

BETWEEN PROPAGANDA AND NATIONAL NARRATIVE: LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD IN SOVIET, RUSSIAN, AND UKRAINIAN POPULAR SONG CULTURE¹

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Summary

The article offers a comparative analysis of three musical interpretations of the fairy-tale narrative of Little Red Riding Hood: the Soviet “Song of Little Red Riding Hood” (*lyrics by Y. Kim, music by O. Rybnikov, 1977*), the contemporary Russian musical composition “Rapira – Little Red Riding Hood (New Song 2026)” (text by H. Valovenko), and the Ukrainian reinterpretation “Little Red Riding Hood in Ukrainian Style. Hit of the Season” (2026), created by the creative group “Spas, Random, Producer, Ptakha and AI”. The study is based on comparative literary, cultural, reception, and imagological approaches and focuses on the transformation of the Western European fairy-tale archetype in contemporary popular culture of East Slavic countries.

It has been established that the figure of Little Red Riding Hood functions as a flexible narrative archetype capable of representing different models of worldview and social subjectivity. The Soviet version constructs an image of a harmonious and safe world aimed at fostering collective optimism and social integration. The contemporary Russian interpretation represents a militarized game space in which violence is aestheticized and transformed into an element of mass entertainment. In contrast, the Ukrainian version builds a narrative of compelled resistance to external aggression, combining wartime experience with intergenerational solidarity, national memory, and a longing for peace.

It has been demonstrated that the traditional fairy-tale plot in the contemporary media environment ceases to function solely as a children’s narrative and becomes an instrument for constructing ideological models that reflect societal understandings of conflict, the Other, violence, and national identity.

Key words: transformation of the fairy-tale archetype, ideological discourse, cultural memory; militarization of the fairy-tale figure, national identity, the image of the Other, gender transformation, cultural resistance.

DOI <https://doi.org/10.23856/7635>

1. Introduction

Contemporary pop and mass culture actively reinterprets classical fairy-tale narratives, endowing them with new social, political, and ideological meanings. **The relevance of this study** is determined by the need to examine the mechanisms through which popular culture functions as a means of ideological influence on the recipient. The reinterpretation of fairy-tale plots in the contemporary media space demonstrates the ability of cultural archetypes to adapt to new historical circumstances while simultaneously becoming instruments for transmitting specific political and national narratives.

¹ This work was supported by a scholarship from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

One of the most recognizable narratives in contemporary mass pop culture is the story of Little Red Riding Hood, which has undergone numerous transformations over the centuries, reflecting shifts in social values, gender models, and cultural perceptions. The primary source of contemporary interpretations is the European folktale “Little Red Riding Hood”, literary adapted by Charles Perrault in the collection *Tales of Mother Goose* (1697) and later reworked by the Brothers Grimm in *Children’s and Household Tales* (1812). The plot tells of a girl who travels through the forest to visit her grandmother, bringing her gifts; along the way she meets a wolf who outwits her, reaches the grandmother’s house, and attempts to eat both characters. In Perrault’s version, the tale ends tragically and carries a clear moral-didactic message, warning children – especially girls – against trusting strangers. The Grimm Brothers’ version, in contrast, introduces the figure of a hunter-rescuer and concludes with a happy ending, emphasizing the possibility of overcoming danger and restoring justice. Owing to its archetypal structure – journey, encounter with the Other, trial, and rescue – the tale of Little Red Riding Hood has become one of the most widespread narratives in world culture and has received numerous literary, cinematic, and musical reinterpretations that reflect the ideological and cultural demands of different historical periods.

In mass Slavic culture of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the figure of Little Red Riding Hood extends beyond the boundaries of the traditional fairy tale and becomes an instrument for shaping collective memory, national identity, and political communication. Of particular interest is the comparison between the Soviet song “Little Red Riding Hood Song” from the film *About Little Red Riding Hood* (1977), the contemporary Russian interpretation “New Story of Little Red Riding Hood” (2026), and its Ukrainian version “Little Red Riding Hood in Ukrainian Style” (2026). Despite a shared narrative foundation, each of these texts represents fundamentally different worldview models and offers its own vision of the heroine, her place in society, attitudes toward danger, war, and the image of the Other.

