

THOMAS THE BABOON AND UTOPIA: CONSTRUCTING A REALISTIC
FUTURE

NATALYA BEKHTA

natalya.bekhta@helsinki.fi & natalya.bekhta@tuni.fi

Natalya Bekhta is a Senior Research Fellow at the Tampere Institute for Advanced Study. Her recent publications include *We-Narratives: Collective Storytelling in Contemporary Fiction* (2020) and a special issue of *Style* on “We-Narratives and We-Discourses Across Genres” (2020).

KEYWORDS

Utopia, satire, narrative structure, Ivan Semesiuk, Russian-Ukrainian war

PUBLICATION DATE

Issue 15, October 31, 2023

HOW TO CITE

Natalya Bekhta. “Thomas the Baboon and Utopia: Constructing a Realistic Future.”
On Culture: The Open Journal for the Study of Culture 15 (2023).
<<https://doi.org/10.22029/oc.2023.1354>>.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22029/oc.2023.1354>



Thomas the Baboon and Utopia: Constructing a Realistic Future

Abstract

This article reissues a call for the recuperation of a particular, non-substantive, approach to the category of Utopia in the current cultural debates about the future. I examine the usefulness of Utopia as a future-making category via a discussion of how Utopian desire manifests itself in the narrative structure of the literary text and what kind of formal and political consequences this manifestation implies. My case study, a prominent example of Ukrainian post-2014 fiction, Ivan Semesiuk's satire *Farshrutka* (2016) presents a critical-satirical Utopian reaction to the realities and futural repercussions of the Russian-Ukrainian war, formalized in a literary form.

1 Introduction: Utopia and the Paradoxes of the Future

Utopia

This article reissues a call for the recuperation of a non-substantive approach to the category of Utopia in order to highlight the usefulness of this particular view of Utopia for the current debates about the future, debates often focused on concrete, substantive futural visions. In a 2004 article on the politics of Utopia Fredric Jameson observed “the waning of the utopian idea” which he interpreted as “a fundamental historical and political symptom”¹ tied to the postmodern weakening of the sense of history and the difficulty in conceiving of alternative society beyond the global historical system of late capitalism. But already in 2004 the first protests on the Ukrainian Maidan signaled what we can now, in retrospect, call the return of Utopia or, following Alain Badiou, the “rebirth of History” signaled by other “historical riots,”² such as the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, the second Maidan in 2013, Black Lives Matter or *Mouvement des gilets jaunes*. Writing in 2012, Badiou interpreted this upsurge in uprisings as a rebirth of History: that is, “the emergence of a capacity, at once destructive and creative, whose aim is to make a genuine exit from the established order.”³ A revival, in other words, of a Utopian desire (and struggle) for a different, better world and a new example of what Miguel Abensour described as the persistence of the Utopian impulse—an impulse “toward freedom and justice,” which is continuously “reborn in history, reappears, makes itself felt in the blackest catastrophe, resists as if catastrophe itself called forth new summations.”⁴

Jameson's article, followed by his 2005 volume *Archaeologies of the Future*, and the influential essay by Abensour in 2006 were at the beginning of a veritable boom

in the theoretical interest in Utopia across disciplines.⁵ By now, with such proliferation of publications, it seems hard to say anything original about Utopia, with new arguments struggling to stand up on the backs of the familiar names from the utopian canon.⁶ Peter Maurits observes how “the discipline of Utopian Studies that supposedly thinks about alternatives contains so few of them.”⁷ At the same time, it is also striking how persistent are the misconceptions of Utopia as a flawed blueprint for a perfect society or unrealistic daydreaming.⁸ This is one of the paradoxes that accompany Utopia: Alongside a sustained, theoretically rigorous and politically passionate interest in this category and in the problem of the future, we continue to see signs of the exhaustion of the debate and a repetition of its arguments.⁹ But perhaps it is not a paradox but an inevitable side effect of the utopian debate, of the agonistic nature of Utopia as concept: “The first manifestation of the persistence of utopia is the work, always necessary, always to be done, on the concept of utopia. [...] Its content, its signification, its orientation, is the object of a struggle that is unrelenting, in a sense interminable.”¹⁰ I should, therefore, begin by making clear which senses of Utopia will figure in this article.

I approach Utopia as a philosophical category as developed by Abensour and Ruth Levitas after Ernst Bloch: Utopia is a desire for a better future, for “a different, better way of being”¹¹; it is that which educates desire. It is important to pause on the word choices in this seemingly broad definition, formulated by Levitas: *Desire* is distinct from *hope*, *wish*, and related notions in its active future-oriented stance. The adjective *better* is deliberately open to a continuous re-interpretation and the unrelenting semantic and social work. It is easier to see what can be improved in present societies, than agree on a universally-accepted content of a *good*, *just*, or *ideal* society. Furthermore, in a rigorous sense Utopia cannot be expressed in concrete—substantive—socio-political or aesthetic terms that would describe an ideal (future) place because such terms are inevitably rooted in the existing discourses and reproduce their limitations.¹² According to China Miéville, “if we take utopia seriously, as a total reshaping, its scale means we can’t think it from this side.”¹³ Utopia is, rather, a process of working through the lived contradictions of a given historical situation towards a new configuration, but not a blueprint. And once the process of Utopia stops and acquires concrete form, it inevitably degenerates as already visible in the fatal colonial flaws of Thomas More’s island.¹⁴ This is another

paradox: As Bill Ashcroft puts it, “to achieve utopia is to fail to realize the possibilities of utopia.”¹⁵ I shall return to this point below, in relation to the future.

