

## DECONSTRUCTION OF RUSSIA'S NEWSPEAK IN UKRAINIAN HUMOROUS TRANSLATION AND DIGITAL FOLKLORE<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** *The paper analyses digital folklore and humor as a weapon in Ukraine's defensive war with Russia. The discussion is focused on the specifics, forms, genres, and scope of the Ukrainian people's cyber war against Russia's propaganda from the perspective of ordinary people's ability to influence an ongoing conflict in real time via virtual conversations. Ukrainian digital folklore is viewed as a new phenomenon in the history of war culture and a new age of cyber-war culture. The paper relies on works exploring identity issues and change in communities affected by war through the prism of popular culture and Ukrainian contemporary art (Iryna Shuvalova, Nataliya Yarmolenko, Viktoriya Sukovata, and others). After a brief historical review of Russian imperial narratives towards Ukraine that led from a hybrid to total war, the article concentrates on the avenues of parodistic translation-deconstruction of Russia's Newspeak by means of puns, meta-derivatives, and neologisms. The perspective broadens still further with the study of new proverbs, jokes, aphorisms, and quotes analyzed as the public voice of Ukrainians debunking Russian propagandistic discourses on social platforms. At that, funny pictures, memes, and cartoons are analyzed separately, through the prism of historical reminiscences which they awaken. The strategies of explicating the Kremlin's geopolitical, historical, and cultural ambitions are highlighted. Contextualization of favorite poetic quotations and a new angle of poetic mystification are also considered separately, from the vantage point of deconstruction of Putin's neo-imperial myths. The article concludes that various deconstructive strategies were spontaneously developed in numerous works of verbal and syncretic humor art and poetry posted and disseminated on public platforms in connection with the Russian war against Ukraine.*

**Key words:** *deconstruction, digital folklore, humor, parody, poetic mystification, translation, wartime Newspeak*

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*Our values matter most not when it's easy to embody them, but when it's really hard. We must not become a mirror of the aggressor state.*

Oleksandra Matviichuk,  
From the Nobel Lecture given by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate  
Oslo, December 10, 2022

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In this article, I will examine public posts and tweets on various social platforms, created in the Ukrainian and Russian languages in the Ukrainian sector of social platforms since February 2014 and mostly after February 24, 2022, when Russia's full-scale invasion into Ukraine started. In my analysis, I will hone in on the strategies of deconstructing Russia's *Newspeak* in Ukrainian humorous translation and digital folklore and ascertain the theory of deconstruction as the common theoretical framework for these spontaneous strategies as people's creativity in dismantling Russian (neo)imperial narratives and myths in cyberspace.

To this end, I will look specifically for the (new) forms and genres of digital folklore and humor as the propeller of a massive and ramified phenomenon of Ukrainian digital folklore under the umbrella of deconstruction theory applied to popular culture and adjusted to the circumstances of the newest cyber war culture, which continues to rapidly develop in the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war conflict. I will employ the methods of critical and deconstructive discourse analysis (Wodak & Meyer 2012; Derrida 1976; 1978; 1979; 1981; 1982; McDonald 1995) for the analysis of Russian *Newspeak* and its humorous debunking on social platforms, which are effective in revealing the ways in which propagandistic language is constructed, as well as structural-semantic analysis and translation analysis; the latter two will both acquire a critical shade in the light of deconstructive method in my research. The analysis will result in some observations on the kinds and workings of spontaneous deconstructive approaches in the humorous genres of Ukrainian digital folklore aiming at dismantling Russian *Newspeak* and identify the most effective deconstructive strategies that can be singled out for different genres of cyber folklore, including parodistic translation.

## 2. Features of Digital Folklore

Average Ukrainians did not remain passive witnesses to the Russo-Ukrainian war. Social platforms offer people the agency to reflect on how they managed life during war. Ukrainians act on media platforms as the diarists and chroniclers of their experience and events of the war unleashed by the Kremlin.

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<sup>1</sup> The study is based on the author's paper presentations at the 2021 and 2022 ASN World Conventions, Columbia University, 6 May 2021 and 4 May 2022.

As the study of popular and folk art, the paper relies on works exploring identity issues and change in the communities affected by war through the prism of popular culture. First, these are the recent publications on popular art coming from the occupied Ukrainian territories of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) and the war in Donbas since 2014, such as the PhD thesis and articles by Iryna Shuvalova (2020; 2022), Viktoriya Sukovata (2017), and others. Among important works I draw on are the public lectures by Nataliya Yarmolenko, which derive from research on a similar project – the study of digital folklore in the case of Ukraine in wartime. In her public lectures about the internet folklore of the Russo-Ukrainian war, given on May 12, 2022 and June 21, 2022, Yarmolenko highlights the traditional and innovative features of Ukrainian digital folklore (Yarmolenko 2022a, 2022b). Specifically, Yarmolenko suggests an exhaustive list of the genre composition of digital folklore about the ongoing war, namely, ritual folklore (incantations, curses, prayers, lamentations), folk epic (author's tales, legends, folk tales, narratives, anecdotes), small folklore genres (praises, greetings, wishes, sayings, proverbs, etc.), children's folklore (tong twisters, rhymes), song folklore, post-folklore (church parish folklore, holy messages, "letters of happiness"). At that, she highlights several new genres featuring the generic novelty of Ukrainian digital folklore. They are greetings, roll calls, news from the frontline, thank you notes to God, the Armed Forces, medics, firefighters, countries, cities, volunteers, etc., appeals, warnings, mutual aid announcements, bans, words of advice, warnings, quotations, remakes of songs (Yarmolenko 2022b).

The study presented here concentrates on humorous pieces of verbal and syncretic art (re)posted in social networks by private Ukrainian users and on webpages of private Ukrainian companies as well as in Ukrainian electronic media. These humorous works began to appear in the cyberspace in great measure from the first days of Russian full-scale invasion, which happened on February 24, 2022. To a large extent, they have been aimed at criticism of Russia's neo-imperialistic rhetoric and actions. The world press almost immediately drew attention to the successful use of humor as a powerful "latest weapon" (Matloff 2022) in the Ukrainians' virtual struggle against Russian aggression.

Thus, the largest number of works on Ukrainian digital art and social platforms which I studied as thematically related to my paper are the popular articles in the Internet media devoted to Ukrainian humor as a weapon in the Russo-Ukrainian war (Matloff 2022; Maksymiv 2022; Novak 2022; Shaw 2022; Charles 2022; Bishara 2022; Opanasyk 2022, etc.). Such publications highlight the importance of "a comic lens" for survival in drastic situations, but they are not looking for an answer to the fundamental question of why Ukrainian humor has become such an effective brand weapon. Of course, an obvious answer to this question may be the creativity of the population, i.e., ordinary Ukrainians have the time and ability to invent and repost funny texts that quickly spread on the networks. The absolute majority of these are anonymous texts. Syncretic works, such as posters, comics, funny pictures, are about the same, although most of them had a separate author and/or source of origin in the first publications. Numerous reposts, however, quickly anonymize even these artistic genres, if they accurately reflect the "need of the day."

The data for this study come from the following social networks: *Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LiveJournal, Reddit, Idaprikol, VKontakte, YouTube Channel, Telegram Channel*; on webpages: *Ukrainian Memes Forces, Zhanabec, Zbirnyk ukrains'kykh anekdotiv* [Collection of Ukrainian Jokes], *Persha pryvatna memarnya on Twitter* [The First Private Museum of Memes on Twitter], *Mala Storinka*, etc.; and in Ukrainian digital media: *Komsomol's'ka Pravda v Ukraïni* (KP in Ukraine), *Holos Ukraïny: Hazeta Verkhovnoi Rady Ukraïny* [Voice of Ukraine: Newspaper of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine], *Obozrevatel, Typovyi Kyiv / Tipichnyi Kiev* [Typical Kyiv], *News of Zakarpattia, UkraineWorld, Hlyboka.Info, YHIAH* [UNIAN], *TCH* [TSN], *Liha.Novyny, Liga.net, Radio Track: Novyny* [News], and some others.

Broadly understanding digital folklore as multimedia folk art that spreads in cyberspace on various social media platforms, one can come across different types of digital folklore, such as verbal type (jokes, proverbial saying, etc.), mixed type (memes, photo frogs), video and animated texts type (gifs). The discussion in this article will focus primarily on the verbal type and extend to the mixed type of digital folklore.

Although in most of its features, digital folklore functions like traditional folklore (it is a syncretic art, with relative constancy and at the same time certain variability of the folk text, its anonymity and collectivity), it nevertheless steps forward as an innovative form of folklore. Stylistic innovation of digital folklore consists in its parodistic and humorous varieties: jokes, anecdotes, satirical rhymes, etc., in addition to such new features as mediality, absence of direct contact between the performer and the listener, absence of oral form of communication (with the exception of songs), as well as its synchronization with current events and focus on the present moment. I also consider a deconstructive translation of Russian propaganda *Newspeak* as a separate branch of parodistic folklore, which, by the way, travels mainly in oral form in news media and on video platforms. It will be discussed in detail in the third section of this paper. From three hundred units of samples of digital folklore that I have collected and researched, I selected three dozen units of the most vivid samples of digital folklore and two dozen samples of parodistic translation for the demonstration and analysis in this article.

