

BETTINA KÜMMERLING-MEIBAUER
FARRIBA SCHULZ (Eds.)

Political Changes and Transformations in Twentieth and Twenty-first Century Children's Literature



Studien zur
europäischen
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Studien zur
europäischen Kinder-
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*Studies in
European Children's
and Young Adult Literature*

Herausgegeben von / *Edited by*

MAREN CONRAD

BETTINA KÜMMERLING-MEIBAUER

ANJA MÜLLER

ASTRID SURMATZ †

Band 13



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Ein zentrales Anliegen dieser Buchreihe besteht darin, literatur- und kulturtheoretisch anspruchsvolle Studien zur Geschichte und Theorie der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur (inklusive anderer Kindermedien) zu veröffentlichen. In ihrer Ausrichtung vertritt die Reihe dezidiert eine europäische Perspektive, d.h. sie versteht sich als Publikationsorgan für Forschung zu den Kinder- und Jugendliteraturen unterschiedlicher europäischer Sprachräume. Auch Studien, die sich mit dem Einfluss außereuropäischer Kinderliteraturen auf die europäische Kinder- und Jugendliteratur befassen, sind willkommen. Die Forschungsperspektive kann komparatistisch geprägt sein oder sich auf eine Einzelphilologie konzentrieren. In dieser Serie können sowohl deutsch- als auch englischsprachige Monographien und Sammelbände veröffentlicht werden. Eingereichte Buchprojekte und Manuskripte werden anonym von zwei ausgewiesenen Fachwissenschaftler/innen begutachtet.

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Table of Contents

Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer and Farriba Schulz

Introduction: Political Changes and Transformations in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Children's Literature	9
---	---

PART 1. NATION BUILDING AND THE IDEA OF THE CHILD CITIZEN

Svetlana Kalezić-Radonjić

The Changing Conception of the Child Citizen in Montenegrin Novels for Children	39
---	----

Smiljana Narančić Kovač

Storyworld Transformations in mid-20th-Century Croatian Picturebooks	55
--	----

Maria Teresa Cortez

Children's Literature and the Portuguese Colonial Empire (1925–1940)	81
--	----

Sara Reis da Silva

Discourses of Identity in Portuguese Children's Literature: Shifts and Persistence	101
--	-----

PART 2. DREADFUL WAR EXPERIENCES: WORLD WAR II AND THE EFFECTS OF THE COLD WAR

Katarzyna Marciniak

Make Peace, Not (the Trojan) War: Transformation and Continuity in the Mirror of the Myth of Troy – with a Focus on Polish Children's Literature	119
--	-----

Åse Marie Ommundsen and Gro Marie Stavem

When Rabbits Get Scared: Exploring a Cognitively Challenging Picturebook on War	139
---	-----

Victoria de Rijke

Hidden in Plain Sight: Explorations of the Cold War in Selected Picturebooks	159
--	-----

<i>Katarzyna Biernacka-Licznar and Natalia Paprocka</i> Translations' Publishers and Censors: Transformations of Western Children's and Young Adult Literature in People's Poland under Stalinism (1945–1956)	179
--	-----

PART 3. PRACTICES OF (POST-)MEMORY

<i>Olga Mikhaylova</i> “Untying the Knots” of the Past: The Representation of Traumatic Events of Soviet History in Contemporary Russian Young Adult Literature	199
--	-----

<i>Dorota Michulka</i> Childhood Engaged: Polish Subjective Literary Narratives in the Face of History and Politics	215
---	-----

<i>Vassiliki Vassiloudi and Anastasia Economidou</i> The Ideological (Mis)Use of the Greek Civil War and Politics in Contemporary Greek Young Adult Literature	235
--	-----

PART 4. MIGRATION AND TRANSNATIONALISM

<i>Mateusz Świetlicki</i> The Entanglements of Polish Past and Canadian Present in Heather Kirk's <i>A Drop of Rain</i> (2004)	253
--	-----

<i>Kenneth Kidd</i> Ninety Miles from Havana: Exile and Heritage in Cuban American Children's Literature	273
--	-----

<i>Angela Yannicopoulou</i> Nostalgia and Empathy in Greek Picturebooks about Refugees	289
---	-----

PART 5. FOLLOWING A SOCIO-POLITICAL AGENDA: EMPOWERMENT THROUGH STORIES

<i>Tzina Kalogirou and Myrsini Vlassopoulou</i> Tyrants, Dictators, and Sovereigns in Greek Children's Literature: The Case of a Greek Political Fairy Tale	307
---	-----

Hadassah Stichnothe

Rebel Girls and Trailblazers. Women's Collective Biographies and Strategies of Meaning-Making	331
--	-----

Owen Hodkinson

Icarus' Fall as Suicide: The Icarus Myth Exploring Bullying and Mental Health in Children's and YA Fiction	351
---	-----

Jones Irwin

More Lateral Than Didactic – Unobvious Controversials in the Poetics for Children of George Saunders and Matthew Sweeney Explored Through a Freirean Lens	371
---	-----

Notes on the Editors and Contributors	383
---	-----

Index	391
-------------	-----

Appendix	399
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Introduction: Political Changes and Transformations in Twentieth and Twenty-first Century Children's Literature

Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer (Universität Tübingen) and Farriba Schulz (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Children's and young adult literature has always been closely connected with political and societal issues. Due to its inherent pedagogical program, literature for children and young people was subdued to contemporary conceptualizations of childhood to a greater or lesser extent. These went hand in hand with political and cultural ideas about proper child-rearing, which in turn was linked to educating children as future adult citizens, however the latter concept was understood. This was all the more virulent in turbulent times, evoked by wars, natural catastrophes, dearth, and other political and societal upheavals. In this respect, authors, illustrators, publishers, educators, and caretakers were faced with the task of either confronting the child audience with the often-devastating effects caused by these events or concealing those effects altogether. This outweighing of positions determined children's literature from the beginning and shaped their educational appeal, to the extent of manipulating child readers not to question the inherent messages but to accept them as a given. From the start, whenever political topics are addressed in literature for children and young people, whether picturebooks, historical fiction, primers, magazines, or nonfiction books, they fall under the suspicion of propaganda, as they may impact on the not yet fully mature minds of young people. However, from another point of view, children's books dealing with or elaborating on political issues may also contribute to the child's increasing political awareness, embedding the newly gained knowledge into a broader historical and societal context.

By all means, the idea that politics is something which concerns adults only, thus implying that politics has no place in children's books, has led to the assumption that there could be a politically neutral literature for children, or even literary works for children that strictly avoid any reference to political issues. While this may hold true at a first glance, a closer consideration reveals that political topics can flow into children's books, albeit often in an indirect manner. To say nothing about political systems, to disavow human rights, let alone children's rights, to vindicate the suppression of certain parts of the world population, or to conceal the entanglement of economic, religious, societal and

political issues, is ultimately also a political decision, namely to leave children in the dark about the fact that politics perennially intervenes in their everyday lives. Against this background, the analysis of how political subjects are treated in children's books is of prime interest in the study of children's literature. Such an investigation would disclose the shifts and rifts in the representation of political issues in literature addressed to children as the next generation of decision-makers, and whose influence on the shaping of world politics should not be under-estimated.

