ROUTLEDGE

FIELDWORK IN UKRAINIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

EDITED BY MATEUSZ ŚWIETLICKI AND ANASTASIA ULANOWICZ

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND CULTURE

"*Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children's Literature* offers a timely and welcome introduction to Ukrainian children's literature and informatively brings global audiences into its subject, while also offering valuable analysis and original studies of a wide variety of texts for experts in relevant regions and topics that will have lasting import in the field. From introductory chapters that situate the reader in Ukrainian history, culture, and folk tales to sensitive studies of Ukrainian books for young readers in the present day and in war time, *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children's Literature* makes a valuable and lasting contribution to multiple fields, including Slavic studies and children's literature research."

Sara Pankenier Weld, *University of California, Santa Barbara*

"The first English-language companion to Ukrainian children's literature will familiarize global audiences with its rich history, from folklore roots to award-winning international bestsellers."

Svetlana Efimova, *Assistant Professor of Slavic Literatures and Media Studies, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich*

Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children's Literature

Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children's Literature showcases the work of prominent scholars of children's literature from Ukraine and the diaspora as it traces the history of books written, marketed for, and circulating among young people since the rise of Ukraine's nationhood in the nineteenth century. This book encompasses a full range of texts and genres (e.g., fiction, nonfiction, poetry, picturebooks, graphic novels), with special attention given to the most important authors and works as defined by aesthetics ("literary excellence"), popularity, or historical and cultural significance. In its focus on ideology and historical context, the collection takes an interdisciplinary and transnational approach. It places titles and trends in broader context, considering the socio-political situation, changing taste, and the history of institutions that shape the production and reception of children's literature. The collection addresses folklore and the beginnings of a distinct tradition of Ukrainian children's literature produced in the nineteenth century; the role played by children's literature in the maintenance of the Ukrainian literary tradition during the Soviet era; and the flourishing Ukrainian book market, with the appearance of numerous new genres and forms, and the growing significance of Ukrainian books around the world. The collection highlights the importance of familiarizing non-Ukrainian students and scholars of children's literature with the richness of the country's literary history and cultural distinctiveness. *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children's Literature* is intended primarily for scholars of children's literature and culture, including specialists in the fields of literary studies, education, and Slavic studies.

Mateusz Świetlicki is an associate professor at the University of Wrocław's Institute of English Studies (Poland). His most recent book, *Next-Generation Memory and Ukrainian Canadian Children's Historical Fiction: The Seeds of Memory* (Routledge, 2023), examines the transnational entanglements of Canada and Ukraine.

Anastasia Ulanowicz is an associate professor of children's literature at the University of Florida (USA). She is the author of *Second-Generation Memory and Contemporary Children's Literature* (Routledge, 2013), which received the Children's Literature Association Book Award in 2015.

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and Anastasia Ulanowicz

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This collection is dedicated to the past, present, and future children of Ukraine

Contents

About the Editors

Mateusz Świetlicki is an associate professor at the University of Wrocław's Institute of English Studies (Poland), director of the Center for Young People's Literature and Culture, and Vice-Dean for Student Affairs and Extramural Teaching at the Faculty of Languages, Literatures and Cultures. His most recent book, *Next-Generation Memory and Ukrainian Canadian Children's Historical Fiction: The Seeds of Memory* (Routledge, 2023), examines the transnational entanglements of Canada and Ukraine. He has recently co-edited *Navigating Children's Literature through Controversy: Global and Transnational Perspectives* (Brill, 2023—with Elżbieta Jamróz-Stolarska and Agata Zarzycka), a special issue of *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature* titled *War and Displacement in Children's Literature* (2023—with Chrysogonus Siddha Malilang) and a special issue of the *European Journal of American Studies* (*Memory, Identity, Belonging: Narratives of Eastern and Central European Presence in North America* 2023—with Izabella Kimak). Świetlicki was a Research Scholar at the University of Florida's Department of English (Kosciuszko Foundation Fellowship), a Fulbright scholar at the University of Illinois at Chicago (2018), a visiting scholar at the University of Toronto (2022), and has held multiple other fellowships (Munich, Kyiv, Harvard). He is the deputy editor-in-chief of *Filoteknos*, a member of the editorial team of John Benjamins Publishing's "Children's Literature, Culture, and Cognition" series, a representative of the Childhood & Youth Network of the Social Science History Association, and a co-officer of the Childhood in Eastern Europe, Eurasia, and Russia Working Group of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies.

