

EUROPEAN HISTORICAL GAME STUDIES

Volume 1/2026

Issue 1

UKRAINIAN GAMES OF WAR

GDAŃSK UNIVERSITY PRESS

GDAŃSK 2026

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The Spectacle of the Absurd: Parody in Video Games as a Tool of Political Satire Relating to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

[<https://doi.org/10.26881/ehgs.2026.1.03>]

[Abstract]: This paper examines the role of independent video games as a medium of partisan expression and alignment with Ukraine during the Russian invasion, with a particular focus on the prevalence and function of parody. Drawing on a corpus of video games (computer and mobile), this study explores how game creators transmute the phenomena witnessed into a set of symbolic ludic objects, which are subsequently employed to craft satirical parodies. These parodies serve to engage with the realities of war, to criticise aggressors, and to construct identities on national and political levels. Our analysis highlights how parody operates across multiple levels of these games, from titles and mechanics to graphics, music, and narrative. By employing humour, exaggerated violence, and cultural symbolism, these games reflect a wartime culture of resistance. They provide a unique lens through which to study the interplay between digital media, identity, and propaganda. This article situates these games within the broader framework of transmedial activism, highlighting their role as new modes of political participation and as agents of globalisation fostering a sense of community and collective agency. This phenomenon underscores how play and procedural interaction can turn unimaginable and abhorrent realities into digestible, reflective experiences. By blending entertainment with criticism, these games offer critical insights into

the intersection of game studies and contemporary socio-political discourse; they transform digital spaces into platforms for activism and resistance.

[Keywords]: parody, political criticism, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, satire, war games

1. Introduction

While the Russian invasion of Ukraine began in 2014, it entered its most important stage in 2022, when the Russian Federation launched its so-called “special military operation.” Alongside the evolution of conventional and unconventional warfare, the aspect with the most influence on the public outside the countries directly involved is the transformation of media and the nature of the information received by observers. The role of established media in narrating ongoing events was one of the main arguments in Jean Baudrillard's *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (1995), in which the author discusses fundamental changes in the broadcasting of information. The media of the twentieth century, according to Baudrillard, became a narrative device which created a version of events and reality, forgoing the initial intention of communication: “we [the Western public] are all accomplices in these fantasmagoria [...] as we are in any publicity campaign. [...] today, in our enslavement to information, we constitute the reserve army of all planetary mystifications” (1995, 64). We contend that Baudrillard's position is not fully applicable to contemporary conflicts, such as the Russo-Ukrainian War. Traditional media have lost their monopoly over narrative construction, a role now distributed among various actors, including independent journalists, social media broadcasters, and individuals directly involved in unfolding events. This democratization of war narratives stands in stark contrast to Baudrillard's assertion that the media form a singular, authoritarian force shaping perception. Furthermore, the erosion of centralized control over war reporting has fundamentally altered the nature of its visual representation. The direct transmission of events through live streams and other unmediated formats offers an almost unfiltered, often unsettlingly realistic depiction of war. This transformation and multiplication of sources shift the emphasis from providing an

objective or coherent account of events to privileging the affective impact of information, thereby reshaping public engagement with a conflict.

The age of post-truth (McIntyre 2018) is characterised by a focus on the emotional impact of what is perceived instead of objective information. This, combined with the absence of a reliable framework to distinguish truth from falsehood, causes the two extremes of the dichotomy to merge into a single entity. Contemporary audiences have access to an unfiltered broadcast where tragedy and farce coexist. The modern public can witness the valiant defence by Ukrainian soldiers on Snake Island (Williams and Kirby 2022), the horrific nature of atrocities committed in Bucha (Browne et al. 2022), the abduction of Russian tanks by tractor drivers (NDTV 2022), the struggle of a Russian soldier with a reinforced door in Kherson (WarLeaks 2022), and the looting of items such as toilets by the invaders (Kampmark 2022), merged into a single online spectacle.

Such a contrast between the tragic and the comedic creates a sense of absurdity. We argue that this perspective leads many modern artists and designers to employ humour, particularly parody and satire. Following the 2022 invasion, hundreds of video games addressing the conflict have emerged, with many adopting a comedic tone that portrays the Russo-Ukrainian war via the individual perspective of the developers. We aim to examine the nature of parody within the satirical games created after the invasion. Regardless of personal opinions, we focus on the Ukrainian perspective on the conflict. The first reason for this choice is that we do not have access to the narrative presented by the Russian Federation. Secondly, as individuals residing in Poland, we feel a connection to the target audience of Ukrainian creators. We argue that these games can be seen as a form of partisan political criticism, further undermining the media's control over the narrative of the war.

A parody is a type of expression that transforms elements of the subject matter to evoke a comical and/or critical effect (King 2002, 114). According to Linda Hutcheon, it is a "form of imitation [...] characterised by ironic inversion" (2000, 6). In games, parody is expressed in a multimodal manner – music, narrative, graphics, and even mechanics combine to create a layered experience. Each element contributes to the parody, blending traditional conventions with ironic twists that reinterpret or subvert familiar themes.

There is a paradoxical ambivalence in parody's criticality, as it simultaneously embraces and mocks traits of its subject (Hutcheon 2000).

In this study, we focus on parody employed for satirical purposes. Parody, as a mode of humour, draws on and underscores aesthetic conventions (Krutnik and Neale 1990, 18–19). When used for satire, it becomes a creative method of expression that intentionally imitates, exaggerates, or distorts aspects of a specific subject to deliver critical social commentary (Krutnik and Neale 1990, 18–19). Satirical parody (King 2002, 108) uses humour, irony, and exaggeration to expose contradictions, absurdities, or flaws in its target, whether that be a public figure, institution, or cultural phenomenon. Distinct from parody purely intended for entertainment, satirical parody seeks to provoke critical thought, encouraging audiences to question or reassess the norms, practices, or ideologies it critiques (Rose 1994, 86). In other words, rather than merely imitating, satirical parody goes beyond simple replication, engaging in a critical analysis and challenging the hidden or unacknowledged assumptions associated with the subject. We acknowledge the extensive discourse on this topic and the difficulty many theorists face in distinguishing satire from parody. However, for the purposes of this study, we adopt this distinction as a functional framework.

In video games, parody serves as a mechanism for engaging with cross-media references and inspirations, wielding a transformative power that enables profound social satire (Tosca 2009, 130). Furthermore, as suggested in the introduction to *Video Games and Comedy*, the production of parodies can be understood as a form of game in itself – a playful praxis – with the potential to shape genres (Bonello Rutter Giappone et al. 2022, 9–23). Through the process of repetition with variation, simplified and grotesque versions of the original are created. What lies at the core of game creation is a parodic gesture (Bonello Rutter Giappone et al. 2022, 13).

2. Method

Approximately 220 computer and mobile game titles intentionally referencing the theme of Russia's invasion of Ukraine were reviewed, based on

both independent searches and a list presented by Yaraslau Kot in a presentation during the “Games of War” conference in 2024). From this initial pool, around ninety games were identified as containing preliminary indications of parody used for satirical purposes.

