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Simplicity of Form – Grandeur of Content: The Transborder Semiotic Influence of an Anti-War Song

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Об'єктом цієї розвідки є текст пісні Піта Сигера *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?* (ПІСНЯ) та її паратекстові (перекладацькі) інтерпретації різними мовами, а метою – з'ясування їх когнітивно-семантичних параметрів під кутом зору консолідованого семіотичного впливу на клієнтів антивоєнного дискурсу.

Робота базується на методологічних принципах когнітивно-дискурсивної парадигми лінгвістики та міждисциплінарного підходу до обраного об'єкта, що передбачає використання таких *методів* аналізу, як герменевтичний (для смислового тлумачення пісенно-текстових побудов), лінгвоконцептуальний (для моделювання концептосфери текстового простору), актомовленнєвий (для з'ясування іллокутивного змісту реченневих одиниць у тексті), зіставно-трансляційний (для встановлення спільних і відмінних рис тексту-оригіналу та його паратекстових версій), музикознавчий (з'ясування ролі та місця мелодії у створенні тексто-музичного цілого).

Встановлено, що консолідований семіотичний вплив здійснюється за допомогою чітко визначених стратегій, тактик і технік переважно емоційного характеру. Основна стратегія цього впливу полягає у цілеспрямованому доведенні думки про війну як про щось найгірше, що може трапитися з людством. Для цього використовуються всі доступні засоби підсиленої сугестії: специфічний добір концептуального і лексичного ресурсу, своєрідна темпорально-персональна сітка, ретельно виважена система питальних речень, а також мелодія і музика.

Концептосистема пісні утворюється ментальною домінантою WAR, навколо якої шикуються п'ять текстоспецифічних концептів (FLOWERS, GIRLS, MEN, SOLDIERS, GRAVES), які об'єктивуються експліцитно. З ними корелюють концепти-імплікатури PEACE, HOPE, LIFE, DEATH, що не виводяться на поверхню текстової матерії, а домислюються. Значне смислове навантаження має концепт TIME в тій його частині, що звернена в минуле. Минуле у ПІСНІ – це вмістище печалі, перенесення життєвого світу людини в зону небуття.

Прагматичний алгоритм текстів пісні задається своєрідною двошаровістю її текстової архітектоники: симбіозом фактологічного *де?*-питання і риторичного *коли?*-питання. Перший шар спирається на діалогічний характер нарації з двома абстрактними учасниками, діалог яких вибудовується за моделлю ІНТЕРРОГАТИВ – АСЕРТИВ. Другий шар – питальний монолог агента дискурсу, адресований його клієнтам. Техніка семіотичного впливу кожного октету ПІСНІ зумовлюється сугестивним рухом від питання до відповіді і від неї знову до питання, що в результаті створює дугу високого емоційного напруження.

Глобальна антивоєнна стратегія семіотичного впливу ПІСНІ спрямована на навіювання суцільного негативу навколо життєвого світу людини, хоча вона (стратегія) не накладає заборони на техніку ментального озадачування людини з метою стимулювання її мисленнєвої діяльності та активізації антивоєнного супротиву.

Дослідження доводить, що найбільшою силою впливу на емоціосферу клієнтів дискурсу здійснює солідарне використання мови і мелодії, що зумовлює створення численних кавер-версій пісні. Для цього в розпорядженні виконавця існують різноманітні прийоми і засоби: регулювання висоти, гучності, тембру голосу, керування паузами, тональністю і об'ємністю звучання, створення неповторного ритмічного рисунку тощо.

Ключові слова: паратекст, пісня, мелодія, кавер-версія, семіотичний вплив, агенти і клієнти дискурсу, концептосистема, прагмасемантика, мовленнєвий акт.

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Introduction

The object of this study is the text of Pete Seeger's song *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?* (SONG) and its paratexts (translated interpretations) in various languages, which, together with the English original, will hereafter be referred to as the SONG. The *New Statesman*, a British political weekly magazine, named it one of the 20 best political songs of 2010. However, it became a prominent anti-war song in 1955, when Pete Seeger wrote the first three verses, drawing on the Cossack lullaby *Koloda-Duda*, and Joe Hickerson added two more verses in 1960. In this form, the song was inducted into the *Grammy Hall of Fame* in 2002 in the "Folk" category. The SONG gained popularity in the USA after being performed by Pete Seeger himself, Joan Baez and Roy Orbison, and in Europe by Dalida and Marlene Dietrich. It achieved public resonance toward the end of the Vietnam War (1955–1975), and, obviously, its relevance has reached its highest point in the current era, marked by the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war.

The subject of the study encompasses the semiotic means through which the lyrics of the SONG and its translated interpretations exert influence on the clients of the discourse. In this context, semiotic impact is understood as the influence of a sign (word, symbol, or sound) on the way it is interpreted by an individual—an impact that can evoke emotions and associations, shaping subconscious decisions and, consequently, generating a specific post-communicative effect.

The aim of the study is to specify the cognitive-semantic parameters of the lyrics of the SONG and its paratexts, examining them from the standpoint of the consolidated semiotic influence exercised by agents of anti-war discourse upon its clients¹.

The research material comprises three layers: folkloric, original, and translational-interpretative. The first layer includes two texts: a) the work song *Tovchu-tovchu mak (I pound poppy seeds)*, [Soussana, 2024, p. 5]), traditionally sung in Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, and Bulgaria; b) its later reinterpretation as the Cossack lullaby *Koloda-Duda* (used by M. Sholokhov in *And Quiet Flows the Don*). The second layer is represented by Pete Seeger's English-language "retelling" of *Koloda-Duda* and its subsequent expansion by Joe Hickerson, who added two new verses. The third layer consists of interpretive translations of the lyrics into German (two versions: by Max Colpet [1962] and Natur Provence [2025]), French (two versions: by Francis Lemarque & René Rouzaud [1962] and Guy Béart [1962]), Dutch (two versions: by Olga [2025] and Jan Rot [2025]), Swedish (one version by Valindra [2022]) and Ukrainian (eight versions: by Mykola Chernyavsky [2024], Paul Graneck [2024], Oleg Zdrok [2023], Pavlo Karen [2022], Yuriy Lazirko [2014], and others). In total, the textual and paratextual corpus of the SONG comprises 20 versions. At the same time, numerous other paratexts (in more than 30 languages) exist within the broader treasury of world culture [Seeger, 2026].

Whichever version we examine, the source text for it is the English song, since it was through P. Seeger's radical reworking of *Koloda-Duda*—later completed by J. Hickerson—that the song entered the entertainment market in its English "disguise" and became the basis for

¹ **Discours agent** in the textual canvas of the SONG is the subject of speech – the addresser (author, translator, or performer), while the **discourse client** is the object of speech – the addressee, recipient, and consumer of the song narrative [Prykhodko, 2025, p. 31].

numerous translations. Consequently, the other texts created from it are derivative, functioning more as authorial interpretations of the Seeger-Hickerson version than as translations. Such texts should therefore be classified as *interpretive translations*, and the materials produced in this way regarded as *paratexts*. This phenomenon corresponds precisely to the type of translation that A. Lefevere describes as *rewriting*, proving that in reproducing a source text, the translator's creative vision can generate an unlimited range of interpretations [Lefevere, 2017, p. 17].

For example, here are the originals of the SONG and several of its most famous interpretive versions in other languages.

Ukrainian I pound poppy seeds (traditional work song)	Ukrainian <i>Koloda-Duda</i> (Interpret.: <i>Danylo Sentore</i>)	Basic Song Authors: <i>Pete Seeger & Joe Hickerson</i> Performers: Pete Seeger, Marlene Dietrich, Joan Baez et. al.
Товчу, товчу мак. Підступає дяк. - Чому, дяче, плачеш? - Мачуха била, їсти не давала. А дала лиш миш. - А де ж тая миш? - Побігла під піч. - А де ж тая піч? - Вода затопила. - А де ж та вода? - Воли попили. - А де ж ті воли? - Коршун похапав. - А де ж той коршун? - Полетів за море. - А де ж тоє море? - <i>Квітками</i> поросло. ----- - А де ж ті квітки? - <i>Дівки</i> порвали. - А де ж ті дівки? - <i>Хлопці</i> побрали. - А де ж ті хлопці? - Пішли на <i>війну</i> . - А де ж та <i>війна</i> ? - Нема ² [Soussana, 2024, p. 5].	Колода-дуда, Де ж ти була? Кони стерегла. Що вистерегла? Коня з сідлом, З золотим махром... А де ж твій кінь? За ворітьми стоїть. А де ж ті ворота? Вода унесла. А де ж тії гуси? В очерет пішли. ----- А де ж той очерет? Дівки вижали. А де ж тії дівки? Дівки заміж пішли. ----- А де ж ті козаки? На війну пішли... ³ [Sentore, 2026].	1) Where have all the flowers gone? Long time passing. Where have all the flowers gone? Long time ago. Where have all the flowers gone? Girls have picked them every one When will they ever learn? {2} (2) Where have all the young girls gone? Long time passing. Where have all the young girls gone? Long time ago. Where have all the young girls gone? Taken husbands every one When will they ever learn? {2} (3) Where have all the young men gone? Long time passing. Where have all the young men gone? Long time ago. Where have all the young men gone? Gone for soldiers every one When will they ever learn? {2} (4) Where have all the soldiers gone? Long time passing. Where have all the soldiers gone? Long time ago. Where have all the soldiers gone? Gone to graveyards every one. When will they ever learn? {2} (5) Where have all the graveyards gone? Long time passing. Where have all the graveyards gone? Long time ago. Where have all the graveyards gone? Covered with flowers every one. When will they ever learn? {2} [Seeger, Hickerson, 1961].

