

SURROUNDED BY CONFLICTS: CHILDREN'S WAR LITERATURE IN THE MAKING

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP
AARHUS UNIVERSITY
12 -13 JUNE 2025



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Since 1989/1991 young generations of child readers have grown up across Eastern Europe and the newly independent states, while their countries struggled to define and narrate emerging national and minority identities. Some experienced coming of age during relatively peaceful transitions, others became witnesses to revolutions, unrest, and wars. The changing conditions for publishing, circulating, and reading books paved the way for a new independent children's literature, gradually developing on a private and internationalized book market, while normative notions of childhood changed and redefined the role of children's books. Today, the Russia-Ukraine war has brought conflict and atrocities back to Europe, but also prompted a new surge of children's war literature and reawakened scholarly interest in such literature.

In recent years, the canon of war literature for children and young adults has significantly expanded, with scholars shifting their focus from the appropriateness of the medium to new functions of children's literature in war-torn societies. We are indebted to existing methods for examining atrocity-themed children's literature that challenge ideas of childhood as a protected, peaceful stage of life and literary theoretical discussions of war as a representational problem in children's literature. However, in this workshop, we want to move beyond the problem of representation of war in children's literature, to shed light on the cultural wars embedded in the making, circulation, and reception of children's war literature across the region. We welcome new research approaches to understand contemporary literary responses to war and conflicts across the East European region from 1989/1991 to the present.

How and why do publishers, authors, illustrators, educators, and other adult actors continue creating and communicating about war literature for children? How does war-themed children's literature contribute to nation- and identity-forming processes? How do wars and conflicts affect children's publishing and other involved institutions? What is the role of literary institutions from publishers, schools, libraries to book institutes in war-torn societies? What are the potentials of informal and civic networks in reading and writing for war-affected children?

With this non-exhaustive list of questions, we hope to open a dialogue on children's war literature in the making in the stated region and time.



DAY 1: 12 JUNE 2025

Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS), build. 1630,
r. 301 Høegh-Guldbergs Gade 6B
(Tram L2 from Aarhus Central St. to "Universitetsparken")

9:00 – REGISTRATION / COFFEE**9:30 – 10:00 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

BIRGITTE BECK PRISTED AND NINA CHRISTENSEN
(AARHUS UNIVERSITY)

**10:00 – 12:00 PANEL 1: WRITING AND READING BY
WAR CHILDREN AND THERAPISTS**

CHAIR: NINA CHRISTENSEN

- **ALIONA YAROVA** (MALMÖ UNIVERSITY): WAR STORIES IN THE CLASSROOM: CHILDREN READING AND WRITING THE WAR IN UKRAINE
- **NADIYA PAVLYK** (UNIVERSITY OF AARHUS): A PILOT STUDY OF SHARED READING OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS ABOUT THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR
- **SVETLANA EFIMOVA** (LUDWIG MAXIMILIAN UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH): PSYCHOLOGISTS AS CHILDREN'S BOOKS AUTHORS: A CONTEMPORARY WARTIME PHENOMENON IN UKRAINE, GERMANY, AND POLAND

DISCUSSANT: MATEUSZ SWIETLICKI (UNIVERSITY OF WROCLAW)

12:00 – 13:00 LUNCH BREAK**13:00 – 14:30 PANEL 2: CULTURAL WARS IN
PUBLISHING**

CHAIR: EKATERINA SHATALOVA

- **LARISSA RUDOVA** (POMONA COLLEGE): CULTURE THREE AND CHILDREN'S WAR LITERATURE OF RESISTANCE IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA
- **BELLA DELACROIX OSTROMOUKHOVA** (SORBONNE UNIVERSITÉ) AND **LAURE THIBONNIER** (UNIVERSITÉ GRENOBLE ALPES): THE W-WORD: WORDS AND SILENCES ABOUT WAR IN RUSSIAN LITERATURE FOR TEENAGERS REVISITED BY RUSSIA'S LARGE-SCALE INVASION OF UKRAINE
- **SVETLANA MASLINSKAIA** (UNIVERSITÉ GRENOBLE ALPES): WAR LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN IN RUSSIA (2000-2025): CONTINUUM AND CHALLENGES

DISCUSSANT: BIRGITTE BECK PRISTED (AARHUS UNIVERSITY)

PROGRAM

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14:30 – 15:00 COFFEE BREAK

15:00 – 16:00 GENERAL DISCUSSION

18:00 – CONFERENCE DINNER

NOMELLE BISTRO & BAR

FREDERIKSGADE 29
8000 AARHUS

DAY 2: 13 JUNE 2025

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9:00 – 9:30 COFFEE BREAK**9:30 – 11:00 PANEL 3: TRANSBORDER
CIRCULATIONS, TRANSLATIONS, AND RESPONSES
TO WAR**

