

Poetic reflections of war in contemporary Ukrainian literature as the poetry of metaphysical perspectives

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DOI: 10.31577/WLS.2025.17.3.6

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Metaphysical poetry. Women's poetry. Mythological imagery. Coping strategies. War in literature.

Metaphysical poetry emerges in transitional historical periods marked by radical change, as exemplified by wars. Defined by unique ideological and stylistic traits, it explores human existence as a drama, focusing on complex experiences. This poetry expresses a catastrophic worldview, merging thought and feeling to capture life's paradoxical nature. This article examines how contemporary Ukrainian poetry reinterprets metaphysical themes, emphasizing sacred time, a new view of death, and mystical elements, demonstrating thematic kinship despite limited use of traditional metaphysical techniques.

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For many Ukrainians, one of the initial coping strategies during the early days of the full-scale Russian invasion was to reflect poetically on events that defied rational understanding. Mykhailo Nazarenko argues that poetry is the most precise and fitting tool to express human feelings in wartime: “It serves as a direct expression, achieving the highest level of generalization, merging the universal with the deeply personal – capturing both absolute specificity (what I or my characters experience) and the collective experience of the community as a whole” (Babel’ 2024, 51st min.). Since February 24, 2022, seeking out and collecting fragments of poetry became a coping strategy for one of the authors of this article. When we were silenced by shock, these poems gave voice to our personal feelings. The research material was gathered in real time as poems appeared on social networks; but, while our reading is naturally limited by intellectual “filter bubbles”, the selected poems rapidly transcended these boundaries, achieving nationwide recognition. Thus, in the paper, we cite them by linking to their initial Facebook publications indicating the precise date (day and month) and omitting the year. From today’s perspective, these poems reveal certain common elements in worldview, themes and style that allow their consideration within the paradigm of metaphysical poetry, guiding our choice of methods. The present research material focuses on poems that circulated on social networks from February 25 to March 23, 2022, a period marked by the most intense shock. Poems that appeared later, in April, contain more generalized imagery and reflect a different emotional state of their authors. Notably, the poems collected during that period were written by women, who, unwillingly found themselves in the roles of observers or supporters for the main actors (the military forces) and protectors for their home and children. The peculiarity of the material considered in the article is defined by the space of the network, where these poems were emerging alongside the news of the first mass shelling, destruction, and entry of enemy reconnaissance groups into cities. The phenomenon of social networks ensures the fastest possible distribution of poetry, an instant response from readers, free access for widespread sharing, and feedback that fuels further interpretations through recitation, song or video clips. Some of the analyzed poems were later included in printed editions.

Meanwhile, the interaction of the authors and the audience, both sharing the same experiences, was a significant asset of the poems written and collected in the first month of the invasion. If we consider these poems from the standpoint of their impact on audiences, perception, and distribution, it is essential to recognize the resonance of the imagery and expressions offered by the poets. This selection reflects a unanimous response to total catastrophe. Notably, these poems reveal the search for and discovery of protection and support that made it possible to survive and endure the first month, resulting in generalizations and channeling their focused spiritual and physical resilience.

We offer an interpretation of the poetry from the first month of the full-scale war through the lens of metaphysical poetry, understood broadly as a recurrent literary phenomenon.¹

METAPHYSICAL POETRY AS A RECURRENT LITERARY PHENOMENON: CREATIVE TECHNIQUES OF THE TREND

The term metaphysical poetry was initially used to define the works of John Donne and other British writers of the 17th century, but over time its meaning has expanded considerably. In the 20th century, this poetry was reconsidered as a supranational and recurrent literary phenomenon associated with “high points of civilization” (Smith 1974, 278) – historical periods marked by radical changes and catastrophes, particularly large-scale wars. A distinct set of features regarding ideology, central themes, poetics, and style positions metaphysical poetry as an independent trend in European literature, genetically connected to the Baroque period yet not limited to it. The works of Francisco de Quevedo (Spain), Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński (Poland), Andreas Gryphius (Germany), and Łazarz Baranowicz (Ukraine) represent metaphysical poetry in European literatures of the 17th century. This paradigm persisted into the 20th century through writers such as Henry Treece (UK), Dámaso Alonso (Spain), and Oleksa Stefanovych (Ukraine – USA).