² Tovchu, товчу мак / Pidstupaie diak / - Chomu, diache, plachesh? / - Machukha byla, yisty ne davala / A dala lysh mysh / - A dezhtaiamysh? / - Pobihla pid pich / - A de zh taia pich? / - Voda zatopyla / - A de zh ta voda? / - Voly popyly / - A de zh ti voly? / - Korshun pokhapav / - A de zh toi korshun? / - Poletiv za more / - A de zh toie more? / - Kvitkami poroslo / - A de zh tii kvitky? / - Divky porvaly / - A de zh tii divky? / - Khloptsi pobraly / - A de zh tii khloptsi? / - Pishly na viinu / - A de zh ta viina? / - Nema [Soussana, 2024, p. 26].

³ Koloda-duda, / De zh ty bula? / Koni sterehla. / Shcho vysterehla? / Konia z sidlom, / Z zolotym makhrom... / A de zh tvii kin? / Za voritmy stoit. / A de zh ti vorota? / Voda unesla. / A de zh tii husy? / V ocheret pishly. / A de zh toi ocheret? / Divky vyzhaly. / A de zh tii divky? / Divky zamizh pishly. / A de zh ti kozaky? / Na viinu pishly... [Sentore, 2026].

<u>German</u> Interpreter / Lyricist: <i>Max Colpet</i> Performer: <i>Marlene Dietrich</i>	<u>French</u> Interpreters: <i>Francis Lemarque & Renee Rouzaud</i> Performers: <i>Marlene Dietrich; Dalida</i>
(1) Sag mir, wo die Blumen sind! Wo sind sie geblieben? Sag mir, wo die Blumen sind! Was ist geschehen? Sag mir, wo die Blumen sind! Mädchen pflückten sie geschwind. Wann wird man je verstehen? {2}	(1) Qui peut dire où vont les fleurs Du temps qui passe Qui peut dire où sont les fleurs Du temps passé Quand va la saison jolie Les jeunes filles les ont cueillies Qu'en saurons-nous un jour ? Quand saurons-nous ? Un jour...
(2) Sag mir, wo die Mädchen sind! Wo sind sie geblieben? Sag mir, wo die Mädchen sind! Was ist geschehen? Sag mir, wo die Mädchen sind! Männer nahmen sie geschwind. Wann wird man je verstehen? {2}	(2) Qui peut dire où vont les filles Du temps qui passe Qui peut dire où sont les filles Du temps passé Quand va le temps des chansons Se dont données aux garçons Qu'en saurons-nous un jour ? Quand saurons-nous ? Un jour...
(3) Sag mir, wo die Männer sind! Wo sind sie geblieben? Sag mir, wo die Männer sind! Was ist geschehen? Sag mir, wo die Männer sind! Zogen fort, der Krieg beginnt. Wann wird man je verstehen? {2}	(3) Mais où vont tous les garçons Du temps qui passe Mais où sont tous les garçons Du temps passé Lorsque le tambour roula Se sont faits petits soldats Qu'en saurons-nous un jour ? Quand saurons-nous ? Un jour...
(4) Sag, wo die Soldaten sind! Wo sind sie geblieben? Sag, wo die Soldaten sind! Was ist geschehen? Sag, wo die Soldaten sind! Über Gräben weht der Wind. Wann wird man je verstehen? {2}	(4) Mais où vont tous les soldats Du temps qui passe Mais où sont tous les soldats Du temps passé Sont tombés dans les combats Et couchés dessous leurs croix Qu'en saurons-nous un jour ? Quand saurons-nous ? Un jour...
(5) Sag mir, wo die Gräber sind! Wo sind sie geblieben? Sag mir, wo die Gräber sind! Was ist geschehen? Sag mir, wo die Gräber sind! Blumen wehen im Sommerwind. Wann wird man je verstehen? {2}	(5) Il est fait de tant de croix Le temps qui passe Il est fait de tant de croix Le temps passé Pauvres tombes de l'oubli Les fleurs les ont envahis Qu'en saurons-nous un jour ? Quand saurons-nous ? Un jour...
(<i>In some versions, the first verse is repeated after the fifth</i>) [Colpet, 1962].	(<i>In some versions, the first verse is repeated after the fifth</i>) [Lemarque, Rouzaud, 1962].

<u>Dutch</u> Interpreter: <i>Olga</i>	<u>Swedish</u> Interpreter: <i>Valindra</i>
(1) Waar zijn alle bloemen heen, lang geleden? Waar zijn alle bloemen heen, lang geleden? Waar zijn alle bloemen heen? Jonge meisjes hebben ze allemaal geplukt. Oh, wanneer zullen ze het eindelijk leren? {2}	(1) Var är alla blommor nu? De är borta Var är alla blommor nu? Som fanns här förr Var är alla blommor nu? Flickor har plockat dem, vet du Åh, säg lär de sig nån gång {2}

<u>Dutch</u> Interpreter: <i>Olga</i>	<u>Swedish</u> Interpreter: <i>Valindra</i>
<p>(2) Waar zijn alle jonge meisjes heen, lang geleden? Waar zijn alle jonge meisjes heen, lang geleden? Waar zijn alle jonge meisjes heen? Weggegaan voor echtgenoten, allemaal. Oh, wanneer zullen ze het eindelijk leren? {2}</p> <p>(3) Waar zijn alle echtgenoten heen, lang geleden? Waar zijn alle echtgenoten heen, lang geleden? Waar zijn alle echtgenoten heen? Weggegaan om soldaten te zijn, allemaal. Oh, wanneer zullen ze het eindelijk leren? {2}</p> <p>(4) Waar zijn alle soldaten heen, lang geleden? Waar zijn alle soldaten heen, lang geleden? Waar zijn alle soldaten heen? Weg naar begraafplaatsen, allemaal. Oh, wanneer zullen ze het eindelijk leren? {2}</p> <p>(5) Waar zijn alle begraafplaatsen heen, lang geleden? Waar zijn alle begraafplaatsen heen, lang geleden? Waar zijn alle begraafplaatsen heen? Veranderd in bloemen, allemaal. Oh, wanneer zullen ze het eindelijk leren? {2} <i>(In some versions, the first verse is repeated after the fifth)</i> [Olga, 2024].</p>	<p>(2) Var är alla flickor nu? De är borta Var är alla flickor nu? Som fanns här förr Var är alla flickor nu? Väntar sina män, vet du Åh, säg lär de sig nån gång {2}</p> <p>(3) Var är alla männen nu? De är borta Var är alla männen nu? Som fanns här förr Var är alla männen nu? Är soldater nu, vet du Åh, säg lär de sig nån gång {2}</p> <p>(4) Var är då soldater nu? De är borta Var är då soldater nu? Som fanns förr Var är då soldater nu? På vår kyrkogård, vet du Åh, säg lär de sig nån gång {2}</p> <p>(5) Var är kyrkogården nu? Den är borta Var är kyrkogården nu? Som fanns förr Var är kyrkogården nu? Under blommorna, vet du Åh, säg lär de sig nån gång {2} <i>(In some versions, the first verse is repeated after the fifth)</i> [Valindra, 2022].</p>

<u>Ukrainian</u> Interpreter: <i>Mykola Chernyavsky</i> Performer: <i>Zhan Seleznyov</i>	<u>Ukrainian</u> Interpreter: <i>Paul Graneck</i> Performer: <i>Paul Graneck</i>
<p>(1) Де всі квіти ділися? Час невпинний Де всі квіти ділися? Знов і знов. Де всі квіти ділися? Їх дівчата позбирали. Коли ж вони збагнуть? До чого все – збагнуть?</p> <p>(2) Де дівчата ділися? Час невпинний Де дівчата ділися? Знову й знову Де дівчата ділися? Хлопцям вінки плетуть Коли ж вони збагнуть? До чого все – збагнуть?</p>	<p>(1) Де поділись квіти всі? В чистім полі. Де поділись квіти ці? Пройшли часи. Де поділись квіти ці? Їх дівчатка унесли. Коли це зрозуміють всі? {2}</p> <p>(2) Де дівчата ділись всі? В чистім полі. Де дівчата ділись всі? Пройшли часи Де дівчата ділись всі? Вийшли заміж і пішли Коли збагнуть усі? {2}</p>

