



## HISTORICAL NOVEL AS A SPECIAL LITERARY GENRE

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**Abstract:** This article is devoted to the analysis and research of the historical novel as a special literary genre. The author explores the history and development of this genre, its characteristic features and importance in world literature.

**Keywords:** historical novel, Alexandrov, genre, historical prose, historical novelism, the need for isolation, a separate genre.

The category of genre is one of the key theoretical and literary concepts. In modern literary criticism, the problem of genre affiliation is one of the most controversial. Different researchers define the genre and highlight its specifics, but it is generally accepted that this category occupies a central place in the system of aesthetic knowledge, is universal and specific.

The genre of the historical novel, which arose in the 19th century, already at the beginning of its formation caused numerous controversies. While most prominent literary critics of that era attributed the appearance of the historical novel to an innovative, original phenomenon, French classicists opposed this trend, arguing that a writer can truthfully portray only the reality that he witnessed, and that “the historical novel is a complete lie, all the more dangerous because the author passes off his fiction as a true story, while in any novel that does not claim to be historical, the fiction is not hidden under the guise of the authentic: truth” [7].

Subsequently, a discussion unfolds in literary circles about the need to distinguish the historical novel into a separate genre. Thus, G. Lukács, analyzing the work of realist writers, comes to the conclusion that the historical novel lacks specific features that distinguish it from social novels. He claims that “it is impossible to find a single significant problem, either in content or in form, that would be found only in the historical novel” [2], thereby the literary critic does not see sufficient grounds to isolate historical prose into a special artistic genre.

G. Lukach’s concept continues its development in the work of V. D. Oskotsky “Novel and History”, which emphasizes the need to distinguish historical prose not into a genre, but into typical stability: “Calling it <historical novel> a genre can only be done in that conditional and in the imprecise literary sense in which in everyday critical use we actually talk about the genres of adventure or science fiction, socio-



psychological or family novel. After all, strictly speaking, none of them is a genre, but each manifests itself as a variety of a single epic genre, as an established type, a meaningful form of novel narration. This is what happens with the historical novel: neither the content nor the form give grounds to distinguish it into some independent and special type of epic, developing according to its own immanent laws" [4, p. 264–265]. This point of view has been disputed by the majority of literary scholars and, in our opinion, this opinion is not correct due to the fact that the historical novel has specific genre features inherent exclusively to this type of epic work, which directly determine the special nature of its content.

Researchers of historical novels S. M. Petrov, A. I. Pautkin, L. P. Alexandrova, G. Lenoble, I. P. Varfolomeev, A. G. Bakanov and others adhere to a different point of view, believing that the historical novel is completely established genre of fiction. And although the opinions of these researchers regarding the identification of the historical novel as a separate genre coincide, the authors still do not come to a single solution to the problem of identifying the genre features of the historical novel.

S. M. Petrov considers time distance to be the most significant features of this direction of novelism: "in a historical novel, the distance between the writer and the theme of his time is always determined <...> the subject of a historical novel is usually the historical past, understood as a certain era that has already completed its development" [6, p. 7–10].

A. I. Pautkin, speaking about the nature of the historical novel genre, emphasizes the importance of the documentary basis of the work, while the narrative should depict significant events in which "the true faces of history" appear [5, p. 4].

L.P. Aleksandrova believes that the main feature of the historical novel as an independent literary genre is "the compositional function of a genuine historical person" [1, p. 24], at the same time, she notes that "the main thing in determining the genre specificity of a novel about the historical past should be recognized as the relationship between the historical reliability of facts and artistic conjecture and fiction in the coverage of historical figures" [1, p. 20].

V. V. Novikov believes that the dominant feature of the historical novel genre is manifested in the embodiment of the principle of historicism, which includes the temporary remoteness of the writer and the events depicted, the preservation of authenticity when depicting phenomena and persons of the past "using documents and defining the boundaries of fiction, its character, with recreating the color of the era, language, customs" [3, p. 275].



I. P. Varfolomeev substantiates the specifics of historical novelism on the typology of the main character, on the versatility of artistic fiction and its presence in all components of the work. The literary critic puts forward the position that the author's fiction in a historical novel serves to reflect artistic truth if the fiction is based on comprehensively studied and trustworthy materials about the events depicted.

Based on the existing authoritative points of view, we can conclude that the main genre-forming features of a historical novel are objectively: 1) the temporary remoteness of the author and the events he describes, the completeness of the process, allowing the writer to look at the holistic picture of the past taking into account the historical perspective; 2) a narrative about significant historical events, based on reliable documentary materials; 3) depiction of outstanding historical figures, real people and fictional characters, while the central place in the work can be occupied by any of these types of hero; 4) the use of the principle of historicism, which allows one to reliably depict the characteristic features of the era, its realities, local color, traditions and language; 5) synthesis of historical facts and artistic fiction, in which the author's fiction does not contradict the facts, but complements them, that is, the writer, using the available documentary facts, speculates on potential paths of development of events or peculiar character traits of the depicted era.

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