Given its association with transitional periods in history, metaphysical poetry has developed a catastrophic worldview that perceives the universe as chaotic and human life as inherently suffering. It seeks to understand and emotionally grasp the paradoxical unity of the transient and the stable within the dynamic process of existence. The Greek prefix “meta” (after, above, beyond) in its name suggests that metaphysical poetry strives to transcend the boundaries of the physical world. In its pursuit “to grasp reality” (Smith 1974, 276), its primary themes explore complex, dynamic phenomena that encompass both the spiritual and material dimensions of individual existence (death and time, religion, love and beauty, loneliness), focusing on conflicting emotions and states of mind. The tragic recognition of life’s transience and the desire for an intimate connection with the divine are among its leading motifs. In the context of our research, it is worth noting that the dramatic tension in metaphysical poetry often stems from personal experiences of living through historical catastrophes.

Ukrainian women’s poetry created at the end of February 2022 has not yet been considered within the metaphysical poetry paradigm or even thoroughly analyzed. To date, only Taras Pastukh’s brief overview highlights the relevant themes, motifs, and emotional tones in poetry written by women at the outset of the war (2022), and Tetiana Belimova’s article positions Ukrainian women’s poetry as a means of expressing traumatic experiences and preserving memory (2023). Yoshinari Harada’s review explores creative approaches to translating these poems and outlines their emotional resonance with a foreign audience (2024).

Our article, dedicated to the time-limited yet emotionally powerful literary material, aims to be the first step toward filling this gap. For our analysis, we selected eighteen poems by Ukrainian women poets, whose texts convey deeply personal experiences of the first thirty days of the war. The analysis primarily focuses on the works of Yuliia Batkilina, Liudmyla Gorova, Nastka Fedchenko, Tetiana Vlasova, Oksana Osmolovska, Natalka Fursa, Larysa Palamarchuk, and Maryna Muliar, whose poems were initially created and published on social media in February and March 2022.

The creative techniques of metaphysical poetry are rooted in an understanding of life as paradox. Its central trope is a distinctive kind of metaphor known as the “metaphysical conceit” (Smith 1974, 272). This conceit can be described as a fusion of two seemingly opposing concepts that form a new, indivisible whole, while each retains its individual, contradictory characteristics (Riazantseva 2014, 37–38). In Baroque poetry, for instance, Quevedo exemplifies this technique with the oxymoronic image of life as “living death”. In the 20th century, Stefanovych employs the same type of metaphor to describe painful spiritual renewal as a “resurrective perdition” (1975, 152).

The texts analyzed in our article cannot be strictly classified as metaphysical poetry, as the main stylistic marker of this literary trend appears in them only sporadically. Although thematically and emotionally aligned with metaphysical poetry, these texts rarely feature oxymoronic imagery. Metaphors resembling metaphysical conceits appear only in the works of Batkilina (“kind fury” [“лють [...] добра”] to denote righteous anger; February 25) and Fursa (“a blossoming stone” [“розквітлий камінь”], “a hard black fire” [“чорний твердий вогонь”] as images of a person spiritually strengthened by hardships of war; March 23). However, the authors also employ other metaphysical poetry techniques: to create a heightened level of dramatic tension, they rely on contrasts and grammatical devices, particularly in the use of tenses.

PARADOXES OF TIME

For our research, both traditional and innovative elements in the interpretation of key themes of metaphysical poetry within contemporary Ukrainian poetry are identified and described. Despite the limited use of metaphysical conceits, the poems written in the early days of the invasion can be closely linked to metaphysical poetry through their shared worldview, thematic focus, and emotional intensity.