Ukrainian Interpreter: <i>Mykola Chernyavsky</i> Performer: <i>Zhan Seleznyov</i>	Ukrainian Interpreter: <i>Paul Graneck</i> Performer: <i>Paul Graneck</i>
<p>(3) Де ж ті хлопці ділися? Час невинний Де ж ті хлопці ділися? Знов і знову. На свиття уквітчане Хлопці на війну пішли. Коли ж вони збагнуть? До чого все – збагнуть?</p> <p>(4) Де ж герої ділися? Час невинний Де ж герої ділися? Знов і знов. Де ж герої ділися? У могилах їх шукать? Коли ж вони збагнуть? До чого все – збагнуть?</p> <p>(5) Де ж могили ділися? Час невинний Де ж могили ділися? Знов і знов. Де могили ділися? Снігом рясно вкрилися Коли ж вони збагнуть? До чого все – збагнуть?</p> <p>(6) А навіщо квіти ці? Час невинний. А навіщо квіти ці? Знову й знову. А навіщо квіти ці? Щоб дівчата позбирали. Коли ж вони збагнуть? До чого все збагнуть?⁴ [Chernyavsky, 2024].</p>	<p>(3) Де хлопці ділись всі? Де всі зникли? Де поділись хлопці ці? Пройшли часи Де поділись хлопці ці? У солдати всі пішли. Коли збагнуть усі? {2}</p> <p>(4) Де солдати ділись всі? Де всі зникли? Де солдати ділись всі? Пройшли часи. Де солдати ділись всі? У могили всі пішли. Коли збагнуть усі? {2}</p> <p>(5) Де ж могили ділись ті? В чистім полі. Де могили ділись ті? Пройшли часи. Де могили ділись ті? Встигли квіти прорости. Коли це зрозуміють усі? Коли збагнуть усі?⁵ [Graneck, 2024].</p>

It is well known that songs, as a genre of literary-artistic and vocal-musical art, reflect cultural experiences passed down from one generation to the next. It is therefore no coincidence

4 De vsi kvity dilysia? / Chas nevpynnyi / De vsi kvity dilysia? / Znov i znov. / De vsi kvity dilysia? / Yikh divchata pozbyrally. / Koly zh vony zbahnut? / Do choho vse – zbahnut? / De divchata dilysia? / Chas nevpynnyi / De divchata dilysia? / Znovu y znovu / De divchata dilysia? / Khloptsiam vinky pletut / Koly zh vony zbahnut? / Do choho vse – zbahnut? / De zh ti khloptsi dilysia? / Chas nevpynnyi / De zh ti khloptsi dilysia? / Znov i znovu. / Na svyttia ukvitchane / Khloptsi na viinu pishly. / Koly zh vony zbahnut? / Do choho vse – zbahnut? / De zh heroi dilysia? / Chas nevpynnyi / De zh heroi dilysia? / Znov i znov. / De zh heroi dilysia? / U mohylaikh yikh shukat? / Koly zh vony zbahnut? / Do choho vse – zbahnut? / De zh mohyly dilysia? / Chas nevpynnyi / De zh mohyly dilysia? / Znov i znov. / De mohyly dilysia? / Snihom riasno vkrylysia / Koly zh vony zbahnut? / Do choho vse – zbahnut? / A navishcho kvity tsi? / Chas nevpynnyi. / A navishcho kvity tsi? / Znovu y znovu. / A navishcho kvity tsi? / Shchob divchata pozbyrally. / Koly zh vony zbahnut? / Do choho vse zbahnut? [Chernyavsky, 2024].

5 De podilys kvity vsi? / V chystim poli. / De podilys kvity tsi? / Proishly chasy. / De podilys kvity tsi? / Yikh divchatka unesly. / Koly tse zrozumiut vsi? / De divchata dilys vsi? / V chystim poli. / De divchata dilys vsi? / Proishly chasy / De divchata dilys vsi? / Vyishly zamizh i pishly / Koly zbahnut usi? / De khloptsi dilys vsi? / De vsi znykly? / De podilys khloptsi tsi? / Proishly chasy / De podilys khloptsi tsi? / U soldaty vsi pishly. / Koly zbahnut usi? / De soldaty dilys vsi? / De vsi znykly? / De soldaty dilys vsi? / Proishly chasy. / De soldaty dilys vsi? / U mohyly vsi pishly. / Koly zbahnut usi? / De zh mohyly dilys ti? / V chystim poli. / De mohyly dilys ti? / Proishly chasy. / De mohyly dilys ti? / Vstyhly kvity prorosty. / Koly tse zrozumiut usi? / Koly zbahnut usi? [Graneck, 2024].

that scholars in the humanities pay special attention to this area of cultural activity, seeking to achieve a comprehensive scientific understanding of it. In particular, the SONG has repeatedly been the subject of pedagogical [Böckel, 2013; Röhrich, 2002], psychological [Karpenko, 2009], and political science [Haug, 2004; Kellermann, 2000] studies, as well as research on the formation of an individual's spiritual and value sphere [Kostenko, Yermakova, 2025]. Today, research conducted at the intersection of the arts is gaining increasing popularity [Redia, 2019, p. 19]. Literature and music are the art forms that interact most closely, and the song is understood as a concise lyrical genre in which a poetic (verbal) text is combined with melody and musical arrangement [Brockhaus, 1993, c. 525].

In recent decades, linguistics has also begun to pay closer attention to song lyrics. Scholars are primarily interested in their genre and stylistic expressiveness [Tabakhian, 1980; Hochradner, 2000], the cognitive and communicative organization of textual material [Shapochka, 2018], the specific use of linguistic means at different levels [Röhrich, 2002], and their correlation with melody [Strajnar, 2000]. Despite significant advances in multiparadigmatic language studies, research specifically devoted to song lyrics remains relatively rare in the field of linguistics. Corresponding musicological studies are likewise limited, even though the issues surrounding songs as musical-poetic works are no less relevant than purely textual ones, since songs use various semiotic resources to fulfil communicative goals, convey ideas, and express worldviews, as noted by D. Machin [2021, p. 427].

The relevance of this study is determined by the general trend in the humanities toward examining the cognitive and communicative aspects of speech activity, including lyrical songs in general and war discourse in particular. Embodied in song lyrics, anti-war themes reflect processes of linguistic world-mapping from an alternative perspective and prompt a radical re-evaluation of the value orientations of an ethnic group. Within this framework, the two traditionally recognized primary functions of language—cognitive and communicative—are complemented by a third primary function, namely the volitional (influential) function. As a result, the cognitive–discursive dichotomy evolves into a cognitive–discursive–volitional trichotomy, which determines the overall methodological approach to the analysis of the selected material.

The research methodology is shaped, on the one hand, by a cognitive-discursive approach and, on the other, by an interdisciplinary perspective on the chosen object, which requires the use of several specialized analytical methods: descriptive (selection, systematization, and generalization of material), hermeneutic (interpretation of the content of song lyrics), conceptual (modelling the conceptual sphere of the textual space), speech-act (clarification of the illocutionary force of sentence units), comparative-translational (identification of shared and distinctive features of the original text and its paratextual versions), and musicological (analysis of the ways in which melody contributes to the interpretation of song lyrics).

Results and discussion

The holistic unity of lyrics and music

The main idea of the lyrics clearly reflects the ideological and political convictions of Pete Seeger, who, as is well known, was a social activist, a passionate defender of human rights, and, of course, a committed pacifist. For Seeger, war was humanity's worst invention. In this connection, he often quoted John F. Kennedy's words: "Mankind must put an end to war – or war will put an end to mankind." He believed that modern warfare places humanity on the brink of extinction [Lynskey, 2014], and all his works were dedicated to communicating this truth to people in a simple and accessible form.

