people, who work in American film industry. Persistent reduplication of Hollywood imagery contributes to stereotyping the symbol of success and fame. This article investigates a stereotypical character of the symbol through application of a qualitative analysis of various media texts within the integrative research frame of social semiotics. The results of the research can be of use in semantic studies aimed at detecting media constructed symbols and stereotypes.

KEYWORDS: Hollywood, symbol, stereotype, media discourse, social semiotics.

Introduction

Over a century ago, Hollywood burst into popular consciousness all around the world with film stars flaunting their fabulous life to the public. Pursuit of thrilling pleasures, instantaneous wish fulfilment and surfeit with comforts characterise the hedonistic ethic that excites pleasures without regard to their costs or ethical considerations. Horace's *Carpe diem* is the very nature of some pleasures that, if not obtained now, will not be available ever. Gaiety and youth have become cherished properties of success (Lyubymova, 2021, p. 178).

Nowadays, Hollywood is the major global influencer that shapes national and global public opinion by imposing a schema of values that diffuses and spreads into new contexts and domains (Smith et al., 2023). Hollywood values promote looking young and beautiful as a way of being successful. Digital globalisation

of Hollywood esthetics and ideas expands its ascendancy. It shapes our lives and shapes us by “a dazzling, fame-fled, fashionable and boundless world” (Taydaş & Karakoç, 2017, p.139). Showing “a perfect life”, Hollywood inspires people to find pleasure in self-fulfillment and success, following the “rags-to-riches” life scenario that describes a person’s transformation into whomever they want to be.

Significant attention of researchers to Hollywood as a multifaceted social, cultural, and industrial phenomenon (Addison, 2003; Schatz, 2004; Taydaş & Karakoç, 2017) that substantially influences music, art, design, and language globally (Smith et al., 2023; De Marco, 2025) has not touched an issue of its stereotypic representation in media discourse. Our study is devoted to formation of a cultural symbol of success and fame and its stereotypisation in media discourse. Covering the timeframe from 1907 to 2022, the research data includes a diverse array of sources such as periodicals, films, and musical works.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

From the perspective of Peirce’s semiotics, Hollywood is a cultural symbol – a complex sign, consisting of an index, an icon, a symbol and an interpretant (Peirce, 1992). Indicating the idea that is indubitably perceived by the community, the index is a well-known landmark erected on Mount Lee in Los Angeles. It represents a specific visual detail of the place. Appearing in cinema and art, this sign

has over the years given rise to an indexical field, in which cultural practices, identities, and values circulate through time and space (Smith et al., 2025). The word *Hollywood* is a linguistic symbol that represents in media discourse a set of qualities attributed by the society to the American film industry. The icon constates a visual image of location and people, who live and work there. Reproduced by mass media in various works, the image of Hollywood evokes an emotional and evaluative reaction from the public. This pragmatic information serves the interpretant of the cultural symbol of success and fame. As a cultural code that has acquired a concentrated, paradigmatic, and iconic character, the symbol of success and fame is determined by the pragmatics of the “symbolic act”, in which verbal or other signs become real through the effect they produce (Malinowski, 2009, p. 31).

Formation of symbols is fundamentally rooted in two actions: generalisation, which is called by Peirce (1992) “most important operation of the mind” and abstraction, which is “allied to generalization”. Abstraction involves the conceptualization of a social phenomenon, identification of its significance and transformation of it into a symbol. Effect, produced by an interpretant of a symbol, gives rise to a stereotype. Embodying ideas, viewpoints and judgments within the symbol to which it is attached (Lurie, 2012), stereotype suggests the given behavioral patterns (Ponzio, 1993, p.63).

From the standpoint of semiotics, a stereotype is a specific sign, characterised by the conventionality and automatism of reproduction. Verbal or non-verbal communication is fundamentally grounded on signs that derive their meanings from a shared understanding within a particular community (Mingers & Willcocks, 2023). Meaning is made in the process of interaction in many material ways that depend on the demands and needs of particular societies and the availabilities of means for making meaning (Gualberto & Kress, 2019). Related to the connotative aspect of communication, on-going semiosis produces meaning of the symbol of success and fame in media discourse. Employing a social semiotics approach that focuses on sign systems and resources that make communication effective, the research aims to reconstruct the meaning of Hollywood as a stereotypical symbol of success and fame.

Replicating the symbol of success and fame according to a certain pattern, mass media contributes to the appearance of its stereotype. Functioning of stereotypes in a specific linguistic and cultural community is a part of the continuum (Mocarz-Kleindienst, 2017) that consists of reproduction, transmission and maintenance of stereotypes as “culturally shared values” (Stangor & Schaller, 1996, p. 25). Stereotyping is a complex process that grounds on information from different semiotic resources, social context, and personal experiences (Shevchenko, 2024). This process involves inferential operations on detectable characteristics that are not readily apparent in the initial perceptual experience (Bodenhausen & Macrae, 1996, p. 228) but drawn by typical shortcomings and social ideals (Tamm & Torop, 2021).