Without substantive content, however, it becomes difficult to pin down any non-general definition. To continue with Miéville’s attempt at describing the meaning of Utopia: “Utopianism isn’t hope, still less optimism: it is need, and it is desire. For recognition, like all desire, and/but for the specifics of its reveries and programmes, too; and above all for betterness *tout court*. [...] And when the cracks in history open wide enough, the impulse may even jimmy them a little wider.”¹⁶ Or, to put it into the terms offered by Badiou, the aim of Utopian desire is “to make a genuine exit from the established order.”¹⁷

Utopian process, then, is a perpetually unresolved displacement of *topos*, *u-topos*, which renders moot the demand to choose between *eu-topia*, a blissful place, or *ou-topia*, a nonexistent place.¹⁸ This displacement keeps open the unimaginable otherness of a different future world. The refusal to choose between two readily available options is also a good example of how Utopian education of desire works. Instead of accepting the conditions of the binary choice, it shows that the choice’s whole structure may be unnecessary in the first place. According to Jameson, Utopian function lies in such gesture of negation: Utopia doesn’t help us to imagine a better future but reveals “the ideological closure of the system in which we are somehow trapped and confined” to such a degree that we simply cannot imagine an alternative.¹⁹ More precisely, Utopia is an operation of negative dialectic: It doesn’t unite the two opposites “in some impossible synthesis”—Utopia isn’t *both* a good place and non-existent place—but it retains both terms in their negation of each other and thus allows “to grasp the moment of truth of each term.”²⁰ Jameson cites the example of utopian fantasies revolving around a return to nature and small rural communities. In the history of Utopian thought, these projections have been matched by visions of urban utopias built upon the benefits of technological invention. These opposing Utopian visions cannot be assessed individually, only in relation to each other: “The value of each term is differential, it lies not in its own substantive content but as an ideological critique of its opposite number. The truth of the vision of nature lies in the way in which it discloses the complacency of the urban celebration; but the opposite is also true, and the vision of the city exposes everything nostalgic and impoverished in the embrace of nature.”²¹ The process of Utopia, understood

semiotically, is a double negation that reveals the limits of the status quo and its unsatisfactory possibilities for the future.²²

Foreshadowing the discussion of literary form, I approach contemporary literary manifestations of Utopia precisely in non-substantive terms. This means that literary utopia is not limited to or even primarily set in the narratives about future societies and ideal worlds.²³ Put differently, if we adopt a philosophical understanding of Utopia as an expression and education of desire for a better world, then such function may be found in various forms and genres.²⁴

Future and Narrative Temporality

It is time to explicitly connect the concept of Utopia to the topic of this special issue —“present futures.” Much has been written about the future in the recent years, too.²⁵ A red thread through these publications is the paradoxical temporality of the future. “Future will be long ago,” writes Natalka Sniadanko in the 2020 collection of essays by Ukrainian writers and philosophers, “The Future We Want,”²⁶ pointing to the elusive nature of this word. Future only exists in the imagination, as a fiction, a projection, a desire that disappears once actualized.²⁷ Future, in this sense, is much like Utopia. Therefore, studying the *present* social imaginary—for instance, through literature—brings us as close to studying the future as possible. At the same time, there is a sense in formulations such as Sniadanko’s that we are not talking about time but rather about place—about location of the future. Is it *in* the present, or in the past or in some paradoxical transposition of the two? Andrii Kurkov, in another essay from the same collection, gives one possible answer: The future is not an increment of time but an impulse, immanent in the present: “In order for the future to come, the linear trajectory leading from the present into the future must be disrupted.”²⁸ Which brings Utopia back into focus because such statements imply the need to arrive at some alternative, as yet unimaginable future that would be better from the one that can be discerned in the grim trajectories of the present. It proves impossible to separate discussion of the future from some version of a discussion about Utopia, which in contemporary debates figures as “a conceptual anchor to any theory of a better world.”²⁹

Utopian and futural problematics is thriving in academic and public circles. But can the same be said about utopia as literary form? The striking abundance of

apocalyptic and dystopian images in contemporary cultural production seems to suggest that there are no visions of a better future on the horizon. However, Utopian work does not always lie in the production of concrete images. Its work can also be more subtle and only emerge into clarity in moments of extreme social crises, such as war. Recall Abensour: Utopia “reappears, makes itself felt in the blackest catastrophe, resists as if catastrophe itself called forth new summations.”³⁰ My larger hypothesis about the revival of the concept is that the negative operation of Utopia is currently structuring literary narrative in the post-Soviet regions of Europe. War suspends the future and at the same time it poses an array of excruciating and pressing futural questions: How will the war end? Can it end? (When) will it end? If there is no visible answer to a combination of these questions, if the war drags out into a new routine and ceases to be a state of exception, what kind of temporality organizes daily life without a future? There is, of course, the extreme temporality of the ‘here and now,’ of a narrow focus on daily survival which ignores the suspension of futural possibilities. But extreme, liminal states cannot be sustained for long, not without endangering the individual psyche and the very fabric of a society. Beyond this individual level, when the state of exception becomes a routine, the absent future is substituted by Utopia: The open-endedness of the present combines with the militant desire to achieve a better future. I have here in mind the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, ongoing since 24 February 2022 for almost exactly one year at the moment of this article’s submission. One year of Ukraine living under the guidance of Utopia. This, I believe, is true on a certain level of abstraction. It must be noted, however, that on the level of everyday resistance and survival, it also has been one year of living in rage and in grief, surviving in Russian prisons and under occupation, in muddy trenches and in dark houses, in relative safety and in absolute desolation with no hope in sight. Both levels co-exist, informing each other.

Generally speaking, war brings about a breakdown of narrative temporality—by suspending or destroying the future—and this has a profound effect on literary and public discourse.³¹ To briefly elaborate why this is so it is useful to start with a basic conception of narrative, rather than with the more complex its forms such as literary texts. Developing an approach to narrative as a primary mode of thought, Richard Walsh describes it as a basic sense- and meaning-making logic that imposes a certain form onto the reality and phenomena it tries to understand. Narrative imposes a

temporal sequential order on its object.³² Furthermore, given “the pragmatic finitude of cognition,” narrative progression, following from one thing to another, is driven by a cognitive imperative to construct a “temporal whole,” which means that it is driven towards closure. There are other attributes of narrative sense-making but I focus here on closure since it illuminates particularly well the effects of the absent future, of the reorientation of our attention to the here-and-now. Walsh elaborates that, “as a semiotic discourse, narrative is oriented towards the end; its form, at every level, is given by the anticipation of closure, the ultimately achieved meaning that makes sense of the whole.”³³ In other words, narrative is under a semiotic demand not just to tell what happened (event, conflict, and so on) and how it was resolved but, more generally, to satisfy the questions of relevance or significance (what is the point?)—to construct a certain type of meaning within which the elements of the narratively organized sequence relate to and transform each other.

