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## “You will bear witness for us”: Suppressed Memory and Counterhistory in Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch’s *Hope’s War* (2001)

**Abstract:** Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch’s historical novels and picturebooks for young readers have gained significant commercial and critical recognition in North America. Interestingly, Ukraine, her grandfather’s homeland, has remained the central theme in her works ever since the publication of the picturebook *Silver Threads* in 1996. The author of this essay argues that by telling the suppressed, untold stories, hence bringing attention to the next-generation memory of the traumatic experiences of Ukrainian Canadians, Skrypuch puts them on the landscape of Canadian collective and cultural memory and challenges the false generalizations attributed to Ukrainians and Ukrainian Canadians in North America after the Second World War. After briefly outlining the history of Ukrainian immigration to Canada, and explaining the roots of the negative stereotypes attributed to Ukrainians, the author analyzes *Hope’s War* (2001), Skrypuch’s first Ukrainian-themed novel, and shows that by highlighting the unexpected similarities between the experiences of the protagonist’s grandfather, who during the Second World War was a member of the UPA, and the anxieties of contemporary teenagers, Skrypuch evokes empathy in mainstream and diasporic readers and enables the formation of next-generation memory.

**Keywords:** children’s literature, memory, counterhistory, postmemory, next-generation memory, Canada, the Second World War

Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch has published almost twenty popular children’s books about the suppressed history of Canadian ethnic minorities, such as Armenian Canadians and Vietnamese Canadians.<sup>1</sup> Still, Ukraine, her paternal grandfather’s

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<sup>1</sup> The Armenian theme is present in the Genocide trilogy consisting of *The Hunger* (1999), *Nobody’s Child* (2003), and *Daughter of War* (2008); as well as *Aram’s Choice* (2006) and *Call Me Aram* (2009), the dilogy about the Georgetown Boys, also known as Canada’s Noble Experiment. Skrypuch explores the Vietnamese Canadian experience of immigration in her two biographies of Tuyet Morris Yurczyszyn (*Last Airlift: A Vietnamese Orphan’s Rescue from War*, 2011; and *One Step At A Time: A Vietnamese Child Finds Her Way*, 2012—an omnibus edition of both books titled

homeland, has remained the central theme in her works ever since the publication of *Silver Threads* in 1996.<sup>2</sup> In this picturebook, illustrated by Michael Martchenko, Skrypuch explores the first wave of immigration from Ukraine to Canada at the beginning of the 20th century and Canadian First World War internment camps,<sup>3</sup> heavily relying on the memory of her grandfather George (Yuri) and the postmemory of her father, Marshall.<sup>4</sup> Similar themes appear in *Prisoners in the Promised Land. The Ukrainian Internment Diary of Anya Soloniuk* (2007) and its companion short story “An Unexpected Memory” (2009),<sup>5</sup> both issued in the popular *Dear Canada* series. Skrypuch also acknowledges the internment of Ukrainians in *Dance of the Banished* (2015), a young adult love story about a couple of Kurds of Anatolia and their struggles to migrate to Canada during the First World War.<sup>6</sup> *Enough*, published four years after *Silver Threads* and also illustrated by Martchenko, is the first—and as of 2020 the only—children’s book devoted to the Holodomor, the Great Famine of 1932/33.<sup>7</sup> As Anastasia Ulanowicz notes, it “offers particular insight into the role of traumatic collective memory in diasporic communities ... and implicitly proposes collective, rather than merely individual, strategies of working through such trauma” (“We are the People” 52). In her most successful historical novels for young readers, the Second World War trilogy about separated sisters con-

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*Sky of Bombs*, *Sky of Stars* was published in 2020), a picturebook illustrated by Brian Deines and co-authored with Tuan Ho (*Adrift at Sea: A Vietnamese Boy’s Story of Survival*, 2017), and *Too Young to Escape* (2018), a memoir co-authored with Van Ho.