CHAIR: NADIYA PAVLYK

- **EKATERINA SHATALOVA** (UNIVERSITY OF AARHUS):
BORDER CROSSING IN RUSSIAN AND UKRAINIAN EDITIONS
OF YURI NIKITINSKY'S VOVKA WHO SADDLED THE BOMB
- **ANKE VOGEL** (JOHANNES GUTENBERG-UNIVERSITÄT
MAINZ): WHEN WAR MOVES INTO CHILDREN'S BOOKS: THE
NEED TO EXPLAIN AND ENCOURAGE EVEN UNDER THE
MOST DIFFICULT CONDITIONS
- **MATEUSZ SWIETLICKI** (UNIVERSITY OF WROCLAW) AND
ANASTASIA ULANOWICZ (UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA):
DOLPHINS, ADVENTURE, AND HISTORY: THE RUSSO-
UKRAINIAN WAR IN ANGLOPHONE MIDDLE-GRADE
FICTION

DISCUSSANT: LARISSA RUDOVA (POMONA COLLEGE)

11:00 – 11:30 COFFEE BREAK**11:30 – 13:00 PANEL 4: BOOKS FOR STORAGE OF
WAR MEMORY AND TRAUMA**

CHAIR: BIRGITTE BECK PRISTED

- **ANI CHUBINIDZE** (NEWTON FREE SCHOOL & NATIONAL
CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT,
TBILISI): NARRATIVES OF WAR AND YOUTH: INCORPORATING
BURIED VINE INTO GEORGIA'S SCHOOL
- **VLADIMIRA REZO** (UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB): “A LITTLE WAR
DIARY” – AN EXAMPLE OF POLITICAL INTERFERENCE IN THE
CROATIAN REQUIRED READING LIST
- **DARIA SEMENOVA** (VILNIUS UNIVERSITY): PATRIOTIC PETS
AND VENGEFUL WILDLIFE: ANIMAL NARRATIVES AND THE
SHAPING OF WAR MEMORY IN UKRAINIAN CHILDREN'S
LITERATURE

DISCUSSANT: INGA KAPUSTIAN (UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN
DENMARK)

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13:00 – 14:00 LUNCH

**14:00 – 15:00 WRAP UP AND
PUBLICATION PLANS**

**16:00 – GUIDED ART WALK IN AARHUS “17
WALLS”**

STARTING AT **KLOSTERGADE 80: “MONKEY & BIRD
MURAL”** (15 MIN FROM AIAS), HIGHLIGHTING NEW
MURALS, CREATED BY STREET ARTISTS, EACH
INTERPRETING THE UN SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS.

BRING WALKING SHOES AND DRESS ACCORDING
TO WEATHER.

THE WALK ENDS CLOSE TO MEFISTO AROUND
17:30-18:00.

**18:00 – INFORMAL ‘HYGGE’
AT MEFISTO PIZZA & BAR**

VOLDEN 28
8000 AARHUS C

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

PANEL 1: Writing and Reading by War Children and Therapists

Aliona Yarova: War Stories in the Classroom: Children Reading and Writing the War in Ukraine

This paper addresses the question of how and through what pedagogies war narratives can be approached in Ukrainian and European schools to build reflective and inclusive space for children to talk about the war. The paper explores the challenges and possibilities of using creative writing techniques to approach the theme of war in the classroom. The study draws on educational potential of picturebooks (Arizpe and Ryan 2018, Bland 2018, Tarbox 2017) and therapeutic potential of creative and life writing (Jensen 2019, King et al. 2013, Hunt 2000, Costa et al. 2018). Specifically, the paper explores how the stories in the books selected for workshops (such as *The Yellow Butterfly*) are read, interpreted, discussed, sequenced and complemented with children's textual and visual storytelling. Children's narratives created by groups of children in 6th and 8th grades during creative writing workshops facilitated in three Ukrainian schools (Lviv, Lutsk and Derazhnia) are analyzed. Children's narratives are interpreted in relation to the primary materials (drawings and texts and storytelling) and further illuminated by the teachers' feedback through interviews and discussions. There are several creative writing techniques applied in the study: genre-focused approach when children are asked to tell war stories through the genre of comics or short story; narrating sequels or prequels of the stories using text-based or visual narratives; narrating missing episodes in the story; creating dialogues where two or more characters are involved, illustrating the story with additional images. By working in groups, children are free to choose how much they are willing to contribute to the story-making. The study explores how this approach creates an inclusive environment where the making of the story blurs the boundaries between real and fictional: each child can share their real-life experience through the fictional character or create fictional story based on their real experiences. The patterns and common themes (such as hopeful narratives or the belief in victory) in children's works show that through storytelling children gain agency, the sense of control and build resilience.