English-speaking audience remains broadly unfamiliar with Ukrainian digital folklore (not to mention other audiences), although small humorous genres and syncretic art, such as funny pictures and memes, can be found more and more often in the English-language digital media, in particular, in such well-known ones as *Al Jazeera, Radio Liberty, The Washington Post, The New Yorker, The New York Times*, etc., and also in smaller press, such as *Geneva Solutions, Hyperallergic, VOA Learning English*, and so on. Therefore, my English translations of the Internet samples of Ukrainian folk art, given in the article, can be considered an important practical and popularizing task, in addition to the main research tasks of this article.

The primary objectives of this paper are to analyze 1) the present-day ability of ordinary people to influence an ongoing conflict in real time via virtual conversations aimed at debunking Russian imperial myths and narratives; 2) humor as Ukraine's digital weapon and a tool of deconstructing the Kremlin's *Newspeak* on social platforms;

3) the forms and genres of Ukrainian people's digital folklore in the war with Russian propagandistic discourses; and 4) the strategies of dismantling Russia's *Newspeak*, peculiar to particular genres of digital folklore.

The article brings into focus a new paradigm in the Ukrainian civilians' perception of the Kremlin's neo-imperial rhetoric and conquering policy. The paradigm shift became particularly broad and conspicuous since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In their defensive war, Ukrainians seem to have overcome their ages-old victim complex of Russian colonialism and are attacking the enemy with flurries of their natural sparkling humor. Ukrainian digital folklore is ridiculing the Kremlin's imperial *Newspeak* and its aggressive actions and intentions by means of parodistic translation, anecdotes, snarky sayings, witty wellerisms, and other varieties of humor genres, which spread in social media networks. Digital folklore unites disparate Ukrainian voices in cyber space and forms a single national narrative aimed at resistance to Russian invasion and defeating its aggressive policy. Digital platforms reveal the peculiar features of Ukrainians' inborn humor as being uniquely striking, biting sharp, but also life-affirming, full of positive energy and invincible laughter.

The focal research question, thus, is to trace the linguo-semiotic resources and strategic ways of combating Russian war discourses on virtual fronts so that to win in the Russo-Ukraine information cyberwar of civilians. With this purpose in mind, first of all, it is crucial to outline and describe the phenomenon of mass Internet activity of Ukrainian civilians, refugees, and diasporas all over the globe, synchronized with real events, as a people's war, and consider this phenomenon in the broader conceptual framework of war cultures as a new stage in the development of the concept of war culture, namely, as a people's cyber war.

In what follows, I will analyze the structure of Russian neo-imperial *Newspeak* as an object of deconstruction and reveal the ways in which propagandistic language is constructed. Then, I will consider the strategies of deconstructing the *Newspeak* in parodistic translation, with the focus on puns, meta-derivatives, and neologisms. I will also examine the most popular units of verbal digital folklore belonging to small humorous genres: (reinterpreted) proverbs, (new) jokes, funny aphorisms, and facetious quotes, from the vantage point of public dismantling of the myth of Russian greatness. In the same section, I will analyze the most popular samples of syncretic genres of digital art—comical pictures, memes, and cartoons, which may still partially retain their authorial origin, but are rapidly losing it due to mass distribution in social networks—in terms of explicating contradictions and reinterpreting Russian historical narratives and reminiscences. I will also probe into the phenomenon of poetic mystification in cyberspace and recontextualization of popular verses during the ongoing warfare.

### 3. Deconstruction in Translation and Digital Folklore

The theoretical research framework of this research is the theory of deconstruction worked out by Jacques Derrida (1976; 1978; 1979; 1981; 1982; McDonald 1995).

Deconstruction is important for the concept and procedures of parodistic translation as well as for the understanding of how the humorous genres of digital folklore are created. The theory of deconstruction is based on a rethinking of the traditional hierarchy of speech over writing as a practice of signification (in Derrida's early work *Of Grammatology*, [1967] 1976). Deconstructing closure and grounding, Derrida asserts the importance of "absence" in which meaning, closure, and grounding is always and forever moving away. For Derrida, the connection between thing and language, or concept and sign, is not based on the metaphysical connection between word and object and the adequacy of language in providing knowledge about the "thing in itself," but rather on the principles of difference – the insurmountable gap between the word and the thing, the signifier and the signified – and the permanent deferral of a stable and unambiguous meaning. Therefore, according to Derrida, writing is a field for an unlimited game of meanings, which is characterized by the movement of distinction. As a result of this movement, meaning no longer acts as isolated and determined – for Derrida, these qualities are always illusory; meaning becomes a series of deferrals, supplements, and substitutions rather than remaining stable and fixed.

Comparing translation with historiography, Derrida notes that each translation necessarily "infects" the original with new meanings and re-creates it anew (1979: 76). Thus, if even a neutral translation in terms of the translator's modality re-creates the original, then a parodistic translation is disproportionately more a product of the target culture than of the source text.

Deconstruction is applied in the works of Ukrainian digital humor at various structural levels of language: at the word and phrase level (parodistic translation), at the text level (mini genres of digital folklore), and at the level of Russian historical, geopolitical, and cultural narratives, wittily transformed in Ukrainian artistic interpretation into the pieces of humorous syncretic art. Deconstruction breaks the (original) meaning into parts. It is always a sarcastic, critical look at the (original) decontextualized text or utterance as having a single/unified/cohesive/non-contradictory meaning. This is why deconstruction works so well for Ukrainians in dismantling Russian propaganda, which is already constructed as very shaky and unsubstantiated statements – perfect material for a de-constructor, even for a non-linguist one.

When the meaning disintegrates, Russian political concepts and slogans, on the one hand, lose their meaning, and on the other hand, acquire an endless interpretive potential, which Ukrainians jokingly exploit. In theory, deconstructive criticism doesn't take even itself very seriously, and in practice, Ukrainians always remain self-ironic, ready to make a funny joke about themselves and have a good laugh at it. Self-irony is very helpful in making quality jokes about others. Ukrainian citizens create dozens of jokes every day, and hundreds of jokes every week. In particular, the online Collection of Ukrainian Jokes already includes almost thirteen thousand samples of the best Ukrainian jokes. Russian-language jokes also circulate in cyberspace, contrasting even more with Russian *Newspeak*. The whole of Ukraine, all its ethnic representatives, is joking.



The deconstructive procedures of picking apart and breaking down the meaning in Russian *Newspeak*, this ambiguous euphemistic language used chiefly in political propaganda, reveal its absurdity. The process of breaking the meaning apart matters itself – to demonstrate how the concept or statement is controlled and reduced by the values and prejudices of certain individuals. This is how and why Ukrainian parodies and jokes are created.

#### 4. Russian Neo-imperial *Newspeak* as an Object of Deconstruction

The specific reasons for a manipulative linguistic strategy in Russia's media, aimed at distortion of political reality, appear to be grounded in the justification of expansionist policy. Linguistic manipulations have proved to be a highly effective tool of hybrid warfare on the part of the Kremlin officials and Russian media. The basic functional mechanism of Russian political propaganda consists in constructing an alternative reality by linguistic means, blatantly pretending on the eve of February 24, 2022, that it was not Russia but Ukraine who was preparing an invasion against Russia. Deliberate semantic shifts of the words and phrases to the opposite meaning comprise a linguistic phenomenon known as the “Newspeak” from George Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). The *Newspeak* is a controlled language designed to limit the individual's ability to think and articulate the concepts of personal identity, self-expression and free will, which are criminalized in a totalitarian superstate.

The study of the linguistic component of Russian hybrid warfare against Ukraine reveals its features as a *new* totalitarian *Newspeak*. It is a “development” of the performative ideological ritual language, well known to the former Soviet Union citizens as a legacy of the late Stalin–Brezhnev era, masterfully described in Alexei Yurchak's study *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*, which was originally published in English and later reprinted in Russian translation (Yurchak 2005; 2014). It was the system of “late socialism” (mid-1950s–mid-1980s) when the consciousness of so-called “homines sovietici,” the “split personalities,” and the “masked hypocrites” prevailed in the masses over any other consciousness. The consciousness of “masked hypocrites” seems to have deeply stuck in the minds of citizens of the Russian Federation until today. The task of constructing an opposite, alternative reality by means of the *Newspeak*, limiting a person's ability to think and express free will, which was analyzed by Orwell in his 1949 novel, has been unfolding in Russian media with a dizzying speed recently.

Throughout the year 2021, the Russian *Newspeak* was aimed at creating a *myth* that an invasion was being prepared against Russia by Ukraine (herewith, Russian troops on the border with Ukraine were allegedly located in a defensive position). Russian TV “journalists” were successfully convincing their listeners of this opinion with statements about “the peacemaking of Russia” (миротворчество России), Russia as “the only real peacemaker” (Россия единственный настоящий миротворец), etc., which sounded directly opposite to the real situation. Simultaneously, the rhetoric of peacemaking was used on par with the militaristic rhetoric, which included, for example, aggressive calls to resort to “coercion into peace” (принуждение к миру),

“coercion into fraternity” (принуждение к братству), “forced denazification of Ukraine” (насильственная денацификация Украины), as well as other older and newly coined phrases and slogans produced on Russian TV channels and political shows, such as “Russia 1,” “Russia Today,” “News of the Week with Dmitry Kiselyov,” “60 Minutes” show, etc.

Russian propagandists count on the assumption that people do not want the truth as much as they want reassurance that what they believe *is* the truth. It is enough for the Kremlin mouthpieces to spread lies more and more intensely because this is what the TV viewers in Russian want to hear, and the pressure, fear, and manipulation act most effectively on totally disoriented people.

