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“russia” with a lowercase letter: A mythological approach

“россия” со строчной буквы: мифологический подход

Abstract. This paper examines the contemporary phenomenon of Ukrainians writing the word “Russia” with a lowercase letter in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. This practice has attracted the attention of Ukrainian researchers, who interpret it as a way of expressing emotions such as neglect. However, scholars tend to describe this phenomenon as self-evident without explaining how a change in letter case can convey emotions. A retrospective analysis reveals the evolving function of capital letters in Latin and Cyrillic scripts – from a utilitarian role in text division to the acquisition of their own semantic significance, particularly in the case of proper names. The paper also proposes an interpretation of the lowercase spelling of “russia” using the myth theory developed by Juri Lotman and Boris Uspensky, founders of the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School. The study argues that altering a proper name is not simply a manipulation of ordinary language but an appeal to a special layer of mythological language. What appears from a descriptive perspective to be a mere renaming is, from the perspective of myth, a redefinition of the object itself. One object (“Russia”) disappears, and its place is taken not by a modified version, but by a fundamentally different object (“russia”).

Keywords: uppercase letters, mythological consciousness, war, Cyrillic script, Ukraine

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On 22 April 2022 the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine made a post on Facebook: “Here is a small «r» for you to write «russia» with an even smaller letter” (*Dopis koristuvača General'nij štab ZSU*, electronic source). Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, social media users, as well as the Ukrainian media, started to write the name of the aggressor country with a lowercase letter: “russia” (rossiya).

This form of expression of disrespect, contempt, or even insult is not necessarily understandable for those who do not speak Ukrainian or Russian. Below, I will try to show how the functional division of letters into uppercase and lowercase has acquired an emotional load in the context of the Ukrainian and Russian languages. My hypothesis is that the special perception of writing a proper name

with a lowercase letter is a manifestation of mythological consciousness. This hypothesis is based on the theory of mythological consciousness of the founders of the Tartu-Moscow semiotic school, Juri Lotman and Boris Uspensky.

Initially, the division of letters into lowercase and uppercase was of a functional nature. To illustrate this, let us delve into the history of writing in the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets.

Capitalization in Latin script

Both the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets have their origins in the Greek script, and all three forms of writing underwent similar evolutionary process, albeit at different times.

Originally, there was no distinction between uppercase and lowercase letters. When referring to early writing, a modern person would say that it consisted solely of capital letters. Regarding the Latin alphabet, it was based on the writing style known as Roman Square Capitals. It is generally accepted that the shape of these letters was standardized by the 2nd century BC (Coulson, Babcock 79). Until the 5th century AD, this script comprised exclusively “capital” letters. The precise geometric forms of Square Capitals were designed for inscriptions on stone, which is why they were challenging to reproduce with a pen. Consequently, they were rarely used for continuous text in books (Coulson, Babcock 89).

As the production of texts expanded and new writing materials became available, fonts also evolved. Around the 4th and 5th centuries, Uncial script emerged. It can “be described as a descendant of Roman capital script, under cursive influence” (Coulson, Babcock 100). However Uncial writing was relatively slow, leading to the development of a font with even smaller and more convenient letters, known as the Semi-uncial script (Goudy, Rudge, Kennerley 15). Some of the letters from the Semi-uncial script eventually found their place in the modern lowercase typographic set.

There is a contested hypothesis according to which lowercase letters “have been developed from the fifth century uncials and the ninth century Carolingian minuscules” (Knut 382). The letter we call lowercase was the final step in evolution from the Caroline hand, “but it did not reach the definite and fixed form familiar to our eyes until after the invention of printing” (Goudy, Rudge, Kennerley 18).

If we talk about the use of larger letters, capital letters were still used for headings (capitalis, uncial, mixed, and ornamental forms) (*Caroline Minuscule*, electronic source). It is believed that the convention on the use of capital letters was established under the Carolingians around the 8th century: “Clear capital let-

ters and spaces between words became standard in the Carolingian minuscule, which was one result of a campaign to achieve a culturally unifying standardization across the Carolingian Empire” (Slimane, Schaßan, Märgner 389).

It is essential for the purposes of this article that the reduction in the size of the letters, their modification, and the division into “uppercase” and “lowercase” were all due to functional requirements. The advent of new materials for writing, the increase in the number of texts, and with it the need to increase the speed of writing influenced the emergence of writing, which we would call “lowercase”. Capitalization of the letters has been preserved for the purpose of ease of reading: initially, “uppercase” letters were used only for the separation of one chapter from another (so-called “initial capital”), but not for the designation of proper names.