Nadiia Pavlyk: A Pilot Study of Shared Reading of Children's Books about the Russian-Ukrainian War

This empirical pilot study investigates the alignment between the theoretical and methodological foundations of "shared reading" groups for children, mainly developed in a Western context during peacetime, and their practical application in the current Ukrainian wartime context. Shared reading is defined as organised systematic reading by groups or families, followed by discussion of the readings. Existing studies of shared reading (Ahrensberg, 2024; Andersen & Nielsen, 2016; Grilli & Terrusi, 2014) show that participating readers increase their rate of literacy acquisition, heighten their level of wellbeing associated with reading, and foster conscious interaction with other dialogue partners' experiences. This study is focusing on the possible strengths, limitations, and observed outcomes of reading children's books about the Russian-Ukrainian war. Drawing on focus group interviews with children's librarians in Ukraine and a qualitative analysis of activities in reading groups, the study examines how young readers perceive and engage with literature addressing the ongoing war. Based on the findings, the paper proposes methodological recommendations for librarians, educators, and parents to introduce shared reading practices for books on war-related themes among Ukrainian-speaking child readers.

Svetlana Efimova: Psychologists as Children's Books Authors: A Contemporary Wartime Phenomenon in Ukraine, Germany, and Poland

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has affected children and young adults in many ways. Numerous Ukrainian children have experienced trauma, with millions forced to leave their homes. Children in the EU have encountered unprecedented media coverage of war, the threat of its expansion, and the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in need of help.

In Ukraine and the two EU countries with the most significant number of Ukrainian refugees (Germany and Poland), professional psychologists have responded to the need to support distressed children by creating literature for young readers. This is part of a larger international tendency: the "merging of psychological discourse and children's literature" (Kidd 2011: XXVI). Books created to help children cope with distressing experiences have gained new relevance as a contemporary wartime phenomenon.

This paper first identifies different roles of psychologists in contemporary war-related children's literature (advisors, authors of texts, and/or paratexts, such as prefaces and afterwords). Then, it focuses on three books authored by psychologists in Ukraine, Germany, and Poland in 2022 and 2024. *Smikhovys'ko* (2024) by Svitlana Roiz is about a Ukrainian girl who learns to cope with her refugee experience. *Ola, Borys i nowi przyjaciele* (2022) is a story about the adaptation of two Ukrainian refugee children in Poland, created by a team of psychologists. It was published in Polish and Ukrainian versions, thus addressing both refugees and children of the host society. *Mama, Papa... wie passiert Krieg?* (2022) by Gabriele Liesenfeld is based on a fairy tale about a war between mountain- and water-elves. Although this book primarily addresses German children, it was also published in a Ukrainian version.

This analysis will examine both the poetics of these books within children's literature and the interplay between their fictional stories and paratexts, situating these books within different social discourses and civic networks.

PANEL 2: Cultural Wars in Publishing

Larissa Rudova: Culture Three and Children's War Literature of Resistance in Contemporary Russia

In his book *The Old and the New: A Book of Articles on Children's Literature*, the great Soviet critic and literary theoretician Viktor Shklovsky observed that "Soviet children's literature turned out to be a cross-section in which the laws of the construction of our literature in general are seen." His words certainly resonate with the state of contemporary children's literature and culture that responds to the political and ideological realities mandated by the Putin government. If in the Soviet Union there were two models of culture, as articulated by Vladimir Paperny in his seminal book *Culture Two*—the free and experimental Culture One of the avant-garde and the authoritarian and tendentious Culture Two that emerged in the Stalinist 1930s and 1940s—then in contemporary Russia we are dealing with a new cultural model, Culture Three, as postulated by Evgeny Dobrenko who argues that unlike Culture One and Culture Two, which were capable of generating new aesthetic models and meanings, contemporary Culture Three demonstrates a tragic "exhaustion of cultural soil." Breaking away from the traditions of the European Enlightenment, alive even in Soviet times, Culture Three stalls any creative development and sinks into stagnation.

In this paper, I will discuss how contemporary children's war literature is shaped by a conservative Third Culture worldview and how an alternative model of children's war literature continues to undermine its efforts. My main argument is that although books about the war in Ukraine cannot be published in Russia, and the children's book market is oversaturated with books about Russian war patriotism and military valor, the existence of literature by Russian and translated authors that clandestinely subverts the militaristic and imperialist tendency of Culture Three and inculcates anti-war and humanistic values in young readers deserves more attention. My focus will be on the children's literature of resistance that includes such contemporary authors as, for example, Evgeny Rudashevsky, Olga Kolpakova, Yulia Yakovleva, Jose Jorge Letria, and Franck Pavloff. The publication, dissemination, and discussion of these books signifies an act of defiance against Culture Three.