The Kremlin’s *Newspeak* as a linguistic component – with its simplified grammar and limited vocabulary interspersed with prison jargon – of hybrid warfare with the aim of constructing the myth of alleged Ukrainian military aggression. Perceived threats to Russia from Ukraine have deep historical roots in the rhetoric of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), with its tradition of substituting objective facts with an alternative reality by means of linguistic manipulation. The rhetoric of generalized Party totalitarianism with its devastating impact on society was analyzed by Orwell in the already mentioned *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. To establish in the minds of citizens the idea that “[n]othing exists except an endless present in which the Party is always right” (Orwell 2003: 249) turned out to be the most important purpose of the Party’s *Newspeak*, a language created to meet the ideological requirements of the ruling political regime. As in Orwell’s novel, the Russian *Newspeak*, which is largely based on the rhetorical experience of the CPSU, affirms the infinite present for the Kremlin leader: Putin’s Russia must “defend” itself forever while conducting at that very time its covert or overt offensive operations, that is, a real war of aggression against Ukraine and the rest of the democratic world. The catastrophic consequences of the influence of lies on the consciousness and emotional state of the deceived Russians are becoming more and more obvious with each new day.

The Soviet totalitarian state was built on historical myths inherited by its successor, the Russian Federation. Exploitation of the performative function of *Newspeak*, that is, using the language as a means of constructing a “correct” reality in the minds of millions rather than as a means of comprehending the objective facts, has been practiced for decades in the rhetoric of the CPSU, and in the early 2020s the neo-imperial Russian *Newspeak* dominates in the rhetoric of Russian government and media.

The *Newspeak*-ish rhetoric is being actively deconstructed in numerous ridiculing neologisms built on a range of clichés from the Russian *Newspeak*, which have been coined by Ukrainians recently. Moreover, a dynamic process of deconstructing the narratives of Russian *Newspeak* is observable not only in public but also in academic Ukrainian discourse, both at the levels of verbal form and semantic content. While Ukrainian academics efficiently decompose the mythmaking of modern Russia, revealing the linguistic mechanisms of geopolitical expansion of the Russian Federation and accurately defining its policy towards Ukraine, in particular in 2021, as



“progressive hybression,” from *hybrid* + *aggression* (Martyniuk 2018), Putin’s geopolitical values are being industriously dismantled and reconsidered by Ukrainians on social media platforms. For instance, a witty philological riddle, posted by Юлія Бондаренко (Iūliia Bondarenko) on her official Facebook page as early as 19 April 2021 (reposted on 19 April 2022), humorously points at the grammatical lacune in the future tense, first person singular of the Russian verb *победить* (to win) as a philological curse of the “russian world” (the author’s spelling is kept):

Філологічне прокляття “руського мира”: це коли бажання є, амбіції тиснуть, а велікий і могутій цього не передбачає. Бо яке б войовниче не було чиесь Я, слова “переможу” в російській мові не існує. (See *Bol'shoi akademicheskii slovar' russkogo iazyka*. Vol.17, 2011, note by the author)

A philological curse of the “russian world”: this is what happens when the desire is there and the ambitions are pressing, but “the great and mighty” [an imperialistic cliché for the Russian language, L.K.]<sup>1</sup> does not provide for their implementation. Because no matter how militant someone’s Self is, the word “I-will-win” [Ukr. *peremozhu*] does not exist in the Russian language. (See *The Great Academic Dictionary of the Russian Language*. Vol.17, 2011, note by the author)

Only descriptive constructions *смогу победить* (I will be able to win), *буду победителем* (I will be a winner), etc. are possible and considered to be normative in the literary Russian language (Kak pravil'no n.d.).

The process of deconstruction of Russian *Newspeak* has become a mass entertainment, an element of Ukrainian pop culture in social networks. Deconstruction appertains to a play and amusement of pointing out flaws and gaps in the “serious” texts and statements of the “other.” The process of deconstruction is related, first, to the search for meaning and pointing out the failure /error in meaning by revealing the tension/contradictions in the text; second, to the discovery of a new unity that resolves the tension, demonstrating that oppositions can be reversed and restructured in many different ways, and meaning can be re-created by many different contexts; and thirdly, deconstruction indicates that the tension is not really an opposite. In the case of Russian propaganda *Newspeak*, one can conclude that it has no meaning, since the euphemistic language within it fails, it does not work as a (true/false) statement, neither has an authentic/credible context for itself as a text.

## 5. Deconstruction of Russia’s *Newspeak* in Parodistic Translation and Digital Folklore

For Ukrainian civilians the Russian war on their country began in 2014. Since then, Ukrainians have been at the center of Ukraine’s virtual mobilization. Many of them took up real arms in the first days of Russian invasion, and many more engaged in virtual battles. With the expansion of Russia’s war on February 24, 2022,

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<sup>1</sup> Quote from a poem in prose by Ivan Turgenev “Russian language” (1882): “In the days of doubt, in the days of painful reflections about the fate of my homeland, you are my only support and pillar, O great, powerful, truthful and free Russian language!” (Serov, Vadim, ed. (2003). *Encyclopedic Dictionary of catchy words and expressions*. Moscow: “Lokid-Press”). Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the Ukrainian and Russian languages are by the author.

ordinary people in Ukraine not only volunteered and sacrificed for their country's war effort, but quickly began describing their experiences to one another while engaging broader audiences – in Western and Central Europe, the United States, as well as Russian audiences – alongside Ukrainian bloggers with a social media presence.

### 5.1. Puns, meta-derivatives and neologisms produced in parodistic translation

Humorous deconstructive translation has been employed as a popular method of debunking those imperial mythologies which underlie the ideology of the “Russian world,” better translated as “Russian (way of) life.” With the help of semantic shifts, deconstructive translation explicates the language of Russia's war against Ukraine. Due to the deconstruction of Russian narratives, dozens of ironic neologisms appeared in the Ukrainian language prior to February 24, 2022, such as the concept of *viinomyr*, meaning “neither war nor peace,” which characterized the (non)observance by Russian mercenaries of ceasefire on the demarcation line.

Among diverse examples of deliberately shifting translation of the concepts generated in the Russian *Newspeak* since 2014 are the following neologisms:

- 1) mocking neological compound noun *krymnashyst* (suffix -yst/ist indicates belonging to a certain party, ideology, or faith), which derives from the Russian imperialistic slogan *Крым наш*, “The Crimea is ours [Russia's],” and is used to designate a person who supports the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation; literal translation into English: *the-Crimea-is-ours-believer*;
- 2) mocking neological compound noun *ikhtamnet* (pl “ikhtamnety”), which derives from Putin's phrase *их там нет*, “they are not there,” said about the supposed absence of the Russian military in Ukraine during the capture of Crimea in 2014; the word is used to designate Russian military men without insignia, who secretly fought in Ukraine on Russia's side; literal translation into English: *one-of-those-who-are-not-there*;
- 3) mocking neological compound noun *adinnarot*, which derives from Russia's imperialistic ideologeme *один народ*, “one/unified nation,” formulated by Putin about the unity of Russians and Ukrainians, asserting that Ukrainians are Russians, and have always been; the word is used to make senseless the ideologeme that Russians and Ukrainians are the one nation through a grotesque imitation of the sound form of this phrase in Russian (*адин на рот*, where *рот* means “mouth”) while completely distorting/shifting its meaning; literal translation into English: *one-for-the-mouth*;
- 4) mocking neological compound noun *myshebrat'ia*, which derives from the manipulative phrase of Russian propagandists *Мы же братья*, “Brothers we are,” addressed to Ukrainians; the word in Ukrainian is a mockery of the meaning of this Russian phrase through a grotesque imitation of its sound form in Russian (*мышебратья*, where *мыши* means “mice”) depriving it of its initial sense altogether; literal translation into English: *mice-brothers*;

- 5) mocking noun *povtorun*, which alludes to the phrase “we can repeat” and designates a person, who is repeating or ready to “repeat” (“povtor” means “repetition” in both Russian and Ukrainian, and suffix -un indicates an actor); literal translation into English: *a repeater*; the phrase “we can repeat” per se is a part of a broader Russian militaristic and political slogan: *деды воевали, можем повторить*, “*dedy voyevali, mozhem povtorit*” (*grandfathers fought, we can repeat*), which alludes to the “Great patriotic War” (a part of WWII) and signals the willingness of contemporary Russians to fight/conquer Europe, reach and invade Berlin, as their “grandfathers” did in 1945; the oppositional activists in Russia and elsewhere call this aggressive sentiment *pobedobesiye*, “victory madness”;
- 6) mocking phrase *uzkiy mir*, which derives from the key Russian ideological and cultural cliché *русский мир*, “Russian world;”<sup>1</sup> the phrase is used to shift the sense of this Russians ideologeme through a grotesque imitation of the sound form of the adjective *русский* (Russian) as “uzkiy” (narrow); thus, literal translation of “uzkiy mir” is *a narrow world* (“uzkiy” rhymes with “русский”);
- 7) neological compound adjective *analogovnetnaya*, used ironically, which derives from the laudatory phrase “there are no analogues” spread by Russian propaganda media about the Russian army; before February 24, 2022, there was a common belief that the might of Russian army had no analogues in the entire world; literal translation into English: *no-analogues* (army);
- 8) mocking neological noun *mobik* (pl *mobiky*), which derives from the adjective “mobilized” and refers to those Russians who were mobilized (often by force) to the front half a year after the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, where Russia suffered numerous setbacks; this disparaging abbreviation “mobik” reflects a low motivation, poor training and insufficient equipment of the mobilized; semantic translation into English: *a mobilized loser*;
- 9) mocking neological apposition *mobik-chmobik* (pl *mobiky-chmobiky*): the added neological noun “chmobik” to the newly coined “mobik” exacerbates a scornfully negative, although not without a touch of compassion, attitude towards the hastily mobilized Russian citizens, contemptuously called the *mobiks* and destined to mass demise in Ukraine; the newly coined noun “chmobik”<sup>2</sup> derives from the abbreviation *чмо* in the Russian criminal jargon that stands for the phrase *человек, морально опущенный* (a man, morally degraded), which can be translated as “schmuck”; therefore, the neological noun “chmobik” is a blending, which consists of two parts:

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<sup>1</sup> In response to Putin’s recent strategy directed at knocking out power substations in Ukraine and thus at breaking the spirits of everyday Ukrainians in the cold of winter, Ukrainians came up with jokes that they are ready to be without electricity, but not a part of the *Russian world* (Eggers 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Originates from the abbreviated phrase in Russian «частично мобилизованный» (partially mobilized), *чмо*.

