

Artículo de investigación

**Ukrainian historical novel by Pavlo Zahrebelnyi in the stream of new  
historical fiction: the world context**

УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ ІСТОРИЧНИЙ РОМАН П. ЗАГРЕБЕЛЬНОГО В РІЧИЦІ НОВОЇ  
ІСТОРИЧНОЇ ПРОЗИ: СВІТОВИЙ КОНТЕКСТ

Novela histórica Ucrania de Pavlo Zahrebelnyi en la corriente de la nueva ficción histórica: el  
contexto mundial

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**Abstract**

The article determines the peculiarities of the Ukrainian historical novels by Pavlo Zahrebelnyi with regard to the general tendencies of the world literature development, particularly in the context of Slavic fiction evolution. The Ukrainian historical novels under a totalitarian Soviet regime assumed a difficult duty, dictated by an imperative need, to awaken the national memory. The following world-wide tendency of literature development in the twentieth century as breakaway of historical novel writing from the real, historiographical representation of reality to the generalized and conditional, philosophical and mythological one was commented upon. The literature sought to renew the national identity, to surround the identity of Ukrainian world with its original, unique language, culture, history, and national character. History, historicism, historical

**Анотація**

У статті з'ясовано специфіку історичних романів П. Загребельного, зумовлених загальними тенденціями розвитку світової літератури, зокрема в контексті еволюції слов'янської белетристики. Українська історична романістика за тоталітарного режиму взяла на себе нелегкий обов'язок, що був продиктований актуальною потребою, – будити національну пам'ять. Прокоментовано таку загальносвітову тенденцію розвитку літератури у ХХ столітті, як відхід історичної романістики від реального, історіографічного представлення дійсності до узагальнено-умовного, філософського, міфологічного. Література намагалася відродити національну ідентичність, обстояти окремішність українського світу з його самотньою

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memory, traditions, heredity, folk character, all these concepts became widespread, demonstrating a growing interest to the aspects that covered them. History, the past have become a kind of tool when writers lifted the identical and national roots from the depths of a human personality. It demonstrated whereby people stay as people, peoples stay as peoples, and an individual human being stays a person as a nation witness, and, therefore, as a whole humanity witness. It illustrates how the Ukrainian historical fiction since the 1960s, having at its origins different causes also moved in this direction, and Pavlo Zahrebelnyi's creative work became one of the most impressive examples of the breakaway from the principle of the past fact presentation to its philosophical understanding in terms of the present day and personal spirit. It analyzes how the writer who actively studied many historical sources and new historical concepts in the process of his creative activity on historical works gradually comes to the creation of his own history concept, which largely keeps up with such a historical direction.

**Key words:** Historical novel, «fiction new wave», «thinking history», novel of «time connection», sixties, chronotopos, time planes, Slavic literatures.

мовою, культурою, історією, національним характером. Історія, історизм, історична пам'ять, традиції, спадкоємність, народний характер – ці поняття набули значного поширення, демонструючи зростання інтересу до тих аспектів, що ними охоплювалися. Історія, минуле стали своєрідним інструментом, за допомогою якого письменники піднімали з глибин людської особистості її корені, завдяки чому люди залишаються людьми, народ народом, а окрема людська індивідуальність є свідком нації, а відтак і всього людства. Проілюстровано, як українська історична проза від 60-х рр. ХХ століття, маючи у своєму першопочатку інші спричинники, так само рухалася в цьому напрямі, і творчість П. Загребельного стала одним із найскравіших зразків відходу від принципу фактографії минулого до філософського його осмислення крізь призму сьогодення й особистісної свідомості. Проаналізовано, як письменник, який активно ознайомлювався в процесі роботи над історичними творами з багатьма історичними джерелами й новими історичними концепціями, поступово приходять до формування власної концепції історії, яка багато в чому суголосна такому історичному напрямку.

**Ключові слова:** історичний роман, «нова хвиля прози», «історія мисляча», роман «зв'язку часів», шістдесятництво, хронотопос, часові площини, слов'янські літератури.