If we move from this basic form to the form of literary narrative, the inability to provide closure (however open-ended) makes the forward-moving trajectory of narrative progression aimless if not impossible. But by this same token, this inability is also the disruption of “the linear trajectory leading from the present into the future,”³⁴ wished for by Kurkov in the context of 2020 Ukraine, and this disruption opens up a Utopian possibility for *a future*, different from the predictable scenarios. I have now arrived at the key claim of my argument: *Such disruption creates the structural conditions for the Utopian logic to emerge in place of the narrative logic.* Or, to put it in more qualified terms, the suspension of a fairly predictable trajectory towards the future, besides being a disruption to the basic form of sense- and meaning-making, opens up and sustains a real possibility of another order of things, which may or may not actualize (recall Badiou’s and Miéville’s formulations). The work of such Utopian possibility in the literary text can be discerned via the operation of double negation, which influences the level of content as well. This particular approach to the literary form of Utopia is, of course, only one possibility. However, given current scholarly focus on the literary texts offering futural visions and imaginative solutions to present crises, I believe it is beneficial to remind ourselves of the more subtle, *structural* manifestations of Utopia that go beyond the level of content.

2_Ivan Semesiuk's *Farshrutka* (2016): Utopia in the Form of Satire

The socio-cultural developments outlined above can be very clearly discerned in narrative fiction. In the case of Ukraine, literature written since 2014 already offers some concrete examples of how suspension of the future or its substitution by Utopia formats social reality—and literary form. A particularly striking example is Ivan Semesiuk's *Фаршуртка* (*Farshrutka*), a humorous, brutal, obscene, and uncompromising satire published in 2016 by a publisher with a telling name, “Ліута справа” (Liuta sprava, or fierce cause). “Liuta sprava” was established in 2014 by Andriy Honcharuk following the literary and artistic activity of Maidan's “Art Barbakan,” a symbolic fortification during the 2013–2014 demonstrations in Kyiv that hosted resistance art. Being a visual artist and a musician, Semesiuk participated in Barbakan's activities and his current prose bears a clear stylistic mark of those events. At the same time, Semesiuk's *Farshrutka* didn't enjoy any visible critical reception (save for a rather negative review by Oleh Shynkarenko, who was puzzled about its genre).³⁵ Until recently, when many rediscovered this text as prophetic of the kind of war, which begun on 24 February 2022.

Farshrutka grapples with the earlier 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine, whose absurdity this satire develops to its logical extremes and interprets it as a terminal crisis of Russia's imperial delusions. In this text a small bus—“farshrutka”³⁶—full of diverse social types (rather than full-fledged characters) and a talking baboon find themselves in the middle of an epic battle with propaganda clichés and magical debris flying from the self-imploding Russia. The action unfolds in the course of one fateful day when, according to Bhagavad Gita (a sacred text of Hinduism), every living entity is annihilated and becomes unmanifest. Apparently, the apocalyptic annihilation starts with Russia, which decides to use this fateful moment and destroy in the process as much of the world as possible with literal pieces of the country and its people. With the exception of the final battle of *Farshrutka*, everything happens on the bus, with various characters boarding it along the road and discussing both strange and recognizable topics, woven together from the actual news and real events as well as from pop-cultural references, scenes and personae from canonical literary history, alongside Wikipedia entries and general philosophizing.

The first formal sign of the suspended future in this text is the peculiar destination of the bus. It is driving with great speed and determination to a destination that

doesn't exist, with a stopover in Yahotyn (a small provincial town in the Kyiv region). The name for this destination—"Nakhui"³⁷—translates into English roughly as "to go fuck oneself" and coincides with the destination for the Russian warship, articulated by the defenders of the Zmiinyi island at the beginning of the 2022 Russian attack on Ukraine. "Nakhui" is an obscenity that refers to a bad *place*—and certainly a complete opposite of More's island of "Utopia," be it a good or a non-existent place or both. The future for "farshrutka" not only doesn't exist, it is a place simultaneously non-existent and pessimistic. The play between temporal and spatial senses of the future is here particularly pronounced, especially when the bus finally does arrive to Nakhui, a small idyllic hut in the middle of a vast field. I will discuss the ending later on.

Just like a typical utopian text, *Farshrutka* is more concerned with its political agenda and social critique than it is with building a fleshed-out storyworld and an aesthetically convincing fiction.³⁸ There isn't a plot to summarize and the rudimentary narrativity of *Farshrutka* comes from a forward-moving trajectory of the bus. The farshrutka-bus, it is often painfully clear, is an allegory of contemporary Ukraine, its various social strata, satire-worthy ruling class and dysfunctional architecture of a post-Soviet society under the pressure of neoliberal reforms. One of the book's central figures, talking baboon Thomas, is another allegorical impersonation of Ukraine. Born in 1991 in a circus,³⁹ he has just escaped his circus cage to board "farshrutka" in the hopes of getting to Kyiv, the center of everything. The driver, Harlequin Petrovych, reassures him: "Don't worry, the bus will take you where you need to be."⁴⁰ For the rest of the journey Thomas and Petrovych assume the roles of visitor and cicerone, the classical figures of the utopian genre. It is worth recalling another Thomas at this point, "Thomas More," and his cicerone, Raphael Hythloday, in More's *Utopia*. The name "Raphael Hythloday" combines a serious reference to an archangel who cures blindness and a Greek pun, calling him a nonsense-peddler.⁴¹ The combination of the carnivalesque and mundane meanings in the name of Harlequin Petrovych may not be as inventive but the rest of the characters certainly make up for this lack.

In order to get a better feel for *Farshrutka*, let us continue exploring some of its colorful characters (here Semesiuk's background in visual arts properly comes through). Their names and appearances combine elements of various world

mythologies, internet memes and recognizable features of Ukraine's actual political, cultural and literary figures, continuing a Utopian play on opposing meanings and uncompromising satirization of opponents as well as of oneself. Ostap Paranirovych Vishnu (alluding to a famous Ukrainian satirist Ostap Vyshnia) is the head of the division of Indo-European magic at the National Security Service of Ukraine, "a little bit like Umberto Eco, except in reverse."⁴² Just like the Hindu god, he has four arms and light blue skin which matches well with his bright yellow track suit in a truly Ukrainian fashion. Bloodthirsty Pastor, "aka Oleksandr Turchynov,"⁴³ represents an actual politician and Baptist minister who served as Executive Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine in 2014–2019. *Farshrutka* uses elements of Turchynov's real biography to tease out a strange exorcist fighter who casts spells with the help of the book called "Necro-Satyricon," offering the reader yet another allusion to satirical classics.⁴⁴ Repostyslav Vakarchuk, in a clear reference to the rock icon Sviatoslav Vakarchuk, is condescendingly described as the "generator of meanings of our farshrutka"⁴⁵ via the social media platform Twitter. Besides Yukhymenko (a composite image of a Ukrainian soldier from the 2014 war), a few more people, talking heads and androids, an important role in "farshrutka" is assigned to an old woman, Vol'va Yevdokymivna. She is both a stand-in for a typical Ukrainian peasant woman and a deity of Mesolithic origins, currently acting as the chief oracle of Ukraine's Secret Service.

