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I. MEDICAL SCIENCES

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THE ROLE OF GENERAL («ALIMENTARY») TOLERANCE MECHANISMS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONCURRENT DAMAGE TO BORDERLINE TISSUE STRUCTURES (ORAL CAVITY, SKIN) AND THE COLON IN PSORIASIS

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*general («alimentary») tolerance mechanisms in the development of concurrent damage to borderline tissue structures (oral cavity, skin) and the colon in psoriasis / Lviv Medical University, Ukraine, Lviv; *Kyiv Medical University, Ukraine, Kyiv; **Medical Institute Sumy State University, Ukraine, Sumy*

The aim of the study is to determine the significance of disruptions in factors of alimentary tolerance and the role of colonic microbiota and TGFβ1 growth factor in regulating the body's reactivity and the clinical manifestations of psoriasis in cases of concurrent damage to oral, cutaneous, and gastrointestinal structures.

The subject of the study is colonic microbiota and blood levels of TGFβ1 growth factor in patients with psoriasis, both with and without concurrent pathology of the dentofacial system.

An imbalance of the colonic normal microbiota was detected in 120 examined patients with psoriasis; this imbalance disrupts the microbiota's tolerance toward other microbial species and influences the development of clinical manifestations of irritable bowel syndrome. The influx of pathogen-associated molecular compounds from sites of injury in the oral cavity (in the presence of concomitant oral pathology), skin, and colon triggers a compensatory response involving the cytokine growth factor that regulates «alimentary» tolerance. The combination of the aforementioned factors, in the presence of concurrent pathology of the dentofacial system, leads to a more severe course of psoriasis.

Keywords: *psoriasis, dentofacial pathology, large intestine microbiota, TGFβ1, «alimentary tolerance».*

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філософії; *Вячеслав Є. Гладчук, доктор медичних наук, доцент;
**Лариса В. Куц, доктор медичних наук, професор. Роль механізмів загальної («аліментарної») толерантності в розвитку одночасних ушкоджень структур пограничних тканин (ротової порожнини, шкіри) та товстого кишечника при псоріазі / Львівський медичний університет, Україна, Львів; *Київський медичний університет, Україна, Київ; **Медичний інститут Сумського державного університету, Україна, Суми

Мета дослідження – виявити значення порушень факторів аліментарної толерантності та роль мікробіоти товстого кишечника і фактору росту $TGF\beta 1$ в регуляції реактивності організму та клінічних проявах псоріазу при одночасних ушкодженнях структур ротової порожнини, шкіри та шлунково-кишкового тракту.

Предмет дослідження – мікробіота порожнини товстого кишечника, рівень фактору росту $TGF\beta 1$ у крові хворих на псоріаз при наявності та відсутності одночасної патології зубо-щелепної системи.

У 120 обстежених хворих на псоріаз виявлено дисбаланс нормобіоти товстого кишечника, що порушує толерантність її відношення до інших видів його мікробіоти і впливає на розвиток клінічних проявів синдрому подразненого кишечника. Надходження патогенасоційованих молекулярних сполук з місць ушкодження у ротовій порожнині (при одночасній її патології) шкіри та товстого кишечника супроводжуються компенсаторною реакцією з боку ростового цитокінового фактору регуляції «аліментарної» толерантності. Комплекс вище названих факторів при одночасній патології зубощелепної системи призводить до більш тяжкого перебігу псоріазу.

Ключові слова: псоріаз, зубощелепна патологія, мікробіота товстого кишечника, TGFβ1, «аліментарна толерантність».

Вступ. Згідно загальноприйнятої термінології толерантність імунологічна – це специфічна «невідповідаємість» (не реагування) імунної системи у відношенні до антигену власного чи введеного. Одне із ключових місць в механізмах розвитку цього феномену відіграє мікробіота, у тому числі – структур ротової порожнини та шкіри (як пограничних тканин, які перші реагують з різноманітними факторами зовнішнього середовища, у тому числі «аліментарними») та шлунково-кишкового тракту (перш за все – порожнини товстого кишечника), а також імунологічні чинники регуляції (перш за все TGFβ1 – Transforming Growth Factor).

Відносно структур ротової порожнини слід відмітити, що при частому вживанні в їжу вуглеводів (сахарози, глюкози, фруктози, лактози, крохмалю) їх продукти розпаду утворюють органічні кислоти (лактат, пропіонат), що призводить до зниження рН слини і до демінералізації тканин зуба. Основне значення має сахароза, яка легко дифундує в зубний наліт та швидко розчиняється, утворюючи моносахариди (фруктозу і лактозу), які в подальшому розщеплюються в клітинах бактерій (*Str. mutans*, *Str. salivavices* а також *Lactobacillus casei*).

Зубний наліт відноситься і до т. з. первинного комплексу чинників запальних пародонтопатій. В його 1 міліграмі маси міститься 10^8 бактерій (19 видів грам-позитивних та більше 20 – грам-негативних).

Під'ясневий наліт складається із прикріпленої частини структурованої пластини та вільно розташованого бактеріального шару, метаболізм в якому здійснюється за участю ясневої рідини.

Пародонтогенні бактерії, за рахунок своїх ферментів (колагеназа, гіалуронідаза, хондроїтинсульфатаза, протеази), руйнують внутрішньоклітинну речовину або колагеновий опірний каркас, а за

рахунок кінцевих продуктів свого обміну речовин (аміак, індол, сірководень) безпосередньо пошкоджують тканини пародонту. Крім того, їх ендотоксини (ліпополісахариди) індукують інтенсивну запальну захисну (!) реакцію, а екзотоксини (у тому числі й – лейкотоксин) – є антигенними.

Бактерії, що містяться в нальоті, розвиваються під впливом екзо- чи ендогенних чинників, і ВИТІСНЯЮТЬ інші бактерії (що й може бути одним із механізмів порушення локальної толерантності).

Не менш важливе значення мають порушення співвідношення нормофлори (до якої відносяться і лактобацили) та умовно патогенної мікробіоти (у тому числі – роду *Candida*) не тільки порожнинної, але й пристінкової частин товстого кишечника.

Такий «прозапальний» цитокін як TGF β є одночасно і регуляторним чинником т. з. «цитокінової сітки» і здійснює свої функції як на загальноорганізменному, так і локальному рівнях (у тому числі – в шкірі та структурах ротової порожнини).

Той факт, що мікробні чинники, як в структурах порожнини рота, так і в товстому кишечнику, є нерідко однаковими, дає підстави розглядати, що під поняттям «аліментарна толерантність» слід мати на увазі не тільки шлунково-кишковий тракт (ШКТ), але й структури ротової порожнини, де власне й розпочинається перший контакт з продуктами харчування (жування, слиновиділення, ковтання).

Ці проблеми, як у стоматології, так і в інших галузях медицини, розглянуті вкрай недостатньо, і більшість наукових досліджень зосереджені власне на таких «основних» регулюючих системах як нервова, ендокринна, імунна; в сучасний період до проблеми толерантних механізмів реагування на різноманітні пошкодження клітин та тканин відносяться як до окремої (четвертої) регулюючої системи

організму, і у цьому зв'язку пропонуються нові підходи до лікування та профілактики великої кількості хронічних захворювань людини.

Мета дослідження – виявити значення порушень факторів аліментарної толерантності та роль мікробіоти товстого кишечника і фактору росту TGF β 1 в регуляції реактивності організму та клінічних проявах псоріазу при одночасних ушкодженнях структур ротової порожнини, шкіри та ШКТ.

Матеріали та методи. Матеріали цього дослідження є продовженням попередньої нашої публікації відносно ролі регуляторних молекулярних сполук (РМС) організму при одночасних ушкодженнях структур ротової порожнини та шкіри, опублікованих у журналі «Paradigm of Knowledge, 3(73), 2026) і стосуються обстеження 120 хворих на вульгарний псоріаз у прогресуючу стадію, з яких у 62 (51,7%) відмічалися прояви одночасного ушкодження структур ротової порожнини, а у 58 (48,3%) таких проявів не було.

Окрім загальних клінічних методів та загальних лабораторних використовували мікробіологічні (дослідження мікробіоти порожнини товстого кишечника) та імунологічні (визначення рівня TGF β 1 у крові). Статистична обробка даних проводилася за допомогою ліцензійної програми «STATISTICA...»; результати вважалися статистично значимими на рівні 95% ($p < 0,05$).

Результати та обговорення. Клінічні результати дослідження свідчили про те, що більш тяжкий перебіг псоріазу спостерігався у хворих з наявністю одночасної патології структур ротової порожнини (карієс, пародонтити).

З урахуванням того, що важливу роль в регуляції функцій «аліментарного» тракту відіграє його мікробіота, вивчали її у такому біотопі як товстий кишечник, вміст якої в ньому впливає не тільки на його функціонування – прояви синдрому подразненого кишечника (СПК), але

й на ступінь тяжкості перебігу псоріазу (особливо при одночасні патології структур ротової порожнини, про що вказувалося вище).

СПК у всіх обстежених хворих на псоріаз проявлявся не тільки т. з. «римськими критеріями» (помірні абдомінальні болі, метеоризм, імперативні позиви на дефекацію або закрепи, функціональні диспепсії), але й негастроентерологічними симптомами (частіше – невротичного характеру).

Дисбаланс основних представників нормофлори товстого кишечника (лакто- та біфідобактерії) порушує толерантність її відношення до інших видів його мікробіоти (умовно патогенної та грибів роду *Candida*).

В результаті цього, як і у процесах, що відбуваються у структурах ротової порожнини, завдяки сахаролітикам від мікробіоти порожнини товстого кишечника відщеплюються моносхаридні фрагменти (слизу, глікокаліксу) з подальшим їх бродінням та наступною утилізацією відповідних метаболітів (летючих жирних кислот), що є не тільки важливим ланцюгом розвитку СПК, але й обтяжує перебіг псоріазу.

Найбільш важливим регулятором такої толерантності є такий різновид «цитокінової сітки» як TGFβ1 і, як вказувалося вище, на таку т. з. «аліментарну толерантність» впливає і патологія зубощелепної системи (ЗЩС), бо її структури першими приймають участь у процесах травлення.

На рис. 1-5 наведено дані про роль цих механізмів у особливостях клінічного перебігу псоріазу у групах хворих, про які вказувалося вище (основній – з одночасною патологією ЗЩС та порівняльній – без такої патології). Вони свідчать про достовірну ($p < 0,05-0,01$) різницю досліджених показників як з групою контролю (30 практично здорових осіб), так і між групами хворих. Статистичні дані наведено в Lg КУО/г (колонієутворююча одиниця).

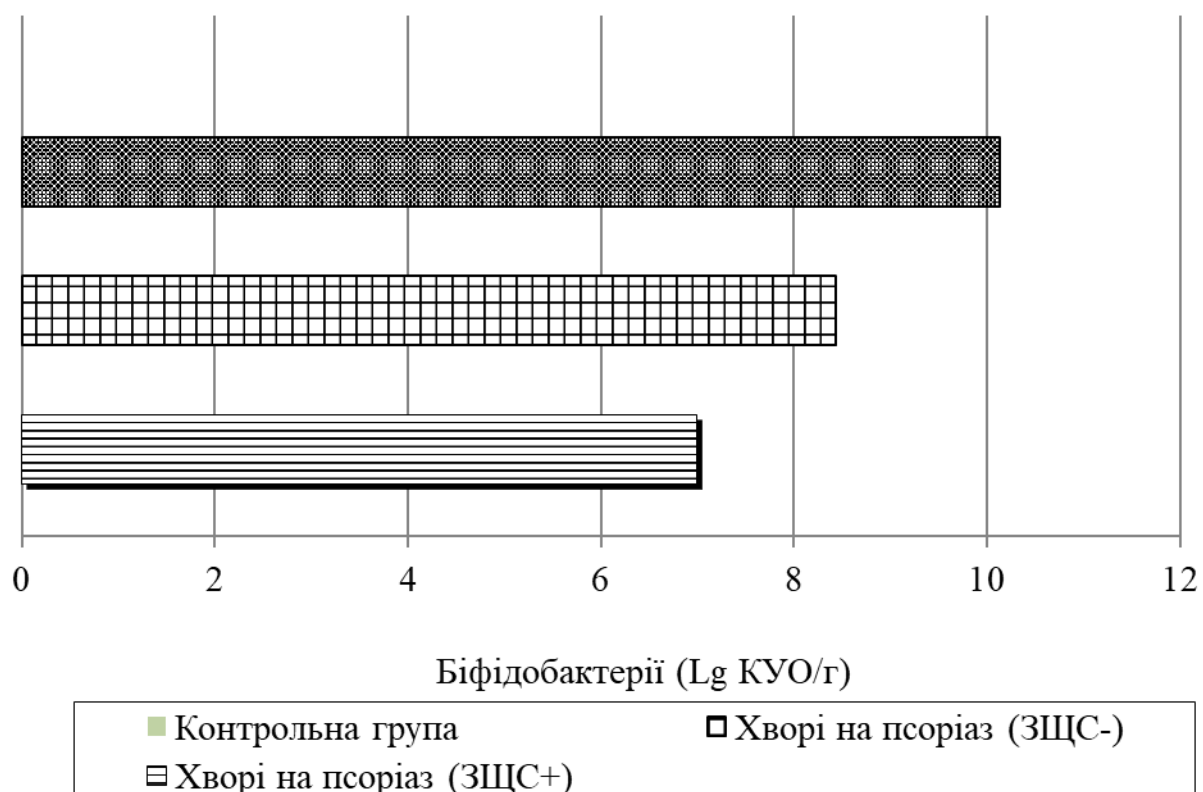


Рисунок 1 – Вміст біфідобактерій (Lg KYO/г) у порожнині товстого кишечника хворих на псоріаз та осіб контрольної групи

Дані, наведені на рис. 1, свідчать про достовірне зниження вмісту біфідобактерій (анаеробних поліморфних паличок – основних представників нормобіоценозу даного біотопу, які складають до 50% усіх мікроорганізмів кишечника і є основною як пристінковою, так і порожнинною його мікробіотою) у хворих на псоріаз основної (із ЗЩС+ - $6,99 \pm 0,86$) та порівняльної груп (без ЗЩС – $8,43 \pm 0,77$) у відношенні до показників осіб контрольної групи ($10,14 \pm 0,77$).

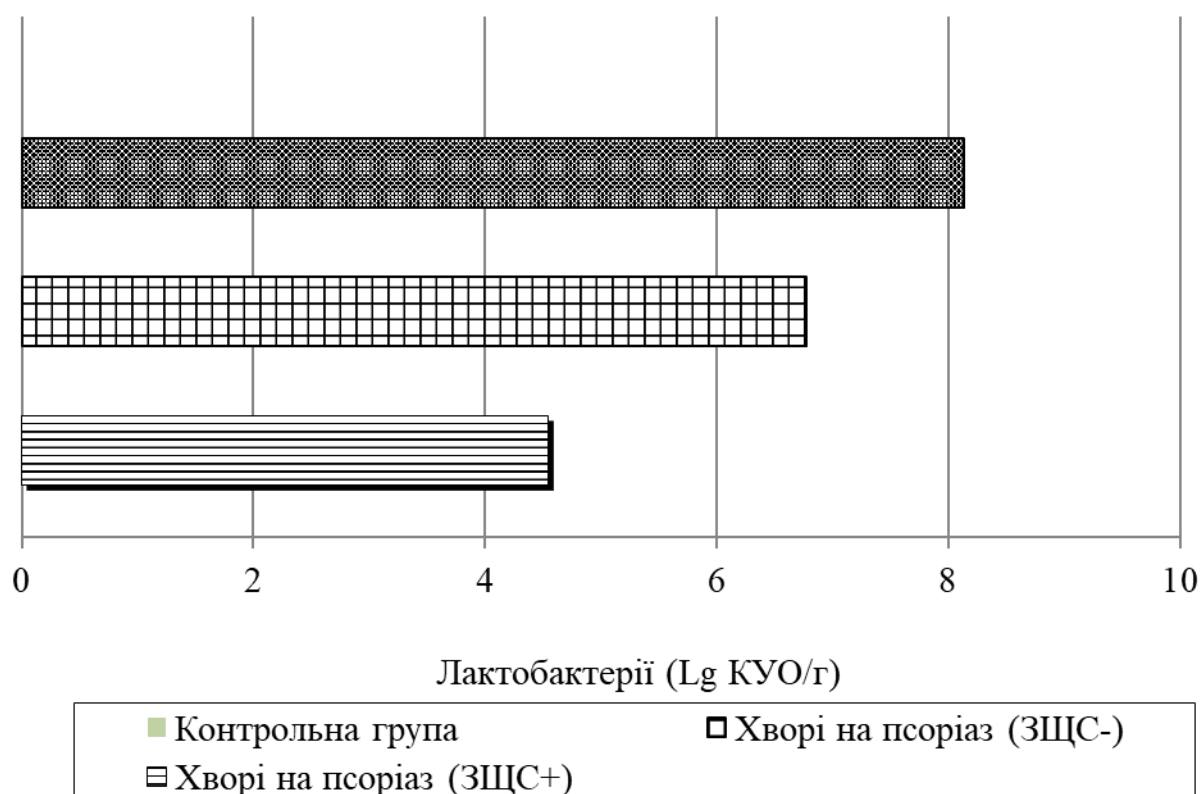


Рисунок 2 – Вміст лактобактерій (Lg КУО/г) у порожнині товстого кишечника хворих на псоріаз та осіб контрольної групи

Дані, наведені на рис. 2, свідчать про достовірне зниження вмісту лактобацил (ще в більшій мірі, ніж біфідобактерій) у хворих на псоріаз основної (із ЗЩС+ - $4,54 \pm 0,65$) та порівняльної груп (без ЗЩС – $6,78 \pm 0,61$) у відношенні до показників осіб контрольної групи ($8,14 \pm 0,69$). Ці мікроорганізми, як і біфідобактерії, забезпечують колонізаційну резистентність, і важливо відмітити, що природні їх ніші розпочинаються ще в ротовій порожнині, а в товстому кишечнику вони, разом із біфідобактеріями та бактероїдами, формують головну облігатну/аутохтонну його мікробіоту, яка й впливає на механізми аліментарної толерантності.

