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# IMAGINING UKRAINIANNESS THROUGH TRANSLATION: UKRAINIAN CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE IN SOVIET AND DIASPORIC CONTEXTS

# РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦІЯ УКРАЇНСЬКОСТІ ЧЕРЕЗ ПЕРЕКЛАД: УКРАЇНСЬКА ЛІТЕРАТУРА ДЛЯ ДІТЕЙ ТА ЮНАЦТВА В РАДЯНСЬКОМУ ТА ДІАСПОРНОМУ КОНТЕКСТАХ

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**Abstract**. This article examines how twentieth-century translations of Ukrainian children's and young adult literature constructed images of Ukrainianness for international readers, with a primary focus on English-language editions produced in Soviet and diasporic publishing contexts. It aims to trace the circulation and functioning of these translations, reconstruct the translated canon, and determine how institutional selection, thematic emphasis, and paratextual framing shaped the cultural self-representation of Ukraine. The study combines the sociology of translation, cultural-historical imagology, cultural memory studies, and an ideology-oriented approach to translation. Its empirical material comprises a bibliographic dataset of 169 records of Ukrainian children's and young adult literature in translation – 122 associated with the Soviet context and 47 with diasporic/Western publishing – together with selected books and periodicals representing Soviet and diasporic publishing practices. Bibliographic mapping identifies publishers, authors, works, translators, print runs, and circulation channels, while the examination of selected publications shows how their themes and paratextual framing contributed to particular images of Ukrainianness. The findings complicate any neat split between the two systems: their configurations of the translated canon overlapped as often as they diverged. Soviet publishing, centred on Veselka and Dnipro, privileged folklore, fairy tales, and ideologically acceptable classics. The image of Ukrainianness it circulated was culturally distinctive but folklorised and depoliticised; politically sensitive subjects were left out. Diasporic publishing networks shared part of this canonical core but more explicitly foregrounded cultural memory, displacement, anti-Soviet resistance, and national survival. At the same time, translators and texts moved between the two systems, complicating any simple binary opposition. By connecting translated canon formation with the thematic and paratextual framing of selected publications, the study demonstrates that translation functioned not merely as literary transfer but as cultural and ideological mediation through which national identity and historical memory were selected, reshaped, and circulated. This approach offers a framework for reassessing the Soviet and diasporic legacies of Ukrainian literature in translation and for decolonising inherited images of Ukraine.

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**Keywords:** Ukrainian children's and young adult literature, Ukrainianness, Soviet translation, Ukrainian diaspora, translated canon, sociology of translation, imagology, cultural memory, decolonisation.

## INTRODUCTION

The Ukrainian national stand at the 77th Frankfurt Book Fair (Frankfurter Buchmesse) in 2025 demonstrated the scale of Ukraine's presence at this major international publishing event, presenting more than 300 books from 38 Ukrainian publishers (Dozhyna & Zhuravlova, 2025). Within this substantial national representation, particular emphasis was placed on translation: the programme included presentations of Ukrainian literature in foreign-language translations, meetings with authors and translators, and translation catalogues (Ukrainian Program, 2025). Participation in several discussions held during the fair brought two closely related ideas into sharp focus. First, Ukrainian literature is under-known abroad – a result not of its quality but of the country's colonial past and thin international promotion. Second, literary decolonisation calls for translating Ukrainian works outward and rendering foreign works into Ukrainian directly, not through Russian as often happened in the Soviet era. In this framing, translation did more than circulate literature. It became a tool of decolonisation that raised Ukraine's visibility abroad and reshaped how the country was seen.

The prominence accorded to translation at the Frankfurt Book Fair also invites a historical perspective: if translation now serves Ukraine's international visibility, what images of Ukrainianness were conveyed to foreign readers in the previous period? For most of the twentieth century, the international circulation of translated Ukrainian children's literature was shaped primarily by the centralised Soviet publishing system. Alongside this dominant channel, the large and internally diverse Ukrainian diaspora sustained a parallel sphere of publishing activity, dispersed across different centres and, in some cases, connected with Soviet institutions. Revisiting this legacy of Ukrainian children's literature in translation, shaped in both Soviet and diasporic contexts, is particularly important today, as Russia's full-scale aggression has made questions of Ukraine's cultural self-representation, international visibility, and the decolonisation of inherited images especially urgent. An analysis of which works of Ukrainian children's literature were selected for translation, who translated and published them, where and under what conditions this took place, and how these works were presented to foreign readers contributes to a critical reconsideration of the translated canon and to the decolonisation of the humanities. Against this background, the article presents interim findings of the research project "(Re)framing Children's and Young Adult Literature Through Translations in Ukraine: Sociology, Ideology, Culture" (No. 2025.02/0026), supported by a Grant of the President of Ukraine awarded through the National Research Foundation of Ukraine. The article thus aims to trace the circulation and functioning of translations of Ukrainian

children's and young adult literature in Soviet and diasporic contexts and to determine how these two translation practices shaped images of Ukrainianness for foreign readers.

The emphasis on sociology, ideology, and culture in the analysis of children's and young adult literature is reflected in the study's movement from translation networks to the formation and divergent configurations of the translated canon. After outlining the methodology, the study then maps the institutional and geographical conditions of Soviet and diasporic translation activity. It examines the Soviet translation infrastructure and the export canon it produced, followed by diasporic publishing networks and their cultural repertoires. The final section brings the two translation practices into direct comparison by identifying their shared canonical core and examining the divergent images of Ukrainianness they produced. These stages compare how each context selected and circulated Ukrainian cultural memory, and what auto-image of Ukrainianness each produced. They also show translation acting as cultural and ideological mediation, not simply as the movement of texts.

## METHODOLOGY AND DATA OF THE STUDY

The study brings together cultural-historical imagology and memory studies with sociological and ideological approaches to translation. These perspectives correspond to two interconnected stages of the research. The first reconstructs the networks through which Ukrainian children's and young adult literature was selected, translated, published, and circulated abroad. The second examines how the resulting publications represented Ukrainianness through their thematic and paratextual framing.