<sup>2</sup> In the preface to *Kobzar’s Children: A Century of Untold Ukrainian Stories*, an anthology of Ukrainian-themed historical fiction, poetry, and memoirs Skrypuch edited in 2006, she explains that it is her passion “to write stories that capture real experiences that have been suppressed or lost” because “[w]hen you don’t write your own stories, someone else will write their version for you” (Skrypuch, *Kobzar’s Children* vi–vii). The volume includes Skrypuch’s two short-stories “The Red Boots” and “The Ring”. The latter, which was initially written as a chapter of an early draft of *Hope’s War*, talks about the Holodomor. While the protagonists of “The Rings” and *Hope’s War* are both named Danylo, there are no more similarities between the stories.

<sup>3</sup> The War Measures Act adopted by parliament in 1914 resulted in the internment of six thousand Ukrainian immigrants. The War Times Election deprived one hundred and forty-four thousand Canadians of Ukrainian origin of their electoral rights.

<sup>4</sup> Skrypuch notes that her father “had the Ukrainian beaten out of him at elementary school in Alberta. His teachers changed his name from Myroslav to Marshall” (Skrypuch, “Am I” 65; cf. Świetlicki 2020). Consequently, as a child Skrypuch’s knowledge of Ukraine was limited. She also did not learn the Ukrainian language as her father “vowed that his kids wouldn’t suffer like he did (Skrypuch, “Am I” 65).

<sup>5</sup> I want to thank Scholastic Canada and Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch for sending me a copy of “An Unexpected Memory”.

<sup>6</sup> The protagonists of this YA novel are Zeynep and Ali, two betrothed Alevi Kurds who experience the Armenian Genocide in Turkey (Zeynep) and Canadian Internment (Ali). Being an Alevi Kurd Ali is interned with many Ukrainians and befriends one called Bohdan. Despite the numerous cultural differences between Alevi Kurds and Ukrainians, Skrypuch depicts both minority groups as similar “others” for Canadians during the First World War.

<sup>7</sup> While the book was translated into Ukrainian and published in Edmonton, it was not distributed in Ukraine.

sisting of *Stolen Child* (2010), *Making Bombs For Hitler* (2012), and *Underground Soldier* (2014),<sup>8</sup> as well as the 2001 *Hope's War* analyzed in this essay, Skrypuch writes about the distinctiveness of the Ukrainian position during the Second World War, a nation trapped between two antagonistic regimes, and the experiences of the third wave of Ukrainian immigration to Canada, mostly DPs (displaced persons). Additionally, in these books, as well as in *Don't Tell The Enemy* (2018),<sup>9</sup> Skrypuch challenges the stereotype of Ukrainians as anti-Semites and Nazi-sympathizers attributed to Ukrainians in North America during the *memory boom* of the 1980s.<sup>10</sup>

Using Werner Sollors' words that "[w]hat is called 'memory' (and Nora's *lieux de me'moire*) may become a form of counter-history that challenges the false generalizations in exclusionary 'History'" (qtd. in Klein 137), I argue that by writing about suppressed history, hence bringing attention to the memory of the traumatic experiences of Ukrainian Canadians, Skrypuch attempts to put them on the landscape of Canadian collective and cultural memory and "challenge the false generalizations" attributed to Ukrainians and Ukrainian Canadians in North America after the Second World War.<sup>11</sup> While evidently both literature and memory are narrative, I concur with Astrid Erll that cultural texts "can have an effect on both levels of cultural memory: the individual *and* the collective" ("Literature, Film" 396) as they "serve as cues for the discussion of those images [they convey], thus centring a memory culture on certain media representations and sets of questions connected with them" (396). While Marianne Hirsch observes that it is the family that constitutes the generational structure for the transfer of what she calls postmemory, Alison Landsberg notes that cultural texts can also serve the role of a medium producing prosthetic memory, consequently generating empathy in read-

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<sup>8</sup> *Stolen Child* and *Underground Soldier* were published in the USA as *Stolen Girl* (2019) and *The War Below* (2018).

<sup>9</sup> This novel was inspired by the true story of a family who during the Holocaust hid three Jewish neighbours under their kitchen floor and eventually immigrated to Canada. It was published in the USA as *Don't Tell the Nazis* (2019). A sequel titled *Trapped in Hitler's Web* will be published in late 2020.