The simplicity of the lyrics is striking at first glance and can be observed in at least three respects. First, there is the extreme syntactic conciseness, built almost entirely on simple two-word sentences, with a complete absence of complex or subordinate structures and secondary predicative elements (participial, infinitive, applicative, etc.). Second, the text displays a marked sparseness of stylistic devices and figures, an austerity that is clearly compensated for by the melody. Third, both the original and the translated versions of the SONG consist of simple, unpretentious, and clearly structured stanzas, where each one leads naturally into the next, forming a cumulative chain. This pattern continues for five iterations. The number five

is, to a certain extent, emblematic of the SONG: it contains five stanzas, each comprising five interrogative sentences; each of the two lines of the refrain contains five words (in the Ukrainian versions—mostly four); and the entire composition revolves around five key concepts. The “symbolic” role of the number five may be logically explained by the well-known limitation of human working memory (7 ± 2), which in this case becomes a significant factor in the cognitive internalization of the ideological and artistic content, which, in its turn, contributes to the effectiveness of the SONG.

Simplicity is also a defining feature of the second aspect of the SONG—a musical one. Since its appearance, the melody has become so popular that many performers have produced *cover versions*, offering their own musical and even textual interpretations. The captivating simplicity of its melody and harmony, together with its strophic form, make the song easy to memorize and accessible even to non-professionals. Notably, the musical text contains no performance markings (such as dynamic indications or tempo modifications), allowing the performer to interpret the piece at their own discretion.



Where Have All The Flowers Gone

Pete Seeger - 1955

words and music:
Pete Seeger

<p style="font-size: small;">G</p> 	<p style="font-size: small;">Em</p> 	<p style="font-size: small;">C</p> 	<p style="font-size: small;">D</p> 
			
1) Where have all	the flow - ers gone,	long time	pas-sing?
2) Where have all	the young girls gone,	long time	pas-sing?
3) Where have all	the hus - bands gone,	long time	pas-sing?
4) Where have all	the sol - diers gone,	long time	pas-sing?
5) Where have all	the grave-yards gone,	long time	pas-sing?

<p style="font-size: small;">5</p> <p style="font-size: small;">G</p> 	<p style="font-size: small;">Em</p> 	<p style="font-size: small;">C</p> 	<p style="font-size: small;">D</p> 
			
1) Where have all	the flow - ers gone,	long time	a - go?
2) Where have all	the young girls gone,	long time	a - go?
3) Where have all	the hus - bands gone,	long time	a - go?
4) Where have all	the sol - diers gone,	long time	a - go?
5) Where have all	the grave-yards gone,	long time	a - go?

Fig. 1. Fragment of the musical notation of the SONG [Seeger, 1955].

Belonging to the folkloric genre characterized by a *cyclic, chain-like* poetic structure, the text of the SONG relies on a consistent logical-associative sequence “flowers were picked by the girls / the girls were taken by men / the men went for soldiers / the soldiers are in graves / the graves are covered with flowers,” where each new verse begins with the final idea of the preceding one, while the concluding thought of the last verse returns to the initial idea of the first. Against the background of this cause-and-effect chain carried over from stanza to stanza, a distinctive architectonic-discursive form of “dialogue” emerges, consisting of five sequential exchanges. At the same time, the semantic anchor points of the SONG are five key words: *flowers, girls, boys, soldiers, and graves*. Consequently, the semantic framework of the lyrics can be represented by the following generalized plot scheme (numbers indicate stanza numbers; letters designate the communicants A and B):

(1)	A: - <i>Where are the flowers?</i> B: - <i>The girls picked them.</i>	- <i>Де квіти?</i> - <i>Квіти порвали дівчата.</i>
(2)	A: - <i>Where are the girls?</i> B: - <i>The men took them.</i>	- <i>Де дівчата?</i> - <i>Дівчат забрали хлопці</i>
(3)	A: - <i>Where are the men?</i> B: - <i>The men went for soldiers</i>	- <i>Де хлопці?</i> - <i>Хлопці пішли у солдати</i>
(4)	A: - <i>Where are the soldiers?</i> B: - <i>The soldiers are in graves</i>	- <i>Де солдати?</i> - <i>Солдати лягли у могили.</i>
(5)	A: - <i>Where are the graves?</i> B: - <i>The graves are covered with flowers</i>	- <i>Де могили?</i> - <i>Могили квітами поросли⁶</i>

In terms of its ideological and artistic concept, the text prepares the audience for a pessimistic ending to the narrative, without any hint of optimism. The inclusion of a sixth stanza—typically a repetition of the first—is left to the discretion of the translator and/or performer. However, there are instances where this sixth stanza is not a mere repetition of the first one: it becomes a new step in the development of the plot. Accordingly, at least two modes of interpreting the semiotic impact of the SONG on the listener’s emotional sphere may be distinguished.

In the first case, we observe a complete epiphoric repetition of the opening stanza, where the final verse exactly reproduces the initial one, evoking a sense of hopelessness in life and predetermined conclusion—an effect that inevitably enhances the emotion of sadness. Here, the natural cycle is broken by death, and the spiral of life allows for no alternative outcome. This is also observed in Ukrainian versions by Yuriy Lazirko, Pavlo Karen, Paul Graneck, and others. It is, however, most fully realized in the German rendition by Marlene Dietrich, who elevated the SONG to iconic status. Through the fusion of text and melody, Dietrich masterfully accentuates the feelings of sorrow, despair, and hopelessness.

This emotional state—a “soul lost in war”—is consistently and deliberately conveyed by Pete Seeger in his music [See, for example: Seeger, 2013]. Concentrating on the meaning of the lyrics, the bard reduces the accompaniment to a quiet background. True to his artistic tradition, he accompanies his calm, measured singing with a long-neck banjo [McKee, 2014]. This instrument produces a deeper, less resonant sound than the standard banjo and does not overshadow the voice. The simplicity of the accompaniment and the steady rhythm reinforce the cyclic nature of the text, almost lulling the listener, until suddenly, just before the climax (*Gone for soldiers every one*), a sharp chord strikes, and the music momentarily stops. This intensifies the drama, emphasizes the central message, and leaves the question suspended: “What will happen to these soldiers next?” The question, however, remains open only until the next stanza: *Gone to graveyards every one* [McKee, 2014].

In Marlene Dietrich’s performance, the German [Dietrich, 1962a], the French [Dietrich, 1962b], and the English [Dietrich, 1963] cover versions of the SONG are almost identical. A quiet opening (*piano*), accompanied by a monotonous guitar line, gradually intensifies (*crescendo*) through the third and fourth verses and then abruptly fades (*diminuendo*) to almost a whisper in the final lines. Yet this is not the only technique used to highlight the most important moment in the song. At the end of the second verse, the guitar is joined by a delicate pizzicato in the violins, which, in the third verse, develops into a full melodic line in the string section, evoking sadness and despair. The emotional tension increases through a gradual modulation from the main key to higher keys before the third and fourth verses.

In the following verses, a reverse modulation returns the music to the original key. This technique is frequently used by Dietrich to create dynamic development and to emphasize the contrast between the climax and the denouement. After re-establishing the original key, she introduces a sudden dynamic shift by sharply lowering the volume, while the accompaniment again consists solely of the guitar (Fig. 2). This creates a sense of intimacy and emotional concentration, reinforcing the thematic climax of the song and leaving the listener in contemplation.

⁶ *De kvity?* / - *Kvity porvaly divchata.* / - *De divchata?* / - *Divchat zabraly khloptsi* / - *De khloptsi?* / - *Khloptsi pishly u soldaty* / - *De soldaty?* / - *Soldaty liahly u mohyly.* / - *De mohyly?* / - *Mohyly kvitamy porosly.*



Fig. 2. An example of the modulation in Marlene Dietrich's version [Dietrich, 2020].

However, not only performers of the 1950s–1970s (Pete Seeger, Joan Baez, Roy Orbison, Bill Wood, Bob Dylan, Marlene Dietrich, Dalida, and others) invited audiences to reflect on the connection between “war and death.” In 2023, the French singer Roxane Filion released a version [Filion, 2023], that combines the traditional melody with a modern pop arrangement. The performer emphasizes her personal reflections and emotions through delicate melodic and rhythmic variations, creating a chamber-like, almost intimate sound. In the first two verses, the smooth vocal line is supported by soft guitar *arpeggios*, which establishes a warm, contemplative atmosphere and ensures narrative continuity. Beginning with the third verse, *crescendo* and modulation are accompanied by a careful introduction of wind instruments, which intensifies the emotional perception and add greater depth to the sound. The absence of a strong pulse and the lack of abrupt melodic contrasts give the song a calming, peace-promoting quality. The final verses are marked by slow fading (*diminuendo*) and a gradual slowing of tempo (*rallentando*), emphasizing lyricism and reflection. Before pronouncing the final word—*jamais* (never), which leaves no room for hope—the singer pauses briefly, as if inviting listeners to find the answer to the question posed.