The study of the fairy tale as a cultural, ideological, and anthropological phenomenon occupies an important place in contemporary humanities. In international literary studies, a substantial body of research has developed addressing the functioning of fairy-tale narratives in various cultural and historical contexts. A significant contribution to the study of the fairy tale as an ideological instrument reflecting mechanisms of power, social control, and cultural memory was made by Jack Zipes, who examines the reinterpretation of traditional plots in the context of social and political transformations (Zipes, 1997; Zipes, 2006). The psychoanalytic dimension of the fairy tale was developed by Bruno Bettelheim, who interprets it as an important mechanism in the formation of the child psyche and moral frameworks (Bettelheim, 1976). Issues of violence, morality, and the hidden meanings of fairy-tale narratives have been addressed in the works of Maria Tatar, who emphasizes the “dark” side of classical plots (Tatar, 1987; Tatar, 2004). The gender dimension of fairy-tale tradition is represented in the work of Alessandra Levorato, which explores the role of linguistic strategies in constructing female and male behavioral models (Levorato, 2003). A substantial contribution to the study of the cultural history of fairy tales and the representation of female figures was made by Marina Warner (Warner, 1994), while a structuralist-anthropological approach to fairy tale and myth, based on the principle of binary oppositions, was developed by Claude Lévi-Strauss (Lévi-Strauss, 1955).

A specific direction in contemporary literary studies is constituted by research on adaptations and radical reinterpretations of traditional fairy-tale plots in literature and drama. A notable example in this context is Elfriede Jelinek’s engagement with well-known fairy-tale narratives, which in her dramatic texts acquire a distinctly deconstructive character (Yuhan (1), 2024).

A separate body of research is devoted specifically to the tale of Little Red Riding Hood, which has undergone numerous transformations and reinterpretations over the centuries. Catherine Orenstein examines the evolution of this narrative as a cultural and political phenomenon, tracing changes in its symbolic content and social function (Orenstein, 2002). In contemporary studies, particular attention is paid to the gendered and bodily dimensions of the tale. Thus, Nicola Welsh-Burke analyzes modern literary adaptations of the Little Red Riding Hood narrative, focusing on issues of sexuality, corporeality, violence, and the interaction between fairy-tale and horror discourses (Welsh-Burke, 2023). In turn, Silviano Carrasco Yelmo investigates the transformation of the Little Red Riding Hood figure in contemporary popular culture, including cinema, comics, and musical interpretations, with particular attention to feminist readings of the narrative and its ideological ambivalence (Carrasco Yelmo, 2022).

Despite a considerable number of studies addressing various aspects of the Little Red Riding Hood figure, the question of its transformation in contemporary literary adaptations and its ideological impact on the modern recipient still requires further comprehensive investigation. A comparative analysis of three musical versions of the Little Red Riding Hood narrative in mass Slavic culture of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries has never been the subject of scholarly analysis, which demonstrates the academic **novelty of the present study**.

The aim of the article is to conduct a comparative analysis of three Slavic versions of the Little Red Riding Hood song and to identify the mechanisms of their ideological influence on listeners and viewers.

To achieve this aim, **the following objectives** are set:

- to determine the specific features of the transformation of the Little Red Riding Hood figure across three cultural contexts;
- to analyze the ideological markers of the texts and video clips;
- to examine models of representation of the hero and the enemy in the musical works;
- to identify the mechanisms of influence of musical and verbal components on the recipient;
- to explore the role of the song in shaping collective memory and national identity.

The research methodology combines the comparative approach (René Wellek, Henry H. Remak, Dmytro Nalyvaiko), intertextual analysis (Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes), imagology (Daniel-Henri Pageaux, Joep Leerssen, Manfred Beller), discourse analysis (Norman Fairclough and Teun A. van Dijk), and elements of reception aesthetics (Hans Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser), which allows for tracing the transformation of the archetypal figure of Little Red Riding Hood and identifying the specific features of its ideological impact on the contemporary recipient.

2. Little Red Riding Hood in the Soviet Educational Discourse

The Soviet version of the “Little Red Riding Hood Song” was written by the poet Yuri Kim to music by Alexei Rybnikov for the television film *About Little Red Riding Hood* (1977) (*Muzyka na radianskomu telebachenni*, 1977). In contrast to the classical fairy tales by Charles Perrault or the Brothers Grimm, where motifs of danger and prohibition dominate, the Soviet interpretation virtually eliminates conflict and fear. The wolf as an image of the enemy disappears, and the world is presented as open, safe, and friendly to the child. The road acquires a symbolic meaning as a life path, openness to the world, and continuous forward movement, corresponding to the Soviet myth of uninterrupted progress and the освоение of new spaces.