Adventures of this bus crew are similarly outrageous and epic. Thus, for example, "farshrutka" successfully dodges a bombardment by pieces of the whole industrial city of Cheliabinsk. It then engages in an epic fight with "skomorokhi," which is both a reference to Eastern-European medieval jesters and a terrible KGB machinery that materializes "cultural battle codes"⁴⁶ and runs on pure unrefined oil (previously, history claims, it operated on wood and fur trade⁴⁷). In order to fight these machines, the leader of the bus crew suggests that they use "Anglo-Saxon spells"⁴⁸ (from *Harry Potter*). What to make of this particular detail? Contrary to popular belief, systematic disinformation cannot be countered with information.⁴⁹ The nature of disinformation, its rhetorical intent is such that it further feeds on information you provide and thrives on amplifying uncertainty. Disinformation and, especially, propaganda are more efficiently countered with satire and parody.⁵⁰ If Russia's dictator and his clique like to describe their invasion as the war with "Anglo-Saxons," denying Ukraine's

existence and agency in the choice of allies, then you may as well respond with the Anglo-Saxon spells. Utopian satire is fierce but, at the same time, it is jesting, laugh-out-loud outrageous.⁵¹ By amplifying to the extreme the existing absurdities of the social reality it criticizes, utopian rhetoric is directed at the reader, asking her whether this is the reality she is willing to accept.

There is, however, another, tragic side to *Farshrutka*'s laughter at the discursive realities of this horrible war, which began in 2014. The Russian bombardment of the Mariupol maternity hospital in spring 2022 was documented by Yevhen Maloletka,⁵² by sheer grim luck, which forced Russia to issue statements. First, Russia claimed that Ukrainians bombed their own city. It then claimed the whole thing was fake, pregnant women covered in blood and dust were actresses, and, third, that Russia did indeed bomb the hospital but it was a neo-Nazi base. Throughout this time Russian troops tried to hunt down the photographer and the people in the photos. Russian TV then proceeded to generate 'evidence' videos with one of the women from the hospital who survived to 'corroborate' the claims that Ukrainians are attacking themselves. A single case of this mad series of statements is perhaps possible to come to terms with on some other grounds, but if it is a routine approach and a routine discourse, then only ruthless satire can offer a matching register. Put differently, texts like *Farshrutka* offer a record of reality that, should you come across it in a novel, would be judged as impossible, absurd, over the top, unrealistic.

And indeed, *Farshrutka* cannot be classified as a novel, not without some considerable difficulties,⁵³ which may have contributed to its absence from the radar of the literary critics when it was published in 2016. In terms of existing genres, I suggest that texts like *Farshrutka* have an especially strong affinity with the proto-genre of Menippean satire, famous for its formal freedom, non-narrative form, testing engagement with ideas, and polemical nature.⁵⁴ Elsewhere I have put forward a hypothesis that, in contemporary literary cultures of Central Eastern Europe, the form of Menippean satire offers a hitherto unacknowledged, formal expression and imaginative resolution of the contemporary Utopian anxieties and futural desire. In the context of the current article, it is worth mentioning that *Farshrutka* is a particularly striking example of what seems to be a generic trend in contemporary Ukrainian fiction. Volodymyr Rafeyenko's *Mondegreen* (2019) fits well into this satirical trend together with his earlier book, *Dovhi chasy* (The Length of Days,

2017), which is structured as a fairy tale with insertions of brutally realist novellas about life and death during war. Contemporary Menippean satires include also Oleh Shynkarenko's *Pershi ukrainski roboty* (First Ukrainian robots, 2016), Andriy Liubka's *MUR* (2020) and *Karbid* (2015) or such already-iconic works as Yurii Andrykhovych's *Rekreatsii* (1992) and *Moscowiad* (1993).⁵⁵

The eclectic combination of discourses, mythologies, and literary traditions makes *Farshrutka* an effective response to the war-torn reality. But what of its Utopian function? On the level of content, the satirical form of *Farshrutka* frees it from the representational imperative to provide a narrative resolution to the futural dilemma at its heart (how will the war end?). In other words, this satire can take the *ongoing* war as its subject matter without the need to offer a temporally-rounded narrative whole that would provide definitive answers. *Farshrutka* rejects the existing order of things—the accepted reality of war, its reasons and its methods, (inter)national reactions, the language of media and public conversation. The rejection of the status quo takes the shape of the latter's satirization as a rhetorical move aimed at convincing the reader (since Utopia also is an education of desire). The typical structure of utopian text involves a split, as Robert C. Elliott summarizes via Mary Claire Randolph: a negative “part A,” which satirizes the ills of the existing society, and a positive “part B,” which then presents “a normative model to be imitated.”⁵⁶ However, while More's *Utopia* was influenced by the formal verse satires of Juvenal and Horace, *Farshrutka*'s reference text is the ironic and often vulgar *Satyricon*. And, unlike classical utopian genre, *Farshrutka* does not offer any ideal model in place of the satirized reality. Instead Semesiuk takes his satirization to the extreme and thus effectively shows the potential for cracks in the established order.

The Utopian operation of double negation becomes visible in this way in the structure and, as a consequence, in the content of the literary text. For the purposes of the current article, this process can be concisely exemplified through the following imaginary interaction Ursula K. Le Guin offers in one of her essays on Utopia: “I am offered the Grand Inquisitor's choice. Will you choose freedom without happiness, or happiness without freedom? The only answer one can make, I think, is: No.”⁵⁷ The syntactic and semantic model of this answer is, arguably, a Utopian operation in a nutshell. Published two years after the 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine, *Farshrutka* faced the binary non-choice between engaging in futile resistance and surrendering

right away, the two options that are still governing the lack of alternative scenarios in the current phase of this war.⁵⁸ In 2014 Russia occupied the whole of Crimean peninsula and parts of the two industrial regions in Ukraine, leading to years of consistent (albeit low-key in comparison to 2022) fighting along the frontline, frozen by the Minsk agreement of 2015, and a systematic repression and torture on the occupied territories. Without any means for thwarting off Russia's encroachment and with the external pressure on Ukraine to implement the political program laid out in the second Minsk agreement, which would have effectively put an end to Ukraine's existence as a sovereign state,⁵⁹ the situation of the non-choice has been looming in Ukraine's politics and social debates for a long time.