## Resumen

El artículo determina las peculiaridades de las novelas históricas ucranianas de Pavlo Zahrebelnyi con respecto a las tendencias generales del desarrollo de la literatura mundial, particularmente en el contexto de la evolución de la ficción eslava. Las novelas históricas ucranianas bajo un régimen soviético totalitario asumieron un deber difícil, dictado por una necesidad imperiosa, de despertar la memoria nacional. Se comentó la siguiente tendencia mundial del desarrollo de la literatura en el siglo XX como ruptura de la escritura de novelas históricas de la representación real, historiográfica de la realidad a la generalizada y condicional, filosófica y mitológica. La literatura buscaba renovar la identidad nacional, rodear la identidad del mundo ucraniano con su idioma, cultura, historia y carácter nacional únicos y originales. Historia, historicismo, memoria histórica, tradiciones, herencia, carácter popular, todos estos conceptos se generalizaron, lo que demuestra un creciente interés por los aspectos que los cubrían. La historia, el pasado se ha convertido en una especie de herramienta cuando los escritores levantaron las raíces idénticas y nacionales de las profundidades de una personalidad humana. Demostró que las personas permanecen como personas, los pueblos permanecen como pueblos, y un ser humano individual permanece como persona como testigo de la nación y, por lo tanto, como testigo de la humanidad. Ilustra cómo la ficción histórica ucraniana desde la década de 1960, teniendo en sus orígenes diferentes causas también se movió en esta dirección, y el trabajo creativo de Pavlo Zahrebelnyi se convirtió en uno de los ejemplos más impresionantes de la ruptura del principio de la presentación de hechos pasados a su comprensión filosófica. en términos del presente y espíritu personal. Analiza cómo el escritor que estudió activamente muchas fuentes históricas

y nuevos conceptos históricos en el proceso de su actividad creativa en las obras históricas gradualmente llega a la creación de su propio concepto de historia, que en gran medida mantiene esa dirección histórica.

**Palabras clave:** Novela histórica, «nueva ola de ficción», «historia pensante», novela de «conexión temporal», años sesenta, cronotopos, planos temporales, literatura eslava.

## Introduction

Until recently, the historical genre in Ukraine was one of the most conservative genres, since it was constantly under the close vigil of «literary critics from the Central Committee of the CPU». Literature ideologists did not much approve of the writers' interest in history, because they said it was a rather dangerous thing, so those who fell under its influence could come to unpredictable conclusions in the views on the present.

Yes, despite everything, the authors' interest in writing historical works of fiction did not disappear. Moreover, the Ukrainian historical novel under the totalitarian regime assumed a difficult duty dictated by the urgent need – to wake up the national memory. Although not only this resulted in an increase of the interest in artistic perception of national history. The writer constrained by the grip of prohibitions, censorship and the requirements of socialist realism was looking for those ideas and issues which, according to O. Zabuzhko, provided the opportunities to be more or less free: «Only the historical genre gave the dependent Soviet novel writing a little chance that let the hero pretend to be free in unnatural specially created environment and not to be concerned about the historical authenticity ...» (Zabuzhko, 2003, p. 57).

The attention to the historical novel genre particularly livened up after Khrushchev thaw – the formation time of the cohort of the Sixties, inspired by the artists' national and state idea. Theoretical underground.

As it is known, the main idea of the Ukrainian sixties was «anti-colonial orientation, and not necessarily in terms of socio-political, but primarily ontological, existential and cultural» (Kordun, Zhulynskyi, & Andrusiv 1997, p. 50). It tried to revive its national identity, be a part of the Ukrainian world with its original language, culture, history, national character.

In the literature there was a scope of «the artistic, spiritual historicism tendency, that is, focusing on the problems of historical memory, understanding the connection between times and generations» roots and origins, «learning

people's rich ethical experience» (Donchyk, 1998, p. 95).

The specific realization of this tendency gained a variety of ways, growing ever further during the 70s and covering all levels and areas of the literary process. According to M. Zhulynskyi, «the development of an integral history conception is not conceived without a fundamental, systematic understanding of our people, our national history» (Zhulynskyi, 1987, p. 25).