“chmo” and “mobik” and points to a double derision: *a morally degraded mobilized Russian, who is a loser*; as well as others.

Concurrently, Russian propagandistic media in Ukrainian public discourse is ironically referred to as the “automatic machines of throwing fakes” (*feikometry*) and the “staples of the Russian world” (*skriēpy russkoho mira*), ironically alluding to the key Russian ideological and cultural cliché *духовные скрепы* (*dukhovnye skrepy*), “spiritual bonds” (literally: spiritual staples), which supposedly denotes for Russians the “traditional values” of their country, its “spiritual bonds” with Kyiv (Russian: Kiev) and Kyivan Rus; the phrase *духовные скрепы* first came into use on December 12, 2012, in the Address of the RF President Vladimir Putin to the Federal Assembly.

Since February 24, 2022, the RF citizens influenced by anti-Ukrainian propaganda with its calls to fight Ukraine have broadly acquired the name *rashyst* [ruscist] (pl *rashysty* [ruscists]) in Ukrainian media. The meaning of this new terminological designation is “a supporter of the Kremlin’s aggressive policy against Ukraine.” The neological terms *ruscist* [rashist] (рашист, рашистський), *ruscistka* [rashistka] (рашистка) originate from the term Ruscism/Rashism, an umbrella term for a popular ideology in Russia. The etymology of the concept of Ruscism points to a blend of English pronunciation of the country name *Rasha* [Russia] and the term “fascism.”<sup>1</sup> *Ruscism* is considered as a form of Nazism, or fascism, or both, and it is most frequently defined as synonymous with the term “Russian Nazism,” analyzed by Timothy Snyder (2022a).

On April 14, 2022, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine recognized the Russian Federation as a terrorist state with a totalitarian neo-Nazi regime and banned its propaganda on the territory of Ukraine (Rebryna 2022). At the same time, *ruscism*, or Russian fascism, is recognized in Ukraine as a political ideology and social practice of the ruling regime of Russian Federation in the late 20<sup>th</sup>–early 21<sup>st</sup> century, based on the ideas of the “special civilizational mission” of Russians and intolerance of cultural elements of other nations (TSN 2022). The ideology and practice of *ruscism*, aimed at cultural and physical destruction of Ukraine and its people, meet a strong physical and intellectual resistance in Ukraine.

A relatively new term *schizofascism*, in parallel to the terms *Ruscism* and *Russian Nazism*, was proposed by Russo-American philosopher Mikhail Epstein at the beginning of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine in 2014. This term was included into Epstein’s *Projective Dictionary of the Humanities* (Epstein 2017); it was also used and developed by Snyder (2022b). *Schizofascism* is defined as “fascism under the guise of fight against fascism .... [it] is a split worldview, a kind of caricature of fascism, but a serious, dangerous, aggressive caricature” (Epstein 2017: 261; my translation from Russian).

A temporary sculptural installation “Застрелись” (“Shoot yourself,” with the characteristic letter Z, Russian military symbol) (Fig. 1), which appeared on Taras Shevchenko Boulevard in the capital city of Kyiv in summer 2022 (sculptor Dmytro Iv), attracted much attention of Ukrainian media and was discussed on social platforms.

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<sup>1</sup> Besides etymology, “рашист” (ruscist) rhymes with “фашист” (fascist).

The inscription under the name of this installation, which addresses the President of the RF, records the popular neologism *Putler*—a telling combination of the last names Putin and Hitler. The entire address reads: “History knows that war criminals have two ways: a trial or ... “*Putler*, is the hint clear?”



**Figure 1. Temporary sculptural installation “Застрелись” (“Shoot yourself”)<sup>1</sup>**

Prior to the start of Russia’s full-scale attack on Ukraine, the supporters of the Kremlin policy towards Ukraine were broadly labelled as *vatnik(s)*: generally, less aggressive RF citizens than the *ruscists* and rather indifferent to Russia’s global politics but those who share their government’s contempt of Western values. The Ukrainian nickname *vatnyk* (pl *vatnyky*) for the supporters of the Kremlin’s policy came from the word for a piece of winter outerwear, called *vatnik* or *telogreika* (in Russian): a quilted cotton jacket, which was a part of the winter uniform of the Red Army soldiers.

A collective noun *vata* (“cotton wool”) became the generalizing term for those Russians who despise the values of Western civilization and remain loyal to the Kremlin militaristic policy. Recently, the concept of “cotton wool” has evolved into the concept of incorrigible xenophobe, the concentrated meaning of which is embodied in the neological phrase *canned cotton wool* (Ukr. *vatna konserva*).

Also, the Ukrainian word *бавовна* (*bavovna*, cotton), denoting the material from which cotton wool is made, has become extremely popular recently as a mocking translation of Russian euphemistic term *хлопок*, with the second syllable stressed (*khlopók*, a bang/flap/clap), which refers to frequent explosions at the ammunition depots and military bases in Russia, caused by unidentified factors.

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all photographs are made by the author.



The Russians do not want to admit their own helplessness in preventing these explosions and therefore they refer to them simply as “bangs.” In the Russian language, a homograph of the word *хлопок* (a bang) is pronounced with the first syllable stressed: *хло́пок* and has the meaning “cotton” (Ukrainian: бавовна). Ukrainians this euphemistic play on words alludes to the idea that Ukraine may secretly be behind the explosions on Russian territory. It is the word *хлопок* that Ukrainians use to report and talk about explosions in Russia, not only among regular Ukrainians on internet platforms, but also journalists in the official media.<sup>1</sup>

In the background of Ukrainian television studios, behind the backs of the hosts of news programs, there is often a branch with ripe cotton as a symbol of destruction of Russian military facilities. The motto “Let’s make *bavovna* great again!”, which appeared on Facebook in the summer of 2022, became a humorous development of the image of exploding cotton. This motto is based on the slogan of Donald Trump’s presidential campaign “Let’s make America great again!”

Ukrainians even proclaimed a humorous holiday, World Cotton Day: On October 7, which is the birthday of Vladimir Putin (Tys 2022). On Ukrainian news, the phrase “powerful cotton could be heard” (which means “loud explosion(s) could be heard”) is repeated quite often nowadays. The image of cotton flowers entered not only art, but also everyday design, for example, women’s manicures, phone covers, etc.

Depriving the original expressions of Russian *Newspeak* of their initially intended meaning and filling them with a new semantic content has proved to be an effective tool of deriding Russian propaganda.

Deconstructive translation procedures are multiple, ramified, and not infrequently intertwined. They range in their variety from the play on homonyms and homographs, such as the above example *хлопок–хло́пок* (bang–cotton), to formal calquing with shifted contextual meaning, as in the lexeme *скрепы* (staples), to meta-derivation through translation based on pronunciation, which results in the new and absurd meanings of the formerly “meaningful” and “important” Russian concepts, for instance, «один народ» → *адіннарот* (one-for-the-mouth), «мы же братья» → *мишебратья* (mice-brothers), as well as coining new concepts by means of transcribed borrowing, in particular, *кримнашист* (the-Crimea-is-ours-believer), *іхтамнет* (one-of-those-who-are-not-there), and so on.

Ironic word formation is a broader technique, which embraces translation, transcoding (formal calquing), a term or name borrowing, and its semantic development in the Ukrainian language. Among the newly coined neologisms are the following:

- 1) the verb *makronyty*, which means “to call often to no avail, talk long and pointlessly on the phone” (this neologism derives from the name of French President Emmanuel Macron);

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<sup>1</sup> Bearing in mind that the noun *бавовна* (cotton) is semantically close to the term *вата* (cotton wool) as a derogatory name for the supporters of *Russian world*.



- 2) the phrase *valiaty shol'tsiā* (from the name of the chancellor of Germany Olaf Scholz), which means “to be constantly promising, but not giving anything” and is grounded on the idiom “*valiāty durniā*” (to do stupid things, pretending that you don’t understand something);
- 3) the verb *chornobaity*, which means “to do the same thing over and over without getting another result and suffer a lot because of it.” Its meaning derives

from the name of suburban village Chornobaivka, near the city of Kherson in southern Ukraine. Kherson International Airport is situated in Chornobaivka and in 2022, there was a series of Ukrainian attacks against the Russian-held airport, which began on February 27 and continued up to November 5, 2022. Chornobaivka saw dozens of attacks on Russian positions by the Ukrainian Armed Forces, which resulted in the deaths of many Russian soldiers and the destruction of their military equipment. Because of memes on Ukrainian social media mocking Russia’s repeated losses in Chornobaivka, the village became synonymous with repeated and futile efforts.