Farshrutka cuts through ideological variations on this dilemma and exposes its bare bones—it exposes this particular ideological closure, to refer back to Jameson's terminology. Time and again someone from the bus mockingly explains how the whole trouble in which they find themselves was foreseen long ago by respectable sources and, in any case, it is the *objective* reality that everyone can see—the end of the world has begun.

Ostap Vishnu was talking. He made himself comfortable on the remnants of the back row of seats and, casually swinging his mace in one hand and a large smartphone in another, started explaining the nature of the situation to the rest of the company, who were listening tensely: “[...] In principle, we're fucked, nothing to do about it, resistance is futile, just lie down and die, because everything was determined long ago, decided and carved into the sacred stone. The Universe has to collapse, whether we want it or not, and Ukraine will go out with it.”⁶⁰

But whenever anyone justifiably starts questioning the point of their resistance, he's immediately reminded that all those centuries-old scribblings must not influence their work. The book insists: “Changing the course of history is well within our powers, even if it's Maha-history, as Sanskrit would have it.”⁶¹ And so for every fatalistic prophecy *Farshrutka* unearths its opposite from the literary history, responding, for example, to Bhagavad Gita with Ukrainian classics, “Борітеся—поборете!”⁶²

This critical movement of double negation is at the core of the Utopian structure of *Farshrutka*. But rejection of the status quo must be accompanied by the positive conviction (another world is possible), if we are to avoid the sheer pessimism of dystopia. The farshrutka-bus, it will be remembered, is on its way towards a non-existent place and the arrival there would mean an apocalyptic catastrophe. This

imperative of narrative closure, which threatens the renewal of the “stubborn [Utopian] impulse toward freedom and justice,”⁶³ is here resolved in a characteristically ambiguous way. The bus arrives to Nakhui, but the enemies do too and—since to “go *nakhui*” in Ukrainian means to “go fuck oneself”—they arrive to their own demise in an ingenious linguistic solution.⁶⁴ The evil mastermind behind the whole attack, Dolhorukii Gagarin (aka Yurii Vladimirovich), is defeated and in a very prosaic manner—with a good whack across the spine by a sack of beetroot (“the most powerful agrarian weapon of all times”).⁶⁵ Nakhui turns out to be an idyll, taken straight from Taras Shevchenko’s poems, a neat peasant hut in the middle of a blooming garden. (Except advertisement banners and bureaucratic signs plaster it and the state clerk supervising this property is renting it out.) The end of the world is averted, the bus crew can now relax and catch some rest. (Except they need to go back to Kyiv as soon as they finish their idyllic picnic because the corrupt state institutions are not going to change themselves.) The final victory is achieved. (Except victory is an ambiguous word. “Is this a victory or a betrayal?—Vakarchuk groaned from the flower bushes. It’s both, Slavko. It’s a victrayal!—Yukhymenko replied.”)⁶⁶ Utopian play of opposites does not stop. But the elated tonality created by the very possibility of articulating a victory in a hopeless battle retains its decisive, powerful effect over the back-and-forth of positive and negative oppositions.

A happy ending is a difficult thing to pull off in contemporary fiction—outside, perhaps, the genres of fairy tale and romance—without sounding naïve. *Farshrutka* succeeds because its victorious conclusion is situated in an outrageously implausible setting. The resolution, drawing on familiar, almost cliché imagery from the Ukrainian literary canon, is the sanest thing in the context of the rest of the storyworld. Much more can be said about the play of meanings that *Farshrutka*’s resolution elicits and negates but, to stay with Utopia in the structure of narrative text, let me conclude with a generalization of the formal repercussions.

When Utopia inserts itself into the narrative structure of a literary text, it provokes a critical stance towards existing social reality and its rejection. And, if no ideal version of this reality is offered instead, the literary text exhibits strong anti-narrative tendencies since there is only minimal substantive content to present. (*Farshrutka* is largely composed out of non-narrative elements such as dialogue, lists, description; it has no narratively-organized plot sequence.) To reiterate: “if we take utopia seriously,

as a total reshaping, its scale means we can't think it from this side."⁶⁷ At the same time, its semantic operation of double negation, its refusal to make a choice from a binary non-choice, can be visible on the level of content, especially in the activated ambiguities of language and in a (grim) optimism that it is possible to change the course of history. While the contemporary literary form of Utopia does not have to be satirical, currently satire seems to offer a rhetorically suitable mode for exposing the unsatisfactory reality and, at the same time, avoiding a dystopian conclusion.

3_Coda: Let's Be Realistic

Throughout this article I have argued for the usefulness of the non-substantive understanding of the category of Utopia in contemporary socio-cultural debates about the future. Scholarly attention to Utopia may be thriving once again but the theoretical revival of the concept does not translate into current political programs and practical analyses that assess the possibilities of the present and thus shape the social futural action. In conclusion I would like to test the need for a serious engagement with the Utopian ideas *ex negativo*. In order to do so, I shall briefly discuss a non-fictional text, which may be treated as a counter-example to the linguistic and ideological achievements of Ivan Semesiuk's *Farshrtuka*.

Six months into the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, the New Left Review published a piece called "New Reality?" by Nicolas Guilhot and Antonio Negri.⁶⁸ The authors engage with the question of the future of the Russian-Ukrainian war from the perspective of Europe (i.e., the European Union) and they issue a warning that the future of the whole "European project" is threatened by this war, which must be brought to an end. But how? Their analysis is shaped by a markedly anti-Utopian stance. First of all, the objective reality is set, it is as it is and nothing can be done about it: "since 1945 nuclear arsenals have set absolute limits to worldwide conflicts and to the possibility of substantially modifying the global order"; "this order cannot be radically altered"; "A world interconnected by global markets and productive and communication systems is less flexible than we imagine." If this is the case, then it is also easy to trace out the correct trajectory from the present into the future: It is predictable. "It is already clear," Guilhot and Negri state, "that Russia will continue to be part of the global system despite Western sanctions"; "any talk of 'victory' is

meaningless”; “Sooner or later, there will be a negotiated solution which will probably approximate the contours of the Minsk agreements.”

