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AI in the Folk Tales: How Turkish Combat Drone Revitalizes Ukrainian Resistance

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“The raiders assaulted Ukraine, hurling bluster // Jets, modern tanks, all the troops they could muster // But soon they exhausted their whole repertoire // Bayraktar, Bayraktar.” Thus starts the song, Bayraktar written by a Ukrainian military Taras Borovok. The song has gone viral on YouTube after the AI equipped Turkish combat drone, Bayraktar TB2, reinforced Ukrainian army’s fight against Russian supported forces that initiated an invasion to the eastern regions of the country in February 2022. The role played by Bayraktar TB2 in Ukrainian military folk tales reminds a killer robot, Necromancer or Lamia, in a science fiction drama series, Raised by Wolves, produced by HBO that was reprogrammed to raise human children on a new planet, Kepler-22b, far from the Earth which was almost destroyed by a catastrophic war between believers and nonbelievers. The once killer robot, Necromancer, gives birth to the human beings and mothers them in a deserted, remote planet. The unexpected agency that manmade inventions performs in literary genres can be traced back to Mary Shelley’s novel Frankenstein, in which a freaky creature, created by a scientist Victor Frankenstein, after being hated by humans swore revenge against all humans. More technological inventions such as machines, robots, and so on also all rushed into the people’s imaginaries through literary genres, folk tales. Such sociotechnical imaginaries as it is discussed in social scientific investigations of technology stand somewhere in between concrete policies and abstract discourses and paved the way for a country’s social, political, technological, and like Bayraktar’s case military achievements. Here in this paper, an analysis of the agency that performed by Bayraktar TB2 in Ukrainian war and its revitalization of the resistance will be done from an Actor-Network Theoretical perspective. Such an analysis will provide an understanding of how a manmade thing could participate in assembling a spirit that holds people’s hope alive. Hence, goes the Borovok’s song Bayraktar: “Their rockets be many, their armor be strong // Yet here they will meet our response before long // We’ll bury their columns in snow, fire, and tar // Bayraktar, Bayraktar. //// These orcs aimed to conquer and pillage right fast // But our new weapon will give them a blast // And blow back their fragments to their Kommissar! // Bayraktar, Bayraktar.”

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