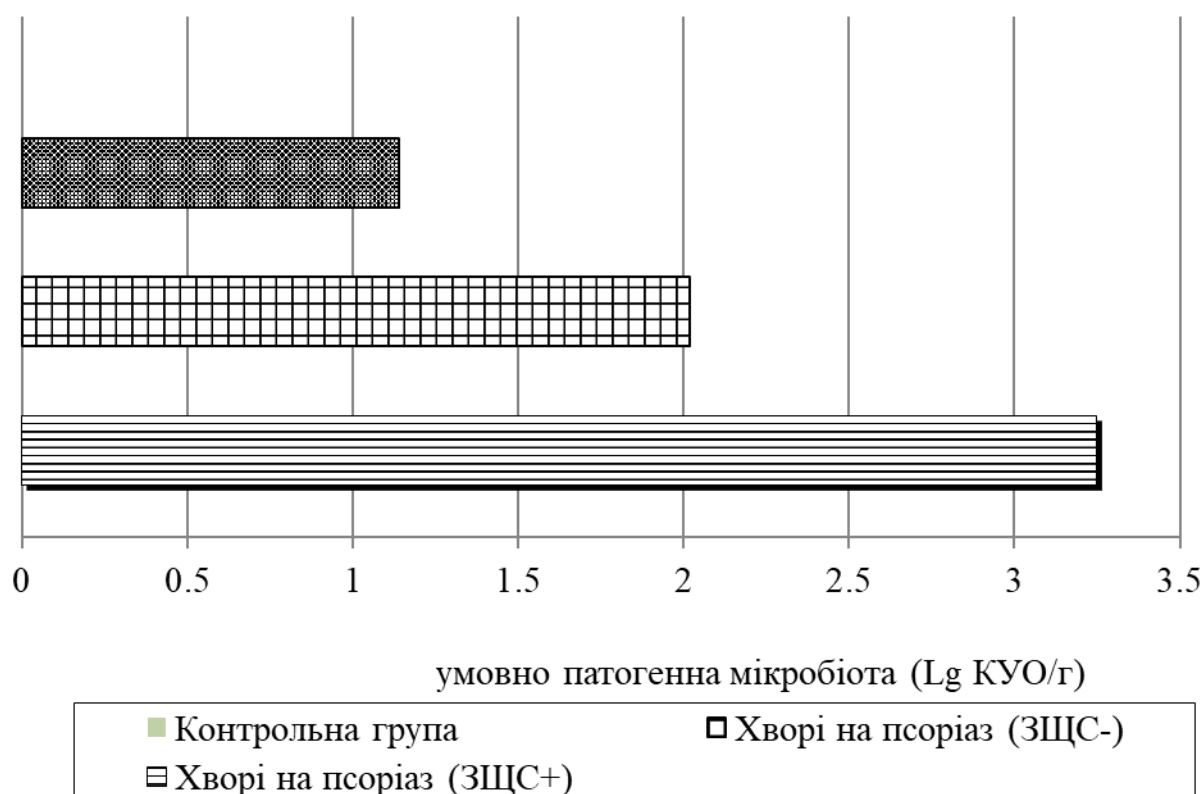


Рисунок 3 – Вміст умовно патогенної мікробіоти (Lg KYO/г) у порожнині товстого кишечника хворих на псоріаз та осіб контрольної групи

Дані, наведені на рис. 3, свідчать про достовірне збільшення кількості умовно патогенної мікрофлори у хворих на псоріаз основної (із ЗЩС+ - $3,25 \pm 0,48$) та порівняльної груп (без ЗЩС – $2,02 \pm 0,33$) у відношенні до показників осіб контрольної групи ($1,14 \pm 0,55$).

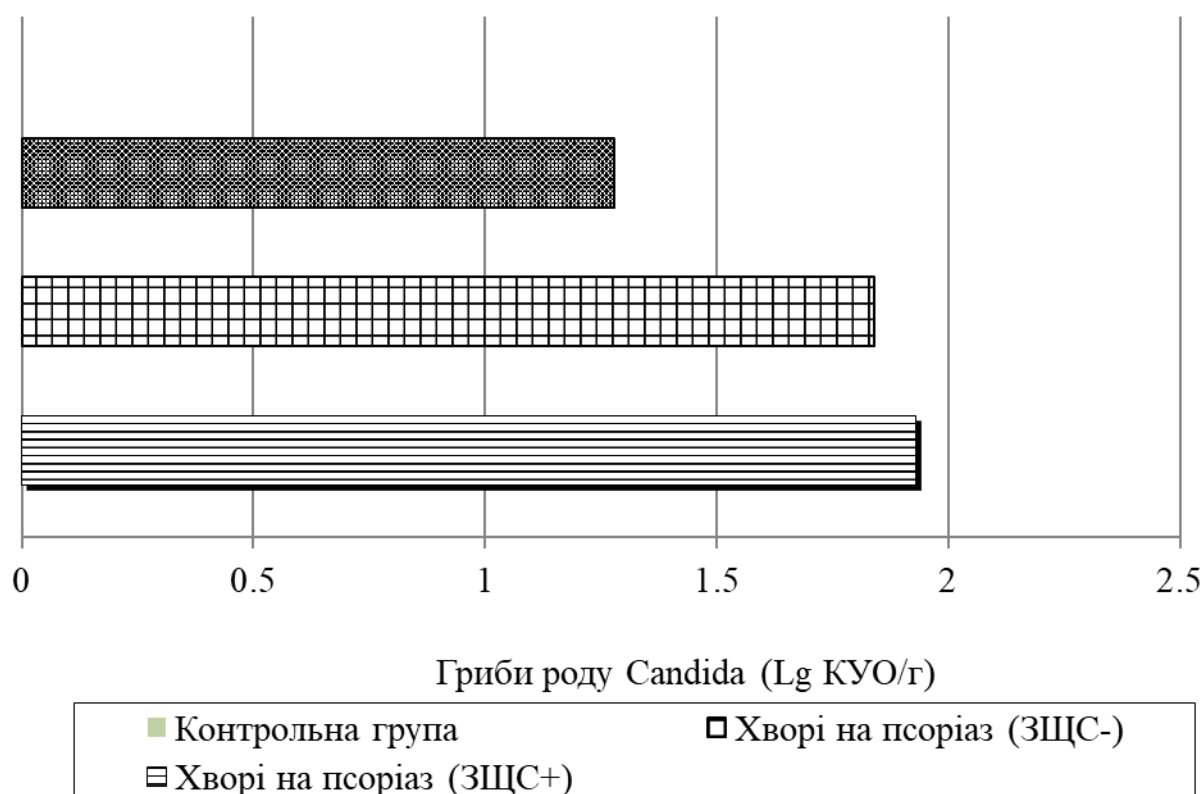


Рисунок 4 – Вміст грибів роду *Candida* (Lg KYO/г) у порожнині товстого кишечника хворих на псоріаз та осіб контрольної групи

Дані, наведені на рис. 4, свідчать про достовірне збільшення кількості грибів роду *Candida* у хворих на псоріаз основної (із ЗЩС+ - $1,93 \pm 0,65$) та порівняльної груп (без ЗЩС - $1,84 \pm 0,67$) у відношенні до показників осіб контрольної групи ($1,28 \pm 0,66$).

Таким чином, кількість представників факультативної мікробіоти (як умовно патогенних ентеробактерій, так і грибів роду *Candida*) зростала (рис. 3 та 4). Зниження кількості облигатних анаеробів (які й формують до 99% складу мікробіоти кишечника) та зростання факультативної (яка, зазвичай, не перевищує 1%) може стати одним із ключових механізмів порушення аліментарної толерантної реактивності організму.

Патогенних мікроорганізмів у жодному випадку виявлено не було.

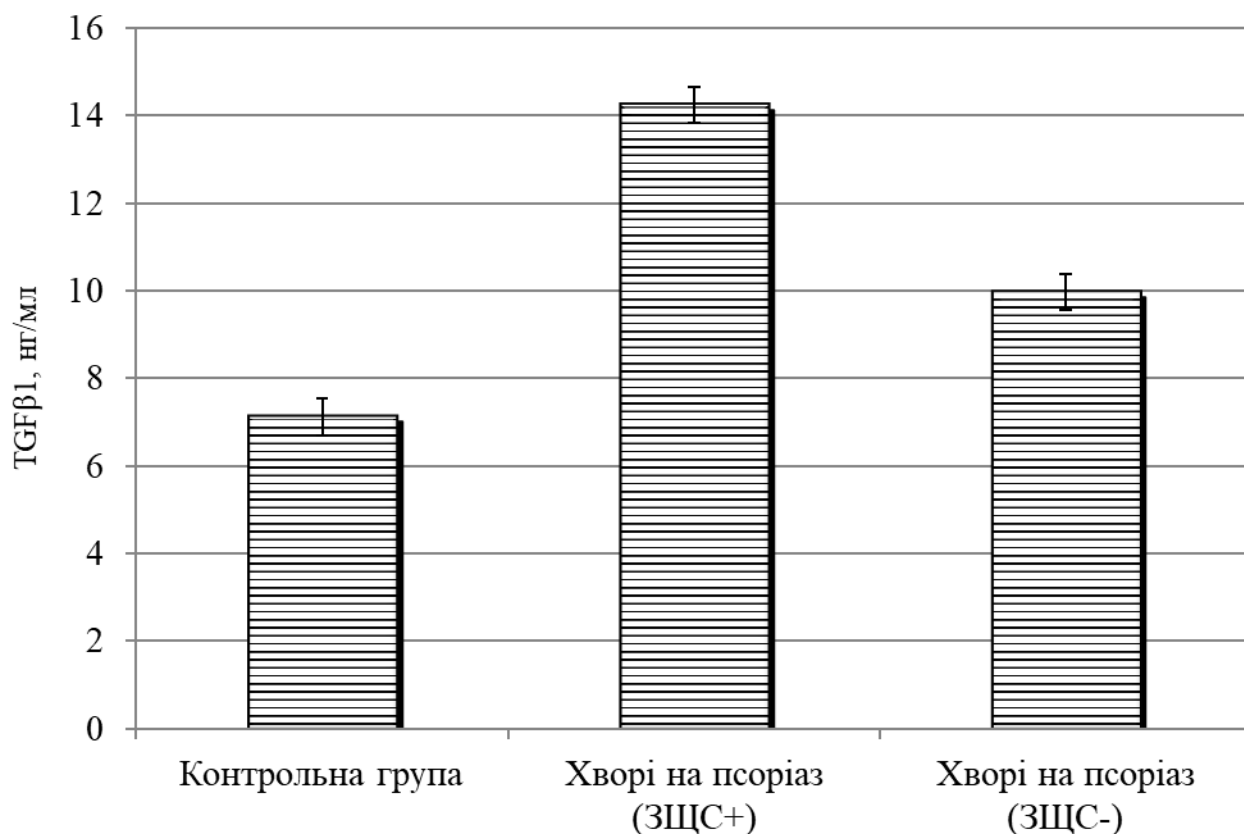


Рисунок 5 – Вміст у крові TGFβ1 (нг/мл) хворих на псоріаз та осіб контрольної групи

Дані, наведені на рис. 5, свідчать про достовірне збільшення TGFβ1 у хворих на псоріаз основної (із ЗЩС+ - $14,24 \pm 0,35$) та порівняльної груп (без ЗЩС – $9,97 \pm 0,27$) у відношенні до показників осіб контрольної групи ($7,12 \pm 0,28$ нг/мл).

Достовірне ($p < 0,05-0,01$) збільшення рівня у крові TGF-бета у хворих на псоріаз основної групи з одночасною патологією ЗЩС (у 2,0 рази у порівнянні з контрольною групою здорових осіб) та порівняльною групою без наявності такої супутньої патології (збільшення рівня в 1,4 рази) можуть свідчити про те, що цей цитокіновий регулятор аліментарної толерантності впливає і на дисбаланс основних представників нормофлори кишечника (лакто- та біфідобактерії), а при

функціональній неповноцінності його епітеліоцитів змінюється і процес адгезії нормобіоти до них, що й порушує ТОЛЕРАНТНІСТЬ їх відношення до інших видів мікробіоти товстого кишечника (перш за все – умовно патогенної з розвитком синдрому подразненого кишечника – СПК).

Після подолання БАР'ЄРУ ТОЛЕРАНТНОСТІ хоча б одним із антигенів можуть розвиватися аутоімунні реакції, що обтяжує перебіг псоріазу.

При цьому:

- 1) утворюється пул ефекторних аутореактивних лімфоцитів, що активується за рахунок різноманітних ліганд-рецепторних взаємодій;
- 2) персистенція патогену призводить до хронізації процесу та утворення самопідтримуючої аутоагресивної системи при псоріазі.

Саме тому у вивченні патогенезу багатьох захворювань сучасним напрямком є з'ясування ролі факторів росту у тому числі – TGF β . Важливим є і те, що ці фактори одночасно є і транскрипційними, тобто впливають на генетичні чинники захворювань.

Такий ростовий фактор як TGF β відіграє особливу роль при пошкодженнях тканин ротової порожнини та шкіри, у тому числі, у зв'язку із залежністю його рівня у крові від супутньої патології ШКТ. Крім того цей різновид цитокінів відноситься до класу т. з. «прозапально/регуляторних», метою якої є:

- а) мінімізувати пошкодження за рахунок «дієвого арсеналу»:
 - ✓ функціональних антагоністів/регуляторів ходу запалення різного генезу;
 - ✓ взаємодій пептидних молекулярних сполук (ПМС);
 - ✓ зміни кількісно-якісного складу мікробіоти в осередках ушкодження відповідних тканин/органів;
- б) компенсування змін у відповідь на локальні патофізіологічні реакції;

в) включення механізмів адаптивної імунної відповіді, у тому числі – з боку клітинно/тканинних структур ротової порожнини, шкіри, ШКТ як додаткового свідчення про те, що вродженим механізмам захисту самостійно не вдається ліквідувати осередки ушкодження;

г) як пептидні молекулярні сполуки, так і матриксні протеїнази (утворені при руйнуванні клітин) стають додатковим джерелом/стимулами, які надходять як з місця локалізації ушкоджень, так і за рахунок зміни складу метабеному (дисбалансу у вигляді зменшення нормобіоти на тлі зростання умовно патогенних мікроорганізмів певного біотопу).