Bella Delacroix Ostromoukhova and Laure Thibonnier: The W-word: Words and silences about war in Russian literature for teenagers revisited by Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine

The war is a very present topic in Russian-language children's literature. During the Soviet period, the civil war (1917-1921) and the "Great Patriotic War" (1941-1945) generated a large number of books for children and teenagers where children are "reforged" as soviet citizens (Kostetskaya 2023), exemplifying those who were considered as heroes (Maslinskaia 2023). This type of narrative, although modified, has persisted in post-Soviet Russian children's literature (Maslinskaia 2023, Lanoux, Herold, Bukhina 2024, p.198-206). More recently, since the 2000's and 2010's, new anti-war narratives appeared on this segment of the Russian-language children book market (Bogatyeva, Timoshchenkova 2021, Friess 2022). The start of the Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has turned the world of children's book publishing upside down and led to the apparition of new prohibitions and injunctions (Thibonnier, Maslinskaia, Ostromoukhova 2023).

In this paper we propose to examine the way Russia's war in Ukraine can (or not) be said in Russian-language children's literature today. In the first part, we retrace the editorial context: relying on interviews with several actors of the book market, we show the setting of the mechanisms of (auto-)censure and the way these actors perceive the possibility and necessity to speak with children about the ongoing invasion. In the second part, we focus on the collection of short stories "Слово на букву В" (The W-word), published outside of Russia by the publishing house Freedom Letters in 2023. Using both literary analysis and sociological interviews with authors and publisher, we show how the full-scale invasion of Ukraine can be depicted and how these narratives rely on previous representations or invent new ways of saying or silencing the war.

Svetlana Maslinskaia: War Literature for Children in Russia (2000-2025): Continuum and Challenges

When studying military literature for children, it is worth distinguishing between war literature in peacetime and war-themed children's literature during a war. In my paper I will consider how the military theme was presented to children before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and after the invasion.

During 2000-2021, large publishing houses founded in Soviet times (Children's Literature) republished historical war stories published before 1991, mostly works about the Great Patriotic War. Since 2014 the number of war-themed book series has increased. But the quantitative increase of books about war for children was exclusively due to reprints, not new works in the genre. Only small independent publishing houses printed a few novel works (for example, Cloud Regiment by Eduard Verkin published by KompasGuide). Thus, the reproduction of the Soviet commemorative narrative about the war was happening. Alternative points of view were not presented.

An analysis of publishing policy after February 2022 allows us to identify two strategies. Large publishing houses, on the one hand, continued to reproduce the same Soviet commemorative narrative about the past wars. Ostensibly, they do not respond to direct orders from the authorities to legitimize the current war. While small children's publishing houses, on the contrary, are involved in the propaganda of pro- and anti-war values.

The norm for depicting a war has not changed qualitatively. The only qualitative difference with the pre-war period is the strengthening of the theme of children's heroism and heroism in general. The new pro-war children's book after 2022 inherits precisely this theme. Heroic narrative usually takes the form of pseudo-folkloric fairy tales which fulfills the state's request for "traditional values." The new anti-war book is characterized by experiments with form and content, primarily in the use of metaphor to convey the anti-war message.

PANEL 3: Transborder Circulations, Translations, and Responses to War

Ekaterina Shatalova: Border Crossing in Russian and Ukrainian editions of Yuri Nikitinsky's Vovka Who Saddled the Bomb

This paper will look at Russian and Ukrainian editions of *Vovka Who Saddled the Bomb*, a middle grade short novel about two friends separated by death during the 2014 annexation of Crimea, written by Russian-Ukrainian writer Yuri Nikitinsky (1970–2023). First published in Russian in a Kiev-based journal in 2015, the text was then republished (also in Russian) in a 2016 anthology of contemporary Ukrainian literature for young adults before making it to the Russian market in 2018. Under the contract with the Russian publisher, the author retained the right to publish his text in Ukraine in both Russian and Ukrainian languages (both published in 2019). In 2020, it was awarded the Volodymyr Korolenko Prize for best Russian-language fiction published in Ukraine.

Despite the use of the same language in Russian and Ukrainian editions, this case of intralingual translation is complicated by political, ideological, national, and cultural factors, especially the intensified sensitivity of the 'language question' and decreased rate of reading in Russian in Ukraine. By comparing the changing text through various editions and versions, including paratextual elements, as well as the accompanying illustrations, this work explores the degree of mediation and ideological manipulation (Lefevere 2017; Leonardi 2020) occurring during textual production to suit different purposes and target different audiences.