Anastasia Ulanowicz is an associate professor of children's literature at the University of Florida (USA). She is the author of *Second-Generation Memory and Contemporary Children's Literature* (Routledge, 2013), which received the Children's Literature Association Book Award in

2015. She is the co-editor, with Dr. Manisha Basu (Associate Professor, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign) of *The Aesthetics and Politics of Global Hunger* (Palgrave, 2017), which features her chapter on representations of the Holodomor in Oksana Zabuzhko's novel, *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* (2009). Along with Dr. Basu and Dr. Brenda Glascott (Portland State University), Ulanowicz co-edited a special issue of *Assay: A Journal of Nonfiction Studies* (6.2, 2020) on the topic of "Reimagining Regimes of Reality" that featured her essay, co-written with Dr. Inna Sukhenko (University of Helsinki) on western representations of the Chornobyl nuclear crisis. Her current book project, *Through Western Eyes: Representations of Eastern Europe in Western Comics, 1989–2022*, examines the role of visual rhetoric in transnational representations of post-socialist Europe. She is the editor of *ImageTexT*, an international journal of comics studies, and her recent essays have appeared in such journals as *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, *Filoteknos*, and *European Journal of American Studies*. She was a Fulbright Specialist at the University of Wrocław in Fall 2021 and returned to the university in 2025 as a Fulbright Scholar.

Notes on Contributors

Evelyn Arizpe is a professor of Children's Literature at the University of Glasgow. She leads the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Degree programme, "Children's Literature, Media and Culture." Her research, which explores the role of books for children alongside themes of displacement, conflict and peacebuilding, has been funded through the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and The British Academy in the UK. She has co-authored, among other books, *Children Reading Picturebooks: Interpreting Visual Texts* (2003), updated and revised in 2023. Evelyn was on the jury for the Hans C. Andersen Award in 2022 and 2024. She served as President of the International Research Society on Children's Literature (IRSCL) from 2019–2023.

Anna Boginskaya is an assistant professor at the Institute of Slavic Studies at the University of Wroclaw, where she teaches Russian language, literature-to-film adaptations, and American Literature. Dr Boginskaya is the author of *Three Fragments about Love (Love Discourse in Polish and Russian Fiction of the 1970s)*. Her other publications include book chapters and articles devoted to children's literature, adaptation studies, and Russian literature of the second half of the twentieth century. Her current research focuses on contemporary Polish, Russian, and American literature and culture, comparative literature, imagology, Russophone literature, and adaptation studies.

Tetyana Blyznyuk is an assistant professor in education at Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University (Ukraine), an expert in educational innovations, and a certified coach on the use of digital tools in education at the Centre of Innovative Educational Technologies "PNU EcoSystem." She is the author of over 130 publications a member of the editorial board, a literary editor, and a proofreader of the Journal of Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University.

Scientific Edition. Series of Social and Human Sciences and *Children's Literature: Interdisciplinary Discourse*. She is a member of the EU ERASMUS+ KA2 project "Modernization of Pedagogical Higher Education by Innovative Teaching Instruments—MOPED," dedicated to the modernization of curricula of pedagogical universities in Ukraine (2017–2021). Her research interests include innovative teaching, new methods of teaching English, non-standard approaches to teaching/learning, and digitalization of the educational process.

Tamara Hundorova is a Principal Research Fellow at the Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and an Associate of Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute. She has published on a wide range of subjects and is the author of numerous important and highly influential books, chapters, and essays. Prof. Hundorova's books include *The Post-Chornobyl Library: Ukrainian Postmodernism of the 1990s* (2009, English edition—2019) and various articles on Ukrainian literature, modernism, postmodernism, gender studies, postcolonial trauma, and kitsch. Prof. Hundorova taught at Princeton University, Harvard University, Toronto University, Greifswald Ukrainicum, Ukrainian Free University, Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, and Kyiv National University. She was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship, a Petro Jacyk Distinguished Fellowship (Harvard University), a visiting professorship at the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center (Hokkaido University) and the MUNK School of Global Affairs (Toronto University), and a fellowship at Monash University (Australia). Currently, she is a Visiting scholar at Princeton University.

Katarzyna Jakubowska-Krawczyk is acting director of the Institute of Ukrainian Studies and the head of the Laboratory for the Study of Ukrainian Identity at the University of Warsaw. She is the founder and coordinator of the Ukrainian Studies Network. She is a cultural and literary scholar specializing in the study of the Polish-Ukrainian cultural borderland, mutual stereotypes of Poles and Ukrainians, 19th-21st century literature, including children's literature, and contemporary Ukrainian culture and art. Jakubowska-Krawczyk is the author of the book monograph *The Formation of National Identity and the Image of the Pole and the Ukrainian in Polish and Ukrainian Literature of the First Half of the 19th Century* (2015). She is the deputy editor-in-chief of *Studia Ucrainica Varsoviensia*.**Tetiana Kachak** is a professor at Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University (Ukraine). She is a member of the International Research Society for Children's Literature, head of the branch of the Ukrainian Research Center of Children's and Youth Literature, editor of *Children's Literature: Interdisciplinary Discourse,*

and a member of the editorial board of the journal *Literature. Children. Time*. She is the author of over 200 publications devoted to Ukrainian and international children's and young adult literature, including book monographs, textbooks, and articles. Her research interests include children's literature, children's reading practices, literary education, digital tools of literary education, gender studies, and postcolonial theory.

