

Tetiana Kachak

Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University, Ukraine

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6863-1736>

Ukrainian Canadian Children's Historical Fiction in the Interpretation of Mateusz Świetlicki

Review of the book: Świetlicki Mateusz, *Next-Generation Memory and Ukrainian Canadian Children's Historical Fiction: The Seeds of Memory*, Routledge, New York-London 2023.

Abstract

The review analyzes Mateusz Świetlicki's monograph *Next-Generation Memory and Ukrainian Canadian Children's Historical Fiction: The Seeds of Memory* (2023). The author's impressive corpus of anglophone Ukrainian Canadian children's historical fiction consists of 41 texts published between 1991 and 2021, including novels, novellas, picture books, short stories, and graphic novels. As it will be shown, the scientist describes the specifics of historical literature for young readers, considering both the combination of historical truth and fiction and the peculiarities of receptive poetics aimed at actualizing the child reader's "sense of personal identity".

The claim is made that Mateusz Świetlicki's book monograph is not only an important contribution to the study of Ukrainian Canadian and Canadian children's literature, highlighting the history of Ukraine and the relations of Ukrainians with other peoples in Canada, but also a fascinating story about how reading, imagining, and reimagining history can lead to the formation of beyond-textual next-generation memory.

Finally, as shall be argued, Świetlicki demonstrates that historical novels may help young readers understand the complexity of the Ukrainian past and present. The cultural memory of the Red Terror, the Holodomor, the Holocaust, the Second World War, as well as the current war, the genocide of Ukrainians committed by Putin and the Russian army, must be preserved, so that future generations understand the value of freedom, diversity, tolerance, and democracy that have to become a priority of every nation and state in order not to give a chance to wars, genocides, and Nazism.

Keywords: Mateusz Świetlicki, Ukrainian Canadian children, historical fiction, interpretation, next-generation memory.

Mateusz Świetlicki is a researcher of literature for children and youth, who frequently experiments with new theoretical concepts and approaches and uses the tools of interdisciplinary studies. He has broad erudition and experience in studying the literature of various nations, including Ukraine, Canada, the USA, and Poland. Notably, he often chooses unstudied or little-studied texts as his subject of analysis, thoroughly and comprehensively revealing current topics and problems. His ability to interpret the books' meaning and consider their socio-cultural, historical, and other possible contexts is astounding. Świetlicki offers a fresh and cohesive take on literary phenomena by juxtaposing the objects of analysis and supporting his reasoning with the results of other scholars' research, expressing his critical remarks, and building sound logical schemes of reasoning and assessment.

Świetlicki's work has brought Ukrainian children's literature and Ukraine's history and culture more generally to the attention of the Western world and presented it as a full-fledged object of European and North American research discourses. In this regard, his latest book monograph entitled *Next-Generation Memory and Ukrainian Canadian Children's Historical Fiction: The Seeds of Memory* is indicative. It was issued in Routledge's *Children's Literature and Culture* series in 2023. Świetlicki's impressive corpus of anglophone Ukrainian Canadian children's historical fiction consists of 41 texts published between 1991 and 2021, including novels, novellas, picturebooks, short stories, and graphic novels.

The touching story about Świetlicki's family in the preface emotionally prepares the reader to understand the problems of memory, stories about the past, the connections between generations, the descendants' understanding of the complex realities that befell their ancestors and shaped them both as individuals and as bearers of national culture, traditions, and memory.

Such acknowledgments emphasize Świetlicki's profound understanding of his research topic and give grounds for asserting that he is not just researching the chosen problem, but is also, in a certain way, experiencing it in a personal, associative dimension. Now we understand why the poignant quotes from L.M. Montgomery's novels accompany each chapter and what role the love of reading plays in the process of developing self-awareness and self-realization of an individual. The openness and authenticity of writing are essential features not only of artistic texts, but also of scholarly communication; they are vital to understand the author's intentions.