The Carolingian minuscule was eventually replaced by the era of Gothic writing, and when Europe actually reverted to the Carolingian style, there were no rules that established when to capitalize and when not to. For example, in English in the 17th and 18th centuries, it was fashionable to capitalize all nouns, just like in modern German, but then the spelling was standardized (Crystal 69). The lack of rules for capitalizing names and pronouns also applied to the Bible. For example, it is now customary to capitalize pronouns pointing to God, but the 1611 *King James Bible* did not capitalize pronouns: “For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name” (Psalm 33:21).

In addition to the Latin alphabet, the Cyrillic alphabet has also gone through a similar path of change in the spelling of letters, and here too the changes were primarily related to functional requirements.

Capitalization in Cyrillic script

The Cyrillic alphabet was developed in the 9th century, and its basis was left by the Greek-Byzantine uncial. In the development of Slavonic Church Cyrillic, there are 3 types of writing: ustav, semiustav and cursive script. The oldest is the ustav, which is similar to the Greek uncial script of the liturgical books of the 9th and 11th centuries. The time of semi-ustav dominance began at the end of the 13th century among the South Slavs and in the middle of the 14th century in Ancient Rus (Karskij 169). Its appearance was determined by the increasing volume of book writing and the gradual transition from parchment to paper in book production. Just as Semi-uncial was smaller and simpler than Uncial in Latin, semiustav was smaller and simpler than Cyrillic ustav. It was the semiustav that later became a typeface in the printing of Cyrillic texts (Karskij 173).

As in texts written in Latin, bigger letters were used only at the beginning of the book for writing the title, chapter divisions (initial capital), and, less frequently,

paragraphs (Barenbaum 248). Within the text, the size of the letters was uniform. This practice continued until the beginning of the printing of Church Slavonic Cyrillic texts in the 16th century when new sentences began to be capitalized (Plûš). Proper nouns with capital letters were rarely used; however, there were no specific rules on the subject, and it was often determined “not even by custom, but by the writer’s own ‘discretion’” (Šapiro 168). The rules for the use of capital letters in Church Slavonic were first more or less regulated in the 17th century *Slavonic grammar with correct syntax* (Γραμματικὴ Slavénskīa prāvīlnoe sýntagma) by Meletius Smotrytsky. Smotrytsky determined that the following should be written with a capital letter:

1. The beginning of verses and sentences.
2. Proper names: God, Adam, etc.
3. Titles: Tsar, Patriarch, Voivode.
4. Arts: Grammar, Logic, Philosophy.
5. Parts of speech: Noun, Pronoun, Verb, etc. (quoted in Šapiro 169)

For the purposes of this article, it is important to note that somewhere between the 15th and 17th centuries, the capital letter ceased to have only a functional character in Cyrillic texts but also acquired a semantic character.

Smotrytsky’s *Grammar* had a significant influence on the territories of what are now Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, and remained the main guide to spelling in Russia until the reforms of Peter I. However, as Smotrytsky’s *Grammar*, written at the beginning of the 17th century, influenced the Church Slavonic language in the region due to its own authority, by the end of the 17th century, the Kiev metropolis had been subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate, and since then, all these dioceses were under the jurisdiction of the Russian Synod. Simultaneously, Russification policies began, including the ban on printing books in the Ukrainian language (Danylenko, Naienko 34). For the purposes of this study, it is more important to note the fact of a centralized language policy, first within the Russian Empire, and then within the Soviet Union. This policy could explain why the intention and consequences of writing “russia” with a lowercase letter are understandable not only to Ukrainian-speaking people, but also to Russian-speaking people, and not only in Russia, but also, for example, in Kazakhstan.

In the 19th century, the Kiev and St. Petersburg Synodal printing houses began to use capital letters in all their publications, including those intended for liturgical use. However, the Moscow printing house continued to follow the traditional practice. This led to a conflict in late 19th century between the publishers. On the one hand, the Kiev-Pechersk and St. Petersburg printing houses, which had long distinguished proper names, including the name of God, with a capital letter (for example, when ‘Word’ or ‘Sun’ is referred to as God), and on the other hand, the

Moscow printing house, which adhered to the ancient principle of capitalizing only the first letter at the beginning of a biblical verse (Pletneva 256).