In the deconstructive translation into Ukrainian, Russian political statements and slogans have been stripped of their initially intended meaning and imbued with a new meaning which ridicules their semantic value in various ways. The basic deconstructive translation procedures are the following: 1) neologization, 2) wordplay, 3) transcribed borrowing with a transfer of meaning, as well as 4) ironic word formation, mostly based on onomastic vocabulary, among other procedures.

## **5.2. Reinterpreted proverbs, new jokes, funny aphorisms and facetious quotes in digital folklore**

Various genres of the verbal and syncretic arts, including new proverbs, jokes, humorous poems, etc., have been actuated immediately from the first day of the Russian invasion. The most well-pronounced are massively shared and reposted on individual, commercial, and institutional webpages. Even if they first appeared on someone’s personal page, they quickly spread through social networks, lose their authorship, and enrich the treasury of Ukrainian cyber folklore.

Perhaps the most vivid example of a new proverb, which is an expansion of the traditional folk proverb, is the following:

Українці незламні. Коли погано – плачуть, коли дуже погано – співають, коли повна дупа – сміються. Але – ніколи не опускають руки.

Ukrainians are invincible. When it’s bad, they cry, when it’s very bad, they sing, and when it’s very-very bad, they laugh. But they never give up.

This post first appeared on a private webpage of Liudmyla Pereverten’ on April 12, 2022, and that very day it was broadly shared, re-appearing on several non-private pages belonging to commercial firms, such as the tourist agency “Club of positive travelers *Like Travel*” and the online store “Family Gifts,” which offers embroidered and modern clothes by Ukrainian manufacturers (the store shared this post on its page “Social project *Very necessary work*”), etc.

Over the next few days, this proverb, already anonymous, entered the oral and written narratives of other authors on YouTube, Facebook and other media platforms with minor variations and abbreviations. For example, on the same day, 12 April 2022, a YouTuber nicknamed Zakhar (10K subscribers) in his post entitled “Chomu ne mozhna voiuvaty z ukraïntšamy?” [“Why shouldn’t one fight with Ukrainians?”] used a shortened version of the proverb: “Незламні. Коли погано – плачуть, коли дуже погано – співають, коли повна ср#ка – сміються!” / “Unbreakable. When it’s bad, they cry, when it’s very bad, they sing, when it’s full of shit, they laugh!” The post gained 3,918 views on that very day (Zakhar 2022). On April 15, 2022, the post titled “Why shouldn’t one fight with Ukrainians?” was reposted by a blogger under the nickname *brenik*, etc.

Beyond celebrations of Ukrainian courage, many memes play upon historical grievances between Russians and Ukrainians. Stepan Bandera (1909–1959, killed by a KGB agent using cyanide) was a leader of the radical wing of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists during World War II. His image is affiliated simultaneously with both Ukrainian resistance, independence, and nationalism and with Nazi sympathizers, depending on the viewer’s perspective. In Russia, Ukrainians, particularly Ukrainian speakers are called *бандеровцы*, *banderovtsy*, the Bandera people (*sing* бандеровец, *fem* бандеровка). Below is an imagined dialogue between Russians and Stepan Bandera, based on an interlingual pun (from Facebook):

Степан Бандера:

А знаєте, як буде російською «вантаж 200»?

Бандеролька.

Stepan Bandera:

– Do you know the Russian for “cargo 200”<sup>1</sup>?

– *Banderolka* (a small parcel).

“Cargo 200” is a reference to Soviet slang for war casualties, denoting the code written on trucks carrying fallen soldiers during the Afghan war.

There is a unifying method in the speaker’s humorous strategy in digital folklore: to raise the level of optimism and faith in victory in spite of everything. Below are two different examples (one in Russian and the other in Ukrainian) of the most popular social media jokes that appeared in April 2022, among many other samples from the online *Collection of Ukrainian Jokes*:

Example 1 (in Russian):

– Харьков взяли?

– Нет.

– Киев взяли?

– Нет.

– А что взяли?

– Мясорубку взяли, миксер, кроссовки взяли и шкаф-купе взяли. (Zbirnyk 2022a)

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<sup>1</sup> “Cargo 200” is a military code word used in the Soviet Union and the post-Soviet states referring to the transportation of military fatalities.

- Did they take over Kharkiv?
- Nope.
- Did they take over Kyiv?
- Nope.
- What did they take, then?
- They took a meat grinder, a mixer, they took a pair of sneakers and took a sliding door wardrobe. (Collection of Ukrainian Jokes #4802)

Before making it to the *Collection of Ukrainian Jokes*, this joke appeared in several shorter versions, starting on April 2, 2022. It was posted by the user with nickname *Kolobok* (in Russian):

Свежий анекдот: Киев взяли? – Нет. – Харьков взяли? – Нет. – А шо взяли?! – Миксер взяли, ковёр взяли...! (Kolobok 2022).

A fresh anecdote: Did they take Kiev? – Nope. – Did they take Kharkov? – Nope. – What did they take? – They took a mixer, took a carpet ...!

On April 6, 2022, another version of the joke was published by Radio Liberty as part of the online reportage title: “Из России: «Киев не взяли. Взяли мясорубку, миксер и кроссовки». Соцсети—о мародерстве российских военных” [“From Russia: “Kyiv was not taken. We took a meat grinder, a mixer, and a pair of sneakers.” Social networks about the looting of the Russian military”] (Radio Liberty 2022). On that very date, Russian free entertainment application АйДаПрикол published the fullest version of this joke; the same version that was included in the *Collection of Ukrainian Jokes* (Idaprikol 2022).

Example 2 (in Ukrainian):

Втрати ворога – це як деруни зі сметаною. Їх багато, але однаково мало. Хочеться ще. (Zbirnyk 2022b)

Enemy losses are like potato pancakes<sup>1</sup> with sour cream. There are many of them but still not enough. Wish there would be more. (Collection of Ukrainian Jokes #4919)

Projected confidence in victory is well reflected in the dozens of new proverbial expressions, jokes, and humorous dialogic exchanges based on puns. The following joke was one of the first to appear on social networks after February 24, 2022, and it spread across all popular networks: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and VKontakte, is the latter of which has been blocked in Ukraine since May 16, 2017:

Ми така нація, що нам спочатку трохи страшно, а потім вже пох#й... а коли нам пох#й, то страшно всім.

We are such a nation that at first, we get scared a little, but shortly after, we don't f#cking care... and when we don't f#cking care, everyone gets scared.

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<sup>1</sup> Potato pancakes: Ukrainian national dish.

On March 1, 2022, the information agency “Typical Kyiv” published a rather extensive selection of the first wartime jokes under the title “*When we don’t f#cking care, everyone gets scared: What new words and expressions were added to Ukrainian folklore during the war*” with the subtitle “Ukrainians know how to joke and this helps them resist the aggressor” (Typovyï Kyiv 2022). In the preface to this selection, digital folklore was mentioned for the first time as a special type of folklore born in social networks during the first week of the war. The above joke was quoted in full with the following reasoning: “The vital credo of Ukrainians can be put into one such phrase that characterizes their behavior in the war,” and a note was made that this joke came into existence on the day of publication: “The expression appeared literally today, but describes the psychological state of the citizens of Ukraine who are literally being wiped off the face of the earth by attacking from the ground, air and sea. But as they say: “A Ukrainian fights like he plows the land.” After all, in wartime, the most important thing is not to panic and not to lose optimism” (ibid.).

A lot of the wartime jokes are contingent on interlingual puns. I will exemplify this type of jokes with two examples (both in Ukrainian):

Example 3:

Знаєте, чому росіяни нам не друзі? Тому, що друзі на дорозі не валяються.

Do you know why Russians are not our friends? Because friends are not lying around on the road.

The above version was published on March 4, 2022, on Twitter by the user nicknamed *Coφi* (Sofie 2022). The joke is based on a Russian folk proverb about money, well-known also in Ukraine, “Money does not lie under your feet (on the road)” (Poslovitsy i pogovorki n.d.). A set phrase from this proverb “... does not lie on the road (street),” which means something valuable, rare, has a wide compatibility and can be used not only with the lexeme “money,” but also with any other to indicate someone or something rare, and is often extended to human beings, as in the derivative proverb: “Friends are not lying on the road.” A day prior, on March 3, 2022, the first and shorter version of the new proverb was posted by *The First Private Museum of Memes on Twitter*: “Muscovites are not our friends. Because friends don’t lie on the road” (Persha pryvatna memarniâ 2022). It is quite likely that the user Sophie took this post as the basis for their own version of the proverb.

In a month, on April 3, 2022, a more neutral version of this proverb appeared in the title of a “portion of fresh memes that give a smile in difficult times” compiled by Oleksiy Dzyuba: “*Russians are not our friends, because friends do not lie on the road. Ukrainians continue to make apt jokes during the war with Russia*” (Dzyuba 2022). A variation of the new proverb also quickly entered the Collection of Ukrainian Jokes [Zbirnyk Ukraïns'kykh anekdotiv №556] (Zbirnyk 2022d). On March 26, 2022, the anecdote was published in the electronic version of the newspaper “News of Zakarpattia,” in the column “Let’s laugh together!” (News of Zakarpattia 2022).

Example 4:

- Куме, а знаєте, як англійською сказати «російські війська»?
- Ні.
- «Рашн трупс»!<sup>1</sup>
- Файно.
- My crony, dost thou know how to say “Russian troops” in English?
- No.
- “Russian corpses!”
- Nice.