In this light, it is quite astonishing that there are comparatively few studies on this topic. These are scattered in various academic journals and anthologies, while a comprehensive handbook or collection which assembles current research in this highly relevant field represents a substantial lacuna in international children's literature studies. Only such an overview would shed light on the forms of political children's literature, the extent to which political topics are addressed in children's books, the impact of these topics on young readers, and what knowledge about politics is conveyed to children, both from a historical and contemporary point of view. Looking back at the 18th and 19th centuries – a long period which paved the way for the rise of the Enlightenment, the separation of church and state, the abolition of the monarchy through a republican or democratic constitution, but at the same time saw exploitation of the poor, the slave trade, and the ascent of colonialism and imperialism – it should be noted that all these issues affected children's literature as it developed at that time.¹ Depending on the ideological dispositions of the authors and publishers, if not controlled by the state and other (educational) institutions, children's books could be used to justify the suppression of certain parts of the native population, not to mention ethnic groups and entire nations, warring actions against foreign, often neighboring nations, and the conquest of faraway countries to bolster one's own prosperity. At the same time, books for children and young adults could also take a critical stance by criticizing these very ideologies to a greater or lesser extent. This wide palette of attitudes reached a peak in times of crisis, provoked by wars, political upheaval and economic downturns. It goes without saying that many authors avoided this debate and adopted a virtually apolitical approach by representing a childhood idyll not affected by any political, societal, or economic changes. Getting to the bottom of it, this attitude can be interpreted as a political statement, namely shirking responsibility and shielding the child audience from any potentially disturbing problems. These kinds of children's books contrasted, for instance, with the war-glorifying picturebooks that appeared in Germany and France during the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871) and represented the opponents as “hereditary

¹ Related to this, we would like to point out that one contribution contains harmful content and pictures related to slavery, colonialism, and racism. This material is used to demonstrate the highly charged premises of imperialist ideology

enemies”, thus laying the ground for an ideological appropriation of naive child readers (Dolle-Weinkauff 2016).

This event already demonstrates that children’s books can play a decisive role in the political indoctrination of children, all the more so in the 20th century, optimistically denoted as the “Century of the Child” by the Swedish pedagogue and activist Ellen Key in 1900. The rise of authoritarian regimes, the triumph of fascism, Nazism, and Stalinism, the previously unimaginable destruction caused by two world wars, the Shoah, the nuclear threat against the background of the Cold War, and other human catastrophes threatened the lives of children and young people in Europe and beyond. Instead of celebrating a novel period in the history of childhood which should be characterized by the idea of child sovereignty, thus following the program of Key and other reform pedagogues, children were pushed into the role of objects autocratic systems are so fond of. Despite committed policies of peace after World War II, for many people peace and stability remained a distant dream.

The 21st century is characterized by a multiplication of conflict scenarios, such as the war recently triggered by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Increasing global movements and the clash of ideologies have had and still have an impact on Europe. All these topics – and there are many more – are addressed in contemporary children’s and young adult literature under the condition that readers and scholars are searching for them. Meanwhile, picturebooks, nonfiction books, and children’s novels dealing with migration and refuge, the political reasons for the climate change, the effects of war, the Shoah, and the impact of borders on people’s and particularly children’s everyday life have found a permanent place in libraries and on the book market. Owing to this increasing corpus of books, scholars started to analyze these books from different theoretical, historical, and cultural perspectives by focusing on the political messages expressed therein. In the international context, questions of politics have increasingly come into focus in recent years, with an emphasis on left-oriented literature and publications. In the following, the core research questions and main strands of the theoretical approaches that governed these academic studies will be explored – with an emphasis on studies that investigate the political transformations and events in Europe in the 20th and 21st centuries.²

² It should be crystal-clear that there are also many other studies that focus on political changes and crises as depicted in children’s literature published before the 20th century, to say nothing of political events occurring outside Europe – but this is beyond the scope of this volume. Nevertheless, the bibliography also enlists some relevant studies which are regarded as trailblazers for further investigations into the history and theory of political transformations in non-European regions.

The Horror and Threat of Wars and Related Events

While war narratives for children and young people initially, and for a long time, served to reassure identification with national and war-related issues as part of cultural memory, children's and young-adult literature – especially after the horrors of World War II – also aims at fostering critical engagement. Representations of war in literature for children and young people differ greatly, depending on the author's political attitudes and war experiences, the date of origin and date of publication, and the historical period chosen. Focusing on the storylines and narrative patterns used in children's books about ancient history and Greek mythology, Sheila Murnaghan and Deborah Roberts (2016) draw attention to a long history of intertextual references in children's literature and their use in an educational context. While Mitzi Myers' article "Storying War" (2000) provides a comprehensive overview on recommended children's and young adult literature that addresses war in different historical periods, the collection *An allen Fronten* (On All Fronts), edited by Ingrid Tomkowiak et al. (2013), discusses the representation of wars and political conflicts across the centuries in various media formats of current children's literature. Other studies however emphasize that children's literature served as a central medium to convey childhood and youth memories during the war and the postwar period (Ewers 2006; Glasenapp and Ewers 2008).

The constantly changing conditions in warfare entail changing global ramifications, the aftermath of which is mirrored in children's literature, as Blanka Grzegorczyk's *Terror and Counter-Terror in Contemporary British Children's Literature* (2020) aptly demonstrates. Based on postcolonial and critical race studies, Grzegorczyk explores in what way literary representations of terrorism are shaped by structural racism. Likewise relevant for research into children's literature are the impact of the Cold War and the resulting censorship measures on children's and young adult literature, by elaborating on the dichotomy of democratic versus autocratic systems and the question of how images of childhoods are constructed in children's and young adult literature of that time (Mairbäurl and Seibert 2011). Although World War I led to a shift due to the fact that wars were no longer limited to a specific region or neighboring countries, but rather were intercontinentally intertwined and globally significant, World War II and the atrocities committed by the National Socialists have been more in the focus of children's literature, as Mitzi Myers (2002) states, albeit with a view on the North American context. Even in research on German children's literature, World War I remained historically and culturally unprocessed for a long time. Nevertheless, changing images of childhoods and traumatic experiences of children during World War I have been discussed in Margaret Higonnet's *Picturing Trauma in the Great War* (2008) and several collections (Audoin-Rouzeau 2013; Campagnaro 2015; Ewers 2016; Galway 2022). Since children's literature on war often intends to balance propagandistic

appropriation and present the “authentic” representation of young people who were indelibly impacted by war, Kimberley Reynolds maintains that the literature at hand “must be linked to other parts of childhood culture” (2011, 270). Related to the questions of whether and how the topic of war was conveyed to children and young adults in British children’s literature, Reynolds especially focuses on mass-circulation publications which were regarded as an adequate medium to indoctrinate or at least influence young people’s minds.