At the intersection of imagology and translation studies (van Doorslaer et al., 2016), translation is understood as a form of cultural mediation through which images are selected and reshaped for readers in another culture. The study focuses on auto-images of Ukrainianness produced for external readerships in Soviet and diasporic contexts. From the perspective of memory studies, translations do more than preserve the past – they shape and circulate collective images of it (Erll, 2008a; 2008b, pp. 389–390). Soviet and diasporic translations are thus approached as interventions within distinct, though partly overlapping, cultures of memory that framed shared cultural material through their own images of Ukrainianness.

The sociological approach treats translation as a socially embedded and institutionally mediated practice shaped by the conditions of its production, circulation, and reception (Blakesley, 2018; Sapiro, 2018). To reconstruct the canon of Ukrainian children's and young adult literature translated into foreign languages during the twentieth century, this study develops a five-part framework for sociological mapping: (1) *who published* – the publishers involved and their institutional status (state, private, etc.); (2) *whose works were published* – the writers whose works were most frequently translated, reissued, and distributed abroad; (3)

*what was published* – the works, genres, and themes repeatedly selected for translation and dominant within the translated repertoire; (4) *how translations were published and circulated* – whether they appeared as separate editions, in periodicals or anthologies, or in bilingual books, as well as their print runs and channels of circulation; and (5) *the translator's visibility* – whether and how translators were identified and represented in the publications and their paratexts. Examining these criteria within their historical and institutional contexts makes it possible to identify recurring patterns of selection, publication, and circulation and to determine how they contributed to the formation of a translated canon of Ukrainian children's and young adult literature.

The recurring patterns identified through this mapping are often interpreted as mechanisms of translated canon formation (Cadera & Walsh, 2017). Grabes (2008, pp. 311–320) regards literary canons as products of selection and evaluation that shape which texts remain within a culture's active memory. Their continuity depends on institutions and cultural mediators that keep particular works in print and make them available to successive generations and to readers in other languages. From this perspective, the two practices did not build separate canons. They produced overlapping configurations within one broader translated canon, under different institutional and ideological conditions. In this study, the concept of the translated canon serves as an analytical link between institutional selection and the images of Ukrainianness conveyed by the selected texts.

The literary canon is not fixed but remains open to revision, renewal, and reconfiguration (Kovbasenko, 2012; Vardanian, 2026). In independent Ukraine, this process has involved the reassessment of Soviet-era hierarchies, the recovery of previously excluded or marginalised writers, and broader debates over national identity and cultural modernisation (Polishchuk, 2023). Hryhorii Skovoroda offers a revealing example. Translations of his works are absent from the Soviet dataset, while diasporic publications preserved his presence through reprints of Ukrainian originals and biographical narratives. Today, the Ukrainian Book Institute's catalogue includes translations for both children and adults in several languages. His renewed international circulation shows that the translated canon is expanding through the rediscovery of Ukrainian classics as well as the promotion of contemporary literature.

Canon formation, however, depends on more than the selection and circulation of works. It also rests on the institutions and cultural agents that make those processes possible. André Lefevere's concept of patronage (1992) provides a framework for examining the institutional conditions under which translations were commissioned, published, and distributed. It is used here to compare the publishers, organizations, periodicals, editors, and translators involved in Soviet and diasporic publishing.

The empirical material comprises a bibliographic dataset of 169 records of Ukrainian children's and young adult literature in translation. Selected books and periodicals are used to clarify the patterns of selection, publication, and circulation identified through bibliographic mapping. The primary focus is on English-language

publications, while editions in other languages are considered where they illuminate broader patterns of translated canon formation.

## SOCIOLOGICAL MAPPING OF TRANSLATION

Cultural memory, as Herbert Grabes argues, is organised through canons: historically variable selections promoted by particular groups, which serve as archives of simultaneously existing cultures of memory and therefore compete over which texts are preserved, taken seriously, and interpreted in particular ways (Grabes, 2008, pp. 311–318). Canons retain selected cultural achievements and, with them, transmit the values and images of collective identity attached to them; abandoning the canon would therefore mean, in Grabes's words, "throw[ing] cultural memory overboard" (Grabes, 2008, p. 318).

This relationship between cultural memory and competing canons is particularly relevant to twentieth-century Ukrainian children's and young adult literature in translation. Its translated canon was formed in parallel within Soviet and diasporic publishing systems, each embedded in its own publishing institutions, translational networks, and ideological conditions (see Vardanian, 2023). Drawing on partly shared cultural material, each system handled this shared material in its own way – in what it chose, how it framed it, and where it circulated – and so contributed a distinct image of Ukrainianness to the translated canon foreign readers saw.

This section therefore offers a sociological mapping of this translation activity, with particular attention to translations from Ukrainian into English. The source base includes the Electronic Catalogue of the National Library of Ukraine for Children, an important centre for research on children's publishing in Ukraine (Marchenko, 2009, p. 314). It also draws on Marta Tarnawsky's annotated bibliographies of Ukrainian literature in English, published by the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press and covering 1890–1965, 1966–1979, and 1980–1989 (Tarnawsky, 1988, 1999, 2010). Although they provide an invaluable record of both Soviet and diasporic publications, their data require further verification and supplementation. The diasporic part of the dataset was therefore cross-checked against *Diasporiana.org.ua*, one of the largest digital collections of publications produced by Ukrainian émigré and diasporic communities. As of July 2026, its "Children's Literature" section contained 789 items, with new materials continuing to be added. The research also draws on *Veselka* / *The Rainbow*, a monthly children's magazine published by the Svoboda Press from 1954 to 1994. Its pages featured several English translations (1957–1958) and the bilingual historical malopys *Bohuta-Bohdan* (1957–1980).