<sup>10</sup> *Memory boom* refers to the appearance of a significant number of cultural texts and academic publications about historical traumas, especially the Second World War and the Holocaust, in the 1980s. As Jay Winter argues, "[t]he memory boom of the late twentieth century is a reflection of a complex matrix of suffering, political activity, claims for entitlement, scientific research, philosophical reflection, and art" (65).

<sup>11</sup> While other Canadian children's literature authors, such as Gloria Kupchenko Frolick (*Anna Veryha*, 1992), Larry Warwaruk (*Andrei and the Snow Walker*, 2002) and Laura Langston (*Lesia's Dream*, 2003) also write about the Ukrainian Canadian experience, none of them achieved the level of Skrypuch's success. Despite the undeniable literary value, most books written by these authors are out-of-print or difficult to find, even in libraries. Apart from Skrypuch, only Lisa Grekul in her coming-of-age novel *Kalyna's Song* (2003) mentions the issue of Ukrainian collaboration with the Nazis. Unlike Skrypuch, Grekul additionally explores Poland and Ukraine's battle over the past, especially the UPA's campaign of mass terror against the Polish minority in Volhynia in 1943 (Katchanovski 76) and Polish colonization of Ukraine (Piotrowski 4).

ers.<sup>12</sup> Adapting Ulanowicz's notion of *second-generation* memory, which she applies in the analysis of children's literature, I propose using a slightly different, yet more precise, term—*next-generation* memory, which better reflects the potential of the transfer of memory, both described in children's books, where the givers of memories are often elderly family members, representatives of the third and fourth generations, as well as the one that can potentially occur between young readers and mnemonic narratives.

After briefly outlining the history of Ukrainian immigration to Canada, and explaining the roots of the negative stereotypes attributed to Ukrainians in North America, in this essay I analyse *Hope's War* (2001) in the perspective of memory studies, and examine the narrative techniques and plotlines Skrypuch uses to familiarize young readers with Canadian counter-history. Considering that children's literature has a particular potential in the intergenerational transfer of memory, I argue that by highlighting the unexpected similarities between the very different experiences of the characters of the novel, Skrypuch not only depicts the transfer of next-generation memory but also evokes an empathic response in readers.

## 1. Ukrainian Canadian diaspora

Ukrainian immigration to Canada started in 1891, one hundred years before the country gained independence, and since then Ukrainian Canadians have become one of the most visible ethnic groups in Canada (cf. Kordan; Suchacka). Due to ideological differences within the Ukrainian Canadian diaspora, as well as the upward mobility of the second- and third-generation immigrants, one could argue that currently “it is not clear whether there is a Ukrainian diaspora, or whether there are many Ukrainian diasporas” (Satzewich 218). It is worth noting that the conflicting agendas of Ukrainian Canadians contributed to the negative depiction of Ukrainians in North America. During the third, post-war period of immigration, diaspora leftists accused Ukrainian nationalists of being “Nazi sympathizers,” and the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians made the allegations that DPs were trying to bring war criminals to Canada (Satzewich 103). Even though already in 1947 The 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS (1st Galician) “was cleared of any wrongdoing against Jews during the war” (Satzewich 101), the allegations caused further conflicts within the diaspora.

<sup>12</sup> Hirsch claims that postmemory emerges when “the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up” (Hirsch 10). Landsberg focuses on the role of cultural texts in the transfer of what she calls prosthetic memories, which are like artificial limbs “derived from engagement with mediated representation (seeing a film, visiting a museum, watching a television miniseries)” that are “sensuous memories produced by an *experience* of mass-mediated representations” (20, emphasis in original).