The rhetoric of Guilhot and Negri’s essay, which they call “a return to realism,” is so strikingly close to the fatalist determinism mocked by Ostap Vishnu in *Farshrutka* that the two texts may have been written in tandem (“everything was determined long ago, decided and carved into the sacred stone,” proclaimed Vishnu⁶⁹). What is also striking in the categories of this analysis is the turn to the past—the nemesis of all Utopian thinking—in order to try and find the language suitable for the future.⁷⁰ For example, when considering a peace negotiation, Guilhot and Negri can only imagine it in the already existing “contours of the Minsk agreements.” The futural non-choice is either a negotiated surrender of Ukraine to Russia or Europe will re-enact its twentieth-century past: Since, the essay implies, the twentieth-century wars have set one unchangeable model, another *world* war or the global nuclear threat of the Cold War are inevitable. When the past exposes itself in thinking about the future, it makes visible other cracks in the so-called realist approach (which stands closer to conservatism): The trajectory from the realities of the present into the future seems clear until the details need to be spelled out of how exactly that particular future will come about. The suddenly impersonal vagueness of Guilhot and Negri’s syntax (“sooner or later, there will be a solution”) reveals this uncertainty and open-endedness of the present, which is otherwise masked by the absolute statements of their essay.

To paraphrase Guilhot and Negri, in our assessment of the available pathways toward a future, nothing would be more dangerous than to mistake interpretations of social reality and the possibilities it contains as objective and immutable. Realism, after all, is a slippery word. As Raymond Geuss notes in a follow-up essay to his *Philosophy and Real Politics* (2008), in its colloquial uses “‘realism’ is set in opposition to utopianism. The realist is someone who never undertakes anything that is not ‘possible’ in a given situation.”⁷¹ But on what grounds does one determine what is possible, or even what “the given situation” is? Such interpretations would inevitably define how narrow or how broad the boundaries of a realist assessment would be. Further, in the domain of international relations theory, Geuss points out how “realism” typically refers to political decisions—as well as futural projections, I would add—that take into account “the concrete (material) interests of the respective

actors” and their actions that pursue the satisfaction of these interests and expansion of power.⁷² Realism, in this context, becomes a normative thesis and not a reference to some universally accepted, objective reality.

Countering one particular version of political “realism” in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, Slavoj Žižek criticizes various attempts to justify Russia’s attack on Ukraine by reference to NATO’s expansion or by Russia’s geopolitical concerns that need to be taken into account. Such justifications, rather than being a realistic assessment of how the world works, contribute to and sustain an image of the world, where “the big powers have the right to control their own spheres of influence, sacrificing the autonomy of small nations on the altar of global stability.”⁷³ And further: “Putin repeatedly claimed that he was forced to intervene military [*sic*] since there was no other choice—in its own way this is true, but we have to raise the key question here: military intervention appears as Putin’s TINA (“there is no alternative”) *only if we accept in advance* his global vision of politics as the struggle of big powers to defend and expand their sphere of influence.”⁷⁴

In this latter point lies a Utopian question: Do you accept the Grand Inquisitor’s choice? Do you accept this version of what politics is or should be? As I have argued above, the Utopian achievement of *Farshrutka* lies in a definitive rejection of such false “realism.”⁷⁵ While Semesiuk’s satire does not offer a concrete alternative to the unsatisfactory choices, it goes as far as to realize the limits of its own situation: The ending takes us to a revival of a 19th-century idyll, the national dream, but the text mocks this ending, too. Neither Ukraine’s victorious resistance to Russia nor its unimaginable defeat are options that go beyond the available choices, and *Farshrutka* is well aware—a victrayal is not a victory. What kind of future can it offer instead? This remains an open question with only one certainty: The future can be different from its contemporary projections. It would require an inhuman amount of dedication and work, but it can be better.

Endnotes

- ¹ Fredric Jameson, “The Politics of Utopia,” *New Left Review* 25, no. 35 (2004): 35–54, here: 36.
- ² A historical riot, according to Alain Badiou, signals “the possibility of a new situation in the history of politics,” even if it is incapable of actualizing this possibility. In Alain Badiou, *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings* (London: Verso, 2012). E-book.
- ³ Badiou, *The Rebirth*.

- 4 Miguel Abensour, “Persistent Utopia,” *Constellations* 15, no. 3 (2008 [2006]): 406–421, here: 407.
- 5 Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005). For other examples, see Robert T. Tally Jr., *Utopia in the Age of Globalization: Space, Representation, and the World-System* (New York: Palgrave, 2013); Benjamin Kunkel, *Utopia or Bust: A Guide to the Present Crisis* (London: Verso, 2014); S. D. Chrostowska and James D. Ingram, eds., *Political Uses of Utopia: New Marxist, Anarchist, and Radical Democratic Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016); Bill Ashcroft, “Critical Utopias,” *Textual Practice* 21, no. 3 (2007): 411–431; Sandeep Banerjee, *Space, Utopia and Indian Decolonization: Literary Pre-Figurations of the Postcolony* (Edinburgh: Routledge, 2019); Phillip E. Wegner, *Invoking Hope: Theory and Utopia in Dark Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020); Tom Moylan, *Becoming Utopian: The Culture and Politics of Radical Transformation* (London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).
- 6 Cf., the selection of utopian texts in Douglas Mao, *Inventions of Nemesis: Utopia, Indignation, and Justice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020) and in Michael Robertson, *The Last Utopians: Four Late Nineteenth-Century Visionaries and Their Legacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).
- 7 Peter Maurits, “*The Last Utopians: Four Late Nineteenth Century Visionaries and Their Legacy* (2018) By Michael Robertson. A Review,” *Fantastika Journal* 4, no.1 (2020): 189–191, here: 189.
- 8 In the Ukrainian critical discourse, see, e.g., Mykhaylo Minakov, “Про небезпеку історичного аргументу, або Розпач та утопії українських інтелектуалів,” [On the dangers of historical argument, or despair and utopias of Ukrainian intellectual elites], *Крытыка* (September 2021): N/A. Volodymyr Panchenko, “Чим завершуються утопії,” [How utopias end], *Крытыка* II, no. 7–8 (1998): 20–23, <<https://krytyka.com/ua/articles>>.
- 9 For example, a recurrent problem discussed in futural debates is the role of imagination. On the one hand, it is considered decisive in bringing about a better future. On the other hand, imagination is repeatedly declared to be in crisis, with literature and other cultural forms incapable of providing new futural visions. For elaboration, see Natalya Bekhta, “Narrating the Future: A World-Literary Take on the Crisis of Imagination and the Novel,” *Poetics Today* 44, no. 3 (2023): 463–486.
- 10 Abensour, “Persistent Utopia,” 412.
- 11 Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 1990), 181, 191.
- 12 Jameson, *Archaeologies*, 170–171.
- 13 China Miéville, “Introduction,” in Thomas More, *Utopia: Introduction by China Miéville, Essays by Ursula K. Le Guin* (London/New York: Verso, 2016), 1–28, here: 25.
- 14 Ashcroft, “Critical Utopias,” 413; see also Abensour, “Persistent Utopia,” 407 and Panchenko’s example from the Ukrainian Soviet history, “Чим завершуються [How utopias end],” <<https://krytyka.com/ua/articles/chym-zavershuyutsya-utopiyi>>.
- 15 Ashcroft, “Critical Utopias,” 413.
- 16 Miéville, “Introduction,” 6.
- 17 Badiou, *The Rebirth*.
- 18 See Jacques Rancière, “The Senses and Uses of Utopia,” in *Political Uses of Utopia: New Marxist, Anarchist, and Radical Democratic Perspectives*, eds. S. D. Chrostowska and James D. Ingram (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 219–232.