The second case concerns new performances of the SONG, in which the sixth stanza offers a completely different perspective on life and death (e.g., translations by P. Graneck, O. Zdrok, and S. Zuykov). Filled with optimism, this stanza marks the beginning of a new cycle of life. For instance, the version performed by Eliza Gilkyson [2020] demonstrates the elements of American *folk-rock* with touches of *country*. It is based on simple harmony (I–IV–V). An acoustic guitar enters at the beginning of the song, and later it is joined by drums that support rhythmic stability and convey a sense of cyclicity and continuity. The song is performed at a uniform tempo, without distinct dynamic shifts, allowing listeners to concentrate on the meaning of the lyrics. A guitar solo appears after the final verse and gradually fades away, leaving both an important question and a sense of hope [Horowitz, 2020].

The Ukrainian singer, Zhan Seleznyov [Chernyavsky, 2024], adds both elegance and a sense of tragedy to the song. The melody is constructed around ascending and descending motifs that imitate a dialogic structure: question—answer. At the climax, a subtle *crescendo* leads to a *forte* on the line “Хлопці на війну пішли” (Khloptsi na viinu pishly). Each *crescendo* is immediately followed by a *diminuendo*, which creates the impression of distant, almost forgotten memories. Before the final word of each verse, the performer inserts a brief pause, thereby emphasizing the central idea of the work: “До чого все... збagnуть” (Do choho vse... zbahnut) [Chernyavsky, 2024].

The conceptual system of the SONG

The use of conceptual resources within a specific discursive and textual environment is a well-established technique of suggestive influence employed by discourse agents on the discourse clients, who, whether consciously or unconsciously, seek to produce a particular effect through their intellectual product enhanced by music. Conceptual influence in the SONG is primarily grounded in stereotypes such as WAR / ВІЙНА – EVIL / ЗЛО, PEACE / МИР – GOOD / ДОБРО, articulated through keywords intended to “hit” a single target point, as they immediately activate conceptual, figurative, and value-laden associations [Prykhodko, 2025, c. 50]. This three-dimensional semantic structure is what makes the concept (mentefact) a unique linguistic and cultural phenomenon, permeated with a strong national spirit or, in the case of the SONG, a supranational one.

Against this background, the value layer acquires particular significance, as it is meant to touch the “strings of the soul.” The high axiological potential of the concepts represented in the SONG is further reinforced by a grammatical feature—their objectification in the plural form. The plural serves as a marker of the generalizing status of the concept, applicable not only to a given text but to the entire discourse to which it belongs. Thus, the plural form is essential here: value is attributed not merely to a single individual designated by a conceptual name but to the entire group of individuals encompassed by this name.

The popularity of the SONG stems from the fact that its lyrics and paratexts address universal human values—issues of life and death, peace and war, creation and destruction. These conceptual dyads shape the ideological and artistic core of the SONG. Although they do not take concrete forms of their textual objectivation—i.e., they function as *conceptual implicatures*—they wrap the SONG with an invisible halo and trigger the actualization of verbally objectified mentefacts—*conceptual explicatures*. It is evident that the conceptual architecture of the SONG is supported by five key explicatures—text-specific (*autochthonous*) hypoconcepts that form a coherent semantic chain of interconnected mentefacts, forged in the creative workshop of Pete Seeger: FLOWERS – GIRLS – MEN – SOLDIERS – GRAVES.

They are dominated by the hyperconcept WAR, which constitutes the *mental dominant* of the text (Fig. 3). It organizes the entire cause-and-effect progression of the narrative: suppressing the positive (life, peace, creation, and development) and foregrounding the negative (death, destruction, and entropy). In doing so, it appears to hold these existential meanings and anti-meanings in a kind of “implicative captivity,” preventing them from fully surfacing in the textual material.

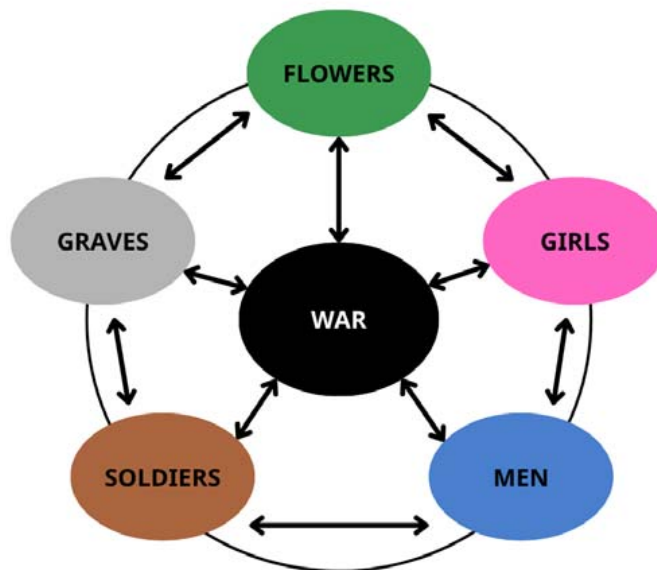


Fig. 3. Configuration of conceptual explicatures of the SONG

Thus, a conceptual system is not only a configuration of explicated concepts in a given text or discourse, but also a configuration shaped by rarely used (in a certain text) or even occasional *allochthonous* concepts (such as ВИНОК / WREATH, ПОЛЕ / FIELD, ВІТЕП / WIND, КРОВ / BLOOD), as well as by conceptual implicatures. The latter include concepts that remain unnamed yet implied—primarily moral-existential (ЖИТТЯ / LIFE, МИР / PEACE, СМЕРТЬ / DEATH, ШЛЮБ / MARRIAGE) and emotion-inducing mentefacts (журба / SORROW, ГОРЕ / GRIEF, ВІДЧАЙ / DESPAIR, СТРАХ / FEAR) that require additional interpretation. In other words, both the emergence and concealment of a concept are normal modes of existence for figurative-value units within the conceptual sphere and form part of their semiotic impact on the individual. Accordingly, one may assume that the SONG has maintained its popularity for decades in large part due to this distinctive interweaving of the conceptually explicit and the conceptually implicit.

The concept FLOWERS, opening the conceptual circle “FLOWERS – GIRLS – MEN – SOLDIERS – GRAVES,” is simply one link in the cycle of nature and life. Even though neither the text nor the paratexts mention specific types or colours of flowers, they evoke an entire network of figurative associations, including “paradise and female beauty” [Andreyeva, 2001, p. 515]. Here, flowers serve as an archetypal image of the soul. Other conceptual characteristics appear insignificant for the higher purpose of the SONG, which explains why the girls treat the flowers so effortlessly: *рвуть* (rvut) [Sentore, 2026], *збирають* (zbyraiut) [Karen, 2022], *уносять* (unosiat) [Graneck, 2024], *вирувають* (vyruvaiut) [Lazirko, 2014], *підбирають* ~ *have picked every one*, *швидко зривають* ~ *picked fast* ~ *pflückten geschwind* ~ *les ont cueillies*. These descriptions concern the manner rather than the purpose of their actions. And the central message of the narrative – war is the destruction not only of life, but also of beauty.



Fig. 4. Visualization of concepts *FLOWERS* and *GIRLS*.

The image was visually designed with the assistance of generative AI [OpenAI, 2025], based on an author-created concept. The authors verified and finalized the image.

The concept GIRLS appears in the anti-war line of the (para)texts only sparingly and without the elaborate poetic attributes typically found in lyrical discourse: in Ukrainian versions, it is represented by *дівки*, *дівчата*, *дівчатка*, while the English text emphasises the established conceptual meaning of youth (*young girls*). Yet the figurative dimension of this concept is not related to the mythologized symbolism of the Virgin or the Great Mother. Its value in the SONG is much more mundane: a young woman who fulfils her earthly role as wife, mother, and keeper of the hearth. Flowers are picked without purpose, while girls are picked with purpose. They are “taken” by boys to ensure the continuation of the family line—a meaning realized lexically almost exclusively through verbs of possession: take, give, find (*хлопці забрали* [Sentore, 2026], *Taken husbands every one* [Seeger, Hickerson, 1961]; *Männer nahmen sie geschwind* [Copelt, 1962]; *Se sont données aux garçons* [Lemarque & Rouzaud, 1962]). The process is presented in a routine, everyday manner, with no reference to culturally marked rituals. (*Заміж вийшли і пішли* (Zamizh vyishly i pishly) [Graneck, 2024]; *Заміж вийти їм не гріх* (Zamizh vyity yim ne hrih) [Lazirko, 2014]; *Під вінець пішли усі* (Pid vinets pishly usi) [Zdrok, 2023]). This ordinariness of female existence is not subject to evaluation; it carries a “neutral” status: it has always been this way, and it will remain this way. There is no sympathy, empathy, or judgment.