Compositionally, the book is well-structured – it consists of an introduction, five well-researched chapters, a conclusion, an appendix, and an index. In the *Introduction*, Świetlicki explains the book's title and outlines the subject and object of the analysis. The basis of his research concept is that "historical fiction for young people attempts to communicate cultural memory from one generation to the next", and in the process of reading it, non-textual memory is formed in the recipients. It is logical that Świetlicki operates with such concepts as Marianne Hirsch's "postmemory",¹ Alison Landsberg's "prosthetic memory",² and Anastasia Ulanowicz's "second-generation memory",³ as well as Jan Assmann's, Maurice Halbwachs, and Astrid Erll's "cultural memory".⁴

Świetlicki is right when he claims that anglophone historical fiction is of remarkable importance in the transcultural transfer of

¹ M. Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory", *Poetics Today*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2008, pp. 103–128.

² A. Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, Columbia University Press, New York 2004.

³ A. Ulanowicz, *Second-Generation Memory and Contemporary Children's Literature: Ghost Images*, Routledge, New York–London 2013.

⁴ J. Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity", transl. J. Czaplicka, *New German Critique*, no. 65, *Cultural History/Cultural Studies* (Spring–Summer), 1995, pp. 125–133. M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed., transl., and with an introduction by L. A. Coser, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1992. A. Erll, "Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction", [in:] *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. A. Erll and A. Nünning, with S. B. Young, De Gruyter, Berlin–New York 2008, pp. 1–15.

next-generation memory and historical discourses. Ukrainian Canadian children's literature is also aimed at recreating the culture of memory, "to introduce untold Ukrainian voices to Canadian history and cultural memory",⁵ to represent historical traumas and tackle the complex Ukrainian–Anglo-Canadian, Ukrainian–Indigenous, Ukrainian–Jewish, Ukrainian–Polish, and Ukrainian–Mennonite relations. Indeed, "in order to survive, cultural memory has to be told/written and repeated/read".⁶

Świetlicki describes the specifics of historical literature for young readers, considering both the combination of historical truth and fiction and the peculiarities of receptive poetics aimed at actualizing the child reader's "sense of personal identity" (Miriam Verena Richter⁷ also writes about this). He does not reject these books' cognitive and educational potential, making reference to the works of Perry Nodelman, Mavis Reimer, Hans Heino Ewers, Peter Hunt, Maria Nikolajeva, Carole Scott, and other researchers of this segment of literature. Świetlicki emphasizes careful disclosure of topics that are difficult for children to understand, the ones that discuss cruelty and atrocity, such as the Holocaust or the Holodomor. He considers it unacceptable to misinform young readers and to distort historical events because "authors always shape the next-generation memory they want to be transmitted through their books".⁸

As he notes, in the case of Canadian literature, one should consider concepts such as "Canadian multiculturalism" and Canada as a cultural mosaic or, to use Janice Kulyk Keefer language, a kaleidoscope. It is encouraging that Świetlicki does not limit himself to studying political and national memory, but also pays attention to gender, aesthetic, and discursive types.

⁵ M. Świetlicki, *Next-Generation Memory and Ukrainian Canadian Children's Historical Fiction: The Seeds of Memory*, Routledge, New York–London 2023, p. 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷ M. V. Richter, *Creating the National Mosaic: Multiculturalism in Canadian Children's Literature from 1950 to 1994*, Rodopi, Amsterdam–New York 2011, p. 25.

⁸ M. Świetlicki, *Next-Generation Memory...*, p. 9.

The historical tour offered by the author, together with a brief explanation of the realities of Ukraine before the First World War, in the interwar period, under the occupation of the Nazis and the Soviet government, are very relevant. Świetlicki describes in detail the waves of emigration of Ukrainians to Canada and provides statistical data. He also emphasizes the contradictory and subjective interpretations of the presence of Ukrainians and their relations with other ethnic groups, and gives a critical assessment of the anglophone research, in particular *Representing the Holocaust in Children's Literature* by Lydia Kokkola and *Tolerance Discourse and Young Adult Holocaust Literature* by Rachel Dean-Ruzicka.