Ukrainian metaphysical poetry of the 20th century

Employing descriptive, comparative, and close reading approaches, and building on the observations of Yevgeniy Golovakha and Aleksandr Kronik (1984) regarding shifts in individual perceptions of time, as well as recent research in this area (Dawson and Sleek 2018), we highlight new semantic nuances in the interpretations of themes like Time (Death) and Religion. The emerging features in the interpretation of these themes and the new aspects of religious and mystical experience conceptualize war and its traumatic events as a sacred time, in line with Roger Caillois’s explanation in *Man and the Sacred*:

War, no less than the festival, seems like the time of the sacred, the period of the divine epiphany. It introduces man to an intoxicating world in which the presence of death makes him shiver and confers a superior value upon his various actions. He believes that he will acquire a psychic vigor – just as through the descent to the inferno in ancient initiations – out of proportion to mundane experiences. ([1950] 1959, 173)

The association with pivotal historical moments significantly influences the interpretation of time in metaphysical poetry. In the 20th century, this interpretation

reflects the experience of the two world wars, conceiving time as “an individual time within history [...] when a person clearly understands that the historical process is unfolding in their own time and space” (Golovakha and Kronik 1984, 8). Stefanovych’s poetic cycle *Kintsyevitnie* (The world’s ending, 1975) exemplifies the Ukrainian version of it. Without claiming a direct genetic link between this cycle and the poems we analyze, we highlight their common elements in time and space interpretation:

1) Framed within a Doomsday context, Ukraine is portrayed as a space of sacred war, existing simultaneously in historical and sacred time, as: “a zone of contact between God and a human being” (Assmann 2012, 322), a place of “miracles, atonement, healing, and spiritual renewal” (324). Thus, World War II and the Ukrainian liberation struggle are represented as mysterious ordeals in line with Caillois’s conclusions (1959, 173).

2) The cyclic movement of Time in Ukraine is demonstrated through the recurrence of sacred events.

3) The combination of Apocalyptic and folklore imagery conveys a compression of the present, which brings the past and future into a sense of immediate proximity (Golovakha and Kronik 1984, 95) and positions future as “a time which is actually happening” (97).

Ukrainian poetry of March 2022

The interpretation of time in the works of Ukrainian women poets, written at the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion – the first conflict of such magnitude in Europe in the past eighty years – shows notable developments of the features listed above.

The poems selected for our analysis primarily portray time as either stopped or extended, reflecting a psychological effect typical of intensely stressful personal situations (Golovakha and Kronik 1984, 8, 99). These poems often focus on experiencing a particular day or even a single moment within it, so time in these texts paradoxically conveys both static and dynamic qualities.

Time appears static because the focal point rests within the present moment, where all of life seems concentrated, yet the flow of events and emotions filling this moment reveals its dynamic nature. This dual interpretation is effectively conveyed through the cyclic structure of poems (Batkilina, Fedchenko, Vlasova), the use of anaphora and enumeration, and the grammatical support of verbs in the present tense, or by contrasting present with past and future tenses.

The present tense dominates even in Muliar’s poems, where the time of an air raid feels frozen. The marked absence of events (“Everything is postponed, even the most pressing matters” [“Відкладено все, навіть найневідкладніші справи”]) and the lack of visual markers of time (“The overripe information boards in the subway swell with zeros” [“В метро перестиглі табло налилися нулями”]); March) symbolically suspends time, capturing the tension of waiting on the threshold between life and death.

The depiction of war as both a deeply personal experience and a matter of national significance illustrates the historical scale of experiencing time. A central narrative

moment is a private life event that simultaneously belongs to the narrator's national history. The authors acknowledge the immense scale of catastrophe and the potential brevity of their existence, but this recognition does not lead to despair. Rather, this emphasis on hope for the future – combined with a catastrophic understanding of the present and a strong connection to the past – introduces a significant innovation in metaphysical poetry perspective. It signals a shift in worldview, which becomes not entirely catastrophic. Additionally, an acute awareness of the repetition of significant historical events creates an impression of time's cyclic movement, resonating with 20th-century Ukrainian metaphysical poetry. For example, in depicting Ukraine at war, Fedchenko invokes the same historical parallels as Stefanovych (1975, 80–81, 93–94), referencing the destruction of Kyiv during the Mongol invasion of the 13th century and the 1918 Battle of Kruty during the Ukrainian-Soviet War:

The horde is coming [...]
I am Kruty
There was a mighty battle with Russians again
And Ukrainians managed well to take their revenge²
(Fedchenko March 5)

THE LONGING FOR AN INDIVIDUAL CONTACT WITH THE DEITY: CHRISTIAN IMAGERY

Another central motif of metaphysical poetry which becomes obvious here is the longing for personal contact with the divine, though it appears only in fragments. None of these poems is explicitly a prayer in verse, yet many of them contain Biblical allusions, Christian imagery, either explicit or implicit, and direct appeals to heavenly powers.