Our corpus consists of computer and mobile games, with online games dominating among the former. These smaller-scale projects – published on platforms like Google Play, Steam, itch.io, and similar alternatives – represent a medium that operates with limited oversight, created by individuals for the public. The vast majority of the titles were independent and made by Ukrainian creators; however, in some cases, because of the anonymization of internet spaces, these distinctions were difficult to make.

Overall, it can be observed that many games have low hardware requirements and an internet connection is usually the only necessity in order to interact with them. A notable feature of these games is their ephemeral nature: they often emerge rapidly in response to events but are just as quickly discontinued, frequently because of resource constraints.

Moreover, our corpus was characterized by a high degree of diversity in utilising humorous solutions. Elements of parody were observed at every level and in every aspect of the games – titles, graphics, music, mechanics, and narrative. We observed similarities between the functioning of these games and internet memes,¹ another medium saturated with parody and intertextual references (Shifman 2013). Indeed, the connections to internet memes and their transformations and parodies, as well as the use of their language, are so abundant in our research material that the kinship of games and memes is unquestionable.²

¹ Internet meme is a popular name for an e-sign composed of a few semiotic elements that draw upon popular and internet culture. These intertextual collages can manifest themselves in diverse forms and degrees of complexity, utilising multimedia formats. Typically, they are presented within humorous contexts.

² Authors promote their games by proudly announcing the fact of utilising internet memes. See, for example: *Ukraine Memes Games Steam Bundle* or *Steam Descriptions of Bavovna Included!* (Ironbellys Crew 2023): “[...] a satirical, casual indie game-manifesto [...]. Memes and Easter eggs are included in the price!,” and that of *Putinist Slayer* (Bunker 22 2022): “[...] Kill hordes, dodge, upgrade, eliminate bosses and reach new highest records! With memes from Ukraine.” The games mentioned here, like memes, are both parodied and utilised for parodying.

Another common feature of the preliminary corpus that can be distinguished is the approach to the theme of the conflict. The games described here are largely directed clearly against the Russian side and are characterised by a one-dimensional, non-nuanced stance, although we have also identified a few titles that problematise the situation within Ukraine itself. These were quite rare, as the only examples that appeared in our sample include itch.io titles *No to War: The Game* (notowar 2023) and *Labor Rights Funeral in Ukraine* (Petrov 2022). The first is a retelling of Odessa's controversial practices related to conscription, where the player takes on the role of a skating pacifist trying to avoid being drafted. The game is part of the educational work of the Ukrainian Pacifist Movement, which advocates for the human right to conscientious objection to military service. It also aims to raise awareness about human rights violations and corruption related to conscription in Ukraine. The second is a short essay adventure that highlights how the government is using war as a pretext to erode workers' rights in Ukraine. In this segment, the player can explore an office and interact with various coworkers, each sharing their negative experiences with the company. Both titles employ humour and obvious parody³ to criticise, respectively, the military conscription system and the treatment of workers' rights in Ukraine.

After a preliminary identification of ninety titles relevant to our study, we decided to divide the discussion of them into two groups. The first included instances in which games, understood as specific cultural artefacts, are themselves subjected to parody. We consider it important to comment on this phenomenon while conducting a study within the context of game studies, particularly given its notable prevalence in the material under examination. The second group comprises games that parody the observed reality of the invasion. This "state of reality" is a broad framework, including events, characters, objects, symbols, and other elements linked to the conflict. To enhance clarity and focus, we further organised the second category based on the primary target of the parody, enabling readers to navigate the corpus of games more effectively while refining our analysis. Notably, these

³ Parody in these titles is mainly visible in their aesthetics, namely the schematization of graphics and the use of visual metaphors, such as the cemetery in *Labor Rights* intended to illustrate the situation faced by workers and their rights, and the caricatured depiction of military conscripts in *No to War*.

thematic categories are not mutually exclusive; a single game may incorporate multiple references, often without clearly prioritising any one element.

The final scope was determined based on creators' declarations, the clear enrichment of the game with signs related to the invasion, and clear indications of satirical parody as described in the previous section. After separating these two categories, we selected representative titles for a given category to confirm the occurrence of parody used for satirical purposes (see Tables 1–4). Next, we conducted an in-depth analysis using the framework proposed by Dan Harries in *Film Parody* (2000), which identifies six primary methods of combining similarity and difference between the parody and its target. Reiteration provides an anchorage to the original, setting up narrative expectations that other parodic techniques can then subvert. Inversion creates a signifier which ironically suggests a meaning that is contrary to that of the original. Misdirection utilises reiteration and transformation and delivers an unexpected turn after initially mimicking the original. Literalisation transforms metaphors into literal interpretations or renders non-diegetic elements as diegetic (Grönroos 2013, 29). Extraneous inclusion introduces foreign elements to the targeted texts that fall outside its conventions. Exaggeration operates by amplifying the lexical, syntactic, and stylistic features of the original text beyond conventionally expected limits. Harries's framework helped us to identify and describe specific parodic transformations that occur in individual titles.

In the next section, we present our analysis divided into two parts corresponding to the two types described above. The subsections consist of a general description of each group and examples of titles effectively exemplifying a broader phenomenon selected based on their representational nature for the given category, ensuring that they offer the reader a diverse and engaging insight into the subject under study. We emphasize that although a creative boom occurred in 2022, new games continue to emerge, disappear, and evolve. Because of the size of the corpus and its (previously mentioned) constantly changing composition, we have decided in this article to document the individual phenomena we observed by providing a limited number of examples for which information was available as of fall 2024 (see Tables 1–4).

3. Games subjected to parody

The first mode of parody we address is the parody of games themselves, including references to well-known game titles, genres, and mechanics. Creators adapt themes related to current events into iconic gaming artefacts, effectively transforming cultural references from gaming history into commentaries on present realities. This dual-layered parody highlights how games can serve as both medium and target for satirical reinterpretations. Cultural phenomena and franchises outside of gaming – such as, for example, rare references to the genre of *hentai* (pornographic anime)⁴ – also appear in the corpus studied, albeit far less frequently. However, as game studies researchers, we centre our focus on the medium’s self-referential parody.

Notably, many of the original games chosen for parodic transformation would now be considered “retro” emphasising how the technology required to cite and propagate them demands only minimal resources. The accessibility amplifies the cultural resonance of these parodic forms. Moreover, as retrogaming “revives periods that are well within living memory” (Guffey 2006, 100) references to retro games are more readily perceived as parodies because of their established place in cultural memory, making them recognisable across generations. In contrast, parody of more recent titles is harder to identify, as newer games have yet to achieve the same cultural longevity and recognition.⁵ We refrain from providing specific examples here because, as the reader may notice, many of the titles discussed below belong to this category (see e.g., Figures 1a–b and 2a–c).