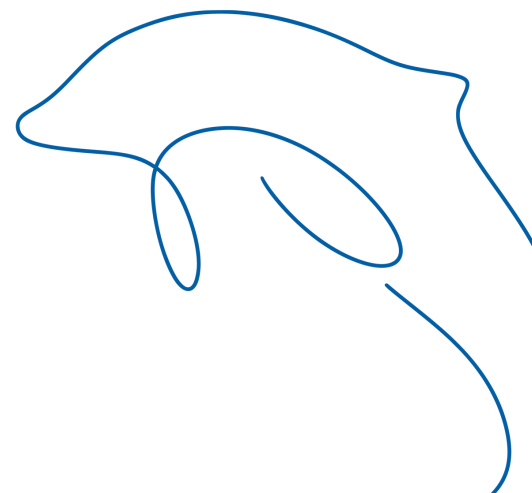
Anke Vogel: When war moves into children's books: The need to explain and encourage even under the most difficult conditions

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 shook many people in Germany to the core, as armed conflicts have not taken place in such close geographical proximity for a very long time. In addition, the effects were felt immediately in the form of shortages of energy, certain foodstuffs, etc. In addition, many people fled from Ukraine to Germany. As the war had a direct impact on life in Germany, which was also experienced by children and fuelled fears, there was a growing need to talk to children about the war in an appropriate way, which led to a large number of corresponding books (new and first editions) in the publishing programmes. The publication of relevant books, such as 'Als der Krieg nach Rondo kam' by the Ukrainian creative duo Romana Romanyschyn and Andrij Lessiw, was a special form of solidarity with authors and artists from Ukraine. Overall, the German children's book scene showed solidarity with its colleagues threatened by the war in many ways. In addition, a few books were produced specifically for refugee children. At the same time, however, production conditions deteriorated, with a shortage of raw materials, delays in production and delivery and also price increases. The talk will look at the production of children's books in the context of the war in Ukraine from a holistic perspective. The focus will be on the German or German-language book industry, but where possible references will also be made to Ukrainian book people.

Mateusz Swietlicki and Anastasia Ulanowicz: Dolphins, Adventure, and History: The Russo-Ukrainian War in Anglophone Middle-Grade Fiction

Children's literature has played a crucial role in helping young Ukrainian people understand and cope with their experiences of war and occupation (cf. Yarova and Sundmark; Efimova; Kachak). Since 2014, Ukrainian publishers have published war-themed novels and picturebooks for all age groups, but only picturebooks have been translated and published outside of Ukraine. However, as this paper argues, it is also important for children in other parts of the world to be introduced to the history of Russia's invasion of Ukraine through engaging and historically- and culturally-accurate narratives, yet ones meeting the reading expectations of non-Ukrainian youth. In this paper, then, we argue that Chrystyna Lucyk-Berger's middle-grade novel, *Swimming With Spies* (2024), issued by Scholastic and blurred by Marsh Forchuk Skrypuch, is a particularly effective example of a text that addresses the nuances of Russia's ongoing war on Ukraine for a North American audience without oversimplifying its complexity. In our reading of the novel, we will also demonstrate that the author skillfully combines elements of historical fiction, thriller, and adventure.

Written by a diasporic author fluent in both Ukrainian and US-American culture, and set at the beginning of Russia's occupation of Crimea in 2014, *Swimming With Spies* depicts the efforts of a group of ethnic Ukrainian and Russian children living in Sevastopol to rescue a pod of dolphins seized by the Russian army for military use. By offering a well-wrought thriller whose plot is reminiscent of those with which North American young people may be familiar – for example, *Dolphin Tale* (2011) and *Free Willy* (1993) – Lucyk-Berger is able to capture the attention of young people who might otherwise have little knowledge of or interest in the war in Ukraine. In doing so, however, she subtly and expertly introduces readers to the basic historical facts of the preliminary Russian invasion – including the appearance of “little green men” and the forced referendums that rationalized the Russian occupation of Crimea – which might amplify and contextualize readers' received knowledge of the current full-scale war. Notably, Lucyk-Berger also deploys such literary elements as characterization and setting to counter misinformation about the war and about Ukraine in general. For example, by featuring two main characters of both Ukrainian and Russian parentage who are equally fluent in Ukrainian and Russian and who are also aware of the politics of language, the author effectively dispels Western conventional images of Ukraine as a predominately Russophone country that only achieved national self-awareness after the Russian full-scale invasion in 2022. Likewise, by inserting minor but significant details such as neighborhood taco food trucks that cater to vegetarian diets and English classrooms in which pupils engage in transnational social media projects, Lucyk-Berger equally counters dominant images of Ukraine as a backwater semi-democracy woefully behind its more progressive Western neighbors. Finally, although it furnishes a happy – yet open – ending requisite of the conventions of middle-grade novels, *Swimming With Spies* does not spare its readers more painful details about the on-going war, such as the difficult decisions children of mixed parentage must make about their national identity, or Russia's forced conscription of both humans and animals in its neo-imperialist project.