The tone of these appeals reflects both the preservation and development of attitudes established in 20th-century metaphysical poetry. Here, the human being is seen foremost as a spiritual creature, as expressed in the line: “in the body of a person who fights there's more spirit than body” (“в тілі людини, що бореться, духу більше, як тіла”; Mikhalitsyna March 14). For the poets, dialogues with God take the form of conversations among equals. They consider Him a friend, openly challenge Him, question His wisdom, or even voice demands, as seen in Fedchenko's poem: “Lord, the enemies will burn in hell for everyone! [...] / God, admit it, when you were settling these monsters on earth / You were very tired, cross and just switched off the ratio (“Господи, вороги ж горітимуть у пеклі за кожного! [...] / Боже, визнай, коли ти селив на землі цих почвар, / то був дуже втомлений, злий і зовсім вимкнув рацію”, March 5). The informal tone of these appeals to the Lord enables a reinterpretation of well-known Biblical symbols with military connotations, such as the image of the trumpet, which in the Bible brings down city walls. In Fursa's poem “A cellar is my hiding place for today...” (“Сьогодні схованка в льоху...”), the sound of a wall vibrating due to explosions during an air raid is described as “the trumpet of Jericho telling you to f.k off” (“труба ерихонська, яка посилає на...”; March 18). This irreverent and sarcastic image of the wall mocking

the enemy contrasts with the poem's otherwise serious tone. Here, the image symbolizes resilience and protection, marking the moment of highest dramatic tension and, simultaneously, its release – a pivotal point in the narrative that signifies a shift from uncertainty to hope.

Even in the most extreme circumstances (“One thanks the Lord, while the other curses Him.” [“Хтось Боженьці дякує, хтось – кляне.”]; March 18), when the meaning of prayers slips from memory (“I don't remember what [...] we were praying about” [“не пам'ятаю [...] про що молились”]; Vlasova March 14), the majority of these Ukrainian poets do not feel emotionally disconnected from God – an enduring trait of Ukrainian metaphysical poetry. The sense of desolation, however, is conveyed in Osmolovska's poem “blessed apostle judas thaddaeus...” (“благословенний апостоле юдо тадею”; March 18), where the narrator expresses clear uncertainty about divine support.

Fursa's poem “And then I turn into stone...” (“А потім я кам'янію...”) illustrates how traumatic experiences can catalyze spiritual transformation, aligning with Caillois's assertion that war can serve as a tragic initiation, granting “a psychic vigor [...] out of proportion to mundane experiences” (1959, 173). In Fursa's work, this vigor manifests as a transformative connection with God. This complex internal process is expressed through a metaphor grounded in a Gospel reference: “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18). This vivid image of a person as both a flame and a rock on which “the Lord's temple will stand till the Judgment day” serves as an extended metaphysical conceit. The underlying principle of this metaphor is the contrast between the transient and the stable – one of the defining features of metaphysical imagery – which is depicted as an ongoing transformation: from tranquility to movement, from material to spiritual, from death to immortality. In this process, a human becomes first a stone, then a living being, then pure energy, ultimately achieving a mysterious dynamic stability as a “hard black flame”. This final form embodies a new entity, combining movement and stillness, grounded in the concepts of strength and eternal endurance:

That's what a stone is for: it will endure everything,
It will soar, it will fall into the pit, it will kneel, and grow into the soil.
It will cover itself with moss, then blossom from within,
With an unfading flower,
With an ever-burning glow,
With a hard black flame
On which the Lord's temple will stand until Doomsday.
My enemy, when I am like this,
No weapon of yours can harm me.³
(Fursa March 23)