The aim of the article is to determine the peculiarities of the historical novels by Pavlo Zahrebelnyi with regard to the general tendencies of the world literature development, particularly in the context of Slavic fiction evolution.

## Methods

The methods of this paper is connected with a comparative analysis of different historical literature tendencies of the same period, a literary text analysis using structural, typological and comparative methods of research. These methods allow us to describe the inner literature layers, the penetration of the historical literature into art in general.

## Results

The longing for his people and culture authenticity, realness, «the genuineness of the origin» is always connected with seeking God, the Creator. The searches were turned to the past as the Lord was the past in the time of the common history, the «golden age» of national heroes and wise men. Therefore, the sixties brought about the new wave of the historical novel – the works by P. Zahrebelnyi, R. Ivanychuk, R. Fedoriv, Yu. Mushketyk, I. Bilyk, R. Ivanchenko (Zborovska, 2006).

P. Zahrebelnyi together with I. Chendei, A. Diamarov, V. Zemliak, Yu. Mushketyk and other authors of the older generation, though not belonging to the core of the Sixties, were them by their very nature (Donchyk, 1998).

In the second half of the 1960s, one of the literary process hallmarks was «the break up of dead walls between the issues of modern age and history, the talk about spiritual and moral sources of man, new and old in the national character, attitude to the past, continuity of generations, eternal universal matters of life and death, transient and eternal unfolded ...» (Donchyk, 1984, p. 96).

Since the late 60s, with the forthcoming of such historical novels as «Dyvo» (1968) by P. Zahrebelnyi, «Malvy» (1968) by R. Ivanychuk, «Zhban vyna» (1968), by R. Fedoriv, the so-called new wave «of Ukrainian historical novel writing started.

1968 was called «symbolic» for the Ukrainian historical fiction since according to M. Ilnytskyi «it was then that a number of works appeared, which in many ways determined the directions of further literature development about the past of our people, namely, they outlined the principles that gave reasons to talk about the features of a new quality in understanding history as the connection of eras, the incessancy of social progress, continuity of generations and spiritual traditions» (Ilnytskyi, 1989, p. 10).

And it is not just a quantitative «explosion» (except mentioned above «Pervomist» (1972), «Death in Kyiv» (1973), «Yevpraksiia» (1975) by P. Zahrebelnyj; «Cherlene Wine» (1977), «Manuscript from Ruska Street» (1979) by R. Ivanychuk; «Father's Lamp» (1976) by R. Fedoriv; the verse novel «Marusia Churai» (1979) by L. Kostenko in the 70 s; in the 80 s: «Stone Water» (1982), «The Fourth Dimension» (1984), «Scars on the Rock» (1986) by R. Ivanychuk; Roksolana (1980), «Ya, Bohdan (Confession in Glory)» (1983) by P. Zahrebelnyi; Yasa, (1970-74) by Yu. Mushketyk; «On the Humble Field» (1983), «Three Leaves Outside the Window» (1986) by V. Shevchuk; «Perun's Anger» (1982), «Golden Stirrups» (1983) by R. Ivanychenko; «The Secret Ambassador» (1981), «Prince Kyi» (1982) by V. Malyk; «Funeral of the Gods» (1986) by I. Bilyk; «Blue-Eyed Tyver» (1983), «The Hard Times of Oecumene» (1985) by D. Mishchenko; «Solomiia Krushelnytska» (1979) by V. Vrublevska; «Mariia Bashkyrtseva» (1986) by M. Slaboshpytskyi, but also in fundamentally new qualities of the Ukrainian historical novel.

This novelty was immediately noticed by the critics who declared: «There is a new, higher form of philosophy in the depiction of the past and its relation to the modern age» (L.

Novychenko) (Novychenko, 1976, p. 44); «A new wave of historical novel-writing» (V. Donchyk) (Donchyk, 1984, p. 43); «The thinking history» (M. Ilnytskyi) (Ilnytskyi, 1989, p. 82).

In the period of the historical novel rise, the critics noted the following common features inherent in the writers' works, such as «enhanced moral factor, deep connection with the modern age, conceptual and analytical approach, person-psychological matters, combined with social-class ones, the conflict interpretation and the finding of a fresh, often artistically condensed form of historical material embodiment» (Donchyk, 1981, p. 1).

