

BETWEEN LINGUISTIC RESISTANCE AND COLLAPSE: RUSSOPHONE ANTI-WAR POETRY AND THE QUESTION OF LINGUISTIC LEGITIMACY

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Abstracts. In this article, I examine Russophone anti-war poetry published since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and identify a tendency in this material to question the very foundations of cultural (literary) resistance. More specifically, the ability, possibility, and moral conditions of language (and script) to express war resistance are addressed. Russophone writers, whether within the Russian Federation or in exile, face profound dilemmas tied to the moral implications of expressing resistance in a language steeped in war, violence, and terror. I explore how these challenges are addressed in a two-pronged analysis. First, I look at some of the main lines of argumentation linked to these issues when discussed by writers and critics on a meta-level (in prefaces, commentaries, launch events, etc.). I then proceed to examine a couple of strategies that manifest themselves in a selection of poems. These strategies range from subtle linguistic innovations to more radical practices, with extreme examples revealing a language teetering on the edge of collapse. I offer a brief prehistory of linguistic resistance in Russian/Soviet culture before concluding by summarizing the chief functions of Russophone anti-war poetry, as conceived by the writers and critics.

Keywords: linguistic legitimacy; linguistic resistance, anti-war poetry, Russophone poetry.

Introduction

Among the diverse cultural responses to Russia's war against Ukraine, poetry has emerged as one of the most powerful genres, particularly within Ukraine. Contemporary Ukrainian writers draw upon a rich literary tradition shaped by centuries of repressive policies toward Ukrainian culture under imperial Russia and the Soviet regime. Against this backdrop, Ukrainian-language war poetry comes forward with strong elements of resistance and resilience, and with a high degree of *linguistic legitimacy*.

Since 2014, many Russian-language writers in Ukraine have transitioned to writing in Ukrainian.¹ Anastasiia Afanasieva symbolically enacted this shift in the middle of her poem "Nova pisnia tyshi" [Afanasieva 2022]. Meanwhile, one writer who chose not to make this transition, published a poetry collection pointedly

¹ So have, of course, many non-writers, that is, ordinary Ukrainians. Developments within language attitudes, language choice and language policies in independent Ukraine, and in particular since the Revolution of Dignity, have been extensively studied by sociolinguists, see, e.g., [Bilianuk 2020] and [Kulyk 2024] with references.

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titled *In the Language of the Enemy* [Kabanov 2017], indirectly highlighting the linguistic legitimacy of Ukrainian through the negative example of Russian.²

If we shift our focus to the aggressor state, Russia, the contexts and conditions surrounding war-time poetry are markedly different.³ A key distinction lies in the issue of linguistic legitimacy, which is deeply intertwined with questions of moral positioning. Russophone writers, whether within the Russian Federation or in exile, face profound dilemmas tied to the moral implications of expressing resistance in a language steeped in war, violence, and terror, and weaponized for political purposes.

In this article, I explore how these challenges are addressed, both when they are discussed on a meta-level – such as in prefaces to poetry collections, interviews, and book launches – and through various poetic and linguistic strategies within the texts themselves.⁴ These strategies range from subtle linguistic innovations to more radical practices, extreme examples revealing a language teetering on the edge of collapse.

During the winter protests of 2011–2012, tens of thousands of Russians took to the streets in major cities to oppose electoral fraud and Vladimir Putin's potential return to the presidency for a third term. Cultural references and people from the cultural sector played a prominent role in this movement [Gabowitsch 2013; Arkhipova et al. 2016]. Since then, the space for critical expression in Russia has been drastically curtailed across the political sphere, civil society, and cultural and academic sectors. Over the past 10–15 years, the Russian state's increasing control over the cultural field has become evident through a range of policy documents, legislation, incentive schemes, and institutional development [Schmid 2015; Anisimova and Lunde 2020]. As political and cultural activism has been increasingly restricted, the state has intensified its own cultural production, co-opting popular genres and communication channels, managing cultural output through incentives, and advancing the militarization of culture itself. In view of the current conditions for Russian cultural production,⁵ in order to gather

² For a recent study examining the motivation and reasoning of authors enacting or not enacting the switch from Russian to Ukrainian [see Averbuch 2023].