Among the games studied, we identified parodies of specific titles and established franchises within the medium, including most notably *Space Invaders* (Nishikado 1978), *Wolfenstein 3D* (id Software 1992), *Grand Theft Auto* (DMA Design 1997), *Whack-a-Mole* (TOGO 1975), *Snake* (Armanto 1998), *Tetris* (Pajitnov 1984), *Minecraft* (Persson 2009), *Counter-Strike* (Valve 1999), *Hong Kong 97* (Kurosawa 1995), and *Hy, nozodu! / Nu, Pogodi!* (Elektronika 1984). In this category, the role of original game elements as a source of re-iteration (Harries 2000, chap. 4) becomes particularly prominent. Parodies

⁴ A notable example is *Hentai Mission Ukraine* by Who We Are Games (2022).

⁵ To further understand retro games and their significance, see, for example (Garda 2013).

are expressed through the use of distinctive mechanics, graphics, animations, and allusions within their titles. Furthermore, allusions to particular game genres – such as fighters, clickers, and platformers – were identified, alongside broader evocations of entire decades of game design, especially retro pixel art styles that evoke nostalgia without explicitly referencing individual titles. An examination of the abovementioned set of titles and their historical development reveals a clear manifestation of the medium’s tendency towards self-referentiality. This tendency is illustrated by stories such as those of both *Tetris* and *Snake*. Those highly recognisable examples have undergone an almost endless number of iterations and adaptations rising well above those of the ordinary video game model. Another example of this phenomenon is the existence of titles, such as *Hong Kong 97*, which was intentionally created as a parody of the medium itself (Shamdasani 2018). The above information is presented in a clearer manner in the Table 1.

[Table 1]: A selection of games from our final corpus, organised according to the original titles they refer to – games as subjected to parody category

Original games	Parody games
<i>Counter-Strike</i> (Valve 1999)	<i>Call Of Ukraine – Multiplayer</i> (SnZGames 2023), <i>Prigazhin Counter Craft 3D</i> (AMCi 2023)
<i>Grand Theft Auto</i> (DMA Design 1997)	<i>Grand Theft Tractor: Ukraine</i> (Pol Grasland-Mongrain 2022)
<i>Hong Kong 97</i> (Kurosawa 1995)	<i>UKRAINE 2022</i> (УКРАИНА2022) (<i>Hong Kong 97 parody</i>) (DongaSSoft 2022)
<i>Minecraft</i> (Persson 2009)	<i>Prigazhin Counter Craft 3D</i> (AMCi 2023)
<i>Ну, погоди!</i> / Nu, Pogodi! (Elektronika 1984)	<i>Маня ловит Ваню</i> (Valentyn 2022)
<i>Snake</i> (Armanto 1998)	<i>Ukraine. Farm. Godot. Farmers. Farmy. 300. Godot Engine Game</i> (Lunariusis 2022)
<i>Space Invaders</i> (Nishikado 1978), <i>Stop the Z Putin Virus</i> (Viriato07 2022)	<i>Russian Invaders</i> (domandlj 2022), <i>U 2022</i> (Giorgos Xeristanidis 2022), <i>Ukraine vs Putin Shootemup</i> (innov8 2023), <i>The Ghost of Kyiv</i> (Ivan-Helsing 2022)

Original games	Parody games
<i>Tetris</i> (Pajitnov 1984)	<i>Kyiv Defence</i> (Cherednichenko and 16 ROMCOM 2023)
<i>Whack-a-Mole</i> (TOGO 1975)	<i>Catch Crazy Dictator</i> (Suspense Studio 2022)
<i>Wolfenstein 3D</i> (id Software 1992)	<i>Escape from Putin's Palace</i> (Vlad Dracul 2023), <i>Kremlin 3D</i> (mod) (Kary 2022)

[Source]: own elaboration based on: (Kot 2024) and own query.

Below we provide the analysis of two titles that are representative of the category discussed here. The examples selected illustrate the phenomenon of referencing specific titles, mechanics, and retro gaming in the production of parodies.

Ukraine. Farm. Godot. Farmers. Farmy. 300. Godot Engine Game is a game developed by Lunariusis, available on the itch.io platform. Released around 2022, the game is built using the Godot Engine and features gameplay mechanics reminiscent of the classic *Snake* (Armanto 1998). The player controls a tractor topped with a Ukrainian flag, tasked with, according to the game's description, collecting enemy tanks while avoiding their attacks. These tanks are then “delivered for scrap” by directing them to a designated point on the map. Points are awarded for each successful delivery and are displayed at the top of the screen (see Figures 1a–b).

The gameplay is accompanied by epic music, adding to the intensity and thematic engagement of the experience. It is worth noting that the game was created using publicly available assets and free sample music. Such sharing of ideas, themes, and material is characteristic of the game-making surge described in this work. There seems to be a general consensus among creators engaged in the movement to adopt similar solutions, emphasising their sense of community and solidarity.

In *Ukraine. Farm*, the well-known mechanics serve as anchorage for the original *Snake* to be further parodically transformed by including graphical and thematic references to events from the time of the invasion of Ukraine. Thus, the game pays homage to the previously mentioned abduction of Russian tanks by tractor drivers (NDTV 2022) – an event circulating widely as

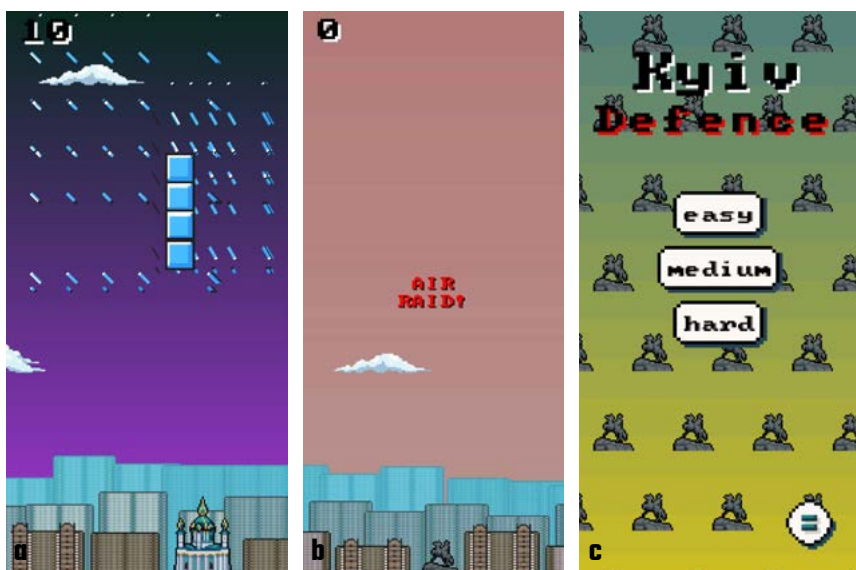


[Figures 1a–b]: Screenshots from *Ukraine. Farm. Godot. Farmers. Farmy. 300. Godot Engine Game*. Upon launching the game, the player is greeted by a panel (Figure 1b) displaying the message: “Don’t forget to donate to the Armed Forces of Ukraine; they are protecting our peace. - - - Glory to Ukraine!”