The image of Africa as a fairy-tale and exotic space is also not accidental. In the culture of the USSR in the 1960s – 1970s, it symbolized international solidarity, anti-colonial struggle, and the friendship of peoples, forming an idea of a world without hostile borders. The ethical dimension of the song is associated with the cultivation of collectivism, trust, and benevolence: the Other does not pose a threat but represents a potential friend. At the same time, the text establishes a dichotomy of “active – passive,” praising courage, curiosity, and openness to new experiences, while condemning fear and inactivity. In this way, a model of the “correct” Soviet subject is formed – active, cheerful, sociable, and fearless. The musical rhythm, repetitions, and fairy-tale exoticism create a comfortable horizon of expectations and encourage the uncritical internalization of these meanings.

Imagological analysis demonstrates a complete absence of the category of the enemy: the world is not divided into “us” and “them”. This feature fundamentally distinguishes the Soviet song from contemporary Russian and Ukrainian interpretations, in which the image of the enemy becomes a central narrative element. Through the figure of a cheerful and fearless girl, the song constructs a model of happy childhood, an open world, trust in others, and the necessity of active exploration of reality, thereby naturalizing the Soviet worldview as harmonious and universal.

Unlike contemporary versions, the Soviet “Little Red Riding Hood Song” also functions as a kind of children’s “movement song”, intended for collective performance. Similar movement songs, in which exotic animals are mentioned, are also popular in contemporary Ukrainian pedagogy, for example “Turtle aha-aha” (*Borshchova, 2021*). A simple rhythm, numerous repetitions, and gestural markers encourage children’s physical activity, thus turning the song into a form of collective bodily practice.

In Soviet pedagogy, collective singing and synchronized movements had an important educational function, fostering a sense of group belonging, discipline, and the ability to act together. From a psychological perspective, the text performs a function of anxiety reduction: unlike the traditional fairy tale, where the forest and the wolf embody danger, the world is presented as safe, predictable, and open to exploration.

The visual image of the heroine also carries ideological significance. Little Red Riding Hood appears as a primary school-aged girl who retains features of childhood – spontaneity, curiosity, and friendliness. She is neither romanticized nor sexualized, and is devoid of explicit ethnic, national, or religious markers, representing the image of a “universal Soviet child”. Such universalization corresponded to Soviet cultural policy aimed at constructing a supranational image of the “Soviet person”.

The ideological impact of the song is realized not through direct political propaganda, but through the formation of a specific psychological type of child – open to the world, fearless, collectivist, physically active, and benevolent. The Soviet Little Red Riding Hood has no psychological trauma, internal conflicts, or national or religious identity; instead, she appears as an archetype of the “correct child”, with whom identification is easy. It is precisely this apparent apoliticality that ensures the song’s strong educational and ideological potential.

3. The Militarization of the Fairy-Tale Archetype in Contemporary Russian Pop Culture

The Russian version “Rapira – Little Red Riding Hood (New Song 2026)” is based on a text by Grigory Valovenko, and its dissemination occurs primarily through AI-generated musical and vocal versions created using Suno AI (*Rapira, 2026*). This interpretation is a characteristic example of a post-folkloric text in which the classical fairy-tale plot is reinterpreted

through the lens of militarized mass culture, humor, and infantilized aggression. It does not so much tell a story as construct a system of ideologemes that shapes a particular worldview.

The central ideologeme is that of “normalized violence”. The combination of a childlike song form with the vocabulary of weapons and shooting produces an effect of desensitization: violence ceases to be perceived as a traumatic phenomenon and becomes an everyday norm. In this way, an image of the world is formed in which armament is a natural state of the subject, and aggression, although stylized as a video game, becomes a routine practice.

A second key ideologeme is that of the armed child subject. Little Red Riding Hood is deprived of the traditional role of a vulnerable girl and appears as an active agent capable of using weapons without moral reflection. Childhood is combined with military attributes, producing an image of the “child-soldier”, characteristic of a culture in which the boundary between play and violence is blurred.

The third ideologeme is the aestheticization and ironization of war. Humorous intonations and reduced linguistic expressivity shift the theme of warfare into the realm of entertainment, where aggression loses its ethical weight and becomes an element of pop-cultural spectacle and video game logic. Irony enables the integration of traumatic experience into a seemingly safe form of play, while simultaneously contributing to its symbolic normalization.

Equally important is the ideologeme of a blurred moral opposition. The text contains no clear division between good and evil: the wolf is not an absolute embodiment of evil, while the heroine does not act within a moral framework of choice but rather according to the logic of armed necessity. The fairy-tale moral system is replaced by a logic of instrumental efficiency.