³ Probably needless to say, I will not consider pro-Russian war poetry (Z-poetry) in this context. For all practical purposes, the topic here is anti-war poetry.

⁴ The present contribution is an expanded and updated version of a shorter article in Norwegian [Lunde 2023].

⁵ With the arrests (May 2023) and subsequent verdict (July 2024) against theatre director Evgeniia Berkovich and playwright Svetlana Petrichuk, the suppression of art and culture has reached a new level, as the two women were not accused of activism, but rather on the basis of the topic in a fictional work. Berkovich and Petrichuk were accused of “justifying terrorism” in the award-winning drama “Finist, the Bright Falcon”, which depicts how Russian women are recruited to join radical Islamists in Syria. Both were sentenced to six years in prison. As of September 2024 (the time of completing this article), a proposal has been presented in Russia outlining a new “professional standard” for writers, including recommendations on language, style, and content. This could be the first step towards yet another level of cultural management. One of its authors,

a sensible material of Russian-language anti-war poetry, we must therefore include poets and publications appearing outside of the borders of the Russian Federation.

Following the full-scale invasion, numerous Russian-language, bilingual, and translated poetry collections, as well as mixed-genre publications with a clear anti-war stance, have been released. These works have appeared in various countries, including Germany [Machina 2022; Plotnikov, 2023], Israel [Golovinskaia 2022], the UK [Nemirovskaya 2023], the USA [Lipovetsky and Platt 2023; Nemirovskaya and Krushelnitskaya 2024], France [Zeytounian-Beloüs et al. 2022], and even Russia [Leving 2022]. These printed books are complemented by online or hybrid initiatives and platforms, often with a transnational profile, such as Linor Goralik's ROAR project [Goralik, 2022–] or the special issue of the journal [*Translit*] [bolshe net slov 2022].⁶

Leving's collection was the focus of a two-day conference held at Princeton on April 15–16, 2023.⁷ Additionally, several critical articles on the topic have been published in Russian or Russian-language internet outlets, with notable contributions from poet and critic Dmitrii Kuz'min [2022] and philologist and critic Andrei Voitovskii [2022]. The Telegram forum *Metazhurnal* has also dedicated multiple sessions to discussing Russian-language anti-war poetry. These discussions are typically uploaded to YouTube and are publicly accessible.

Linguistic legitimacy

In discussions surrounding anti-war poetry, linguistic legitimacy is frequently raised as a key question. The title of [*Translit*]'s special issue, “there are no words left,” conveys the general idea of a certain impossibility of speaking or writing. This idea is reinforced by the cover, which is decorated with asterisks (*) shaped like tank barriers made of angle iron. The use of asterisks, in turn, alludes both to the context of protest culture and to the issue of censorship, referring to protest signs marked with 3 + 5 asterisks, which indirectly express the words “No to war” (Нет войне) [Voitovskii 2022].

“How should one write poetry after Bucha,” asks literary critic Aleksandr Genis, echoing Theodor Adorno's famous “To write poetry after Auschwitz is

nationalist prose-writer and Duma deputy Sergei Shargunov, commented that the proposed standard is “a reflection of a steady trend of increasing the importance of normative regulation of relations in the sphere of literary activity” and will help “form cultural and moral perceptions and solve everyday issues” [Mintrud Rossii 2024].

⁶ The list is not exhaustive.

⁷ As far as I have been able to establish, materials from this conference have not been published in the form of a conference volume or special issue, but a two-part blog post by Ilya Kukul'in [2024] seems to be based on his contribution to the conference. Also, Emma George, a PhD student at Princeton University, published a detailed conference report in *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* [Dzhordzh 2023].

barbaric” [Genis 2022]. A more concrete and poignant question, however, is: how to write poetry in Russian? Several poets and writers insist that if you want to write poetry in Russian today, you need to be aware of the language’s strong link to war, violence, and terror. Poet and prose writer Maria Stepanova asks, “How can we manage the situation when literally every second expression or metaphor, if we trace it to its roots, is littered with allusions to war and violence? Language itself turns into a minefield in which you can’t put your foot down anywhere without risk of an explosion” [Lipovetsky and Platt 2023].