The need to address the subject of war by following an interdisciplinary path and across international borders, resulted in an international publication that puts together multiple perspectives on literary images of childhood and children’s culture in Europe, North America, and the Global South before, during and after World War I (Paul, Johnston, and Short 2015). This publication brings to the fore the role of childhood culture, including various props and media such as toys, magazines, and nursery rhymes, let alone the impact of education and official institutions, in shaping children’s perspectives. Addressing wartime propaganda alongside the representation of trauma, Elizabeth Goodenough and Andrea Immel’s *Under Fire: Childhood in the Shadows of War* (2008) portrays the impact of war on childhood experiences over the centuries, from the Children’s Crusade to the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. John Gall’s article therein, “A Physician’s Take on Ferdinand”, particularly serves as a strong reminder that traumatized children need stories of hope, such as *The Story of Ferdinand* (1936) by Munro Leaf and Robert Lawson. It is the same pacifistic fable that Jella Lepman published as a Christmas-gift newspaper edition for children within the First International Children’s Book Exhibition after World War II, on display in the American sector of Berlin in December 1946 (Lepman 1999, 92–94). As a special expression of hope for peace, the story counteracts the horrors of World War II. The dichotomy arising from the question of whether to protect or enlighten young readers opened a debate which was not only relevant during the postwar period and after, but has also shaped children’s literature until the present day.

The Challenging Confrontation with the Holocaust

To recall and reflect on the Holocaust and other National Socialist atrocities, children’s and young adult literature has taken up these topics in various media formats and genres. Considering current approaches to Holocaust literature, Victoria Aarons and Phyllis Lassner’s *The Palgrave Handbook of Holocaust Literature and Culture* (2020) examines the Holocaust from an intergenerational perspective, thus shedding new light on shifting contexts that impact on the commemoration of the Holocaust. This goes in line with Marianne Hirsch’s (2012) statement that “[p]ostmemory’s connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation”,

pointing to the fact that new generations discuss again and again which kinds of ethics and aesthetics of remembrance of the Holocaust are reasonable, but also acceptable. Likewise, Kenneth Kidd examines questions of whether and in what way the implied young readers can be confronted with traumas, including the Shoah, in the article “A is for Auschwitz: Psychoanalysis, Trauma Theory, and the ‘Children’s Literature of Atrocity’”, in which he claims that literature and psychoanalysis are interrelated forms of trauma “testimony” (2005, 122). Kidd discusses some controversial texts under the condition “that young readers must find history personally traumatic in order to know it” (133). In *Representing the Holocaust in Children’s Literature* (2003) Lydia Kokkola focuses on a similar question by exploring the “various means by which authors have attempted to write Holocaust literature for young readers” (3) and examining “the ways in which the texts rise to or fail to meet [...] contradictory requirements” (9). As a central principle, Kokkola, referring to Terrence Des Pres, stresses the ethics of “Never Again” which entails literary texts that take a stand against fascism. The extent to which the implied reader is enmeshed diegetically into the traumatic events, might be conducive in fostering historical awareness. Thus, the trope of games in Holocaust literature for young readers serves “as a juvenile means of making sense of the madness and cruelty of a brutal realm” (Feldman 2014, 363). Based on Johan Huizinga’s theory of play, Daniel Feldman traces those features in texts such as Judith Kerr’s *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* (1971). In another article on Uri Orlev’s children’s books, Feldman introduces game and adventure as beneficial modes of engagement in children’s literature on the Holocaust, while “portraying war as an audacious game and survival as a thrilling adventure” (2020c, 3). Since they establish a direct connection to everyday experiences of young implied readers, Feldman’s studies provide important insights that might be of great use in the context of Holocaust education and the literary classroom.

Eyewitness testimonies are another source that offer access to this horrific part of human history. According to the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, using testimonies in order to learn about the Holocaust is a potential way to personalize traumatic events and to present it as a human experience (Yad Vashem). One of the first testimonies of the Holocaust was the diary of Anne Frank, which was first published in the Netherlands in 1947, followed by translations around the globe and many media adaptations. Conveying the story of a teenager living in hiding from 1942–1944 for future generations, shaped the reception of Anne Frank in an international memory discourse (Barnouw 2018; Caplan 2004; Kliwer 2005; Mooren 2005a, 2005b; 2020; Schulz 2019, 2021; Wertheim 2009). While there will soon be no living Holocaust survivors left, the importance of storytelling and maintaining the testimony of the atrocities is of utmost importance. In order to conserve eyewitness stories, the University of Southern California’s Shoah Foundation, more precisely, the Institute for Visual History and Education, initiated a collection of interactive biographies called

New Dimensions in Testimony, which enables people to have conversations with prerecorded video images of Holocaust survivors and other witnesses of the genocide. Against this backdrop, the questions Marianne Hirsch raised in *The Generation of Postmemory* (2012) are of prime importance for future research: “What aesthetic and institutional structures, what tropes and technologies, best mediate the psychology of postmemory, the continuities and discontinuities between generations, the gaps in knowledge, the fears and terrors that ensue in the aftermath of trauma?” (6).

Migration, Forced Displacement, and Refugees

While migration is not a new phenomenon but has always been a part of human history, it is globally linked to a number of causes such as war, violence, oppression, famine, colonialism, but also associated with hopes and dreams. Therefore, migration is represented in children’s and young adult literature as tropes with many variations. Questions of existence, survival, and identity are negotiated and can be seen as literary condensations of conceptions of migration, forced displacement, and refugees (Brown 2011; Hope 2017). Differentiated according to place of action, escape routes, and the place of arrival, character constellations and focalization influence the representation of the dangers, fears, and hopes associated with seeking refuge and thus shape images of migrants and refugees (Arizpe, Colomer, and Martinez-Roldán 2014; Österlund 2022; Warnqvist 2018). For the German-speaking context, studies have provided a fairly comprehensive overview of the narrative dimensions of the topic in children’s literature (Dettmar et al. 2017; Wrobel and Mikota 2017; Josting 2021). These studies refer to current refugee movements, but they also look back into German history by depicting the escape from the Nazi regime and the German Democratic Republic. Daniel Feldman (2020b), for instance, explores selected contemporary German children’s books about refugees, published in 2013–2017, from a historical perspective in order to draw parallels to the German-Jewish children seeking refuge during the Kindertransport to the United Kingdom in 1938–1939.

Deconstructing the representation of aspects of nation-building in children’s books, Macarena García González’ *The Stories We Tell Children about Immigration and International Adoption* (2017) investigates the topic of the “rescued orphan” in Spanish and Latin American children’s literature. A special issue on the portrayal of refugees’ experiences in children’s books, edited by Evelyn Arizpe (2021), came out in the journal *Migration Studies* and exemplified the multiple dimensions of the topic from an interdisciplinary perspective. Arizpe emphasizes that stories about migration in particular run the risk of reproducing stereotypes and labeling the protagonists as the “other”. In the same vein, Katarzyna Smyczyńska (2018) highlights the form of alienation

applied in visual narratives about refugee experiences, while Ana Margarida Ramos (2014) focuses on the topic of decolonization in Portuguese picturebooks. Following a postcolonial approach, Philip Nel sheds new light on the literary constructions of migrant characters in the introduction to a special issue, *Migration, Refugees, and Diaspora in Children's Literature* (2018). At the same time, he opens up a discourse on the importance of critical whiteness, which is a perspective that is not only reflected in the articles of the special issue but can be also traced in the fourth part of this volume.