On this basis, the dataset assembled for this sociological mapping comprises 169 bibliographic positions: 122 associated with the Soviet publishing context and 47 with diasporic/Western contexts. It covers Soviet publications from the 1960s to 1990 and diasporic/Western publications from 1944 to 2011; within this broader dataset, 101 positions are book editions – 77 Soviet and 24 diasporic/Western. By examining

which works were selected, who translated and published them, and through which institutional and geographical networks they circulated, the analysis reconstructs the translated canon as a space in which selected elements of Ukrainian cultural memory were preserved and reproduced and particular images of Ukrainianness were shaped for foreign readers.

## SOVIET TRANSLATION INFRASTRUCTURE

In the Soviet Union, the international representation of Ukrainian children's literature was inseparable from state cultural policy. Children's literature was expected to participate in shaping the "new Soviet person," while Ukrainian writers worked in a cultural environment that privileged Russian-language literature, treated Ukrainian writing as provincial, restricted nationally oriented subjects, and defined an ideologically acceptable range of themes for young readers (Kachak, 2014, p. 52).

These tendencies also extended to translations of children's literature. In Lefevere's terms, translation operated within a system of undifferentiated patronage, in which the ideological, economic, and status components were concentrated in the hands of a single patron (Lefevere, 1992, pp. 16–17). In the Soviet context, this control lay with the Communist Party, which regulated the selection, production, and circulation of translated books according to ideological criteria. Alongside this institutional control, the patronage system displayed several further patterns: the predominance of folklore and ideologically safe texts; canon formation through repetition and retranslation; and the recurring involvement of a small number of translators as key mediators. A decision to translate a Ukrainian book was therefore also a decision about which Ukraine could be presented abroad.

At the centre of the Soviet patronage system were two Kyiv publishing houses, Dnipro and Veselka. Together, they issued 71 of the 77 Soviet book editions included in the dataset assembled for this sociological mapping, accounting for 92.2 per cent of the Soviet book segment. Whereas Dnipro had a broad literary profile (Palii, n.d.) and addressed international readers across a range of genres, Veselka had a clearly defined audience: children. Established as Dytyvydav in 1934 and renamed Veselka in 1964, it gradually developed an international reach through its foreign-language and bilingual editions (Ivanchenko, n.d.).

The dataset shows that Soviet translation activity intensified from the mid-1970s and reached its highest level in the 1980s: 54 of the 77 Soviet book editions, or 70.1 per cent, appeared between 1980 and 1989. Although this peak extended into the final years of Soviet rule, when ideological pressure began to weaken, the increase in translation did not substantially broaden the image of Ukraine presented abroad. The repertoire continued to privilege folklore, fairy tales, morally legible narratives, selected classics, and other works compatible with Soviet cultural policy. Repression, colonial domination, the Holodomor, forced migration, historical trauma, and anti-

Soviet resistance remained absent. Greater international visibility therefore did not necessarily entail a fuller representation of Ukrainian historical experience.

Translators and illustrators belonged to this infrastructure too, and their choices determined how visibly Ukrainian a book looked. Within the Soviet publishing system, Ukrainian itself often remained invisible or blurred as the source language: editions did not consistently state whether a translation had been made from Ukrainian or via Russian, and the original Ukrainian publications on which the translations were based were generally not identified. Russian-mediated forms for proper names such as “Maria Prihara”, “Victor Bliznets”, “Mikhailo Kotsyubinsky”, “Ostap Vishnya”, and “Kiev”, together with the Russian-language production data placed at the end of the books, further obscured their Ukrainian linguistic basis. Translators themselves were not always prominently visible: their names might appear on a page following the title page or only in the Russian-language colophon, as in the case of Lilia Titar in *Two Chanticleers*. With prefaces and afterwords generally absent, these works arrived in a standardised Soviet frame, not a specifically Ukrainian historical or cultural one. Translators’ notes could have a more ambivalent effect: terms such as *hetman*, *otaman*, and *chaika* preserved Ukrainian historical vocabulary but simultaneously marked it as unfamiliar to foreign readers.

The circle of translators was also strikingly narrow. Seventeen translators are named in the 77 books, but only six recur regularly. Mary Skrypnyk translated 21 editions and Anatole Bilenko 16; together they account for 48.1 per cent of the data corpus. The other four recurrent translators – John Weir (9), Lilia Titar (6), Walter May (5), and Viktor Ruzhytskyi (4) – collectively account for a further 31.2 per cent, while the remaining 20.8 per cent is distributed among eleven translators, most of whom are represented by only one edition. The international image of Ukrainian children’s literature was therefore mediated by only a handful of translators.

Illustration shaped that visibility just as powerfully. In some editions, it constructed a recognisable Ukrainian historical world through a monumental visual idiom characteristic of Soviet-era historical illustration (*The Cossack Holota*, illustrated by Heorhii Yakutovych). In others, bright watercolour imagery gave literary tales a distinctly folkloric visual character (*Brother-Months* by Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky and *When the Animals Could Talk* by Ivan Franko, both illustrated by Yurii Kryha). A culturally specific narrative could also be recast in a more universal fairy-tale idiom (*In the Land of the Living Lights*, illustrated by Svitlana Lopukhova). In another case, Olexandr Zastanchenko’s illustrations for *Heart in Flames* moved eclectically between Ukrainian ethnographic motifs, European fairy-tale conventions, and the imagery of contemporary Soviet life. The image accompanying Lesia Ukrainka’s “Lileia”, for example, places a fairy alongside *a samovar* and a clown, bringing European fairy-tale imagery together with Russian-Soviet and contemporary motifs. Depending on these choices, Ukrainianness could appear sharply or only faintly, and was frequently reduced to isolated folkloric, ethnographic, or historical

markers. Soviet publishing consolidated these varying images by reproducing them on a large scale and circulating them among readers abroad.

Print-run figures preserved for 53 of the 77 Soviet book editions amount to at least 2,004,790 copies, of which folklore accounts for 1,291,060. The distribution of these copies was also uneven: *The Mitten* appeared in 50,000 copies, almost ten times the 5,200-copy print run of Viktor Blyznets's *In the Land of the Living Lights*. The preference for folklore thus registered twice over: in the number of works chosen for translation and in the scale on which they were reproduced.

