

## Preface

The past of Eastern Europe, and of Ukraine in particular, in all its diversity and drama, is a history of different national cultures that coexisted on the same territories for centuries. This coexistence has been recorded in various forms and remains part of living memory. The past speaks to us no less vividly through literary texts than through archival documents or historical accounts. Perceptions of the Other, formed and transformed across different historical periods, existed in the form of stereotypes and prejudices, but also as forms of dialogue and mutual understanding. It seems to me that literature is precisely the space in which one culture not only describes another but also seeks to understand it, while at the same time defining its own place in shared territories and a shared history.

The study of literature in different languages on the lands of Ukraine makes it possible to gain a deeper understanding of the history of Ukrainian-Jewish relations, and the metaphor of the mirror seems particularly apt to me. For a literary text does not simply reflect reality—it creates images that become part of cultural memory and ultimately influence the ways communities understand themselves and their neighbours.

This is why imagology seems to me one of the most promising approaches to the study of Ukrainian-Jewish relations. Literature can be viewed as a kind of mirror in which we see not only Jews in Ukrainian writing or Ukrainians in Jewish writing, but also the culture from which these images emerge. For every gaze directed at the Other is at the same time a look inward, a reflection on one's own values, fears, and historical experience. Imagology focuses not on the correspondence between a literary image and historical reality, but on why an author creates particular images, how they change over time, and what conclusions can be drawn about the cultural context in which the texts emerged. In this sense, the image of the Jew in Ukrainian literature

and the image of Ukraine in the writings of Jewish authors are not two separate subjects but parts of a shared history of mutual reading.

The studies collected in this volume cover a broad chronological and thematic range—from medieval manuscript texts to contemporary prose, from biblical reception to reflections on the Holocaust and the memory of the trauma of the twentieth century. This perspective makes it possible to trace how patterns of mutual perception between Ukrainians and Jews have changed, how religious representations have given way to cultural ones, and how established stereotypes have been replaced by more complex and multidimensional ways of understanding identity.

The volume opens with Olena Peleshenko's study of the apocrypha about Pontius Pilate in the Ukrainian manuscript tradition. The author traces the mechanisms of the othering of Jews in medieval literature, demonstrating how religious narratives shaped the image of the Other while the Ukrainian tradition simultaneously developed its own, less radical forms of this process.

In Oleksandr Boron's article, the Jewish theme in Taras Shevchenko's works emerges beyond simplified assessments. The author shows how the poet combined inherited literary clichés with a genuine humanistic impulse to see a human being above all behind ethnic and religious differences. Bohdan Tykholoz addresses the multifaceted relationship between Ivan Franko and the Jewish world, examining it in biographical, literary, and political dimensions. He demonstrates the complexity and evolution of Franko's views, challenging simplified notions of his attitude toward Jews and opening new perspectives for understanding Ukrainian-Jewish dialogue. Olha Poliukhovych explores the reception of ancient Jewish themes in Lesya Ukrainka's works, combining an analysis of her dramatic poems and biblical translations with her biographical context. Poliukhovych demonstrates how the writer's engagement with the history of the Jewish people became a way of reflecting on freedom, responsibility, and the fate of Ukraine, revealing new dimensions of her modernist thought.

A separate thematic section is devoted to the twentieth century—a period of intense cultural dialogue, modernist experimentation, and dramatic historical upheavals. Vira Ageieva examines the figure of Jeremiah Aizenshtok, demonstrating his place in the history of Ukrainian literary scholarship and Kharkiv Formalism. Tetiana Nepypenko analyses the image of the new Kharkiv in sketches by Yiddish writers, revealing a Jewish perspective on the modernization project of Soviet Ukraine. Roman Veretelnyk focuses on Alexander Granach's autobiographical book, examining it as a literary testimony to the multilingual and multicultural world of pre-war Galicia. He shows how the everyday coexistence of Ukrainian and Jewish communities shaped the writer's cultural identity, offering a new perspective on the history of the borderland as a space of interaction rather than separation. Natalia Peleshenko explores the complex Ukrainian-Jewish identity of Leonid Pervomaisky, tracing how memories of the shtetl, the Ukrainian cultural space, and the search for new models of self-understanding intertwine in his work.

The volume concludes with studies devoted to the literature of memory. Rostyslav Semkiv analyses Jonathan Safran Foer's novel *Everything Is Illuminated*, showing how irony and the comic can become means of confronting the Holocaust and Ukrainian-Jewish history without diminishing their tragic complexity. Iryna Borysiuk turns to the novels of Oksana Zabuzhko and Sofia Andrukhovych, examining the mechanisms of memory, silence, and trauma that shape contemporary interpretations of the Second World War.

The studies presented in this collective monograph convincingly demonstrate that Ukrainian-Jewish cultural dialogue cannot be reduced to a history of conflict or coexistence. It is, above all, a history of mutual reading, in which each culture, in seeking to understand the other, discovers new dimensions of its own identity.

I hope that this collective monograph will become not only a contribution to the development of Ukrainian imagological studies but also an invitation to further interdisciplinary and intercultural dialogue—one that is particularly important at a time when the

humanities are increasingly called upon not only to investigate the past but also to foster mutual understanding in the present. For literature not only preserves the memory of the shared past of two peoples but also invites us to rethink it.

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