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Materials and Discussions

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Shaping Speechlessness after February 24, 2022 in the Magazine ROAR*

1. *Introduction*

In the past few years, Russia has transformed its culture and language into a matter of national security (Østbø 2020). Thus, it is not surprising that the declared protection of the 'Russian world' appeared as a key argument in Russia's official justification of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Since Russia launched the war, there has been a massive public shift from Russian to Ukrainian language among the inhabitants of Ukraine (Kulyk 2024). However, many Russians may feel alienated from their mother tongue and cultural identity as well (Davydenko, Henry 2024). This may apply to Russians living abroad and those who do not agree with the war or the current development of Russian politics. Another reason for alienation may be the existing and newly adopted Russian laws that silence public debates and protests. However, different opposition groups have searched for new ways to protest and avoid state censorship (Aizman 2024; Baranova 2024; Khrebtan-Hörhager *et al.* 2024).

Shortly after the invasion, a new online journal emerged. This journal is called "Resistance and Oppositional Art Review" ("ROAR"). As its title suggests, the journal serves as a platform for oppositional art and literature. Moreover, "ROAR" has become a platform for creative (non-) professionals to share their experiences and thoughts following the invasion.

This study analyzes essays published in "ROAR", focusing on the speechlessness motif after the outbreak of the full-scale war. This study aimed to identify the range of emotions related to speechlessness. The key emotions intertwined with an expressed inability to speak are shame and fear. Further, these emotions are political, as contributors to "ROAR" use them to emphasize their oppositional attitudes toward the Russian State. Moreover, by doing so, they prepare the soil for like-minded people who can join them. Consequently, they all participate in the life of the virtual emotional community.

2. *"ROAR" – Oppositional, but not Necessarily Russian-Language Magazine*

As aforementioned, the journal was founded almost immediately after Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The first issue appeared precisely two months after the

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invasion, on April 24, 2022. The initial meaning of the acronym "ROAR" emerged from the English title "Russian Oppositional Arts Review" ("Vestnik oppozicionnoj russkojazyčnoj kul'tury").

The title clearly defines the scope and aims of the journal, as the editor-in-chief, the famous and respected writer Linor Goralik, mentions in her first editorial. Goralik states that the "works collected in this first issue of "ROAR" speak for themselves so distinctly that I wouldn't want to distract readers, viewers, and listeners from them even for several extra minutes" (Goralik 2022). It is evident to her that the word "oppositional" means disagreement with the war and the current Russian political regime. However, in the closing paragraph of the editorial, Goralik expresses her expectation that the need for the journal is only temporary, until the war as well as the regime that launched it, cease to exist:

> And the last thing. Even now, we're looking forward to the moment when "ROAR" is closed forever, that is, the moment when there is no more need to label a certain segment of the Russian-language culture as opposing the criminal Russian regime, solely by reason of the fact that this regime ceases to be. However, before it happens, we'll be doing what we can to ensure that "ROAR", at present made only through volunteer effort, continues to come out (*ibidem*).

Since the sixth issue, that was published on March 1, 2023, the meaning of the acronym officially changed into "Resistance and Opposition Arts Review" ("Vestnik antivojennoj i oppozicionnoj kul'tury"). Goralik explains the change in the acronym's reading as the need to make the journal accessible, not simply to Russians or Russian-language authors. She admits that the decision to change the meaning was due to the Ukrainian poet Vlad Petrenko, whose poem was published in the issue in both Ukrainian and Russian (in the poet's own translation at Goralik's request). Goralik underlines that Petrenko "said that he sees it as a possibility for a dialogue of cultures during a war, and first steps towards peace, because he thinks steps like these are necessary and important" (Goralik 2023).

Every issue of "ROAR" comprises several sections dedicated to poetry, prose, drama, essays, visual arts, and music. As the journal is an online platform, it may provide access to various media products. As Goralik's quote suggests, the journal attempts to establish an intercultural dialogue. Therefore, these issues have been published in several languages. The texts are available not only in Russian but also in English, French, Italian, Polish, and Japanese.

Initially, many contributors published their texts anonymously. New Russian repressive laws attempting to exclude anti-war voices from the public debate were the most probable reasons. Anonymous publication of the contributions ensured more protection for their authors, who may have been in Russia or relocated temporarily and were uncertain about their future and afraid of subsequent repression. Many contributors shared their experiences of their recent relocation[1]. Therefore, it is possible to consider the journal within the context of Russian diaspora culture.