The routes of circulation extended this selected image beyond the Soviet Union. A book made in Kyiv might circulate in Canada; a Canada-based translator might work for Dnipro or Veselka. The Kyiv-published English-language magazine *Ukraine* and the Toronto-based pro-Soviet magazine *The Ukrainian Canadian*, together with Dnipro's recurring notices encouraging foreign readers to obtain Soviet books and periodicals, further expanded this network. A Ukrainian work could even appear abroad under Soviet bibliographic conventions and also reach English readers through Russian translations. One notable example is Vsevolod Nestaiko's well-known *Two Toreadors from Vasiukivka Village*, whose English translation by Fainna Glagoleva (Raduga Publishers, Moscow, 1983) was based on the 1980 Russian edition.

Such crossings reveal how effectively the Soviet publishing infrastructure projected its selected image of Ukrainian culture beyond the borders of the USSR. Soviet translation, then, worked as managed cultural projection. It raised Ukraine's international profile – but only within the ideological limits that shaped what could be seen.

## CONSTRUCTING THE SOVIET EXPORT CANON

The publishing infrastructure described above did more than facilitate the international circulation of Ukrainian children's literature: through repeated choices, it produced a Soviet export canon. Rather than representing this literature in its diversity, the canon was organised around three main components: folklore, which accounted for 43 of the 77 editions (55.8 per cent); a selective group of Ukrainian classics, represented by 14 editions (18.2 per cent); and works by Ukrainian writers of the Soviet period, which comprised 20 editions (26 per cent). As Figure 1 shows, these were not merely three bibliographic categories. Each offered a particular way of making Ukraine culturally visible within the limits of Soviet cultural policy.

Folklore occupied the centre of this canon because it offered a particularly safe form of cultural difference. Folk tales, fairy tales, lullabies, and related collections made Ukrainian culture recognizable through oral tradition, rural life, nature, costume, custom, humour, and fairy-tale temporality. Yet this visibility primarily presented Ukrainians as an ethnic group within the multinational Soviet Union rather than as a nation with its own political history and agency. Folklore was not devoid of

national meaning, but that meaning was contained by being framed as ethnographic, traditional, and timeless. Its dominance therefore produced a combined effect of folklorisation and archaisation: foreign readers repeatedly encountered Ukraine as a land of tales and customs, while colonisation, repression, struggles for statehood, and other dimensions of modern Ukrainian history remained outside the translated repertoire.

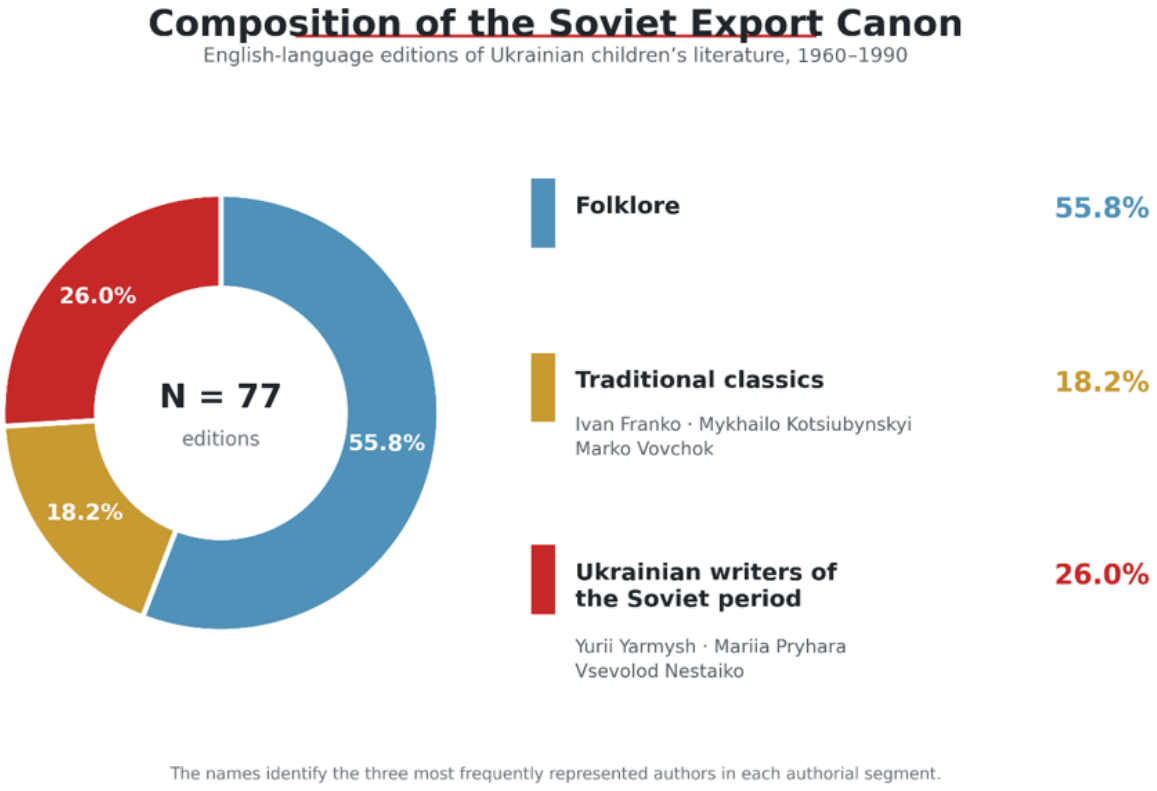


***Figure 1.*** *Composition of the Soviet Export Canon: English-language book editions of Ukrainian children's literature, 1960–1990.*

The representation of pre-Soviet traditional classics was shaped not only through the selection of particular works but also through biographical narratives that interpreted the lives and legacies of major Ukrainian writers for international audiences. Lesia Ukrainka, for example, is represented in the dataset not only by translations of two of her works but also by Semen Shakhovsky's biography, published in English by Dnipro in 1975 in a translation by Anatole Bilenko and Viktor Ruzhytskyi. As Natalia Marchenko observes, Soviet culture incorporated Lesia Ukrainka into the symbolic triad of "Shevchenko the Kobzar, Franko the Stonecutter, and Lesia Ukrainka the Daughter of Prometheus" (Marchenko, 2021, p. 153). According to Tarnawsky's catalogue annotation (2010, pp. 44–45), Shakhovsky's biography reproduced this interpretive framework by emphasising Lesia Ukrainka's socialist leanings, patriotism, "love of Russian literature", and "friendship with revolutionaries", while linking her literary position to class struggle and scientific socialism.