The Moscow side argued that it was sufficient to use a ‘titlo’, a diacritical sign used in the Christian tradition¹, to indicate ‘nomina sacra’ (Hurtado). In the documents, one can find the justification of the Moscow printing house, which referred to the reference books from the early 17th century, listing words divided into three categories: those denoting “holiness, the ordinary, and the fallen” (Romanskij 98). Sacred words that required the titlo were listed in detail. However, their opponents argued among other things, that titlo is not placed over all names, for example, it does not appear over such names of God as the Maker, the Creator, the Redeemer, the Almighty, and the Comforter. The Synod was not convinced, and in 1888, its decree approved a norm excluding the use of capital letters for proper names and words under the titlo (Kalašnikov 34). Proper names in the books of the St. Petersburg, Kiev-Pechersk, and Pochaev printing houses were henceforth to be printed with a lowercase letter. Later, at the beginning of the 20th century, the priest Nikolai Romansky criticized the state of affairs, noting that while God’s names were written with a small letter, relegating them to the category of human names, and do not have their own distinction and honor, the names of the imperial family were highlighted in a special (bold) font in the same books (Romanskij 97).

It is important to note the processes that took place not in church, but in civil writing. In Russia, there was no clear understanding of how to use a capital letter correctly. The linguist Yakov Karlovich Grot, in his work on the problems of *Problematic issues of Russian spelling from Peter the Great to the present day* (*Spornye voprosy russkago pravopisanîâ ot" Petra Velikago donyně* 1873), noted that until recently, writers capitalized all foreign nouns, positions, sciences, and names of institutions (Grot 123). O. Senkovsky urged not to please linguists who ascribe a mystical meaning to capital letters (cited after: Vasil’eva 14).

Ukrainian spelling faced difficulties in its development, including in connection with the transition of the entire Russian Empire under Peter the Great to the civil script, which strengthened Russia’s central influence on the linguistic processes in Ukraine. However, it should be noted that in 1837 the almanac *Mermaid of the Dniester* (*Rusalka Dnistrovaâ*) was published. In this work, the phonetic system of spelling in the Ukrainian language was used for the first time, writing words as they were heard. The new system replaced the old approach based on the etymological principle of writing (Mitropolit Ilarion). However, even in this system, the capital letter was used in various functions, not only syntactic (at the beginning of a sentence or a line of poetry) but also semantic. Despite the revo-

¹ Now in Orthodoxy only.

lutionary approach to spelling, the principles of using capital letters might have continued the tradition of Smotrytsky, and were inconsistent. The names of ethnic groups are written with an uppercase letter, but not always (Cossacks and cos-sacks), the word ‘God’ is capitalized, but ‘virgin lady’ is lowercase, the title ‘Tsar’ is written with an uppercase letter, but princes, tsars, boyars were lowercase, proper names in one paragraph are written differently: the Alphabet of St. Cyril and the Alphabet of st. cyril.) (Šaškevič, Golovackij, Ivan Vagilevič)

Soviet orthography: Hierarchies and power

Later, in the USSR, the spelling rules of Ukrainian and Russian were standardized. They reached their maximum rapprochement by 1960. In 1956 the *Rules of Russian spelling and punctuation (Pravila russkoj orfografii i punktuacii)* were adopted, and based on these rules Ukrainian Spelling was adopted in 1960 in which certain “inconsistencies” were eliminated in a number of points “common to the Ukrainian and Russian languages” (Švidka 3).

Regarding the Soviet rules for the use of capital letters, they indicated, among other things, power relations. Vasilyeva points out that the *Rules of Russian spelling and punctuation* can be divided into two functions of uppercase letters: hierarchical and psychological. The hierarchical function marked the place of an object in the hierarchy of power, while the psychological function singled out common nouns to which special significance was ascribed. Speaking about the hierarchical function, Vasilyeva writes:

In the USSR, state administration was carried out centrally, which minimized the independence of municipalities. As a result, the pyramid principle was strictly observed in the use of a capital letter in the names of institutions: in the names of **ordinary** Soviet institutions, all letters were lowercase, in the names of **higher-ranking** authorities, the capital letter appeared only in the first word, and in the names of the bodies of the **highest** echelons of power, all letters were uppercase. In the job titles, the capital letter also indicated the place in the power structure, only the pyramid was two-stage: only the positions of the heads of the highest bodies of power were capitalized, and all other positions were written with a lowercase letter (Vasil’eva 36).