Mass media reproduce stereotypes through specific configuration of popular narrative formulas and schemata (Brylla, 2018, p.264) that are associated closely in memory with other socially relevant knowledge structures (Stangor & Schaller, 1996, p.26). Media influence the way stereotypes are treated (Dyer, 2002, p. 1). Emotionally perceived, stereotypes are portrayed in a stable set of external and ethical characteristics that manifest in different forms of judgments about certain attributed or denied features of stereotyped objects (Quasthoff, 1978; Bartmiński, 1998). The common feature of all stereotypical judgments is a covert universal generalization (Bartmiński, 2017).

Summing-up achievements in the study of stereotypes and stereotyping, three main lines of their investigation are distinguished (Lyubymova, 2019). The first focuses on cognitive processes involved in categorization and abstraction of social knowledge. In this view, a stereotype is a result of the basic human cognitive activity connected with evaluative categorization, which is a mental process of division into categories on the results of distinguishing salient features of cultural phenomena according to national ideals, values and standards. Stereotypes represent simplified and reduced information about the social environment (Quasthoff, 1978; Putnam, 1988; Ashmore & Del Boca, 2015).

The second line of investigation points out affective attitudinal component of stereotyping. In this view, stereotypes shape both the individual and collective perceptions (Brewer, 2005). Ambivalent character of a stereotype reflects duality of appraisal. This essential feature of stereotypes is described as “a split” between “good” and “bad” evaluation.

The third line of investigation is aimed to observe a social aspect of stereotyping (Taguiri, 1969; Fiske, 1998). From this standpoint, a stereotype is a pattern that shapes attitudes, values, beliefs, and behavioral implications that ensure proper functioning of the community.

From semiotic perspective (Barthes, 1968; Genette, 1997; Ricoeur, 1974; Riffaterre, 1960) stereotypes are intermediaries between different spheres of semiosis, as well as semiotic and extra-semiotic reality. People exist within a space that is formed through meaning. Production and interpretation of meaning is the process and the basis of all forms of communication (Mingers & Willcocks, 2023, p.168). Produced automatically and recurrently, stereotypes preserve the cultural experience of the society, its tendencies and patterns (Barthes, 1968, p. 284). They persist in the reader’s mind, even if the author tries refuting them (Genette, 1997, p. 369).

Indispensable to human mental activity, stereotypes are an integral part of a natural language. They are maintained and changed through language and communication. Representing the image of a social phenomenon in its verbal form, a stereotype forms the center of semantic and cognitive associations (Tajfel, 1981; Coulmas, 1981; van Dijk, 1998). Stereotypes most vividly manifest themselves in connotations, in pragmatic predispositions and attitudes, expressed in media discourse. Circulating in society, stereotypes present certain unquestionable beliefs that function as cognitive presuppositions stored in a collective memory in forms of scripts and frames (Stalnaker, 1974). Presuppositions are not necessarily based on patterns of life experience; they are also not individually asserted and justified. They are ratified by epistemic criteria of a community and thus considered true (van Dijk, 1998, p. 19). These implicit assumptions are spread in the sphere of mass communication and reproduced in different functional genres.

Stereotypes are closely linked to the pragmatic dimensions of word and sentence meaning (Ponzio, 1993, p. 36). They manifest through typical vocabulary, idiomatic and trivial expressions (cliché) (Riffaterre, 1960, p. 211) that function as specific labels accurately discerned through the underlying beliefs and motivating force of the stereotype (Genette, 1997, p. 497). On the syntactic level of the language, stereotypes are instantiated by propositional structures that demonstrate subjective views on descriptive and evaluative features of them. That suggests that our knowledge of stereotypes will remain incomplete without an analysis of the language that defines an assumed stereotype (Maas & Arcuri, 1996, p. 220).

Considering Hollywood the symbol that encapsulates the complex of conventional ideas, hedonistic values and imperatives of American society that are stereotyped by mass media, we integrate the achievements in study of stereotypes in the social semiotic frame of our research.

Methodology

Interpretation of the stereotypical symbol of success and fame in media discourse is based on the hermeneutic canon that the language is the medium for understanding (Gadamer, 2004/1975). Detailed examination of the object under study is provided by the complex methodology, based on a qualitative analysis, which includes non-numerical data to develop a descriptive result of the study. The analysis starts with exploring formation of the symbol of success and fame in print publications at the beginning of the century, subsequently focusing on stereotyping it in American mass media production of the middle of the 20th – in the 21st century.

The data for analysis are collected through media monitoring that involves observation and fixation of language material for further linguistic processing (Graffigna & Riva, 2015). The criterion for selecting material for analysis is the thematic focus of media texts on Hollywood. A significant time span of gathered material and its genre diversity enable us to trace stereotyping the symbol. Graphic media texts, such as print and digital periodicals, represent the stereotypical symbol of success and fame mainly by verbal means. Non-verbal means prevail in the portrayal of the symbol of success and fame in audio-visual media texts, such as films, series, songs. In cinematic discourse, Hollywood appears a multifaceted sign, which is perceived visually in terms of clothing style, physical and behavioural features of Hollywood dwellers and audibly in their verbal characterisations. In music videos, the symbol of success and fame is represented by a synthesis of verbal, musical, and visual codes, with the verbal component subordinated to and coordinated with a sound component that influences its interpretation.