Nation-building and the Image of the Child as a Citizen

Children are particularly important for programs of nation-building in many European countries and beyond. This undertaking is frequently linked with ideas about childhood and youth, since the concept of childhood played and still plays a decisive role in extrapolating the notion of national identity. Very often, politicians and other shareholders draw analogies between children's maturation processes and the development of the national state, as pointed out by Maria Truglio (2017) with respect to Italian children's literature. Since the early 20th century, concerns about the role children and young people should have in the formation of new national societies, have motivated policies which intended to integrate the new generation within institutional frames. Against this backdrop, citizenship education is key for the transmission of identity to future generations, thus disclosing how a nation understands itself. Educational reforms and changes in political systems may lead to the transmission of a critical attitude towards the national past and present, which was a core issue in the postwar years in Europe and beyond. The relevance of these features is demonstrated in the collection by Kit Kelen and Björn Sundmark, *The Nation in Children's Literature* (2015), which examines the concepts of nation and nationalism in children's literature and children's films from different European and non-European countries, thus displaying the construction of different national experiences and perceptions.

In this respect, historical novels for children play a decisive role, as they pass on historical events seen through the ideological lenses of the authors. These novels may impart heroic images and biased conceptions of nationhood or contribute to a better understanding of the past and how the insights conceived therein can foster peace education. This issue was raised in Sanne Parlevliet's (2015) contribution on Dutch historical children's books that were published in the period 1914–1935, and in Kim Wilson's recent book on historical fiction in children's literature (2018). How the representation of social classes, leisure time, and national identity go in tandem in British children's literature from the end of World War I to the immediate postwar years, has been investigated by Hazel Sheeky Bird (2014). The most comprehensive and up-to-date studies on nation-building and children's literature, however, deal with Korean and Hebrew

children's literature. In *Figuring Korean Futures* (2017), Dafna Zur contends that the figure of the child was particularly relevant for the project of nation-building in modern Korea. She points to the ways in which Korean children's literature considers the close link between children and nature. Starting in the 1920s, Zur argues, the child was initially regarded an organic part of nature, but in the postcolonial era, the figure of the child was seen as the primary agent of control of nature. Arguably, the study thus reveals the complicated ways in which the child takes a position between nostalgia as a reference to the past and future aspirations for projects of socialization and nationalization. In the same vein, Yael Darr painstakingly investigates the active role of children's literature in the cultural project of constituting a Hebrew nation. Accordingly, *The Nation and the Child. Nation Building in Hebrew Children's Literature 1930–1970* (2018) explores the literary activities of leading authors, publishers, and gatekeepers for children from the 1930s to the 1970s, expounding the underlying political changes and tensions that impacted on Hebrew children's literature in these decades. These studies convincingly demonstrate that the concept of nation-building cannot be fully grasped without the consideration of the underlying image of the child as the representative of the future generation. Pursuant to this assumption, children's literature and other media formats addressed to children need to be accurately analyzed in order to carve out the inherent political messages conveyed to the child audience. Such an approach would achieve fruitful results regarding the political and historical changes and transformations in many other countries all over the world – as the chapters in the first part of this volume exemplarily demonstrate.

Thinking about the Past: Memory Studies

Irrespective of their political intentions, children's and young adult literature reflects the political and social developments happening over time. Seen in this light, a child or young person can act as a “transmitter of memory” (*passeur de mémoire*; Schneider 2019, 34), understood as a character or figure who preserves a specific group's cultural and political heritage over time and, as a result, facilitates its adherence well into the future. Alongside this process, major political, historical, and cultural events can turn into cornerstones for generational positioning. Taking these considerations seriously demands an interdisciplinary perspective by connecting findings from children's literature research and memory studies. Very often, stories about past historical and political events are told by authors who have either been eyewitnesses or who write about occurrences passed down by others – whether family members, friends, or people not known personally. Owing to the time that has passed and the personal, probably even traumatic, involvements of the storytellers, the events told are shaped by memory gaps to a greater or lesser extent. In this respect,

scholars distinguish first-generation memory and second-generation memory or postmemory. While the former term relates to stories or events conveyed by authors who experienced these incidents themselves, the latter term points to the fact that memories have been shared with the subsequent generation, who was not directly involved but is still affected by personal bonds with people belonging to the first generation of memory. How individual and generational memories shape children's books is at the core of several studies in this volume, whose focus is mainly on the war and postwar generations.

Following Anne Lawson Lucas' collection on the presentation of the past in international children's literature (2003), the monograph *Past without Shadow* (2005) by Zohar Shavit deftly criticizes the silencing of the Shoah and other threatening events in postwar German children's literature. Annegret von Wietersheim (2019) takes up this argument, albeit with a different corpus and in a more nuanced manner. Nevertheless, she also argues that authors mostly employ the strategy of omitting or mitigating traumatic experiences in order to avoid overstraining young readers' cognitive and emotional capacities. Yet undeniably, these and other studies persuasively demonstrate the impact of the past on the present to the extent of establishing a "culture of remembrance", whether in British (Krips 2016), German (Glasenapp and Ewers 2008), or Soviet children's literature (Leingang 2014). The debate on what exactly is remembered about the past in fictional works addressed to children gained momentum with Anastasia Ulanowicz's widely received study *Second-Generation Memory and Contemporary Children's Literature* (2013), which pointed to the shift between memories passed on via different channels and first-rate or second-rate witnesses and the stories told in children's books. Ulanowicz illustrates that the reliability of stories can be weakened by fabrications, falsified memories, and memory gaps. Nevertheless, these very stories can simultaneously convey the emotions, feelings, and thoughts of the people involved, thus emphasizing that individual and collective memories are indissolubly entangled in fictional texts, particularly those which deal with political and historical incidents. This concept was taken up in, among other publications, the recent collections by Anne Schneider (2020) and Felix Krawatzek and Nina Frieß (2022), which both elaborate on the significant role young people, memory, and children's and young adult literature play in our present time. Here, too, the last word has not been said, because these memory processes have not been considered for a long time and have only become the focus of research interest in the last two decades.

