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**The Latest Trends in Ukrainian Children's Literature:
Tetiana Kachak's *Тенденції розвитку української
прози для дітей та юнацтва початку XXI ст.,
Akademvydav, Kyiv 2018, 320 pp.***

A few years ago, when I started researching Ukrainian children's literature, I was surprised by the lack of contemporary books for young adults, the omnipresence of low-quality translations of Western classics (usually from Russian), as well as the minor role of children's literature in Ukrainian literary studies, with most scholarly publications authored by librarians and educators¹. Since then a lot has changed, and now children's literature is probably the most exciting part of the Ukrainian publishing market. Countless original new picturebooks, novels, and non-fiction texts for all age groups, together with splendid new translations of old masterpieces and recent international bestsellers, are available in most bookstores nationwide. Some of Ukraine's best-known authors (and illustrators) living abroad are Romana Romanyshyn and Andriy Lesiv, whose innovative picturebooks have been translated into many languages to great critical acclaim².

With this evolution of the Ukrainian publishing market, also literary scholars have started to pay more attention to contemporary literature for young readers. Having already published textbooks on Ukrainian³ and international children's literature, as well as a myriad of articles, in the last few years Tetiana Kachak has proved to be one of the leading Ukrainian scholars specialising in children's literature, a field previously too often

¹ See: M. Świetlicki, „*Dzieci imperium...*” – *postkolonialny wymiar ukraińskiego rynku książki i prasy dla dzieci i młodzieży*, „Porównania”, no 15, 2015, pp. 233–244.

² See: M. Świetlicki, „*Oh, What a Waste of Army Dreamers...*”: *The Revolution of Dignity and War in Contemporary Ukrainian Picturebooks*, „Filoteknos”, no 8, 2018, pp. 118–129.

³ For a review in English see: A. Radecka, *Tetjana Kachak, „Ukraińs'ka literatura dlja ditej ta junactva: pidručnyk”*, VC «Akademija», Kyiv 2016, pp. 352, „Miscellanea Posttotalitaria Wratislaviensa”, no 7, 2017, pp. 122–124.

overlooked by many of her peers. Kachak's latest book, titled *Тенденції розвитку української прози для дітей та юнацтва початку XXI ст* (*Trends in the Development of Ukrainian Fiction for Children and Young Adults at the Beginning of the 21st Century*, 2018), makes a valuable contribution not only to children's studies but also to Ukrainian literary studies in general. The monograph, devoted to fiction published in the last two decades, consists of a short introduction, five well-researched and state-of-the-art chapters, and a brief conclusion. In the course of the book, Kachak manages to portray contemporary children's literature as an exciting and thriving field of Ukrainian literary landscape with countless new research opportunities waiting to be picked up by other scholars.

In the short introduction, Kachak presents the premise of her monograph and briefly familiarizes readers with the most eminent Ukrainian and international scholars of children's literature. She further explores this theme in the first chapter, titled *Науково-теоретичні засади дослідження прози для дітей та юнацтва* (*Theoretical foundations of research on children's and young adult fiction*). In the three subchapters, the author not only focuses on the latest research trends in children's literature and the potential new approaches towards it but also provides readers with a detailed history of Ukrainian children's literature research. She references countless national (e.g. Emilya Ohar, Olha Papusha, Ulyana Baran) and international scholars (e.g. Maria Nikolajeva, Jacqueline Rose, Perry Nodelman) and shows the uniqueness of Ukrainian literature and the need of coming up with new research tools, as mechanically applying some Western ones to the local context is unreasonable due to numerous cultural factors. For instance, she studies the difference between the Ukrainian understanding of the words *тенденція* and *тренд* (both meaning *trend* in English) and the various approaches to defining the notion of children's literature. Kachak also underlines the interdisciplinary character of her research (and childhood studies in general) as she frequently references non-literary sources.