Halyna Pavlyshyn completed her PhD in Education at the University of Tasmania with the thesis titled "The Interpretation of Fictional Violence Represented in Illustrated Books by the Australian and Ukrainian Gatekeepers of Children's Literature in Educational Contexts" (2022). She is a member of the International Research Society for Children's Literature. Her academic interests include literature for children and young adults, Ukrainian literature, book illustration, social semiotics, and narratology. Halyna is also an author of four books for children and young adults (published under the pen name Halyna Rys), as well as a researcher and translator of young adult literature. Her first book, *Unique Potato* (2008), is a collection of tales depicting the ordinary lives of extraordinary characters, and her most recent novel is *Amsterdam-Kyiv. And a Little Bit About Saint Nikolas* (2017). Her fiction explores topics of creativity, friendship, loneliness, coming of age, violence, death, hope, love, and compassion. Since 2016, she has lived and worked in Australia. In her spare time, Halyna enjoys teaching yoga, doing handstands, and drawing flowers.

Björn Sundmark is a professor of English literature at Malmö University (Sweden), where he teaches English literature and children's literature. He is the author of the study *Alice in the Oral-Literary Continuum* (Lund UP, 1999), and the co-editor of four essay collections: *Translating and Transmediating Children's Literature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), *The Nation in Children's Literature* (Routledge, 2013), *Child Autonomy and Child Governance in Children's Literature: Where Children Rule* (Routledge, 2016), and *Silence and Silencing in Children's Literature* (Makadam, 2021). He was the editor of *Bookbird—Journal of International Children's Literature* 2015–2018, served on the Swedish Arts Council 2013–2016, and was Chair of the Swedish August Jury 2016–2019. He serves on the ALMA jury since 2023.

Maryna Vardanian is a professor at the Department of Translation and Slavic Studies of the Kryvyi Rih State Pedagogical University (Ukraine). Since 2022, she has also been a visiting scholar at the Institute for Translation and Interpreting at Heidelberg University (Germany).

Her current research project, "Ukrainian Children's Literature and Translation across the Dimensions of Identity, Ideology, Culture Memory, and Emigration," examines ideological approaches to the translation of children's literature. These include the role of translation in nation-building, the promotion of Ukraine, and its colonization in the Soviet era, as well as the war and emigration through cultural memory studies and ecocriticism. Her primary area of research is Ukrainian children's literature from the twentieth to the twenty-first centuries, including the Soviet era and the writings of the Ukrainian diaspora. She has published over 70 works, both internationally and locally. Her most recent publication is a book chapter titled "Seeking Home, Discovering the Bush: The Australian Bush Envisaged in Ukrainian Children's Books" (co-authored by Lydia Kokkola) in *Storying Plants in Australian Children's and Young Adult Literature* (edited by Melanie Duckworth and Annika Herb, 2023). She is a member of several associations, including the International Research Society for Children's Literature, the European Children's Literature Network, and the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies.

Aliona Yarova holds an MA degree in English from Lviv National University in Ukraine, an MPhil degree in Education from the University of Cambridge, UK, and a PhD from Malmö University, Sweden. Her doctoral dissertation"Narrating Humanity: Children's literature and Global Citizenship Education" (2021) explores the role of children's magic realist fiction in critical global citizenship education. Aliona is a researcher and teacher of children's literature at the Department of Education and Society, Malmö University. Her research interests include children's and young adult literature and global citizenship education, children's war literature, and creative writing. Aliona is a recipient of a Crafoord research grant for the project "Children's Literature and the War in Ukraine" (2023–2024).

Snizhana Zhygun is an associate professor at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University (Ukraine) and a researcher at Taras Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the Ukrainian National Academy of Science. She is interested in literary theory, Ukrainian literature of the 20th century, and ideological influences on texts and those caused by texts.

Foreword

Toward the World Across Ages, Nations, and Genders

Tamara Hundorova

Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children's Literature, edited by Mateusz Świetlicki and Anastasia Ulanowicz, opens up Ukrainian children's literature from a historical and genre perspective to English-speaking readers. However, as the editors note in the introduction, the collection's intention is more significant—to convey "the sense of vulnerability and excitement (indeed, a certain *jouissance*) experienced by Ukrainian intellectuals, artists, and writers as they labor to establish a space for the study of Ukrainian culture in the wide-ranging, and often inhospitable, fields of contemporary cultural and critical study."

This conceptual, multifaceted, and informative publication is also an attempt to form a canon of Ukrainian children's literature, which is still in the process of being formed in Ukraine itself. Undoubtedly, children's literature is an integral part of the national culture and clearly reflects the stages and peculiarities of its development. Combining historiographical and genre approaches, *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children's Literature* introduces readers to the entire corpus of texts and authors who have worked in the field of Ukrainian children's literature from the earliest to the present day. It also aims to place Ukrainian children's literature in the global context of postcolonial literature.