Фактори росту відрізняються від інших цитокінових сигнальних молекул:

1) діють через рецептори, які мають тирозинкіназну активність, що призводить до активації певного протеокіназного каскаду (т. з. «клітинний цикл»);

2) надалі додаткові умови спричиняють як мінімум один з трьох патофізіологічних феноменів – мітоз, диференціювання, апоптоз;

3) у дослівному перекладі скорочення TGF β (Transforming Growth Factor) не є точним, тому що це стосується тільки TGF α (проліферація без прикріплення при пухлинах), а TGF β навпаки – пригнічує мітогенез (має не тирозин-, а серин/тріонін-активність) і діє через вплив на N-клітини, при цьому на них стимулюють не проліферацію, а диференціацію;

4) до сімейства TGF відносяться і т. з. «активіни» та «інгібіни» - ауто- та паракринні регулятори численних функцій клітин;

5) TGF, як й інші фактори цитокінової сітки, володіють загальними закономірностями сприйняття клітинних сигналів:

✓ через рецептори;

- ✓ після зв'язування ліганда рецептором, він доставляється до місця своєї дії трьома шляхами (через міжклітинний простір, через прямий контакт чи з током крові);
- ✓ відбуваються ефекти зв'язування ліганду також завдяки механізмам афінності рецептору або антагоністичного блокування дії ліганду;
- ✓ окрім афінності (високої спорідненості) мають значення й інші механізми – специфічність центрів зв'язування (стеричне співпадіння та формування слабких нековалентних зв'язків між лігандом та рецептором); дія т. з. «теплого шуму» від різних молекул; дія т. з. «загального учасника», зокрема білка CPP (Creb Binding Protein).

Втрата перевага нормофлори ШКТ (в основному – пристінкової мікробіоти) відносно факультативної (в основному – порожнинної) забезпечує зв'язок останньої з рецепторами епітелію, чим порушуються функції кишечника (товстого).

Крім того:

- 1) змінюється селективне зв'язування нормобіотою поверхневих рецепторів епітеліоцитів кишечника – основного механізму пригнічення нею патогенної мікробіоти;
- 2) лакто- і біфідобактерії, як резидентна мікробіота, проявляють антагонізм відносно патогенної за рахунок секреції кислот, лізоциму, спиртів, бактеріоцинів, які й інгібують метаболізм та виділення токсинів патогенною мікробіотою;
- 3) як неспецифічний постійний подразник імунної системи, нормобіота викликає утворення антитіл у низьких титрах (sIgA), які складають основу місцевої несприятливості до патогенів;

4) за фізіологічних умов нормобіота за рахунок кислот і газів, які виділяються при її життєдіяльності, позитивно впливає на перистальтику й спорожнення кишечника.

Порушення толерантних механізмів викликає також розвиток феномену «молекулярної мімікрії» (обмін клітинним матеріалом, набуття мікробіотою рецепторів та антигенів, які притаманні клітинам організму хазяїна – тобто вона стає «своєю»), а епітеліоцити хазяїна, у свою чергу, отримують мікробні антигени; відбувається також обмін генетичним матеріалом між ними.

Висновки. В розвитку клінічних проявів з боку ШКТ (синдром подразненого кишечника) та шкіри (псоріаз) порушення толерантності відіграють важливу роль (у більшій мірі при одночасній патології ЗЩС): 1) дисбаланс нормофлори товстого кишечника, при наявності неповноцінності його епітеліоцитів, порушує толерантність до мікробіоти (перш за все – умовно патогенної); 2) у такому разі ліганд-рецепторні взаємодії утворюють аутореактивні лімфоцити і, в результаті цього, відбувається персистенція патогену, а патологічні процеси набувають хронічного характеру; ці ж процеси утворюють аутоагресивну систему (самопідтримуючу); 3) селективність зв'язування нормобіотою рецепторів епітеліоцитів кишечника змінюється, і вона стає неспроможною до фізіологічного пригнічення патогенної мікробіоти, що негативно впливає на його перистальтику і спорожнення кишечника; 4) розлади біоценозу (рівноваги асоціацій нормо- та умовно патогенної мікробіоти) можуть супроводжуватися надмірним накопиченням ферментів і токсинів, які, потрапляючи у кров, впливають не тільки на імунологічну реактивність, але й на різні ланки єдиної нейро-ендокрино-іmunної регулюючої системи і, таким чином, порушення толерантних механізмів реактивності є комплексними і можуть викликати феномен молекулярної мімікрії.

Певні типові зміни толерантності спостерігаються при ушкодженнях як структур ротової порожнини, так і слизової оболонки кишечника (патогенетична роль сахаролітиків мікробіоти).

Зміни з боку патогенасоційованих молекулярних сполук, які надходять з місць ушкодження в ротовій порожнині (при одночасній її патології), шкіри (псоріаз), ШКТ (синдром подразненого кишечника) призводять до компенсаторного реагування з боку регулюючих молекулярних систем організму і, перш за все, TGF β 1 (ростового цитокінового фактору регуляції «аліментарної» толерантності).

Ці дані диктують необхідність комплексного диференційованого підходу до лікування хворих на псоріаз з одночасною патологією ЗЩС та ШКТ. Перспективою подальших досліджень є з'ясування ролі цих порушень при інших видах патологій ротової порожнини та шкіри (т. з. «локальної толерантності»).

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II. PHILOLOGICAL SCIENCES

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THE INFLUENCE OF MARIO PUZO'S WORKS ON CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LITERATURE

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Mario Puzo occupies a unique position in twentieth-century American literature as one of the most influential writers whose works transcend the boundaries of crime fiction and become profound explorations of American identity, ethnicity, morality, and power. Although Puzo is commonly associated with "The Godfather" (1969), his literary contribution extends far beyond a single bestseller. His novels transformed public perceptions of organized crime by integrating sociological realism, psychological complexity, and philosophical reflections on family loyalty, capitalism, justice, and the American Dream. The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of Mario Puzo's literary legacy on contemporary American literature through a philological analysis of his narrative techniques, thematic innovations, stylistic characteristics, and intertextual legacy.

The research applies comparative literary analysis, narrative criticism, stylistic analysis, and cultural studies methodology to examine how Puzo's works contributed to the evolution of American crime fiction and influenced later generations of writers. Particular attention is devoted to narrative structure, multilingual discourse, characterization, symbolism, and the representation of ethnic identity within multicultural American society.

The article argues that Puzo fundamentally redefined the gangster novel by combining elements of classical tragedy, family saga, historical fiction, and political narrative. His literary innovations have influenced contemporary authors such as Don Winslow, Dennis Lehane, George Pelecanos, Richard Price, and others who continue to explore issues of crime, social hierarchy, corruption, and moral ambiguity. Furthermore, Puzo's works have shaped not only literary traditions but also broader American popular culture, including cinema, television, and digital storytelling.

The study concludes that Mario Puzo should be regarded not merely as a popular novelist but as one of the key figures in the development of modern American narrative prose whose artistic achievements continue to influence literary production in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: *Mario Puzo, American literature, crime fiction, literary influence, narrative techniques, family saga, intertextuality, American Dream, organized crime, contemporary fiction.*

Introduction

Mario Puzo remains one of the most significant yet frequently underestimated figures in twentieth-century American literature. Although literary criticism has traditionally positioned him within the category of popular fiction, contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes the artistic complexity of his novels and their lasting influence on American literary traditions. His works occupy an intermediate position between mass literature and high literature, combining accessible storytelling with sophisticated explorations of ethics, politics, ethnicity, and cultural identity. Such hybridity has enabled Puzo's fiction to reach an exceptionally broad readership while simultaneously attracting sustained scholarly attention.

Published in 1969, "The Godfather" [1] rapidly became a cultural phenomenon whose impact extended far beyond literary circles. The novel achieved extraordinary commercial success, remained on bestseller lists for

months, and was subsequently adapted into Francis Ford Coppola's acclaimed film trilogy. While the cinematic adaptations have often overshadowed the literary source, the novel itself represents an important milestone in the development of American narrative fiction. Rather than presenting organized crime merely as criminal activity, Puzo constructed an alternative social system governed by its own ethical principles, traditions, and institutional structures. This innovative perspective transformed readers' understanding of both crime fiction and American society.

The historical context in which Puzo wrote is particularly important for understanding his literary significance. Postwar America experienced profound economic growth, increasing social mobility, expanding immigration, political tensions associated with the Cold War, and widespread debates concerning capitalism, ethnicity, and national identity. Italian Americans, despite their growing integration into American society, continued to experience stereotypes and discrimination. Puzo's fiction addressed these issues indirectly through narratives that examined immigrant communities striving for economic success while preserving traditional cultural values.

Unlike earlier crime writers such as Dashiell Hammett or Raymond Chandler, whose protagonists typically functioned as detectives operating outside institutional corruption, Puzo shifted the narrative focus toward criminal organizations themselves. This perspective fundamentally altered the genre. Criminals became psychologically complex protagonists rather than one-dimensional antagonists. Family relationships acquired central narrative importance, while violence emerged as an expression of political power, cultural tradition, and economic competition rather than simple criminality.

One of the defining characteristics of Puzo's fiction is the synthesis of multiple literary traditions. His novels [1–4] incorporate features of classical tragedy, Shakespearean drama, historical epic, immigrant narrative, political novel, family chronicle, and psychological realism. Such generic hybridity

distinguishes his works from conventional detective fiction and contributes to their continuing relevance within literary studies.

Another significant feature of Puzo's writing concerns the representation of power. Political authority, economic influence, religious institutions, legal systems, and organized crime are portrayed as interconnected mechanisms operating within American society. Rather than constructing a simple opposition between legality and criminality, Puzo demonstrates how both systems frequently employ similar strategies of negotiation, loyalty, coercion, and violence. Consequently, his fiction challenges traditional moral binaries and encourages readers to reconsider accepted definitions of justice and legitimacy.

Family constitutes another central thematic dimension of Puzo's literary universe. The Corleone family functions simultaneously as a biological unit, an economic corporation, a political institution, and a symbolic representation of immigrant identity. Loyalty toward family repeatedly supersedes legal obligations, reflecting broader tensions between collective identity and individual ambition. This emphasis on kinship has profoundly influenced later American novels concerned with ethnicity, migration, and multiculturalism.

Puzo's narrative techniques also deserve particular attention. His novels employ multiple focalizations, nonlinear chronology, parallel plotlines, extensive characterization, and cinematic descriptive methods. These stylistic innovations contributed to the remarkable adaptability of his fiction to visual media while simultaneously enriching the literary experience. The alternation between intimate psychological reflection and expansive sociopolitical narration creates a multidimensional representation of American life.

Linguistically, Puzo's prose combines straightforward narration with strategically employed Italian lexical items, legal terminology, religious discourse, and colloquial American English. This multilingual texture

reinforces cultural authenticity while emphasizing the hybrid identity of immigrant communities. From a philological perspective, such language choices demonstrate sophisticated code-switching strategies that enhance characterization and narrative realism.

The influence of Mario Puzo extends well beyond literature itself. Contemporary American novels, television dramas, films, streaming series, and even video games continue to reproduce narrative patterns originally developed in "The Godfather". Themes including dynastic succession, institutional corruption, moral ambiguity, antiheroic protagonists, and family-centered criminal organizations have become defining characteristics of modern American storytelling. Writers such as Don Winslow, Dennis Lehane, Richard Price, George Pelecanos, and Michael Connelly engage, either explicitly or implicitly, with narrative conventions established by Puzo.

From a philological perspective, examining Puzo's literary legacy provides valuable insights into the evolution of American narrative discourse. His fiction illustrates how linguistic style, narrative architecture, genre transformation, and cultural representation interact to produce enduring literary influence. The continuing popularity of his works demonstrates that their significance cannot be reduced to commercial success alone; rather, they constitute important contributions to the development of contemporary American literary aesthetics.

The primary objective of this article is to analyze the influence of Mario Puzo's literary works on contemporary American literature through an interdisciplinary philological framework. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- examine the principal stylistic and narrative features of Puzo's fiction;
- investigate the representation of ethnicity, family, power, and the American Dream;
- identify literary innovations introduced by Puzo into crime fiction;

- evaluate the continuing relevance of Puzo's artistic legacy within twenty-first-century literary discourse.

The research employs methods drawn from comparative literature, narratology, stylistics, discourse analysis, and cultural criticism. Such an interdisciplinary approach enables a comprehensive understanding of Puzo's enduring contribution to American literary history and contemporary narrative practices.

Mario Puzo in American Literary Scholarship

Despite Mario Puzo's extraordinary commercial success and undeniable cultural significance, academic criticism has long demonstrated an ambivalent attitude toward his literary achievements. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, many scholars categorized Puzo primarily as a popular novelist whose works belonged to commercial fiction rather than the American literary canon. This distinction reflected a broader tendency within literary studies to separate "high literature" from mass-market fiction. Nevertheless, developments in cultural studies, narratology, and postmodern literary criticism have substantially transformed scholarly perspectives on Puzo's works.

Modern literary criticism increasingly recognizes that commercial popularity does not necessarily exclude artistic value. Scholars have begun to analyze "The Godfather" not simply as a crime novel but as a sophisticated cultural text that engages with questions of ethnicity, immigration, capitalism, masculinity, political authority, and the construction of American identity. This reassessment has positioned Puzo within broader discussions of multicultural American literature and ethnic writing.

One of the central arguments in contemporary scholarship concerns the hybrid nature of Puzo's fiction. Rather than adhering strictly to conventions of detective fiction or gangster narratives, his novels synthesize multiple literary traditions. Researchers identify elements of classical tragedy, historical fiction, psychological realism, political allegory, family saga, and immigrant

literature operating simultaneously within his narrative structures. Such generic hybridity explains both the widespread appeal of his works and their enduring scholarly relevance.

Recent philological studies emphasize that Puzo's language deserves closer examination than it has traditionally received. His prose appears deceptively simple, yet beneath its accessible surface lies a carefully organized system of stylistic devices, including repetition, symbolic imagery, multilingual discourse, strategic dialogue construction, and sophisticated narrative pacing. These linguistic features contribute significantly to the emotional and ideological effects of his novels.

Another major area of scholarly interest concerns Puzo's representation of ethnic identity. Italian American literature occupies a distinctive position within American literary history because it negotiates the relationship between assimilation and cultural preservation. Critics argue that Puzo neither idealizes nor condemns Italian-American culture; instead, he presents it as a dynamic system continuously adapting to American social and economic realities. The Corleone family embodies this tension between tradition and modernization, illustrating the broader immigrant experience in the United States.

Philological Approaches to Literary Influence

The concept of literary influence has evolved considerably over the past century. Earlier comparative literary studies often understood influence as a direct relationship between authors in which one writer consciously imitated another. Contemporary philology, however, adopts a broader understanding that includes intertextuality, genre transformation, cultural memory, narrative adaptation, and ideological continuity.

Harold Bloom's influential theory of the "anxiety of influence" [5] suggests that later writers inevitably engage in complex psychological relationships with their predecessors. According to Bloom, literary creation often involves

reinterpretation rather than imitation. Although Bloom primarily analyzed canonical poetry, his theoretical framework offers valuable insights into the reception of Puzo's fiction. Contemporary American novelists rarely reproduce Puzo's narratives directly; instead, they adapt his themes, narrative strategies, and character archetypes within new historical contexts.

Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality [6] further expands the understanding of literary influence. Every literary work, according to Kristeva, exists within a network of previous texts that shape meaning through dialogue rather than isolated originality. Puzo's novels participate in such intertextual networks by incorporating biblical motifs, Shakespearean tragedy, classical mythology, American realism, and Italian cultural traditions. Subsequent authors similarly engage with Puzo's narrative patterns while simultaneously transforming them according to contemporary social realities.

Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism [7] also provides a productive analytical framework. Bakhtin argued that novels consist of multiple interacting voices representing diverse ideological positions. Puzo's fiction exemplifies this polyphonic quality through the coexistence of legal discourse, religious language, family traditions, political rhetoric, business terminology, and criminal codes. Rather than presenting a single authoritative perspective, his novels allow conflicting moral systems to coexist within the same narrative universe.

From the perspective of discourse analysis, literary influence may also be understood as the transmission of narrative conventions across genres and historical periods. Puzo's influence extends beyond direct textual references because he transformed readers' expectations regarding characterization, narrative complexity, and representations of organized crime. These innovations subsequently became normalized within American literature and popular culture.

Narratological Perspectives

Narratology provides another important theoretical framework for analyzing Puzo's literary significance. Gérard Genette's work [8] on narrative time, focalization, and narrative levels offers particularly useful concepts for examining "The Godfather" [1] and Puzo's subsequent novels [2–4].