Table 1 Research methodology of Hollywood media image

Kind of media texts	Prevailing code	Methods applied
Graphic	Verbal	Semantic, discourse, pragmatic analysis
Audio-visual	Nonverbal	Narrative, discourse analysis

Implemented in the work qualitative analytic methodology comprises narrative, discourse, semiotic, interpretative (Neuendorf, 2002, pp. 5–7) and pragmatic technics. Narrative technic involves the description of narrative structures of media texts with a focus on the characters represented in them, e.g., a life story of African-American screenwriter Archie Coleman from the Netflix series “Hollywood” shows Hollywood as American dream. Growing up in fear and humiliation in Memphis (*‘I grew up being terrorized’*), Coleman moved to Los Angeles to pursue his dream to be a screenwriter. He is not ashamed of any kind of earning money. Striving to realize his dream, he had to face insults and threats, but he was ready to confront all challenges (*‘I’m scared, I’m angry, but what I’m not is surprised’*). His goal was not only to achieve success, but also to change Hollywood’s attitude toward the people like him (*‘I wanna take Hollywood and give it a rewrite’*). In regard to Coleman’s story, Hollywood is perceived as a place, where it is possible to break barriers and gain success.

Discourse analysis (Johnson & McLean, 2020) engages characteristics of Hollywood that manifest in the language. Interpretation of statements involves investigation of contextual assumptions and implicatures that refine and adjust comprehension (Wilson, 2019). The attention is paid to syntactic units that convey value judgments, inferences, implications, associative characteristics, and conclusions about Hollywood, e.g., the statement of a studio executive *‘Equality, progress, that’s we should stand for’* (Murphy et al., 2020) reveals her principle to advance equal opportunities for all people to pursue success and fame.

Directed at the meaning of the symbol, semiotic analysis (Metz, 1974; Buckland, 2007) elucidates creation and application of a sign in communication, e.g., the word *Hollywood* that signifies the symbol of success and fame is analyzed in the context of its appearance and application in American media discourse.

Focusing on language use, pragmatic analysis is directed at the author’s intentions that convey meaning implicitly, beneath the surface of a text. This technique is useful in empirically testing assumptions “that theorize the role of agents in the creation of meanings, practices, structures, and institutions through their speech acts and communicative interactions” (Duffy, 2008 p.169). Examining meanings in the context of media dis-

course, pragmatic analysis reveals evaluative meaning that testifies stereotyping of the symbol of success and fame, e.g., in the phrase *'there is but one Hollywood physiognomy, especially among newcomers; only the names are different'* (Masters, 1948) noun *physiognomy* indicates ironic attitude of the author toward the people, who having no talent, imitate the appearances of Hollywood celebrities.

Results and Discussion

A proper noun *Hollywood* that signifies success and fame in American media discourse is a toponym, which designates the geographical object by its name. Apparently, the lexeme *Hollywood* was motivated by a remarkable feature of the location – an evergreen tree or shrub with prickly leaves, named *holly*. Photos from Hollywood's early history demonstrate lush greenery of woods in this area (Fig. 1).

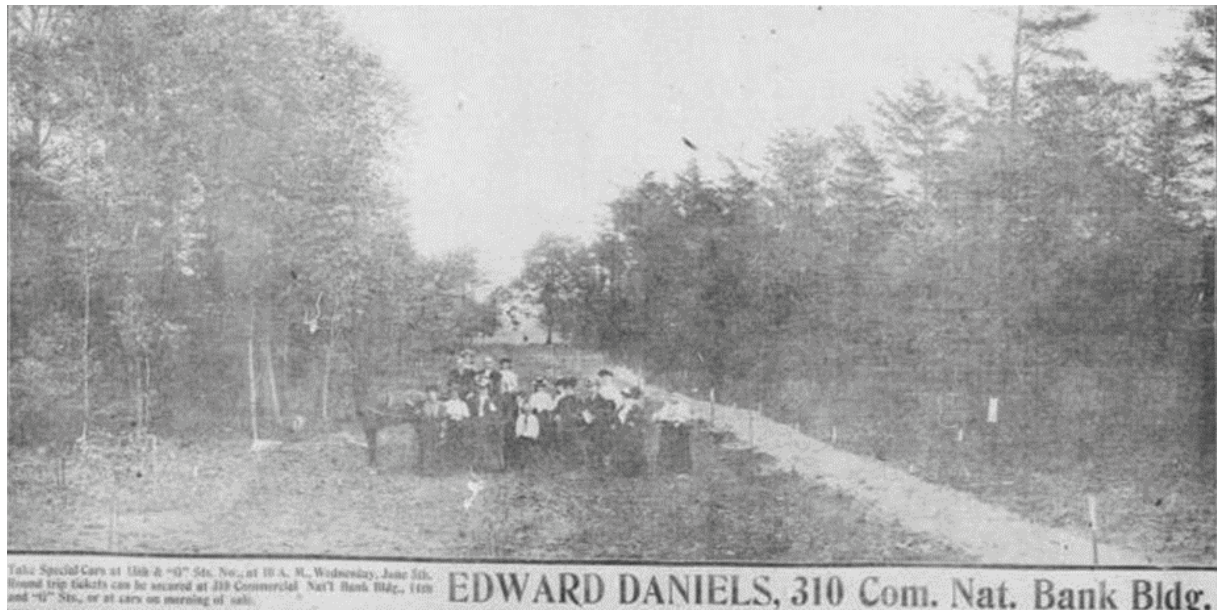


Fig. 1 From "Hollywood-On-The-Hill", *Washington Times*, 1907.