The artistic concept of the novel was embodied in the search for a «way of discovering a close» connection of times «continuity, deepening of the internal problem, philosophical content of images, the discovery of new and fruitful use of ancient folk poetry, on the way of further enrichment of such literature features ... as historicism and national character» (Donchyk, 1981, p. 146).

The new Ukrainian novel combines «the features of the classical historical novel with its serious study of the past and the historical and artistic novel with a» total look at things, «an extensive view of modern life, philosophy, intellectuality (Andrusiv, 1987, p. 10).

In the novel of this period there is «a characteristic shift of time and an interchange of timeplanes, retrospective historical view of the past, and» vertical planes «, other methods of disengagement. The new kind of novel - the «novel of times connection» gradually developed (Donchyk, 1984, p. 96).

The appearance of «Dyvo» by P. Zahrebelnyi in 1968 allowed the critics to speak about the continuation of the historical novel-writing traditions: The novel «Dyvo» has the best features that were revealed in «Volodymyr» by Skliarenko ... first of all, the completeness of the historical epoch depiction - these features can be called continuity if it is not a repetition, but a continuation, further development, the search for new ways.

And the new approach for «Dyvo» was the drama of times, the collision of ideas» (Ilnytskyi, 1989, p. 36). Literary scholars linked «Dyvo» with a new stage in the development of Ukrainian novel-writing, the stage that was called «the thinking history» (Ilnytskyi, 1989, p. 48).

The historical novel set the task «not only to copy, reconstruct the past in an objective, impersonal story, but also to comprehend it from the view point of the present day and the emphasised subjective-author concept, to highlight the modern age, revive the upper eventful stratum of history and historical personality, depict it from the inside» (Andrusiv, 1991, p. 51).

History, historicism, historical memory, traditions, continuity, and people's character – these concepts became widespread in the late 1960s, showing an increasing interest in those aspects they covered.

The past, history became a kind of instrument with which the writers raised a human personality's roots from the depths, so that people remained people, peoples also remained themselves and a particular human personality is the nation's role model and therefore of all mankind.

The new historical novel «firmly abandoned the practice of conscientious illustration of history, or, moreover, humiliation of the people's history» (Andrusiv, 1991, p. 51). For Ukrainian historical prose of this period, «a characteristic rethinking, in-depth awareness and depicting a new stage of the past historical experience, the historical role of prominent figures became crucial» (Zhulynskyi, 1987, p. 24).

It is worth noting that the new type of historical novel, namely the «thinking one» that developed in the Ukrainian literature, had its «twins» in other national literatures of the USSR republics: «Goodbye, Gulsari» (1966), «White Steamboat» (1970) by Ch. Aitmatov; «Kaunas Novel» (1966) by A. Beliauskas; «Georgian Chronicle of the XIII Century» (1957, 1963, 1975) by G. Abashydz; «A Souvenir from Otara» (1966), «Makhambet's arrow» (1969) by A. Alimzhanov; «The Gulp of Freedom» (1969) by B. Okudzhava; «I Came To give You Freedom» (1971) by V. Shukshyn; «Data Tutashkhia (1973-75) by Ch. Amiredzhybi; «Olshanskyi Black Castle» (1979-1980) by Y. Drutse; «Fatal Fatali» (1983) by Ch. Huseinov; «Fierce Age» (1984) by I. Kalashnykov; «Four monologues about St. George» (1984) by Y. Kros.

Consequently, the interest in the problem of historical memory at that time was a quite natural phenomenon which was motivated by socio-political factors and the logic of the development of the nations «enslaved» by totalitarian system.

It should be noted that the phenomenon, which was called by literary critics a historical novel, due to the rapid development of the southern Slavs during the second half of the twentieth century and the interaction with other novel genre and thematic varieties gained new features. Within this phenomenon with inherent internal contradictions different in nature genre modifications were formed. One of such modifications was the novel of «times connection» – «the work in narrative chronotope of which two or more time planes coexisted, functioning not as separate, independent components, but as a part of the whole» (Moskalenko, & Rudiakov, 1993, p. 200). According to V. Donchyk, «times connection «is no longer a feature of one or several novels, but the property of the genre itself ...» (Donchyk, 1984, p. 89).