As Michael Roth argues, “[i]n modernity, memory is the key to personal and collective identity ... the core of the psychological self” (qtd. in Klein 135)—partly because of the aforementioned ideological differences, many third-wave Ukrainian Canadian immigrants repressed their memory of the Second World War, making the formation of a collective diaspora identity even more difficult. By not sharing the individual memories with their children and communities, they also kept their experience absent from Canadian cultural memory. The so-called *memory boom* of the 1980s and the subsequent interest in the Holocaust and the Second World War, led to a one-dimensional representation of Ukrainians in the products of North American popular culture as anti-Semites and Nazi collaborators (Satzewich 167). Many North-American Ukrainians felt victimized as they were “collectively, and unjustly, portrayed as inveterate racists, anti-Semites and war criminals” in the mass media (Satzewich 168). Such portrayal might have been the consequence of Soviet propaganda, as “[t]he Soviets were trying to undermine the cooperative relations that were developing between diaspora Jews and Ukrainians” by providing North American governments with forged documents about the alleged cooperation of Ukrainians with the Nazis (Satzewich 173). While in the 1980s the diaspora was caught by surprise and struggled to come up with an immediate response to the allegations of anti-Semitism, especially considering the fact that the war experiences of Ukrainian Canadians remained largely untold and repressed, when similar ones resurfaced in the 1990s on North American TV, unlike in the previous decade, “this time the diaspora acted, sued and achieved partial victory” (Satzewich 176). As Lisa Grekul claims, referring to author Myrna Kostash’s assertions,

Ukrainian Canadians of the next generation faced the same challenges as their parents’, grandparents’, and indeed great-grandparents’ generations—how to retrieve their experiences from the margins of Canadian history; how to overcome enduring stereotypes of their ethnic culture, how to make their ethnicity meaningful in, and relevant to, their time and place. (198)

## 2. Intergenerational transfer of memory in *Hope’s War*

The first literary representation of the struggles of both the witnesses of the war’s atrocities and their children and grandchildren dealing with the allegations of Ukrainians as anti-Semites appears in Skrypuch’s *Hope’s War*. The novel illustrates the role of the mass media, especially newspapers, radio, and television, in spreading biased news. Kat Baliuk, the teenage protagonist of *Hope’s War*, finds out that her grandfather Danylo Feschuk who immigrated to Canada right after the Second World War is to be deported to Ukraine as he is accused of being a war criminal who lied to obtain Canadian citizenship.<sup>13</sup> While the plot evokes

<sup>13</sup> In the author’s note Skrypuch states that “[w]ar criminal must be brought to justice” but “justice demands that they be presumed innocent until proven guilty” (243). She mentions the trials of Wasyl Odynsky, Vladimir Katriuk, and Helmut Oberlander who were accused of collaborating

the notorious case of John Demjanjuk, a Ukrainian-American accused of working with the Nazis during the Second World War, Skrypuch's protagonist is innocent. The novel also echoes Vic Satzewich's assertions that "[t]he defense of individual Ukrainians accused of war crimes, and the defense of the wider ethnic group in both the diaspora and Ukraine against allegations of anti-Semitism has provided one focal point for the Ukrainian diaspora community" (168).

Kat's parents hire a high-profile attorney and spend all of their savings to prove Danylo is not guilty. The TV, radio and press use only chunks of information and promote a negative image of Danylo, continuing to refer to him as a former Nazi collaborator by publishing headlines such as "Ex-Nazi set for deportation" or "Ex-Nazi lied to live here" (*Hope's War* 238) and with no evidence claiming that "Feschuk has been identified as one of the notorious Ukrainian Police who were known to have committed atrocities in Second World War Ukraine" (129). Mostly because of the negative portrayal in the media, some of the neighbours and other people start protesting against Danylo in front of the Baliuks' house and the court. However, such biased depiction makes others believe in the protagonist's grandfather's innocence. Danylo gets overwhelming support from the local Ukrainian community and the Vietnamese family of Dr Nguyen, the father of Kat's friend Lisa. They understand that a similar thread of deportation could happen to them, as Lisa's grandparents also immigrated to Canada fleeing communism. Despite the media backlash against him, Danylo never stops respecting and loving Canada, consequently showing that he is not only a Ukrainian patriot but also a Canadian one. After all, in all of Skrypuch's books, Canada appears to be the land of opportunities and the place where all protagonists eventually find happiness.