The etymology of the word is sustained by the description of a wooded scenery: *The advantages of Hollywood cannot be excelled. Location, elevation, pure air, fine water, delightful shade, thousands of hollies, pines, and oaks* ("Hollywood-On-The-Hill", 1907). The phrase *advantages of Hollywood cannot be excelled* points to extremely good area for living that Daeida Wilcox and her husband, a real estate dealer, bought in 1886. Naming of this place is ascribed to this enterprising woman that subdivided the property into lots and registered them as a village under the name *Hollywood* in 1903 (Fig. 2).

Hollywood was an elite neighborhood in the early 20th century. A comfortable and popular place was *an exclusive residential district populated*



Fig. 2 Panoramic view of the area from Hollywood to Santa Monica, with an inset real estate map of Hollywood, 1887. 442300, Huntington Rare Book Maps, the Huntington Library, San Marino, California

by a *handful of retired Easterners* (“With the Film Stars”, 1922). By 1910, with the construction of film studios, a quiet farming Hollywood transformed into the capital of the American film industry. The cause of the change is *the forward strides, which are being made in the motion picture industry* (“Foremost Screen Writers”, 1920). Some years after the giant sign ‘Hollywood’, initially ‘Hollywoodland’, was set up on Mount Lee in the Santa Monica Mountains (Fig. 3). The word *Hollywood* has become a *generic term covering the movie-making interests of Los Angeles and environs* (Lowry, 1955).

Already in the 1920s, Hollywood was not seen solely the location of American movie industry, but an external manifestation of the remarkable occurrence: *Hollywood, in its most interesting aspect, is a social phenomenon* (“With the Film Stars”, 1922). The word *phenomenon* points to the fact that Hollywood has acquired the generalized meaning of an abstract entity, which encompasses social relations of people of different professions: *store-keepers, bankers, insurance agents, owners of factories that live and work in “a film colony”* (“Foremost Screen Writers”, 1920). They create the atmosphere of free-spirited place, described by media as *gypsy settling town* (“With the Film Stars”, 1922).

Being the object of aspirations of creative people that frequently visit this place in pursuit of success and fame, Hollywood got a name *the Mecca of motion picture writers* (“Foremost Screen Writers”, 1920). In association with the holy place of pilgrimage, the word *Mecca* acquires the meaning of a special importance and attraction for people who are passionate about success. Typical for America’s 1920s the dream of becoming overnight famous motivates the influx of fame-and-fortune-seekers.

Media describes Hollywood as *wonderful, a regular paradise* (“Miss Letch”, 1921) and *expensive place* (“With the Film Stars”, 1922) affordable for the rich. Interpreting Hollywood as signifying enjoyment from accomplishments, media contributed to the formation of the symbol of success and fame.



Fig. 3 The Hollywoodland sign circa 1930.
Wikimedia Commons

Table 2 Semantic characteristic of the symbol of success and fame

Index	the Hollywood sign	
Icon	image	
	location	people
Symbol	lexeme <i>Hollywood</i>	
Interpretant	judgments, evaluations, conclusions	

In the 1920s, Hollywood was being widely criticised by media for the immorality of its inhabitants, their drug and alcohol abuse: *There has been so much printed about the sins of horrible Hollywood* (“Hollywood not to Blame”, 1922). The designation of Hollywood as *Tinseltown* that appeared in 1939 (Dalzell & Victor, 2013, p. 2267) reflects societal evaluation of the ostentatious displays of wealth and extravagant lifestyles associ-

ated with Hollywood. The center of American film industry is described as an exciting and riotous mixture of elements: *Hollywood is the combination of Greenwich Village and a carnival honky-tonk* ("Stereotypes of Hollywood", 1948). It arouses mixed feelings as a bright and exciting, and simultaneously, squalid and disreputable centre of bohemian culture.

With growing success of American movie industry, Hollywood was increasingly attracting people, aspiring to be movie stars. Called by media *would-bes*, these people carefully copy those who have already become successful. With an appearance of a new star, they immediately try to convert themselves into the absolute (*carbon*) copies of successful people. These transformations concern mainly their appearances:

The costume worn by one is practically the same as the costumes worn by all of the others. Their hair tinted to common shade and dressed with the same little waves and curls. All seemed to trained down to approximately the same degree of leanness. Their mouths are made up to fit the common pattern (Fidler, 1937).