- 19 Jameson, “The Politics of Utopia,” 46.
- 20 Jameson, “The Politics of Utopia,” 50.
- 21 Jameson, “The Politics of Utopia,” 50.
- 22 I cannot offer here a more detailed summary of Jameson’s semiotic method of analysis of the utopian gesture. See his “The Politics of Utopia” and *Archaeologies* (esp. 170–181) as well as further elaborations in Phillip E. Wegner’s *Invoking Hope*.
- 23 I use the category of Utopia as an umbrella term for current modes of engagement with futural problematics and as an overarching reference to concrete manifestations of such a process: positive and negative utopias, dystopias and critical utopias (Tom Moylan), ambitopias (Redfern Jon Barrett), ustopias (Margaret Atwood) and others. These are genre designations for literary and cultural manifestations of Utopia.
- 24 See Eleanor Courtemanche, “Satire and the ‘Inevitability Effect’: The Structure of Utopian Fiction from Looking Backward to Portlandia,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (2015): 225–46.
- 25 In 2015 *Modern Language Quarterly* featured a special issue on inevitability and future, in 2016 *Poetics Today* released a double issue on “No Future (I)” and “No Future (II),” a 2020 issue of *DIEGESIS* was dedicated to narrating the future, not to mention a series of books and collected volumes on futural problematics.
- 26 Vakhtang Kebuladze, ed., *Майбутнє, Якого Ми Прагнемо* [The future we want] (Kyiv: Tempora, 2020).
- 27 Natalka Sniadanko, “Майбутнє як добре забути минуле,” [The future as a well-forgotten past], in *Майбутнє, Якого Ми Прагнемо*, ed. Vakhtang Kebuladze (Kyiv: Tempora, 2020), 195–210, here: 197.
- 28 Andrii Kurkov, “Про майбутнє і користь англійської граматики,” [translation] in *Майбутнє, Якого Ми Прагнемо*, ed. Vakhtang Kebuladze (Kyiv: Tempora, 2020), 103–120, here: 107.
- 29 Ashcroft, “Critical Utopias,” 411.
- 30 Abensour, “Persistent Utopia,” 407.
- 31 See Ivan Kozlenko, “Україна як суб’єкт: пошук нової мови,” [Ukraine as subject: The search for a new language], in *Крытка* no. 1–2 (2022) on Ukraine’s media discourse drawing its language for description of the new reality from the past—from the images and tropes of WWII.
- 32 Richard Walsh, “Narrative Theory for Complexity Scientists,” in *Narrating Complexity*, eds. Richard Walsh and Susan Stepney (Cham: Springer, 2018), 11–25, here: 14.
- 33 Walsh, “Narrative Theory,” 22.
- 34 Kurkov, “Про майбутнє,” [On Future] 107.
- 35 Oleh Shynkarenko, “‘Фаршрутка’ Івана Семесюка: пригоди метафізичного пікаро з буряками,” [Ivan Semesiuk’s *Farshrutka*: Adventures of a metaphysical piquaro with beetroots], in *Chytomo*, August 7, 2016, <<https://archive.chytomo.com/issued/farshrutka-ivana-semesyuka-prigodi-metafizichnogo-pikaro-z-buryakami>>.
- 36 A pun on the words referring to ground meat (“farsh”) and a usually overcrowded route bus (“marshrutka”).
- 37 Dot Wordsworth, “The Complicated Business of Swearing in Ukrainian,” in *Spectator* no. 5 (2022), <<https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-complicated-business-of-swearing-in-ukrainian/>>.