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[1] For an overview of the Russian emigration after the war see Rapoport 2024.

Shortly after the invasion, another journal of contemporary Russian culture emerged. It was established in the Netherlands under the title "The 5th Wave" and the subtitle "Independent Russian Writing". The magazine's editor-in-chief is Maxim Osipov, a writer. The introductory text published on the journal's website emphasizes that the magazine publishes texts by "literary authors from Russia and abroad who are united in their rejection of war and totalitarianism"[2]. Similar to "ROAR", "The 5th Wave" also underlines its political position. Moreover, the title "The 5th Wave" may be considered as an attempt to relate the journal to the legacy of Russian emigration of the 20th century[3].

Nevertheless, one should also consider that Russian émigré journals are not always anti-totalitarian or anti-imperialist, but may even tend toward nationalism, for example, "Russkaja mysl' " with its roots in the 19th century. The first issue, published one month after the outbreak of the full-scale war, was dedicated to celebrating World Poetry Day. However, it informed its readers about Russia's recognition of the Doneck and Luhansk People's Republic on February 21, 2022. The author of the article promised to provide an analysis of the upcoming events in the following issues (Perevalov 2022). There was no word about the ongoing war.

Returning to the journal "ROAR", I would like to briefly comment on contributors who may be labeled as creative (non-)professionals. Their range of professions and career stages vary significantly. On the one hand, there are contributions by well-established writers, poets, artists, and scholars such as Polina Barskova, Boris Chersonskij, Julija Jakovleva, Vitalij Komar, Il'ja Kukulin, Oleg Lekmanov, Lev Rubinštejn (recently, tragically deceased), Michail Suchotin, and many others. On the other hand, some contributions were written by students (even teenagers) or writers, for whom texts in "ROAR" may have been their first publishing experience.

My analysis is limited to the texts published in the sections *Essays* and *Voices*. The latter section appeared in the first and fifth issues. The texts of the section are characterized as 'micro-essays'. The 'micro-essays' are meant to give 'voice' to anyone who is willing to share their thoughts, impressions, and experiences with the war, and related topics. These texts are usually shorter and less structured than 'standard' essays. I decided to analyze essays because they allow their authors to communicate their feelings and attitudes more overtly and, therefore, approach the topic more personally and autobiographically (cfr. Westerwelle 2019).

3. *Theoretical Background*

The overt communication of feelings and attitudes mentioned in the previous paragraph is related to sincerity. Recently, the academic debate on sincerity has undergone a change. The debate shifted from defining sincerity to assessing how it is performed or what characterizes the rhetoric of sincerity (van Alphen, Bal 2009: 3). However, reviewing older research attempts, one should notice that this has never been about finding a proper definition of sincerity. Scholars have always been more interested in the rhetorical tools that enact the effect of sincere utterances, or the effect of "a congruence between avowal and actual feeling" (Trilling 1972: 2). It was probably the literary criticism of Romanticism that turned sincerity into a virtue and became the chief criterion for discussing literature (Peyre 1963: 132). However, ancient culture regarded sincerity "as a function of style" and not "as a function of personality" (Allen 1950: 146). Thus, it appears reasonable to regard sincerity as a matter of rhetoric or as a specific speech act. Such an approach may allow scholars to avoid questioning whether the authors really feel or experience what they describe.

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[2] <https://fifthwavemagazine.com/> (last access: 12.07.2024).

[3] For some insights into the issue of Russian emigration waves see Posochin 2021.

A similar approach applies to feelings. Reddy, a historian of emotion, developed the concept of emotives. Reddy's concept is based on Austin's notion of performative and constative. Reddy defines emotives as "instruments for directly changing, building, hiding, intensifying emotions" (Reddy 2001: 105). This implies that emotives are not simply words used to describe people's feelings. They may have a bodily impact and influence how others feel or perceive us. Therefore, Reddy excludes the criteria of truthfulness and sincerity from his theory, although they were crucial for Austin's original conception of speech acts, "Because of the powerful and unpredictable effects of emotional utterances on the speaker, sincerity should not be considered the natural, best, or most obvious state toward which individuals strive" (*ibidem*: 108).