Repetition of the word *same* in the extract underlines similarity of would-bes' appearances and conformity of their views. The sentence *They are stamped out on the same mould* (ibid.) expresses the idea that Hollywood is the industry that produces future stars from a template of appearance and behavior. Conveyed by the phrase *Hollywood physiognomy* (Masters, 1948) refers to a certain type of the face that is considered beautiful and desirable in Hollywood. The lack of individuality of those who want to succeed at any cost is expressed in the phrase *all of them wear the same expressionless expression* (Fidler, 1937). The looks of Hollywood stars became a required standard that young girls eagerly emulate (Fig. 4). Emphasising the negative opinion of the residents of Hollywood, media named them *a flock of quarter-wits, wolves, nymphomaniacs and moronic, tyrant producers* ("Stereotypes of Hollywood", 1948). Imitation of beauty and the patterned behavior of fame-seekers are deemed *the curse of Hollywood* (Fidler, 1937). Hollywood is recognised as an industry that makes and sells templates for success and fame.

However, the most significant critique concerns production practices. Not creating new pieces but replicating previous successful works, Hollywood tries to *duplicate success* (Bayl, 1960). Devoid of originality *stock characters* (Calvin, 1935) are seen as *stereotypes that are both disconcerting in their naivety and unenlightening in their development* (Simms, 1970). Printed media creates a negative image of Hollywood, focusing on standardized beauty and immoral lifestyle of those who work in movie industry. A broad generalization and accumulation of negative evaluations and media inferences favours stereotyping of the symbol of success and fame. American media acknowledges the fact that *Hollywood is a stereotype* (Masters, 1948).

The metaphorical designation of Hollywood *a hype machine* (Du Lac, 1999) emphasises power of the centre of the American film industry to create various stereotypes, including the stereotype of Hollywood itself. Intensive publicity of Hollywood

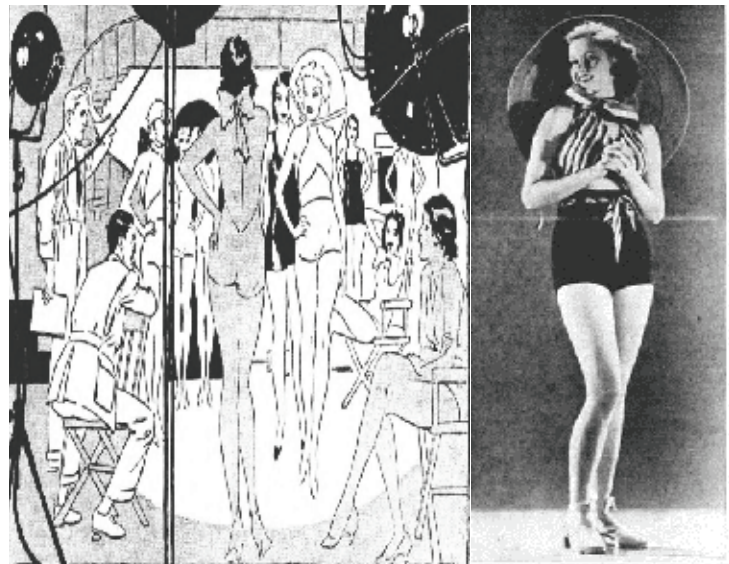


Fig. 4 Beauty contest in Hollywood. Library of Congress. "So the movies have a beauty shortage" by D. Thomas. The Laredo Times, May 12, 1935

hedonistic lifestyle detrimentally affects lives of people striving for fame. Spreading throughout the world destructive power of Hollywood is conveyed by the word *californication* that appeared in 1966 to indicate condemnation of dissolute life of hippie and liberal spirit of California (“Nosepicking Contests”, 1966). By the 1980s, the term gained widespread usage in idiomatic American English across neighboring states, which strongly opposed the significant influx of Californians that disseminate a lifestyle associated with Hollywood. Implicating negative influence on people’s lives, the word *californication* conveys the key message, encrypted in the lyrics of the song “Californication” (Kiedis, 1999 a). The music video assists in correct interpretation of the lyrics that expose California culture and its propagation through Hollywood production. Endless struggle with temptations of Hollywood is embodied in the visual metaphor of fighting with sharks: subduing one of them, the personage faces new shocks and trials. Characters of the video explore a luxurious but bogus world of *silver screen* that attracts people by fame, sex, ever-lasting youth, and beauty. Hollywood is represented as a fantastic world, in which an influential person like *a fairy* can make anyone successful and famous if only to ask *buy me a star on the boulevard*. Success in Hollywood is metaphorically described as *First born unicorn* – something which is unique, unattainable and imaginary.

A row of identical mannequins outside the store in the video, in which a girl enters is a visual metaphor of Hollywood standard appearance that girls look up to. Success requires ideal bodies and *celebrity skin* that can be provided by a well-paid plastic surgeon: *Pay your surgeon very well to break the spell of aging*.

Striving to catch incredibly luxurious life in Hollywood, fame-seekers can find themselves in *Hardcore*, *soft porn* made in a *Hollywood basement* or die as a broken-hearted starlet, which ran from home to Los Angeles to become an actress but got *chewed up* by Hollywood as in the R.H.C.P. “Dani California” (Kiedis, 2006). Irony expressed in the words *Knock on wood we all stay good ‘Cause we all live in Hollywood* (Kiedis, 1999 b) conveys the idea of impossibility to remain an immaculate person in the pursuit of success in Hollywood. Faulty temptations of fame are unsurmountable for vulnerable people as Kurt Cobain to whom the song refers. Nevertheless, the R.H.C.P. are optimistic, expressing hope that *Destruction leads to a very rough road but it also breeds creation*. A path to success may result either in ruin or in fame.