It can be assumed that Soviet orthography inherited rules established after Peter’s reform. In 1721, Peter the Great assigned himself the title of Emperor, leading to the names of the imperial family being printed in a special form from that time onwards. From 1741 onward, the names and titles of the reigning persons began to stand out in publications with a larger font (Emel’anova, Sedova, electronic source). Mikhailo Lomonosov in the *Russian grammar (Rossijskaâ grammatika 1755)* wrote the ruler’s title in capital letters: YOUR IMPERIAL HIGH-

NESS² (Lomonosov 8). Even the Moscow Synodal printing house, which refused to capitalize “sacred words”, made an exception to “the names of members of the royal house, which were typed in a special bold type” (Pletneva 257). These rules likely follow the Church’s Slavonic tradition of highlighting “sacred words” using capital letters. Grot quoted the opinion of Senkovsky, who believed that the word ‘Savior’ should be capitalized when referring to the true Lord, and the title ‘Emperor’ when referring to your ruler and not some other ruler (Grot 123–124).

Speaking about the psychological function, Vasilyeva notes that the Soviet *Rules* establish the capitalization of common nouns in a special stylistic usage. The publication does not explain what ‘special stylistic usage’ is, but gives two examples: ‘Man’ and ‘Homeland’.

The *Handbook of spelling and literary correction* (1967), which concretizes the current rules, allows the common noun Motherland to be capitalized. The rule is illustrated by a quotation from the *Communist party program* of the Soviet Union, where the values to which every Soviet person should aspire are marked in capital letters: Peace, Labor, Freedom, Equality, Fraternity, Happiness (Vasil’eva 67).

Perhaps both hierarchical and psychological functions have a common root in mythological consciousness, as I will discuss below. For now, we can draw some preliminary conclusions.

The capital letters in both the Latin and Cyrillic scripts have followed a similar path. Initially, they had a purely functional meaning, indicating the beginning of chapters and aiding readability. However, over time, they began to carry additional semantic meaning. For instance, in the English language, capitalization has also taken on political significance. Irving Lewis Allen demonstrated that the struggle for capitalization, first with the word Negro and later with the word Black, reflected the rising status of a historically oppressed group. Conversely, “noncapitalization signifies the historical weakness of a minority group; [...] and decapitalization has sometimes signified efforts to repress competing groups” (Allen 222).

If we talk about the Russian and Ukrainian languages, it’s likely that a specific attitude toward capital letters developed due to Orthodox church culture. This may have been formalized during the 16th to the 17th century period with the development of Cyrillic printing.

The Soviet government not only unified the rules of the Ukrainian and Russian languages but also consolidated, disseminated, and strengthened the perception of capital letters throughout the territory by formalizing their usage through mandatory *Rules*.

² ВАШЕМУ IMPERATORSKOMU VYSOČESTVU.

Lowercase letters in the context of Russia's war in Ukraine

This preliminary introduction should help better understand the spelling reaction of Ukrainians to the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine when Ukrainians on social media begin to write the name of the aggressor's country with a lowercase letter. They are followed by some media; as a result, the professional organization, the Commission on Journalistic Ethics, discusses the right/wrong and issues a recommendation that the media can continue to write "Russia", as it remains neutral ("Orki", "rašisti" ta "putin"... , electronic source). Here are a few more examples³:

- The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, in its news, writes the name with a lowercase letter ("Vid počatku širokomasštabnoï...", electronic source).
- Oleksandr Avramenko, the author of school textbooks on the Ukrainian language, said that writing the name of the aggressor country with a small letter is not a grammatical mistake (Kravčuk, electronic source).
- Spelling with a lowercase letter can be found in a published scientific article in the peer-reviewed edition of the *Almanac of Ukrainian studies* (Smorzhevska) or *Journal Ukrainian Language* (Šumic'ka).
- The National Commission for State Language Standards decided not to consider the spelling of "russia" with a lowercase letter as a violation of the norms of the Ukrainian language in unofficial texts ("Napisannâ nazv «rosijs'ka federaciâ»", electronic source).