[Source]: (Lunariusis 2022).

a meme in internet spaces.⁶ While the reiteration and extraneous inclusion are what constitutes the parodic nature of the title, its satirical nature stems from the game’s explicit engagement in the discourse on the Russo-Ukrainian war. This is evident, for example, in the opening game panel (see Figures 1a–b), which clearly expresses the creator’s alignment with one side in the conflict. The use of a mechanical reference to the popular *Snake* game gamifies this alignment and conveys a narrative of resistance and mockery of the Russian military.

⁶ For a collection of memes referencing the invasion, see, for example, the project *War Memes Museum* developed by Media Center Ukraine (2023).



[Figures 2a–c]: Screenshots from *Kyiv Defence* (2023)

[Source]: (Cherednichenko and 16 ROMCOM 2023).

Kyiv Defence (Cherednichenko and 16 ROMCOM 2023) is a mobile game developed by Andri Cherednichenko, in which the player defends an 8-bit rendition of Kyiv. The identity of the city is conveyed through the inclusion of iconic buildings and landmarks on each map. Falling blocks, styled graphically after *Tetris* (Pajitnov 1984), intentionally misdirect the player (Harries 2000, chap. 6). This time the game is not about efficiently arranging the blocks but rather removing them by tapping before they hit the bottom of the map. Any blocks that are not skilfully intercepted collide with the pixelated Kyiv, causing an explosion that scatters the pixels into ruins. A points counter is displayed in the upper-left corner of the screen (see Figures 2a–c). The gameplay is accompanied by 8-bit upbeat versions of Ukrainian songs (by@nestir_) thematically associated with the invasion.

What is particularly interesting in the case of using *Tetris* to narrate the Ukrainian-Russian conflict is the strong Russian context of the original title. In the original Western release by Spectrum Holobyte (Guerra 1988), emphasis was placed on graphical references to Soviet imperialism,

including the use of Cyrillic script, the hammer and sickle, St. Basil's Cathedral, the Kremlin, Soviet sports teams, and military imagery. That context may explain why the falling blocks, so characteristic of this Russian-origin game, are used as obstacles to be avoided in its satirical anti-Russian iteration.

This subsection explores how creators parody well-known game titles to construct satire addressing Ukraine's current situation, tackling themes such as air raids and the militarization of daily life. By invoking iconic games' elements – such as the mechanics of *Snake* or the graphics and gameplay of *Tetris* – they engender audience nostalgia, making these new titles more accessible and impactful (Wulf et al. 2018). Both *Snake* and *Tetris* undergo parodic reinterpretation, simultaneously reaffirming and subverting their original meanings through the inherent ambiguity of parody (King 2002, 114).

We highlight this phenomenon to underscore the unique self-referential capacity of games (Bonello Rutter Giappone 2015). By choosing games as their medium of expression, creators gain a distinct opportunity to engage with the history and structure of the gaming medium using its own language. This results in intriguing techniques, in which parodying the medium becomes a means of political and cultural commentary.

4. Elements of invasion-related reality subjected to parody

One of the criteria for determining whether a game falls within the scope of our discussion was, alongside creators' declarations, the clear enrichment of the game with signs related to the invasion. These signs serve as symbols and elements of a transmedia narrative about the conflict. Below, we offer descriptions of sets of the most commonly encountered signs – objects that are parodied. These are: events (see Table 2), national symbols, weaponry (see Table 3), soldiers, and public and symbolic figures (see Table 4). Despite the ontological differences between these elements, they are all transformed into ludic objects via the medium of video games.

[Table 2]: A selections of games from our final corpus, organised according to the parodied elements of reality – events (elements of invasion-related reality as subjected to parody category)

Events	Games
Чорнобаївка [“Chornobaivka”]	<i>Чорнобаївка Україна (квест)</i> (ProZhar 2022), <i>ЧОРНОБАЇВКА: День бабака</i> (Vovchuk 2022), <i>Смерть Ворогам</i> (MoonClock Studio 2022)
“русский корабль, иди на хуй” [“Russian warship, go f*** yourself”]	<i>Russian Warship Go F*ck Yourself</i> (Martian Teapots 2022), <i>Putin (HTML) Message</i> (Viriato07 2022a)
bombing of Kyiv	<i>Kyiv Defence</i> (Cherednichenko and 16 ROMCOM 2023)
Ukrainian farmer towing a Russian tank with a tractor	<i>Ukraine. Farm. Godot. Farmers. Farmy. 300. Godot Engine Game</i> (Lunariusis 2022), <i>Farmers Stealing Tanks</i> (PixelForest 2022), <i>Ukrainian Farmy</i> (ukrainian 2022), <i>Grand Theft Tractor: Ukraine</i> (Pol Grasland-Mongrain 2022), <i>Race to Kyiv</i> (Drogowit Pomorski 2022)
looting toilets by Russian soldiers	<i>Pixel World: Orcs Attack</i> (Demon Dezard 2022), <i>RUSLICSTAN INVADES</i> (SLAM AWAY GAMES 2023)

[Source]: own elaboration based on: (Kot 2024) and own query.

Kyiv Defence and *Ukraine. Farm. Godot. Farmers...* both offer retellings of events that occurred during the invasion, namely the bombing of Kyiv and the viral video documenting a Ukrainian farmer towing a Russian tank with a tractor. Other references to events that frequently appear in the corpus analysed include the following.

Чорнобаївка [“Chornobaivka”] – this term references the battles that took place between February and April 2022, linked to the failed attempts of Russian forces to solidify their position at a local military airfield, which were sabotaged by Ukrainian artillery at least seventeen times.

Games refer to that event by specifically utilising the village’s name most notably in the very titles. An example is *Чорнобаївка Україна (квест)* [“Chornobaivka Ukraine (quest)”] (ProZhar 2022) a game in which the player participates in a text chat between countries discussing the emerging conflict.

“Русский корабль, иди на хуй” [“Russian warship, go f*** yourself”] – is the well-known response from Ukrainian defenders of Snake Island to the Russian demand that they surrender, which was broadcast on 24 February 2022. For example, this event manifests itself in the form of the title and as an inspiration for the setting in a mini-game *Russian Warship Go F*ck Yourself* (Martian Teapots 2022) created as part of the game jam Stand With Ukraine Jam that was held on itchi.io from March to May 2022. Similarly, it appears in a transformed version in the game *Putin (HTML) Message* (Viriato07 2022a), where the player can click on flags of various countries to generate an analogous message expressed in five languages and directed at Putin instead of the warship.