The concept MEN in this multicultural song cycle is also presented as mundane. Its conceptual substrate corresponds to the established perception of an adult, married male [Busel, 2003, p. 1381; **Wehmeier**, 2025]. In the SONG, various young men are assigned the function of “choosing”

women: *men*, (*Ehe*)*Männer*, *garçons*, *jeunes hommes*, *чоловіки*, *хлопці*, *мужчини*, *юнаки*, *соколи*, *суджені*. Within the conceptual segment of the pentagram “FLOWERS – GIRLS – MEN”, the line of life reaches its turning point in the LIFE – DEATH dyad, which implicitly outlines the entire pentagram. At this juncture, the concept WAR emerges from the background and begins to exert open influence, disrupting the established order, destroying human destinies, and destroying everything men and women have created. Here, the triadic link of anti-concepts SOLDIERS – WAR – GRAVES enters the scene and initiates its destructive progression.

The concept WAR occupies a special position in the textual material of the SONG. It does not appear on the periphery of the pentagram but constitutes its center, as it marks both the cause and the consequence of everything that happened. Thus, it becomes the origin of the entire artistic narrative and, accordingly, its mental dominant. Its figurative symbolism lies in the fact that it draws a line through the positive first conceptual triad (FLOWERS – GIRLS – MEN) and marks the beginning of the negative dyad (SOLDIERS – GRAVES), signaling a transition from creation to destruction of everything created before. The lexical representative of the concept—a noun *war* / *Krieg* / *guerre* / *війна*—is used rather sparingly in the (para) texts, thus, remaining in the subtext. The most widespread English and French versions do not include the word at all. However, it appears in other paratexts: once in folk song (*A de ж мії хлопці? – На війну пішли* [Soussana, 2024, p. 5]), in German (*der Krieg beginnt* [Colpet, 1962]), in Ukrainian (*На війну забрали всіх* [Lazirko, 2014]). In all these cases, the conceptual value of war is consistently marked with a “minus” sign: war functions as an obstacle to peaceful progress, development, and creativity. It might seem strange, but neither the concept PEACE nor HOPE—logically expected in any anti-war song—appears explicitly in the SONG or its paratexts. They are undeniably present, but only as *implicatures*, i.e., implicit, unspoken meanings.

The concept SOLDIERS is described in the SONG as one of the principal symbols of war: few words are used to express it (e.g., *gone for soldiers every one* /P. Seeger/), yet they possess considerable emotive force. By persistently asking *Sag mir, wo die Soldaten sind?* [Colpet, 1962] or *Mais où vont tous les soldats* [Lemarque, Rouzaud, 1962], the translators simultaneously lament: *Sont tombés dans les combats*, | *Et couchés dessous leurs croix* [Lemarque, Rouzaud, 1962]. At the very mention of *soldier*, the song in any language seems to break open with grief: *Де солдати, де вони?* | *Вітер дме у ями сніг* (*De soldaty, de vony?* | *Viter dme u yamy snih*) [Lazirko, 2014]. The concept SOLDIER in the SONG is the powerful blend of compassion, respect, and sorrow. Its mournful imagery aligns with its value component. However, in certain versions this value component becomes so prominent that it eclipses both the conceptual and figurative dimensions. This is evident in the translation by M. Chernyavsky, who, moving with the times, replaces *soldier* with *hero*, significantly intensifying the value component: *Де ж герої ділися?* | *У могилах їх шукать* (*De zh heroi dilysia?* | *U mohylakh yikh shukat*) [Chernyavsky, 2024]. Merging the figure of the soldier with that of the hero, he elevates his moral status in the eyes of the compatriots, thereby exerting the influence on the emotional sphere of the discourse client, filling it with pride and gratitude rather than sorrow. It is obvious that the concept SOLDIER appears consistently in close correlation with the concepts WAR and GRAVE. A conceptual link SOLDIER – WAR – GRAVE forms the most influential segment of the discursive configuration of the concepts in this pentagram: death draws all three elements into its orbit with the predetermined outcome.

The concept GRAVES occupies a central position in the conceptual system of the SONG, symbolizing the final point of movement and the conclusion of the entire life cycle. The conceptualization of graves begins with acts of searching for them (*Де могили, де вони?*) and discovering them (*Covered with flowers every one* [Seeger, Hickerson, 1961]; *Blumen wehen im Sommerwind* [Colpet, 1962]; *Pauvres tombes de l’oubli*, | *Les fleurs les ont envahis* [Lemarque, Rouzaud, 1962]; *Там на квіти вітер ліг* [Lazirko, 2014]; *Снігом рясно вкрилися* [Karen, 2022]; *В чистім полі* [Graneck, 2024]). Such examples illustrate concealment / dispersion of concepts among linguistic signs [Prykhodko, 2014, p. 15]. The search for the name of the concept GRAVES, more than any other, demonstrates a preference for indirect verbal embodiments within the textual space of the SONG.



Fig. 5. Visualization of the concept GRAVES [Carpenter, 2025].

As is well known, a concept cannot be reduced to its purely conceptual substrate, nor does its name always correlate directly with nouns: both the concept itself and its semiotic embodiment may be expressed through different parts of speech and may manifest at different levels of realization. Moreover, a concept as a value-laden mentefact may be objectified through visualization (Fig. 4 and 5), signal itself through music, or be grammatically concealed.

The concept TIME in the SONG exemplifies this particularly well. Its conceptual substrate (“the duration of the existence of phenomena and objects, measured in centuries, years, months, hours, minutes” [Busel, 2003, p. 1371]) offers a generally adequate understanding of its essence; however, its figurative and evaluative components are far from superficial. These enable it to appear comprehensive and omnipresent throughout the lyrics of the SONG, even though it is not explicitly verbalized. It permeates the ideological and artistic fabric of the SONG and its conceptual framework, where it interacts with the mental dominant WAR and correlates with the other concepts of the pentagram, relating them in one way or another to distinct temporal perspectives. Above all, it is oriented toward the PAST, which is marked in two complementary ways—lexically and grammatically. For both approaches, the temporal perspective PAST functions as a constant within the temporal grid, whereas the components Present and Future – act merely as variables. The alternation of constant and variable elements within the temporal grid of the SONG prevents monotony and thereby enhances its emotional resonance for the audience.

The intention to avoid monotony is also evident in Pete Seeger’s version. The semantic fabric of his text is directed toward mourning all the suffering inflicted by war, and this is considerably intensified by the predominance of the past temporal perspective. The author seems to cry out: war has thrown life and human destinies to a tragic and irreversible past; grief, sorrow, and hardship are what war brings to the “little person.” This constitutes the central message of the SONG and its ideological invariant, preserved across all paratexts. In this way, the lexical and grammatical suggestion of the transience of life, set against the backdrop of war, is implemented with deliberate consistency. The concept TIME weighs on the human subconscious with its relentless ephemerality. It contributes to the figurative activation of the concepts LIFE and DEATH, which remain unspoken in all versions of the SONG, yet can be implicitly inferred.

Pragmasemantic dimensions of the SONG

The pragmatic algorithm of the lyrics is based on the following: preserving the logic of chain-like narration, it builds each stanza in the form of two interactive layers—an interrogative-factual layer (the invariant “*where?*-question”) and an interrogative-rhetorical layer (the invariant “*when?*-question”). The first layer (lines 1–6) takes the form of a dialogue between two abstract participants (A and B) who exchange facts. Both are imagined clients of anti-war discourse and act as ordinary

citizens whose conversation is “broadcast” to a large audience. One of them guides the dialogue—he asks three questions in each stanza—while the other contributes more sparingly, responding only once; one is emotional and insistent, the other is emotionally neutral. The second layer (lines 7–8) is a monologic appeal to reason expressed through a rhetorical question marked by intensity and communicative pressure. At this stage, only one communicative agent is involved—the discourse agent addressing his collective counterpart, the hypothetical client of the discourse. The pragmatic algorithm of the SONG, valid for all five octets, can be visualized in Fig. 6.

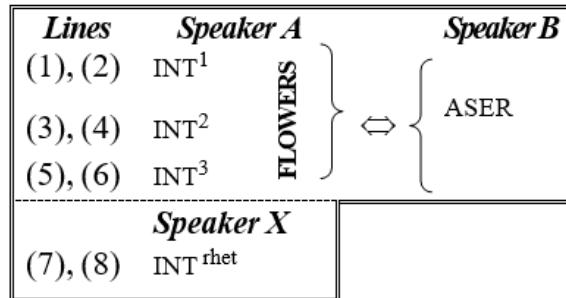


Fig. 6. Two-layer pragsemantic structure of the SONG

The dialogic-interrogative dimension of the compositional-speech structure is organized according to the model of communicative interaction INTERROGATIVE / INT – ASSERTIVE / ASER, where the first signals a “request for information” [Anokhina, 2017, p. 8], and the second conveys that information. Both speech acts (INT and ASER) function as constants of interaction in the SONG, while other speech acts serve as variables that may be integrated into it as optional components. These include directives and expressives.