Following Michael Rothberg, Świetlicki emphasizes that “instead of fighting memory wars and sticking to the simple victim-oppressor binary”, one must “consider memory as multidirectional: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not private”.⁹

Świetlicki outlines the political conditions that contributed to the development of the literature of Canadian Ukrainians and the preservation and multiplication of their national traditions and cultural heritage. At the same time, he notes the marginality of studies of Ukrainian Canadian literature in English and affirms the relevance of its reading and interpretation.

Świetlicki devotes the first chapter, entitled “Land of All Colors and Races? Canadian Cossacks, Indigenous Peoples, and the Myth of the Founding Fathers of the Prairies”, to the analysis of Larry Warwaruk's middle-grade novel *Andrei and the Snow Walker* (2002), its companion novel *Brovko's Amazing Journey* (2013), and Laura Langston's award-winning *Lesia's Dream* (2003), all of which describe emigration from Western Ukraine to the Canadian prairies at the turn of the 20th century. He also mentions Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch's popular *Prisoners in the Promised Land: The Ukrainian Internment Diary of Anya Soloniuk* (2007) and Marion Mutala's *Kokhum's Babushka: A Magical Métis/Ukrainian Tale* (2017). In

⁹ Ibid., p. 15–16.

a very interesting and deep way, Świetlicki reveals the authors' artistic retransmission of the similarities and differences between the first Ukrainian immigrants and the Indigenous Peoples, the articulation of the idea of the development of the prairies and "the process of turning the new country into home".¹⁰

The comparison of the works of Warwaruk and Langston prompts Świetlicki to draw conclusions about the stereotypical or non-stereotypical character of their views on Ukrainians and the historical accuracy of their books for children. The cross-reading approach makes it possible to follow in parallel two artistic versions of the symbolic transmission of the "seeds of memory" about the old country, which the emigrants had been forced to leave, and the artistic depiction of their different life stories in Canada. Not only events and episodes of the plot are examined by Świetlicki, but also narrative types, characters of the main heroes, models of their behaviour, and genre features of the works, which he explains through the prism of the specifics of literature addressed to children.

Świetlicki follows the stories of immigrants step by step, comparing the descriptions of their journey to Canada. The researcher assigns a specific role to the semantics of landscapes, how the main characters perceive the area, and how new topoi are associated with the Ukrainian nature of the native land. In the end, he concludes that in the analyzed novels, the Canadian prairies appear "as a vast promised land, a simulacrum of Ukraine where Ukrainian Canadian Cossacks can finally be free".¹¹

Next-Generation Memory and Ukrainian Canadian Children's Historical Fiction: The Seeds of Memory also considers how writers implement the myth of the founding fathers of the Canadian prairies in their texts. Using the example of Andrei's friendship with Gabriel in Warwaruk's novel, Świetlicki notes the cultural traditions that bring Ukrainians closer to the Métis. At the same time, he points to the details that indicate the assimilation of immigrants and

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 61.

the gradual detachment from “the Old Country”. In his reading of Skrypuch’s popular novel *Prisoners in the Promised Land*, he singles out and explains the episode with the gifts exchanged by Anya Solonyuk and the Pigokan lady. Finally, in *Kokhum’s Babushka*, an interesting but little-known picture book by Mutala, he points out the customs and traditions that bring Ukrainians and Métis closer. At the same time, however, he notes certain manifestations of hostility and racism in the behaviour of individual characters in the analyzed texts.