The allusive name of Showtime’s series “Californication” (Kapinos et al., 2007– 2014) refers to the hit of the R.H.C.P. Popular etymology traces the title of the series from the fusion of *California* and *fornication* (Klug, 2015, p. 175). Sexual implication of this portmanteau emphasizes the attitude toward the Hollywood lifestyle, depicted in the show. Sex in this television dramedy is the background against which the characters are profiled. Earthy and obscene language of all characters intensifies sexual display in the show. However, as the personage of the series states, ... *the true subject isn’t sex but loneliness* (episode 11, season 3). By highlighting the common hypocrisy and delusions of Hollywood, the series fosters a disagreeable image that further entrenches a negative stereotype of the industry.

The central figure in the series is a promiscuous and cynical hero, Hank Moody, played by David Duchovny. A promising writer from New York, Hank sees Hollywood as *the craptastic crowd-pleaser* (episode 3, season 1). The word *craptastic* is a blend of the words *crap*, which means “something of extremely poor quality” and the word *fantastic* in the meaning “extraordinarily attractive”. By this word, Hank expresses his attitude to American film industry, which produces low-quality movies made exclusively for entertainment.

When placed into the immoral atmosphere of Hollywood and corrupting temptations of Los Angeles, a promising writer from New York experiences complete devastation. He epitomizes a kind of Hollywood masculinity, which is expressed in the sexual and physical prowess of the *body guy*. Deliberately untidy look, a black shirt and sunglasses, a messy Porsche with a broken headlight he drives are attributes of a stereotypical Angeleno, who leads bohemian life.

Women constantly fall for his tough good look, his fascinating wit and self-awareness. He definitely possesses sex appeal. Enchanting women, he loves Karen and their daughter, but fails to set stable relations with his beloved. The show gives impression that firm traditional heterosexual relationship is ultimately impossible within Hollywood environment. Frequently used by Hank the word *dysfunctional* (relations, help, family, etc.) is an essential characteristic of him. Aware of his complete devastation, he persists in living such life, saying

I'm disgusted with my life and myself but I'm not unhappy about that. As a stereotypic Hollywood bohemian, Hank Moody does not live by conventional rules and relations.

A paradoxical character, Hank is a misogynist who *objectifies women that exist solely to satisfy his urges* (episode 5, season 7), and at the same time he tries to understand and defend them as a devoted feminist. Innumerable sex affairs do not prevent Hank from writing. One of his bestsellers is "Californication", the allusive name of which indicates the author's self-destructive attachment to the truth. Hank Moody exposes hypocrisy of Hollywood dwellers, who are *ranting and raving about saving the environment* but pay a lot of money for *fuel of their private jet planes getting down to Cabo* (episode 4, season 1). Raising money to support anti-pollution campaigns, these people are not really interested in ecologic problems. The city alienates Hank Moody for his truth.

Hollywood world of make-believe affects the Los Angeles life: *Everything is ... fake. The houses like sets and the people are indistinguishable from actors* (episode 3, season 5). There is no place for sincerity in relations of people: *the Beverly Hills husbands're definitely cheating and friends only act like they're friends* (episode 9, season 2). Traditional families are rare in this environment: *It's nice to see some good old-fashioned family values in this morally bankrupt city of ours* (pilot). It is *no place to raise a daughter* (episode 5, season 3). To Karen's statement that *L.A. changes people*, Hank justly retorts *cities don't change people ... we are who we are* (episode 3, season 5).

Almost all the characters experience detrimental influence of Los Angeles life style. Sexaholic Hank's agent and friend betrayed Hank for money. Another friend suffers from drug addiction. A promiscuous nymphet stole Hank's manuscript. Even Hank's daughter, craving for writer's fame, experimented with drugs. Hank's surroundings are in hot pursuit of pleasure and sensual self-indulgence that represent hedonistic principle to gain satisfaction at any cost. They live to the morality of hedonism: *Live fast, die young* (episode 3, season 4). Carnal pleasures motivate their behavior, as Hank says: *a morning of awkwardness is far better than a night of loneliness* (episode 1, season 1). They need money to satisfy their fads: *you do make a decent living and that's really good for the hedonist* (episode 3, season 5). Lust for pleasures sweeps away all moral barriers. Promiscuity, drug-addiction, avidity are all attributes of a negative stereotyping of Hollywood in the series.