The Debate on Radical Children's Literature

New light was shed on the notion of radical children's literature in Kimberley Reynolds' crucial study *Radical Children's Literature* (2007). Drawing on Eliza Dresang's *Radical Change: Books for Youth in the Digital Age* (1999), Reynolds

expanded the concept of radical change – Dresang had mostly focused on the influx of digitalization on children’s and young people’s changing behavioral attitudes towards reading and learning for that matter – by taking political, societal, and artistic measures into account. Julia Mickenberg and Philip Nel followed in her footsteps by emphasizing core features, such as teaching children “to take collective action to effect change” and “to use history to understand how and why today’s world has developed as it has” (Mickenberg and Nel 2008, 1). Both authors additionally point out that radical children’s literature can “promote social justice, environmental stewardship, and greater acceptance of differences” (Mickenberg and Nel 2011, 445). While these claims seem to stem from left-wing children’s literature (see Mickenberg 2006; Reynolds 2016), they are certainly not restricted to this kind of literature but can be assigned to any children’s book that follows a progressive agenda (Benner 2020). Against this backdrop, more specific descriptions and explanations followed that, on the one hand, stress the historical roots of radical thinking in literary texts for children and, on the other hand, elaborate on the contrast to mainstream literature (Mickenberg 2017). In her insightful monograph *Left Out: The Forgotten Tradition of Radical Publishing for Children in Britain, 1910–1949* (2016), Reynolds distinguishes “social/political radicalism” and “aesthetic radicalism”, thus explicitly referring to the political implications of the application of “radicalism” to children’s literature. In addition, she proposes a comprehensive checklist that enumerates the underlying ideological elements (217). In her view, only those books deserve the designation “radical children’s literature” that comply with a high proportion of these characteristics. By dealing with the emancipatory orientation of radical children’s literature and highlighting that such a literature supports the child reader to become a rational adult who is skilled to question their surroundings as well as to “decide what they wanted to think and believe” (2), Reynolds – like Mickenberg – draws a connecting line to left-wing and progressive authors, illustrators, and publishers. At the same time, this approach could open new vistas when it comes to the historical analysis of children’s books, as Reynolds has amply demonstrated with respect to radical publishing in Britain in the first half of the 20th century up to the postwar years. Other studies have taken up this approach by investigating interwar socialist and communist children’s literature in Germany, children’s literature in East Germany, the impact of the students’ revolts of the end of the 1960s on European children’s books, or the interference of children’s literature publishing and children’s rights in Sweden in the wake of the ’68 movement (Heywood 2018; Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer 2019, 2021, 2022; Schulz 2013; Widhe 2018). Although the number of studies on radical children’s literature is still somewhat modest, they may serve as a springboard for further investigations on the tight connection between political commitment, radical ideas (whether about societal, historical, or political aspects) and writing for children and young adults – also with a view on how children’s and young adult literature may shape the

political thinking of future generations, an idea taken up in the final part of this volume.

Perspectives for Future Research

This overview illustrates that despite promising approaches, politically committed literature addressed to children and young adults still remains underexplored. This is all the more regrettable because the inherent examination of political, aesthetic, and historical aspects of this kind of children's books provides interesting points of departure for current scholarly discourse. In this context, discussions about the changing construction of childhood and its media representations in the course of social, ideological, and economic changes are just as central to current debates as the role children's and young adult literature may assume, depending on the educational, artistic, and political aspirations of the authors, illustrators, and publishers.

The following aspects and questions require more in-depth scholarly analysis in order to provide a more elaborate picture of the diversity of themes, genres, and aesthetic devices in politically committed children's literature.

Images of childhood: The images of children presented in children's literature vary greatly, depending on the genre, but also on the respective pedagogical programs prescribed by the state, parties or other governmental institutions, which have often existed in tense processes of negotiation with the child's everyday life. Above all, an increasing psychologization of the child characters can be observed, distinguishing the child's identity physically, ethnically or sexually associated with individual or collective normativity. Closely linked to this is the relevance of societal structures within pedagogical institutions such as school, kindergarten, or family and peer relationships. All these issues – and there are others, too – poignantly shape concurrent images of childhood, ranging from the sweeping idea of the innocent romantic child to the active and self-confident child so pervasive in periods that foster child agency, whether in socialist or communist communities, which mostly rely on children's active participation, in the wake of the '68 movement, or in current activist groupings. Irrespective of ideological underpinnings, the construction of childhood reflects the dichotomy of enlightenment and romanticism, adult and child, and innocence and experience.

Comparative studies: A comparative perspective could be taken in many ways. These comparisons can be made synchronically or diachronically. How are political aspects represented in the everyday life of a child? Which contemporary historical references are taken up and possibly omitted or mitigated? These are just a few key points and questions that arise from a closer look at the extensive and as yet unexplored corpus of children's literature. We are still a long way from a comprehensive comparative history of children's literature. One step into

this direction could be the investigation of how political changes such as in the European colonial period, the outbreak of World War I, the world economic crisis of the 1920s, the rise of fascism and the seizure of power by the Nazis, the threats of World War II, the upheavals of the postwar years, and the long-lasting effects of the Cold War, terrorism, and the cyber war are reflected in past and contemporary children's literature across national and linguistic borders, thus creating a more holistic trajectory of how these historical events affected the further development of national as well as transnational perspectives.

Politics and propaganda in children's media: Although politically committed children's literature can be used to raise children's political awareness by sharing knowledge about how political decision-makers can intrude into children's and their families' everyday life, children's books and related media can likewise be employed to manipulate the audience to the extent of deceiving them by deliberately letting them maintain wrong beliefs or utterly telling them lies. Since children have not achieved a knowledge of the world which enables them to see through the lies and wrong information told, they are at the mercy of any kind of propaganda. Since political commitment generally is not void of any propagandistic messages, children's books are the perfect medium to install those political missions which are significant for specific political programs, let alone political parties that aspire to gain power or maintain their hold on it. How propaganda functions in children's literature and which types of propagandistic means are deployed, has not yet been studied in detail, but it would certainly contribute to a better understanding of the narrative and aesthetic strategies applied by authors and illustrators in order to more or less openly manipulate the readers to uncritically follow well-trodden paths.

Political commitment is by no means restricted to children's and young adult literature but can likewise be found in other children's media, such as films, theater plays, video games, and social media. Until now, this broad perspective has been utterly neglected, although the first steps have been taken with respect to children's film. *The Oxford Handbook of Children's Film* (2022), edited by Noel Brown, includes a comprehensive section on children's film, society, and national identity which covers the children's film production in seven European and non-European countries (Australia, China, Hungary, India, Iran, Japan, Sweden), while a collection on East German children's films produced by the DEFA film studios, edited by Steffi Ebert and Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer (2021), analyzes the tight connection between political, ideological, societal, and film-aesthetic issues. Comparable studies are more than desirable on other children's media, both from a historical and contemporary perspective.

In retrospect, such a huge project can only be successfully undertaken in an interdisciplinary exchange between disciplines such as children's literature studies, childhood studies, politics, sociology, visual culture studies, memory studies, and historical science, to name just the most relevant fields. Bringing together scholars from these diverse disciplines would definitely enhance the

investigation of the impact of politically committed children's and young adult literature on the young audience, thus shedding new light on a highly relevant but also controversial text corpus.

Overview of the Volume

Tying in with political and cultural changes in Europe, this volume focuses on current discourses on the significance of democratic systems in opposition to authoritarian regimes, to fathom the transformations but also the continuities in children's and young adult literature from the beginning of the 20th century to the present. In the disjunction of democracy and authoritarianism, value patterns regarding the degree of freedom, political equality, and control can be questioned by ideological bipolarities, such as nationalism vs. globalism, xenophobia vs. philanthropy, and migration vs. isolation. These broad forces shape the future of young generations, but they also resonate with the past and therefore cannot be seen outside the context of tensions between transformation and historical continuity – as is visible throughout postwar Europe. Referring to the history of Europe beginning with the rise of fascism in the 1920s and 1930s, this volume centers on the presence of both historical continuity and radical departures from the past, whether that past is conceived of in political, aesthetic, or pedagogical terms.