While the third-person narrator gives an objective point of view, Skrypuch at times gives voice to Kat and Danylo, enabling readers to identify with the characters. As the protagonist's grandfather has never talked about his pre-Canadian experiences with his family, the accusations provoke him to symbolically go back to his teenage years in the form of flashbacks, making him appear more relatable to

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with the Nazis and concealing their past, and in 2001 were set to be deported and stripped of their Canadian citizenship under subsection 10(1) of the Citizenship Act, R.S.C. 1985, c. C-29. Skrypuch also brings out the case of Serge Kisluk who died during proceedings in 2001. In 2007 the Federal Court found that Odynsky and Katriuk, who was accused of participating in the Katyń massacre, had lied to obtain their citizenship, but there was no evidence of their personal involvement in war crimes. Both died in Canada—Odynsky in 2014 and Katriuk in 2015. In 2007 Oberland was stripped of Canadian citizenship and as of 2020 is still to be deported. Katriuk and Oberland were among the Most Wanted Nazi War Criminals according to the Simon Wiesenthal Centre. In *To Look a Nazi in the Eye: A Teen's Account of a War Criminal Trial* (2017) Kathy Kacer and Jordana Lebowitz familiarize young readers with the trial of Oskar Groening, a German senior who was accused of being a Nazi. While Danylo's and Groening's cases differ significantly, they both involve sympathetic elderly citizens who claim to be innocent and represent contradictory approaches of teenagers towards the allegations. Unlike Kat, the Jewish protagonist of *To Look a Nazi...* has no personal relationship with the accused. Still, she has a cognitive dissonance when she listens to Groening's convincing testimony and then the testimonies of the Holocaust survivors.

the young readers, who get to know Danylo both as an older adult and a teenager. During the trial shown at the end of the novel, the readers are asked "Imagine yourself as a teenager in a Canada with no government, no army, no weapons ... What would you do? Would you do what Danylo did when he was a teen? Would you fight for your country as he did?" (229). First-person flashbacks and direct questions may provoke readers to become empathetic. I agree with Maria Nikolajeva who notes that children's fiction has the potential to encourage affective empathy by offering a "vicarious emotional experience that children can partake of in a safe mode, without risking fatal mistakes or even small embarrassment" (121). In her analysis of children's books about refugees, Evelyn Arizpe maintains that "with a mediating adult, it is possible to not only develop affective empathy but also empathic concern to encourage social action" (15). Although both Nikolajeva and Arizpe focus on picturebooks, I believe that historical YA novels, such as *Hope's War*, show similar capacity to develop empathy and "encourage social action." When Danylo finally shares his individual memory of the Second World War with his family and community, the testimony prompts a subjective transformation and becomes a polyvalent instrument of self-acceptance as well as a mechanism of potential political indignation for his close ones and, potentially, also for the readers—both mainstream and diasporic.

Danylo's repressed memory is symbolically represented by the three photographs of his parents, sister Kataryna, and his wife, the latter taken on their wedding day in a DP camp. Photography, as Hirsch observes, "is an 'inscriptive' (archival) memorial practice that retains an 'incorporative' (embodied) dimension: as archival documents that inscribe aspects of the past" (107). Until Danylo shares his individual memory with his family, the pictures, especially the first two, remain insignificant for his close ones and cannot become the source of next-generation memory. No sooner does he tell his own story than the pictures become meaningful for Kat and her sister. The way the transfer of memory is depicted in *Hope's War* also echoes Maurice Halbwachs' words that "the family has its own peculiar memory, just as do other kinds of communities. Foremost in this memory are relations of kinship" (63). In the Baliuk/Feschuk family, it was Danylo's late wife Nadiya (Hope) who shared the family memory with her daughter and granddaughters. She was the one who taught them not only the customs and traditions, like making Easter eggs (*pysanky*) and preparing Ukrainian mushrooms, but also shared her experience as an Ostarbeiter and a DP. As Nadiya is no longer with him, Danylo has to heal the traumatic loss of his wife and take responsibility for the intergenerational transfer of memory.