In the March 2023 special issue of *World Literature Today*, entitled *The Russophone Literature of Resistance*, the editors nevertheless insist on the inherent power language to resist authoritarian ideology and rule: “This is writing that explodes the cultural foundations of Russian ‘patriotic’ ideology that, generation after generation, has fuelled imperial arrogance, self-aggrandizement, resentment, and xenophobia” [Lipovetsky and Platt, 2023]. Drawing on work by Marco Puleri, Naomi Caffee, and others, Lipovetsky and Platt point to the need of broadening the concept of Russophone literature to include literature written by authors from a range of different countries from Kazakhstan to Ukraine. In particular, they stress the need to employ and develop a rich Russian language, preferably with interferences from languages such as Kazakh, Azeri, Estonian, or Ukrainian, depending on the multilingual surroundings of the individual poet and poem. In their understanding, “Russophone” does not refer to territory or ethnicity but exclusively to language. It can thus operate independently from its political (mis)use by the Russian power elite. Interspersed with linguistic interference from non-Russian languages, Lipovetsky and Platt argue, it becomes markedly different from the normative Russian standard language, the latter being associated with the center of power and the country’s imperial history.

A related conceptualization of “Russophone resistance literature” draws inspiration from the French theorists Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “minority literature”, defined as “not the literature of a minor language, but the literature a minority makes in a major language” [Deleuze and Guattari 1982–83, p. 16]. In this understanding, writers who represent anti-war or anti-regime resistance (by no means always the same thing) perceive themselves as a minority within the broader Russian-language mainstream literature. This mainstream literature is understood as being aligned with official Russian premises, whether it overtly promotes the ruling ideology, as seen in the so-called Z-poetry, or just operates in a business-as-usual manner.

It is debatable whether the Russian language can truly be detached from the political through this kind of conceptualization. One might even argue that it is neither possible nor necessarily desirable to “liberate” the language from its imperial legacy, as this could also eliminate, or at least downplay, the crucial

aspect of responsibility. As Maria Stepanova puts it, “You may want to write about butterflies, but ultimately you will have to explain the war” [Lipovetsky and Platt 2023]. Russian prose writer Sergei Lebedev, in a different context, underscores this point: “When one considers that one writes and speaks a language that has been and is a tool of oppression, it leads to a very special sensitivity” [Lebedev and Lunde 2023].

During the launch of *The Russophone Literature of Resistance*, an interesting example could be observed that highlights the challenges of decolonizing Russian language and culture. Russian prose writer Mikhail Shishkin, who has been based in Switzerland since 1995, has spent much of his professional writing career opposing the regime; few would suspect him of consciously wanting to reproduce imperial discourse. However, during the launch, he started out by comparing the “current situation” with Kazymyr Malevych’s *Black Square* (1915), interpreting it as a premonition of future horrors: “it was his [= Malevych’s] feeling for the future, for the coming, horrible future, and what was in this future; it was the First World War, the bloody, horrible Civil War, and [the] Gulag [...] Now Russia is this black square” [Launch 2023]. While Shishkin’s point is neither uninteresting nor invalid per se, it is striking that the Russian writer did not at all reflect on Malevych’s biography, in particular, on the fact that the artist was born into a Polish family in Ukraine and spent many years in Kyiv, teaching at the city’s Art Academy. More importantly, Shishkin seemed to ignore that Malevych was one of the very few contemporary Ukrainian artists who dared to depict the greatest catastrophe that the “coming, horrible future” had in stock for his homeland Ukraine, the manmade famine, Holodomor (1932–33), in his famous images of faceless and handless peasants.