In this regard, Rosenwein and Cristiani (2018: 35-36) comment on Reddy's emotives, "For Reddy, every emotive is both sincere and insincere. It is sincere because it accords with one goal. But since people have more than one goal, the same emotive is insincere in connection with the conflicting goal". Rosenwein and Cristiani not only problematize the category of sincerity but also highlight the pragmatic and non-linguistic dimensions of emotives. These aspects are what Reddy's conception shares with other approaches embedded in performativity theory. For example, according to the German historian of emotion Gerd Althoff (2019), emotional display is often a political announcement, particularly in the context of medieval governance and power games that he is an expert on. Discussing Althoff's research, Rosenwein and Cristiani underline his idea that "even if the sources exaggerated", the narratives they conveyed "had to have verisimilitude even when they did not report the 'absolute truth'" (Rosenwein, Cristiani 2018: 47). The emphasis on pragmatics allows both Reddy and Althoff to analyze emotional display without insisting on verifying the sincerity and truthfulness of the utterances.

Drawing on the outlined theoretical framework, this study does not attempt to examine the 'genuine' feelings underlying the text. This study focuses on representations of emotions in language[4]. This approach allows us to search for the intertwining between expressed emotions and political attitudes as a shift to discourse analysis. Rutten (2017) proceeded similarly in her book on the concept of sincerity in the late Soviet and post-Soviet

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[4] There have already been attempts to examine emotions regarding the Russian aggression (Jones 2024; Dean, Porter 2024).

Russian society. She examined the role of this concept in three discursive threads: memory, commodification, and digital media.

4. *Methodology*

The previous section suggested that emotion history research may be closely linked to discourse analysis (cfr. Bujačková 2023: 8-16). A prominent historian of emotion, Rosenwein, proposed a general methodological model for analysis. Rosenwein's model is based on the notion of emotional communities, which she defines as "groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value – or devalue – the same or related emotions" (Rosenwein 2006: 2). Such an approach is applicable not only to the past, but also to the present.

Studying texts produced and perceived by members of a certain community enables to better understand their norms of emotional expression and values, and therefore, better understand them as an emotional community. Rosenwein (2010) emphasizes the need to examine texts written by more than one author to identify discursive regularities in their reflection of feelings. Moreover, it is important to consider the specific meanings of emotional terms. The same or similar terms may have different notions at different times as well as in different cultural contexts or emotional communities. Rosenwein not only advises to consider the importance and frequency of certain words, but also suggests to "read the silence". She proposes asking whether texts that appear unemotional at first glance do not use other means to convey emotional messages. The last and most crucial principle proposed by Rosenwein considers the social role of expressed emotions.

Thoughtful insights into the methodology of studying emotional expressions in language may be found in a study on the role of emotions in international relations. Koschut proposes a model similar to Rosenwein's (Bujačková 2023:15-16). Koschut suggests dividing the analysis into three steps. In the first step, scholars analyze wider sample of texts and aim at emotional intertextuality, defined as "the way emotional expressions are quoted, appropriated, or criticized within and against other texts" (Koschut 2018: 282), which is important, because "emotions rarely reside in a single text or are unique in their way of expression" (*ibidem*). In the second step, the focus is not only on the emotions expressed overtly, but also those that are "tacitly implied" (*ibidem*: 281) through metaphors, comparisons, or analogies. In the last step, scholars relate the text to the social context, which means connecting the emotions identified with the moral values important to the social group. Koschut emphasizes that values are often expressed in ritualized forms using certain symbols, images, or speech acts.

In accordance with Rosenwein and Koschut's principles, I will discuss a wider sample of texts. I will not limit my inquiry to a couple of representative articles. My analysis focuses on emotional expressions of speechlessness. I will read texts that overly reflect upon the inability to speak using expressions such as "I don't know what to say" (Papernyj 2022) or "I do not yet have the words" (Anonymous 2022a). This is where I draw on Reddy's concept of emotives, which in the words of Rosenwein and Cristiani "call up a whole panoply of feelings" (Rosenwein, Cristiani 2018: 35). This implies that emotional expressions may intertwine with other emotional expressions. However, I do not wish to claim that this feeling of speechlessness triggers a chain of feelings. Speechlessness may appear as a result of other expressed feelings, thereby acquiring a wider variety of meanings.