Also significant is the ideologeme of a permanently threatening world, realized through the image of a dangerous forest and the necessity of arming Little Red Riding Hood. The world is not presented as safe, as in the Soviet interpretation, but as one that requires protection and control through force, thereby constructing the notion of permanent readiness for conflict as normality.

Thus, the Russian 2026 version of “Little Red Riding Hood” constructs a model of the world in which violence is mundane, weapons function as a natural extension of the body, and play and war continuously interpenetrate each other. Its ideological impact lies not in direct propaganda, but in the gradual incorporation of military practices into the sphere of childhood imagination through mechanisms of humor, rhythm, and repetition.

The final episode of the Russian version of the song, in which the grandmother says “I’m tired of lard, give me vinaigrette”, is not only a humorous detail but also a condensed ideological gesture in which gastronomic codes and cultural stereotypes intersect. In the classical and Soviet versions, food remains a neutral marker of domesticity and care. In contrast, the contemporary Russian interpretation introduces “lard”, a product that in post-Soviet mass culture functions as a stereotypical sign of Ukrainianness. This is not an internal Ukrainian self-identification, but an externally ascribed and reductive image of cultural difference.

The phrase “give me vinaigrette” produces another symbolic shift. Vinaigrette functions as a marker of Soviet culinary universality and a supranational domestic space. Thus, two cultural codes collide in the dialogue: “lard” as a sign of stereotyped Ukrainianness and “vinaigrette” as a sign of Soviet unification. The transition from one to the other symbolizes a movement from ethnic markedness to an imagined commonality in which local differences are neutralized.

In this sense, the episode appears as a micro-model of post-Soviet cultural memory, in which ethnic markers are simultaneously present and devalued, while the Soviet legacy functions as a normalizing horizon that re-signifies local identities. The ironic intonation translates

this ideological tension into a form of everyday joke, masking the process of symbolic reduction of cultural differences.

In this episode of the Russian version of the song, which revolves around the grandmother's gastronomic preferences, what is important is not only the symbolism of the dishes but also the modality of relations between the characters, which manifests itself as a structural coldness of communication disguised as humor. The traditional fairy-tale model of interaction between granddaughter and grandmother is based on care, gratitude, and emotional closeness. In the Soviet version, this warmth is still preserved, as the world appears as a harmonious space of mutual goodwill.

In contrast, in the Russian interpretation the dialogue is constructed as a series of short imperatives and functional utterances. Even at the moment of reunion, there is an absence of gratitude, joy, or bodily closeness. Communication is reduced to utilitarian actions – hand over, return, comply with orders. This produces an effect of affective deformation of the familial bond: family roles are formally preserved, but their emotional content is displaced. The grandmother appears as a dominant participant in the interaction, while the girl performs the function of a mediator and executor of actions.

Significantly, this emotional coldness is not presented as a problem but exists in the form of humor and irony. Such a framing legitimizes the absence of warmth as a natural condition that does not require reflection. As a result, a model of sociality is formed in which family ties persist only as formal roles, communication takes the form of functional commands, and emotionality is replaced by rhythm, repetition, and humor. The scene represents a broader cultural logic in which intimate bonds do not disappear but lose their emotional, bodily, and ethical density, giving way to utilitarian role-based interaction.

In this Russian version of the song, the ideological load is produced not only on the verbal level through militarization and the normalization of violence, but also through the visual and bodily representation of the heroine, which radically transforms the type of subjectivity of Little Red Riding Hood.

In the video clip interpretation, she appears not as a child but as a sexualized young woman. Revealing clothing constructs a hypersexualized image in which the fairy-tale character shifts into the realm of adult eroticized identity. As a result, the very address of the image changes: instead of a child-oriented or family narrative, a model emerges that is oriented toward visual consumption by an adult viewer, where the female body functions as an object of display.

Sexualization is intensified through the inclusion of weapons as a visual attribute. The combination of an eroticized body and military paraphernalia constructs the image of an “eroticized militarized subjectivity”, in which sexuality and aggression mutually reinforce each other. The total red coloration of the costume also plays an important role. The color red, symbolizing passion, danger, blood, and power, simultaneously intensifies both the erotic and aggressive dimensions of the character. As a result, Little Red Riding Hood is transformed into a sign of sexual-military intensity.

Thus, the Russian clip version constructs a system of ideologemes in which the heroine's body becomes the central bearer of meaning: it is simultaneously sexualized, militarized, and functions as a medial object of spectacle. The fairy-tale archetype is used to produce an image in which the boundaries between childhood and adulthood, play and violence, eroticism and war are systematically blurred.