Świetlicki decodes the images-symbols of Ukrainianness as multifaceted phenomena, taking into account the results of historical and literary studies, in particular, the image of the Cossack, which “became one of the key symbols of Ukrainian Canadian identity”,¹² and in literature it has been used as a transcultural trope. He notes that in *Andrei and the Snow Walker*, Ukrainians emerge as the descendants of the Cossacks and the Scythians. Interestingly, another symbol is the image of the kobzar, which Warwaruk describes in the novel *Brovko’s Amazing Journey*. Świetlicki’s observations and analogies regarding the images of the Snow Walker and the Holy one are of particular significance.

The first chapter of *Next-Generation Memory and Ukrainian Canadian Children’s Historical Fiction: The Seeds of Memory* also points to the image of a family relic – the Bible – as a key image-symbol that connects the main character in Langston’s *Lesia’s Dream* to Ukrainian cultural traditions and beliefs and help her become the bearer of memory. Lesia, the novel’s central character, receives a Bible from her grandmother Nadia before going to Canada. Finally, in the novel’s last chapter, old Lesia hands it over to her own great-granddaughter, Laisha. Świetlicki very rightly interprets the transmission of the Bible as “the symbolic marking of Lesia as the guardian of traditions, values, and memory”.¹³

The Bible is a token of the symbolic seeds of memory, just like the Scythian cup in the novels by Warwaruk. Both the Bible and

¹² Ibid., p. 36

¹³ Ibid., p. 43.

the Scythian cup “belong to Ukraine” and are eventually returned to the Motherland. It is natural that in works for children there are charms, magic, fairy tales, personification, and belief in supernatural forces.

In important historical and cultural digressions, Świetlicki explains in more detail the events that led to certain historical and social phenomena. For example, he mentions the ban on the Ukrainian language, the role of Taras Shevchenko’s literature and creativity in the creation of the Ukrainian state, the development of the Cossacks and the activities of Hetman Dmytro Vyshnevetskyi, and the persecution of kobzars in Soviet times, among others. Notably, Świetlicki relies on the research of authoritative historians (Timothy Snyder, Frances Swyripa, Norman Davies, Anne Applebaum, Jaroslav Hrycak and others) and literary experts (Oksana Zabuzhko, George Grabowicz, Vitaly Chernetsky and others).

The second chapter introduces the readers to the theme of Ukrainians as enemy aliens during the First World War and the Canadian First World War Internment. Here Świetlicki studies several texts, including the picture book *Silver Threads* (1996) by Skrypuch and Michael Martchenko, Skrypuch’s novel *Prisoners in the Promised Land: The Ukrainian Internment Diary of Anya Soloniuk*, Glen Huser’s *Firebird* (2020), Pam Clark’s *Kalyna* (2016), and the graphic novel *Enemy Alien: A True Story of Life Behind Barbed Wire* (2020) by Kassandra Luciuk and Nicole Marie Burton. Świetlicki undertakes research on the internment, which seemed to be practically erased from the Canadian mnemonic discourse and public consciousness for decades. It has begun to be covered by Canadian Ukrainians in historical literature for children, so that the transmission of next-generation memory of the internment to children born more than 100 years after the end of the Great War is possible. The analysis of the artistic representation of the topic is preceded by Świetlicki’s comment on the attitude to the question of internment before and after the approval of Bill C-331.

Świetlicki highly appreciates the role of the first picture book on this topic, *Silver Threads* by Skrypuch and Martchenko, as well as

Skrypuch's other three texts. It is not by chance that he emphasizes the writer's biographical facts, which show her interest in the history of Ukrainian immigrants in Canada and motivate her to artistically broadcast her grandfather's experiences, including his stay in an internment camp.

In his interpretation of the *Silver Threads*, Świetlicki introduces the plot and singles out the fable elements that ensure a happy ending. However, he notes that the main mission of Skrypuch's book is to incorporate the internment into the Canadian collective memory. Notably, Świetlicki analyzes the verbal and visual components of the book to determine how well Skrypuch and Martchenko managed to achieve this goal. Moreover, he describes how the picture book was received by the readers and used by teachers.