The name of the town, the broadcast excerpt, and the agricultural machine have become symbols of specific events and are widely recognized as emblems of defiance and resistance against the Russian invasion. They have spread through new media, including video games, and are the central theme of many of them. Referencing these events through game titles, mechanics, and graphics represents another form of “soft propaganda” with a humorous undertone, criticising the aggressor in an accessible and emotionally resonant way.⁷

The process of the creation of new, easily communicable symbols that can be further circulated occurs simultaneously with the reinterpretation and universalization of those already existing through reprocessing. In addition to allusions to events, references to weapons used by the Ukrainian military, such as *Байрактар* [“Bayraktar”], *Джавелін* [“Javelin”], and airforce, undergo those types of processes. They appear in games in titles, as available weapons to be used by the player or even playable sprites as in the *Bayrakadakka* (JyveAFK 2022), a game described as a Bayraktar drone simulator.

These weapons have become new symbols of the Ukrainian military or even of national identity, especially as Ukrainian identity in European discourse is increasingly framed within the context of conflict. Alongside these emerging symbols, established cultural and historical ones such as *соняшники* [“sunflowers”], *гуси* [“geese”], *козак* [“Cossack”], and the

⁷ For a broader analysis of the propaganda functions of wargaming, see (Harrigan and Kirschenbaum 2016).

national colours – yellow and blue – are also employed (see Table 3). National music, or even parodic songs⁸ are present as well.

[Table 3]: A selections of games from our final corpus, organised according to the parodied elements of reality – weapons and established national symbols

Symbols	Games
Байрактар ["Bayraktar"]	<i>Bayraktar</i> (wiedzmiz 2022), <i>Bayrakadukka</i> (JyveAFK 2022), <i>Ukrainian Bayraktar vs Orcs</i> (andijm 2022), <i>Bavovna Included!</i> (Ironbellys Crew 2023), <i>Deputinization</i> (Myttsi Zabav 2022)
Джавелін ["Javelin"]	<i>Javelin Point – Bravery Game</i> (NovaApps Limited 2022), <i>Saint Javelin</i> (anomalousFrog 2022), <i>Zelenskyy's Wrath</i> (Helssen 2022), <i>Bavovna Included!</i> (Ironbellys Crew 2023), <i>Deputinization</i> (Myttsi Zabav 2022)
соняшники ["sunflowers"]	<i>Sunflower Simulator</i> (Null Activity 2022), <i>Sunflower Slap</i> (Native Games Studio 2022), <i>Friedens Panzer</i> (Hexenwerk 2022)
гуси ["geese"]	<i>Birds Attack 2022</i> (Novokhatskyi and Kharchenko 2022a), <i>Nenka Ukraine</i> (3xOnGames 2024), <i>The Goose of Kyiv</i> (salopusher 2022)
козак ["Cossack"]	<i>Cossack Drive</i> (elD1abl0 2023), <i>Javelin Point – Bravery Game</i> (NovaApps Limited 2022), <i>Nenka Ukraine</i> (3xOnGames 2024), <i>Cossack Freedom Fighter</i> (Liza and Lemon 2023)
national colours	<i>Deal with Putin</i> (Little-Rena and DVa-Clock 2022), <i>Ukraine vs. OrcZ</i> (Alaric von Teplitz 2022)

[Source]: own elaboration based on: (Kot 2024) and own query.

Representations of the characters of soldiers also deserve a comment. Both Russians and Ukrainians, they often retain a humanoid form but undergo humorous graphic transformations. Russian soldiers are frequently depicted as *орки* ["orcs"], zombies, or various animals, while Ukrainian soldiers are portrayed as *кошенята* ["kittens"] and *гуси* ["geese"]. In both cases,

⁸ Such as, for example, the popular patriotic propaganda song "Bayraktar" (Kronika24.pl 2022).

these representations draw on widely recognized cultural references,⁹ often humorous in nature, which in games take the form of virtual creations that have both a graphic, animated, and diegetic dimension (see Table 4).

[Table 4]: A selections of games from our final corpus, organised according to the parodied elements of reality – soldiers and specific characters

Group of characters	Characters	Games
soldiers	soldiers (of both sides)	<i>The Most Russophobic Game Clicker Kill Russians Orks</i> (Neas Gaming 2022), <i>Birds Attack 2022</i> (Novokhatskyi and Kharchenko 2022a), <i>Nenka Ukraine</i> (3xOnGames 2024), <i>Cats at Arms</i> (Halubovskiy 2022), <i>Ukraine vs. OrcZ</i> (Alaric von Teplitz 2022), <i>Bunnies vs. Bunnies: Ukraine Edition</i> (Jordan Magnuson 2022), <i>Putin Orcs Defender</i> (pacifism 2022), <i>Pixel World: Orcs Attack</i> (Demon Dezard 2022), <i>RUSLICSTAN INVADES</i> (SLAM AWAY GAMES 2023), <i>UFU Ukrainian Forces Unlimited</i> (RuslanHaru 2022), <i>Bavovna Included!</i> (Ironbellys Crew 2023)
symbolic figures	Привид Києва [“Ghost of Kyiv”]	<i>Ghost of Ukraine</i> (Staryshko 2022), <i>Ghost of Kyiv – Fly Shooter</i> (UlfBjorn 2022), <i>The Goose of Kyiv</i> (salopusher 2022), <i>The Ghost of Kyiv</i> (Ivan-Helsing 2022)
	Патрон [“Patron”]	<i>Sniffer Dog Game</i> (Novokhatskyi and Kharchenko 2022b), <i>Nenka Ukraine</i> (3xOnGames 2024)

⁹ Among such linguistic jokes, the term *бавовна* [“cotton”] is notable when used to refer to explosions. It is present in, for example, game titles; see, for example, *Bavovna included!* (Ironbellys Crew 2023) on Steam.

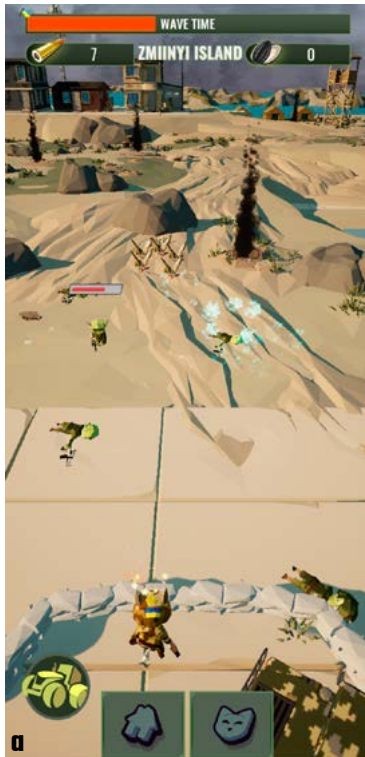
Group of characters	Characters	Games
public figures	Wladimir Putin, Yevgeny Prigozhin, Alexander Lukashenko, etc.	<i>Putinist Slayer</i> (Bunker 22 2022), <i>Putin</i> (HTML Message (Viriato07 2022a), <i>Stop the Z Putin Virus</i> (Viriato07 2022b), <i>Deal with Putin</i> (Little-Rena and OVa-Clock 2022), <i>Granny Putler</i> (SnZGames 2022), <i>Musk vs. Putin</i> (Polianytsia Charity Initiative 2022), <i>Bavovna Included!</i> (Ironbellys Crew 2023), <i>Russian Invaders</i> (domandlj 2022), <i>FUCK PUTIN</i> (Sunday's Games 2022), <i>Kick the Pu: Beat Dictator</i> (PRICERA 2022)
	Wolodymyr Zelensky, Elon Musk, Joe Biden	<i>Musk vs. Putin</i> (Polianytsia Charity Initiative 2022), <i>Zelenskyy's Wrath</i> (Helssen 2022), <i>Revenge of Zelenskyy</i> (cjavod 2023), <i>Ukrainian Revenge</i> (FutumaGames 2023)

[Source]: own elaboration based on: (Kot 2024) and own query.