PANEL 4: Books for Storage of War Memory and Trauma

Ani Chubinidze: Narratives of War and Youth: Incorporating Buried Vine into Georgia's School

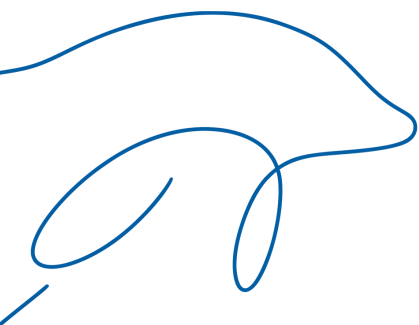
Given Georgia's long history of geopolitical instability, including its incorporation into the Russian Empire, later the USSR, the restoration of independence in 1991, and two subsequent wars following the Soviet Union's dissolution, it is unsurprising that Georgian society has been producing a significant body of war-themed literature. These works often depict children and adolescents as principal characters. However, such texts have yet to be recognized as part of young adult literature of atrocity and as valid educational tools within the school curriculum. The following article aims to highlight the importance of incorporating young adult literature about war into the Georgian school curriculum. It focuses on analysing the characteristics of young adult war literature in *Buried Vine* by Artur Yurkevich and Malkhaz Jajanidze, an (auto)biographical novel centered on the Abkhazian war. Despite exhibiting clear traits of young adult war literature, *Buried Vine* is marketed to an adult audience and remains excluded from school curricula. I argue that examined text can be employed as a therapeutic tool or a tool for social action in addressing generationally transmitted collective trauma. In a context where political instability persists, parts of the country remain occupied, and a full-scale war continues in Ukraine, the inclusion of young adult war literature in Georgian schools is more relevant than ever.

Vladimira Rezo: "A Little War Diary" – an Example of Political Interference in the Croatian Required Reading List

Throughout history, Croatia has been part of other empires and monarchies, but literary production of Croatian writers has always been called the Croatian name. During the state Union with other South Slavic peoples from 1918 to 1991, there was never any "Yugoslav" literature, either for adults or for children. The writers wrote in their national language, and when they presented themselves outside the Yugoslav borders, it was the name for a package of national literature. The proclamation of Croatian independence continues the tradition interrupted by the Yugoslav episode. The function of Croatian children's literature created during and after the Homeland War is to strengthen the national identity more than to build it because it already exists, only discontinuously. With the aim of raising national awareness, a three-part novel "Little War Diary" (1992) by Stjepan Tomaš, also known for his first part "My Dad sleeps with Angels", was included in the required reading list. After eleven years of complaints based on the condemnation of portions of a novel taken out of context, the novel was erased from the required reading list. It leads to the conclusion that individual interest groups used the novel for daily political purposes and created a controversy that served their interests. Despite attempts to make Croatian children's literature about the Homeland War tendentious and politicized, the novel also came out in 2024 as the 13th edition of the Mozaik knjiga publishing house. The Russian aggression against Ukraine, which has continued since 2014 and intensified in 2022, is a reminder of a very similar Croatian situation some 30 years ago that promotes the production of children's literature. That is why we are not surprised by the repeated editions of the novel, which, while the Ukrainian agony persists, continues to strengthen the national component of the identity of Croatian children.

Daria Semenova: Patriotic Pets and Vengeful Wildlife: Animal Narratives and the Shaping of War Memory in Ukrainian Children's Literature

Ukrainian children's literature has been prolific in commenting on the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war, especially since the full-scale invasion in 2022. Along with the stories about human protagonists, which provide child readers with relatable characters whose experiences of displacement and loss they might share, quite a few standalone titles and collections of stories have appeared that communicate about war through stories about animals. The proposed paper offers to look at different communicative functions of these stories, specifically focusing on those based off images of specific real-life animals that entered the public imagination through media (e.g. Patron the Dog, Shafa the Cat, the Raccoon from Kherson, etc.) and/or certain recognizable space-bound "segments" of wartime experience (e.g. evacuation from Mariupol, occupation and deoccupation of the Kyiv region). I argue that the images of animals become something of "sites of memory" (Pierre Nora), symbols that develop to be containers of the collective memory about specific past events. This function becomes especially critical, as the real-life stories are retold according to the genre rules, addressed to very young readers who did not have the capacity to process the original events but are making sense of the ongoing historic events from the adapted versions. As such, they explore the notion of belonging to the (national) collective and help children form mental maps of the country. Primary sources for the article: picturebooks, story books and comics about Patron the Dog by Halyna Tkachuk, Tania Orlyk, Yulita Ran, and others; "The Fairytale Forest. Adventures of Mischievous Raccoons" (2023) by Yuliia Olefir; "Ommm. The Spirit of Irpin Forest" (2023) by Tasha Torba; "Patriotic Cats" (2023) by Zoriana Byndas; "Rocket the Raccoon and Other Heroes" (2024) by Yevheniia Zavalii; "Beehouse Ukraine and Other Fairytales from the War" (2024) by Dara Kornii and "Saved Tails" (2023) by Anastasiia Muzychenko.



LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Nina Christensen, Ph.D., is Professor in Children's literature, Head of Center for Children's Literature and Media, situated at the Department of Comparative Literature and Rhetoric at the School of Communication and Culture, Aarhus University. Research and teaching interest concern history and analysis of children's and young people's texts and media in general, children's reading cultures in contemporary and historical contexts, and the interaction between children's literature and concepts related to childhood. Co-editor of the international book series Children's Literature Culture and Cognition (John Benjamins), advisory board member of the scholarly journals International Research in Children's Literature and Barnboken. Vice-chairman of the board of The Cross Media School for Children's Fiction, which offers a fully funded, full-time education in writing for children across media.

Email: nc@cc.au.dk

Ani Chubinidze is a University of Glasgow graduate of an International Master of Children's Literature, Media, and Culture program. She has also received a Master's degree in comparative literary studies from Ilia State University. She currently works as an IB MYP English language and literature teacher at Newton Free School and is an accreditation expert at the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (Tbilisi, Georgia). Her research interests pertain to Georgian children's and YA literature and culture, literary trauma studies, war literature, and consumer society in Georgian and American literature. Her recent article, Young People and Collective Trauma in Georgian Fiction about The Abkhazian War and the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, was published in Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature.

Email: a.chubinidze11@gmail.com

Svetlana Efimova is Assistant Professor of Slavic literatures and media studies at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany. In 2024, she was elected to the Young Academy at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities with her research project on "The Aesthetics and Politics of Picturebooks in Contemporary Eastern European Children's Literature." Her recent coedited volume (with Marina Balina), The Politics of Text and Image in Children's Culture: Contemporary Eastern Europe and Beyond, will appear in 2025. In 2024, she was elected as co-chair of the international working group "Childhood in Eastern Europe, Eurasia, and Russia" (ChEEER, ASEEES).

Email: Svetlana.Efimova@slavistik.uni-muenchen.de

Inga Kapustian is Associate Professor at the department of English and German philology, Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University in Ukraine, and since 2022 a postdoc at the Hans Christian Andersen Center, University of Southern Denmark. She holds a Ph.D. in educational studies from The Institute of Information Technologies and Means of Education of the National Academy of Science in Ukraine, Kyiv (2013). Her current research focuses on Slavic language translations of classic literary works through different political and cultural periods together with cultural literary adaptation and translation of children literature into Ukrainian.

Email: ingaka@sdu.dk

Svetlana Maslinskaia, Ph. D., is a researcher at the Center for Contemporary Slavic Studies (CESC) at the University Grenoble Alpes (France), and Co-Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Children's Readings: Studies in Children's Literature* ("Детские чтения"). She has an extensive publication record in Soviet children's literature, the history of the criticism of children's literature in the 1920-1940s, cultural recycling of the Soviet past, the history of Russian-German contacts in the field of literature for children. She is the editor and co-editor of seven volumes, most recently "Russian-German contacts in children's literature: XVIII—XX centuries" (2020). She has been awarded a fellowship from the PAUSE programme (french hosting programme for scientists and artists in exile) at the University Grenoble Alpes (project "Children and War: the Past in the Present") and is currently working on a monograph exploring the representation of war in children's literature and the militarisation of education in Russia in the 20th and 21st centuries.
Email: braunknopf@gmail.com

Bella Delacroix Ostromoukhova is Associated Professor of Russian Language and Culture at Sorbonne Université (Paris, France). As a cultural sociologist, she is investigating independent children's publishing in post-Soviet Russia, with a particular focus on the mechanisms of censorship and the ways in which the actors involved circumvent it. She is also analyzing the changes in this professional realm in the context of the war in Ukraine.
<https://cv.hal.science/bella-ostromoukhova>

Nadiia Pavlyk is a doctor of science (Social Pedagogy), a professor at the Department of Social Technologies (Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University, Ukraine) and a researcher of the MSCA4Ukraine project DaR:ua "Dialogues and Reading: Shared Reading for Ukrainian Young People" (Department of Global Studies, Aarhus University, Denmark). Her research focuses on non-formal education for excluded groups, youth work and youth policy based on Council of Europe standards and approaches, shared reading and children's books in the Russia-Ukraine war.
Email: pavnad@cas.au.dk