One of Puzo's most notable achievements lies in his manipulation of narrative temporality. Rather than presenting events according to strict chronological order, he frequently interrupts the main storyline with retrospective episodes that provide historical background for individual characters. These temporal shifts deepen psychological characterization while simultaneously expanding the sociocultural context of the narrative.

The alternation between external narration and internal focalization also contributes to narrative complexity. Readers gain access to the thoughts and motivations of multiple characters, including Vito Corleone, Michael Corleone, Tom Hagen, Kay Adams, and numerous secondary figures. Such multiperspectival narration prevents simplistic moral judgments by encouraging readers to understand conflicting viewpoints.

Another narratological characteristic concerns the balance between summary and scene. Puzo frequently condenses long historical developments into concise narrative passages before slowing the tempo during crucial dramatic moments. This rhythmic variation creates narrative tension while maintaining the expansive scope of the family saga.

Narrative reliability likewise deserves attention. Although the narrator generally appears objective, subtle evaluative language occasionally influences readers' sympathies. Criminal activities are described with remarkable restraint, whereas acts of loyalty, sacrifice, and familial responsibility receive greater emotional emphasis. This narrative strategy contributes to the moral ambiguity that distinguishes Puzo's fiction from conventional crime novels.

Crime Fiction as Social Commentary

Traditional detective fiction generally emphasizes the restoration of social order through criminal investigation. In contrast, modern crime fiction increasingly explores systemic corruption, institutional failure, and moral uncertainty. Puzo occupies a pivotal position within this historical transformation.

Rather than portraying organized crime as a deviation from American society, Puzo represents it as deeply integrated into political institutions, economic structures, and legal systems. Judges, senators, businessmen, labor unions, bankers, entertainers, and religious authorities frequently interact with criminal organizations. Consequently, organized crime becomes less an external threat than an alternative mechanism of governance operating alongside official institutions.

This perspective reflects broader developments within postwar American literature. Authors increasingly questioned idealized representations of American democracy by exposing structural inequalities, corporate influence, racial tensions, and political corruption. Puzo's fiction contributes to this critical tradition by illustrating how economic power often transcends legal distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate enterprises.

The family organization depicted in "The Godfather" [1] functions simultaneously as a criminal enterprise and as a substitute welfare institution. Community members seek assistance from Don Corleone because official institutions frequently fail to provide justice or protection. This sociological dimension distinguishes Puzo from earlier crime writers whose narratives primarily focused on individual criminal acts rather than systemic relationships.

Ethnicity, Immigration, and Cultural Identity

Ethnic identity constitutes one of the central concerns of contemporary American literary criticism. Italian-American literature examines the complex negotiation between cultural preservation and assimilation into mainstream

American society. Puzo's fiction occupies a prominent position within this tradition.

The Corleone family illustrates the paradoxes of immigrant success. Economic prosperity requires participation in American capitalism, yet cultural survival depends upon maintaining Italian traditions, family loyalty, religious customs, and community solidarity. This duality generates persistent tensions throughout Puzo's novels.

Language plays an especially important role in constructing ethnic identity. Italian words, expressions, names, and forms of address appear throughout the narrative without excessive explanation. Such code-switching reinforces cultural authenticity while emphasizing the coexistence of multiple linguistic traditions within American society.

Food, religious rituals, weddings, funerals, and family celebrations similarly function as cultural symbols rather than merely descriptive details. These recurring motifs establish continuity between Old World traditions and New World realities, illustrating how immigrant identities evolve rather than disappear.

Scholars have also examined gender within Puzo's representation of ethnicity. Masculinity occupies a central position in the organization of family authority, political leadership, and economic competition. Nevertheless, female characters such as Mama Corleone, Connie Corleone, and Kay Adams reveal important tensions between patriarchal traditions and changing social expectations in postwar America.

Puzo and the American Dream

Perhaps the most significant theoretical perspective concerns Puzo's reinterpretation of the American Dream. Traditional formulations emphasize individual achievement through education, entrepreneurship, and lawful economic opportunity. Puzo complicates this narrative by demonstrating that

access to power frequently depends upon informal networks, family alliances, political patronage, and economic coercion.

Vito Corleone's rise from impoverished immigrant to influential businessman parallels classic success narratives found throughout American literature. However, his methods expose contradictions within capitalist ideology. Wealth accumulation, political influence, and social mobility appear inseparable from violence, negotiation, and strategic manipulation.

Michael Corleone's trajectory further illustrates the transformation of the American Dream across generations. Initially committed to assimilation and legal respectability, Michael ultimately assumes leadership of the family organization, suggesting that institutional legitimacy and organized crime share comparable mechanisms of power.

This reinterpretation has profoundly influenced contemporary American fiction. Numerous modern novels portray success not as moral achievement but as participation in complex systems of economic, political, and social power. In this respect, Puzo's work anticipates later literary explorations of corporate capitalism, political corruption, and institutional violence.

The theoretical perspectives discussed above demonstrate that Mario Puzo's literary significance extends far beyond the conventional boundaries of crime fiction. His novels engage with narratology, discourse analysis, intertextuality, cultural studies, ethnic literature, and political criticism simultaneously. Contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes that Puzo transformed the gangster narrative into a multifaceted literary form capable of examining fundamental questions concerning identity, morality, authority, and American society. These theoretical foundations provide the methodological basis for the subsequent analysis of Puzo's stylistic innovations and their influence on contemporary American literature.

The Transformation of the American Crime Novel

Mario Puzo fundamentally transformed the American crime novel by expanding its thematic, structural, and philosophical dimensions. Prior to the publication of "The Godfather" in 1969, crime fiction was largely dominated by detective narratives, hard-boiled fiction, and police procedurals. Writers such as Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Ross Macdonald, and Mickey Spillane emphasized criminal investigation, urban corruption, and the psychological resilience of individual detectives. Although these authors introduced moral ambiguity into American crime fiction, their narratives generally preserved a distinction between lawful society and the criminal underworld [9, p. 34–36].

Puzo challenged this convention by relocating the center of the narrative from the detective to the criminal family itself. Instead of observing organized crime from the perspective of law enforcement, he immersed readers within the internal social structure of the Mafia. The Corleone family functions simultaneously as a domestic institution, a political organization, an economic corporation, and an alternative judicial system. Consequently, the traditional binary opposition between legality and criminality dissolves into a complex representation of competing systems of authority.

This innovation significantly altered readers' expectations of crime fiction. Criminal organizations became multidimensional social institutions rather than merely antagonistic forces. Family relationships acquired greater narrative importance than criminal investigations, while political negotiations often replaced violent confrontations as the primary mechanisms of conflict resolution.

The influence of this transformation can be observed throughout contemporary American literature. Modern crime novels increasingly explore institutional corruption, family networks, corporate power, and political alliances instead of focusing exclusively on criminal acts. Authors such as

Dennis Lehane, George Pelecanos, Richard Price, and Don Winslow continue to develop narrative models that Puzo helped establish [10, p. 112].

Narrative Architecture and Structural Complexity

One of Puzo's greatest literary achievements lies in his sophisticated narrative architecture. Although "The Godfather" [1] initially appears to follow a relatively linear chronology, closer examination reveals a carefully organized network of interconnected temporal structures.

The novel opens with Amerigo Bonasera's appeal for justice during Connie Corleone's wedding. This opening scene immediately establishes several thematic oppositions that remain central throughout the narrative: 1) justice versus legality; 2) family versus state; 3) loyalty versus individualism; 4) tradition versus modernization; 5) public authority versus private power.

Rather than beginning with violence, Puzo introduces readers to negotiation. Violence emerges only after dialogue has failed, reinforcing Don Corleone's philosophy that force should represent the final instrument of political action rather than its first expression.

The wedding itself functions as an organizational framework through which readers encounter dozens of characters belonging to different social classes and institutions. Politicians, entertainers, businessmen, lawyers, judges, immigrants, and ordinary citizens all participate in the celebration, illustrating the extensive influence of the Corleone family. This structural choice resembles techniques commonly associated with nineteenth-century realist novels, particularly those of Charles Dickens and Honoré de Balzac, where large social gatherings introduce complex networks of relationships.

Temporal movement throughout the novel combines chronological progression with extensive retrospective narration. Individual chapters frequently interrupt the main storyline to reconstruct earlier events from Vito Corleone's life. These flashbacks perform several narrative functions simultaneously. First, they explain the historical origins of the Corleone

family's authority. Second, they provide psychological motivation for present decisions. Third, they transform individual biography into collective immigrant history. Finally, they establish continuity between past and present, emphasizing that contemporary conflicts originate in historical experiences rather than isolated events.

From a narratological perspective, Puzo's manipulation of narrative tempo is equally sophisticated. Long periods of political negotiation may be summarized within a few pages, whereas brief conversations receive extensive descriptive attention. This alternation between summary and dramatic scene resembles cinematic editing and contributes significantly to the novel's dynamic rhythm.

Characterization, Psychological Realism and Language

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Puzo's narrative technique is his construction of psychologically complex characters. Unlike traditional crime fiction, which frequently divides characters into heroes and villains, Puzo consistently avoids absolute moral categorization.

Don Vito Corleone represents one of the most influential literary characters of twentieth-century American fiction. Although he occupies the position of a Mafia leader, his characterization incorporates qualities traditionally associated with statesmen, philosophers, and patriarchs.

His authority derives less from physical violence than from emotional intelligence, strategic patience, and profound understanding of human psychology. Throughout the novel he repeatedly demonstrates that people are motivated by predictable combinations of ambition, fear, gratitude, pride, and family loyalty.

Importantly, Vito rarely acts impulsively. Every decision appears within a broader historical and political framework. His leadership depends upon consensus, negotiation, and reciprocal obligation rather than simple coercion.

From a philological perspective, Puzo's linguistic representation of Vito reinforces these characteristics. His dialogue is concise, measured, and metaphorically rich. He seldom raises his voice, and his speech frequently relies upon understatement rather than explicit commands.

If Vito embodies stability, *Michael Corleone* represents transformation. His narrative arc constitutes one of the most significant examples of character development in modern American literature. Initially presented as an educated war hero determined to distance himself from organized crime, Michael gradually becomes the family's most effective leader. Importantly, this transformation is neither sudden nor psychologically implausible. Puzo constructs it through numerous incremental stages: 1) increasing responsibility; 2) emotional trauma following his father's attempted assassination; 3) exile in Sicily; 4) personal loss; 5) political necessity; 6) gradual acceptance of institutional violence.

Readers witness not merely behavioral change but the reconstruction of Michael's moral worldview. This psychological continuity distinguishes Puzo's characterization from conventional adventure fiction, where protagonists often undergo abrupt ideological conversions.

Equally significant is Puzo's treatment of secondary characters. Tom Hagen, Sonny Corleone, Fredo Corleone, Kay Adams, Connie Corleone, Johnny Fontane, Luca Brasi, Clemenza, Tessio, and dozens of others possess distinct motivations and linguistic identities. No character exists merely to advance the plot. Instead, each contributes to the construction of a broader social environment.

This multiplicity of perspectives reflects Bakhtin's concept of polyphony [7, p. 62], in which multiple ideological voices coexist within a single narrative without complete authorial domination.

At first glance, Puzo's prose appears remarkably straightforward. Unlike William Faulkner or Thomas Pynchon, he avoids syntactic complexity, experimental narration, and highly figurative language.

However, stylistic simplicity should not be mistaken for artistic simplicity. His prose demonstrates several sophisticated linguistic characteristics. Puzo consistently selects concrete vocabulary instead of abstract philosophical terminology. Power is represented through observable actions: meetings, negotiations, gifts, contracts, weddings, funerals, meals, conversations.

This lexical strategy enhances narrative realism while allowing broader ideological meanings to emerge indirectly.

Repetition functions as an important stylistic device. Expressions concerning family, respect, friendship, loyalty, and honor recur throughout the novel with subtle contextual variations. Such repetition establishes thematic cohesion while reinforcing cultural values central to the Corleone worldview.

The famous expression from Puzo's "The Godfather": "I'm gonna make him an offer he can't refuse" [1, p. 242] illustrates this principle.

Although the sentence appears relatively simple, its repeated use gradually transforms it into a symbolic formula representing political persuasion disguised as voluntary choice. The phrase eventually transcends its immediate narrative function to become one of the most recognizable expressions in modern world literature.

Dialogue constitutes perhaps Puzo's greatest stylistic strength. Characters rarely explain themselves explicitly. Meaning often emerges through implication, silence, indirect speech, and shared cultural knowledge. This conversational economy resembles dramatic dialogue more than conventional prose narration. Individual characters possess distinctive linguistic patterns.

For example: Vito speaks calmly and formally. Sonny employs emotionally charged language. Tom Hagen communicates with legal

precision. Michael's speech gradually shifts from detached observation toward calculated authority. These subtle linguistic differences reinforce characterization without requiring explicit psychological commentary.

Although Puzo is generally regarded as a realist, symbolic structures permeate his fiction. The family represents the central symbolic institution. On one level it denotes biological kinship. On another, it symbolizes: political organization, economic stability, cultural continuity, moral obligation, historical memory, etc. Thus, attacks upon family members simultaneously represent attacks upon identity itself.

The opening wedding symbolizes communal harmony while simultaneously revealing hidden political structures. Behind public celebration operate private negotiations concerning justice, employment, financial assistance, and political alliances. Consequently, the wedding functions as a microcosm of American society.

Meals occupy remarkable narrative importance. Shared dining establishes trust. Negotiations frequently occur during family dinners. Food therefore symbolizes continuity between Italian cultural traditions and American immigrant experience. Unlike scenes of violence, meals often emphasize emotional intimacy and social stability.

Vito Corleone's garden acquires symbolic significance during the conclusion of his life. Gardening represents cultivation, continuity, peace, and generational succession. His death while playing with his grandson contrasts sharply with decades of political struggle, suggesting that personal fulfillment ultimately resides within family rather than institutional power.

From a philological perspective, one of Puzo's most interesting techniques is his integration of Italian vocabulary into English narration. Italian expressions appear without excessive translation. Terms such as: caporegime, consigliere, Don, omertà [11], capo, retain their cultural specificity.

Rather than interrupting narrative flow, these lexical borrowings construct authenticity while emphasizing the bilingual environment inhabited by Italian-American communities. This phenomenon represents an example of literary code-switching. Importantly, multilingualism functions not merely as decoration but as an indicator of identity. Characters often shift linguistic registers according to social circumstances. Italian expressions dominate family interactions and traditional ceremonies, whereas English predominates within business and political contexts. Language therefore becomes an instrument through which cultural identity is negotiated.

Perhaps Puzo's greatest contribution to modern American literature lies in his systematic rejection of absolute moral categories. Readers frequently sympathize with characters who participate in criminal activities because the narrative foregrounds motivations such as family loyalty, justice, gratitude, and survival.

Conversely, officially respectable institutions—including politicians, judges, police officials, and businessmen—often exhibit corruption, hypocrisy, or opportunism. This inversion complicates traditional ethical judgments.

Rather than asking whether individual actions conform to legal standards, Puzo encourages readers to evaluate competing systems of moral responsibility. Such ambiguity profoundly influenced later American fiction, particularly novels exploring institutional corruption, political violence, and corporate capitalism. The antihero became one of the defining figures of contemporary American literature partly because writers increasingly adopted Puzo's method of presenting morally compromised protagonists with psychological depth and emotional credibility.

Power as a Social and Cultural Construct

One of Mario Puzo's most enduring contributions to American literature lies in his sophisticated representation of power. Unlike conventional crime fiction, which often equates power with physical violence or criminal authority,

Puzo conceptualizes power as a multidimensional social phenomenon encompassing political influence, economic capital, family loyalty, cultural legitimacy, and symbolic authority. In “The Godfather” [1] and his later novels [2–4], power is not merely possessed; it is continuously negotiated, exchanged, inherited, and contested. This broader understanding aligns Puzo’s fiction with the tradition of the political novel rather than limiting it to the crime genre.

Power in Puzo’s narrative universe operates through networks rather than individuals. Don Vito Corleone rarely relies solely on intimidation. Instead, his authority emerges from a complex system of reciprocal obligations, favors, trust, and long-term relationships. The famous principle that “friendship” and “respect” outweigh money illustrates an alternative political economy in which social capital becomes more valuable than financial capital. Such representations resonate with sociological theories of informal institutions, where authority depends upon legitimacy within a community rather than official legal recognition.