The value of such a publication is especially high today, as it appears during the Russian-Ukrainian war. Świetlicki and Ulanowicz expressively record this moment in history, reminding us that "Ukrainians defend their country at unbearable cost." At the same time, the heroes are not only people but also books, in particular children's books, those that have been used by generations of Ukrainians and those "that Ukrainian children continue to read in bomb shelters or new homes far beyond their national borders." It is no coincidence that the collection opens with reference to the present and the current Russian-Ukrainian war, which has exacerbated the question of the right to history and self-sufficiency of the whole of Ukraine and Ukrainian culture, which is also under threat of destruction.

The formation of a national archive becomes an existentially important task in these circumstances, and the publication of *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children's Literature,* which unfolds as an introduction to the history of an entire trend in Ukrainian culture, serves this very purpose.

The history of children's literature in Ukraine from a postcolonial perspective allows us to look at the broader problems of the formation and development of national culture in Ukraine, its continuity from ancient times to the present, and the role of children's literature in these processes. Historically torn between two empires, the Austro-Hungarian and the Russian, Ukraine has been developing since the eighteenth century, on the one hand, in the context of the influences of German and Polish speakers, and on the other hand, it has been drawn into the all-Russian context and subordinated to the canons and structures of the imperial all-Russian culture. In this situation of double colonization, children's literature has become a bridge between different social strata and between parts of Ukraine torn between two empires.

Old Ukrainian literature—represented by the names of Hryhorii Skovoroda and Ivan Vyshenskyi, Baroque literature, folk epics, dumas, songs, and translated literature—was rich in various styles and genres. Multicultural and multilingual texts were written in Ukrainian, Latin, and Polish and united society's different age and class categories at the time. The readers of this literature were not only representatives of various estates, religions, and classes but also of different ages. In a certain sense, the entire ancient oral and written literature, as well as the spectacular culture-school drama, interludes, and ritual songs, were aimed at the multicultural community living in Ukraine, and the children's audience was one of the largest among them.

Modern Ukrainian literature begins with the publication of *Eneida* by Ivan Kotliarevsky, a parody of Virgil's *Aeneid*. *Eneida* (1798), written in the vivid Ukrainian spoken language, became an encyclopedia of Ukrainian folk life, history, and language. It also marked the birth of national consciousness, which became the basis of the national revival. *Eneida* shaped Ukrainian writers' sense of themselves as "members of the same national and ideological family" and served as a way of protecting them from dissolution in other imperial cultures.

A special role was given to the folk poetry tradition. Folklore shapes the tastes of adults and children, and it performs the function of consolidation and unites various types of readers in one ideal community. It is difficult to call Taras Shevchenko an author who wrote specifically for children. However, his works spoke to them as emotionally, with the same understanding and empathy, as to adults. Some of his poetic passages, including those discussed in *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children's Literature*,

became favorite children's texts and remain so today, whether they depict pictures of typical Ukrainian landscapes or the life of a thirteen-year-old orphan.

During the period of Russian colonization, when Russification, exoticization, and orientalization of Ukraine, or, as it was called in the Russian Empire, Little Russia, took place, the Ukrainian language was considered the language of the peasantry, and Ukrainian literature written in it was suitable only "for home use." Its scope was limited by special tsarist circulars and decrees to topics from folk life and works for children. One can even say that the infantilization of an entire nation became one of the colonization strategies of the Russian Empire. The role of children's literature in these circumstances became especially important as it shaped the memory, consciousness, tastes, and ideals of future generations. Using different narrative methods and generously referring to folk poetic forms, nineteenth-century writers Hryhorii Kvitka-Osnovianenko, Panko Kulish, Ivan Nechuy-Levytsky, and Borys Hrinchenko shaped the world of children's expectations, combining the real and the imaginary, and introduce readers to Cossack history in their stories, accompanying them to unknown lands and instilling in them faith in the future.

The role of children's literature in the twentieth century grew as it was distinguished into a separate subcategory and served as a window into a complex, extremely volatile, and often terrifying reality. The works for children perhaps most clearly record the reaction to the cataclysms of the twentieth century: the First and Second World Wars, the Holodomor, and Stalinist terror. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Vasyl Stefanyk conveyed the terrible feeling of the First World War in the images of young children and old people as liminal figures who are on the margins and are most vulnerable to social tragedies. Andriy Holovko managed to convey the horrors of the Civil War in his children's stories, and Hryhir Tiutiunnyk, writing about children and for children, recorded the phenomenon of fatherlessness and the painful growing up of a generation of teenagers whose parents did not return from the Second World War.