Works by Soviet-period writers accounted for 26 per cent of the dataset, forming the third major component of the Soviet export canon. Their selection operated through both theme and genre. The export canon included works on the shared history of Soviet peoples or resistance to invaders, alongside humorous adventures, nature writing, moral narratives, fairy tales, and allegory by Vsevolod Nestaiko, Yurii Yarmysh, Mariia Pryhara, Platon Voronko, Anatolii Kostetskyi, and other authors, many of whom remain part of Ukrainian children's reading today. Yet suitability for Soviet publication did not necessarily imply authorial conformity. Viktor Blyznets's fairy-tale novel *In the Land of the Living Lights*, read in Ukrainian scholarship as a political and anti-colonial allegory of national survival and revival (Hurbanska, 2015; Kumanska & Yablonska, 2022; Kyzylova, 2020), was reframed within the official Soviet narrative of struggle against invaders, while Vasyl Symonenko's poem "To My Son" [*Vyrostysh ty, synu*] was incorporated into socialist moral education. The system thus selected not only works that reflected its values but also those whose themes or genres allowed their meanings to be appropriated within its ideological framework.

These patterns of selection, mediation, and circulation had a cumulative effect. Through the numerical dominance and repeated circulation of folklore, alongside selectively framed classics and Soviet-period writing, it made Ukrainianness visible primarily as folkloric, rural, and historically timeless. It thus circulated an archaicised and ethnographic cultural memory in which Ukrainians appeared as a culturally distinctive community within the Soviet order rather than as a nation with its own historical agency and struggle for statehood.

## DIASPORIC PUBLISHING NETWORKS AND CULTURAL REPERTOIRES

Against the centralised Soviet infrastructure, diasporic/Western translation developed through dispersed networks connecting individual translators, publishers, periodicals, and Ukrainian communities across national borders. The dataset comprises 24 books published between 1944 and 2011 and a selective sample of 23 English-language translations published in the children's magazine *Veselka* in 1957–1958, and Roman Zavadovych's bilingual historical malopys *Bohuta-Bohdan*. Most diasporic publishing, however, was concerned with sustaining Ukrainian-language reading among children growing up outside Ukraine, while translation into English was initially less central and constrained by a shortage of qualified translators. As younger generations became increasingly English-dominant, English translations and bilingual books offered another means of maintaining access to Ukrainian culture, serving both its transmission within the community and its presentation to a wider Western readership.

This activity involved at least nineteen Ukrainian community presses and Western commercial publishers across Canada, the United States, Europe, and

Australia, to name a few: Svoboda Press, Bayda Books, and The Basilian Press. Translation often depended on individual initiatives rather than sustained publishing programmes, so full translations appeared alongside publications without an identified translator and English retellings or adaptations of Ukrainian folklore, such as those by Alvin Tresselt and Jan Brett.

Folklore constituted more than half of the book repertoire, but its diasporic presentation was not limited to the transmission of familiar tales, customs, and images. The English-language pages of *Veselka* also gave space to heroic folklore, including "Kyrylo Koshemiaka – Cyril the Tanner" (1957, no. 6) and "Mykhailo Semylitok – Michael the Seven-Yearling", explicitly presented as "an old Ukrainian legend" (1957, no. 7). Editorial arrangement could further elevate the cultural status of a folk narrative: the placement of *Dereza – The Grumpy Goat* (*Koza-Dereza*) in the following issue (1957, no. 8) beside a biographical account presenting Mykola Lysenko (1842–1912) as a great Ukrainian composer connected the tale with the broader national artistic tradition rather than treating it as merely another children's story.

This heroic framing was sustained on a much larger scale in Roman Zavadovych's *Bohuta-Bohdan*, a full-page series of "historical tales in pictures" published in *Veselka* from 1954 until 1980 and bilingually in Ukrainian and English from 1957 (Vardanian, 2025, pp. 151–152). The malopys traced a collective image of the Ukrainian warrior through three historical periods: Kyivan Rus, the era of Zaporozhian Cossack statehood, and the twentieth-century struggle for Ukrainian independence. By connecting the folkloric model of the strong and invincible hero with successive periods of Ukrainian history, the series presented national resistance as a continuous historical tradition. Whereas the Soviet export canon largely detached folkloric difference from Ukrainian political history, diasporic publications incorporated folklore into a broader national and heroic narrative.

Alongside this folkloric and historical framing, the English-language pages of the diasporic *Veselka* also introduced young readers to prominent Ukrainian figures through translations and explanatory materials. In 1957, *Veselka* presented Lesia Ukrainka through her Ukrainian-language fairy tale "Leliia" and a short biography in English (no. 2); and later that year, it published an English translation of Marko Vovchok's "Little Sister and the Bear" (no. 9). Taras Shevchenko held a particularly important place in diasporic children's literature, which developed an extensive Shevchenkiana comprising short stories, novels, and poetry about his life. This tradition continued in *Veselka*, which published English-language biographies and biographical stories about Shevchenko, as well as translations of several of his works, including "The Testament", "Times Are Past…", and an episode from *Kniahynia*.