Philologically, this conception of power is reflected in the lexical fields associated with Vito Corleone’s speech. Words such as honor, respect, friendship, obligation, family, and justice recur significantly more often than direct references to violence. The semantic dominance of these concepts subtly reshapes readers’ perceptions of organized crime. Violence remains present but is linguistically subordinated to discourse concerning order, responsibility, and social equilibrium [12, p. 136].

Puzo’s treatment of power also reveals striking parallels between governmental institutions and criminal organizations. Political leaders, judges, police officials, businessmen, and Mafia bosses frequently employ identical rhetorical strategies. Meetings resemble diplomatic negotiations; financial transactions mirror governmental lobbying; alliances resemble international treaties. Through these structural similarities, Puzo suggests that distinctions

between legitimate and illegitimate power often depend more upon institutional recognition than upon ethical behavior.

This perspective profoundly influenced contemporary American literature. Modern writers increasingly portray political and corporate institutions as morally ambiguous systems governed by interests rather than principles. In works by Don Winslow, Richard Price, George Pelecanos, and Dennis Lehane, official authority frequently appears inseparable from organized crime, economic inequality, and systemic corruption. Such representations owe much to Puzo's redefinition of institutional power.

Mario Puzo as the Founder of the Modern American Gangster Narrative

Mario Puzo's literary innovations fundamentally altered the trajectory of American crime fiction. Before "The Godfather" [1], the gangster was typically portrayed as either a social outcast or a violent antagonist whose downfall reaffirmed the triumph of legal authority. Puzo replaced this model with a far more complex narrative paradigm in which organized crime became a lens through which broader questions of ethics, politics, capitalism, ethnicity, and family could be explored.

His greatest innovation was not simply the humanization of criminal figures but the creation of a literary universe in which competing systems of morality coexist. The Corleone family is governed by an internal code that values loyalty, reciprocity, discipline, and collective responsibility. While this code often conflicts with state law, it is presented as coherent, internally consistent, and historically grounded. As a result, readers are encouraged to evaluate characters not solely through legal categories but through multiple ethical frameworks.

This shift had profound implications for subsequent American fiction. Later writers increasingly adopted morally ambiguous protagonists whose actions could not be understood within simple binary oppositions of good and

evil. The criminal antihero emerged as one of the defining literary figures of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Equally important was Puzo's expansion of narrative scale. Crime was no longer treated as an isolated phenomenon but as an integral component of economic systems, political institutions, media industries, and international relations. Contemporary American literature repeatedly returns to this expanded perspective, demonstrating the continuing relevance of Puzo's narrative model.

Mario Puzo's influence on contemporary American literature extends well beyond thematic imitation. His works transformed the structural foundations of crime fiction by integrating political analysis, family saga, psychological realism, and immigrant experience into a unified narrative form.

Modern authors such as Don Winslow, Dennis Lehane, George Pelecanos, Richard Price, and Michael Connelly continue to develop literary strategies that Puzo pioneered. Likewise, contemporary television drama and popular culture repeatedly reinterpret his narrative models, confirming the exceptional durability of his artistic vision.

From a philological perspective, Puzo's legacy consists not merely in memorable characters or compelling plots but in a profound reconfiguration of narrative discourse itself. His stylistic economy, thematic complexity, and structural innovations continue to shape the evolution of American literature in the 21st century.

The Changing Academic Perception of Mario Puzo

The critical reception of Mario Puzo's literary works has undergone significant transformation since the publication of "The Godfather" [1] in 1969. Initially, many academic critics viewed Puzo primarily as a commercial writer whose success resulted from effective storytelling techniques rather than significant literary innovation. The enormous popularity of the novel, its status as a bestseller, and the subsequent success of Francis Ford Coppola's film

adaptation contributed to the perception of Puzo as a writer of popular entertainment rather than as an important figure in American literary history.

However, contemporary literary scholarship has increasingly challenged this limited interpretation. The development of cultural studies, ethnic studies, and interdisciplinary approaches to popular literature has encouraged researchers to reconsider the relationship between commercial success and artistic value [13, p. 79]. Scholars now recognize that texts belonging to popular genres may contain complex representations of social structures, cultural identity, and historical experience.

From this perspective, "The Godfather" [1] represents an important cultural document of postwar America. Its exploration of immigration, capitalism, political authority, family organization, and social mobility reflects fundamental concerns of twentieth-century American society. The novel's popularity is therefore not simply the result of effective marketing or dramatic storytelling; rather, it indicates its ability to address widely shared cultural anxieties.

A significant aspect of contemporary reassessment concerns Puzo's position within Italian-American literature. Earlier criticism sometimes interpreted his representation of organized crime as reinforcing ethnic stereotypes [14, p. 86]. More recent scholarship, however, emphasizes the complexity of his approach. Puzo does not present criminality as an inherent characteristic of Italian identity. Instead, he situates organized crime within specific historical circumstances involving immigration, poverty, discrimination, and limited access to institutional power.

Thus, Puzo's fiction participates in broader discussions concerning ethnic representation in American literature. His novels demonstrate how immigrant communities negotiate cultural preservation, assimilation, economic advancement, and social acceptance.

Conclusions

Mario Puzo occupies a distinctive and influential position within the development of contemporary American literature. Although he is most widely recognized as the author of "The Godfather" [1], his literary significance extends far beyond a single successful novel. Through his innovative treatment of crime, family, power, ethnicity, and the American Dream, Puzo transformed the possibilities of American narrative fiction.

The present study has demonstrated that Puzo's influence operates on several interconnected levels:

First, he fundamentally reshaped the crime novel by transforming organized crime from a background element into a complex social system worthy of literary investigation. Instead of presenting criminals as simplified antagonists, he created psychologically sophisticated characters whose decisions emerge from historical, cultural, and emotional circumstances.

Second, Puzo expanded the thematic boundaries of American fiction. His novels examine not only criminal organizations but also broader issues concerning immigration, capitalism, political legitimacy, institutional corruption, and cultural identity. The Corleone family becomes a symbolic representation of immigrant experience and the contradictions of American success.

Third, Puzo introduced narrative techniques that continue to influence contemporary writers. His use of multiple perspectives, historical retrospection, extensive characterization, cinematic pacing, and moral ambiguity established models that later became central to modern American storytelling.

Fourth, his linguistic approach demonstrates significant philological importance. Through dialogue, code-switching, cultural vocabulary, and symbolic repetition, Puzo created a literary representation of bilingual immigrant identity. Language in his novels functions not merely as communication but as a marker of belonging, authority, and cultural memory.

The influence of Puzo can be observed in the works of numerous contemporary American writers. Authors such as Don Winslow, Dennis Lehane, George Pelecanos, Richard Price, and Michael Connelly continue to explore themes and narrative structures that originated or were significantly developed within Puzo's fiction. His impact also extends into television and cinema, where narratives of morally ambiguous protagonists, family-centered power structures, and institutional corruption have become defining characteristics of modern storytelling.

From a broader cultural perspective, Puzo's enduring relevance demonstrates the ability of popular literature to engage with serious social and philosophical questions. His novels reveal that genre fiction can serve as a powerful medium for exploring national identity, historical memory, and ethical complexity.

Ultimately, Mario Puzo should be understood not merely as a successful commercial novelist but as a major contributor to the evolution of contemporary American narrative forms. His artistic legacy lies in his ability to transform the gangster novel into a comprehensive exploration of American society itself. By combining elements of tragedy, realism, family saga, political fiction, and immigrant literature, Puzo created a literary model whose influence continues to shape American fiction in the 21st century.

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III. PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES

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THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR RESEARCH ON COGNITIVE FACTORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSONALITY'S VALUE DOMAIN

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This article presents a theoretical analysis of contemporary psychological approaches to the study of cognitive factors in the development of the value domain of the personality. It substantiates the relevance of studying the mechanisms of the cognitive domain's functioning as one of the determinants of the formation and development of an individual's value orientations in the context of contemporary sociocultural transformations. The article summarizes contemporary psychological approaches to understanding the value domain of the personality as a complex integrative system that determines the direction of behavior, regulates life activities, and facilitates processes of self-determination and self-development. The content of the cognitive domain of the individual as a system of cognitive processes and properties is revealed. The structural components and functional role of the cognitive domain of the individual in the perception, processing, and interpretation of information — which ensures the formation of personal meanings and value orientations — are characterized. An analysis is conducted of cognitive styles as relatively stable individual-psychological characteristics of the organization of cognitive activity and methods of

processing information, which determine the uniqueness of an individual's cognitive functioning. The psychological content of the cognitive styles "field-dependence–field-independence" and "reflectiveness–impulsiveness" is revealed, and their role in the processes of decision-making, cognitive control, information processing, and the formation of individual strategies for interacting with the surrounding reality is determined. The role of cognitive mechanisms in the development of the personality's value domain — particularly in the processes of forming personal meanings, beliefs, and value orientations — has been substantiated. The findings demonstrate that the development of the personality's value domain is determined by the characteristics of the cognitive domain's functioning, the level of cognitive control, and individual characteristics of the organization of cognitive activity.

Key words: *cognitive domain of the personality, value domain of the personality, cognitive factors, cognitive styles, field-dependent–field-independent, reflectiveness–impulsiveness, cognitive activity, value orientations.*

Introduction. The current stage of development of Ukrainian society is characterized by complex socio-economic, cultural, and informational transformations that determine changes in the structure of personality, the mechanisms of its self-regulation, the modes of cognitive activity, and the processes of forming value orientations. The dynamics of social transformation, the digitalization of the educational environment, the intensification of information processes, the expansion of communicative space, and the growing demands for professional self-realization of the individual necessitate an in-depth theoretical analysis of the psychological factors underlying the development of one's value domain.

In contemporary psychological science, the value domain of the personality is regarded as a complex structural-functional system that

integrates personal meanings, beliefs, and value orientations, and ensures the regulation of behavior, the determination of life direction, and the processes of self-determination, decision-making, and professional development. The formation of the value domain is the result of the individual's active mental activity, which involves the processes of perception, cognitive processing, comprehension, evaluation, and internalization of socially significant experience.

The theoretical and methodological foundations for studying the value domain of the personality and the regularities of its formation and development are presented in the scholarly works of I. Bekh [1], M. Boryshevskyi [2], H. Kostyuk [3], S. Maksymenko [4], V. Romenets [5], and T. Tytarenko, O. Kochubeinyk, and K. Cheremnykh [6], in which the value domain is defined as a system-forming component of personality that ensures its integrity, activity, direction, and capacity for self-development.

At the same time, an analysis of contemporary psychological research reveals an insufficient theoretical and empirical elaboration of the problem of the role of cognitive factors in the processes of formation and development of the personality's value domain. Particular significance is attached to studying the regularities of the cognitive domain's functioning and its role as a psychological factor in the development of the personality's value domain, as well as to identifying the psychological mechanisms through which cognitive processes ensure the perception, processing, comprehension, and internalization of social experience and its integration into the system of personal meanings, beliefs, and value orientations.

Further research into the cognitive factors of the development of the personality's value domain requires the application of modern methodological foundations, in particular the post-non-classical approach to studying the psyche, according to which the personality is regarded as a complex open system capable of self-development, self-organization, and self-regulation.

The theoretical and methodological grounding of this approach is presented in the works of S. Maksymenko [4], while the specifics of applying synergetic methodology in psychological research are discussed in the works of O. Vozniuk [8], H. Chaika [9], M.-L. Chepa [10], and others.

The psychosynergetic approach of I. Yershova-Babenko, in particular the concept of "the whole within the whole," is of significant methodological importance for understanding the regularities of the functioning of the mental system; according to this concept, the cognitive and value domains of the personality are regarded as interrelated components of a unified self-regulating mental system [11].

An analysis of scholarly sources shows that the development of the personality's value domain is a complex multifactorial process in which sociocultural, professional, and individual-psychological determinants interact with the cognitive organization of the personality. Cognitive mechanisms ensure the processes of perceiving, comprehending, and interpreting the surrounding reality, forming personal meanings and beliefs, identifying significant life guidelines, and transforming acquired experience into a system of personal values.

Thus, the study of the cognitive factors in the development of the personality's value domain is a relevant direction of contemporary psychological science, as it contributes to a deeper understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying the formation of the personality's value structures, to clarifying the role of cognitive processes in its professional development, and to revealing the regularities of its self-development.

The purpose of the article is to provide a theoretical grounding for the role of cognitive factors in the development of the personality's value domain and to identify the psychological mechanisms of their interrelationship.

The objectives of the article are: to conduct a theoretical analysis of contemporary psychological approaches to studying the value domain of the

personality; to reveal the psychological content of the concept of the personality's cognitive domain and to characterize its structural components; to examine cognitive styles as determinants of the organization and regulation of the personality's cognitive activity; and to provide a theoretical grounding for the role of cognitive factors in the process of developing the personality's value domain.

Main Body. The term "cognitive" derives from the Latin *cognitio* — "cognition," "knowledge" — and is used in psychology to characterize the mental processes of obtaining, processing, storing, and using information that ensure a person's cognition of the surrounding world and of themselves.

Thus, S. Maksymenko regards the cognitive domain of the personality as a complex structural-functional system of mental processes, mechanisms, and properties that ensures the cognitive reflection of reality, the formation of knowledge, the construction of ideas about the surrounding world and one's own "self," the regulation of behavior, and the adaptation of the personality to changing life conditions [12]. According to the scholar, the structure of the cognitive domain includes basic cognitive processes and cognitive formations, in particular perception, pattern recognition, attention, memory, imagination, speech, thinking, intelligence, and creativity. The functional purpose of the cognitive domain lies in ensuring the processes of obtaining, processing, storing, and using information, which determines the features of the personality's cognitive activity, its mental self-regulation, and its interaction with the surrounding environment [4; 12].

According to M. Savchyn, cognitive processes function as the functional mechanisms of the personality's cognitive activity, ensuring not only the perception, storage, processing, and reproduction of information, but also its comprehension and use in the processes of regulating activity and behavior [13].

The historical origins of research into the personality's cognitive domain are linked to the study of basic cognitive processes, in particular perception and attention. One of the first to experimentally investigate these processes was W. Wundt, who analyzed, among other things, the dependence of the speed of auditory perception on the direction of attention [14].

The findings indicate that research into cognitive processes and the personality's cognitive domain developed in stages. At the initial stage of the development of scientific psychology (late 19th – early 20th century), the study of mental processes was carried out mainly within the framework of the atomistic approach, according to which individual mental phenomena were regarded as relatively autonomous and independent components of the psyche. The further development of the systemic approach to studying the psyche contributed to forming an understanding of cognitive processes as interrelated components of the personality's holistic mental organization, ensuring the integration of different levels and forms of cognitive activity into a unified system of mental functioning. In the mid-20th century, with the development of cognitive psychology as a separate scientific field, the main theoretical approaches to studying the cognitive domain took shape — structural, functional, activity-based, procedural, and socio-cognitive — which were aimed at studying cognitive structures, methods of information processing, mental representations, and the mechanisms regulating the personality's cognitive activity. The current stage of scientific understanding of the personality's cognitive domain is characterized by the integration of different scientific fields within the interdisciplinary domain of cognitive science, which involves combining psychological, neuroscientific, linguistic, and informational approaches to studying the regularities of cognition, information processing, and the functioning of cognitive systems [15].

At the current stage of the development of psychological science, the research focus has gradually shifted from studying individual cognitive

processes to a comprehensive analysis of the personality's cognitive domain as a holistic system. The development of systemic, activity-based, cognitive, and interdisciplinary approaches has contributed to the integration of theoretical and empirical achievements of cognitive psychology, consciousness studies, the psychology of thinking, intelligence, neuropsychology, and neuroscience, aimed at a holistic understanding of the regularities of the functioning of the personality's cognitive domain. Within this approach, contemporary scholarly discourse increasingly employs the concepts of "cognitive domain," "cognitive system," and "cognitive architecture," which reflect the integrative character of cognitive processes, their interdependence, and their systemic organization [16].

Representatives of cognitive psychology — J. Piaget [17], J. Bruner [18], U. Neisser [19], and R. Sternberg [20] — regard the personality's cognitive domain as a system of interrelated mental processes and structures that ensure the formation of knowledge and the development of thinking, intelligence, memory, attention, speech, and problem-solving activity.

In the psycholinguistic and cognitive-linguistic approaches, cognition is regarded as the process of forming, representing, and interpreting knowledge, which is realized in speech activity and ensures the conceptualization and comprehension of the surrounding reality.