There is another clip based on a new Russian song about Little Red Riding Hood, created by AI – HEAVY DOWN METAL AI (*HEAVY DOWN METAL AI*, 2026). In this version, the narrative appears more coherent, and its clip-like fragmentation is partially overcome: the

scenes form a conditional narrative sequence, and the heroine's militancy is motivated by the threatening image of a dark forest. At the same time, other features of the text and visual composition remain typical of AI-generated music videos.

The key semantic node is the final line, "Where could I get more ammunition?", which shifts the narrative from the logic of a fairy-tale resolution to that of continuous warfare. In contrast to the classical fairy tale, where the ending restores safety, here the future is defined exclusively by the search for means to continue violence. Thus, the ideologeme of "permanent militarized subjectivity" is formed, in which war is not an exception but a normal mode of existence.

The final line cancels the possibility of catharsis and proposes a model of a subject for whom constant readiness for struggle becomes the only horizon of existence. In a broader cultural context, this can be seen as a form of normalization of military aggression through pop-cultural mechanisms of humor, rhythm, and fairy-tale stylization. For this reason, the reference to ammunition retrospectively re-signifies the entire narrative as preparation for the continuous reproduction of violence.

At the formal level, the clip demonstrates a post-narrative structure characteristic of digital content: plot is replaced by repetition, psychology by function, and coherence by montage inertia. Repeated episodes create an effect of pseudo-structure in which narrative is displaced by rhythm and by intensive visual impulses, corresponding to the aesthetics of AI-generated image logic.

Equally important is the absence of clear national or religious markers. The image of Little Red Riding Hood is not anchored in any specific cultural context through costume, symbolism, or space, and the characters function as universalized media figures similar to video game protagonists. Such a depoliticized surface creates the illusion of universality, while simultaneously and implicitly normalizing a particular cultural code as neutral and "default". In combination with militarized and sexualized visuality (in the first video clip), this contributes to the perception of the image as a universal model capable of global media circulation and ideological fluidity.

4. The Ukrainian "Little Red Riding Hood" as a Narrative of National Resistance

The Ukrainian song "Little Red Riding Hood in Ukrainian Style. Hit of the Season", released in April 2026 by the creative group "Spas, Random, Producer, Ptakha and AI", with the support of "Radio Resistance" (*Radio sprotyv* (1), 2026), is a deliberate reworking of the Russian song "Rapira – Little Red Riding Hood (New Song 2026)". It emerged as a response to the popular Russian musical product, preserving its melodic foundation but radically transforming the lyrics and system of imagery.

The Ukrainian version functions as a cultural battle and a counter-narrative. The use of the same melody creates an effect of recognition and demonstrates the possibility of re-signifying a familiar media product. While the Russian text aestheticizes and normalizes violence through humor and video-game logic, the Ukrainian reworking transforms it into a narrative of defense, national solidarity, and civic resistance that became particularly salient in Ukrainian society after the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (*Drohomyretska et al.*, 2024: 48–49).

The Ukrainian "Little Red Riding Hood" appears as a distinctly ideologized war-related allegorical text in which the fairy-tale plot is reinterpreted under conditions of ongoing war. In contrast to the Soviet model of a "conflict-free world" and the Russian model of "normalized violence", it constructs a clear system of political meanings in which the fairy tale represents a collective experience of war.

The central ideologeme is the image of a clearly defined enemy. "Orcs" function as a dehumanized figure of the aggressor, establishing a binary opposition of "self" and "other". The "self" space is associated with protection, care, and memory, while the "other" is linked to invasion and threat. The second key ideologeme is the heroine's defensive subjectivity. Her armament does not aestheticize violence but appears as a marker of compelled military competence and responsibility. Unlike the Russian version, where weapons are part of a game, here they are integrated into the logic of survival.

Another important ideologeme is that of a traumatized yet active space. The forest and the road become zones of constant danger that do not paralyze the subject but instead mobilize her into action. This constructs a model of active resistance in which forward movement is maintained despite continuous external threat.

The figure of the grandmother requires separate analysis as an active combatant subject. Instead of the traditional role of a passive bearer of care, she appears as a participant in collective resistance, which produces an ideologeme of the total involvement of society in war, where "neutral" positions are absent. War encompasses all generations and transforms the very structure of familial roles.