Hank's attitude to Hollywood and Los Angeles changes from a stance of rejection to one of admiration. Intrinsic to a stereotype duality of evaluation is conveyed by contrasting designation of the city as both *Babylon* and *Promised Land* in the series. Associated with the destruction of Solomon's Temple and the exile of the Israelites, *Babylon* is an allusive metaphor of disillusionment and moral decay. Hank explains his moral decay by devastating influence of Hollywood: *What happened to me? I came out here from New York to fight the good fight. I lost. This city happened to me* (episode 2, season 2). Despite the awareness of this, he does not want to leave the place that ensures him success and fame: *But here I am, rotting away in the warm California sun* (episode 3, season 1). At the same time, Hank perceives Hollywood as *Promised Land*. In the biblical narrative, *Promised Land* is God's divine gift to the Israelites. As great happiness that someone wants to reach, Hollywood is the place that *turns out dreams come true* (episode 4, season 7). Hollywood is the place of American dream realisation:

- *American Dream right here. Your name's gonna be up on the screen. You'll be immortal.*
- *I've written a couple of books too.*
- *That's not the same* (episode 8, season 1).

Despite being celebrated for his achievements, the writer's paramount success is his emergence as a prominent figure in Hollywood.

Only strong and daring personalities achieve their American dream in Hollywood. This idea is conveyed by the Netflix series of 2020 "Hollywood" (Murphy et al., 2020). *If you want something, you have to declare it*

(episode 2), says one of the main characters of the series. By using the verb *declare*, she accentuates the audacious resolve to openly confront adverse conditions that hinder the attainment of success.

The title card of the series shows the Hollywoodland sign to which people climb. This visual metaphor encapsulates the fundamental message of the series, demonstrating that there are no limits for those who fervently seek their American Dream. Success in Hollywood is recognized equal to the realization of American dream that everybody craves for: *Hollywood dream, that's everybody's dream*.

The narrative centres around the ambitious plan of young talented people to create a movie in the late 40s of the 20th century. The existing laws of racial segregation and activities of the racist Ku Klux Klan organization make it hard to achieve the goals of those, whose stereotypes Hollywood has been reinforcing and spreading for years. Represented in the series ethnic stereotypes include a Chinese-American actress that endeavors to move beyond conventional Asian character roles, a proficient businesswoman showcasing her talent in movie production and a tenacious African-American actress who achieves success in a prominent Hollywood role. Often repeated in the series the word *coloured* (*coloured person, coloured picture, a woman of colour, a man of colour*) emphasises a feature of difference by which ethnic groups were stereotyped in Hollywood during the period of the segregation law. The phrase in the poster *what if you could rewrite the story?* suggests the alternative idea about American film industry of the period. It expresses an idealistically favourable outlook on Hollywood during the 1940s, asserting that people, irrespective of their race, nationality, or gender identity, were granted the chance to realize their aspirations.

The influence of Hollywood as symbol of fame and success is conveyed by the sentence *If you change the way that movies are made, I think you can change the world*. Changing the way that movies are made concerns the revision of Hollywood policy to provide equality of possibilities in American film industry. Promoting ideals such as individualism, liberty, equality, democracy, and hard work through films would change the world that consumes these values with Hollywood production.

The epic “Babylon” (Chazelle, 2022) offers a contrasting view of the symbol of success and fame. Portraying luxury and depravity of roaring twenties, it creates negative image of Hollywood. The film begins with extravagant display of hedonism at luxurious Hollywood party, which is the ultimate dream for many to attend. The film’s allusive title conveys the core concept of it – human arrogance and the futility of fame.

The opportunity to achieve fame, success and wealth attracts aspiring people to a rapidly evolving film industry. Whereas the silent film star Jack Conrad (Brad Pitt) tries to find himself in the world of sound films, a would-be star Nellie LaRoy (Margot Robbie) and the assistant producer Manny (Diego Calva) fight their way to stardom. Pursuing their American dream, Nellie and Manny do what they can to achieve success in Hollywood.

It was a hard way of making his way to success in Hollywood for a Mexican immigrant, Manny. At the beginning of the film, the visual metaphor of pushing an elephant up a steep mountain renders great hardships he has to overcome on his way to realization of his American dream. Success does not mean for him just fame and money, he wants *to be a part of something...bigger*. He wants to be involved in the true art of filmmaking.

A quintessential “jazz baby” from New Jersey slums, Nellie LaRoy, challenges societal norms. She suffers from addiction: *I do cocaine all the time*. Starting her career in New York, she was rejected many times as her appearance does not correspond Hollywood standard: *Every casting director in New York told me I was too short or too fat. Usually, I was too fat*. She had no one to support her on her way up to success: *I’ve always been on my own*. Confident in herself she makes her way to the top of Hollywood stardom: *You don’t become a star – you either are, or you ain’t*. Nellie is incredibly talented and self-sufficient. But her individualism and self-affirmation gradually destroys Nellie’s career.

The Hollywood silent film star, Jack, was also of a working-class origin: *My folks didn’t have the money or the education*. Revelling in his fame, he is convinced that he creates what people need: *There’s beauty there. What happens on the screen means something – maybe not for you up in your ivory tower, but down on the ground where real people live, it means something*. The idiom *ivory tower* is the metaphoric expression of hedonistic idea to avoid unpleasant things that happen around. No one pays much attention to deaths that hap-

pened in the film during the production of movies or afterwards. Jack's suicide is one among numerous cases of whom the Hollywood columnist Elinor St. John states: *There'll be a hundred more like it, too. An earthquake could wipe this town off the map and it wouldn't make a difference. It's the idea that sticks.* Hollywood is not just a place; it is the idea of people's eternal yearning for recognition and fame that never will fade.