More recently, Shishkin’s unfortunate Russocentric perspective transpired again in his *Essay on Russian Literature* [Shishkin 2024], where the cover text asks, “What is wrong in the world created by the Cyrillic alphabet?” – clearly referencing Russia. Quite contrary to the (perhaps utopic) idea of a de-centralized, non-standard Russian, interspersed by elements of various surrounding languages [cf. Lipovetsky and Platt], Shishkin seems to overlook that the Cyrillic alphabet is used not only by Belarusians, Ukrainians, Serbs, Macedonians, Bulgarians and other Slavic peoples, but also a by a multitude of speakers of minority languages within the Russian Federation itself.⁸

Returning to the book launch, Shishkin describes Russian as “the language of blood,” emphasizing that the task of writers is to “fight for the language” and “clean it by what we do.” To restore the dignity of the Russian language and culture, Shishkin outlines two prerequisites: 1) the Russian regime must lose the war, and 2) a “genius novel that explains how this could happen” [Launch 2023].

⁸ For a longer commentary on Shishkin’s book see [Margolis 2024].

While Shishkin's logocentric optimism remains within the traditional space where Russian literature reigns high as the nation's conscience, we see more radical attitudes from other writers, who believe that the language itself must somehow be redefined, reshaped into something else, or created anew.

Towards a new 'we'?

One of Maria Stepanova's contributions to the special issue of *World Literature Today* belongs to a cycle with the telling title *Без ыка/Bez yka* (Without lang[uage]), in which the word "language" (*jazyk*) has been cut off:

Пока мы спали, мы бомбили Харьков

Потом, чуть позже, чайник со свистком

И дачные стволы стволели солнцем

И створы лета отворя

Лобзания и слёзы и заря, заря

И Харьков чёрным дымом исходил

Пока мы ели, мы бомбили Львов

Потом входили

За старшими в наморщенную воду

В дыму шашлычном

Лязгали стрекозы

Потом запели хором мы про то, как берег

Покрылся сотнями пострелянных людей

Так шло, заваливаясь, будто утка,

В июле утро.

Maria Stepanova, 9. July 2022

While we slept, we bombed Kharkiv

Afterward, a little later, the kettle with its whistle

And the old house's tree trunks trunking full of sun

And throwing wide the summer shutters

Sweet kisses tears and oh the dawn, the dawn

And Kharkiv breathed its last in blackest smoke

While we ate, we bombed Lviv

And after entered

The wrinkled water, elders first

*In the smoke of barbecues
Clanged dragonflies*

*Afterward we sang in chorus of how the banks
Were blanketed with hundreds of shot-down dead*

*And so it went, waddling like a duck,
A morning in July.⁹*

Stepanova's poem combines crystal-clear language with careful linguistic innovation or distortion (depending on one's perspective). Some sentences deviate from usual syntax, and some words are neologisms, such as the verb "to trunk." The poem's temporal structure strongly emphasizes the synchronicity in the implied references of "we" ("While we ate, we bombed Lviv"). This poetics can be understood as a kind of reality check ("we bombed Kharkiv", "we bombed Lviv"), conveyed in a language that demands the listener's or reader's maximum attention.¹⁰

Stepanova is not alone in emphasizing this "we." A short poem by Viacheslav Popov also embodies a collective "we" with a clear reference, pointing to the need for taking responsibility for Russian aggression.

*кругом
молодые
старые
бодрые
и усталые

идут избегая наледи
не знают
что все мы нелюди [Kuz'min 2022]*

⁹ The Russian original is available as a reading in [Launch 2023]; the English translation is by Ainsley Morse [Lipovetsky and Platt 2023].