He traces the dynamics of interest in the internment in literary and non-literary circles of Canada, which has been growing significantly since 2008, and proves that the role of Skrypuch's novel *Prisoners in the Promised Land*, published in the *Dear Canada* series, has been crucial.

It is worth noting that Świetlicki is a very attentive reader who deeply understands the content of the texts he analyzes, paying attention to paratexts, illustrations, photographs, and book design. He analyzes the image of Anya from Skrypuch's *Prisoners in the Promised Land* through her ideas, drawings, notes, as well as her emotional experience of moving to Canada, adapting to the Canadian way of life, and realizing that she is not Galician but Ukrainian. These observations are highlighted in the context of comparing the works of Skrypuch and Huser.

Another important problem that Świetlicki studies is the writers' depiction of the assimilation of Ukrainian immigrants, especially because of the increasing hostility and discrimination they were facing. He describes in great detail the markers of assimilation – the rejection of Ukrainian clothes, food, language, which expressed their identity, nationality, and ethnicity.

The cross-sectional readings of Skrypuch's *Prisoners in the Promised Land*, Clark's *Kalyna*, and Huser's *Firebird* allows Świetlicki to

compare different writers' depictions of internment camps, prisoner life, and the Anglo-Canadian exploitation of internees. He makes important points about how writers convey the idea of "forgiveness and reconciliation between Anglo-Canadians and Ukrainian Canadians and point to the need to commemorate the past".¹⁴

The third chapter, entitled "Canadian Pysanky and the Survival of the Seeds of Memory", is devoted to femininity, motherhood, fertility, and their connection to national identity, memory, and the preservation of traditions and customs of Ukrainian immigrants. In addition to the novels mentioned in the previous chapters of the monograph, Świetlicki carefully analyzes Gloria Kupchenko Frolick's *Anna Veryha* (1992). He notes that the episode of gifting a pysanka, a symbol of fertility and an emblem of Ukrainianness, appears in many Ukrainian Canadian texts, and at the same time, it is a symbol of passing on memory to future generations.

In a comparative analysis of Langston's *Lesia's Dream* and *Anna Veryha* by Kupchenko Frolick, Świetlicki examines the role of women as bearers of the seeds of memory – the writers' portrayal of their behaviour in relation to gender norms. Świetlicki claims and proves with the examples of selected episodes that the main characters of Ukrainian Canadian children's historical fiction are "not only bearers of the nation, but also progressive agents".¹⁵ He sees a distinct difference between the representatives of different generations: "grandmothers, who embody conservative values of continuity", are "the custodians of traditions"¹⁶ and the symbolic guardians of cultural memory and traditional gender roles,¹⁷ whereas young girls are "more progressive, but potentially, less Ukrainian, independent women".¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 107.

¹⁶ F. Swyrypa, "Wedded to the Cause: Ukrainian-Canadian Women", [in:] *Canada's Ukrainians: Negotiating an Identity*, ed. L. Y. Luciuk and S. Hryniuk, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1991, p. 217.

¹⁷ M. Świetlicki, *Next-Generation Memory...*, p. 110.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 108.

It is noteworthy that the transfer of individual and cultural memory to the descendants, as well as national traditions and customs, was the duty of mothers and grandmothers. Moreover, it is often connected with religious customs, in particular, the celebration of Easter and preparing Ukrainian Easter eggs, an Easter basket, Christmas celebrations, and preparation of the traditional twelve Christmas Eve dishes. This is also related to the transmission of the rich heritage of ethnic symbols, the Ukrainian clothes that are attributes of Ukrainianness and femininity: a handkerchief, a vyshyvanka, a women's traditional belt. Given that we are talking about works addressed to children, which are characterized by a fairy-tale aura and adventure-filled plot, in some works these attributes also perform a magical function (transfer in time, amulet for a child, etc.). This is clearly noted by Świetlicki.