An intimate connection with the deity in moments of crisis is sometimes depicted from a reverse perspective. For example, Mikhalitsyna in her “anatomy/Mariupol” (“анатомія/Маріуполь”) introduces an image of Our Lady cutting her heart into pieces and giving them to the slain children. This powerful dynamic image visualizes

grief through its literal interpretation of Ukrainian idiom “to cut a heart into pieces”, which means “to suffer, to experience grief”:

The Virgin in the heavenly sacristy
Is cutting her heart into pieces:
To each hungry one,
A piece to their mouth,
To each perished one
A way out of the gate of this world⁴
(March 14)

This technique chosen to portray a spiritual process, such as grieving, reflects a revival of the creative practices of Baroque metaphysical poetry in the works of contemporary Ukrainian poets.

THE POETICS OF SHELTER: MYTHOLOGICAL AND SACRED IMAGES

The unbreakable connection with the sacred powers gains a new dimension through the reinterpretation of the underground space as a space of safety. The open sky carries a threat:

The open sky is like a book
like the telephone book of the city of Mariupol
which gradually turns into a notebook
with blank pages⁵
(Osmolovska March 18)

The sky stands in contrast to the dungeon, an unfamiliar, enclosed, hidden space that saves lives (the underground, a cellar, a basement). This binary opposition evokes another level of sacredness: folkloric and mythological, where the underground space is not set against the sky but inseparably paired with it. When the open space and the sky become threatening, a person turns to the closed underground (chthonic) space, to the belly of the earth. Heaven is in need of protection and support: “the sky does not fall, the sky is kept fast” (“небо не падає, небо тримають міцно”; Batkilina February 25).

The next example is an appeal to the saints – Apostle Judas Thaddeus, the Virgin Mary, and God: “cover the sky over Ukraine” (“закрий небо над Україною”; Osmolovska March 18). The capitalization plays a specific role in this line: the names of saints and God are written with a lowercase letter, while only “Ukraine” is capitalized, elevating it as the highest, most sacred value. The alarmed sky is defenseless, prompting people to create their own shelter. The poet covers a lamp with a “piece of old cloth” (“рядниною”) because “there isn’t any shelter nearby” (“поблизу немає ніякого укриття”). The words “cover” (закривати) and “shelter” (укриття) in Ukrainian are of the same root meaning “covering, hiding, sheltering and protecting”.

Creating one’s own darkness, retreating to dungeons, to uninhabited spaces: the “wet cellar” (“мокрый погріб”; Palamarchuck) becomes a sacred act of life protection – a “lurking-space in a cellar” (“схованка в льоху”; Fursa). This space also

becomes a place of life creation: “and a woman gave birth in agony in the basement, in the metro” (“а жінка ж родила он в муках в підвалі, в метро”; Mikhalitsyna March 2); “I am Ukraine. [...] I am a mother in labor lying in a bomb shelter, hearing the first cry of my son” (“Я – Україна [...] Я – породілля, яка лежить у бомбосховищі і чує перший крик сина”; Fedchenko March 5). The imagery in Fedchenko’s and Mikhalitsyna’s poems is rooted in a real event, serving as both literal and apocalyptic vision. Here, the child emerging from the mother’s womb symbolically enters the Earth’s womb, sheltered in the safety of a chthonic space that has gained new sacredness as a place that preserves life.

Palamarchuk discerns runes (sacred signs) in the patterns of mold on the wet walls of the cellar. Muliar combines the theme of the Earth’s womb with that of death (“a rocket hit the cemetery” [“ракета у цвинтар прийшла”]) and with the concept of time (see above). Here, people try to comprehend the incomprehensible: death brought by enemies strikes those who are already dead, while midnight becomes a “timeless time” on the digital clock in the metro. In Ukrainian poetry, the topos of the dungeon broadens the sphere of interaction with the sacred, giving new resonance to the motif of seeking intimate contact with higher powers – a characteristic of metaphysical poetry.