Nevertheless, it is possible to discuss the particular cause that triggers all types of emotions and emotional expressions. In general, the key reference point of all analyzed essays is the war Russia launched in Ukraine. Following Laclau and Mouffe, we can call war the main nodal point in the discourse of the analyzed texts. Nodal points "partially fix meaning; and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social" (Laclau, Mouffe 2001: 114). Certain phrases acquire specific meanings owing to their relationship with the social sphere, which tends to change. Therefore, the role of nodal points is to organize the elements of the discourse, and they are particularly responsible for the semantics of these elements (Schneiderová 2015: 70-71).

5. *Lost Speech and Meaningless Words*

Although authors of the essays published in "ROAR" write about feelings of speechlessness, they do not remain quiet. This suggests a strong connection between the expressed inability to speak and the need to deal with it. The mere mention of muteness may be perceived as the first step in the path to finding a voice. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the different meanings of articulated speechlessness.

Authors use various explicit formulations to discuss lost voices. Nevertheless, expressions such as "all words have evaporated" (A.S. 2022), "robbed of the voice" (Kordon 2022), "[n]obody knew what to say" (Iossel 2022), "[a]nd then comes muteness" (Anonymous 2022b), or the "collapse of the fundamental functions of language as a means of organization and communication" (Fokin 2022) do not reveal much on their own. Generally, they refer to a state of shock. Shock is the result of witnessing war events or being aware of the ongoing war in Ukraine. Shortly before the invasion, many people did not believe this was possible. Literary theorists Kukulin and Majofis discuss this question in their essay published in the first issue of "ROAR": "For people we know in Russia, the most common reaction to the war and this persistent violence is shock. You find no words to say; you see no source of strength to build up your inner resistance from" (Maiofis, Kukulin 2022). Such an understanding of speechlessness corresponds with definitions from dictionaries. For example, the *Cambridge Dictionary* states that speechlessness is "the feeling of being unable to speak because you are so angry, shocked, surprised, etc."[5] This suggests a direct link between the state of not being able to speak and strong emotions.

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[5] <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/speechlessness> (last access: 12.07.2024).

Similarly, Majofis and Kukulin discuss the state of shock and speechlessness in connection with different feelings. They attempt to draw an analogy with Teodor Šanin[6] and the shock and rage that he experienced in Poland after WWII, where many people "were pretending nothing had happened, as if there had been no Shoah" (Maiofis, Kukulin 2022). Simultaneously, Majofis and Kukulin underline that they are experiencing the "world catastrophe" right now and it is, therefore, not easy to turn such rage into meaningful action, as was Šanin's case. They state that small everyday actions such as doing the dishes or calling a friend only veil "the dark core of your inner life that you have no clue how to deal with, and neither words nor rage to sum it up" (*ibidem*). Insights into these attitudes can be found in another essay. An anonymous author states, "no matter what you say, words do not seem to have bodily presence now, they do not make any sense. one cannot verbalize an experience which is beyond words. [B]ecause war is beyond what makes a word" (Anonymous, 2022c).

This quote indicates that speechlessness emerges because it is not possible to properly grasp war in language. Therefore, these words appear meaningless. They do not really matter and are not proper means for solving the situation. We may encounter many similar fragments that reflect the lost meanings of words. For example, contributors state that "all of our words have lost their meaning" (Anonymous 2022d), "syntax is supposed to serve thought, to reflect some kind of coherence, and there is none of that, and nothing is known" (Manotskov 2022), or that "only language cosplay is observed and there is no sense left" (Safronov 2022).

The latter quote touches not only on the question of meaning, but also on state propaganda. Probably the most evident "language cosplay" in the Russian public discourse is calling the war not "war" but a "special military operation" (*special'naja vojennaja operacija*)[7]. This has been explicitly mentioned by many contributors. For example, Aleksandr Gavrilov criticizes censorship in his micro-essay from the first issue of "ROAR":

> Now the word 'war' has boiled over. We don't want war, people cry, we just support our country. This is not a war. We want to kill children and women, we agree to blood and trophies, we will walk around in the clothes of the dead, we just don't want war, don't you dare say 'war'. Don't you dare speak words and name things (Gavrilov 2022).