The remaining four chapters are more analytical, but Kachak regularly shows her remarkable theoretical knowledge. In the second one, titled *Тематичні горизонти сучасної української прози для дітей та юнацтва* (*Thematic perspectives of contemporary Ukrainian fiction for children and young adults*), the author presents the most frequent and typical themes found in contemporary Ukrainian children's literature (such as coming-of-age, friendship, family, Ukrainian history and traditions), as well as some of the most challenging topics which have appeared in the last few years

(for example social issues, death, and war). Moreover, analysing the fiction of authors such as Serhiy Hrydin, Oksana Lushchevska, Dzvinka Matiyash, and Stepan Protsyuk, Kachak presents the recent growth of Ukrainian realist literature which, as Emilya Ohar rightly pointed out in 2012, practically did not exist a few years ago⁴. Interestingly, Kachak also mentions the possibility of rethinking some contemporary themes found in children's literature from a postcolonial perspective⁵.

In chapter three, titled *Жанрова парадигма сучасної української прози для дітей та юнацтва* (*Genre paradigm in contemporary Ukrainian fiction for children and young adults*), Kachak pays attention to the most popular genres found in contemporary Ukrainian children's literature, as well as the new ones that have emerged in the last few years. In the first subchapter, she introduces a coherent system of genres and then analyses it in detail in the remaining four subchapters, focusing on contemporary novels, short stories, as well as fairytales.

The fourth chapter, titled *Новітні типи дітей-героїв у сучасній прозі для дітей та юнацтва* (*The newest types of child heroes in contemporary Ukrainian fiction for children and young adults*), deals with the new types of child protagonists in Ukrainian literature for children and young adults. Kachak analyses numerous texts belonging to various genres. She mostly focuses on realist fiction (Zirka Menzatiuk, Valentyna Berdt, Mariya Morozenko, Olena Ryzhko), biographical fiction (Stepan Protsiuk's stories about Vasyl Stefanyk and Volodymyr Vynnychenko), detective stories (Maryna Pavlenko, Halyna Malyk, Halyna Pahutiak), as well as speculative fiction (Lesya Voronyina, Volodymyr Aryenyev, Halyna Rys). It is worth highlighting that her selection of dozens of latest texts is remarkable and proves that the Ukrainian children's book market is thriving. Still, due to the astonishing number of books studied, sometimes Kachak's analysis seems too brief and inconclusive.

Finally, in chapter five, titled *Гендерні позиції героїв у сучасній прозі для дітей та юнацтва* (*Gender roles of heroes in contemporary Ukrainian fiction for children and young adults*), Kachak proposes a gender reading of Ukrainian texts for children and young adults. Using interdisciplinary methodology (Michael Kimmel, Kenneth Kidd, Jacek Kochanowski),

⁴ E. Ogar, *Dytjacha knyha v ukrai'ns'komu sociumi (dosvid perehidnoi' doby)*, Lviv 2012, p. 17.

⁵ M. Świetlicki, „Dzieci...”.

she challenges the frequent misconception that gender studies is synonymous with women's studies. In three subchapters, Kachak pays equal attention to girlhood (Dzvinka Matiash, Iryna Macko, Oksana Sayko) and boyhood (Serhiy Hrydin, Andriy Kokotiucha), as well as what she calls a *gender-symmetric* narrative in young adult literature (Oksana Lushchevska, Nadya Bila). Remarkably, Kachak's detailed gender analysis shows that despite the undeniable thematic evolution of Ukrainian young adult literature, some topics have not been embraced. For instance, non-heteronormative sexualities, which are already omnipresent in Western literature, for example in Becky Albertalli's bestselling *Simon vs. Homo Sapiens* (2015), do not exist in contemporary Ukrainian texts for young adults. Despite the unquestionable value of this chapter, the actual literary analysis seems slightly unsatisfying.

Even though *Тенденції розвитку української прози для дітей та юнацтва початку XXI ст* is a remarkable and well-researched study (the list of works cited is impressive as it includes 538 sources in several languages), it suffers from editorial flaws that I attribute mostly to the publisher. First, it is rather surprising that there is no summary/table of contents in English (or a different foreign language), making it difficult to even briefly familiarise potential non-Ukrainian children's studies scholars with this valuable book. Second, the lack of an index of names and keywords in such a long volume is quite problematic, as it makes using it as a research/educational tool a challenge. Third, the volume contains some spelling mistakes, especially when it comes to non-Ukrainian names. Nevertheless, when it comes to its scholarly value, Kachak's latest monograph is a captivating and coherent book that may be of interest to literary researchers, librarians, teachers, and parents.

Bibliography

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