¹⁰ Interestingly, in her latest novel, Stepanova also foregrounds the topic of language. The novel, entitled *Fokus* in Russian (in this context probably best translated as *Magic Trick*), follows a writer (M.), who has left her homeland and lives in a European country. Her homeland, though unnamed, is easily identifiable. It is presented as the homeland of "a beast" or as "the beast" itself, which wages a war against its neighbouring country. The writer M. embarks on numerous trips, one of them is the basis of the narrative. Far from an ordinary journey, it confronts the writer M. with serious life-changing challenges, but also possibilities. "Language" is portrayed almost as a living creature, pictured in grotesque imagery evoking feelings of horror and disgust. I quote, in my translation, two passages of the novel taken from *Novaia gazeta Evropā's* recension, since I do not have access to the novel itself: "[...] everything was more difficult with the language, which was much older than the beast, but it too was suddenly covered with suspicious mucus, lumpy with festering growths, words of disposition appeared in it, it seemed as if it had gone wild and did not recognise its household. M. herself would not like to touch it now; she bided her time." "[...] as soon as she began to search in her mind for any words, M. felt that there was a mouse still half alive in her mouth, and she could not spit it out – it was moving, clamped between her teeth, and she had to either clench her jaws and bite it in half with a crunch, or live on with the mouse in her mouth, thinking of nothing else." [Aleksandrov 2024].

*all around
the young
old
cheerful
and tired*

*walk avoiding the icy patches
unaware
that we're all monsters¹¹*

The “we” in these examples is more or less explicitly linked to Russia’s role as an aggressor and can be read as a critical wake-up call against the widespread apathy in Russian society.

The following poem by Daria Serenko displays, like Popov’s text, a sudden shift in the last line, but otherwise utilizes a quite different poetic strategy:

*встаньте, дети, буквой «зет»
лучше буквы в мире нет:
нарисованная кровью
полусвастика побед*

*победили? победили:
нас послали, мы убили
ну, а что, таков приказ
скажут «фас», убьем и вас*

*смерть, конечно, лучше жизни
свет, конечно, хуже тьмы
с днём победы над фашизмом
но фашисты –это мы*

*children, form the letter “Z”
best letter in the alphabet:
drawn in blood, this symbol’s might
half-swastika, it’s victory’s fight*

*triumphed? triumphed: we have killed:
sent by orders, task fulfilled
well, so what, they say “attack”
that’s the command and we’ll strike back*

*death, of course, is better than life
light, of course, is worse than strife*

¹¹ My translation.

*happy victory over fascism, we glee
but the fascists, that's truly we*¹²

Serenko's poem mocks official propaganda language and Z-poetry through its content, style, and rhythm, before taking a sudden turn in the last two lines, where the "we" identify with the "fascists" – the classic enemy of state propaganda – and thereby changes its reference completely.

Between creative distortion and linguistic collapse

Popov's and Serenko's orthography reflects a fairly widespread tendency to avoid using capital letters. Other poets go much further in breaking with the norms of the standard language. A radical example is the young poet Varvara Nedeoglo, one of the contributors to [*Translit*]'s special issue on anti-war poetry. Her work was also the focus of a session in the *Metajournal* forum, and her orthographic style, termed "exorussian," inspired the cover of Leving's collection.

Nedeoglo supplements the Russian alphabet with a wide range of special characters – some borrowed from minority languages within the Russian Federation, some from other alphabets, some pure symbols, and some unconventional combinations of letters and diacritical marks. Here is a short excerpt from her long poem (*поема*):

[...] в н, а ч абыловн ач, а ыблосло во и вослов о ыблов вой роуьськыи
языкъ
что в кор не не верно
в н, а ч, а ле ыбло слово и солово ыбло альтруссиш олд іст slavіc old
ruthenian олд рутэніан давньоруська старажытнаруская мова
общий медок украинского белорусского русс кого от не го
пра изо ѡел пра изоѡли
пустого цѡря мїснопѡмятныи вздѡх
украинский и русский и белорусский [...] [Nedeoglo 2022]

[...] in theb, e g innwasintheb, and swawo rd and rdthew o swa wa rusian
language
which in ess ence isn't true
in theb, e g, inning swa word and worord swa *altrussisch* old east славік
олд руфиниан
old ruthenian *davn'orus'ka*
starazhytnaruskaia mova
the common аместор of ukrainian belarusian russ іan from і t
[it] a roše [they] a roše

¹² My translation, in dialogue with <https://chatgpt.com>.

the memorable sigh of the empty tsar
ukrainian and russian and belarusian [...] ¹³

Nedeoglo's poetic strategy moves in two directions, creating a tension. On the one hand, she enriches the language, enhancing linguistic and graphic diversity – alluding, in the process, to Russian colonialism and imperialism; on the other hand, we see that words fall apart or merge into each other, while the syntax is broken.