Gavrilov insists on the meaning of words:

> I stay by the language, by my Russian language, and I shall not surrender it to anyone. 'A raven' does not mean 'a writing desk'. 'Christianity' does not mean 'cannibalism'. 'Murder' does not mean 'accident'. 'Mercy' does not mean 'callousness'. The words of my language have meanings. As long as I remember them, I can stand (*ibidem*).

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[6] Teodor Šanin (1930-2020) was a social scientist, whose fate was highly affected by the turbulent events of the 20th century. In 1995 he founded The Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences, which is also called after its founder Šaninka. For more details see Archangel'skij 2020.

[7] For a broader context of Russian State silencing see Przybyła 2024.

Moreover, the author claims that although many may perceive Russian language as "shameful stigma", for him it represents "hope" (*ibidem*). For Gavrilov, the "disagreement with Putinism has always been about words and the meaning of them" (*ibidem*). Apart from touching on the issue of overcoming the widespread feeling of speechlessness, Gavrilov also mimics the rhetoric of war or Putin supporters to demonstrate its absurdity. It is precisely in the part where he states "We want to kill children and women" and adds the threat "don't you dare say 'war'" that he points at the rupture between language and the actual world. He demonstrated the absurd consequences of believing in state propaganda. Poet Chersonskij states in his essay that Russian propaganda (primarily TV) "literally hypnotizes" its audience (Khersonsky 2022).

6. *The Consequences of State Propaganda and the Silence among the Close Ones*

It is clear that the initial shock from the full-scale war outbreak led to a loss of voice, to a loss of sense in communication. The motif of lost meanings also appears in texts dealing with propaganda. Chersonskij addresses the impact of propaganda on consumers. Therefore, this opens up another important topic that is frequently reflected in essays. This is the relationship between war or propaganda supporters and anti-war communities. This topic was discussed in the essays in a personal manner. The authors often share stories about their family or close friends who believe that the official Russian narratives legitimized the war. Here, the speechlessness motif emerges again.

The authors express concerns regarding disrupted and close relationships. Sometimes, they oversimplify the situation to clarify what they struggle with. For example, they state "My father is for the war" (Panyushkin 2022) or "My grandma is a fascist" (Žiron 2023). In these cases, the authors identify the chief sources of disagreement. This is their attitude toward war. They described problems with mutual communication and highlighted their qualitative and quantitative reductions.

> Since then, we just call each other and talk exclusively about whether he has taken his medications (Panyushkin 2022).
>
> We keep silent as we are tidying her grave. All you can hear is rustling of leaves, gurgling of the water that we pour from the bottle to rub the dirt off, and our quiet words addressed to mother (Lepikhov 2022).
>
> I just suffer through and say nothing (Pavlova 2023).

The authors link the disrupted relationships with different feelings, for example, with "personal grief" (Panyushkin 2022) or with "terrifying irrational shame"[8] (Žiron 2023). They miss human contact, which Sergej Lepichov conceptualizes through the metaphor of a ghost who is invisible to others and cannot touch them. The author expresses both a longing for human contact and painful alienation from family members:

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[8] "чудовищный иррациональный стыд".

> A ghost of mournful phrases with a shroud made of dreary posts, news pings and notifications that make me jump. I try to touch somebody; I try to tell them something, but my words, my hands go through them. I cannot fix it. I cannot put together everything that I had broken with my words. All I can do is to try again and again to touch my father, to touch somebody else, to attempt to move things around our empty flat. I can try again and again (Lepikhov 2022).

In such cases, unpleasant feelings induced by alienation are intensified by the positive image of family members and friends in the authors' memory. Although the authors may explicitly call them "fascists" or "war supporters", they attempt to avoid depicting them as evil. For example, they emphasize how good or loving they are, "[H]e loved my mother tenderly and touchingly took care of her" (Panyushkin 2022).

However, a reader may encounter similar attempts to see the 'Other' more positively also in texts that do not focus on the close relationships. For example, Oleg Lekmanov asked:

> Should I try to talk to people from 'the other side', – the war supporters of 'the Z's'? Or is that useless? How do I treat the good Russian people (and I know from many years of living among them that they are indeed *good*) who say, 'That is no concern of ours' (Lekmanov 2022a).