Notably, Świetlicki very carefully interprets the relationships between women of different generations and he studies the themes of marriage (especially in Warwaruk's novels), fertility and childbirth. He also notes the patriarchal patterns of behaviour prescribed in most of the texts. But at the same time, the analysis of the behaviour patterns of young heroines shows that the younger generation of girls choose assimilation, rebel against patriarchal stereotypes, and want to learn, be independent, and successful (for example, Dotsia from *Anna Veryha*). They represent the Nasha Meri stereotype (cf. Swyrypa). But here, too, not everything is clear, as evidenced by the comparison and contrast of the character, behaviour, actions, and life choices of Anna and Dotsia from Kupchenko Frolick's book or Lesia and Minnie from Langston's novel.

In the fourth chapter, Świetlicki analyzes books about the Red Terror, Stalin's collectivization and the Holodomor of 1932–1933, written by authors of Ukrainian (Mutala, Gal, Skrypuch), Mennonite (Dueck), and German (Goldstone) origin. It is worth mentioning that this chapter fulfils an important mission – to critically evaluate the narratives which contain subjective and one-sided interpretations of little-known facts from Eastern European history and a negative interpretation of the experience of ethnic Ukrainians (as, for example,

in Barbara Smucker's Canadian classic *Days of Terror*), to point to the historical truth and to show which books convey it.

Świetlicki's truthful position and the chosen metaphor of the "plague" to denote the Soviet ideology as a spreading plague stigmatizing the victims of Lenin's so-called Red Terror, Stalin's collectivization and, most importantly, the Great Famine of 1932–1933, are impressive. He offers a broad historical and socio-cultural context, which emphasizes the ability to understand the literature about the Holodomor – a theme on which he has published extensively – even by those readers who have never heard about this genocide. Świetlicki introduces the historical background of the Holodomor, collectivization and the statistical data of Stalin's genocide of Ukrainians, and proves that the Great Famine of 1932–1933 has become a fundamental part of Ukrainian Canadian memory politics. However, it has not been sufficiently represented in anglophone literature. Moreover, this topic was also banned in Ukraine until 1991. But after the successful debunking of Soviet myths, propaganda and disinformation in the 1980s, the situation has changed.

Świetlicki compares the narratives about Mennonite migrants in Barbara Smucker's *Days of Terror* (2008) and Adele Dueck's *Nettie's Journey* (2005) with the Ukrainian migrants in the aforementioned novels by Langston and Warwaruk. It is clear that he questions the validity of the image of Ukrainians "only as nameless peasants and anarchist bandits" in Dueck's novel *Nettie's Journey*. In his opinion, it does not add quality to historical fiction, similarly to the counterproductive comparisons of the Holodomor to the Holocaust.

Demonstrating the mnemonic potential of Canadian historical literature, Świetlicki positively evaluates Gabriele Goldstone's *The Kulak's Daughter* (2009) about the life of a Ukrainian village before the Holodomor (between 1929 and 1931) and the tragic fate of a family that suffered from Stalinist repressions. However, he critically studies the updated version of this novel, *Red Stone*, and identifies the conclusions drawn later in the *Broken Stone* about the Red Terror of the Soviet regime and the power of Stalin's propaganda.

Świetlicki also emphasizes the fact that “writing about her mother’s traumatic childhood, Goldstone explores her own heritage and works through posttrauma”.¹⁹

In this chapter, Świetlicki also examines the depiction of the famine in the picture book *Enough* (2000) by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch and Michael Martchenko and a short epistolary novel *My Dearest Dido: The Holodomor Story* by Marion Mutala. Regarding the latter, he notes several problematic aspects, in particular historical inaccuracies and the questionable narrative choices. Instead, he highly appreciates the novel *Philipovna: Daughter of Sorrow* (2019) by Valentina Gal, which was inspired by the story of Gal’s mother’s childhood, and may become the source of next-generation memory about the Holodomor for the young readers.