- 38 Robert C. Elliott, *The Shape of Utopia: Studies in a Literary Genre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 111.
- 39 On the metaphorical societal circus of the 1990s in the newly independent Ukraine see also Yurii Andrkukhovych, *Recreation*, trans. Marko Pavlyshyn (Edmonton/Toronto: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 1998 [1992]).
- 40 Ivan Semesiuk, *Farshrutka* (Kyiv: Liuta sprava, 2016), 20.
- 41 Abensour, “Persistent Utopia,” 412.
- 42 Semesiuk, *Farshrutka*, 57.
- 43 Semesiuk, *Farshrutka*, 166.
- 44 Semesiuk, *Farshrutka*, 69. “Necro-Satyricon,” which Semesiuk’s characters extensively use as an aid in battle, is a reference to one of the key texts of the ancient Menippean satire, *Satyricon*, ascribed to Gaius Petronius. *Satyricon*’s genre is quite distinct from the formal verse satire of Persius, Juvenal and Horace, which influenced Thomas More’s structural design of his *Utopia*. On the history of the satirical influences on *Utopia*, see Elliott, *The Shape of Utopia*, 31.
- 45 Semesiuk, *Farshrutka*, 72.
- 46 Semesiuk, *Farshrutka*, 109.
- 47 Semesiuk, *Farshrutka*, 109–110.
- 48 Semesiuk, *Farshrutka*, 110.
- 49 I thank Matti Kangaskoski for this insight.
- 50 A recent precedent for this was created by the group of Twitter users called “The NAFO Fellas,” who managed to efficiently prevent Russian disinformation attempts from spreading by amplifying their absurdity through satirization and parody. See Mark Scott, “The Shit-posting, Twitter-trolling, Dog-deploying Social Media Army Taking on Putin One Meme at a Time,” in *Politico*, August 31, 2022, <<https://www.politico.eu/article/nafo-doge-shiba-russia-putin-ukraine-twitter-trolling-social-media-meme/>>.
- 51 See Abensour’s “The Persistent Utopia” on the inherent playfulness of Utopia that “aims to foster a new disposition in the reader, a sixth sense that helps him not take things too literally in utopian matters, introducing laughter into what seems to be the height of seriousness [...]. It is as if utopia said to the reader: it’s very serious, but as serious as all that,” 406.
- 52 One of the last independent journalists remaining in the city at that time. See Evgeny Maloletka and Matt Fidler, “Ukraine’s Evgeny Maloletka: Agency Photographer of 2022,” in *The Guardian*, December 23, 2022, <<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2022/dec/23/evgeny-maloletka-agency-photographer-of-2022-ukraine>>.
- 53 See Shynkarenko, “Ivan Semesiuk’s *Farshrutka*.”
- 54 For a detailed analysis, see Natalya Bekhta, “Меніпейська сатира, українська літературна критика і... ‘Фаршрутка’ Івана Семесюка,” [Menippean satire, Ukrainian literary criticism and... Ivan Semesiuk’s *Farshrutka*], in *LitAksent*, July 4, 2017, <<https://litakcent.online/2017/07/04/menipeyska-satira-ukrayinska-literaturna-kritika-i-farshrutka-ivana-semesyuka/>>.
- 55 Volodymyr Rafeyenko, *Мондегрін: Пісні про смерть і любов* [*Mondegreen: Songs about death and love*], (Chernivtsi: Meridian Czernowitz, 2019) and *Довгі часи: Міська балада* (Lviv: Vydavnytstvo Staroho Leva, 2017; English translation: *The Length of Days: A City Ballad*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2023); Oleh Shynkarenko, *Перші українські роботи* [First Ukrainian robots] (Kyiv: Liuta sprava, 2016); Andriy Liubka, *MVP* [MUR] (Chernivtsi:

- Meridian Czernowitz, 2020) and *Карбід* [Karbid] (Chernivtsi: Meridian Czernowitz, 2015); Yurii Andrykhovych *Рекреації* [Recreations], (Ivano-Frankivsk: Lileya NB, 2005 [1992]) and *Московиада* [Moscowiada] (Ivano-Frankivsk: Lileya NB: 2000 [1993]).
- 56 Elliott, *The Shape of Utopia*, 30–31.
- 57 Ursula Le Guin, “A Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cold Place to Be,” in Thomas More, *Utopia: Introduction by China Miéville, Essays by Ursula K. Le Guin* (London/New York: Verso, 2016), 163–194, here: 193.
- 58 See, e.g. Nicolas Guilhot and Antonio Negri, “New Reality?,” in *Sidecar (The New Left Review)*, August 19, 2022, <<https://newleftreview.org/sidecar/posts/new-reality>>.
- 59 Isobel Koshiw, “Everyone Is Talking About Minsk but What Does it Mean for Ukraine?,” in *Open Democracy*, February 4, 2022, <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/russia-ukraine-what-are-the-minsk-agreements/>>.
- 60 Semesiuk, *Farshrutka*, 151.
- 61 Semesiuk, *Farshrutka*, 152.
- 62 Semesiuk, *Farshrutka*, 108; “Keep fighting—you are sure to win!” The quotation is from a poem by Taras Shevchenko *The Caucasus* (1845) in John Weir’s translation, <<https://taras-shevchenko.storinka.org/taras-shevchenko-the-caucasus%E2%80%8B%E2%80%8B-poem-english-translation-by-john-weir.html>>.
- 63 Abensour, “Persistent Utopia,” 407.
- 64 Semesiuk, *Farshrutka*, 182.
- 65 Semesiuk, *Farshrutka*, 178. In a bizarre non-fictional move by Russia, the Moscow concert on 25 February 2023, organized to *celebrate* one year of the Russian-Ukrainian war, featured a man dressed as a soldier with a nickname “Yuri Gagarin.” See Andrew Roth, “‘That’s My Neighbour’: Mariupol Residents’ Shock at Putin’s Parade Line-up,” in *The Guardian*, February 25, 2023, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/25/thats-my-neighbour-mariupol-residents-shock-at-putins-parade-line-up>>.
- 66 Semesiuk, *Farshrutka*, 182. The play of words in the original is as follows: “Це зрада чи перемога? – простогнав з квітника Вакарчук? Це Зрадомога, Славко. Зрадомога! – відгукнувся Юхименко.” Semesiuk refers here to a criterion for assessing political decisions, popular in recent public debates in Ukraine: Is it “zrada” (betrayal, of national/public/civic interests) or “peremoha” (victory of people’s will, achieved through pressure on the state institutions). “Zradomoha” is both, a “victroyal.”
- 67 Miéville, “Introduction,” 25. See also Jameson, *Archaeologies*, 292.
- 68 Guilhot and Negri, “New Reality?” The rest of the references in this section come from the same source.
- 69 Semesiuk, *Farshrutka*, 151.
- 70 For critique of this turn to the language of the Cold War and WWII in Ukrainian media, see Kozlenko, “Україна як суб’єкт [Ukraine as Subject],” <<https://krytyka.com/ua/articles/ukraina-ia-k-subiekt-poschuk-novoi-movy>>.
- 71 Raymond Geuss, “Realism, Wishful Thinking, Utopia,” in *Political Uses of Utopia: New Marxist, Anarchist, and Radical Democratic Perspectives*, eds. S.D. Chrostowska and James D. Ingram (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 233–247, here: 244.
- 72 Geuss, “Realism,” 244.

- ⁷³ Slavoj Žižek, “Ukraine and the Third World,” in *Kuray Academics*, March 4, 2022, <<https://kurtayacademics.com/2022/03/04/ukraine-and-the-third-world-prof-slavoj-zizek/>>.
- ⁷⁴ Žižek, “Ukraine and the Third World,” emphasis added.
- ⁷⁵ “Realism properly understood,” Geuss stresses, “is opposed to ideological, not to utopian, thinking,” Geuss, “Realism,” 246.