He thinks from a more general perspective than the authors of the previous quotes. Nevertheless, he operates with a similar figure of the 'good Other' that he knew in the past. Lekmanov overtly raises the question about 'us' and 'them'. This question structures the thoughts in all these cases.

Another structuring idea mentioned in these essays (but more implicitly) is the perception of war as a rupture that divides life into 'before' and 'after' periods. This feature of the analyzed discourse was indicated while mentioning the war as the nodal point that partially fixes the meaning of certain elements. In this regard, war, conceptualized as a rupture, determines the perception of life before and after an invasion. This is illustrated by the following examples.

> The war has ended our childhood. The war has chased us out of libraries, thrown us on the cold Peterburgh pavement, aimed all the cameras on us, put bayonets to the back of our heads, made us breath according to the new rules[9] (Iugov 2023a).

As aforementioned, articulation of the inability to speak is a step toward overcoming it. Similarly, the rupture caused by the war is viewed as something that must be bridged. This is particularly true for family relationships. There appears the urge "to reach through those thick unbreakable walls" (Pavlova 2023). As authors desire to re-establish lost intimacy in relationships with loved ones, they tend to search for mistakes. They then turn toward self-criticism. They often consider self-illusion to be the most significant mistake.

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[9] "Война поставила жирную точку в нашем детстве. Война вытащила нас из библиотек, бросила на холодную брусчатку Петербурга, направила на нас все камеры слежения, приставила к затылку штыки, заставила дышать согласно установленным правилам".

> In actual fact, I had always known that in the event of a catastrophe many would behave exactly the way they did. It was my own conscious choice to try and construct a perception of those around me that would allow me to still greet them, live in the same city with them, and share family meals with them (Sadovaya 2022).

Although the above quote maintains an intimate tone, some authors apply a self-critical perspective on the national level, "The whole blind nation suddenly started to see. How pathetic that it happened too late" (Arseny K. 2022).

7. *Repetition*

Evident from the discussion so far, the feeling of speechlessness may manifest itself in relation to a state of shock, lost meaning of words, or disrupted communication. Simultaneously, writing about the inability to speak is a step toward finding a voice. This suggests that speechlessness or muteness does not materialize through silence. When the motif of speechlessness appears in a journal, it is considered a discursive fact. Thus, speechlessness may fulfil different functions in the structure of a text. For example, it may convey a message about an author's disagreement with state politics. Therefore, other elements with similar functions can be considered.

In this regard, the repetition of certain words or phrases works in this manner. Repetition also points to a reduction in the communicative function of language or may be a symptom of a lost ability to speak. This may be linked to a state of shock, as illustrated by the following fragment:

> When my husband woke me up crying 'It started' from the bedroom doorway, and I found myself following him around the apartment and repeating like a windup doll, 'it's terrible, terrible, it can't be, it's madness', my mind, still not fully awake, thought it was a scene from an old movie (Anonymous 2022e).

Focusing on a selected phrase evokes the tension that emerges from the awareness of not being able to say something meaningful, and the attempt to say at least something to overcome silence. The introductory sentences of an essay are symptomatic, where the author uses the repetition to demonstrate the inability to write: "Nowarnowarnowarnowarnowarnowarnowar ... and so on, 1,500 characters of it" (Pavlova 2022).

Moreover, the motif of repetition appears in essays concerning problematic communication with family members and friends. The authors typically mention situations in which their close ones repeat certain phrases or narratives that are characteristic of state propaganda. Several authors approach this issue analytically. They tend to interpret these repetitions as similar to a state of shock. They consider it as a mechanism that helps people deal with the situation, avoid admitting reality, and continue living their everyday lives. An author summarizes it as, "But my father was screaming on the edge of despair. People behave this way when they understand the reality but cannot accept it, because accepting it is worse than death" (Panyushkin 2022).