Beyond the magazine, bilingual book publishing extended this cultural work through more sustained engagements with the national literary canon. By keeping Ukrainian and English together within the same volume, these editions did more than provide linguistic access for English-dominant readers: they made the continued

presence of Ukrainian part of the cultural meaning of the book. *Fox Mykyta / Lys Mykyta* (2000) offers the clearest example. The bilingual verse edition presented Franko's work not simply as a classic available in English, but as an inherited cultural text with its own history of transmission. The poem itself had already carried a claim to cultural stature: Ivan Franko reworked a widely circulating European narrative into a Ukrainian cultural possession, giving it a distinctly national form and thereby positioning Ukrainian literature within a wider European tradition rather than a narrowly domestic sphere. Its subsequent publication history renewed this claim under conditions of emigration. In 1941, editor Bohdan Hoshovskyi brought out a Kraków edition marking the fiftieth anniversary of the poem's first publication, with illustrations by Edvard Kozak (EKO). Bohdan Melnyk's 1978 English version subsequently recast the poem as a free prose adaptation illustrated by William Kurelek, whereas the 2000 edition restored its verse form, placed the Ukrainian and English texts side by side, and reproduced EKO's Kraków illustrations. Through this linguistic, textual, and visual continuity, the later edition reinforced the status of *Lys Mykyta* as a cultural inheritance connecting Ukraine with successive emigrant communities.

Ivan Franko's wider presence in the diasporic repertoire further strengthened this status. Alongside Melnyk's two versions of *Fox Mykyta*, Franko's works appeared in Zonia Keywan's bilingual anthology *The Magic Crystal and Other Short Stories in Ukrainian and English* (1988), which included "My Crime", "Little Myron", and an excerpt from *Zakhar Berkut*. The anthology, however, extended the principle of cultural continuity beyond a single author by bringing fourteen short stories and prose excerpts into a shared bilingual literary space. Its selection joined nineteenth- and early twentieth-century classics by Marko Vovchok, Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky, Ivan Nechui-Levytskyi, Vasyl Stefanyk, Bohdan Lepkyi, Ivan Franko, and Borys Hrinchenko with more recent prose by Valerii Shevchuk and Yevhen Hutsalo. The social worlds represented by Marko Vovchok and Vasyl Stefanyk thus appeared alongside other periods, settings, and forms of Ukrainian experience. This combination presented classical and more recent writing as parts of a continuous national literary tradition rather than as separate historical layers. Since several selections had not originally been written specifically for children, the anthology reframed the broader literary canon for a younger diasporic readership. Its parallel Ukrainian and English texts made this canon accessible to readers with different levels of Ukrainian while creating a common cultural space in which the inherited language remained visibly present.

The 1944 translation of *Zakhar Berkut* by Theodosia Boresky framed Franko's work through a more explicitly political understanding of historical continuity. In her dedication to "all real Americans", Boresky presented the narrative as the story of "an independent, self-governing community of 13th century Ukraine" and drew a parallel between its defence of self-government and American traditions of freedom, civil rights, and resistance to tyranny and foreign invasion. Her appendix, "A Brief Outline

of Ukrainian History", extended this perspective into the modern period through its discussion of the Ukrainian republic of 1917–1919, the struggle for self-determination, and the political divisions and repression that followed. Through these paratexts Boresky worked as more than a linguistic mediator: as a cultural interpreter she addressed readers directly, introduced Franko and his work, and set them within broader historical and international contexts. The medieval narrative was thereby connected with Ukraine's modern struggle for independence, presenting Ukrainians as historical and political subjects with their own tradition of self-government and a legitimate claim to freedom.

This emphasis on Ukrainian historical agency grew still stronger in publications that dealt with the upheavals and collective experiences of the twentieth century – above all with political violence, resistance, and cultural memory. Ivan Bahrianyi's *The Hunters and the Hunted*, translated by George S. N. Luckyj (Toronto, 1954; reissued New York, 1957), set its account of Stalinist persecution and Ukrainian resistance alongside maps, an introduction to the author, and explanatory notes on Soviet realities; the jacket added Bahrianyi's portrait and details of his other works. Olha Mak's *Stones Under the Scythe* served a similar memorial purpose. Published in Ukrainian in Toronto in 1973 and rendered into English by Vera Kaczmarskyj in 2011, it opened with a dedication to the victims of the Holodomor, an address to readers, maps locating Ukraine within the USSR, and a translator's note – all framing the novel as testimony to a suppressed past. This diasporic culture of memory persists in contemporary Ukrainian Canadian writing for children: studies of Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch's *Enough* (2000) and *Winterkill* (2022) trace how writing for the young still passes on the collective memory of the Holodomor (Ulanowicz, 2017; Świetlicki, 2024).

Other books widened the frame to wartime resistance and displacement. Mariia Dmytrenko's *Mykhailyk*, translated by W. Nicholson Skorkhid (Hamilton, Ontario, 1981), carried information about the author and a foreword, "A Word to the Young", that set out the history of the Ukrainian resistance for its readers. Dmytro Chub's *So This Is Australia* (English version attributed to Yuri Tkach; Doncaster: Bayda Books, 1980) tied the difficult lives of Ukrainian migrants in Australia to Chub's own experience of persecution, displacement, and diasporic cultural work. For all their differences in subject and publishing history, these books share one approach: their translators and editors did not simply move Ukrainian texts into English but, through introductions, notes, maps, dedications, and direct addresses to the reader, placed them within Ukrainian historical, political, and cultural experience. Here Ukrainianness appeared not only as a literary and linguistic inheritance, but also as a historical experience shaped by resistance, trauma, displacement, and cultural survival.

Therefore, the diasporic repertoire represented Ukrainians not as an ahistorical ethnic community, as in the Soviet export canon, but as a nation with its own history, language, and cultural canon. It articulated Ukrainian political aspirations and the

struggle for freedom, while also presenting a community marked by imperial violence and dispersed across the world, yet never deprived of historical agency (Fig. 2). Ukrainianness thus emerged as historically continuous, politically agentive, and grounded in a claim to sovereignty.