Birgitte Beck Pristed is Associate Professor in Russian Studies at the Department of Global Studies, Aarhus University, Denmark. She holds a Ph.D. from the Johannes-Gutenberg-University of Mainz, Germany, awarded with distinction 2014. She is author of an illustrated monograph on post-Soviet Russian book design and print culture *The New Russian Book. A Graphic Cultural History* (New Directions in Book History, Palgrave, 2017). Her main research areas are print and media history of the Soviet and post-Soviet eras with a second strand in children's books. Her current research project focuses on children's book publishing in the Russia-Ukraine war (<https://projects.au.dk/publish>).
Email: birgitte.pristed@cas.au.dk

Vladimira Rezo is Associate Professor at the Department of Communication Studies of Faculty of Croatian Studies at the University of Zagreb where she teaches language courses (Croatian language). An important area of her scientific interest is Croatian children's literature. Since 2020 she has been a member of the editorial board of the journal *Libri & Liberi* for the research of children's literature and culture. She is the member of the Center for Research in Children's Literature and Culture of the Faculty of Teachers, CIDKK, and of the Croatian Association of Children's Literature Researchers HIDK.

Email: vrezo@fhs.unizg.hr

Larissa Rudova is Yale B. and Lucille D. Griffith Professor in Modern Languages and Professor of Russian at Pomona College. She is the author of two monographs, *Pasternak's Short Fiction and the Cultural Vanguard* (1995) and *Understanding Boris Pasternak* (1997). She has co-edited *Russian Children's Literature and Culture* (2008), *Historical and Cultural Transformations of Russian Childhood. Myths and Realities* (2023) and several thematic journal clusters on children's and YA literature and culture. Rudova is a co-founder of the international research group, ChEEER (Childhood in Eastern Europe, Eurasia, and Russia), affiliated with ASEES. Her numerous articles have been published in American, Canadian, European, and Russian journals and scholarly volumes. Her research interests include contemporary Russian popular culture and literature, children's and YA literature, representations of childhood, East European and Russian cinema, and gender studies.

Email: LVR04747@pomona.edu

Daria Semenova obtained her PhD in Slavic Languages and Literatures from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her previous degrees include a BA and MA from the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Ukraine. Daria is currently a postdoctoral researcher at Vilnius University, Lithuania, working on a project dedicated to the construction of collective memory and space in Ukrainian children's and young adult literature since 1991. Her research interests include children's and YA literature, popular culture, and genre fiction in a comparative context of 20th and 21st-century Eastern Europe.

Email: darya.seme@gmail.com

Ekaterina Shatalova is a PhD fellow at Aarhus University, working on the project "PUBLISH: Children's Books in the Russia-Ukraine War." Before turning to conflict and children's books, she earned a Master's degree in Victorian literature at University of Oxford (2018), followed by an Erasmus Mundus International Master's degree in Children's Literature, Media and Culture (2022). She is also a prolific translator of children's books and TV shows. When not translating, she scouts and reviews books for international publishers and book organisations (IBBY, Children's Books Ireland). Her recent article "Image of Migrants and Refugees in Contemporary Russian Children's Literature: A Case Study of Alexey Oleynikov's Works" (2024) was published in *Filoteknos*.

Email: eshatalova@cas.au.dk

Mateusz Świetlicki, Dr. hab., is Associate Professor and Director of the Center for Young People's Literature and Culture at the University of Wrocław's Institute of English Studies (Poland), as well as Deputy Dean for Student Affairs at the Faculty of Letters. His 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 co-edited a 2023 special issue of *Bookbird on War and Displacement in Children's Literature*. Together with Anastasia Ulanowicz, he edited *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children's Literature*, (Routledge 2025).

Email: mateusz.swietlicki@uwr.edu.pl

Laure Thibonnier is Associate Professor of Russian Language and Literature at Université Grenoble Alpes. As a specialist of literature and children's literature, she is currently focused on the memory of the siege of Leningrad in Russian literature and the mechanisms of cultural censorship.

<https://cv.hal.science/laure-thibonnier>

Anastasia Ulanowicz, University of Florida, received her Ph.D. in Cultural and Critical Studies from the University of Pittsburgh in 2006. She is collaborating with Marek Oziewicz (University of Minnesota) on a book on the emerging genre of "Bloodlands fiction" in global children's literature, and she is also developing a book project on representations of post-1989 Eastern Europe in comics and graphic narratives. Together with Mateusz Świetlicki, she edited *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Children's Literature*, (Routledge 2025).

Email: aulanow@ufl.edu

Anke Vogel is Research Associate at the Gutenberg Institute for World Literature and Written Media at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz. She specialises in communication phenomena and the digital transformation of the book market, with a particular focus on the children's and young adult book market, as well as reading research.

Email: vogelan@uni-mainz.de

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, creative writing and art-based approaches in education.

Email: a.a.yarova@gmail.com