Within J. Piaget's cognitive-genetic concept, cognitive development is interpreted as the process of forming and restructuring cognitive structures that ensure the subject's cognitive interaction with the surrounding environment on the basis of the mechanisms of assimilation, accommodation, and the personality's adaptation to environmental conditions [17].

According to J. S. Beck's cognitive model, the mental functioning of the personality is based on information-processing processes that determine the features of perception, the interpretation of events, and the formation of behavioral responses. Cognitive mechanisms are regarded as important

regulators of the personality's interaction with the surrounding environment, and the specifics of their functioning depend on the content and level of development of cognitive structures. A key element of this model is the system of cognitive schemas — stable, organized structures of knowledge and beliefs that determine the processes of selecting, evaluating, and interpreting information. The features of the functioning of cognitive systems determine the nature of the cognitive processing of experience: adaptive cognitive structures contribute to a realistic evaluation of situations and effective behavioral regulation, whereas dysfunctional schemas can lead to cognitive distortions, maladaptive ways of perceiving reality, and corresponding behavioral responses [21].

One of the leading directions of contemporary cognitive psychology is the study of the personality's cognitive styles as individual-psychological characteristics of the organization and regulation of cognitive activity. The founder of research into cognitive styles is considered to be the American psychologist H. Witkin, who defined cognitive style as a distinctive way of perceiving, processing, structuring, and organizing information that reflects the individual features of a person's cognitive activity [22].

In contemporary psychology, cognitive style is regarded as a relatively stable individual-psychological characteristic of the organization of cognitive activity, which determines the features of the perception, processing, and interpretation of information, decision-making, and the ways the personality interacts with the surrounding reality. Cognitive style is an important component of the individual distinctiveness of the personality's cognitive activity and one of the psychological factors influencing the features of its cognitive functioning, the formation of personal meanings, and the ways of comprehending experience.

The most widely studied cognitive styles include "field-dependence–field-independence" (FD/FI) and "reflectiveness–impulsiveness" (R/I).

The cognitive style "reflectiveness–impulsiveness" is interpreted as an individual-psychological characteristic of the regulation of cognitive activity that determines the specifics of decision-making under conditions of uncertainty and time constraints.

The cognitive style "field-dependence–field-independence" reflects individual differences in the ways of perceiving, analyzing, and processing information, in particular a person's ability to use internal reference points when interpreting complex or contradictory stimuli and to resist the influence of external context. The theoretical grounding of this style was provided by the American psychologist H. Witkin in the course of studying the features of perceptual organization and the regularities of extracting a figure from a perceptual field [22].

The field-independent cognitive style is characterized by a greater capacity for the cognitive restructuring of information, the identification of an object's essential features, and the use of internal reference points when solving cognitive tasks, whereas the field-dependent style is characterized by a greater orientation toward external stimuli, situational context, and the social environment. Within the cognitive style "reflectiveness–impulsiveness," two main characteristics of cognitive activity are analyzed: the time parameters of decision-making and the accuracy of task performance. Based on the ratio of these indicators, four types of cognitive response are distinguished: the impulsive type, characterized by rapid decision-making and relatively low task-performance accuracy; the reflective type, characterized by a slower pace of decision-making, detailed analysis of information, and high response accuracy; the fast-and-accurate type, characterized by an optimal combination of the temporal and productive characteristics of cognitive activity; and the slow-and-inaccurate type, manifested in prolonged decision-making combined with insufficient task-performance accuracy [23].

Thus, cognitive styles reflect the individual ways in which a personality organizes, processes, and regulates cognitive activity; they determine the features of perceiving and analyzing information, making decisions, and comprehending acquired experience, which accounts for the distinctiveness of each individual's cognitive functioning; and they are regarded as important factors influencing the processes of interpreting life experience and forming personal meanings and value orientations.

Conclusions and Prospects for Further Research. Thus, the results of the theoretical analysis have shown that cognitive styles are significant individual-psychological factors in the organization and regulation of the personality's cognitive activity. The findings demonstrate that the cognitive styles "field-dependence–field-independence" and "reflectiveness–impulsiveness" reflect individual features of the perception, processing, and interpretation of information, the exercise of cognitive control, decision-making, and the comprehension of acquired experience. The findings indicate that the specific functioning of these cognitive mechanisms mediates the processes of internalizing social experience and forming personal meanings, beliefs, and value orientations, which provides grounds for regarding cognitive factors as one of the psychological determinants of the development of the personality's value domain. The features of cognitive organization determine the ways of evaluating social reality, choosing significant guidelines, and forming an individual system of values. The prospect for further research lies in the theoretical and empirical grounding of the psychological mechanisms of interaction between the personality's cognitive and value domains, as well as in determining the role of cognitive factors in the formation of the system of personal values.

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**JUNGIAN ARCHETYPES AND THEIR REPRESENTATION IN THE MAJOR
ARCANA OF THE TAROT: A PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SYMBOLIC
ANALYSIS**

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The relationship between analytical psychology and the symbolic system of the Tarot has attracted considerable interest among psychologists, historians of religion, cultural theorists, and practitioners of depth psychology. Although Carl Gustav Jung did not develop a systematic psychological theory of Tarot and did not establish a canonical correspondence between the Major Arcana and his archetypal model, his concepts of the archetype, the collective unconscious, individuation, the Self, the Shadow, the Persona, and psychological transformation provide a particularly productive framework for interpreting Tarot imagery. The Major Arcana, consisting of twenty-two symbolic figures and situations, can be approached as a visual and narrative system representing recurrent patterns of human experience: the emergence of consciousness, confrontation with unconscious material, psychological conflict, transformation, integration, and the development of a more comprehensive sense of self. The present article examines the Major Arcana

from the perspective of Jungian analytical psychology. It proposes that Tarot images may be interpreted as symbolic representations of archetypal patterns rather than as literal descriptions of supernatural forces or objective predictions of future events. Particular attention is given to the Fool as an image of undifferentiated psychic potential, the Magician as a representation of agency and conscious intentionality, the High Priestess as an image of the unconscious and intuitive knowledge, the Empress and Emperor as complementary maternal and paternal principles, the Hierophant as an embodiment of tradition and collective symbolic order, and the Lovers as an image of psychic opposition and integration. The Hermit, Wheel of Fortune, Hanged Man, Death, Devil, Tower, Star, Moon, Sun, Judgment, and World are examined as successive symbolic configurations of withdrawal, destabilization, surrender, transformation, confrontation with the Shadow, dissolution of psychic structures, renewal, encounter with the unconscious, emergence of consciousness, psychological rebirth, and integration.

The article argues that the strongest psychological value of the Tarot does not depend upon its predictive claims. Rather, its images can function as projective and amplificatory symbols that facilitate reflection on unconscious processes. At the same time, the proposed correspondence between Tarot and Jungian psychology must be regarded as a modern interpretive construction rather than as a historically established doctrine of Jung. A critical approach therefore requires distinguishing between the historical development of Tarot, Jung's original psychological concepts, and subsequent attempts to integrate these traditions.

Keywords: Carl Gustav Jung, analytical psychology, archetypes, collective unconscious, Tarot, Major Arcana, individuation, Shadow, Self, symbolism, depth psychology, projection.

Human beings have always created symbolic systems through which experiences that are difficult to express in ordinary language can be represented, communicated, and psychologically explored. Myths, fairy tales, religious narratives, dreams, rituals, works of art, and divinatory traditions frequently employ recurring images of birth, death, transformation, conflict, initiation, descent, sacrifice, wisdom, love, and renewal. Such images appear across cultures and historical periods, although their particular meanings vary according to cultural context.

One of the most influential psychological approaches to recurrent symbolic patterns was developed by the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung. Jung's analytical psychology proposed that the human psyche cannot be reduced to conscious mental processes. Beneath and beyond individual consciousness exists a deeper dimension of psychic life, which Jung termed the collective unconscious. Its contents are expressed through archetypal patterns that emerge in dreams, myths, religious symbols, fantasies, literature, and other forms of cultural production.

The Tarot presents an especially interesting case for psychological interpretation because its Major Arcana consist of a sequence of highly condensed symbolic images. A figure encounters authority, knowledge, love, isolation, fortune, crisis, death, temptation, destruction, hope, illumination, and completion. When viewed as a symbolic narrative, the sequence can be interpreted as a representation of psychological development.

It is important, however, to establish a methodological distinction at the outset. Jung did not create the Tarot, nor did he formulate a definitive system in which the twenty-two Major Arcana correspond to twenty-two Jungian archetypes. Tarot cards originated within European card culture during the fifteenth century, while the occult and esoteric interpretations associated with the Major Arcana developed considerably later. Consequently, claims that Tarot cards are intrinsically or historically "Jungian" would be misleading.

Nevertheless, the absence of a historical identity between Jungian psychology and Tarot does not prevent their meaningful theoretical dialogue. Jung's theory offers a language for interpreting symbolic images as expressions of psychological processes. Conversely, the Tarot can serve as a rich cultural corpus through which concepts such as archetypal polarity, projection, Shadow, anima and animus, transformation, and individuation can be explored.

The purpose of this article is therefore not to demonstrate that Tarot is a hidden form of Jungian psychology. Rather, it is to investigate how the symbolic structures of the Major Arcana can be interpreted through Jungian concepts and to evaluate the psychological usefulness and limitations of such an approach.

The central hypothesis is that the Major Arcana may be understood as a symbolic map of psychological transformation. Individual cards can represent specific archetypal configurations, while the sequence as a whole may be interpreted as a narrative of movement from psychological potential and relative unconsciousness toward increasing differentiation, confrontation with unconscious material, and integration.

Literature Review

The psychological interpretation of Jungian archetypes and their representation in the “Major Arcana of the Tarot” is based primarily on the theoretical framework of analytical psychology developed by Carl Gustav Jung. Jung conceptualized archetypes as fundamental patterns of the collective unconscious that manifest through myths, dreams, religious imagery, fantasies, and symbolic representations [5]. His theory of the collective unconscious provides an important psychological basis for interpreting Tarot images not merely as divinatory symbols but as representations of recurring psychic structures and processes. Jung's later discussions of symbolism and the role of images in psychological

development further emphasize the capacity of symbolic material to express unconscious contents and facilitate their integration into consciousness [6]. His “Two Essays on Analytical Psychology” also establishes the relationship between conscious and unconscious processes and the development of personality, which is particularly relevant to interpreting the Major Arcana as stages or aspects of psychological transformation [7].

Jung’s studies of psychological types and symbolic processes provide additional theoretical foundations for this approach. In “Psychological Types”, Jung examines different modes of psychological orientation and consciousness, demonstrating how contrasting psychic functions contribute to individual development [9]. His “Psychology and Alchemy” is especially significant for Tarot analysis because it explores symbolic transformation as a representation of psychological change. The alchemical process, interpreted by Jung as a symbolic expression of individuation, offers a useful framework for understanding the Major Arcana as a sequence of images associated with transformation, confrontation with the unconscious, and the achievement of greater psychological integration [8].

The historical and intellectual development of Jung’s analytical psychology is examined by Shamdasani, who places Jung’s ideas within the broader history of modern psychology and demonstrates the importance of symbolic, mythological, and comparative approaches in the formation of his theoretical system [12]. This historical perspective is useful for distinguishing Jung’s original psychological concepts from later applications of archetypal theory to Tarot.

The concept of the archetypal journey is further developed in the works of Joseph Campbell and Jean Shinoda Bolen. Campbell’s comparative study of mythology identifies the recurring structure of the hero’s journey, including separation, initiation, transformation, and return [3]. This model has become particularly relevant to interpretations of the Major Arcana, whose sequence

can be understood symbolically as a movement from an initial state of potential and unconsciousness toward knowledge, integration, and completion. Bolen's analysis of goddess archetypes applies Jungian principles to female psychological patterns and provides an additional perspective for interpreting Tarot figures associated with femininity, such as the High Priestess, Empress, and other feminine symbolic forms [2].

Roberto Assagioli's psychosynthesis provides a complementary psychological perspective on personal transformation and the development of will. His emphasis on conscious self-development and the integration of different aspects of the personality can be productively compared with Jung's concept of individuation and with the transformational progression represented by the Major Arcana [1]. Although Assagioli's theoretical system differs from Jungian analytical psychology, it offers a broader framework for considering Tarot symbolism as a potential representation of inner psychological development.

Several authors have addressed the Tarot directly from historical, symbolic, and psychological perspectives. Douglas examines the origins, meanings, and uses of Tarot cards and provides an important foundation for understanding the symbolic vocabulary of the Tarot tradition [4]. Waite's "The Pictorial Key to the Tarot" is particularly important for the interpretation of the imagery associated with the Rider–Waite–Smith tradition, which remains one of the most influential visual systems for contemporary readings of the Major Arcana [13]. These sources make it possible to connect specific visual motifs with established Tarot symbolism while distinguishing traditional meanings from later psychological interpretations.

Nichols explicitly approaches Tarot through a Jungian framework, interpreting the cards as stages of an archetypal psychological journey from darkness toward greater consciousness [10]. Her work is particularly relevant to the present study because it directly connects individual Tarot images with

Jungian concepts such as the unconscious, archetypal patterns, psychological transformation, and individuation. Pollack similarly interprets the seventy-eight Tarot cards as a system of images that can facilitate self-awareness and psychological reflection, emphasizing the developmental and introspective potential of Tarot symbolism [11].

Taken together, these sources provide three complementary foundations for the present research: Jungian analytical psychology and archetypal theory [5; 6; 7; 8; 9], comparative and developmental approaches to archetypal transformation [1; 2; 3], and historical, symbolic, and psychological interpretations of Tarot [4; 10; 11; 13]. The combination of these perspectives makes it possible to examine the Major Arcana as a symbolic system in which recurring archetypal motifs — such as the Self, Shadow, Anima and Animus, Wise Old Man / Woman, Hero, Mother, and Trickster — can be interpreted in relation to psychological development and individuation. At the same time, Shamdasani's historical analysis encourages a careful distinction between Jung's original theoretical concepts and subsequent Jungian interpretations of Tarot [12]. Thus, the selected literature establishes an interdisciplinary basis for analyzing the Major Arcana not as evidence of supernatural prediction, but as a culturally developed symbolic language capable of representing fundamental psychological themes and processes.

Archetypal Images and Cultural Symbolism

Jung's model of the psyche differs substantially from theories that identify psychological life primarily with conscious cognition. For Jung, consciousness represents only one dimension of psychic reality [5, p. 53]. The ego occupies the center of conscious awareness, but it is not identical with the total psyche. The unconscious consists of both personal and collective dimensions. The personal unconscious contains forgotten, repressed, or subliminal experiences associated with the individual's biography. The collective unconscious, by contrast, refers to a deeper layer of

psychic organization containing inherited predispositions for experiencing and organizing certain fundamental human situations.

Jung described archetypes as structural tendencies or organizing patterns that become visible through symbolic images [5, p. 73]. An archetype should not be confused with a fixed picture. The image that appears in consciousness is an archetypal representation, while the archetype itself is better understood as an underlying pattern of psychic organization.

This distinction is crucial when interpreting Tarot. The Emperor, for example, should not simply be declared “the archetype of the Father” as though a single image possessed one permanent meaning. Instead, the Emperor can activate a constellation of meanings associated with authority, order, boundaries, law, paternal function, political power, discipline, and the potential dangers of rigidity [4, p. 34].

Archetypal patterns are expressed through culture. A maternal principle may appear as a mother goddess, a fertile earth, a queen, a protective animal, or a nurturing human figure. Similarly, the heroic principle may appear as a warrior, traveler, knight, divine child, or individual confronting a monster. Therefore, archetypal psychology does not imply that all cultures use identical symbols. Rather, it suggests that recurrent human psychological problems can generate symbolically comparable forms.

The Tarot is particularly suitable for this kind of investigation because each card combines several layers of representation: human figures, social roles, animals, celestial bodies, landscapes, objects, gestures, colors, numbers, and spatial relationships. The symbolic density of the cards allows different psychological interpretations to coexist.

One of Jung’s most influential concepts is the Shadow. It refers broadly to psychological aspects of the personality that the conscious ego fails to recognize or accept. The Shadow may contain socially unacceptable impulses, aggression, envy, dependency, sexuality, vulnerability, ambition, or

other qualities that contradict a person's conscious self-image [12, p. 107]. It may also contain positive capacities that have been neglected or rejected. The Shadow is not equivalent to evil. It is a dimension of the psyche that remains insufficiently integrated into conscious identity.