Visual and verbal caricatures are often combined as syncretic art on posters and billboards. Moreover, in the south-eastern regions of Ukraine, the language of this sarcastic genre can be both Russian and Ukrainian, such as the one illustrating a double-headed Russian eagle being driven away with a trident, the coat of arms of Ukraine. A caricature of an eagle chased away by a trident pitchfork appeared on a billboard in the city of Odesa on March 10, 2022. The picture was supplemented with a text in Russian, stylized at the beginning into the Biblical diction and finished with a low-colloquial pattern. This captioned cartoon, together with the inscription placed under it, circulated in numerous electronic media and on many web pages. The text is as follows:

Не возжелай страны  
Ближнего своего,  
И свободы его, и сала его,  
И Крыма его —  
И не застрянут у тебя  
В ж#пе ви́лы его! (Durova 2022)

Don't covet the country  
Of your neighbor,  
Nor his freedom, nor his bacon,  
Nor his Crimea —  
If you don't want his pitchfork  
To get stuck in your ass!

Allusions to the Bible and classical Ukrainian poets, especially to Taras Shevchenko, are not infrequent. The case in consideration is the following humorous variation on the theme of Shevchenko's popular verse “Zapovit” (“Yak umru, to pokhovaïte mene na mohyli...”) [My Testament], which has been spread on social media platforms, shared, and reposted multiple times. The voice of the subject in this parodistic verse, known as “Putin's Testament,” is extrapolated on the RF President Vladimir Putin as the speaking persona. This verse appeared in variations on social networks as early as January 2015, and after February 24, 2022, it was topicalized with greater force. The following version of this scathing satire, with the picture of the RF president in

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<sup>1</sup> The word “трупс” is the Anglicized plural form of Ukrainian noun “труп” that means “corpse” and would be pronounced as “troops.”

the background, appeared online on May 1, 2022, with a link to the page of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine (Defense of Ukraine on Twitter 2022):

Як умру, то поховайте  
Мене в купі гною,  
І покласти не забудьте  
Униз головою.  
Начепіть мені на плечі  
Хоч якісь ознаки,  
Щоб хоч якось відрізнялась  
Голова від ср#ки.

When I die, bury me  
In a pile of manure,  
And do not forget to put me  
Upside down.  
Also pin to my shoulders  
At least some insignia  
To make my head somehow  
Differ from my ass.

Scorching parodies of the Russian military men are appearing in large numbers to mark the notable events of the war and can be used to track down Russian hostilities in Ukraine and to compile a chronicle of Ukrainian victories. One of the witticisms of this kind refers to the stay of Russian troops on the territory of the Chornobyl nuclear power plant: they captured the plant on the first day of the full-scale war, February 24, and remained there until April 2, 2022. This anecdotal story concerns the stupidity and lack of general education on the part of Russian troops who raised the dust in the so-called “red forest” near Chornobyl nuclear power plant, dug trenches there and organized an ammunition depot at the foot of the plant, having stayed there for 36 days.

The joke was spread in social networks in different variations. On April 1, 2022, it appeared in the daily newspaper “Komsomol's'ka Pravda v Ukraïni” (KP in Ukraine), which until January 13, 2022, was printed exclusively in Russian. Below I give this anecdote in the “KP in Ukraine” version:

До Статуту З(бройних) С(ил) Росії вирішено запровадити нове звернення. До солдатів, які перебували в радіусі 20 км від ЧАЕС, слід звертатися з часткою “фон”; у радіусі 10 км – “ваша світлість”; у радіусі 5 км – “ваше сіятельство” (Komsomol's'ka Pravda 2022).

It was decided to introduce a new address to the Statute of the Armed Forces of Russia. Soldiers<sup>1</sup> who stayed within the radius of 20 km from the Chornobyl nuclear power plant should be addressed with the prefix “Von” [in Russian and Ukrainian “фон” means “background radiation”], those who stayed within the radius of 10 km, “Your Luminescence,” and those who stayed within the radius of 5 km, “Your Radiance.”

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<sup>1</sup> In other versions “the orcs,” which is a collective name for Russian soldiers.



Lots of satire have been created around the globally-known exchange of the brave Ukrainian serviceman, who defended the island of Zmiinyi in the Black Sea, with the Russian navy warship, which put forward an ultimatum:

- Я русский военный корабль! Предлагаю сложить оружие и сдаться!  
Russian Warship: “I suggest you lay down your arms and surrender, otherwise you’ll be hit”
- Русский военный корабль, иди нах#й  
Ukrainian Outpost’s response to the threat was telling and brief: “Russian warship, f#ck off!” (February 25, 2022).

Among multiple sarcastic Ukrainian “good wishes,” grounded on the Ukrainian serviceman’s response to the Russian warship, is the following:

- А не міг би той хлопака зі Зміїного по радіо ще й путіна послати? Може, має дар...) (Zbirnyk 2022c)
- “And that guy from Zmiinyi, could he also send Putin to hell on the radio? Maybe he has a magic gift ...)” (Collection of Ukrainian Jokes #5076)

Losses of the enemy are often made a topic for dark humor. The following illustration (Fig. 2) from social media is a humorous interpretation of the famous painting by Ivan Shishkin “Morning in a Pine Forest,” which appeared on the wrapper of Russian chocolate candies “Mishka kosolapy” (“Clumsy Bear”) as early as 1913. The bear candy outlived the Russian Empire and even the Soviet Union that inherited it. A unique candy, which became recognizable thanks to Shishkin’s masterpiece on its wrapper, remains widely popular and desired, though quite expensive in Putin’s Russia. The humor in the inscription on its Ukrainian caricature is built on word play with the near homographs. The Ukrainian inscription reads:



New candies went on sale in Russia for the May 9<sup>th</sup> holiday:<sup>1</sup>

Meshki (Bags) in the Forest<sup>2</sup>

Unwrap and find your denazifier!<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 2. Ukrainian caricature of the wrapper of Russian chocolate candies “Mishka kosolapy” (“Clumsy Bear”)**

<sup>1</sup> “Victory Day” (May 9, 1945) in the “Great patriotic War” in Russia.

<sup>2</sup> The remains of the dead bodies of Russian soldiers are packed in black bags.

<sup>3</sup> The denazification of Ukrainians was one of the intermediate goals of Russia’s so-called “special military operation” in Ukraine.

The pun is based on the play on words “meshkí”, «мешки в лесу», *Bags in the Forest*, with the stress on the last syllable in the word «мешки» (bags), versus “míshki” from a recognizable popular candy name «мишки в лесу», *Bears in the Forest*, with the stress on the first syllable in the word «мишки» (bears).

Putin’s law that criminalized any public voice calling the war against Ukraine a “war” instead of framing it as a “special military operation,” was ridiculed in one of the most popular memes responding to this censorial law shortly after the start of invasion on February 24. The meme replaces the title of Leo Tolstoy’s 1867 novel *War and Peace* with “Special Military Operation and Peace” (Vasily Grogol 2022; printed in Bishara 2022). This meme spread in cyberspace, was photocopied, and posted on bulletin boards in European universities, circulated globally, etc.

Ukrainians are dismantling Russian Newspeak on social platforms using the strategies of 1) creating new narrative framings for traditional proverbs, 2) making anecdotal exchanges and stories strung on the homonymic and homographic word play, including interlingual homonymy, and contextually engendered or reversed semantic contrast, 3) generating wellerism-like ironic aphorisms, and 4) manufacturing facetious recontextualization of the *Newspeak* concepts.

### 5.3. Comical pictures, memes and cartoons

In this subsection, a combination of pictorial and verbal elements will be considered more closely. At that, sometimes the image alone works, or in combination with a one-word or short-phrase inscription. The comical effect lies in the strategy of paradox, which unfolds as a conceptual conflict between the image and inscription, or a cognitive conflict encoded in the image itself.

One of popular anti-Putin memes circulating on the internet (Fig. 3), “How this will end for Putin,” was posted on Twitter on March 1, 2022 (Jerry Avenaim 2022):



Figure 3. The meme “How this will end for Putin”

After a guided missile cruiser of the Russian Navy *Moskva* sank on April 18, 2022, it became “obvious” that the Ukrainian servicemen on Zmiinyi [Snake] Island really did tell Russian warships to “go to hell.” Also, a cartoon on the topic of the sunk warship *Moskva* quickly appeared on social media. The pivotal illustrated text (Fig. 4) unfolds as a dialogue between the Fish-landlord in the sunk submarine, which not unexpectedly turned out to be extremely costly, and the Fish-tenant. This version was published on April 18, 2022, on Twitter by the user nicknamed Чылік (Chylik 2022).



Fish-landlord: *\$1000 plus utilities*

Fish-tenant: *kinda expensive*

Fish-landlord: *and what did you expect...*

*it's Moscow*

**Figure 4. Cartoon on the topic of the sunk warship *Moskva***

The topic of the effectiveness of bayraktars – Turkish strike drones with a long flight duration – has also proved to be very popular in both verbal and visual humorous art in the first months of war. For instance, on April 6, 2022, a trolling-request asking if there are direct flights by Bayraktar from Kiev to Moscow appeared in Russian on the Facebook page of the company “Transport of Kiev”:

Тут люди интересуются, летает ли Bayraktar Airlines из Киева на Москву: “Скажите, пожалуйста, а есть прямые авиарейсы Байрактаров из Киева на Москву?” (Transport of Kiev 2022)

People are asking whether *Bayraktar Airlines* fly from Kyiv to Moscow: “Please let me know if there are direct flights by *Bayraktar* from Kyiv to Moscow?”