At the same time, the text contains an ideologeme of emotional mobilization through everyday language. The combination of military vocabulary with quotidian expressions integrates the experience of war into ordinary life without detaching it from routine practices. From the perspective of political impact, the text constructs a model of legitimized resistance, in which violence appears as a compelled response to aggression rather than a romanticized game.

Thus, the Ukrainian version of "Little Red Riding Hood" constructs a war narrative in which the fairy tale is transformed into an allegory of collective resistance. The heroine combines the childlike innocence of the fairy-tale archetype with the adult responsibility of war, thereby shifting the work from the level of an individual story to that of a collective war myth.

In this configuration, "Little Red Riding Hood" appears as a collective image of a Ukrainian female military unit. The grandmother and the granddaughter do not represent separate characters, but rather different generations of a single subject of resistance. The name "Little Red Riding Hood" functions not as the heroine's personal name, but as a symbolic designation of a shared female identity.

From an ideological perspective, this constructs the concept of a collective female war-time subjectivity, in which women are represented not as exceptional heroines, but as a systemic part of a defensive society. Such an image legitimizes women's participation in war as a norm rather than an exception, thereby shifting traditional gendered perceptions of military experience.

Thus, the Ukrainian version constructs not a story of an individual heroine, but an allegory of collective female resistance, where the central element is not the body of a single character, but collective action as a form of historical presence.

In the Ukrainian version of the "Little Red Riding Hood" song, a crucial role is played not only by the war-related allegorical dimension, but also by an affective-genealogical structure that constructs the image of resistance through intergenerational closeness and mutual care. In contrast to the Russian model of emotional reduction, the Ukrainian family appears as a living emotional community in which the mother, daughter, and grandmother are connected through gestures of care, support, and shared presence.

War does not destroy these bonds; on the contrary, it intensifies them. The heroine's armament appears not as self-sufficient aggression, but as a form of protective care for those close to her. Violence does not isolate the characters; instead, it is integrated into a system of

familial reciprocity, where care, the transfer of food, and shared participation in resistance form a unified affective and military community. Thus, the family appears not as a private sphere, but as a locus of collective defense, where emotional closeness and readiness for protection constitute an inseparable system of values.

Equally important is the combined model of wartime subjectivity and harmonious embeddedness in the natural environment. Unlike the Russian version, where the forest is a purely threatening space, here it appears as a living environment of coexistence among different forms of life. A telling example is the image of the hedgehog that the girl feeds: this episode marks an ethics of care for vulnerable life and demonstrates that the heroine is not only a warrior but also a bearer of empathy.

Of particular significance is the symbolic alliance between the girl and the wolves, referred to in the text as “dogs”. The traditional opposition of “victim – predator” is dismantled, and animals emerge as potential allies in the struggle against the external aggressor – the “orcs”. This constructs an ideologeme of a recalibrated boundary between “self” and “other”, in which the natural world becomes a space of solidarity and collective protection.

The final scene of the liberation of the grandmother’s village forms an ideologeme of ecological collective resistance. Violence is not presented as an end in itself, but as an ethically justified means of restoring a disrupted order. Little Red Riding Hood functions as a mediator between the human, animal, and military-political worlds, combining the roles of protector, caregiver, and coordinator of collective action.

Thus, the Ukrainian version constructs a complex ideological structure in which the war narrative is combined with an ethics of care and harmonious coexistence. Violence is not presented as a game or a norm, but as a compelled form of protecting life and restoring a disrupted harmony.

In the final semantic layer of the Ukrainian version of the song, the articulation of exhaustion as an ethical state of the wartime subject is particularly significant. The heroine explicitly voices fatigue from the struggle against the “orcs”, which reinforces the idea that her military activity is not a choice or a game, but a compelled mode of existence under conditions of a full-scale invasion. This constructs the ideologeme of a defensive rather than aggressive subjectivity, in which war appears as an externally imposed pressure rather than a normalized or playful state. Importantly, violence is neither romanticized nor pleasurable; it remains a reactive form of action.

The image of the enemy is clearly politically defined: the “orcs” designate an external aggressor, thereby shifting the conflict from a fairy-tale dimension into a historical-political one. This eliminates the universalization of violence: the heroine does not fight nature or chaos, but defends her space from invasion. At the same time, the motif of exhaustion and the dream of “retreat” emphasize the preserved horizon of normal life after the war, which remains a valuable existential orientation.