These whimsical (Nenkov and Scott 2014) depictions often balance on the border of the “cute-grotesque” as framed by Daniel Harris: “cuteness [...] must by no means be mistaken for the physically appealing, the attractive. In fact, it is closely linked to the grotesque, the malformed” and “[...] cuteness is ultimately dehumanising, paralysing its victims into comatose or semi-conscious things” (2001, 3, 7). The troubling nature of such aesthetic choices further illustrates the paradoxical nature of using an entertainment medium to create humorous depictions of war.¹⁰

While orcs are intended to symbolise the brute force and uncivilised nature of Russian soldiers, zombies serve a particularly intriguing function: they depict soldiers as the living dead, emphasising their inevitable downfall and rendering them “ungrievable” (Butler 2009). Such biopolitically troubling representations become tolerable in public reception when directed at the advancing aggressor forces (Train and Ruhnke 2016, 515). In a similar

¹⁰ For example, consider the mobile game *Cats at Arms* by Oleh Holubovskyy (2022) in which players control a Ukrainian cat-soldier who shoots Russian orc-soldiers. The graphic design of both armies can be described as “cute” (see Figure 3a).



[Figures 3a–c]: Screenshots from *Cats at Arms* (Figure 3a), *Stop the Z Putin Virus* (Figure 3b), and *Sunflower Simulator* (Figure 3c)

[Source]: (Holubovskyi 2022), (Viriato07 2022b), (Null Activity 2022).

vein, *Stop the Z Putin Virus* (Viriato07 2022b) is a game in which Putin himself changes into a zombie, infected by the “Z virus” (see Figure 3b). The association with the letter “Z,” an identification symbol commonly linked to the Russian military, reinforces this imagery.

These representations express a collective affect, channelling widespread frustration, anger, and resistance, and further popularising it. Dehumanisation is accompanied by exaggerated gore aesthetics, which function in a comparable way: they intensify the violence and brutality of the game, making the stakes feel more immediate and visceral, while simultaneously reflecting and reinforcing the shared emotional response of the public towards the aggressor. This highlights the inherent paradox of play and gaming transgression (Mortensen and Jørgensen 2020; Jørgensen and Karlsen 2018). In the cases discussed here, the paradoxical nature is very evident and easy to notice, particularly in the aesthetic dimension. Creators and players seek to engage in transgression through the act of creation and playing, by tormenting their opponents, using moral bracketing that causes the moral norms “outside the game” to be suspended and replaced by the “in-game” norms (Mortensen and Navarro-Remesal 2018, 30). However, a truly profound transgression (Mortensen and Jørgensen 2020, 194) implies the impossibility of participating in such an experience.

An interesting aesthetic deviation from ubiquitous gore can be found in *Sunflower Simulator* (Null Activity 2022), in which Russian tanks are transformed into sunflowers (see Figure 3a). The player aims at them with a crosshair, suggesting that their operators are killed, and upon their bodies, sunflowers – a national symbol of Ukraine – grow. Here the transformation of the non-visible soldiers is significantly subtler and as such less disturbing to the recipients. It is worth noting, however, that this remains an exception – most of the titles discussed here compete in sadistic depictions. To give the reader a more tangible understanding of the phenomenon described here, we provide a specific example below.

Маня ловит Ваню [“Manya Catches Vanya”] (Valentyn 2022) – directly references *Ну, погоди!* [“Nu, Pogodi!”], the 1984 Russian game featuring characters from a popular animated series. In this version, instead of the wolf character, a female figure dressed in traditional Russian attire catches dismembered body parts of Russian soldiers rolling down four birch wood



[Figure 4]: Screenshots from *Маня ловит Ваню* [“Manya Catches Vanya”] (2022)

[Source]: (Valentyn 2022).

slopes, much like the original game’s eggs (see Figure 4). The *Hy, погоди!* itself was a copy of the 1981 *Egg* from Nintendo Game & Watch. Here, the subverted and mocked characteristics of one of the best-known early Russian titles becomes a tool of Ukrainian anti-imperialism.

Although parodying the specific video game title is crucial to the satirical tone of the game, we decided to include it in this part of our discussion because one of its most shocking elements and one charged with meaning is the grotesque depiction of dismembered Russian soldiers. It is important to note that such exaggerated gore representations can transgress limits for some viewers. Based on comments on its itch.io page, criticising the dehumanising nature of depictions, *Маня ловит Ваню* can be categorised as an extreme example of the mechanisms we have discussed in this section becoming for some players a space of profound transgression – one that is unacceptable and as such unplayable (Mortensen and Jørgensen 2020, 194).

Alongside faceless, anonymous soldiers, another important element of invasion-related reality introduced into games are specific, identifiable characters. These include, first, symbolic figures representing Ukraine’s liberation efforts, such as *Привид Києва* [“Ghost of Kyiv”] and *Патрон* [“Patron”] the

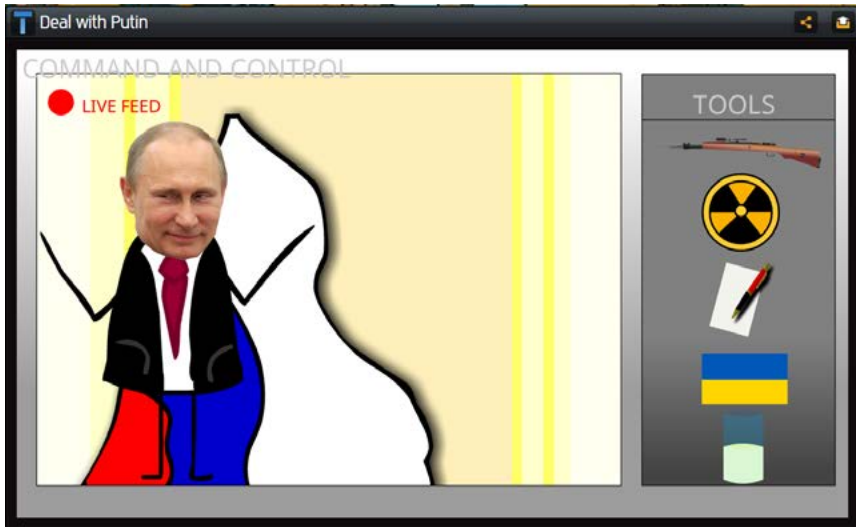
dog. Second, there are caricatures of Russian leaders and public figures, such as Vladimir Putin, Yevgeny Prigozhin, and Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko, as well as figures from the international stage, including Volodymyr Zelensky, Elon Musk, and Joe Biden. The latter characters, although graphically depicted in a parodic manner, are positioned within the narrative and mechanics as protagonists or at least as active agents in the conflict. While the visual representation may be exaggerated or humorous, their roles in the games reflect their symbolic significance within the larger context of the war, often emphasising their importance in the resistance struggle.