8. *Guilty, Ashamed, and Scared*

Although the contributors share their thoughts about the lost meaning of speech, experience with disrupted family relationships or simply, their perception of the ongoing situation, they often state that they cannot be compared with the horrible experience of the people in Ukraine. Consider the following quotes:

> I've got nothing to say today, I'm afraid. For a writer, to speak about Ukraine these very days is to divert attention from the voice of Ukraine herself. Paradoxically, speaking of something else or about oneself means the same (Kuzmin 2022).
>
> In the beginning, this is how I also felt; I remember this blind spot well – the black horror of what was going on rose like a wall, and against it, all of my worries, emotions, and thoughts became completely uninteresting even to myself (Yakovleva 2022).
>
> It is hard and shameful. But all our pains are nothing in comparison to the pain and fear of those, who are spending the night in Kijev today[10] (Anastasija 2022).
>
> For sure, all that sound pathetic and stupid next to all the deaths, tragedies, destroyed lives of millions who, unlike me, are not guilty at all (V. Ch. 2022).

In all the quotes, the authors diminish the importance of their own utterances. Moreover, they may indicate that they feel responsible and guilty for the Ukrainian situation. For example, Oleg Lekmanov writes about "our cowardice, our way of taking care of our families (of ourselves, to be honest!)" that "culminates in bloodshed, in Ukrainian cities being destroyed" (Lekmanov 2022b). It is an expression of concern about his personal responsibility and guilt as a citizen of the state that invaded the neighboring country.

In his famous essay *The Question of German Guilt* (*Die Schuldfrage: Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Frage*, 1946)[11], Karl Jaspers offers a scheme that comprises four types of guilt: 1) criminal, 2) political, 3) moral, and 4) metaphysical. What is most relevant for the authors of the "ROAR" essays is political, moral and metaphysical guilt. Jaspers states that "[e]verybody is co-responsible for the way he is governed" (Jaspers 2000: 25), which makes them politically guilty. The nature of moral guilts resides in the idea that "every deed remains subject to mora judgement" (*ibidem*). The metaphysical guilt is rooted in the idea that "[t]here exists a solidarity among men as human beings that makes each co-responsible for every wrong and every injustice in the world, especially for crimes committed in his presence or with his knowledge" (Jaspers 2000: 26). This is the perspective that implicitly and intuitively the authors from "ROAR" share. Jaspers' conceptualization of the phenomenon is relevant for its emphasis on the link between feelings of guilt and responsibility. However, the issue of responsibility for the action of others or one's own may be linked to feelings of shame, as many contributors to "ROAR" often do. Moreover, they do it in a manner similar to the previous quotes that underlined responsibility and guilt:

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[10] Тяжело и обидно. Но все эти наши боли – ничто по сравнению с болью и страхом тех, кто сегодня ночует в Киеве.

[11] Ol'ga Fatejeva explicitly mentions Jaspers in her essay published in "ROAR" (Fateyeva 2022).

> I felt ashamed for being born in Russia, for thinking and for speaking the Russian language. I felt ashamed that the government of *my* country attacked the country of my friends and relatives (Anonymous 2022f).
>
> And I felt ashamed before Sladkov and Jablokov for having both legs, while they had none[12] (Doždeva 2023).
>
> It feels shameful to get out and relax in our strange and unclear time. You must do something, respond to the situation[13] (Žbankov 2023).

Guilt and shame, as well as the feelings of embarrassment, pride or hubris, are considered self-conscious emotions, because their elicitation "involves elaborate cognitive processes that have, at their heart, the notion of self" and that "it is the way we think or what we think about that becomes the elicitor" (Lewis 2004: 623). Thus, in this case what makes people feel guilty or ashamed is not the mere fact of Russian war aggression, but the way the authors perceive it[14]. This proves that self-conscious emotions are socially constructed because they are based on the subject's self-evaluative capacity, which is based on the ability to recognize social rules (*ibidem*: 626). Sara Ahmed observes that shame may be based on a "double play of concealment and exposure" (Ahmed 2014: 104). Essays from "ROAR" are a suitable example of a double play. Typically, shame is associated with "disruption of ongoing behavior, confusion in thought, and an inability to speak" (Lewis 2004: 628) and it is "experienced before another" (Ahmed 2014: 103). Many of the examples provided in the study indicate that authors express their confusion and speechlessness in connection with certain social norms and values, and thus before other members of society. The double play rests in the public avowal of unpleasant feelings, particularly regarding the frequently mentioned speechlessness, interpreted as an exposure to their wish to conceal. Further, they spoke about their inability to speak. They deal with feelings of shame by admitting to being shameful and guilty.