Robert A. Goldberg notes that "[t]he bookshelves and film racks are filled with accounts of the Holocaust that focus on three representative figures: the victim, the perpetrator, and the selfless savior" (649). Danylo does not entirely fit into any of these categories. The trial makes him finally return to the traumatic moments when he had to fight both the Nazis and the Soviets in order to survive and save

his country. After seeing his parents killed, teenage Danylo was encouraged by his sister Kataryna to join the UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) and infiltrate the Nazis by becoming an auxiliary police officer and gaining information. While at first he disagreed to cooperate with the Nazis, Kataryna threatened him with a pistol and said “[y]ou’ll do what I say, brother, or I will shoot you myself” (88). Teenage Danylo had no choice and “knew better than to argue” (88). Despite the allegations against him, from the flashbacks the readers learn that Danylo did not kill or torture Jews—he only tried to survive and fought for his own country which was trapped between two antagonistic regimes. Whereas Danylo’s reluctance to talk about his Second World War experience appears to be the consequence of post-war trauma, it may also be related to his awareness of the ambiguous legacy of the UPA, an organization he initially did not want to join, and the unwillingness to be associated with atrocities he had not committed. Instead of leaving any ambiguities unanswered, the genre of historical children’s and YA fiction has the tendency to oversimplify complex historical narratives and reduce ethical dilemmas to simple acts of forgiveness. Skrypuch’s portrayal of the controversial UPA is irrefutably positive<sup>14</sup> and she fails to mention the problematic relationship between Ukraine and Poland during the Second World War—a surprise considering that some historians claim “that the mass murder of Poles committed by the UPA constituted genocide” (Katchanovski 76). Still, *Hope’s War* is not completely biased, as during the trial Danylo and scholars interviewed by the prosecutor admit that there were instances of collaboration between Ukrainians and the Nazis, showing young readers that applying such narrow categories of “the victim, the perpetrator, and the selfless savior” is problematic in the context of war atrocities. By intertwining testimonies of witnesses and interviews with historians, Skrypuch manages to incorporate meticulous descriptions of historical details into the novel. Because

<sup>14</sup> In the afterword to *Underground Soldier/The War Below* (2014) Skrypuch explains: “I first heard about the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) almost two decades ago. Could it really be true that there was an underground army that fought the two most bloodthirsty dictatorships of the twentieth century? People who wouldn’t take the tyranny anymore, so they went into the woods and the mountains, built hiding places and underground hospitals, and fought back for freedom, even though they’d likely die in the process?” (241). Such an unequivocally positive attitude towards the UPA may be explained by the fact that “[p]ublications produced by former leaders and members of the OUN and the UPA and their followers in the West generally presented these organizations as belonging to a movement for the independence of Ukraine while minimizing or ignoring their participation in the mass murders” (Katchanovski 72). Writing about the UPA and the OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists) which helped to organize anti-Jewish pogroms in Western Ukraine, Ivan Katchanovski maintains that many studies produced “by Ukrainian diaspora scholars, frequently minimized or ignored the OUN’s and UPA’s involvement in mass murder” because “[t]hey often relied on OUN sources in the West, while ignoring or discounting Soviet sources as unreliable” (71). Katchanovski also notes that numerous members of the UPA found refuge in Canada and the United States after the Second World War “and the governments of these countries often withheld or did not properly investigate information about their involvement in the mass killings in Ukraine” (71–72).



of them, readers learn not only about Danylo's individual experience, but also the Ukrainian position during the Second World War and the role of the NKVD and then KGB in spreading anti-Ukrainian propaganda in North America. However, unlike in her later novels set mostly in Second World War Europe, in *Hope's War*, the inclusion of extra historical information seems like a mechanical and encyclopaedic addition and may be one of the reasons why the novel has not become as popular as *Making Bombs for Hitler* or *Stolen Child*.

While Danylo's adolescent experience is introduced in the form of flashbacks, at the trial, his version of the Second World War's reality is challenged by that described by historians and other witnesses. Danylo's defender, Mr Vincent, keeps on rejecting the accusations, as the charges against Danylo are built on allegations and testimonies of only two witnesses. As there is no factual evidence of his cooperation with the Nazis, the testimony of Mr Abramovich makes Danylo appear as the perpetrator who tortured people in the village of Orelets. The use of flashbacks, however, allows us to see that he was supposed to kill a number of villagers, but instead of obeying the order, pointed the pistol at them and made people do push-ups; thus, saving them and putting himself in danger. In order to help Danylo, before the trial, his daughter goes to Ukraine to find witnesses who would testify in his favour. She finds eleven. One of them is Sergei Kovalenko, who claims that his life was saved by Danylo: "I will never forget that man ... I was prisoner of war, and he helped me escape," he testifies (198). While the story of Danylo serves to familiarize young readers with the multifaceted political predicaments of Ukraine during the Second World War, one could argue that a singular act of saving a group of villagers from execution cannot eliminate the fact of systemic participation of organized groups of Ukrainians in atrocities mentioned by the prosecutor.