An entire library of children's literature has been created in the diaspora. It teaches and entertains, instills a sense of history and a sense of the Ukrainian language, introduces the environment and the world, and creates an image of a mysterious and desirable Ukraine. Children's literature has also proved to be the most dynamic in the modern world, as it is generally open to various experiments and often serves as a laboratory for them. It opens up not only children but also adults to the most radical ideas and the most distant worlds. Mythology, intergalactic adventures, environmental issues—all of this is reflected in contemporary children's literature. We should also add the newest intermedial forms and means of interactivity, which are rich in contemporary Ukrainian children's

literature. Visual culture, which is a part of children's literature, deserves a separate word. The A-BA-BA-HA-LA-MA-HA publishing house, one of the most popular in Ukraine, has become a trendsetter of high children's literature since the end of the last century, and not only in Ukraine.

I will allow myself one digression. I was in Munich with my ten-year-old grandson when the war broke out. His parents remained in Kyiv, a few kilometers from Irpin and Bucha. And I saw with my own eyes how the war traumatizes children. My grandson did not want to hear anything about the war, and he defended himself with words: "I don't want to hear anything about it." His whole world was centered on games and the computer, where he tried to escape reality, although it caught up with him. At the same time, I was taking online exams from students. One of them was analyzing Stefanyk's story about the First World War, where the war is shown from the inside, as if with a spotlight illuminating the scene of two children who are in the midst of a battle near their dead mother. The older boy tries to comfort his little sister in a childishly naive and inept way, imitating the conversations of the old people and feeling responsible while at the same time remaining a child and being surprised by the new impressions that the war opened up for him, in addition to early adulthood—the glare of explosions, the buzz of bullets, the light of searchlights coming down to the ground. For him, this terrible situation was a childhood adventure at the same time. The story is called "A Child's Adventure." Answering the question, the student could not calmly say the phrase "my mother was killed." It was in the first months of the Russian-Ukrainian war. He was in Ukraine. Empathically transferring the situation depicted in the shot story to himself, to his own mother, to the war that came to his home, he could not physically accept this phrase, repeating and varying it four times in a row. I saw how the trauma itself speaks to children. All children's literature tries to protect its readers from such traumas. It teaches how to live, dream, desire, and act. Ukrainian children's literature has done and continues to do the same.

Acknowledgments

We thank our families, friends, and colleagues who supported us while working on this collection. We are grateful to the editors of the series, Kenneth B. Kidd and Elizabeth Marshall, who believed in this project from the beginning, and the two reviewers, Sara Pankenier Weld and Svetlana Efimova, who gave us thought-provoking feedback. This project would not have happened without the contributors—thank you! Finally, we want to express our gratitude to the University of Wrocław, the University of Florida, and the Kociuszko Foundation.

Introduction to Ukrainian Children's Literature

Mateusz Świetlicki and Anastasia Ulanowicz

On March 16, 2022—less than a month after the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine—the Russian Air Force shelled the Donetsk Academic Regional Drama Theatre in the southeastern city of Mariupol. This was one of many early coordinated attacks on significant sites of Ukrainian culture, such as museums, historical landmarks, and statues honoring national poets, folk heroes, and political thinkers.[1] The targeting of these sites was as rhetorical as it was materially destructive. By destroying cultural and historical monuments such as this one, Russia could retroactively demonstrate President Vladimir Putin's contention—advanced in his 2021 essay, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians"—that Ukraine has no culture or history of its own. That is, by extinguishing material traces of Ukraine's independent culture and history, Russia not only sought (and still seeks) to obliterate their memory, but also to replace them with its own. In fact, months after the attack on the Mariupol theatre, Russian occupiers shrouded its ruins with screens bearing the portraits of Russian writers such as Alexander Pushkin and Lev (Leo) Tolstoy. In this way, it literally screened off traces of Ukrainian culture (as well as their intentional destruction) even as it used material screens onto which it could project its own nationalist and neo-imperial interpretation of history.

What was especially horrifying about the March 16 attack, however, was its deliberate destruction of not only an institution of Ukrainian culture but also of the humans who lived within this culture and claimed it as their own. During the siege of Mariupol, which began on the first day of the full-scale invasion, this theatre was re-purposed as an air-raid shelter that housed people fleeing from near-constant Russian shelling. In an effort to appeal to the better nature of Russian invaders—and, more significantly, to remind them of international law forbidding deliberate attacks on civilians—citizens of Mariupol created giant signs spelling out the Russian word "ДЕТИ" (or "CHILDREN") on two of the theatre's

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squares, so as to protect the vulnerable people within the building.[2] Although these signs were visible to pilots—indeed, later satellite images confirmed that they were legible even from space (cf. Schifrin and Dodd)—Russian air forces nevertheless bombed it, thus intentionally killing hundreds of young people huddled within it. Ultimately, this event—much like the earlier deliberate shelling of a Mariupol maternity hospital recorded within Mstyslav Chernov's Academy Award-winning documentary *20 Days in Mariupol* (2023)—called global attention to how Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine transgresses modern conventions of warfare because of its deliberate assault on civilians. As public intellectuals such as Yale historian Timothy Snyder have argued, Russia's war on Ukraine may be qualified as genocidal not only because it intends the destruction of individual members of an entire national community but also because it is grounded in the obliteration of institutions that sustain their sense of shared identity (cf. Snyder "Russia's Genocide").