In texts dedicated to this topic, one can find explanations for why people engage in this practice. One perspective suggests that it serves as a form of symbolic neglect (Danil'čuk, electronic source). Researcher Ol'ha Dubchak, in her book *To Win in Ukrainian: On the Language of Hate and Love* (Peremahaty ukraïns'koyu. Pro movu nenavysti y lyubovi), writes that using lowercase for terms such as 'russian federation', 'putin', and 'moscow' allows individuals to demonstrate "sufficient russophobia and disdain for those who have come to us with war" (Dubčak). Dubchak laments that orthographic rules do not permit such usage in academic and official documents. Conversely, Alla Tkach and Maksym Tkach argue that "in diplomatic communication, it is worth using the words 'russians', 'russian troops', 'russian army', 'russia', and 'russian federation' in order to accurately and unambiguously name the perpetrators of this war" (Tkač, Tkač 107). Another perspective posits that the use of lowercase letters is an expression of anger through which the psyche attempts to achieve stabilization (Drobovič, electronic source).

³ For a large number of examples, see Braïlko.

In the context of academic discourse, I would like to draw attention to Yuliya Brayilko's work, *Capital and Lowercase Letters as Ideologemes in Ukrainian Discourse* (Velyka y mala litery yak ideolohemy v ukrayins'komu dyskursi). In this article, which focuses on the current war, she also examines the historical roots of capitalization in the Ukrainian language. However, the earliest source she cites is the *Ruska hramatika* (1893), in which authors Stepan Smal'-Stots'kyi and Fedir (Theodor) Gartner state that capital letters can convey respect. The evidence I presented earlier shows that this function was already evident in Cyrillic texts – texts that Ukrainian orthography inherits – somewhere between the 16th and 17th centuries.

Brayilko argues that the ideological function of lowercase letters emerged solely during the Soviet era: “The practice of a totalitarian state interfering in purely linguistic matters also resulted in a reverse process: assigning lowercase letters a diminished value” (Brayilko 152). According to her, this occurred because the Bolsheviks banned the capitalization of sacred names, such as god, virgin mother, bible, christmas, and others. This claim seems debatable. Earlier research has demonstrated that the predecessor of the capital letter for denoting sacred names was the titlo. The word “god” with a titlo referred to the “true Christian God”, while without the titlo, it referred to a pagan god. Similarly, the word “angel” without a titlo referred to an evil spirit (Sazonova 107). The attitude toward a pagan god or an evil spirit was not neutral – it was evidently negative. Initially, this was expressed by the absence of a titlo and later by writing the word in lowercase. Fundamentally, the emergence of the possibility to signal “importance” in a language inherently creates the potential to denote “unimportance”. This phenomenon could be analyzed through the lens of semantic structuralism.

Another point that deserves attention is Brayilko's assertion that “lowercase letters gained a new functional role during the contemporary Russian-Ukrainian war, reflecting Ukrainians' extremely negative and contemptuous attitude toward the enemy” (Brayilko 155). According to the text, Soviet intervention in language endowed lowercase letters with the function of desacralization. In this context, expressing contempt through lowercase usage in forms such as “russia”, “putin”, and similar examples represents a “new functional role”. On one hand, I would argue against separating these functions, as both desacralization and the expression of contempt involve diminishing significance. On the other hand, it is difficult to agree with the claim that expressing disrespect through lowercase letters only emerged with the onset of Russia's full-scale invasion. Below, I present several pre-war examples from Ukrainian texts:

- A 2002 textbook on stylistics: “Stylistic significance is also acquired through the use of proper nouns in the plural: «All of them are real Einsteins! This is a group of 14 little hitlers». In this case, the capitalization of proper nouns in

the plural indicates the author's positive attitude toward these individuals, while lowercase usage signals a negative attitude" (Kapelûšnij 135).

- A Facebook comment from 2020: "I've been through a lot in the USSR (which is why I write it in lowercase) and I do everything I can to distance Ukraine from the imperial punitive Soviet system..." (Laznâ, electronic source).
- A Facebook post from 2020: "If you write your name or surname in lowercase, you signal to those around you that they can treat you without respect" (*Treningovij centr*, electronic source).

Proper names and mythological consciousness

While these explanations describe the motivations behind this practice, they do not clarify why it should be considered effective.

The latter can be explained by applying the theory of mythological consciousness of the founders of the Tartu-Moscow semiotic school, Juri Lotman and Boris Uspensky. In their joint article *Myth – Name – Culture*⁴, they looked at the characteristics that mythological consciousness possesses, and one of the key characteristics they noted is that mythological consciousness does not distinguish between the signifier and the signified; the proper name is not just indistinguishable from the object it names; it is that thing.