An example of commented visual art on the theme of bayraktars is given below (Fig. 5). The inscription reads: Seeing *Bayraktar*, the Russian tank pretended to be dead (UNIAN, March 14, 2022).

Побачивши "Байрактар", російський танк  
прикинувся мертвим.



**Figure 5. Comical picture with the upside-down Russian tank**

A humorous visual image can be combined with a phrase-long inscription, as in Figure 6, or with a one- or two-word inscription, as in Figures 7 and 8, or devoid of verbal elements altogether, as in Figure 9 below.



**Figure 6. "Careful: a f#cked-up neighbor"**

While the inscription on the wall in Figure 6 reads: "Careful: a f#cked-up neighbor," the user's comment preceding the inscription is the following: "we need such a wall." The picture was posted on April 16, 2022, on Facebook by the user nicknamed *Sophie Muraly* (2022).





**Figure 7. “Занавес”**

The Russian word behind the curtains in Figure 7, “Занавес” is written with a substitution of the Cyrillic letter “З” (“Занавес”) with the Latin letter “Z”, which is a new military symbol in Russia, sported by Russians on their uniforms and tanks. The contextual meaning of the word “Занавес” is the following: “The show’s all over, clear out,” or, as Facebook user under nickname *LudMila Nitz* formulated: “We are leaving, we are leaving.... Curtain,” indicating the end of performance for the two fans of the “classical Russian ballet” in ballerina tutus – self-proclaimed President of Belarus Lukashenka and Russian President Putin. The picture was retweeted and reposted many times, particularly on the Facebook pages of the users *Natalia Pylypiuk* (March 21, 2022), *LudMila Nitz* (March 26, 2022), *Sanasar Kuiumchian* (April 27, 2022) and others, as well as published on the Telegram channel of the same name (Занавес 2022) and reposted by Reddit from Ukrainian Memes and Art for Ukraine sites (Reddit Zahabec 2022a; 2022b).

A similar type of picture with an inscription in the background and humorous images of Presidents Lukashenka and Putin in the foreground can be seen in the following author’s comic on Twitter (Fig. 8), “Pariah Olympics 2022” (Camley Cartoons 2022), which has also become quite popular in the networks.



**Figure 8. “Pariah Olympics 2022”**

A further illustration from public domain of the war-born art of Easter-egg painting on grenades, called “the combat Easter eggs,” contains no verbal elements (Fig. 9).



**Figure 9. Lemon grenades, painted like Easter eggs.**

The art appeared seven years ago in the Donbas area of anti-terrorist operation (Ukr.: ATO) among the Ukrainian military and was first publicly discussed in the reportage “The Offensive Easter eggs: The ATO fighters paint grenades with Easter patterns” on the TV News Service channel on April 11, 2015 (TSN 2015).

An entire collection of funny visual metaphors which refer to various aspects of Russian propagandistic viewpoint at the history of Ukraine can be singled out. For example, the following picture (Fig. 10) embodies the Kremlin’s “concept” of the origin of Ukraine from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, founded by Vladimir Ulyanov-Lenin in 1922. It is grotesquely called The Monument “Vladimir Lenin founds Ukraine” (bronze, granite, Alzheimer’s).

пам'ятник "Володимир Ленін  
засновує Україну"  
бронза, граніт, альцгеймер



**Figure 10. The Monument “Vladimir Lenin founds Ukraine”  
(bronze, granite, Alzheimer’s)**



The statue of Lenin in the above montaged picture replaces the posture of Lybid', a legendary co-founder of the city of Kyiv. The picture was posted as early as December 23, 2021, on the Facebook page of the user *Протишин Офіційний* (Protsyshyn Ofitsiyniy 2021). Since then, it has been reposted many times. Below (Fig. 11) is the picture of the real monument, erected in 1982 in a park near the Paton bridge in Kyiv in honor of the symbolic 1500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kyiv. It is the Monument to the founders of Kyiv: brothers Kyi, Shchek, Khoryv and their sister Lybid'. The official name of the monument is "Soaring Lybid'," although it is also called "The Boat."



**Figure 11. "Soaring Lybid'" ("The Boat")**

Ukrainians are deploying meme warfare to combat Russian disinformation and pseudohistorical declarations with their arsenal of war memes. In particular, the Twitter account Ukrainian Meme Forces (UMF), which aggregates Ukrainian counter-propaganda memes from Twitter and Reddit, was created as early as February 2022 as a semi-official tool of resistance (Ukrainian Memes Forces 2022). A deluge of funny pictures grounded on historical reminiscences is helping Ukrainians cope with their predicament with humor. "Ukrainians are greeting Russian liberators with flowers!" reads a caption above the image of Ukrainian woman threshing a frightened Russian soldier with a flower bouquet (Fig. 12), tweeted by Ukrainian Memes Forces on March 11, 2022 ("Ukrainians are greeting Russian liberators with flowers!" 2022).



**Figure 12. "Ukrainians are greeting Russian liberators with flowers!"**

Quite often the humor in historical reminiscences spills over into bitter satire, as in the following caricature poster “Kuzka’s mother is calling!” depicting a woman-drunkard calling to “protect our rat” (i.e., Vladimir Putin) (Fig. 13).

Re: Анекдоти, смішні картинки, афоризми, цитати, гумор  
Vovcharka



Figure 13. “Kuzka’s mother is calling!”

This poster is reminiscent of the famous poster “Motherland is calling!” depicting a symbolic Motherland in red who shows the “military oath” to the Soviet citizens (Fig. 14), from the times of the “Great Patriotic War,” created by the artist Irakli Toidze at the end of June 1941.



Figure 14. “Motherland is calling!”

*Kuzka's mother* (Кузькина мать; *Kuzka* is a diminutive of the given name *Kuzma*), is part of the Russian proverb “to show Kuzka’s mother (to someone)” [Показать кузькину мать (кому-либо)], “to teach someone a lesson,” “to punish someone in a brutal way.” The expression *Kuzka's mother* is a common idiomatic curse in Russian. It entered the history of the foreign relations of the Soviet Union as part of the image of Nikita Khrushchev, along with the shoe-banging incident and the phrase “We shall show you Kuzka’s mother!” (meaning “We will bury you”).<sup>1</sup> The actual reference in Khrushchev’s phrase was to a code word for the atomic bomb – a thermonuclear test device – nicknamed by its builders *Kuzka's mother*. The poster “Kuzka’s mother is calling!” appeared in cyber space (on Facebook) as early as June 24, 2016, on the anniversary of Khrushchev’s public use of the Russian idiom “to show Kuzka’s mother” for the first time – on June 24, 1959, at the first American National Exhibition in the USSR, addressing the then US Vice President Richard Nixon.

Another popular satirical caricature, with reference to history, which was shared and reposted on the Internet, belongs to the subgenre of “family portraits” and depicts a “happy” family of Hitler, Stalin, and little Putin (Fig. 15). The motto above this “family picture” reads: “We smile and continue the fight!”



**Figure 15. “We smile and continue the fight!”**

Syncretic deconstruction of Russian geopolitical, cultural, and historical narratives by means of comical pictures, memes, and cartoons extends in the strategy of creating a paradox, which mostly unravels a conceptual conflict between the image and inscription (as in Fig. 7, 8, 12, 13) or a cognitive conflict encoded in the image itself (as in Fig. 3, 9, 10).

<sup>1</sup> The interpreter was stunned and translated literally: We shall show you the mother of Kuzma.

#### 5.4. Recontextualizing national traumas during wartime: favorite poetic quotes and mystifications in the cyberspace

Many bloggers, YouTubers, and other social media users rely on the authority of Taras Shevchenko, Pavlo Tychyna, Lina Kostenko, and their ilk, as people's poets, dead and alive, and attribute to them the verses which they like and post on their pages, but which might actually belong to other poets. This phenomenon is perhaps the most widespread in the case of Lina Kostenko, our contemporary, to whom at least a dozen different verses are attributed by reference @Ліна Костенко. The authority of the folk poet in today's Ukraine is no less strong than it was a hundred or more years ago, starting from the era of National Romanticism and its national emblem Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861). Symptomatically, the presence of Lina Kostenko's name functions as a kind of talisman on social platforms. The name of a genial modern poet, a woman who has not yielded to Soviet authorities, nor was tempted by the State awards during Independence, symbolizes people's belief in the magical power of the poet's word and testifies to the high moral authority of an unwavering poet in Ukrainian society.

A new folklore genre can be singled out – poetic mystification, or poetry attributed to outstanding humanitarian authorities, such as Lina Kostenko and Taras Shevchenko, alongside their authentic texts. In this article, due to lack of space, I will consider only the case of Lina Kostenko on Internet platforms.

Several quotes from the historical novel in verse by Kostenko "Berestechko," which was written in 1966–1967 and published only in independent Ukraine, began to spread actively on social networks with the beginning of the hot phase of the war. In particular, the fragment "*Tse zh treba maty satanyns'kyy namir...*" ("*Their satan plannings...*"), which appeared on Kostenko's Facebook page on March 6, 2022, is more popular today than ever before thanks to the internet reposts. This fragment is given below:

Це ж треба мати сатанинський намір,  
чаїть в собі невиліковний сказ,  
щоб тяжко так знущатися над нами  
та ще й у всьому звинуватить нас!