Now, years after the full-scale invasion and the initial destruction of Mariupol, Russia's annihilation of Ukrainian literature and culture continues in ways that have had devastating effects on the nation's youngest generation. On March 22, 2022, children's author and poet Volodymyr Vakylenko was arrested by Russian forces together with his thirteen-year-old autistic son. Although they were both initially released, Vakylenko was once again abducted two days later. His body was found almost two months later in a mass grave. His literary colleague, Victoria Amelina, retrieved his journal depicting life under the Russian occupation and helped to have it published. A year later, Amelina—a children's author and a recipient of the Joseph Conrad Literary Award—died at the age of 37 in the Russian attack on the eastern Ukrainian city of Kramatorsk on June 27, 2023, while dining at a popular restaurant frequented by Ukrainian writers and their international allies. Then, another year later, on May 23, 2024, Russia committed a further act of what Snyder calls "a larger genocidal policy" by bombing Faktor Druk, one of Ukraine's most successful printing houses located in Kharkiv, the country's second-biggest city and academic center (cf. Culverwell). Since Factor has long produced a significant part of all books printed in Ukraine, including a majority of textbooks and many children's books, this attack—which killed seven people and wounded sixteen others—ultimately impacted young readers and students throughout Ukraine.

During the first few months of the war, we—this collection's editors and contributors—were each approached by friends, colleagues, and students in Western Europe and North America who all expressed interest in learning more about Ukrainian history, culture, and literature. Then, as the war grinded on, we each received appeals from Ukrainian colleagues who were worried that global attention to these same topics had seemed

to flag at precisely the time when it was most needed. Since we all work in the scholarly field of children's literature, we became swiftly aware of the fact that there is, as yet, no comprehensive English-language introduction to Ukrainian literature for young people. Therefore, this collection is intended to fill this critical gap. Each of its ten chapters, which range from pre-Christian oral folklore to contemporary picturebooks, middle-grade books, and YA novels, is intended to address the questions that our North American and Western European colleagues so enthusiastically posed to us at the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion. Moreover, as the war continues to drag on—even as, sadly, international attention has turned to other, equally tragic global atrocities—this collection is intended to remind readers of what remains at stake as Ukrainians defend their country at unbearable cost. The literary texts we examine here are those that have made an indelible impression on generations of Ukrainians, not least because readers encountered them during their youngest and most formational stages of development and political awareness. Many of these books are those that Ukrainian children continue to read in bomb shelters or new homes far beyond their national borders. Additionally, some of them are translations that are intended to reach audiences, young and old alike, from Czechia to Vietnam and from Brazil to Korea, in ways that reiterate Ukraine's presence in a greater global community. Ultimately, all of the texts examined by this collection give expression to a rich and vibrant Ukrainian culture that continues to be imperiled by Russia's genocidal war—and, since many of them are still beloved by contemporary Ukrainian children, they refer indexically to the actual young people who remain the most vulnerable victims of Russian aggression.

The title of this collection, *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children's Literature*, intentionally alludes to that of Oksana Zabuzhko's landmark novel, *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex* (1996), which, as post-Independence Ukraine's first literary best-seller, was also the first Ukrainian-language contemporary novel to be translated into multiple languages, including English (2011). Although, at first glance, these two titles might suggest incongruent themes—not least because they imply a gulf between the (Western) domains of childhood innocence and adult experience, respectively—they are, in fact, ultimately intertwined. Zabuzhko's semi-autobiographical novel, which depicts a Ukrainian writer's sojourns in North America, draws on images of intimacy, desire, and alienation in order to explore how Ukrainians perceive themselves within an increasingly globalized world. Zabuzhko's titular evocation of "fieldwork" thus alludes to the simultaneous feeling of vulnerability and excitement (indeed, a certain *jouissance*) experienced by Ukrainian intellectuals, artists, and writers as they labor to establish a space for the study of Ukrainian culture in the wide-ranging, and often inhospitable, contemporary fields of contemporary cultural and

critical study. Just so, this collection is inspired by a desire, both thrilling and terrifying, to carve out a space for Ukrainian children's literature in a field where it previously had not existed.