The phenomenon of creating a novel with a new genre modification was typical not only for Ukrainian literature but also became a natural process in Polish, Serbian, and Bulgarian literatures. Thus, the forerunner of a new novel in Serbian literature was the work by I. Andrych «The Curse of the Courtyard» (1954).

The novel was written as memoirs, an important feature of which was the free switch from one episode to another, regardless of their chronological or any other interdependence, the limitlessness of the narrative with any formal logical factors. The writer moreover, uses a complicated, multilevel composition. ... The sequence of events and their time coordinates lose their clarity and become to some extent conditional» (Moskalenko, & Rudiakov, 1993, p. 213).

Comparing another historical novel by I. Andrych «The Bridge over the Dryna» with the works by P. Zahrebelnyi: «Pervomist» and «Miracle», N. Bilyk reveals the common features of representative components in the artistic work plot lines, covering the issues of the historical past (Bilyk, 2006).

This connection allows the researcher to assert that «along with the unconditional recognition of the national-specific artistic material mastery and each artist's individual characteristic of the creative writing» (Bilyk, 2006), that the unity of the ideological and aesthetic principles of I. Andrych and P. Zahrebelnyi is traced and gives an opportunity to emphasize again the connection and contiguity of processes that shape and determine the historical development of Serbian and Ukrainian literatures (Bilyk, 2006).

The tradition follower of I. Andrych in Serbian literature became M. Selimovych with the novels «Dervish and Death» (1966), «The Fortress» (1973). Describing the novel «Dervish and Death» from the view point of time connection, it is worth noting that «it is not a historical novel in the full sense» (Moskalenko, & Rudiakov, 1993, p. 215). Not the plot itself, but the narrative material is connected with the history and the past events. The researchers of M. Selimovych's creative work called the plot in the novel «Dervish and Death» conditionally historical.

Another novel by the writer is «The Fortress,» the narration of which takes place in the Muslim-Sarajevo environment of the XVII century (the period after the Pochynska Battle in 1612), is characterized by «timelessness», raise over the major events and age. According to L. Shchehol M. Selimovych was able, in the framework of unlimited time, «to depict the development of the universal human crisis during the protagonist absence in the main scene ...» (Shchehol, 2012, p. 389). M. Selimovych's creative work synthesized the achievements of a historical and philosophical, historical and psychological novel and a parable.

And another event in Serbian literature was the novel by M. Pavych «The Khazar Dictionary» (1983), in which the writer in the stream of postmodernism practice builds a multilevel story in which the adventure narration is complemented and complicated by the event comments, so that to have new ones at the further narrative level (Pavych, 1999).

Analyzing the storyline, it should be mentioned that «in the novel there is no common plot time or space, there are many different time lines and spaces between which the most diverse ties are established and destroyed in order to be re-establish and destroyed again» (Moskalenko, & Rudiakov, 1993, p. 219).

In the historical works by the Bulgarian writer E. Staniv «The Legend of Sybin, the Prince of Pereiaslav» (1967), «Antychryst» (1970), there is a marked interpenetration of historically concrete and parable beginnings, the influence of folklore on the world poetic picture. According to S. Mashynskiy, the peculiar feature of «The Legend of Sybin, the Prince of Pereiaslav», and indeed the entire historical writer's prose, is «a very delicate internal correlation of different time planes» (Mashynskiy, 1977, p. 6).

I. Petrov's creative work is an example of transformation experienced by the Bulgarian historical fiction from the early 60 s of the twentieth century. The time of a particular historical period in the novel «A Wolf Hunt» (1986) falls in a wide range of nuances, splits up in the heroes' minds and re-combines into a whole again.

Due to the original plot, «when, within a single unity, several planes function freely the unity is constantly connected with the closer chronotope, which is the author's understanding of time» (Moskalenko, & Rudiakov, 1993, p. 221), I. Petrov succeeded in creating the artistic characters of the age.