The polyvalence of chthonic motifs, deeply rooted in folklore worldviews, emerges through the portrayal of enemies as monsters. The enemy is depicted in three distinct ways:

1) Impersonal references using third-person plural constructions, such as “they’ve fired” (“обстріляли”), “they’ve broken” (“розбили”). This depersonalization of the threat is reinforced through metonymic substitutions: the siren, originally a warning of danger, becomes synonymous with the danger itself. The sound of the siren takes on the characteristics of a monster’s voice, reviving its ancient association with mortal threat. A siren’s voice is potentially deadly, it “chokes and howls” (“сирена, аж захинається, виє”; Fedchenko). Other examples include the bitterly ironic “gift” (“подарунок”; Palamarchuk) to name enemy missiles, and “tanks with bloody inscriptions” (“танки з кривавими написами”; Vlasova March 14) symbolizing the faceless enemy through weapon.

2) Metaphors such as “In every village, monsters cough up with blood” (“В кожному селищі чудища кров’ю харкають”; Batkilina February 25), “the vipers that taught you to fear” (“гаддя, що вчило тебе боятись”; Gorova February 25), “horde” (“орда”), and “monsters” (“почвари”; Fedchenko). These terms evoke folkloric imagery underscoring the enemy’s inhumanity.

3) Direct naming of the enemy, as in “Russian occupiers” (“російські окупанти”), used only by Fedchenko. The poet uniquely combines chthonic monster imagery with explicit naming of the enemy within a single text, linking folklore symbolism with direct identification.

In the first days following the Russian invasion, an overwhelming sense of unity between people and land emerges, captured in the image of the city as a sentient, living entity (Batkilina, Fedchenko). The personified land responds to the invasion by rallying its people with a forceful presence: “The city does not sleep, the city

calls its people” (“Місто не спить, місто скликає своїх”; Batkilina February 25). The first phrase, initially perceived as a metonymy, gains direct meaning in the personified image of the city: “the city calls its people / with a quiet song, with trumpets, with swearing / [...] Cries of frightened babies” (“місто скликає своїх / тихою пісню, сурмами, матюками / [...] Криками розтривожених немовлят”). These voices are tangible: “a stone is swearing” (“матюкається камінь”). The city acquires a human-like form as a holistic organism with “hundred throats” (“сто горлянок”), and its body – a “cobblestone” (“бруківка”) – feels pain and roars like a great beast. Though unnamed, this city embodies the spirit of all cities – “Kyiv, Kherson, or Kharkiv” – sharing the same experience and state of being. Kyiv toponyms in Gorova’s poem (February 25) resonate with layers of mythic consciousness: in “In Troya and Obolon” (“На Трої та Оболоні”) echoes of an ancient besieged city, while each reader recognizes the Kyiv district Troyeshchyna (Troy [Troya]).

Batkilina’s poem intertwines the image of the city with a mother’s lullaby, soothing a “frightened baby”: “Sleep, my little one, / sleep, lullaby-lullaby-ly, / how I now hate and I love...” (“Спи, моя крихітко, / спи, люлі-люлі-лю, / як я тепер ненавиджу і люблю...”; February 25). The mother, as a part of the living city, by protecting her child protects life itself, and is filled with powerful, contrasting emotions: hatred and love.

At the beginning of the war, a mother speaking to a child also tries to make sense of what is incomprehensible. The unity of opposites as a means of emphasis is an instrument of metaphysical poetry: “Do not fear, my child, these are tanks” (“Не бійся, дитино, це танки”; Gorova), the same is the contrasting unity of hate and love (Batkilina). These lines respond to the absurdity of the situation, capturing the resilience required of an adult who, amid extreme danger, must protect the life and peace of their child:

And these tanks are ours, daughter [...]
 Do you see a man waving?
 You can greet him too.
 He is going to kill vipers that taught you to fear.⁶
 (Gorova February 25)

The mother finds strength within herself, just as Ukraine finds its inner resilience.