The central word “war” (*voina*) flashes in the quote from the opening phrase of the Gospel according to St John (“In the beginning was the word and the word was war”), which is interrupted and replaced with “Russian [= early East Slavic] language.” The poem evokes numerous references and allusions: in the quoted excerpt, we hear echoes of John 1, 1, but likely also Putin's (“the empty tsar's”) much-discussed essay (“memorable sigh”) “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians” from July 2021.

Nedeoglo's lyrical persona also occasionally aligns with a broader “we”, referencing Russia as an aggressor and perpetrator. This is exemplified through wordplay later in the poem, involving her own name (Varvara) and distortions of the word “barbarism” (*varvarstvo*).

While Nedeoglo's poem is rich with suggestive references, it also demonstrates the dissolution of language itself, a process that could lead to complete collapse – or to the creation of something entirely new. In this way, it encapsulates the central dilemma facing Russian-language poets today.

Counterspeak – new and old

Linguistic and (ortho)graphic renewal has a prehistory in Russian literary culture. One can think of the futurists' experiments with transrational language (*zaum*), the postmodernist linguistic play of the late Soviet and early post-Soviet periods, or the more recent net slang *jazyk padonkoff*, popular in the years 2004 to 2006, which deliberately distorted the norms of the standard language.

More specifically, however, Russophone anti-war literature/poetry of today also incorporates elements of what we may call *linguistic resistance*. In this, it echoes the struggle against the totalitarian, ideologized language of the Soviet era, expressed through various subversive linguistic strategies. These strategies have been described with terms such as counter-language (*protivoiaz*) [Sarnov 2005], linguistic resistance (*iazikovoe soprotivlenie*) [Kupina 1999], or the language of self-defence (*iazk samooborony*) [Guseinov 2003].

Such strategies are not unfamiliar in Putin's Russia either. Several scholars have identified a “crisis” in the political language culture well before the full-scale

¹³ My translation, in which I attempt to convey some of Nedeoglo's techniques directly or indirectly. For example, I switch alphabets in a manner similar to (but reversed from) what Nedeoglo does (Cyrillic/Latin).

invasion [Scharlaj 2020; Nicolosi et al. 2020], driven by the limited opportunities for broader segments of society to engage in political life, the strong ideologization of public discourse, and the state's ambition to control and regulate language use through legislation [Gorham and Weiss 2016/2017].

In contemporary Russia,¹⁴ an initiative reminiscent of the (anti)Soviet tradition of linguistic resistance is the Signal project by the independent media platform Meduza. The initiators identify the dominant state discourse as “*novoiaz*” (in the tradition of Orwellian and Soviet newspeak) and the counter-discourse as “*oppoiaz*” (≈ the language of opposition). Signal publishes a newsletter and a podcast featuring detailed commentaries on typical clichés and expressions – often euphemisms – that dominate state political discourse, particularly in news coverage of the war. They pay special attention to elements of this discourse that blur the description of reality. In the editors' own words: “Novoiaz smooths out sharp edges so as not to set the boat in motion. [...]. Oppoiaz, on the contrary, maximises the sharp edges” [Amzin 2023].¹⁵

Concluding remarks

Despite their differences, the Signal project, the Soviet counter-language tradition, and anti-war poetry since the full-scale invasion share a common intention: *to sharpen and renew verbal expression while simultaneously increasing metalinguistic awareness.*

A distinctive feature of poetry is its often clearly defined lyrical voice, making it particularly well-suited to highlighting the speaker's or speakers' position, which in many of our examples can be identified as a collective “we”. As we have seen, this “we” lies at the heart of a moral dilemma, linked both to the right to speak about the war (being associated with the aggressor state) and to the issue of language (the Russian language being associated with the aggressor state). In the texts and statements we have examined, this “we” has several references: to Russia as an aggressor state and the shared responsibility that entails, but also to what poet and critic Ilya Kukulín, referencing Jan Patočka, calls “the solidarity of the shaken” [Dzhordzh 2023, p. 483]. This concept has been repeatedly emphasized in the online *Metajournal* discussions, which in themselves serve as a forum for individual poets to be part of a larger group of like-minded individuals, or a “minority literature” in Deleuze and Guattari's terms.