*Hope's War* also imposes a didactic closure of "forgiveness" by the victim. Though there is no clear happy ending to Danylo's story as he is sentenced and his future is not clear, young readers see that his case was built on allegations only. After the trial, a woman who protested in front of the house of the Baliuks approaches Danylo and says, "I survived the Holocaust ... I remember ... being led away at gun point by the Nazis, while the Ukrainians looked on. ... What I realize now is that the Ukrainians were as hopeless as the Jews" (239). By holding out her hand to Danylo and introducing her own granddaughter to Kat, the woman symbolically shows her forgiveness.

### 3. The Second World War vs high-school

Setting *Hope's War* in a contemporary, multicultural Canadian high-school allows Skrypuch to show the alleged similarities between the experiences of certain marginalized characters. Consequently, it may be easier for her readers to connect with Danylo and Kat. By introducing individuals such as Ian, Dylan or Michael,

Skrypuch further shows that it is often difficult to distinguish between the victim and the perpetrator. Teenagers in *Hope's War* are anxious and misunderstood for a variety of reasons. The most significant young character, next to the protagonist, is Ian, “a Goth in full regalia” (6) who becomes one of Kat’s best friends at the new school and supports the protagonist during her grandfather’s public trial. While at first Kat is shocked by Ian’s looks, she does not reject him and gradually learns to understand and appreciate—which is parallel to her attitude towards her grandfather. As the story progresses, both Ian and Danylo appear as victims of bullying. The latter first receives hate mail that Kat tries to hide from him, then the Baliuks’ house is vandalized by an anonymous graffiti artist who paints swastikas and is initially believed to be Michael, Mr Vincent’s son and Kat’s classmate. Ian is bullied by three jocks and accused of being gay, which he is not, and is eventually physically attacked. Unsurprisingly, at the end of the novel, it turns out that Dylan, the boy-next-door who used to be Kat’s friend and later bullied Ian, is also responsible for the graffiti vandalism. While the protagonist instantly believes in Michael’s guilt, she initially struggles with seeing the real oppressor in Dylan, even when she learns that he attacked Ian. Eventually Kat and Michael reconcile and she gives him a traditional *pysanka* as a token of friendship and promises to teach the boy how to make them, symbolically sharing the Ukrainian part of her identity with him. Interestingly, Ian also once used to be a jock—he became a Goth in the act of resistance against the social norms and expectations and focused on playing music instead of sports. When Danylo attends Ian’s concert, the day after the boy is physically attacked, and sees him covered in bloody clothes, playing Chopin’s *Ballade no 1* on a stage decorated with torn parachutes, he not only thinks how brave the boy is but also goes back in memory to 1941 and the decisions he and other Ukrainians had to make—including risking their lives by hiding Jews. Ian’s powerful performance allows Danylo to symbolically find the inner strength to keep on fighting the eponymous war with the help of his family and friends.

Danylo frequently parallels Kat with his rebellious sister Kataryna who joined the UPA first, and calls her a “zolota zhabka” (golden frog). Comparing their relationship to the one between the girl and the frog in the Brothers Grimm’s “The Frog Prince; or, Iron Henry,” Danylo says that for him Kat is “very special” (13). Unfortunately, Kat seems like the most one-dimensional and flat character in the novel. Despite being the protagonist, she does not develop, and her role is limited to being the empathetic focalizer of Danylo’s story. When the readers are introduced to Kat at the very beginning of *Hope's War* on the first day of school, they learn about her expulsion from St. Paul’s Catholic High School where she, an Orthodox Ukrainian Canadian, was misjudged by her religious education teacher, who saw her assignment, a sculpture of Jesus and a naked, crucified Virgin Mary, as offensive. At the new school, the same piece of art causes Kat’s popularity. The very first sentence of the novel—“Kat Baliuk felt like a traitor” (5)—suggest that the protagonist feels torn. Unlike her sister, she has to go to Cawthra School for