The text also clearly marks the heroine’s national identity. Ukrainian visual codes (traditional clothing, embroidered towels, St. Andrew’s Church, and salo as an internal cultural sign) construct the ideologeme of a space of national rootedness. Ukrainianness is not declared explicitly but is continuously visually reproduced through everyday life, architecture, and symbolic objects, in contrast to Soviet universalization or Russian stereotyping.

The final image of the “Motherland Monument” completes this logic by re-signifying memory as a living process: the monument “comes alive” through female images of resistance. This creates the ideologeme of the continuity of historical resistance, where past and present merge into a single acting history of female wartime subjectivity.

A very important component of the structure of the Ukrainian version of the “Little Red Riding Hood” song is the use of a hybrid technology combining AI and documentary representation of real women participants of resistance, which creates a multilayered system of images and further strengthens its ideological and political effect. On the one hand, the main video uses AI-generated visuality, which constructs a generalized, symbolic space of a fairy-tale-war narrative. This level performs a mythologizing function: it transforms individual plots into a collective image of female struggle, where the heroine becomes an archetype rather than an individual figure. On the other hand, an important addition is the presence of mini-versions or inserted real portraits of women participants of resistance with concrete prototypes (*Radio sprotyv* (2), 2026). These are not abstract characters, but documented women performing various roles at the front: drone operators, assault troops, medics, artillery personnel, drivers, snipers, and others. Thus, a fundamental shift occurs from the symbolic to the documentary level.

The hybrid structure of the video clip – combining AI-generated visuality and documentary fragments of real female service members – constructs an ideologeme of transition between myth and reality: the artificially created image of Little Red Riding Hood is reinforced by concrete female biographies. In this configuration, AI performs the function of mythologization, while documentary inserts serve as ethical and political verification.

As a result, a dual representation of female subjectivity emerges: both as a collective archetype of resistance and as real embodied female subjects of war, which consolidates the image of contemporary Ukrainian female military agency as a historically real and symbolically legitimized phenomenon.

5. Three Versions of “Little Red Riding Hood”: a Comparative Ideological Dimension

In comparative terms, the three versions of “Little Red Riding Hood” demonstrate not merely different interpretations of a single fairy-tale plot, but in fact three distinct ideological models of world-ordering, in which the same archetype functions as an instrument for constructing different types of subjectivity, different understandings of violence, and different boundaries between the “self” and the “other”.

The Soviet version constructs a universalized and harmonized world in which potential danger is neutralized through an optimistic narrative logic, while the “Other” is integrated either as a friend or as a neutral figure. Central to this model is the image of the child as a bearer of collective optimism, curiosity, and social openness, reflecting an educational ideology of stability, non-conflict, and collective cohesion.

The contemporary Russian version of the traditional fairy-tale narrative, by contrast, constructs a world of constant threat, in which violence becomes an everyday norm, yet is mediated through irony, parody, and an aesthetic of gaming and music-video stylization. The “Other” here oscillates between the figure of the enemy and an object of elimination, while the protagonist appears as a hyper-armed but emotionally simplified figure for whom war is not a tragedy but rather a stylized mode of existence. The ideological effect lies in the gradual desensitization to violence through its aestheticization and humorous “relief”.

In comparative terms, the three versions of “Little Red Riding Hood” do not merely offer different interpretations of a single fairy-tale plot, but in fact represent three distinct ideological models of world-order, in which the same archetype functions as an instrument for constructing different types of subjectivity, understandings of violence, and boundaries between the “own” and the “foreign”.

The Soviet version constructs a universalised and harmonised world in which potential danger is neutralised through an optimistic narrative logic, while the “Other” is integrated as a friend or a neutral figure. Central here is the model of the child as a bearer of collective optimism, curiosity, and social openness, reflecting an educational ideology of stability, non-conflictuality, and collective cohesion.

The contemporary Russian version of the traditional fairy-tale song, by contrast, produces a world of permanent threat, in which violence becomes an everyday norm but is presented through irony, parody, and a playful, clip-based aesthetic. The “Other” oscillates here between the figure of the enemy and an object of destruction, while the hero appears as a hyper-armed yet emotionally simplified figure for whom war is not a tragedy but rather a stylised form of existence. The ideological effect consists in a gradual desensitisation to violence through its aestheticisation and humorous “relief”.

The YouTube hit “Chervona Shapochka po-ukrainskyi” appears as an example of cultural reappropriation and symbolic resistance, where a borrowed media form is used to produce a fundamentally different ideological content. It demonstrates that the contemporary confrontation between Ukraine and Russia unfolds not only on military or political levels, but also within cultural narratives, where popular music, fairy-tale archetypes, and digital media become instruments in the struggle over memory, identity, and meaning.