The narrative by V. Karamanchev «Cherry Remembrance Saturday» (1986) is similar to I. Petrov's work. This likeness can be traced not only at the event level, but also at the level of the plot composition. Each of the characters in the story speaks about himself and the fellow villagers using the language of various documents. As in the novel by I. Petrov, concrete historical time falls in a wide range of nuances to give a complete picture of a deep socio-philosophical ground.

The works by Bulgarian writers I. Petrov «A Wolf Hunt» and V. Karamanchev «Cherry Remembrance Saturday» by genre modification can be treated as the conditional historical prose, in which real historical events, actual phenomena of peoples' lives are used to describe a particular historical age.

Taking into account the problem of time connection, expressed by the coexistence of several time planes in the narrative chronotope, «A Wolf Hunt» and «Cherry Remembrance Saturday» fully correspond to the trends of modernist historical pose of the peripheral type. The Slovak writer P. Yarosh in his historical and social novel, «The Millenium Bee» (1979) expresses the chronological principle of constructing a poetic world view that perceives the history of one family as a symbol of folk fate. H. Syvachenko, studying the influence of postmodernism on Slovak literature of the 70s and 80s, notes that «due to absurdity and neglect a grotesque, phantasmagoric chronotope of the modern Slovak novel is formed, there is a rather sharp mutation of traditional genres. ... The family chronicle by P. Yarosh «The Millenium Bee» filled with the complex polyphony of folk life, turns into a philosophical narrative about the national self-

awareness formation ...» (Syvachenko, 1996, p. 68).

Since the second half of the 1950s in Czech literature it is possible to observe the emergence of qualitatively new types of historical novels that overcome not only the communist tradition, but the tradition itself.

Moreover, we can speak about the implementation of these alternative strategies after the suppression of the «Prague Spring» in 1968, deploying Soviet troops and establishing in Czechoslovakia regime of the so-called «normalization». It was the period that, unlike the 1960s, was characterized by a violent transformation of the genre.

The traditional themes, such as the conflict of power and man, artist and power, the precondition of personality's actions by historical circumstances were considered, for example, by I. Shotola («The Brotherhood of Jesus», 1969), V. Kerner («The Sandy Spit», 1970), O. Danek (the trilogy about the Czech kings of the XIII-XIV centuries – «The King escapes from the battlefield» (1967), «The King Without a Helmet» (1971), «The Murder in Olomouts» (1972).

In particular I. Shotola, through the prism of «cog» psychology in a huge hierarchy of the Jesuit Order tells the story of the most famous religious fraternity or O. Danek who reveals the Czech history through a story about the Czech kings Yan Liuksemburh and Vatslav II as particular personalities.

In the 1970s-1980s, in the context of a similar tendency the novels by V. Erben («Memoirs of the Czech King Irzhyk from Podebrad» (1979), I. Shotola («Chicken on a Roasting jack» (1976) and «The Saint on the Bridge» (1978), V. Kerner («The Dying Time Guard» (1984) were created and considered by B. Dokoupyl to be «experimental» novels.

In the novels by M. Yourcenar «Memoirs of Adrian» (1960), «The Philosopher's Stone» (1988), by L. Gyllensten «The Death of Socrates» (1975), by P. White «A Fringe of Leaves» (1976) history is not the source of archetypes, but the reality beyond which there can be neither characters, nor issues that are covered in works with a high philosophical degree (Bakanov, 1989).

## Conclusions

The foregoing gives grounds to assert that one of the world-wide trends in the development of literature in the twentieth century was breakaway of historical novel, writing from the real, historiographical representation of reality to the generalized and conditional, philosophical and mythological one.

Having at its origins different causes Ukrainian historical prose moved in this direction since the 1960s, and P. Zahrebelnyi's creative work became one of the most brilliant examples of the breakaway from the principle of the past fact presentation to its philosophical understanding in terms of the present day and personal spirit.

At the same time the writer who actively studied many historical sources and new historical concepts in the process of his creative activity on historical works gradually comes to the creation of his own history concept, which largely keeps up with such a historical direction.

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