Indeed, if Ukraine has been long missing in the terrain of children's literature studies, this is in part because its rich literary outpourings have been conventionally regarded as expressions of a "minor" or "post-Soviet" nation of little relevance to Western scholarship. Sadly, even though scholars of Ukrainian children's literature have maintained a strong presence at international conferences such as the Children's Literature Association (ChLA) and the International Research Society for Children's Literature (IRSCL), they have tended to be marginalized. Often, they are folded into panels on "Russian" or "[post-] Soviet" children's literature—and just as often, even these panels are treated as more or less expendable and thus have been scheduled at the same time as those on "hot topics" in North American and British literature. To be sure, this has been the fate of other expressions of "minority" literatures from, for example, Southeast Asia, South America, Africa, Australia, and Central and Eastern Europe. However, a recent post-colonial turn—in children's literature studies as well as in Slavic studies—has since enabled the amplification of literature produced in nations and territories emerging from nineteenth- and twentieth-century global empires. Although, with the exception of Ireland, the term "post-colonial" has been generally associated with contemporary literature from the Global South, writers such as Zabuzhko and scholars such as Vitaly Chernetsky (2007), Tamara Hundorova (2014, 2019), and Marko Pavlyshyn (1993) have strenuously argued that contemporary Ukrainian literature is equally expressive of post-colonial themes, not least because Ukraine has historically been subject to both Tsarist Russian and Soviet imperial rule. One of the objectives of this collection, then, is to call attention to how Ukrainian children's literature contributes to a larger body of post-colonial literature and thus how its study might constitute an intervention in wider investigations of global literature for young people (cf. Kachak).

Significantly, however, even as this collection takes a global and transnational approach, it is also invested in an immanent critique of specifically Ukrainian literary texts. For example, it gives special attention to the most important authors and works as defined by aesthetics ("literary excellence"), popularity, or historical and cultural significance, and it also places titles and trends in a broader context, considering the socio-political situation, changing taste, and the history of institutions that shape the production and reception of Ukrainian children's literature. To this end, it is invested in a larger project, initially undertaken by scholars such as Tetiana Kachak and Emilia Ohar, of establishing a canon of Ukrainian children's literature. In doing so, we anticipate some resistance from Western readers,

especially those from the US and the UK, for whom the term "canon" has become associated with the privileging of dominant white/colonial voices and the marginalization of minority voices long excluded by structures of race and class. Even as we recognize the fraught connotations of this term, however, we insist that the construction of a literary canon is absolutely essential to post-colonial nations such as Ukraine, whose cultural and political sovereignty depend on their articulation of difference from their former imperial masters. Specifically, in the case of Ukraine, this involves tracing a unique cultural, political, and literary genealogy that contests those long engrained in the institutional memory of Russophilic Western Slavic studies. Indeed, we regard the establishment of a Ukrainian canon of children's literature as an act of resistance against Russian forces that are currently intent on erasing Ukrainian culture and eliminating the young people who embody it.

Thus, this collection proceeds chronologically, beginning with early Slavic mythology, folklore, and fairytales and ending with recently published Ukrainian children's books produced after the Russian full-scale invasion in February 2022. As such, it is organized into three clusters: the first on early sources of Ukrainian children's literature; the second on twentieth-century works of literature for young Ukrainian readers; and the third on texts produced after Ukraine's declaration of independence in 1991.

The first section, "The Sources of Ukrainian Children's Literature," begins with Katarzyna Jakubowska-Krawczyk's chapter on Ukrainian folktales and fairytales. Here, she demonstrates how ancient Slavic mythology endured even after the introduction of Christianity in 988 CE, significantly influencing Ukrainian folktales and fairytales, as well as holidays and traditions practiced even to this day. This chapter, which accounts for how folklore inspired some of Ukraine's most celebrated authors, gives way to Mateusz Świetlicki's and Anastasia Ulanowicz's second chapter, on Ukrainian nineteenth- and early-twentieth literary classics and their adaptations for child audiences. Specifically, this chapter introduces the work of Ukraine's national poet, Taras Shevchenko, the fables and fairytales of the Western Ukrainian author and political thinker Ivan Franko, and the fiction, poetry, and dramaturgy of the proto-feminist author Lesia Ukrainka. Each of these literary luminaries, the authors demonstrate, played an enormous role in the formation of Ukrainian national identity; consequently, their original works, which have crossed over to children's literature, as well as various adaptations of them, have maintained a central position within an evolving canon of Ukrainian children's literature.

The second section, "Ukrainian Children's Literature in the Century of Repressions," is focused on the development of Ukrainian children's literature in the twentieth century, specifically during the period (1917—1991)