Needless to say, most poets are under no illusion that poetry can directly impact the catastrophic war. However, it is still seen to serve important functions. Writers and critics highlight poetry's ability to: 1) weaken defensive mechanisms

¹⁴ Technically not *in* Russia (since Meduza is operating in exile), but clearly produced for a Russian-speaking audience residing both in and outside of the Russian Federation.

¹⁵ My translation.

that block empathy (or simply work against apathy); 2) undermine official (propaganda) language; 3) foster a sense of communality; and 4) strive for linguistic renewal to regain linguistic legitimacy. The problem of linguistic legitimacy is intertwined with the ethical position from which to speak. Dmitrii Kuz'min [2022] raises this point in his critique of Nedeoglo's radical poetic strategy, noting that the poem (from which I quoted an excerpt above) appears to focus more on the destruction of Russia than on the destruction of Ukraine. Consequently, it advocates for the need to save Russia rather than Ukraine.¹⁶

For writers such as Maria Stepanova and Sergei Lebedev, awareness of the Russian language's association with violence, war, and barbarism is a necessary step on the road if Russian literature and culture are to exist in the future. Recognizing that words, after all, can do little, while individuals can still perform small acts of solidarity, Maria Stepanova encouraged her audience at the Umeå Literary Festival 2023 in Sweden to focus exactly on that: "I believe in two things: a miracle and solidarity. While waiting for the former, we should devote ourselves to the latter" [Stepanova, Sjögren 2023].

It still seems early, perhaps too early, to see the processes discussed here, the linguistic endeavours and the highlighting of a "new we", as expressing a first step – the one termed guilt-processing – toward a much needed *poetics of solidarity*, as described by Rory Finnin [2022] in his book about how Crimean Tatar, Ukrainian, Turkish, and Russian literatures forge ties of solidarity with the Crimean Tatar experience of Stalinist atrocities.

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¹⁶ Unfortunately, this concern echoes, to a certain degree, the position of the Russian liberal opposition, now mostly in exile.

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МІЖ МОВНИМ ОПОРОМ І КРАХОМ: РОСІЙСЬКОМОВНА АНТИВОЄННА ПОЕЗІЯ ТА ПИТАННЯ МОВНОЇ ЛЕГІТИМНОСТІ

Анотація. У цій статті досліджується російськомовна антивоєнна поезія, опублікована після повномасштабного вторгнення РФ в Україну, і виявляється наявна в цьому матеріалі тенденція ставити під сумнів самі основи культурного (літературного) опору. Зокрема, йдеться про здатність, можливість і моральні умови мови (і письма) виражати опір війні. Російськомовні письменники, як у Російській Федерації, так і в еміграції, стикаються з гострими дилемами, пов'язаними з моральними викликами вираження опору мовою, просякнутою війною, насильством і терором. Ці виклики аналізуються в рамках двостороннього підходу. По-перше, розглядаються основні лінії аргументації, пов'язані з цими питаннями, коли вони обговорюються письменниками та критиками на метарівні (у передмовах, коментарях, під час презентацій тощо). Потім розглядаються кілька мовних стратегій, які проявляються у вибраних віршах. Ці стратегії охоплюють і витончені лінгвістичні інновації і більш радикальні практики, де крайні приклади показують мову, яка балансує на межі розпаду. Насамкінець пропонується коротка передісторія лінгвістичного опору в російській/радянській культурі, а на завершення підсумовуються основні функції російськомовної антивоєнної поезії, як їх уявляють собі письменники та критики.

Ключові слова: мовна легітимність; мовний спротив, антивоєнна поезія, російськомовна поезія.

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