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[12] "И мне стыдно перед Сладковым и Яблоковым за то, что у меня две ноги, а у них нет".

[13] "Во время наше странное, незнакомое, взять и просто так отдохнуть – стыдно. Нужно же делать что-то, соответствовать происходящему".

[14] That also explains why some may feel proud of it, when we consider the work of state propaganda and its framing of the war as an act of patriotism as the ongoing fight against Nazism.

Moreover, the emotion of fear is explicitly mentioned in many essays. In some cases, the emotion of shame is articulated next to fear or anxiety; for example, Anonymous 2022f and Ardalionova 2022. Typically, anxiety is considered "pre-stimulus" and fear, "post-stimulus", which implies that fear has a more easily identifiable object (Öhman 2004: 574). Sara Ahmed's observations are productive again. She describes the relationship between fear and anxiety as follows: fear is "produced by an object's approach", while anxiety by "an approach to objects" (Ahmed 2014: 66). Ahmed's notion is productive because of its shift toward the question of perception. It is not the object that elucidates the feeling of distress, but the perception of the object. Typical reactions to both anxiety and fear include escaping and avoiding, or other actions that help minimize the possibility of threat. For example, the anticipation of a possible injury leads to bodily shrinkage, which involves withdrawal from a potentially dangerous space (*ibidem*: 70). This may be the case with disrupted family ties, when the avoidance of certain topics during conversations or the reduction of communication to very basic questions about health can be seen as a strategy for dealing with the fear of confrontation that may cause emotional injury. However, there is a similar double play between exposure and concealment, which is characteristic of shame. The authors overtly and publicly discuss their anxieties (expose themselves) while indicating that they try to avoid unpleasant consequences.

> I took off on the first of March and with every kilometer I felt that the horror was letting go, and just the hope remained that the Good would prevail soon (Russ 2022).
>
> Our house is not a safe place anymore. Irrational fear and panic attack me with every single passing car. It's so strange. I miss my house, parents, cat, but I understand my vulnerability and I don't want to return. No one can find me in Sankt-Petersburgh [*sic*]. The state machine doesn't have any information about where I am[15] (Iugov 2023b).

9. *Conclusion*

The analysis revealed that the community of "ROAR" authors values the critique of different aspects of the Russian war in Ukraine and the Russian State. Critique is often aimed at particular features of Russian politics and society such as censorship, propaganda, and repression. However, the contributors approach the critique from a personal perspective; thus, emotional involvement is not surprising. This study focused on expressions of inability to speak that frequently appeared in essays, particularly during the first months of the invasion. This is related to the feeling of shock that may also lead to the impression of the lost meaning of words and the communicative function of language. This study indicated that speechlessness functions as a motif that may intertwine with various situations and emotions. It may acquire the form of repetition of certain phrases; authors may identify it in their relationships with close family or friends, or relate it to emotions of guilt, shame, or fear. Nevertheless, the analysis revealed that speechlessness in these essays was not really speechlessness. It is a discursive fact that helps authors communicate their political attitudes toward Russian politics. Being speechless proves that one is concerned about the ongoing war and does not support it. Writing about one's inability to speak is a key step toward acquiring a voice.

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[15] Дом перестал быть безопасным местом. Иррациональный страх, паника охватывали меня при виде каждой проезжающей мимо машины. Так странно. Я очень скучаю по дому, по родителям, по коту, но, понимая свою уязвимость, не хочу возвращаться. В Санкт-Петербурге никто меня не найдет. У государственной машины нет никакой информации о моем местоположении.

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Abstract

Jakub Kapičiak

Shaping Speechlessness after February 24, 2022 in the Magazine ROAR

This study analyzes essays published in the magazine "Resistance and Oppositional Art Review" ("ROAR"), which was established after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. The study focuses on the motif of speechlessness that appeared in many texts by authors contributing to the magazine during the first month after February 24, 2022. The inquiry shows that the motif may acquire different forms and relate to various emotions such as guilt, shame, and fear. The author of this study argues that the motif is used not only as a specific emotional response to ongoing events but also as a medium to communicate a political statement of disagreement with the Russian invasion. Thus, it is possible to consider the magazine "ROAR" and its contributors as an emotional community.

Keywords

Literature and Emotion; Russian Opposition; Russian Essays; Speechlessness; February 24, 2022.