***Figure 2***. *Thematic Construction of Ukrainianness in Diasporic Translation*

The analysis so far has considered the Soviet and diasporic repertoires separately, showing how each publishing system selected and framed Ukrainian cultural material. The following section brings these two contexts into direct comparison to identify their shared canonical core and to examine how the same cultural inheritance was incorporated into different cultures of memory, producing divergent images of Ukrainianness.

## SHARED CANONICAL CORE AND DIVERGENT IMAGES OF UKRAINIANNESS

The relationship between the translated repertoires is best understood through cultural memory rather than through a simple political binary. Grabes argues that

canons arise from evaluations shared and promoted by groups within a culture over a particular period (2008, p. 311). Because several cultures of memory may coexist and compete, their canons function as archives that determine which texts remain available, are taken seriously, and are interpreted in particular ways (pp. 314–318). Soviet and diasporic translation can therefore be seen as two partly overlapping archives of Ukrainian cultural memory.

Their shared core consists of Ukrainian folklore, Ivan Franko, Taras Shevchenko, Marko Vovchok, and Lesia Ukrainka. These authors and traditions retained symbolic authority across ideological and geographical divisions, although they circulated in different textual and institutional forms. Ivan Franko appeared in Soviet publishing through such works as *When the Animals Could Talk* (transl. Mary Skrypnyk, Dnipro, 1984), while *Fox Mykyta* circulated in two Canadian versions by Bohdan Melnyk (1978 and 2000). His historical novella *Zakhar Berkut* likewise appeared first in Theodosia Boresky's New York translation (1944) and later in Mary Skrypnyk's translation for Dnipro (1987). Taras Shevchenko circulated through separate editions, collections, poems, and periodical excerpts: *The Testament*, for example, was published in the diasporic children's magazine *Veselka* in C. A. Manning's translation in 1957 and appeared in John Weir's translation in the Soviet *Selected Works: Poetry and Prose* issued by Progress Publishers (Moscow, 1979). Marko Vovchok's prose moved between the diasporic *Veselka*, which published "Little Sister and the Bear" in 1957, and Soviet books and collections, including *Melasia and the Bear* (transl. Mary Skrypnyk, Kyiv: Veselka, 1980) and "Karmelyuk" in *Heart in Flames* (transl. Oles Kovalenko and Vasil Baryshev, Dnipro, 1990).

Lesia Ukrainka occupied a somewhat different position within this common core. Soviet publishing produced direct English translations of her works for children, including *Adversity Teaches* (transl. Mary Skrypnyk, Dnipro, 1981) and "Lady Lily" in *Heart in Flames* (1990). The diasporic *Veselka*, by contrast, introduced her to younger readers through English-language biographical material and directed them towards *The Songs of the Forest*, described as "a tale of the fabulous dwellers of Ukrainian woods" (*Veselka*, 1957, no. 2, p. 14). Her canonical presence was thus used to connect children not only with an individual literary work but also with a broader narrative of Ukrainian culture.

The recurrence of these names marks the area of greatest overlap between the two translated repertoires. Figure 3 visualises these relations through four degrees of canonical visibility adapted from Grabes's terminology (2008, p. 317). The circles do not represent fixed literary value. They show the extent and form of an author's presence in the translated catalogue: recurring book editions and retranslations, presence in both books and periodicals, or isolated appearance in a journal or anthology. The red and green configurations overlap at the core, while the surrounding levels diverge as each publishing environment preserves a different range of texts in cultural memory.




***Figure 3.*** *Hierarchical configurations of the Soviet and diasporic/Western translated canons of Ukrainian children's and young adult literature. Red indicates the Soviet context; green indicates the diasporic/Western context. The names shown are selected illustrative examples, not an exhaustive list.*

Yet the divergence of the two canons coexisted with a far less orderly circulation of texts, translators, and publications. Geographical location, institutional affiliation, and ideological orientation did not always coincide. Mary Skrypnyk, for instance, a Canadian translator of Ukrainian origin, became the most frequently commissioned translator in the Soviet book corpus and collaborated extensively with both Dnipro and Veselka in Kyiv. Her translations also appeared in periodicals circulating outside the Soviet Union. The journals themselves further complicate a simple geographical division: the English-language *Ukraine* was a Soviet state periodical produced in Kyiv for foreign readers, whereas *Ukrainian Canadian* was published in Canada but maintained a consistently pro-Soviet orientation. The same translation could consequently pass from one setting to the other. Iryna Zheleznova's translation of the folk tale "The Cat and the Cock", for example, appeared in *Ukraine*

in 1982 and in *Ukrainian Canadian* in 1983. Even the name *Veselka* referred to two institutionally unrelated enterprises: the Ukrainian children's magazine published in Jersey City by Svoboda Press and the Soviet children's publishing house in Kyiv.

Nor did diasporic publishing exclude writers active in Soviet Ukraine. Yevhen Hutsalo's "Grandpop Hippity-Hop", translated by Mary Skrypnyk, appeared in *Ukrainian Canadian* in 1982, while his prose was also included in Zonia Keywan's community-based bilingual anthology *The Magic Crystal and Other Short Stories in Ukrainian and English* (Yalenka Ukrainian Cultural Society, 1988), together with works by Ivan Franko, Marko Vovchok, Bohdan Lepkyi, and other writers from different historical and geographical contexts. Folklore moved just as freely across institutional forms. "The Flying Ship", for instance, appeared in the Canadian commercial collection *The Flying Ship and Other Ukrainian Folk Tales* in 1975 and later within Raduga's Soviet series *Folk Tales from the Soviet Union* in 1986. Other tales circulated through the diasporic *Veselka*, Soviet state publishers, bilingual community books, and commercial adaptations such as Alvin Tresselt's and Jan Brett's versions of *The Mitten*. These crossings show that Soviet and diasporic/Western publishing were not sealed cultural territories. Geographical location, institutional affiliation, ideological orientation, and the cultural background of the translator did not always coincide. The two fields addressed a nominally shared reader – the child – but imagined that reader differently: as an international recipient of Soviet cultural representation, a diasporic child negotiating language shift, or a broader Anglophone reader encountering Ukrainian culture through a commercial book.