While Mikhalitsyna “reads her son a shabby book” (“сину читає розхристану книжечку”; March 3), and Batkilina addresses a “frightened baby”, one of millions of voices from the embattled city, “sleep, my little one” (“спи, моя крихітко”), Gorova reassures her child: “So don’t close your eyes, don’t be afraid, just don’t” (“Тож ти не заплющуй очі, Годі боятись, годі”). The mother gains an understanding of a new reality, passing this awareness and the gift of life to her child. Vlasova writes about these transitions of war, “By taking our children out of the country, / by giving birth to our children in the country” (“Вивозячи із країни своїх дітей, / народжуючи у країні своїх дітей”). Children are born “in the country” (“у країні”) which sounds almost identical to “for Ukraine” (“Україні”; March 22). The theme of children becomes an integral part of the motif of transition: as people traverse the wounded land, roads, bridges, and cities, they imbue it with spirit and revive it.

Life itself acquires the highest value. In Gorova's poem (March 2), an old woman cares for a sick baby goat: "but now it's war, let everything live" ("але ж тепер – війна, хай би усе жило"), as the lives of all her kin, pets, and cattle become precious. Other examples convey this reverence for life: "only light masking remains for me / it works while I'm alive" ("мені лишається тільки світломаскування / воно діє поки я жива"; Osmolovska), or "There is only one sign left of me, the main one: I'm alive" ("Од мене лишилась ознака одна, головна: жива"; Fursa March 18). Life is the core value and essence of each person.

Despite the terrifying reality that petrifies everything, and the fear that transforms into rage, life resurfaces and strengthens, gaining an unprecedented, concentrated power rooted in self-awareness through memory and language. As Vlasova writes, "and my memory will be restored only on the victory day" ("і моя пам'ять відновиться тільки в день перемоги"; March 14) and "we are switching to Ukrainian" ("ми переходимо на українську"; March 22). Her poem metaphorically captures the essence of transitions – crossing destroyed bridges and traversing the roads represent switching to the mother tongue. All these meanings converge in the same Ukrainian verb for "to transit" (переходити). The interplay of meanings – a semantic layering that intensifies dramatic tension – is a characteristic technique of metaphysical poetry. Self-awareness emerging in moments of crisis, becomes both a sign and a source of strength. Palamarchuk captures this transformation, calling herself a woman in Ukrainian ("ти жінка") instead of Russian ("не жінщина") she concludes: "Break the ice of impotence" ("ламай кригу безсилля"; February 27).

CONCLUSION

The first month of the war inspired spontaneous poetic responses that intertwined mystical insights with mythological consciousness. Through its presence on the Internet this poetry helped shape Ukraine's collective mental landscape by enabling poets and their audiences to articulate their emotions and experiences. Our analysis demonstrates that the poetic reflections of the onset of Russia's war against Ukraine can be situated within the framework of metaphysical poetics. Although Ukrainian authors employ the central tropes of metaphysical poetry only sporadically their texts are thematically and emotionally aligned with this tradition. At the same time, they introduce significant ideological innovations, such as the articulation of hope and an expanded conception of the divine. This body of poetry reconfigures elements of cultural tradition, historical allusions, and personal trauma into a poetics of resilience, functioning simultaneously as a creative practice and a symbolic act of resistance.

NOTES

- ¹ All poetry quotes in this research are presented in interlinear translations provided by the authors of the article, with the original lines added in the endnotes.
- ² "суне орда [...] / Я — Крути / Ось знову була з росіянами потужна заруба. / Й українцям вда-лося дуже добре помститися"

- ³ “[...] А камінь на те і камінь – він витримає усе: / угору злетить, у вирву впаде, улякне, в землю вросе, / укриється мохом, а потім зсередини зацвіте – / цвітом невянучим, / сяйвом негаснучим, / чорним твердим вогнем, / на якому Господній храм аж до С’уду встоїть. / Вб’орже, для отакої мене / у тебе немає зброї.”
- ⁴ “Діва в небесній ризниці / серце своє розкроє: / кожному зголодалому – / по кусенцю до рота, / кожному відстраждалому – / шлях за мирські ворота.”
- ⁵ “Небо відкрите як книга / як телефонна книга міста Маріуполя / яка поступово перетворюється на записник / з чистими аркушами”
- ⁶ “І танки ці — наші, доню [...] / Он, бачиш, махає дядя? / Ти теж можеш привітатись. / Він їде нищити гаддя, / Що вчило тебе боятись.”

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