The Ukrainian version of the “Little Red Riding Hood” song constructs a fundamentally different model from both the Soviet and contemporary Russian ones—a world of existential resistance in which violence is clearly marked as a consequence of external aggression rather than an internal logic or a game. The “Other” is unambiguously coded as an aggressor, while the hero appears as a female defender embedded in familial, intergenerational, and national bonds. Importantly, this model is not reduced to a purely military function: it includes affectivity, exhaustion, the need for peace, and deep emotional solidarity.

Thus, the same fairy-tale archetype within the Slavic tradition is transformed into three distinct ideological constructions:

- The Soviet model – an educational narrative of safety, optimism, and collective harmony.
- The contemporary Russian model – aestheticised militarity and the normalisation of violence through irony, play, and clip-based aesthetics.
- The contemporary Ukrainian model – a narrative of civic resistance, decolonisation, and national self-identification, in which war is interpreted as a forced defence of life, culture, and memory.

It is precisely this tripartite perspective that makes it possible to see that the fairy-tale plot is not a neutral cultural form, but rather a mediator of ideological representations of the world, violence, and subjectivity that shift depending on the historical and political context of its reinterpretation.

A significant feature of both contemporary national versions of the French fairy-tale plot is also the process of a specific feminisation and reinterpretation of the traditional image of Little Red Riding Hood. If in the classical fairy tales by Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm the girl appears primarily as an object of danger requiring rescue, in contemporary Russian and Ukrainian interpretations she is transformed into an active subject capable of self-defence and of resisting threats. At the same time, the nature of this transformation differs substantially.

In the Russian version, the heroine’s emancipation is largely reduced to her militarisation and sexualisation: the woman is given weapons, yet remains an element of a spectacle-based culture, where the combination of the female body and weaponry produces an effect

of eroticised violence. By contrast, the Ukrainian version endows the image of Little Red Riding Hood with additional layers of meaning. Here, there is not only an activation of the female character but also a significant shift in traditional gender roles. The heroine assumes a socially and culturally coded masculine function of the warrior and defender, becoming an embodiment of a new model of female subjectivity shaped by the experience of the Russo-Ukrainian war (Yuhan (2), 2024).

At the same time, this masculinisation of the role does not lead to the loss of traditionally “feminine” characteristics. The Ukrainian Little Red Riding Hood remains a daughter, a granddaughter, and a bearer of familial memory and a culture of care. Her image combines strength and empathy, military experience and the aspiration for peace, the capacity to kill the enemy and the capacity to care for loved ones. Thus, the Ukrainian version proposes a new type of female heroine – not a victim and not an Amazon, but a defender who integrates traditionally feminine and masculine roles within a unified model of civic and national responsibility.

6. Conclusions

In the final conclusion, the conducted analysis demonstrates that “Little Red Riding Hood” in three different cultural-ideological versions functions not as a fixed fairy-tale plot, but as a flexible narrative archetype capable of reproducing and consolidating different models of worldview, political imagination, and subject formation.

The Soviet interpretation represents a model of a controlled, harmonised childhood world in which social reality appears safe, orderly, and morally transparent. Its primary function lies in fostering collective optimism and integration into a system in which conflict is rather dissolved than articulated.

The contemporary Russian version demonstrates the opposite pole – a fictional-playful world in which conflict and violence are a constant norm, yet they are aestheticised, ironised, and transformed into an element of mass entertainment. In such a model, war and weapons lose their ethical weight, gradually becoming part of cultural play and spectacular consumption.

The contemporary Ukrainian version constructs a different logic – the logic of forced resistance under conditions of real threat, in which violence is neither romanticised nor neutralised, but understood as a response to external aggression. At the same time, this narrative is not reduced to a purely military dimension: it preserves affective depth, intergenerational continuity, national rootedness, and openness to the natural and ethical dimensions of coexistence.

In this sense, the three versions demonstrate different ways of working with the same archetype as an instrument of cultural imagination. They show that the fairy tale in the contemporary media space ceases to function merely as a children’s narrative and instead becomes a carrier of ideological models of collective representation, in which notions of normativity, threat, violence, identity, and the boundaries of social self-representation are encoded.

Thus, “Little Red Riding Hood” in its different Slavic interpretations functions not simply as a story, but as a mirror of socio-cultural imaginaries, reflecting how different communities in different historical contexts make sense of childhood, conflict, the image of the Other, and themselves.

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