However, the shared names did not guarantee a shared image. Soviet publishing maintained canonicity through state selection, repetition, large print runs, and a stable group of translators: recurrent folklore editions and Semen Shakhovsky's ideologically framed biography of Lesia Ukrainka exemplify a repertoire that made Ukraine culturally distinct while largely depoliticising its past. Diasporic publishing preserved the same folklore and classics but placed them alongside works excluded from the Soviet field, including Ivan Bahrianyi's *The Hunters and the Hunted* and Olha Mak's *Stones Under the Scythe*, which restored histories of repression and the Holodomor to the image of Ukraine. The difference therefore lay not only in what was translated but also in how shared cultural material was framed: folklore could remain timeless and ethnographic in Soviet editions, yet become part of a narrative of historical resistance in the diasporic *Veselka* through "Kyrylo Koshemiaka" and Roman Zavadovych's *Bohuta-Bohdan*; likewise, a classic could be incorporated into Soviet ideology or reclaimed as part of a dispersed national tradition.

These differences cannot be reduced to inclusion and exclusion alone. The common core confirms that both systems drew on the same cultural inheritance. The movement of translators and texts between them shows that institutional boundaries were porous. What changed was the frame of memory: which meanings were brought forward, which histories were silenced, and what kind of reader each publication

imagined. Read in this way, the study begins to answer the historical question posed in the introduction. The previous period did not convey one stable image of Ukrainianness. It produced competing but interconnected representations. The Soviet system gave Ukrainian literature far greater numerical circulation, yet concentrated that visibility around folklore, selected classics, and politically safe contemporary writing. Diasporic publishing was smaller and less continuous, but it used translation to preserve language, recover excluded history, and connect younger generations with a national community dispersed across borders.

## CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, this comparison of Soviet and diasporic translations demonstrates that Ukrainian children's literature in translation functioned as much more than children's reading material. Translation became a powerful mechanism for shaping international images of Ukrainianness.

Twentieth-century translations of Ukrainian children's and young adult literature made Ukraine visible through two unequal but interconnected publishing fields. The centralised Soviet system ensured wider circulation, repeated editions, and large print runs, whereas diasporic publishing remained smaller and more dispersed. Yet the two fields drew on a partly shared repertoire, and texts, translators, and publications moved across their institutional boundaries. Their differences therefore lay not only in what was translated, but also in how common cultural material was selected, illustrated, framed, and placed within broader narratives of Ukraine.

These practices produced different images of Ukrainianness within cultural memory. Soviet publications presented Ukraine as culturally distinctive but predominantly folkloric, rural, and detached from its political history, making it compatible with the Soviet order. Diasporic publications connected the same cultural inheritance with linguistic continuity, historical trauma, displacement, resistance, and national survival. Translation thus preserved two interconnected memories of Ukraine: one as an ethnically distinctive culture without political agency, and the other as a historically continuous nation oriented towards sovereignty. These translations show what children's literature can be in a transnational setting: a space where culture is negotiated and national identity takes shape.

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**Варданян, М.** (2026). Репрезентація українськості через переклад: українська література для дітей та юнацтва в радянському та діаспорному контекстах. *Дитяча література: інтердисциплінарний дискурс*, 3 (2), 13 – 33.

У статті досліджено, як переклади української літератури для дітей та юнацтва у XX столітті формували образи українськості для зарубіжних читачів. Основну увагу зосереджено на англомовних виданнях, підготовлених у радянському та діаспорному видавничих контекстах. Мета дослідження – простежити циркуляцію та функціонування цих перекладів, реконструювати перекладний канон і визначити, як інституційний добір, тематичні акценти й паратекстове оформлення впливали на культурну саморепрезентацію України. У статті поєднано соціологію перекладу, культурно-історичну імагологію, студії культурної пам'яті та ідеологічно орієнтований підхід до перекладу. Емпіричний матеріал охоплює бібліографічний масив зі 169 позицій перекладної української літератури для дітей та юнацтва, з яких 122 пов'язані з радянським контекстом, а 47 – із діаспорним і західним книговиданням, а також вибрані книжки й періодичні видання, що репрезентують радянські та діаспорні видавничі практики. Бібліографічне картографування дало змогу визначити видавництва, авторів, твори, перекладачів, наклади й канали поширення, тоді як розгляд

окремих публікацій показав, як їхня тематика та паратекстове оформлення сприяли формуванню певних образів українськості. Результати засвідчують, що радянські та діаспорні перекладацькі практики сформували не цілком відокремлені, а частково перехресні конфігурації перекладного канону. Радянське книговидання, зосереджене навколо видавництв “Веселка” і “Дніпро”, надавало перевагу фольклору, казкам та ідеологічно прийнятній класиці. Поширюваний ним образ українськості зберігав культурну самобутність, але був фольклоризованим і деполітизованим, тоді як політично чутливі теми залишалися поза межами перекладного канону. Діаспорні видавничі мережі поділяли частину цього канонічного осердя, проте виразніше акцентували культурну пам’ять, досвід переміщення, антирадянський спротив і національне самозбереження. Водночас перекладачі й тексти циркулювали між двома системами, що ускладнює їх просте бінарне протиставлення. Поєднуючи формування перекладного канону з аналізом тематичного й паратекстового представлення вибраних публікацій, дослідження демонструє, що переклад функціонував не лише як перенесення літературних творів до іншого мовного середовища, а й як форма культурного та ідеологічного посередництва, через яку національна ідентичність та історична пам’ять зазнавали добору, переосмислення й поширення. Запропонований підхід створює підґрунтя для перегляду радянської та діаспорної спадщини української перекладної літератури й деколонізації успадкованих образів України.

**Ключові слова:** українська література для дітей та юнацтва, українськість, радянський переклад, українська діаспора, перекладний канон, соціологія перекладу, імагологія, культурна пам’ять, деколонізація.

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