Similar to the case with soldiers, in the aesthetic transformations of both hero and enemy characters, the creators' sadism comes to the forefront, not always consciously, in their attempt to "maim, hobble, and embarrass" (Harris 2001, 5). It is further reinforced in narration and mechanics turned "against" Russia's allies. This reflects a deliberate exaggeration of negative traits and vulnerabilities, adding a layer of dark humour and criticism. The use of such depictions may also be a way to explore the grotesque nature of the conflict, as these characters are dehumanised and subjected to visual ridicule, highlighting the brutality of war through satirical aesthetics.

The majority of the titles that can be mentioned in this category focus on Putin. In these many games, the Russian leader is often compared to Hitler, with linguistic play – such as using the term "Putler" (for example, *Granny Putler* [SnZGames 2022]) – and the use of the Hitler graphic motif signalling fascist ideologies. These games are designed as ways to kill, torture, and rid the world of Putin, essentially using him as a target for violent retribution.

One of them is *Deal with Putin* a straightforward online game developed by Little-Rena and DVa-Clock (2022) on newgrounds.com. Players select from a range of tools to trigger animations depicting direct harm inflicted upon Putin (see Figure 5). He can be shot, obliterated by a nuclear bomb, stabbed with a pen, crushed under a map of Ukraine, or drowned in urine. The game's visual style draws heavily from popular satirical online games and aligns itself with the broader trend of caricaturing and tormenting political figures (Phillips 2018),¹¹ here with a pronounced focus on the Ukrainian

¹¹ For example, in ragdoll games like *Interactive Buddy* (Shock-value 2005), in which the player tortures a doll that can be equipped with the skins of George W. Bush or John Kerry, among others.



[Figure 5]: Screenshots from *Deal with Putin* (2022)

[Source]: (Little-Rena and DVa-Clock 2022).

cause. The game includes seven unlockable achievements, encouraging repeated engagement. Accompanying the gameplay is a background track titled “The Dictator” (jasont01 2007), which features a digital sample of a quote from George W. Bush regarding dictatorship.

This form of representation featured in *Deal with Putin* and many other titles not only reflects an intense animosity towards the Russian leader but also serves to channel the frustration and anger stemming from the ongoing conflict into virtual acts of vengeance (Murray 2016, 320).

To summarise this category, we note that the diegetic incorporation of the above-mentioned elements further highlights the use of mechanisms of parody (Harries 2000). Their oversaturation in subsequent titles establishes a clear satirical stance towards the ongoing conflict, with sharp criticism aimed at mocking the Russian armed forces. Ludic objects – phenomena distilled into reusable and reinterpretable symbols – serve as tools for structuring experience, extending memory, and shaping associated emotional responses. A game centred on a specific object or event commemorates the existence of that object or event, allowing the myth it generates

to persist beyond the immediate moment. The affective responses elicited by these phenomena are embedded within the game's structure, providing both creators and players with a means to process and navigate the emotions they evoke. While undergoing parodic transformations, these ludic objects are simultaneously simplified and enriched with new critical dimensions. Through their games, creators offer a hyperreal simulacrum of their individual and national experiences, engaging with the paradox of humour by transforming cherished symbols – such as national icons and war-time suffering – into elements that are more easily disseminated through the popular language of parody.

5. Discussion

The people of Ukraine and their allies manifest their agency not only on the battle and political fields but also through transmedial spaces. Games provide a novel framework for situating experiences within a temporal and relational context. Through games, creators capture the attention of players from around the world, sharing their perspectives and propagating Ukrainian culture, albeit in a simplified or trivialised form. By contributing to the trend of creating the games discussed here, the creators are actively participating in negotiating norms of discourse regarding the invasion. Their annihilating laughter at the triumph of the absurd is their moment of freedom (Hariman 2008, 261).

Games related to contemporary armed conflict function as networks of references. They transform sets of signs into ludic objects, which serve as the foundational elements for satirical actions. Above, we have outlined examples of how parodying other games as well as elements directly related to the invasion are featured in the creation of satirical games. With the help of these mechanisms the reality of war itself is transformed into hyper-realistic, mocking representations, in a way that makes possible a processing of what is unimaginable, repulsive, and abhorrent.

A key aspect of this analysis concerns the most prevalent thematic and aesthetic trends that emerge within these games. After reviewing the scope

of our discussion, we observe that the most popular titles tend to be those targeting Putin or featuring orcs or zombies. We speculate that these metaphors are among the most symbolically potent and relevant throughout the invasion. In contrast, games based on individual memes – such as the tractor memes – emerged in large quantities and were produced rather crudely during the height of their circulation, eventually fading away or becoming less prominent. Later titles have shifted their focus from being solely centred on one event, incorporating a broader array of elements, with the tractor serving as just one among many motifs.

As noted above, forms of negotiating the boundaries of discourse through video games often rely on various modes of violence, not only within narration and mechanics, but also through aesthetics. It is not only the game itself but also its chosen parodic convention that facilitates these transgressions (see “ludo-comedic consonance” in Bonello Rutter Giappone et al. 2022). When humour is employed and directed at the oppressor, even dehumanisation may appear harmless (Carter and Allison 2018, 133–52). What is more, the previously mentioned paradox of cuteness (Harris 2001) highlights that aesthetic transformations – commonly understood as expressing positive affect toward an object – can also carry a problematic, violence-laden connotation. It follows that despite the creators’ evident bias, the portrayals of characters from both sides in their cutified, cartoonish form are similarly imbued with the violence of war. Gore and a distinctly pronounced grotesque aesthetic, alongside purely mechanical techniques, are what set the opponents apart from allies. Thus, the selection of monstrous categories (e.g., zombies and orcs) to depict Russian soldiers, contrasted with animalistic ones (e.g., geese and cats) for Ukrainian soldiers, is noteworthy.