when Ukraine was a Soviet republic. Mindful of the ways that the Soviet Union, despite its official disavowal of imperialism, nevertheless incorporated the vast and diverse territories of the Russian Empire it supplanted, each of these chapters deploys a post-colonial lens through which it examines the cultural, ideological, and linguistic tensions that inform Ukrainian children's literature produced during this complex and tumultuous historical era. Snizhana Zhygun's third chapter, on early Soviet Ukrainian children's literature, traces how the Leninist program of *korenizatsia* ("indigenization")—which encouraged the production of often experimental literary works in minority languages such as Ukrainian—gave way to state-imposed controls on form, content, and linguistic expression in the Stalinist 1930s. As Zhygun shows, many of the pioneering authors of the early twentieth century are now regarded as members of the "Executed Renaissance"—or a generation of Ukrainian authors who were imprisoned, assassinated, or otherwise forced to emigrate after their literary innovations were deemed expressions of "bourgeois nationalism" by Stalinist authorities. Anna Boginskaya's fourth chapter, on Soviet-era Russophone Ukrainian children's literature, returns to and expands on the literary periods and texts examined in the preceding ones by demonstrating how (and why) many Ukrainian writers used Russian, the *lingua franca* of the Soviet Empire, in texts produced directly for young Ukrainian readers. Anticipating questions often asked by contemporary Westerners—for example, "Why do so many Ukrainians identify themselves as such even though they speak Russian?" or "What is the difference between Ukrainians and Russians if so many of them speak the same language?"—Boginskaya offers a concise historical account of Russification and its linguistic, ideological, and literary implications. In turn, she accounts for how Ukrainian writers used Russian in order to at once adapt and subvert dominant Soviet themes and forms. In turn, Mateusz Świetlicki's fifth chapter, on Soviet-era works of children's literature, focuses on the oeuvres of two major twentieth-century Ukrainian writers, Hryhir Tiutiunyk and Vsevolod Nestaiko. Here, Świetlicki demonstrates how these authors responded to their similar traumatic origins by composing works that are dramatically different in genre, tone, and style; in this way, he calls attention to the rich nuances of Ukrainian-language texts produced even in the midst of Soviet totalitarianism. If this chapter—and the ones that precede it in this section—are focused on questions of ideology and language that emerge from children's texts produced within Soviet Ukraine, Maryna Vardanian's sixth chapter on diasporic Ukrainian literature accounts for how Ukrainian-language works of children's literature produced in North America offered a counter-narrative of Ukrainian national identity. Here, the author shows how Ukrainian émigré children's authors – both those of the 1930s-era "Executed Renaissance" and those

who fled the twin Nazi and Stalinist occupations of Second World War-era Ukraine—not only sustained but improvised on earlier discourses of Ukrainian national identity. Ultimately, this chapter shows how the twentieth-century diaspora created its own literary traditions even as it preserved memories and literary forms that would influence the development of post-Soviet Ukrainian children's literature.

The third and final section of this collection, "The Present and Future of Ukrainian Literature for Young People," showcases the changing trends in the Ukrainian book market since the country gained independence in 1991. Tetiana Kachak's and Tetyana Blyznyuk's seventh chapter, on contemporary Ukrainian poetry and prose for young people, shows how post-Independence-era Ukraine witnessed a veritable literary renaissance marked by the emergence of Ukrainian-language presses that encouraged the publication of poetry collections and middle-grade novels that involved linguistic innovation as well as exploration of historical and national themes. Likewise, in her following chapter on contemporary young adult (YA) Ukrainian literature, Halyna Pavlyshyn demonstrates how, since Ukraine's independence and successive democratic revolutions, books for adolescent readers have drawn on enduring questions of national identity even as they broach contemporary issues such as gender, sexuality, death, and youth cultures that emerge within an increasingly connected global society. The role of contemporary children's literature in such a larger world is taken up in the tenth chapter, in which Anastasia Ulanowicz argues that contemporary Ukrainian picturebooks function as the nation's "cultural ambassadors." Here, she accounts for how this distinct form, which depends on the affective interplay between verbal and visual components, has allowed Ukrainian children's authors and illustrators to reach global audiences. Ulanowicz's chapter, which concludes with an examination of picturebooks produced after the initial Russian invasion of 2014, gives way to Aliona Yarova's and Björn Sundemark's tenth and final chapter, on recently published Ukrainian children's books about war. Here, the authors argue that these texts, which offer unflinching representations of the effects of neo-imperial violence on the everyday life of Ukrainian young people, productively unsettle Western depictions of war for child readers—not least because they address war as an ongoing phenomenon, rather than as a past event recalled in the relative tranquility of the present.

Significantly, the authors of the final chapter contend that contemporary works of Ukrainian children's war literature draw on memories of the past—including Ukraine's rich folk and literary traditions—in order to give young readers hope for the future. Thus, this collection ends where it begins by demonstrating how the long history of Ukrainian children's literature has shaped a present generation that, even as it struggles for its

survival, is committed to Ukrainian identity and its new and developing literary expressions.

Notes

1 Russia also destroyed such sites as Ukraine's National Skovoroda Museum dedicated to Hryhoriy (Gregory) Skovoroda, a philosopher and poet of Ukrainian Cossack background known in Russia as "the first Russian philosopher."
2 For an approachable children's book in English about the attack see Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch's *Under Attack* (2025), the first volume of the "Kidnapped from Ukraine" trilogy issued by Scholastic.

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