Their satan plannings always were much rougher,  
The rabies was well hidden deep inside,  
It can't be cured, and that is why we suffer,  
And victim blaming just an extra bloody bite! (Translated by Olha Vakhromova,  
April 26, 2022b)

Other popular quotes from the novel "Berestechko" appearing on Twitter and Facebook are those: "*Rozp'yato nas mizh zakhodom i skhodom...*" ("*Between them all we suffer the damnation*")<sup>1</sup> and "*My voïny. Ne ledari. Ne lezhni...*" ("*Warriors we are. No lazy. No inert*"):

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<sup>1</sup> Розп'ято нас між Заходом і Сходом.  
Що не орел – печінку нам довбе.  
Зласкався, доле, над моїм народом,  
щоб він не дався знівечить себе.  
Between them all we suffer the damnation.  
And any eagle just has our liver willed.

Ми воїни. Не ледарі. Не лежні  
І наше діло праведне й святе  
Бо хто за що, а ми за незалежність  
Отож нам так і важко через те.

Warriors we are. No lazy. No inert  
Our cause is saint and right,  
We stand for independence,  
This makes so tough our fight. (UCU\_University, May 23, 2022)

It is a telling fact that the quoted above fragment appeared in anonymous translation into English on different social platforms: on March 19, 2022, when Lina Kostenko was celebrating her 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday, a bilingual (Russian and Ukrainian) online journal “New Time of the Country” published this stanza in the post “НВ (Новое Время) to our legend Lina Kostenko.” It was retweeted on the official Twitter account “Ukraine/Україна: Ukraine Government Organization” that very day (Ukraine/Україна 2022) and on the official page of Ukrainian Catholic University on May 23, 2022 (UCU\_University 2022).

In Ukrainian, all the above stanzas from the poem “Berestechko,” as well as a separate short poem “*I zhakh, i krov, i smert', i vidchay...*,” were published by news agency company Ukrainian Independent Information Agency (UNIAN) on Lina Kostenko’s birthday (Pikulina 2022). This relatively new poem by Lina Kostenko, “*I zhakh, i krov, i smert', i vidchay...*,” the one directly exposing Putin’s ongoing war against Ukraine, quickly became popular and recognizable by its first line. The history of its creation is worthy of separate mentioning. On March 19, 2015, Kostenko celebrated her 85th birthday. And the day before, she joined the humanitarian action “Second Front of the Anti-Terrorist Operation.” Humanitarian aid and books were collected for the soldiers of the volunteer battalion “Kyiv-1” and for the children who remained in the anti-terrorist operation zone. Kostenko handed over to the front several collections of her poems with words of support. On the title page of one of her books taken to the frontline she wrote a poem by hand, “*I zhakh, i krov...*,” which instantly flew around the Internet:

І жах, і кров, і смерть, і відчай,  
І клекіт хижої орди,  
Маленький сірий чоловічок  
Накоїв чорної біди.  
Це звір огидної породи,  
Лох-Несс холодної Неви.  
Куди ж ви дивитесь, народи?!  
Сьогодні ми, а завтра – ви. (Druhyi front Liny Kostenko 2015)

Horror, blood, death, and despair,  
The screeching of a vulture’s horde,  
A little gray man  
Has brought a black scourge.

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Dear destiny, have mercy on my nation,  
So we won’t let the horde to get us killed!  
(Translated by Olha Vakhromova, April 26, 2022a)



This is a beast of a dreadful breed,  
The Loch Ness monster of the cold Neva.  
Which way are you looking, peoples?!  
Today's our turn, tomorrow is – yours! (Translated by Svitlana Budzhak-Jones, in open access)

Among more recent translations of Kostenko's poetry into English one can come across a poem "*Shche nazva ye, a richky vzhe nemaye...*" ("*The river's gone, the name remains*") on the Twitter page of Boris Dralyuk, tweeted on December 5, 2022, with the translator's comment: "May both the landscape of Ukraine, now scarred, and the beautiful names of its rivers and valleys, towns and villages, arise and flourish!" (Dralyuk 2022). Fans of Lina Kostenko's creative work maintain a page on Twitter, where they present her aphorisms, quotes from longer works and her short poems (@L\_Kostenko).<sup>1</sup> Concurrently, Ukrainian media, retweets and reposts broadly attribute to Lina Kostenko such poems as "A Stolen Spring" (*Ukradena vesna*) and "When the war ends..." (*Koly zakinchytsia viina...*), although the real authors of these poems are Olena Horhol'-Ihnat'iēva (2022) and Halyna Potopliāk (2022), respectively. The poem "*Ukradena vesna*" was first published on March 17, 2022, by Horhol'-Ihnatieva and the poem "*Koly zakinchytsia viina...*" on August 23, 2022, by Potopliāk. The phenomenon of their attribution to Lina Kostenko in subsequent reposts proves the authority of Lina Kostenko as a people's poet.

These and other poems on social networks help to explicate and debunk Putin's myths about the absence of a separate Ukrainian people and its separate history. The main strategy of dissecting Putin's war crimes through poetic means is inverted and restructured opposites, for example, as in the poem "Horror, blood, death, and despair...", which metaphorically points to Putin as "the Loch Ness monster of the cold Neva" back in 2015. Poetry turns out to be extremely effective in getting to the bottom of the imperial semiotic space in Russian-Ukrainian historical relations.

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

Ukrainian folk voices and genres in cyberspace have been greatly versatile ranging from ritual folklore, folk epic and small folklore genres to children's folklore and songs to post-folklore. Additionally, new genres have appeared, as well as numerous remakes of songs, poetic mystifications, and anonymous translations. The analysis of the data presented in this article shows that people's creativity manifested on social platforms and in electronic media emerged as an effective vehicle of deconstructing Russian neo-imperial myths and propaganda and generating simultaneously a new culture of cyberwar while making their war globally visible.

Critical discourse analysis, combined with the theory of deconstruction, structural-semantic analysis and translation analysis, allows us to identify a set of strategies of deconstructing Russian *Newspeak*, peculiar to particular digital (folklore) genres and parodistic translation in the media. Linguistic deconstruction of Russian myths serves not only as an important warning about real threats, but also as a means of

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<sup>1</sup> See: [https://twitter.com/L\\_Kostenko](https://twitter.com/L_Kostenko)



anticipating and combating them. In the Ukrainian deconstructive translation, the basic strategy is resorting to parody: Russian political statements and slogans are stripped of their initially intended meaning and imbued with a new meaning which ridicules their semantic value in various ways. The leading deconstructive translation procedures are neologization, wordplay, transcribed borrowing with a transfer of meaning, as well as ironic word formation. Ironic word formation, which happens to be predominantly onomastic and vocabulary-based, is a broader technique that embraces translation, transcoding (formal calquing), a term or name borrowing, and its semantic development in the Ukrainian language.

Humorous dismantling of Russian neo-imperial myths in such verbal genres of digital folklore as reinterpreted traditional proverbs, new jokes, funny aphorisms, and facetious quotes (written mainly in Ukrainian, but also occurring in Russian) proceeds by using the following strategies: creation of new narrative framings; contextual semantic development in jokes of homonyms- or homographs-based word play (including interlingual homonymy); creation of wellerism-like ironic statements/aphorisms (built on play with coherence and logic); and facetious recontextualization of the original Russian *Newspeak* concepts.

In syncretic genres of digital folklore, which represent new folklore genres, such as comical pictures, memes, and cartoons (I considered only the works of art belonging to these genres which either already became anonymous, or are in transition to anonymity), the deconstruction of Russian geopolitical, cultural, and historical narratives and reminiscences presents itself in the strategy of creating a paradox, which, more frequently, demonstrates a conceptual conflict between the image and inscription to it or, in rarer cases, a cognitive conflict encoded in the image itself (if the image is not accompanied by any inscription).

The social platforms users' experience of explicating Putin's war crimes and debunking colonial myths by poetic means has been analyzed in the case of original verses by Lina Kostenko and public mystifications of her poetry. The strategy of restructured opposites has been used by Kostenko in her original verses revealing Putin's rhetoric, and Kostenko's fans turn to the strategy of poetic mystification or attributing a poem they liked to a well-known and authoritative author in order to make the text, considered to be important, more widely distributed and more influential.

By means of deconstructive strategies spontaneously applied in humorous translation and digital folklore, Ukrainian civilians demonstrate their ability to influence the ongoing conflict in real time via virtual conversations aimed at debunking Russian militaristic myths and narratives. A deconstructive approach and humor as a tool of dismantling the Kremlin's *Newspeak* have shown their joint effectiveness on social platforms. The most popular humorous forms and genres of digital folklore, explored in this article, constitute a feature of contemporary people's cyberwar.

A promising prospect for further research is the analysis of parodistic translation and various genres of digital folklore within the theoretical framework of war cultures as a new stage in a cyber war, which globally engages Ukrainian communities in virtual battles, namely, as a people's cyber war. Therefore, the prospect for

further research consists in the historical, linguo-semiotic, and discursive analysis of the concept of war culture from the cyberwar perspective, as a new age of cyberwar culture, in comparison with the 20<sup>th</sup>-century war cultures, starting from WWI (see Smith 2007; Horne and Kramer 2001; Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker 2003). What is new in the history of warfare is the combination of technology and participatory democracy introducing a new element – Ukrainian digital folklore, or the direct, sustained, and spontaneously unifying engagement of civilians in ways that span the globe. The methodology of further research, thus, may be extended to historical method and the method of historical analogy, classification, and typological analysis.

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