The algorithm of speech realization in the INT – ASER model in these texts is always asymmetrical: in each stanza, INT is methodically repeated at least three times, whereas ASER appears only once. Each time, this repetition involves one of the five key concepts. Compare: INT *Where have all the FLOWERS (GIRLS, MEN, SOLDIERS, GRAVEYARDS) gone?* {three times} [Seeger, Hickerson, 1961] – ASER *Girls have picked them every one* [Seeger, Hickerson, 1961]. Such intensification functions as a technique of linguistic influence through emotive questioning. On the other hand, the interrogative intention is further reinforced by the rhetorical question that crowns the end of every stanza: INT *When will they ever learn?* [Seeger, Hickerson, 1961] {2 repetitions}. A similar pattern appears in the Ukrainian translation: INT *Де поділись квіти всі?* {3} – ASER *Їх дівчата унесли* and INT *Коли це зрозуміють всі? Коли збагнуть усі?* [Graneck, 2024].

The pragmatic role of the “intermediate” lines in the text and its paratexts is also significant: *Long time passing i Long time ago* [Seeger, Hickerson, 1961] or *В чистім полі* and *Проїшли часу* [Graneck, 2024]. These are lines 2 and 4. They are essential for understanding the author’s intention. On the one hand, they can be logically connected to the preceding interrogative lines (1 and 3), as in the second German version (*Wohin sind all’ die jungen Mädchen verschwunden vor lang vergangener Zeit?*) [Natur Provence, 2025]. On the other hand, they may be perceived as independent speech acts, functioning as responsive assertives. This is how the French lines appear as well: *Du temps qui passe* and *Le temps passé* [Lemarque, Rouzaud, 1962], as well as Ukrainian *Немає їх вже давно* and *Давним давно* [Karen, 2022]; *Час невпинний* and *Знов і знов* [Chernyavsky, 2024]; *День за днем минає* and *Ген роки пливають* [Zdrok, 2023].

There are also interrogative variants of interline filling in interrogative interaction: *Wo sind sie geblieben?* and *Was ist geschehen?* /M. Colpet/; *Де нам їх шукати?* and *Що з ними є?* /Yu. Lazirko/, where the asymmetrical distribution of the octet between INT and ASER makes 7 : 1. This proportion shifts the overall communicative impact from the rational channel (persuasion) to the emotional one (suggestion). In any case, lines 2 and 4 strengthen the rhetorical effect of the question in the stanza, implicitly linking the central concept of the stanza (here – FLOWERS / КВІТИ) with the concept TIME / ЧАС.

At the same time, the interrogative can be compositionally reinforced by a directive that either precedes (*Sag mir, wo die Blumen sind* [Colpet, 1962]) or follows (*Де ми квіти – відзукніться!* [Baidiuk, 2018]). The request for information, conveyed through two interrelated intrerrogatives, also amplifies the emotional force of the stanza. Compare: *Qui peut dire où vont les fleurs* [Lemarque, Rouzaud, 1962]. In a structure with directive impulses, intrerrogatives cease to function as tools of persuasion and instead become instruments of suggestion. The latter, as is well known, reduces the role of argumentation, because persuasion, pleading, and coercion are no longer effective; they are compensated by the speaker's emotional-evaluative stance toward the message. This becomes especially evident when the speech act is reinforced by such modal particles as: in Ukrainian *же, ж, ой* or German *endlich, je, Oh!*

The rhetorical-interrogative layer of the poetic stanza is based on a monologue produced by discourse agents and addressed to their implied recipients. Neither participant is explicitly named, yet both are presuppositionally present within the communicative structure of the text. Compositionally, this interrogative-rhetorical layer is associated with the final lines (7 and 8) of each octet in each (para)text, where a double repetition forms the refrain. The refrain lines—innovatively added by Pete Seeger to the Cossack lullaby *Koloda-Duda*—can be considered particularly meaningful, at least because their rhetorical questions are comprehensive and didactic in nature. Pete Seeger and Joe Hickerson succeeded in creating a striking atmosphere of emptiness: (“there is nothing anywhere—no flowers, no girls, no boys, no soldiers, only graves that still need to be found”), there is no joy, no life. This bitter, intimate dialogue “*Tell me where...*,” “*Tell me, what’s happened?*” seems to reach directly into the soul. The answers contain very few words, yet they abound in mental verbs: *think, know, understand, learn, guess, suspect* etc.

The use of rhetorical questions with verbs of mental activity effectively compels intellectual engagement. Together, these devices aim to awaken the listener from lethargy, prompt reflection on the causes of the events, free one from the shackles of submission, and encourage resistance and action. The primary source—P. Seeger’s song—attests to this intention, for the refrain itself implores the audience to draw conclusions and to learn to live and act accordingly: *When will they ever learn?* {two times} [Seeger, Hickerson, 1961]. Another English version offers to understand first what is happening: *When will they ever understand?* {2}. M. Dietrich likewise appealed to understanding when she performed on the ruins of Berlin: *Wann wird man je verstehen?* {2} [Dietrich, 1962], whereas another German version returns to the theme of self-learning: *Wann werden sie endlich lernen* {2} [Natur Provence, 2025]. The French refrain *Apprendrons-nous un jour? Apprendrons-nous jamais* [Béart, 1962] also foregrounds the idea of learning.

The theme of “understanding” recurs throughout Ukrainian paratexts (*Коли ж вони збагнуть? | До чого все – збагнуть?* [Chernyavsky, 2024]; *Коли це зрозуміють всі? | Коли збагнуть усі?* [Graneck, 2024]). Learning, viewed as a continuation of the cognitive process of understanding, is equally prominent in Ukrainian paratexts (*Чи то навчило їх* {2} [Lazirko, 2014]). The phenomenon of “learning” is emphasized in the Swedish (*Åh, säg lär de sig nån gang* [Valindra, 2022]) and all Dutch versions of the SONG (e.g., *Oh, wanneer zullen ze het eindelijk leren?* [Olga, 2024]). However, these intellectual reflections on the attainment of truth are overridden by the voice of Maria Burmaka, who, by using the epistemic verb *to know* in the negative form, philosophically declares: “*І ніхто не знає, де...*,” because “*Там завжди зима*” [Burmaka, 2011]. For her, *winter* functions as a symbol of eternity, transience, and unknowability.

It is noteworthy that the two repeated lines in the refrain demonstrate a technique of cognitive diversification that appeals to both comprehension and learning simultaneously. Thus, in the second German version, each line receives its own mental verb: *Oh, wann werden sie endlich lernen, | oh, wann werden sie endlich verstehen?* [Natur Provence, 2025]. The same effect is achieved in *Ой коли зрозуміють вони? | Ще й коли ж і ми навчимося?* [Karen, 2022].

Closely related to the mental vocabulary is the predicative category of **personality**, used here as a means of linguistic influence. It is strongly associated with such a rhetorical technique of cognitive destabilization as “mental puzzling.” Paradoxically, we can observe the appeal to the second and third persons (as seen in the examples underlined with a straight line above). This technique signals the discourse agent’s distancing from the events: everyone is held responsible except the speaker. Rhetorical questions are thus addressed to the discourse clients, implicitly attributing to them responsibility for the consequences of war and distancing the speaker from

personal involvement. The impression is created that the authors and performers know the answers to the questions they pose and view their task as teaching listeners to think critically in order to understand.

The tactic of the rhetorical-interrogative influence, opposite to distancing, is the author's deliberate approximation to war outcomes. Such authors consider themselves involved in what has happened. For example, Oleg Zdrok poses the logical question *Як же нам збагнути це?* {2} [Zdrok, 2023], and the anonymous translator Victoria T., who initially addresses someone else (*Тож коли вони помудрішають?* {2}), eventually includes herself in the final stanza among those who need critical thinking (*Тож коли ми всі помудрішаєм?* {2}). The answers to the questions *Що ми знаємо?* and *Коли ми знаємо?* are given by F. Lemarque and R. Rouzaud, the authors of the French version. Compare:

(1) <i>Qu'en saurons-nous un jour ?</i> <i>Quand saurons-nous ? <u>Un jour</u> 'one day'</i>	(6) <i>Qu'en saurons-nous un jour ?</i> <i>Quand saurons-nous ? <u>Jamais</u> 'never'</i>
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Translators of other French paratexts, who were among the first to recognize their *nous*-involvement in the war, offer a completely pessimistic ending to the song by concluding it with *jamais* “never” (all three versions). Yet there are also markedly optimistic translations, such as: *А в світі так яскраво, а в небі так яскраво* {2} [Baidiuk, 2018]. And this optimism is entirely justified, because, as A. Einstein once said, “Life is sacred, that is to say, it is the supreme value, to which all other values are subordinate” [Einstein, 2025].