One aim of the book is to calibrate the political, poetic, and receptive examination of children's and young adult literature and to depict it from a historical and systematic perspective. What continuities but also changes are discernible? What political and ideological concepts are inherent in children's and young adult literature? How are World War II and the postwar period represented in children's books? What role do trauma and (post)memory play? How is the discourse on forced displacement and migration shaped? How are childhood and its actors constructed?

The volume is characterized by an internationally comparative scope in order to carve out the political and cultural negotiation processes and transformations in children's and young adult literature of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The contributors to this volume come from Croatia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the USA, thus guaranteeing an international perspective. Moreover, the chapters are written by both well-known children's literature scholars and young researchers. The volume thus consolidates an international and interdisciplinary discourse on the effects of political and cultural changes in children's and young adult literature. In order to achieve a stronger networking of different cultural contexts and theoretical approaches from different research disciplines, the volume pursues a broad interdisciplinary approach, thus providing new insights into children's and young adult literature.

The collection is divided into five thematic blocks, each of which is assigned three to four chapters. These blocks or parts address the topics of nation-building and the idea of the child citizen (Part 1), the dreadful experiences of war (Part 2), practices of (post)memory (Part 3), migration and transnationalism (Part 4), and the child's empowerment through stories which follow a sociopolitical agenda (Part 5). The seventeen contributions cover a wide range of topics: the aftermath of World War II, the effects of the Cold War, colonization, migration and seeking refuge, the question of national and/or collective identity, the representation of different political systems (democracy, dictatorship), and the concept of the child citizen.

Part 1, *Nation-Building and the Idea of the Child Citizen*, emphasizes the concept of nation-building, which has played such a major role in many European countries due to the erection of new borders in the postwar years, the detachment from colonies outside of Europe, the formation of new states caused by the civil wars in Yugoslavia, and the confrontation with different political systems. Whenever the idea of nation-building emerges in children's books, it goes usually hand in hand with the concept of the child citizen, as Svetlana Kalezić Radonjić aptly demonstrates. She analyzes the changing conception of the character of the child as a socially responsible being in Montenegrin novels written from the second half of the 20th century to the present. This chapter examines five different types of novels (fantasy, war novels, novels about childhood, novels about animals, and adventure novels) and explores how the breakup of Yugoslavia caused changes in Montenegrin curricula and literature for children and young people, and how the characterization of children was transformed in this context. In this respect, the author distinguishes two key transformations, namely the envisaged erasure of any concept of social responsibility and the infantilization of children by reintroducing the ideology of an innocent childhood, thus counter-pointing the former ideal of the child as a considerate future citizen.

In the next chapter, Smiljana Narančić Kovač focuses on the storyworlds depicted in Croatian picturebooks published from 1919 to 1953. In doing so, the author strives to show how the meanings and overall significance of narratives are transformed under new historical circumstances and how different ideological and cultural norms govern the selection and presentation of storyworld elements. While differences are found between storyworlds in the titles published before and during World War II, the analysis of characters, events, and settings reveals a radical change after World War II. The playfulness and individuality detected in previous periods are replaced by seriousness and collective identity.

The ensuing two chapters move to a different European region by examining the impact of colonialism and regime changes on Portuguese children's literature from the beginning of the 20th century to the present. First of all, Maria Teresa Cortez explores the representation of Africa and the interdiscursive strategies in

four Portuguese colonial novels addressed to children and published between 1925 and 1940. It is shown that the novels reflect a new colonial policy that began to take shape in 1926, when a military coup overthrew the democratic regime of the First Republic (1910–1926), and was continued by the so-called Estado Novo (New State), a dictatorial regime headed by Salazar and Caetano that lasted from 1933 to 1974. The making of an imperial mentality through propaganda, education, teaching, and various cultural initiatives was at the heart of the political program of the military dictatorship and lasted throughout the Estado Novo, although from the 1950s, in an international context of decolonization, indoctrination strategies were adapted to the new circumstances.

The subsequent chapter by Sara Reis da Silva ties in with these findings, as the author maintains that the Salazar regime was a fertile period for the publication of books which highlight Portuguese legends, figures, or symbols. *Meu Portugal, Meu Gigante...* (1931) by Adolfo Simões Müller is a prototypical representative of this strand. This book is contrasted with José Jorge Letria's *O Meu Primeiro Portugal* (2008) which highlights democratic values and the close connection with Europe. By comparing these books, the author examines the way in which Portugal is literarily represented, within the framework of two opposing political regimes and by two ideologically, pedagogically, and aesthetically dissimilar authors, thus emphasizing the shifts and persistence of identity discourses in Portuguese children's literature.

Part 2, *Dreadful War Experiences: World War II and the Effects of the Cold War*, is dedicated to the representation of the trauma of war and how it affected the population, with an emphasis on children as victims and helpless bystanders. Katarzyna Marciniak convincingly showcases the potential of treating Greek mythology as a marker of continuity and change by exploring the reception of the myth of Troy in Polish children's and young adult literature. The milestones from Poland's history across the 20th and 21st centuries and the images emerging therein are analyzed against the backdrop of these historical stepping stones, thus demonstrating that classical mythology forms a unique legacy which, at one and the same time, is both fixed and in constant evolution. As a result, it fosters a deeper understanding of the key transformations underway that shaped Polish history. At the same time, it is a living cultural experience in the process of continuous reinterpretations wherever the ancient culture has reached down through the ages.

How a challenging picturebook on war can be successfully used in an educational context, comes to the fore in the chapter by Åse Marie Ommundsen and Gro Marie Stavem. By relying on the theoretical frameworks of picturebook research, literacy studies, and shared picturebook reading, the authors question how the picturebook *Når kaniner blir redde* [*When Rabbits Get Scared*] (2019) by Arne Svingen and Kamila Slocinska can foster emotional and critical literacy. This challenging picturebook visualizes human sufferings caused by dramatic war experiences and invites the child reader to build empathy through narrative

imagination and to use the text as a social tool in ways that allow for a reconstruction of the storyworld. Drawing on an intervention within a primary-school context, the authors advocate that the intricate text–picture relationship and the open ending enhance critical thinking and ethical reflections, thus contributing to the pupils’ critical literacy.

Victoria de Rijke explores the possibility of a process of expressive suppression from a selection of avant-garde picturebooks of the Cold War period to a later postwar “hypomnesia”, an archaic term for poor memory of the past. Drawing on Jacques Derrida’s argument that memory has holes in it long before people start to write it down, and that hypomnesia is not in itself memory but affects memory, a selection of children’s literature limited to the 1980s is compared to a selection of post-20th century picturebooks, all visually depicting the Cold War epoch. While the earlier books confront many of the challenges head on, de Rijke argues that the later works take a more sentimentalized stance – expressing a hidden suppression about wars that authors, artists, and publishers have not been part of, as if searching for a longed-for continuity with the poignancy of nostalgia, thus potentially shying away from any intentional affect or critique.