the Arts, a place she does not know and feels reluctant to attend. Kat also struggles with being both Canadian *and* Ukrainian, especially during the trial against her grandfather. While at first fellow students and teachers mispronounce her name as “Katie” or “Katreena Balick” and she feels embarrassed, the school turns out to be a multicultural place where she finds acceptance. Kat, who never doubts her grandfather’s innocence during the trial, loses her old friends Beth and Callie but gets emotional support not only from her new ones but also teachers, who worry about her as she is failing every subject except for art. The readers do not get to see her actual struggles at school and her failure seems like a surprise—a logical one considering the circumstances, but still a surprise. The experience of being misunderstood and misjudged at the previous school where everyone had to wear a uniform and follow strict rules makes the protagonist more sympathetic towards her grandfather.

Skrypuch portrays two contradictory positions towards the accusations against Danylo in the Baliuk family. The reaction of Genya, whom friends call Jenny, is nothing like the protagonist’s. Kat’s perfect, “beautiful in a blonde and blue-eyed way” (13) sister, Danylo’s “malenka ptashka” (little bird), instantly believes in the allegations against her grandfather as she is worried about their influence on her own well-being: “If Dido truly cared about us, he would pack his bags and move back to Ukraine ... He’s obviously done something, and now we’re all paying for his past. ... We could lose our home because of him. And I probably won’t be able to go to medical school” (69). While initially Genya seems conformist and appears as Kat’s contradiction, she gradually becomes more involved in the trial and eventually believes in her grandfather’s innocence. For such a change to happen, Danylo has to testify and share his memory with the family. By doing so, his testimony and the three family photographs may become the basis of Kat’s and Genya’s next-generation memory of the Second World War. Skrypuch’s narrative illustrates Ulanowicz’s point that such transfer of memory can occur only when an individual deliberately acknowledges “the ways in which her present circumstances have been mediated and shaped by past events that she herself did not directly experience” (*Second-Generation* 4). The trial against Danylo seems to help Genya, who, unlike Kat, allows everyone to call her by an Anglophile name and feels little allegiance to her Ukrainianness, embrace her heritage and see how remembering and forgetting can influence her present and future.

## Conclusion

As I have argued, Skrypuch creates sympathetic characters and uses children’s literature as not only a potential medium of the transfer of next-generation memory, but also a means of challenging the stereotype of Ukrainians as anti-Semites and Nazi collaborators. Luka, the teenage protagonist of Skrypuch’s later novel

*Underground Soldier/The War Below* who, similarly to Danylo, cooperates with the UPA and eventually settles in Canada, is told “[y]ou need...to live. To tell our story” (185) and “[y]ou will bear witness for us, Luka. For all those who have been silenced by death” (187). Danylo in *Hope’s War* shows that keeping such a promise can be a challenge, especially in an inimical socio-political situation. Despite being one of the only survivors, he remains silent. After fifty years, Danylo finally has to break the silence, testify and bear witness not only for himself, but also “for those who have been silenced by death.” By using flashbacks and setting the narrative in the high school environment, Skrypuch shows some similarities between Danylo’s traumatic war experience as a teenager and the struggles of contemporary characters such as Ian and Kat, a writer’s decision some may consider quite problematic (cf. Kidd 136). While *Hope’s War* addresses the needs of the younger generations of the Ukrainian Canadian diasporic community and constructs a simulacrum of Ukraine that they can embrace as respectable members and beneficiaries of Canadian multiculturalism, the novel’s didacticism is also oriented towards educating a mainstream audience. Though it contains some historical oversimplifications typical of YA fiction, *Hope’s War* is a consciousness-raising book that not only familiarizes young readers with a certain suppressed story of Ukrainian Canadian migrants coming from a nation trapped between antagonistic forces during the Second World War, a fact absent from most Canadian history textbooks, but also one that shows the role of breaking the silence and sharing repressed memories with next generations in the process of building cultural memory and counter-history.

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