As for the fifth section of the monograph, entitled “Survivors, Oppressors, Implicated Subjects, and Entangled Bystanders. The Second World War and the Holocaust”, it is interesting, complex in terms of content, contradictory in some statements regarding the Ukrainian national struggle for independence, but dynamic in the presentation of reasoning and analysis of the works. Based on the example of the analysis of eight books, in particular seven Skrypuch’s Second World War novels and *Louder Than Words* (2020) by Kathy Kacer, using a transcultural perspective, Świetlicki claims that “contemporary historical fiction enables the transfer of next-generation memory, which challenges the victim-oppressor binary by showing the implicated position(s) of Eastern Europeans during the Second World War”.²⁰ He explains thoroughly Ukraine’s situation during the Second World War and demonstrates the role of the Holocaust in the Ukrainian Canadian mnemonic discourse since the mid-twentieth century.

The value of this chapter lies both in the coverage of a new topic and in the fact that Świetlicki is the first literary critic to carefully read Skrypuch’s *Hope’s War* (2001) and her two Second World War

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 148.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 169.

trilogies,²¹ and to study the depiction of Ukrainian displaced persons (DPs), the underground operations of Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), Jewish–Ukrainian relations, the Holocaust, and the presentation of the Ukrainian Righteous Among Nations. I agree with Świetlicki’s opinion that these works play an important role in passing on memory to future generations, in particular, about the traumatic experiences of many Ukrainians. These novels “challenge the anti-Semitic generalizations attributed to Ukrainians in North America without withholding information about the instances of collaboration from the reader or being overly didactic”.²² They also show how Canada emerges as the only place where Skrypuch’s protagonists can find peace.

The analysis of Kacer’s *Louder Than Words* articulates another version of the artistic display of Ukrainian–Jewish relations and the Second World War in Canadian literature. A comparison of the two authors emphasizes the ambiguity of the interpretation of a complex topic in Ukrainian Canadian children’s literature.

In the process of analysis of the novels by Skrypuch and Kacer, Świetlicki considers the potential risks of oversimplifications, misinformation, historical inaccuracies, and infantilization in children’s Holocaust fiction. His conclusions regarding the artistic features of historical adventure prose for children are reasoned and valid.

Mateusz Świetlicki’s book monograph is not only an important contribution to the study of Ukrainian Canadian and Canadian children’s literature, highlighting the history of Ukraine and the relations of Ukrainians with other peoples in Canada, but also a fascinating story about how reading, imagining, and reimagining history can lead to the formation of beyond-textual next-generation memory.

Świetlicki demonstrates that historical novels may help young readers understand the complexity of the Ukrainian past and present.

²¹ *Don’t Tell the Enemy* (2017), *Trapped in Hitler’s Web* (2020), *Traitors Among Us* (2021), *Stolen Child* (2010), *Making Bombs for Hitler* (2012) and *Underground Soldier* (2014).

²² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

The cultural memory of the Red Terror, the Holodomor, the Holocaust, the Second World War, as well as the current war, the genocide of Ukrainians committed by Putin and the Russian army, must be preserved, so that future generations understand the value of freedom, diversity, tolerance and democracy that have to become a priority of every nation and state in order not to give a chance to wars, genocides and Nazism.

References

- Richter, M. V., *Creating the National Mosaic: Multiculturalism in Canadian Children's Literature from 1950 to 1994*, Rodopi, Amsterdam–New York 2011.
- Swyrypa, F., "Wedded to the Cause: Ukrainian-Canadian Women", *Canada's Ukrainians: Negotiating an Identity*, ed. L. Y. Luciuk and S. Hryniuk, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1991, pp. 238–253.
- Świetlicki M., *Next-Generation Memory and Ukrainian Canadian Children's Historical Fiction: The Seeds of Memory*, Routledge, New York–London 2023.