Non-mythological language, in which concepts can be explained in terms of other concepts, is characterized by descriptiveness, whereas in mythological language there is no translation of one concept through another, there is identification. Lotman and Uspensky cite as an example the expression "The world is a horse", which is extracted from the Hindu teachings *The Upanishads* and which is mythological. The authors show that the copula 'is' do not indicate correlation, but identification and recognition. The world is not explained as a horse; it is recognized as a horse; they are the same thing. In a mythological text, translation is impossible because all objects belong to the same language, thus both meta-language and metaphor are impossible in myth. In the words of Uspensky and Lotman, the words 'world' and 'horse' are 'isomorphic' (Lotman, Uspensky 214).

They go on to defend the assumption that there is a special layer of language in natural language that does not belong to it. And this is the language of proper

⁴ The original article *Миф – Имя – Культура* appeared in *Труды по знаковым системам* [*Studies on Sign Systems*], Issue 6, Tartu 1973. In this publication the quotations are from J. Lotman – B. Uspensky, "Myth – name – culture". *Semiotica*, 22, 3–4, 2009.

names. From this point of view, the language of proper names is a mythological language stretching from mythological times to modern times.

This identification of name and what is named in turn determines the notion of the unconventional nature of proper names, of their ontological essence. Hence mythological consciousness can be interpreted from the standpoint of the development of semiosis as asemiotic (Lotman, Uspensky 215).

Elsewhere they write that while in natural language changes occur gradually, in the language of proper names there are leaps and bounds:

The “language of proper names” occurs as a chain of conscious and sharply delimited acts of naming and renaming. A new name corresponds to a new state. From a mythological standpoint the transition from one state to another is in the formula “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1) and is simultaneously regarded as an act of completely changing all proper names (Lotman, Uspensky 222).

In this sense, writing “russia” is nothing more than an act of renaming, not just a form of a different spelling. It should be considered within the general movement of renaming that can be observed in Ukraine, which includes not only the renaming of streets and institutions but also the demolition of imperial monuments. A continuation of this kind of renaming may be the possibility of an official renaming of Russia to Moscovia. Such an official petition has gained the necessary number of votes, and Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky instructed officials to conduct an examination with a possible renaming (“Oficijno perejmenuvati nazvu...”, electronic source).

From the point of view of mythological consciousness, renaming is not a change in perception, it is a change of the named object. If the name and the object are the same, then changing the name changes the object completely. In other words, “Russia” and “russia” are two different entities. This is how mythological consciousness differs from magical consciousness. Magical consciousness involves manipulation of the object. Renaming as magic would imply a change of the object affected. The object renamed in the mythological way has not changed – it is a fundamentally different object. In this sense, it is difficult to even say that an act of renaming has taken place.

In this sense, the mythological approach can be compared to a performative act. John Austin gives an example: “«I name this ship the *Queen Elisabeth*» – as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem” (Austin 5). Before the champagne strike, the ship did not have a name; after that, it appeared. From the performativity point of view, a change to Moscovia changes the political and geographical context. Perceptions change, which can have real consequences.

At the same time, it is important to distinguish between the manifestation of mythological consciousness and magical thinking. Within the framework of mag-

ical thinking, a name is a tool for influencing an object. Within the framework of mythological consciousness, there is no effect on the object during renaming. At the moment of renaming, consciousness *is already* dealing with another object.

Conclusion

Retrospectively, it is evident that the capital letter has undergone changes in its function. Emerging in Latin script, it initially served a purely utilitarian purpose of visually dividing text into sections. However, gradually, the capital letter began to acquire its own semantics. This transition occurred in both Latin-based and Cyrillic-based writing systems. Moreover, languages with these types of writing systems converged on the idea that capital letters would be used to highlight proper nouns. In Cyrillic-based languages such as Ukrainian and Russian, the significance of the capital letter took on an especially expressive, almost religious meaning. The use of capital letters for proper nouns can be interpreted through the mythological theory of Lotman and Uspensky – being a distinct layer of mythological language, the language of proper nouns thus stood out within the fabric of ordinary language.

In this sense, manipulating the capital letter in a proper noun is not a manipulation at the level of ordinary language, but rather at the level of mythological language. If we interpret the writing of “russia” with a lowercase letter through this lens, we can conclude that Ukrainians are not merely expressing their emotions; they are engaging with the deep mythological layer of language to redefine the object: Russia does not exist/did not exist; there is an entirely different object of relation – “russia”.

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