Several Major Arcana can be interpreted through this concept, particularly the Devil, Moon, Tower, and Death. Yet the Shadow may potentially appear in any card because archetypal symbolism is context-dependent. Even apparently positive archetypes can acquire a shadow form. The Emperor can become authoritarian; the Hierophant can become dogmatic; the Hermit can become isolated; the Lovers can become dependent; and the Magician can become manipulative.

The Persona is the psychological “mask” through which an individual relates to society. It is necessary for social adaptation, but psychological difficulties can arise when the individual becomes excessively identified with a social role.

The Tarot contains numerous images of social identity: rulers, priests, merchants, lovers, hermits, judges, and travelers. These figures can be understood as symbolic representations of different modes of social and psychological identity. The tension between Persona and deeper psychic reality becomes especially relevant when a socially successful identity no longer corresponds to the individual's psychological development [11, p. 76].

Jung originally conceptualized anima and animus as unconscious contrasexual dimensions of the psyche. His formulation reflected the gender assumptions of his historical context and has subsequently been subjected to considerable criticism and revision. For contemporary psychological interpretation, these concepts can be approached more flexibly as symbolic representations of psychological qualities traditionally culturally associated with femininity and masculinity, including receptivity and agency, relationality and autonomy, intuition and rationality. Such a reinterpretation avoids treating

gendered psychological characteristics as biologically fixed. Within the Tarot, the High Priestess, Empress, Emperor, Magician, Lovers, and Moon offer particularly rich material for examining psychological polarity and the integration of apparently opposite qualities [10, p. 128].

The concept of individuation is central to Jung's mature psychology. Individuation refers to the development of a more differentiated and integrated personality. It is not equivalent to individualism in the ordinary social sense. Rather, it involves the gradual recognition that the conscious ego is only one part of the psyche and the development of a relationship with previously unconscious aspects of personality.

From this perspective, psychological development involves neither the elimination of the unconscious nor the domination of the psyche by the ego. It involves dialogue between conscious and unconscious processes. The Tarot's Major Arcana can be interpreted as a symbolic narrative of precisely such a process. The sequence begins with the Fool, a figure associated with openness, uncertainty, potential, and departure. It culminates in the World, an image traditionally associated with completion, integration, and wholeness.

The conventional numbering of the Major Arcana provides a particularly suggestive narrative structure: 0 — The Fool; I — The Magician; II — The High Priestess; III — The Empress; IV — The Emperor; V — The Hierophant; VI — The Lovers; VII — The Chariot; VIII — Strength; IX — The Hermit; X — Wheel of Fortune; XI — Justice; XII — The Hanged Man; XIII — Death; XIV — Temperance; XV — The Devil; XVI — The Tower; XVII — The Star; XVIII — The Moon; XIX — The Sun; XX — Judgment; XXI — The World.

The sequence should not be treated as an objectively established psychological development model. Nevertheless, as a symbolic narrative it can be read as a progression from undifferentiated possibility toward increasingly complex forms of psychological consciousness.

The Fool: Undifferentiated Potential and the Beginning of the Journey

The Fool occupies a unique position in the Major Arcana. Traditionally numbered zero, the card stands outside the ordinary sequence while simultaneously functioning as its beginning and, in some systems, its completion. From a Jungian perspective, the Fool can be associated with the archetypal motif of the Divine Child, the Wanderer, or the Trickster. The image often represents innocence, spontaneity, openness, risk, and freedom from established structures.

Psychologically, the Fool may represent a condition in which the ego has not yet established a stable relationship with the world. This condition can be creative but also dangerous. Consciousness has not yet accumulated sufficient experience to anticipate consequences. The Fool therefore embodies an important psychological paradox: what appears to be naïveté may contain enormous developmental potential, while what appears to be certainty may conceal psychological rigidity [10, p. 45].

The Fool's journey begins when the individual leaves the familiar structure of identity. In Jungian terms, psychological development frequently requires a temporary destabilization of established assumptions. The person must become capable of encountering experiences that cannot be fully assimilated into the existing conscious worldview. Thus, the Fool can symbolize the beginning of individuation: not completion, but willingness to enter an unknown psychological territory.

The Magician: Ego Agency and the Capacity to Act

The Magician represents conscious agency, skill, communication, intentionality, and the transformation of potential into action. His traditional symbolism frequently includes objects representing the four suits, suggesting access to multiple dimensions of human experience. From a Jungian perspective, the Magician can be understood as a representation of the developing ego's ability to differentiate and manipulate elements of

experience consciously [10, p. 227]. If the Fool represents potential without established direction, the Magician represents directed psychic energy. Yet the Magician also contains a Shadow dimension. Agency can become manipulation; intelligence can become deception; creativity can become narcissism. The psychological task is therefore not merely to acquire power but to establish an ethical relationship with it. The Magician can consequently be viewed as an archetypal image of psychological efficacy: the recognition that the individual possesses resources capable of transforming experience.

The High Priestess: The Unconscious, Intuition, and Hidden Knowledge

The High Priestess occupies a fundamentally different psychological position from the Magician. Whereas the Magician emphasizes conscious action, the High Priestess emphasizes receptivity, silence, intuition, mystery, and hidden knowledge. She can be interpreted as an archetypal image of the unconscious psyche. The veil behind or around her suggests a boundary between what consciousness can immediately perceive and what remains concealed.

From a Jungian perspective, unconscious processes cannot be reduced to irrational noise [7, p. 123]. Dreams, fantasies, spontaneous images, emotional reactions, and symbolic productions may contain information about psychological conflicts and developmental possibilities. The High Priestess therefore represents a mode of knowing that does not operate through conscious rational control. Her Shadow form, however, may involve excessive secrecy, passivity, emotional withdrawal, or the idealization of intuition as infallible knowledge.

Psychologically mature engagement with the High Priestess requires neither blind rationalism nor blind intuition. It requires the capacity to allow unconscious material to emerge while maintaining reflective consciousness.

The Empress: The Maternal Principle, Nature, and Psychic Generativity

The Empress is traditionally associated with fertility, nature, abundance, sensuality, creativity, and motherhood [2, p. 47]. In Jungian terms, she can be interpreted through the Great Mother archetype. The maternal archetype has both positive and negative aspects. Its positive dimensions include nourishment, protection, generativity, emotional containment, and connection with life. Its negative dimensions may include engulfment, excessive dependency, possessiveness, and resistance to psychological separation.

The Empress can therefore represent not only biological motherhood but the broader psychological capacity to generate, nurture, and sustain. Creative activity may be understood as one of the psychological manifestations of this archetypal pattern. The artist, writer, researcher, or parent gives form to something that previously existed only as potential. At the same time, individuation requires differentiation from the maternal field. The nurturing principle becomes psychologically problematic when it prevents autonomy.

The Emperor: Authority, Structure, and the Paternal Principle

The Emperor represents order, structure, authority, boundaries, law, stability, and social organization. Within a Jungian framework, he may be interpreted as a symbolic representation of the paternal archetypal function. His psychological role is to establish boundaries, distinguish self from other, and transform undifferentiated potential into organized reality.

The Emperor complements the Empress. If the Empress symbolizes generation and containment, the Emperor symbolizes differentiation and structure [4, p. 17]. However, excessive identification with the Emperor produces rigidity. Authority may become authoritarianism, order may become repression, and stability may become fear of change [3, p. 354]. The psychological challenge is therefore to integrate structure without becoming imprisoned by it.

The Hierophant: Tradition, Collective Meaning, and the Cultural Psyche

The Hierophant represents institutionalized knowledge, tradition, ritual, teaching, religious authority, and collective values. Jung's psychology emphasized the importance of symbolic and religious structures in psychic life [6, p. 134]. Humans require systems of meaning through which existential experiences can be interpreted.

The Hierophant can therefore represent the collective symbolic order into which an individual is born. Family traditions, religion, education, moral conventions, and cultural narratives provide psychological structure. At the same time, individuation requires differentiation from collective expectations. The person must eventually ask whether inherited values genuinely correspond to their developing psychological reality. The Shadow of the Hierophant is dogmatism. A symbolic system that once provided meaning can become oppressive when it is treated as absolute and immune to psychological examination.

The Lovers: Relationship, Choice, and the Integration of Opposites

The Lovers are frequently reduced to the theme of romantic love. From a Jungian perspective, however, their symbolism is considerably broader. The card may represent encounter with the Other, attraction, psychological polarity, choice, and the confrontation between incompatible values. Jungian psychology places considerable emphasis on opposites. Conscious and unconscious, rational and irrational, autonomy and relationship, individuality and belonging are not necessarily problems to be eliminated. They constitute tensions through which psychological development occurs. The Lovers therefore symbolize the necessity of choosing. Psychological maturation requires that the individual recognize conflicting desires and values rather than remaining in an undifferentiated state [13, p. 86]. The card may also be interpreted in relation to projection. Romantic attraction can involve projecting unconscious qualities onto another person. The beloved becomes the carrier

of psychological contents that actually belong partly to the subject's own psyche. The withdrawal of projection does not destroy love; ideally, it transforms it into a more conscious relationship.

The Chariot: Ego Consolidation and Direction

The Chariot represents movement, determination, control, victory, and purposeful direction. Following the relational and psychological tensions represented by the Lovers, the Chariot can symbolize a more consolidated ego capable of choosing a direction. From the standpoint of individuation, however, conscious control has limitations. The charioteer must coordinate opposing forces. The image therefore suggests not simply domination but the integration of competing drives. The Shadow of the Chariot is compulsive control: the belief that every psychological problem can be solved through willpower. Jungian psychology would caution against excessive identification with the conscious ego [8, p. 281]. The psyche contains autonomous processes that cannot always be controlled directly.

Strength: The Conscious Relationship with Instinct

Strength traditionally depicts a human figure interacting peacefully with a lion. This image offers an especially powerful Jungian metaphor. The lion can represent instinctual energy, aggression, sexuality, vitality, and the non-rational dimensions of the psyche [10, p. 164]. The human figure does not necessarily destroy or suppress the animal. Instead, the relationship is one of containment and integration. This corresponds closely to the Jungian idea that psychological development does not require eliminating instinct. Consciousness must establish a constructive relationship with instinctual energy.

The Shadow of Strength appears when the individual mistakes repression for self-control. Suppressed instinct does not disappear; it may return through projection, compulsive behavior, dreams, or emotional

eruptions. Strength therefore represents a mature form of psychic power: not domination, but conscious integration.

The Hermit: Withdrawal, Reflection, and Inner Knowledge

The Hermit represents solitude, contemplation, wisdom, and withdrawal from ordinary social activity. Jung's own life and writings emphasize the psychological importance of withdrawal from collective consciousness [12, p. 143]. Individuation requires moments in which the individual encounters their own psychic reality without relying entirely on social validation. The Hermit can therefore symbolize the movement from external authority toward inner authority.

His lantern represents a limited but meaningful light: consciousness illuminates only a small portion of the psychological landscape at any given moment. The Hermit's Shadow is isolation. Solitude can facilitate psychological development, but excessive withdrawal may become avoidance of relationship and reality.

Wheel of Fortune: Psychic Change and the Limits of Ego Control

The Wheel of Fortune introduces the theme of cyclical change. Human beings experience success and failure, gain and loss, emergence and decline. From a Jungian perspective, the Wheel may symbolize the autonomous dynamics of the psyche. The ego does not determine all psychological events. Unconscious processes, interpersonal relationships, historical circumstances, and collective forces continually influence the individual's life. The Wheel can therefore challenge narcissistic fantasies of total control [9, p. 172]. Psychological maturity requires recognition that the ego participates in life but does not govern the totality of psychic reality.

Justice: Moral Consciousness and Psychological Responsibility

Justice represents equilibrium, discernment, consequence, and ethical judgment. In Jungian psychology, individuation is not a license for unrestricted self-expression [7, p. 136]. Greater psychological consciousness

entails greater responsibility for one's actions. Justice may be interpreted as the encounter between personal desire and objective consequence. The individual must recognize both the subjective meaning of an action and its impact upon others. The card also raises the question of psychic balance. Opposing elements cannot always be reduced to a simplistic choice between "good" and "bad". Mature consciousness often requires tolerating ambiguity and accepting responsibility for contradictory aspects of oneself.

The Hanged Man: Surrender and the Transformation of Perspective

The Hanged Man represents suspension, reversal, surrender, sacrifice, and the abandonment of conventional perspective. From a Jungian standpoint, this card may symbolize a crucial stage of psychological transformation: the conscious ego encounters a situation that cannot be solved through its existing methods. The individual must temporarily surrender control. Such surrender should not be confused with passivity. Psychologically, it may represent the capacity to tolerate uncertainty and allow unconscious material to reorganize conscious understanding [1, p. 85]. The inverted position of the Hanged Man is particularly significant. What appears "wrong" from one perspective may reveal a new meaning when the frame of reference changes.

Death: Psychological Transformation and the End of an Identity

Death is one of the most psychologically significant Major Arcana because its symbolic meaning extends far beyond biological death. Within Jungian interpretation, Death can represent the dissolution of an obsolete psychological structure. An identity, relationship pattern, belief system, or defensive mechanism may need to end so that psychological development can continue. Individuation frequently requires symbolic deaths. A person cannot become psychologically different while preserving every previous identification unchanged. The Shadow of Death is resistance to transformation. The ego frequently attempts to maintain familiar structures

even when they have become dysfunctional [7, p. 203]. Death therefore represents not annihilation but transition: something must cease for something else to emerge.

Temperance: Psychic Integration and the Union of Opposites

Temperance depicts the mixing of substances between vessels and traditionally symbolizes balance, moderation, healing, and integration. This imagery corresponds particularly well to Jung's emphasis on the union of opposites. Psychological integration does not mean that all differences disappear. Rather, contradictory tendencies can enter into a new relationship. Conscious and unconscious processes may interact; rationality can coexist with intuition; autonomy can coexist with attachment; strength can coexist with vulnerability. Temperance thus represents one of the central principles of individuation: psychological wholeness is not uniformity but differentiated integration.

The Devil: The Shadow, Compulsion, and Psychological Bondage

The Devil is perhaps the Major Arcanum most directly associated with Jung's concept of the Shadow. The card traditionally represents temptation, attachment, materiality, sexuality, instinct, compulsion, and bondage. Its imagery often emphasizes chains or forms of captivity. From a Jungian perspective, psychological bondage frequently results from unconscious identification. A person may believe that a particular desire, fear, or social role defines them completely. The Devil represents the moment when unconscious forces acquire disproportionate power over consciousness.

Importantly, Jungian psychology does not equate instinct with evil [9, p. 246]. Sexuality, aggression, ambition, pleasure, and material desire are components of human psychology. The problem arises when they are denied, projected, or allowed to dominate behavior without conscious reflection. The Devil therefore invites Shadow integration rather than moralistic rejection.

The Tower: Collapse of the False Structure

The Tower depicts sudden destruction, lightning, falling structures, and dramatic disruption. Psychologically, it can represent the collapse of an ego structure that has become incompatible with reality. A person may maintain a coherent identity through beliefs, defenses, relationships, or social roles. When contradictory evidence becomes impossible to ignore, the structure may collapse. From a Jungian perspective, such experiences can be profoundly destabilizing but potentially transformative. The Tower is therefore not simply a symbol of catastrophe. It represents the destructive dimension of psychological truth. What is false or excessively rigid may need to collapse. The experience is painful precisely because the ego experiences the loss of its familiar organization as a threat to identity.

The Star: Hope, Renewal, and the Emergence of Meaning

After the destruction of the Tower comes the Star. The Star traditionally symbolizes hope, inspiration, renewal, authenticity, and spiritual orientation. In psychological terms, the Star may represent the emergence of a new organizing image after the collapse of previous structures. Jung emphasized the importance of symbolic images in psychological transformation [8, p. 138]. When an old worldview becomes inadequate, the psyche may generate new images that provide orientation. The Star therefore represents the psychological capacity to imagine a future that is not merely a repetition of the past.

The Moon: The Unconscious, Projection, and Ambiguity

The Moon is among the most psychologically complex Major Arcana. It is associated with dreams, uncertainty, fear, illusion, instinct, projection, and the ambiguous territory between consciousness and unconsciousness. This makes it particularly compatible with Jungian approaches to dreams and symbolic material. The Moon does not simply mean deception. It represents a state in which perception is influenced by unconscious material. Fear may

distort reality; projection may cause the individual to experience internal qualities as external threats. The psychological task is not to eliminate ambiguity immediately. It is to remain sufficiently conscious while entering an uncertain psychological territory. The Moon thus represents the necessity of developing a relationship with unconscious material without confusing symbolic experience with objective external fact.