The chapter by Katarzyna Biernacka-Licznar and Natalia Paprocka examines the transformations that children’s and young adult literature imported into Poland from the West underwent during the Stalinist period (1948–1956). The authors exemplify the impact of the new political situation on the selection of literature from behind the Iron Curtain for translation, and how censorship influenced the publishing policy during this period. Based on an analysis of bibliographical data on translations of children’s and young adult literature published in Poland as well as of the list of books to be withdrawn by censorship, reviews of Western children’s books prepared by censors of the Central Office for the Control of the Press, Publications and Performances (*Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk*), and prefaces to published books, this chapter identifies some of the mechanisms and strategies that stood behind the change in direction and nature of literary imports.

The significance of memory of past events and how they influx the narrative strategies in children’s literature is at the core of Part 3, *Practices of (Post)Memory*. Olga Mikhailova focuses on two well-known contemporary Russian short novels for young adults, Ol’ga Kolpakova’s *Polynnaia ělka* [*The Sagebrush Christmas Tree*] (2017) and Ol’ga Gromova’s *Sakharnyi rebēnok* [*The Sugar Child*] (2014). The chapter explores the literary strategies used to convey truthful and realistic accounts of events, such as a complex narrative structure, a poetics of impressions and nonfiction features within the historical narrative, and portraying the children as the “other” against a background of tragic episodes. Therefore, the author underscores how the detrimental experience of exile that the young female protagonists undergo, losing family members, suffering from starvation, diseases, and physical trauma, and, at the

same time, the optimistic emotional landscape that the girls need to face the changed world, are at the core of the narrative in both works.

Dorota Michulka discusses issues related to literary narratives of subjective character and family histories in the context of the culture of memory and – broadly speaking – engaged humanities. The chapter analyzes two contemporary Polish historical novels intended for young readers, which display clearly exposed mythical images of childhood and elements of nostalgia: *Mirabelka* (2018) by Cezary Harasimowicz and *Weiser Dawidek* (1987) by Paweł Huelle. Michulka argues that both texts belong to the stream of “engaged literature”, since they are set in sociocultural and historical-political contexts and enter the discourse related to the culture of participation. This is evident in the presentation of the historical events depicted, which are seen from a distant perspective caused by a time shift as well as political and societal changes in Poland. In this respect, the author stresses that the return to childhood, the evocation of memories, and the reference to specific settings elicit special emotions which are linked to certain historical events.

Drawing on Greek young adult fiction that thematizes the Greek Civil War (1946–1949) – a taboo issue for decades – Vassiliki Vassiloudi and Anastasia Economidou look into the literalization of the lived historical experience and the historicization of literature in its subtle attempt to reconfigure and establish a secondary public memory for the young. Based on a corpus of five historical novels published between 1983 and 2011, this chapter points out the recurrent plot motifs that fictionalize this historical event and examines how paratexts and language work towards constructing historical verisimilitude. It further addresses the role historical documentation plays in the emplotment of the Greek Civil War. The chapter concludes that these historical novels foster mostly a leftist view of that traumatic event, one that left national and social cohesion riven, while they seek to take the edge off the civil conflict in the name of national unity and human solidarity in the post-civil war era.

Part 4, *Migration and Transnationalism*, addresses a highly relevant and controversial topic, the impact of migration movements on changing concepts of national identity. While there are voices that call for a return to national virtues, others advocate novel approaches to this global challenge, culminating in the demand for transnationalism.

Examining *A Drop of Rain*, Heather Kirk’s second Polish-themed young adult novel, issued in 2004, Mateusz Świetlicki combines textual analysis with the theoretical perspective of memory studies, most importantly Michael Rothberg’s concept of multidirectional memory. Focusing on the relationship between Naomi, the novel’s main protagonist, with her mother and two immigrant women, Hanna and Mary, this chapter shows that Naomi learns about Polish history and culture and eventually includes them in her own mnemonic repertoire without having to physically leave Canada. Świetlicki rightly points

out that Kirk does not escape bias and misinformation despite referring to historical sources and combining numerous genres and narrative techniques.

Kenneth Kidd claims that nowhere is the turbulent relationship of Cuba and the United States on clearer display than in the children's literature of the two nations. He points out that Cuban and Cuban American children's literature share considerable territory but remain more segregated than not. While Cuban children's literature has been continuously preoccupied with Cuban sovereignty, Cuban American children's literature is largely the consequence of the 1959 Revolution and the large-scale migration movements out of Cuba to the United States, Florida in particular. Cuban migrants found themselves mourning Cuba from a doubly American perspective, meaning both as newly-naturalized American citizens and as Cubans who identified with pre-Castro, Americanized Cuba. The chapter considers this perspective as it plays out in Cuban American exile narratives and heritage stories for children.

How migration, the refugee experience, and nostalgia come together is at the core of Angela Yannicopoulou's chapter. She distinguishes two distinct categories related to picturebooks on refugees circulated in Greece which are based on the construction of identities of the portrayed refugee characters: Greek refugees from Asia Minor (1922), and non-Greeks who arrived in Greece from the Middle East (2015 onward). Picturebooks about Greek refugees focus on their homelands and cultural heritage, concentrating on the nostalgia that facilitates a cross-generational maintenance of the Asia Minor identity. Conversely, picturebooks about "Others" are written to foster awareness and acceptance where empathy and compassion are their underlying aim. The chapter examines this double standard as Greek refugees celebrate their Asia Minor roots, while non-refugee authors have westernized the diasporic "Other" and stripped all geographic and cultural references in a way that conveys an indirect disrespect of the refugees and their culture.

Part 5, *Following a Sociopolitical Agenda: Empowerment Through Stories*, finally addresses the idea that stories about political topics may empower the child reader in the event that they follow a sociopolitical agenda. This comes to the fore in the chapter by Tzina Kalogirou and Myrsini Vlassopoulou, whose aim is twofold: first, it explores the figure of the tyrant or dictator in a range of literary texts that deal with aspects of modern Greek political history. From picturebooks to illustrated children's novels and an emblematic modern poem taken from the literary and school Greek canon, the figure of the tyrant is represented in uncompromising and inherently subversive ways. Second, this chapter investigates ways of encouraging young readers to make critical readings of literature in order to find out how the issues of political power, oppression, and exploitation are portrayed and potentially subverted or destabilized. Based on an empirical study, Greek students critically deal with a contemporary Greek fairytale by Giorgos Panagiotakis by interpreting and transforming it in a variety of ways and through different media.

The penultimate chapter by Hadassah Stichnothe examines recent collections of women's collective biographies and their supposed feminist appeal. Based on definitions developed by researchers on the historical genre in the English language, Stichnothe gives a very brief introduction to the development of women's collective biographies. Furthermore, by proposing a taxonomy of collective biographies and assessing their structuring principles, methods of visual meaning-making as well as recent developments in the genre, it will be possible to examine their emancipatory potential as well as locating changes and continuities in the history of women's biographies.

At the very end, Owen Hodkinson returns to ancient times by focusing on the Icarus myth as a popular subject in English children's literature. The chapter first introduces readers to the "rise and fall" of Icarus as a topic in English children's and young adult literature through the 20th and 21st centuries, noting how the changing sociopolitical contexts are reflected in variations on the continuously present elements of the myth. The chapter then makes a detailed examination of two 21st-century novels which use the same myth in quite different ways: *The Icarus Show* (2016) by Sally Christie and *Harry and Hortense at Hormone High* (1984) by Paul Zindel. Hodkinson focuses on the issue of mental health and how it influenced the behavior of the main protagonists and the outcome of the novels.