The symbol of success and fame is a culturally conditioned sign, mediated by consciousness, memory, and

Conclusion

associative relation to a lexical unit *Hollywood*. As a complex sign, the symbol of success and fame unfolds its specific details in media image, represented in printed periodicals, television and cinematographic production. Transforming verbal and visual elements into a special semiotic code, media discourse forms ontological conditions for creating symbols.

Media portrayals of the lifestyle, activity and personal characteristics of those who work in American film industry promote Hollywood values looking young and beautiful as a way of being successful. Conformity with beauty standards is accepted as essential quality for gaining success. By showing the satisfaction and happiness, experienced by successful people who enjoy life as if in paradise, media has contributed to conversion of Hollywood into the symbol of a hedonistic existence of immediate enjoyment from success.

By replicating the symbol according to certain patterns, mass media contributes to stereotyping it. Acquiring an evaluative and emotional character, the symbol of success and fame becomes stereotypical. The symbol's stereotypical character manifests in the ambivalent perception, which is implicitly or explicitly expressed in media discourse. The pragmatic meaning of the symbol of success and fame splits into positive and negative aspects that are represented by designation of Hollywood Mecca, Promised Land, American dream, as well as Tinseltown, Babylon, Hype machine (Fig. 5).

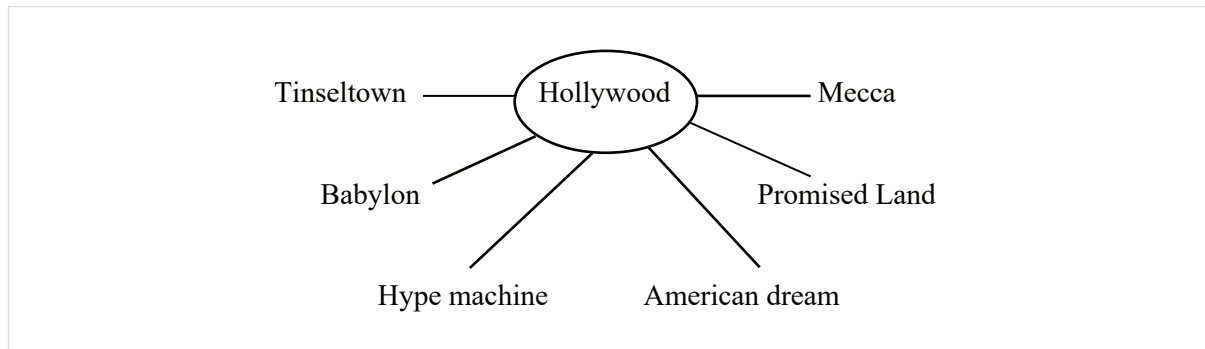


Fig. 5 Media representation of Hollywood

The negative aspect concerns highly sexualized and consumer driven Hollywood production that heavily emphasizes sensual pleasures, ever-lasting youth, and beauty standards as the precious goals to be achieved. Immorality of people, working in the film industry, evokes criticism already in the first part of the 20th century. The positive aspect refers to the possibility, given by Hollywood for those who pursue success, which is the chief stimulus in person's professional development. Only those gain fame who withstand all the temptations and trials of Hollywood and overcome obstacles on their way. The significance of the stereotypical symbol of success and fame lies in inclination to a certain style of everyday behavior and thinking at the mass level. The results of the analysis confirm the leading role of mass media in stereotyping Hollywood as the symbol of success and fame.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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Santrauka

Svitlana Lyubymova, Ilona Derik.

Holivudas – stereotipinis sėkmės ir šlovės simbolis

Holivudo produkcijos plitimas pasaulyje įrodė jos svarbą ir galingumą kaip pagrindinio pasaulinio įtakos veiksnio, kuris įkvepia žmones siekti savo svajonių. Rodydama pasauliui „tobulą gyvenimą“, amerikietiškas svajonių fabrikas tapo prabangaus pasaulio kultūriniu simboliu, kuris traukia žmones šlove, turtais, amžina jaunyste ir grožiu. Kaip konkretus ženklas, susiformavęs socialinių žinių abstrahavimo ir redukavimo procese, sėkmės ir šlovės simbolis yra perteikiamas sąmonės, atminties ir asociatyvaus ryšio su gyvenimo būdu, veikla ir asmeninėmis savybėmis žmonių, dirbančių Amerikos kino industrijoje. Nuolatinis Holivudo vaizdinių kartojimas prisideda prie sėkmės ir šlovės simbolio stereotipizavimo. Šiame straipsnyje tiriamas stereotipinis šio simbolio pobūdis, taikant įvairių žiniasklaidos tekstų kokybinę analizę integruoto socialinės semiotikos tyrimo kontekste. Tyrimo rezultatai gali būti naudingi semantiniuose tyrimuose, kuriais siekiama nustatyti žiniasklaidos sukurtus simbolius ir stereotipus.

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