The Sun: Consciousness, Vitality, and Psychological Illumination

The Sun represents clarity, vitality, joy, visibility, and conscious awareness [11, p. 212]. In Jungian symbolism, light frequently provides a metaphor for consciousness. The Sun can therefore represent the emergence of psychological material into awareness. Yet the Sun should not be interpreted as a permanent state in which all unconscious processes have disappeared. Jung's psychology does not propose that consciousness can illuminate the entire psyche. Rather, the Sun represents a relative increase in clarity: the individual can recognize aspects of experience that were previously obscure. Its positive imagery also suggests the integration of vitality and spontaneity. Psychological maturity is not synonymous with seriousness or suppression; it includes the capacity for play, pleasure, creativity, and authentic expression.

Judgment: Psychological Rebirth and the Call of the Self

Judgment represents awakening, calling, resurrection, recognition, and a decisive transition. From a Jungian perspective, it can be associated with a major stage of individuation in which the individual responds to a deeper organizing principle of the psyche. Jung distinguished the ego from the Self [5, p. 335]. The ego is the center of conscious awareness, whereas the Self represents the totality and organizing wholeness of the psyche. Judgment may therefore symbolize an encounter with a deeper sense of identity that cannot be reduced to social roles or previous ego definitions. The image of resurrection is psychologically significant because transformation often

requires the emergence of a new relationship between past and present. The past is not erased; it is integrated and reinterpreted.

The World: Wholeness and the Symbolism of the Self

The World is traditionally the final card of the Major Arcana and represents completion, integration, fulfillment, and wholeness. This makes it particularly suitable for comparison with Jung's concept of the Self. The Self is not merely the ego perfected. It refers to the totality of conscious and unconscious psychic life. Consequently, the World should not be understood as a state in which conflict disappears permanently. Psychological wholeness involves the capacity to contain opposites [7, p. 186]. The figure within the circular wreath can be interpreted as an image of integrated psychic life: movement and stability, individuality and participation, conscious and unconscious dimensions are held within a larger pattern. The World therefore represents not the end of psychological development but a temporary experience of integration. The circular structure also allows the sequence to begin again with the Fool.

The Major Arcana as a Narrative of Individuation

When the Major Arcana are considered collectively, a broad psychological narrative becomes visible. The Fool begins as potential. The Magician develops agency. The High Priestess introduces the unconscious. The Empress and Emperor establish complementary principles of generation and structure. The Hierophant represents collective meaning, while the Lovers introduce relationship, polarity, and choice [13, p. 67]. The Chariot consolidates direction. Strength establishes a conscious relationship with instinct. The Hermit turns inward. The Wheel of Fortune confronts the ego with forces beyond its control. Justice introduces responsibility, while the Hanged Man disrupts habitual perspective. Death marks symbolic transformation. Temperance attempts integration. The Devil confronts unconscious attachment and Shadow material. The Tower destroys rigid

structures. The Star introduces renewed orientation. The Moon returns consciousness to ambiguity and the unconscious, followed by the clarifying symbolism of the Sun. Judgment represents awakening to a deeper psychological identity, and the World symbolizes integration. This sequence resembles the broad structure of individuation: differentiation, encounter with unconscious material, confrontation with opposites, destabilization of previous identity, integration, and movement toward greater psychic wholeness. However, this interpretation should not be mistaken for a literal psychological algorithm. Human development is rarely linear. Individuals move backward and forward between psychological states, revisit unresolved conflicts, and experience multiple transformations throughout life. The Major Arcana can therefore be better understood as a symbolic spiral than as a straight developmental ladder.

Archetypal Polarity in the Major Arcana

One of the most important principles of Jungian psychology is the relationship between opposites. The Tarot repeatedly constructs symbolic polarities:

- Fool / World: beginning and completion;
- Magician / High Priestess: action and receptivity;
- Empress / Emperor: generation and structure;
- Hierophant / Lovers: collective values and personal choice;
- Chariot / Hermit: outward movement and inward reflection;
- Strength / Devil: conscious integration of instinct and unconscious bondage;
- Death / Sun: symbolic ending and renewed consciousness;
- Tower / Star: destruction and reconstruction;
- Moon / Sun: ambiguity and clarity.

These polarities suggest that psychological development does not consist in choosing one side permanently. The conscious personality

becomes more complex when it can hold opposing psychological truths simultaneously. For example, autonomy without relationship may become isolation, whereas relationship without autonomy may become dependency. Rationality without intuition may become rigidity, while intuition without critical reflection may become projection. Jungian individuation therefore requires a psychological capacity that can be described as “holding the tension of opposites” [5, p. 34]. The Tarot provides an exceptionally accessible visual language for this principle.

Projection and the Psychological Use of Tarot

One of the most significant connections between Tarot and analytical psychology concerns projection. Jung understood projection as a process through which unconscious psychological contents are experienced as belonging to another person or to the external world. Symbolic images can become objects of projection because they are sufficiently ambiguous to activate personal associations. For example, an individual looking at the Devil may perceive sexuality, fear, repression, temptation, power, or liberation depending on their psychological history. The card does not contain one psychologically universal message. Rather, it functions as a symbolic stimulus [12, p. 92].

This principle provides a possible explanation for why Tarot readings may feel personally meaningful even without assuming supernatural prediction. The individual's associations, expectations, emotional reactions, and memories contribute to the interpretation. The Tarot card can function as a mirror — not because it objectively reflects future events, but because symbolic ambiguity permits the individual to encounter aspects of their own psychological world. This does not mean that every subjective interpretation is psychologically valid. Projection can distort perception as easily as it can facilitate insight. A responsible psychological approach therefore requires reflection on the interpreter's assumptions.

Jung developed the method of amplification to explore symbolic material by connecting a particular image with mythological, religious, cultural, and historical parallels. The Tarot lends itself naturally to such an approach.

A card can be examined on several levels:

1. Descriptive level: What is visibly represented?
2. Personal level: What associations does the image evoke in the individual?
3. Cultural level: What historical meanings are attached to the symbols?
4. Archetypal level: What recurrent psychological pattern might the image activate?
5. Developmental level: What psychological conflict or transition could the image represent?

This multilayered approach prevents the reduction of Tarot symbolism to rigid definitions. For instance, the Hermit may historically evoke religious asceticism and wisdom. Personally, it may evoke loneliness or freedom. Archetypally, it may activate the Wise Old Man motif. Developmentally, it may represent a period of withdrawal required for psychological differentiation. All of these meanings can coexist.

A central place in Jungian analytical psychology occupies the concept of the Self [5, p. 48]. Jung's conception of the Self is broader than the ordinary notion of self-esteem or personal identity. It refers to the organizing totality of the psyche and to the possibility of psychological wholeness. Several Tarot images can be interpreted as manifestations of this principle. The World is the most obvious example because of its symbolism of completion and circularity. Judgment may represent the call toward a deeper identity, while the Sun represents increasing consciousness. Nevertheless, the Self should not be equated with any single card.

If the Self represents psychic totality, then the entire Major Arcana can be interpreted as a symbolic field through which different aspects of psychic

life become visible. The Self is therefore not simply the destination of the Fool's journey [12, p. 67]. It is also implicitly present throughout the journey.

The phrase "Fool's Journey" is commonly used in modern Tarot discourse to describe the progression through the Major Arcana. From a Jungian perspective, the journey can be understood as a symbolic representation of the development of consciousness. At the beginning, the individual encounters external structures: authority, tradition, family, relationship, social identity. Later, the journey turns toward inner experience: solitude, uncertainty, surrender, transformation, Shadow confrontation, and the unconscious. The final stages involve renewed consciousness and integration. This narrative corresponds to a general psychological movement: potential → differentiation → social adaptation → conflict → withdrawal → destabilization → confrontation with the unconscious → transformation → integration. The model is useful precisely because it does not portray psychological growth as uninterrupted progress. Crisis is included as an essential component of development.

A serious academic interpretation must acknowledge significant limitations. First, Tarot is historically older than Jung's analytical psychology but younger than many of the myths and symbolic traditions sometimes associated with it. The modern occult interpretation of the Major Arcana emerged through complex 19th- and 20th-century esoteric traditions.

Second, there is no canonical Jungian system assigning each Tarot card a specific archetype. Any detailed correspondence between the twenty-two Major Arcana and Jungian concepts is therefore interpretive.

Third, the concept of archetypes itself has been criticized for ambiguity. Some scholars have questioned whether archetypes should be understood as inherited psychic structures, culturally transmitted patterns, cognitive predispositions, or metaphorical descriptions of recurring human experiences.

Fourth, symbolic interpretation is inherently susceptible to confirmation bias. Once an interpreter expects to find a particular archetype, almost any sufficiently ambiguous image may appear to confirm the hypothesis.

Fifth, psychological meaning cannot be separated entirely from culture and personal history. The same Tarot image may evoke very different psychological associations in different individuals.

For these reasons, Tarot should not be presented as a scientifically validated diagnostic instrument. The psychological interpretation of Tarot must be distinguished from empirical psychological assessment. Contemporary clinical psychology relies upon methods designed to evaluate reliability, validity, predictive accuracy, and clinical utility. Tarot does not possess comparable empirical status as a diagnostic or prognostic instrument. Nevertheless, symbolic practices may have psychological value without functioning as scientific tests.

Narrative therapy, expressive arts, dream work, guided imagery, and other therapeutic approaches demonstrate that symbolic representation can contribute to self-reflection and meaning-making. A Tarot image may similarly serve as a prompt for narrative exploration.

For example, asking an individual what the Tower represents in their current life may encourage examination of beliefs, structures, and identities that have become unstable. Asking what the Hermit means to them may facilitate reflection on solitude, boundaries, and inner authority.

The psychological mechanism in such cases need not be supernatural. It may involve projection, metaphorical thinking, autobiographical memory, emotional activation, narrative reconstruction, and perspective-taking. The therapeutic usefulness of a symbolic practice should therefore be evaluated separately from its metaphysical claims.

It is tempting to describe the Major Arcana through fixed statements such as “the Emperor means authority” or “the Devil means temptation”. A Jungian

approach suggests a more dynamic interpretation [12, p. 27]. Authority can be conscious or unconscious. The Emperor can represent healthy structure or authoritarian domination. The High Priestess can represent intuitive wisdom or avoidant secrecy. The Hermit can represent mature solitude or defensive isolation. The Lovers can represent authentic relationship or projection. The Devil can represent destructive compulsion or the rediscovery of rejected instinctual energy. The Tower can represent traumatic collapse or liberation from a false identity. Thus, archetypal images should be interpreted in terms of psychological relationships rather than dictionaries of fixed meanings. The same archetypal pattern can have both constructive and destructive manifestations [11, p. 214].

One of the greatest psychological strengths of the Tarot is ambiguity. Scientific concepts strive toward precise operational definitions. Symbolic images function differently. Their meanings are open enough to allow associations but structured enough to provide psychological orientation. This ambiguity creates a productive tension between recognition and uncertainty. A person may recognize themselves in an image while simultaneously discovering something unexpected about their own interpretation. The Moon is particularly illustrative. Its ambiguity may provoke fear, imagination, curiosity, projection, or intuition. The card does not resolve the uncertainty; it creates a symbolic space in which uncertainty can be examined. From a depth-psychological perspective, this can be valuable because unconscious processes frequently become visible first through ambiguous images rather than explicit propositions.

The comparison between Jungian archetypes and the Major Arcana demonstrates a substantial interpretive compatibility, but compatibility should not be confused with historical identity or empirical validation.

The Tarot's symbolic richness allows many Jungian concepts to be represented metaphorically. The Shadow finds particularly clear expression in

the Devil and Moon, while the process of psychological transformation can be explored through Death and Tower. The Self is especially compatible with the World, and individuation provides a framework for interpreting the entire sequence.

Nevertheless, no one-to-one correspondence can be established. This is partly because archetypes are not equivalent to characters. The same archetypal pattern may appear in multiple cards, while a single card may activate several archetypal patterns simultaneously. The Emperor, for instance, can represent the paternal principle, authority, order, Persona, collective structure, or the ego's need for control. Which dimension becomes psychologically significant depends on the individual and the context. Similarly, the Fool can embody the Divine Child, Trickster, Wanderer, or potentiality. The psychological meaning is not contained entirely within the image itself. This interpretive openness is not necessarily a weakness. It is precisely what allows symbolic material to function as a medium of psychological exploration. However, it does mean that Tarot interpretation should be presented as hermeneutic rather than diagnostic.

The study of Tarot through Jungian psychology may contribute to a broader understanding of symbolic consciousness.

First, it demonstrates the persistence of archetypal narrative structures in contemporary culture.

Second, it provides a case study of how individuals construct personal meaning from culturally transmitted images.

Third, it illustrates the psychological significance of ambiguity. Human beings frequently need symbolic forms that can contain contradictory meanings without resolving them prematurely.

Fourth, Tarot offers an accessible example of the distinction between projection and objective reality. A card may reveal something about the

interpreter's psyche precisely because the interpreter participates in constructing its meaning.

Finally, the Tarot may be considered a cultural artifact through which the tension between rational modernity and symbolic imagination becomes visible.

Rather than asking whether Tarot is “scientifically true” in a predictive sense, psychological scholarship can ask what people psychologically do with Tarot, why its images remain compelling, and how symbolic interpretation influences self-narratives.

Conclusion

The Major Arcana of the Tarot and Jungian analytical psychology belong to different historical and intellectual traditions. Tarot emerged within European card culture and later became associated with various occult and esoteric systems. Jung, by contrast, developed a psychological theory concerned with consciousness, the unconscious, archetypal patterns, symbolic experience, and individuation.

Nevertheless, the two systems can be placed into a productive interpretive dialogue. The Major Arcana can be read as a symbolic narrative of psychological development. The Fool represents the beginning of an uncertain journey; the Magician, conscious agency; the High Priestess, the encounter with the unconscious; the Empress and Emperor, complementary generative and structuring principles; the Hierophant, collective tradition; the Lovers, relationship and psychological polarity; the Chariot, direction; Strength, integration of instinct; the Hermit, inner reflection; the Wheel of Fortune, the limits of ego control; Justice, responsibility; the Hanged Man, surrender of habitual perspective; Death, transformation; Temperance, integration; the Devil, Shadow and attachment; the Tower, collapse of rigid structures; the Star, renewal; the Moon, unconscious ambiguity; the Sun, illumination; Judgment, awakening; and the World, symbolic wholeness.

The most significant correspondence is therefore not between individual cards and isolated archetypes, but between the structure of the Tarot journey and the psychological logic of individuation. From this perspective, the Tarot does not need to be understood as a supernatural mechanism in order to possess psychological significance. Its images can function as symbolic containers for projection, imagination, emotional recognition, narrative reconstruction, and reflection on unconscious processes.

The value of a Jungian interpretation of Tarot lies precisely in its ability to transform the question from “What will happen to me?” into “What is happening within me, and what might this image reveal about the way I understand myself?” Such an approach also preserves the distinction between symbolic interpretation and scientific evidence. Tarot should not be regarded as an empirically validated diagnostic or predictive method. Its potential psychological relevance lies instead in its function as a symbolic language.

Ultimately, the Major Arcana may be understood as a gallery of psychological possibilities. Their figures do not necessarily predict external events; they dramatize inner situations. Their narratives remind us that development involves not only gaining knowledge and control but also encountering uncertainty, recognizing disowned aspects of ourselves, relinquishing obsolete identities, integrating opposites, and discovering forms of meaning that are larger than the conscious ego. In this sense, the journey of the Tarot can be interpreted as an image of a fundamental psychological movement: from unconscious potential toward greater consciousness, from fragmentation toward integration, and from identification with a limited ego toward a more complex relationship with the totality of psychic life. The Fool and the World may therefore be understood as two points on the same symbolic circle. The journey begins with openness to the unknown and culminates in an experience of greater wholeness — but wholeness itself

contains the possibility of a new beginning. Psychological development is not a final state. It is an ongoing process of becoming.

Further research could focus on a more detailed comparative analysis of individual Major Arcana cards and specific Jungian archetypes, as well as on their relationship to the process of individuation. Future studies could also investigate how psychological interpretations of Tarot symbolism vary across different cultural contexts and contemporary approaches to analytical psychology.

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