The chapters collected in this volume demonstrate – across international and disciplinary boundaries – some of the many ways that political and cultural changes have impacted children's and young adult literature. One of the aims of this volume is to consolidate international and interdisciplinary discourse and to raise awareness of the topic as a common concern for research into children's literature.

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PART 1

NATION BUILDING AND THE IDEA OF THE CHILD CITIZEN

The Changing Conception of the Child Citizen in Montenegrin Novels for Children

Svetlana Kalezić-Radonjić (University of Montenegro)

Montenegrin literature for children and young people, in terms of the time of its appearance, is one of the youngest such types of literature, not only in the European context but also globally. The first work intended for child readers in Montenegro by a Montenegrin author appeared in 1953 (namely the science-fiction novel *Svemoćno oko* [*The Almighty Eye*] by Čedo Vuković). One of the reasons for such a belated appearance of children's literature can be found in the fact that in Montenegro, oral literature was dominant over written literature right up until World War II. In such circumstances, literature for children was not differentiated from the overall corpus of oral literature, taking into account that, even in the world context, literature was divided into children and adult literature only much later on, and that some forms which now belong to children's literature, such as fairy tales, were originally meant for an adult audience (Latković 1975, 84). Also, in the Montenegrin patriarchal context, it was inappropriate to express any feelings towards children, so all artistic expression was confined to the domain of epic and heroic tradition.

The second reason concerns the fact that the historic and cultural development of Montenegro after World War II is essentially linked to the development of Yugoslavia. Being one of the republics within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), Montenegro was part of the Yugoslav educational system in which "the historical circumstances were much more favorable for the creation and development of Yugoslav children's literature"¹ (Majhut 2016, 28) than during its independence before 1918. Unlike in Serbia and Croatia, which had a rather developed children's literature before the creation of the so-called "second Yugoslavia"² and even before World War I

¹ All translations from Croatian, Serbian and Montenegrin texts are made by Svetlana Kalezić-Radonjić.

² The idea of Yugoslavism, as an idea of the ethnic, cultural and linguistic unity of South Slavs, originated in the 19th century. It was the continuation of the idea of Pan-Slavism, which was a reaction to the nationalist movements of non-Slavic nations, most of all

(Majhut 2016, 29), this was definitely not the case with Montenegro.³ By joining Yugoslavia, it became part of a wider educational system in which the literary canon consisted mostly of Yugoslav authors' works, which had a twofold effect. On the one hand, the placement within the wider framework contributed to the belated development of Montenegrin literature, since this had somehow always been "attached" to Serbian literature. Consequently, the only writers that were left out of the Yugoslav canon of children's literature, which had a rule of including in the curricula authors from all six Yugoslav republics (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia), were Montenegrin ones, of which, admittedly, there were few immediately after World War II. On the other hand, starting from the 1960s, aided by the Yugoslav cultural climate which was favorably inclined towards children's literature – considered in the SFRY as one of the most powerful means of socializing and ideologizing children – Montenegrin authors were encouraged to write, mostly through numerous festivals and magazines for children.

The breakup of Yugoslavia in 1992, caused by economic decline and conflicts over national issues, eventually meant not only the end of a country but of an entire system of cultural values. Since the breakup was followed by a period in which everyone was renouncing their common history, the changing of school curricula and reading lists was inevitable. It is precisely that aspect that is the key foundation of my work – dealing with changes in the curricula in Montenegro (especially since the breakup of Yugoslavia) and changes in Montenegrin literature for children and young people. I have attempted to uncover what the impact of these changes was on young readers. In that context, I was particularly interested in the tendency to remove from school reading lists works which presented children as socially responsible beings, as well as the tendency of Montenegrin authors to completely ignore difficult subjects in the

Pan-Germanism. A narrower form of the Pan-Slavic ideology was embodied in the Illyrian movement, Illyrism (active during the 1830s and 1840s), out of which was born the "first Yugoslavia" – the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918 – and then in 1945 the "second Yugoslavia", the SFRY, which lasted until 1991/92 (Roksandić 2017, 27–54).

³ Although some researchers (Nikčević 2012) consider the collection of poems by Jovan Sundečić from 1865 to be the first Montenegrin book for children, it was not made by a Montenegrin author for a Montenegrin young audience. Sundečić published the collection in Zadar for Croatian children in 1856, so the Montenegrin edition is merely a reprint of the original Croatian edition. Also, numerous poets who had published individual poems for young people from time to time in Montenegrin magazines, but who neither were declared as writers for children nor had written a single book for children, were declared as authors for children after the fact. Let us not forget that in the 19th century the term "children's literature" applied to all young people, including adolescents and young adults.

recent history after the breakup of Yugoslavia and to write mostly about romanticized and idealized images of children and childhood.

Alterations to School Curricula

Mandatory reading lists, as an educational tool of the state (Althusser 2014), were changed depending on the social and political imperatives, and they were therefore characterized by diachronic instability and synchronic fluidity.⁴

In my research I analyzed Montenegrin curricula from the years 1984, 1990, 1998, 2004, 2011, and 2017, but also lists of the most important publishers which I will show in the next section. I was mostly interested in the transition between the curricula of 1984 and 1998.⁵ These two eras were, respectively, the period when Montenegro was part of Yugoslavia and the period when, after the beginning of the civil war, it was part of the “truncated” Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1992–2003 – after 2003 it was renamed the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro). Comparing the contents of these curricula I came to a very surprising conclusion – the differences were minimal, with a somewhat reduced number of books, but the titles remained the same in 85% of cases, unlike in the other former Yugoslav republics!⁶ However, the main transition took place in 2004, almost ten years after the civil war, when the political situation between Serbia and Montenegro began to worsen, after which Montenegro declared independence in 2006.

The transition between 1998 and 2004 is characterized by the same model in all of the former Yugoslav republics, including Montenegro. Namely, Yugoslav authors were removed from reading lists and the curricula were nationalized.⁷

⁴ Besides the social and political circumstances, the alterations made to the mandatory reading lists were affected by other factors: the availability of the books, their compatibility with the dominant notions of childhood, the judgments of literary critics, publishing strategies, etc.

⁵ The 1990 curriculum is almost completely identical to the 1984 program, and I will not examine it separately.

⁶ For example, in Croatia, as early as 1993, Serbian, Bosnian-Herzegovinian and, to some extent, Slovenian writers were removed from the list of school textbooks and certain topics that had not been represented within the SFRY were imposed. Thus, texts with explicit religious themes were introduced into primary school reading lists, which, apart from being a social affirmation of religious, primarily Catholic, values, can also be interpreted as a break with secularism as the main determinant of Yugoslav identity after World War II (Hameršak 2020, 11–12).

⁷ By analyzing nationalism in Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian literature textbooks in the education system of the territory formerly known as Bosnia and Herzegovina (which today consists of the Republika Srpska, the Brčko District and the Federation of Bosnia