The paradox of transgressive actions in video games, which pertains to most of the games discussed here, presents a compelling dilemma. On one hand, player actions within a game can be deeply unsettling when evaluated through the lens of contemporary human rights standards: for instance, in games about torturing Putin, where the player engages in acts that would be considered morally reprehensible in any real-world context. However, the magic circle of the gaming experience provides a form of absolution, framing these actions as acceptable within the boundaries of play. The veil of parody further legitimizes this engagement, allowing players to channel

their emotions in a manner that remains normatively acceptable within the cultural framework of satirical gaming.

Cruel carnival laughter encompasses all – enemies, comrades, players, and creators alike (Bonello Rutter Giappone et al. 2022, 9–11; Bakhtin 1984). These forms of expression – aesthetic and mechanical – do expose and mock the absurd, yet they remain its “accomplices” as well (Baudrillard 1995, 64).

Although there are exceptions, such as the previously mentioned *Labor Rights* and the conscription game, the majority of the games analyzed in this study do not endeavour to provide nuanced critical commentary. They are politically engaged but not necessarily serious (Flanagan 2009). As Hye-Won Han and Su-jin Kim note (2016, 97), in the case of parody games, developers perceive real-world social and cultural problems tragically, yet convey satire and irony through comedic parody. This juxtaposition of the gravity of events with a medium intended for entertainment creates a paradoxical effect. However this paradox serves a clear purpose. A certain lightheartedness (as discussed in parody studies) permits a freer engagement with both information and affect. To quote Robert Hariman, parody cuts its subject to “human scale” (2008, 251). Game scholars examining parody games emphasise that parodic elements and paracausal (Gurney and Payne 2016) qualities enhance the entertainment value of these games, creating accessible and alluring spaces that capture players’ attention. Moreover, the satirical approach, embedded within a parodic aesthetic, functions at the margins of conventional discourse, circumventing established norms of acceptable expression. The perceived “non-seriousness” of these works grants their creators the latitude to depict images and facilitate interactions that would otherwise be deemed unacceptable within mainstream channels of communication. These features invite players to engage in critical reflection on serious themes, thereby facilitating the critical processes mentioned above (Gurney and Payne 2016; Han and Kim 2016).

By using distribution platforms such as Newgrounds, itch.io, and Google Play, these games position themselves as non-threatening artefacts, despite serving as conduits for powerful affective expressions and creative interventions (Flanagan 2009). An illusion of casuality is dispelled, at least in some titles, by information surrounding them such as fundraising efforts

for the front, along with descriptions and comments from creators sharing insights into the situation in Ukraine revealing the games' educational and informational values.

The language of satirical parody becomes legitimised within the realms of independent public actions, coexisting with or even replacing direct discourse. The satirical effectiveness of parody stems from its "irreverent democratisation of the conventions of public discourse" which situates discourse closer to the audience itself (Hariman 2008, 258). It exposes the limitations of dominant narratives that Baudrillard warns of, even if by its own totalising tendencies (Hariman 2008, 254).

Games' procedural and interactive properties propose an alternative to traditional linear media. They are a form of partisan political criticism capitalising on the media literacy of their audience. Interaction with humour directed against political opponents enhances a sense of political efficacy, particularly in situations of heightened anxiety (Becker 2014, 440). Not only do these interactions have this effect, but actively creating such humour likely produces a similar outcome, thus fostering a sense of agency. Parodic deconstructions in the form of games become an affinity space (Gee 2005; Gurney and Payne 2016) promoting not only passive learning but active discussion and a sense of community. It can be noted that while online platforms are often used for spreading propaganda and for surveillance, the space of independent games remains relatively pure of institutional influences. The production of satirical games exemplifies a form of partisan agency that operates beyond conventional frameworks of discourse. Despite often maintaining anonymity, developers and artists demonstrate a clear intent to resist in a manner that fits in with their expertise and creative capacities. These games serve as non-militant instruments of opposition, offering an alternative mode of engagement in the struggle against invasion. The accumulation of affective responses fosters a sense of shared understanding, further solidifying the formation of new communities bound by these collective experiences.

However as the editors of *Video Games and Comedy* note, the "democratising power of laughter" should not be overestimated (Bonello Rutter Giappone et al. 2022, 11–12). Although it provides an opportunity to reinforce communal bonds, it often comes at the expense of cruelty towards the

Other. In the games we examined, it is evident that while the roles of victim and aggressor may shift, the underlying mechanisms of violence and the perpetuation of nationalistic ideologies remain unchanged. As Bonello Rutter Giappone et al. note, “There is a fine line between carnivalesque ridiculing of shared values, brave satire against the tyrants, and cruel mockery of others from the platform of smug conviction in one’s superiority [...]” (2022, 12).

In a situation of heightened risk and during a war that is becoming more intense and violent, it is not surprising that representations of war dominate in the titles we analysed. These are not distant or fictional events but rather transformations of current realities, which both diminishes and amplifies their frivolity. The immediacy of the conflict intensifies representation’s impact, blurring the lines between representation and reality. The violence and ideologies depicted in these games, then, are not merely historical echoes or abstract constructs, but are deeply rooted in ongoing global tensions. This temporal proximity adds a layer of urgency and complicates our understanding of the narratives being portrayed, making them not only more relevant but also more unsettling. The shifting dynamics between victim and aggressor in this context are not just theoretical exercises, but part of a living, evolving crisis, one that challenges the very nature of how we engage with and interpret these representations.

6. Final remarks

Game design functions as a powerful tool for both personal expression and broader cultural communication within a wartime context. Our article provides a limited overview of the phenomenon of parody games related to the Russo-Ukrainian War, highlighting their role in shaping affective responses and political narratives. However, further research is needed to explore their long-term impact on collective memory, their reception across different cultural contexts, and their influence on the broader discourse of war representation in digital media. The games discussed here align themselves with a tradition of political satire, one that has found its place in every medium – from drawings and songs to magazines and monologue (Bonello

Rutter Giappone et al. 2022, 1–24). In this context, the aesthetics and mechanics of parody function as instruments of satire, ultimately serving the purpose of critiquing reality. This criticism is not merely intellectual but affective, aiming to elicit an emotional response. The accumulation of shared emotions fosters the formation of communities, united by a collective sense of agency. Satirical games actively contribute to the construction of national and political identity, with their heightened militarization reflecting and reinforcing facets of contemporary Ukrainian self-perception. This study is, thus, part of a longstanding inquiry into the foundational constructs of national identities. Within the epistemic landscape of the post-truth era, the significance of emotions and affect in the formation of collective identity becomes increasingly pronounced, as they function as cohesive forces that unify communities. In this context, the predominant unifying affect is one of resistance and indignation – an emotive response to the surreal and incomprehensible spectacle of war. The fact that many of these games served as a means of fundraising to support Ukrainian troops at the front further highlights the dedication and commitment of their creators. By directing proceeds towards defence efforts, developers not only show their support for Ukraine but also engage players worldwide in this cause, transforming gaming into a platform for activism. This blending of play and purpose underscores a unique aspect of modern game design, where entertainment intersects with real-world impact, rallying digital communities towards shared goals, and expressing and stabilising personal and political affect.

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