On the ruins of Berlin, Marlene Dietrich addressed the German people with *Wann wird **man** je verstehen?* [Colpet, 1962]. The pronoun *man* does not mark “*he/they*” or “*I/we*,” but implicitly includes both—everyone collectively and no one individually. However, while condemning the submissiveness and inaction of her compatriots and urging them to adopt an active civic stance, both M. Dietrich and M. Colpet implicitly implicated themselves as well. The translator of one Ukrainian version, Pavlo Karen, does the same: he addresses both the clients and the agents of anti-war discourse—that is, himself as author and performer.

Thus, the transborder of the semiotic influence of the SONG manifests itself primarily in its lasting relevance, driven by the timelessness of the themes of war and peace, and in its broad internationalization, which has generated numerous translations and paratexts in different languages, crossing borders and cultural boundaries. Among the suggestive means of semiotic influence, the most important are reliance on keywords and conceptual stereotypes, the use of implicatures, lexical-grammatical cues that foreground particular ideas, emotional-pragmatic intensification through interrogative iteration, mental puzzling, the use of intensifying particles and exclamations, the elimination of monotony, the marked use of mental vocabulary, rhetorical questions that compel intellectual activity, deliberate distancing of authors and performers from guilt for what has occurred, and, conversely, the approximation of this guilt to the authorial *ego*, as well as the musical reinforcement of the content and conceptual structure.

Conclusions

As a work of art, the song plays a significant role in shaping the spiritual and moral values of a nation. Its significance becomes especially pronounced when it transcends administrative boundaries and becomes part of the cultural heritage of humanity as a whole. The anti-war song *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?* is no exception, with its simple structure, memorable melody, and harmonic clarity. Numerous translations and appearance of new cover versions prove its emotional resonance with discourse clients, and, consequently, the depth of its influence on the collective consciousness – an influence generated jointly by its music and lyrics.

The SONG exerts consolidated semiotic influence through a set of strategies, tactics, and techniques, among which suggestion—defined as a psychological mechanism where the emotional factor predominates—plays a central role. The principal strategy of this influence is to convey to the audience, in a deliberate and unobtrusive manner, the idea that war is the most devastating calamity that can happen to humanity. To this end, all possible suggestive means are employed: a specific collection of key concepts, a distinctive temporal-personal grid, a carefully arranged system of rhetorical questions, as well as the expressive resources of melody and music.

The conceptual system of the SONG is organized around the mental dominant WAR, surrounded by five explanatory text-bound concepts-explicatures (FLOWERS, GIRLS, MEN, SOLDIERS, GRAVES). The tactical and strategic potential of the suggestive influence produced by the concepts of the SONG is based not only on their explicitly stated names, but also on the implicatures—mental units hidden in the subtext (PEACE, LIFE, DEATH). The most relevant to this idea remains the concept TIME, whose lexical and grammatical materialization unfolds within the temporal perspective of “the past”—a temporal grid through which death casts its shadow over life. The past here evokes the sorrow, grief, and horror that war has brought.

The pragmatic algorithm of the SONG is determined by the compositional and linguistic two-layer structure of its textual architectonics, comprising factual and rhetorical questions. The first layer is dialogic, involving two abstract discourse participants. Their dialogue follows the INT — ASSER model. Other illocutionary types do not participate in the construction of this dialogue, except for directives, which function as “reinforcers” of the questions. The second layer is based on an interrogative monologue. Compositionally, it is linked to the refrain, which features two paired questions of a didactic nature. An assertive is inserted between two interrogative layers. Consequently, the semiotic mechanism of each octet in the SONG is shaped by a suggestive progression from question to answer and from answer back to question, producing an arc of heightened emotional and pragmatic tension.

The grammar of personality is also connected with the pragmatics of interrogation. Its persuasive effectiveness is constrained by the interrogative intention, which requires addressing the second and third persons. This contributes to a tactic of influence built on distancing discourse agents from what has happened and shifting responsibility onto the discourse clients. It constitutes the tactic of mental puzzling. It is reinforced by a cluster of mental verbs that are actively used in the refrain.

The most profound emotional impact on discourse clients arises from the integrated use of linguistic and musical elements (the trinity of text, melody, and voice). While text and melody remain constants of the SONG, the voice is its variable component. It is through vocal interpretation that numerous cover versions emerge, foregrounding the performer’s individuality, as each artist freely selects musical expressive means: varying volume, pitch, and timbre; controlling pauses, tonality, and dynamics; shaping rhythmic patterns; and employing contrasting chords. Performers’ versions enhance the emotional perception of the text and melody, imbuing them with lyricism and reflection (R. Filion), intimacy and sorrow (M. Dietrich), elegance and tragedy (J. Seleznyov).

Unlike many other anti-war songs, the SONG stands out because it imposes nothing. Its influence strategy relies primarily on suggestion. In its struggle against war, the SONG operates as a form of “soft power,” whose instruments are gentle puzzling and persuasion through feeling; therefore, its suggestive force is concentrated not so much on the textual surface, but in the subtext. The SONG presents a coherent cycle of thoughts that reflects the seemingly endless repetition of war after war and asks when humanity will finally begin to learn from the errors of previous generations.

A cognitive-discursive approach to the SONG and its translated paratextual versions can serve as a foundation for further multi-paradigmatic studies of other textual constructions belonging to the discursive genre of “song.” This is entirely feasible if research is conducted at the intersection of such fields as linguoculturology, linguopoetics, and corpus linguistics. Moreover, comparative and translation studies based on material from different linguocultures could become a rich field for further linguistic research.

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Simplicity of Form – Grandeur of Content: The Transborder Semiotic Influence of an Anti-War Song

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The object of this study is the text of the song written by Pete Seeger “Where Have All the Flowers Gone?” (SONG) and its paratextual (translated) interpretations in various languages. The goal is to examine their cognitive-semantic parameters from the perspective of their consolidated semiotic impact on the clients of anti-war discourse.

The study is grounded in the *methodological principles* of the cognitive-discursive paradigm of linguistics and an interdisciplinary approach to the chosen object. This approach involves the use of several analytical methods: the hermeneutic method (for the semantic interpretation of textual structures of the song); the linguistic-conceptual method (for modelling the conceptual sphere of the textual space); the speech-act method (for clarifying the illocutionary content of sentence units in the text); the comparative-translation method (for identifying the shared and distinctive features of the original and its translated versions); and the musicological method (for clarifying the role and place of melody in the formation of the text-music whole).

The study establishes that the consolidated semiotic impact is achieved through clearly defined strategies, tactics, and techniques that are predominantly emotional in nature. The primary strategy of this influence is the deliberate presentation of war as the worst possible calamity for humanity. To this end, all available means of enhanced suggestion are employed: a purposeful selection of conceptual and lexical resources, a distinctive temporal-personal grid, a carefully balanced system of interrogative structures, as well as melody and music.

The conceptual system of the song is formed around the mental dominant WAR, which serves as the nucleus for five text-specific concepts—FLOWERS, GIRLS, MEN, SOLDIERS, GRAVES—that are objectified explicitly in the lyrics. These correlate with the implied concepts PEACE, HOPE, LIFE, and DEATH, which do not emerge directly in the textual material but are inferred by the listener. The concept TIME carries a significant semantic load, especially in its reference to the past. In SONG, the past is portrayed as a repository of sorrow, a dimension in which a person’s lifeworld is ultimately transferred into nothingness.

The pragmatic algorithm of the verbal architecture of the song is determined by the two-layered nature of its textual organization: a symbiosis of the factual question “where?” and the rhetorical question “when?”. The first layer is anchored in the dialogic character of the narrative with two abstract participants whose exchange follows an INTERROGATIVE—ASSERTIVE model. The second layer takes the form of an interrogative monologue by the discourse agent, addressed to the recipients of the song. The semiotic impact of each octet in the SONG is determined by the suggestive progression from question to answer and back to question, a cyclical movement that ultimately creates an arc of heightened emotional tension.

The global anti-war strategy underlying the semiotic influence of the song aims to instill an unequivocally negative perception of the human world under conditions of war. At the same time, this

strategy does not exclude techniques that stimulate reflective thinking to encourage cognitive engagement and activate anti-war resistance.

The research demonstrates that the strongest emotional influence on the audience arises from the combined effect of language and melody, which has contributed to the creation of numerous cover versions of the song. To this end, performers have at their disposal a wide range of expressive means: modulation of pitch, volume, and vocal timbre; control of pauses, tonality, and sound intensity; and the creation of unique rhythmic patterns, among others.

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