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IVAN KOCHERHA'S *MARKO V PEKLI* (1928) AND THE EARLY POETICS OF MAGICAL REALISM: A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Abstract. *This article examines Ivan Kocherha's play *Marko v pekli* (1928) from a comparative perspective, placing it in dialogue with the early poetics of magical realism later canonized in Latin American literature. The study is based on typological comparison rather than on a claim of direct influence. It identifies key parallels in the use of folklore and myth, the interpenetration of ordinary and extraordinary reality, infernal imagery as social critique, and the destabilization of time and space. The article argues that Kocherha's play can be read as an early and underrecognized East European articulation of magical-realist poetics, thus expanding the literary geography of magical realism.*

Key words: *Ivan Kocherha; magical realism; comparative perspective; Ukrainian literature; folklore.*

Бодик О.П. *Іван Кочерга і рання поетика магічного реалізму: компаративна перспектива.* У статті проаналізовано п'єсу Івана Кочерги «Марко в пеклі» (1928) у компаративній перспективі, із зіставленням із ранньою поетикою магічного реалізму, пізніше канонізованою в латиноамериканській літературі. Дослідження ґрунтується на

типологічному порівнянні, а не на припущенні про прямий вплив. Виокремлено основні паралелі у використанні фольклору й міфу, поєднанні буденного та надприродного, функціонуванні інфернальної образності як форми соціальної критики, а також у деформації часу й простору. Обґрунтовано, що п'єсу І. Кочерги можна розглядати як ранню й недостатньо осмислену східноєвропейську артикуляцію поетики магічного реалізму, що розширює уявлення про його літературну географію.

Ключові слова: Іван Кочерга; магічний реалізм; компаративістика; українська література; фольклор.

The relevance of the study. Magical realism is most commonly associated with Latin American literature of the second half of the twentieth century, particularly with the works of Gabriel García Márquez, Alejo Carpentier, and Isabel Allende. Yet the poetics that later came to be canonized under this label did not emerge in a single geography, nor did they develop in a single literary tradition. The fusion of realistic representation with the marvelous, the mythical, and the inexplicable appeared in different cultural contexts and under distinct historical pressures long before magical realism was stabilized as a critical category. The term itself was introduced by the German art historian Franz Roh in 1925 in *Nach-Expressionismus: magischer Realismus: Probleme der neuesten Europäischen Malerei*, where he used it to describe new tendencies in European painting. As Roh observes, “Magic Realism [...] aims to depict the magic of the external world, rather than the magic of the mind” [15, p. 16].

If one moves beyond the canonized Latin American genealogy of magical realism, interwar Ukrainian literature begins to appear as a particularly significant, though still underexamined, site for reconsidering the early history of this artistic mode. Despite the extreme political and ideological pressure of the period, Ukrainian literature of the 1920s remained open to modernist experimentation, genre hybridization, symbolic density, and non-realist forms of representing fractured historical experience. Ivan Kocherha's 1928 play *Marko v pekli* (*Marko in Hell*)¹ is especially important in this regard. The play constructs an artistic world in which folklore, infernal imagery, satire, allegory, and social reality are not separated into autonomous zones but coexist within a single representational field.

Chronologically, this is a striking fact. Kocherha wrote *Marko v pekli* two decades before Alejo Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo* (*The Kingdom of This World*, 1949), which is often treated as one of the foundational texts of Latin American magical realism, and nearly four decades before Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*

¹ Here and below, the translations are ours.

(*One Hundred Years of Solitude*, 1967). This chronology does not justify a reductive competition over origins, nor should it flatten the differences between distinct literary traditions. It does, however, invite a reconsideration of how literary history has been organized and canonized. If Kocherha's play demonstrates formal and poetic affinities with what would later be theorized as magical-realist writing, then Ukrainian literature deserves a more visible place in transnational discussions of magical realism's early development.

Problem setting. Ivan Kocherha's oeuvre has long attracted the attention of Ukrainian literary scholarship, although the critical paradigms used to interpret his work have changed significantly over time. During the Soviet period, critics tended to read the playwright within the ideological framework of socialist realism. In her 1968 monograph *Dramaturg Ivan Kocherha. Zhyttia. Piesy. Vystavy* (*Playwright Ivan Kocherha. Life. Plays. Productions*), N. Kuzyakina focused primarily on the ideological and thematic dimensions of the plays, interpreting *Marko v pekli* as a text about the conflict between the new man and the old world, while also noting the protagonist's romantic features and the paradoxical combination of romanticism with agitational didacticism [6, p. 82].

A new phase in the study of Kocherha's work began in the post-Soviet period. In his 2003 PhD dissertation *Problematyzatsiia modernistskykh techii u khudozho-estetychnykh poshukakh Ivana Kocherhy* (*The Problematization of Modernist Trends in Ivan Kocherha's Artistic and Aesthetic Pursuits*), O. Bodyk offered a systematic account of the playwright's artistic development, tracing the movement from symbolism to post-symbolism and examining the complex relation between Kocherha's modernist impulses and the emerging socialist realist canon [2]. In her 2004 article *Portret modernista v sotsrealistychnomu interieri* (*Portrait of a Modernist in a Socialist Realist Interior*), V. Aheieva proposed understanding Kocherha as a modernist dramatist compelled to adapt to socialist realist norms while remaining fundamentally faithful to his own aesthetic commitments. She identified duality as one of the major structural principles of Kocherha's poetics [1, p. 184]. This observation is especially important for understanding the layered reality that also becomes central in magical-realist representation.

The question of magical realism in interwar Ukrainian literature has been addressed by H. Syvachenko [7] and, more recently, by S. Boroditsa, who examined the genre-specific features of *Marko v pekli* and demonstrated its distinctive combination of fairy-tale structures with magical-realist tendencies [3, pp. 51–54]. Even so, comparative studies that place Ukrainian interwar texts in dialogue with the broader history of magical realism remain rare. In particular, Kocherha's dramatic poetics have not yet been systematically examined in relation to the Latin American tradition, which has become the dominant reference point in theoretical discussions of magical realism.

By contrast, Latin American magical realism has generated an extensive and influential body of scholarship. The collection *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* (1995), edited by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, remains one of the key theoretical landmarks in the field [14]. Wendy B. Faris identified several recurrent features of magical realism: the presence of an irreducible element of magic, the detailed rendering of the phenomenal world, the reader's hesitation concerning the nature of events, the convergence of different ontological realms, and the disruption of time, space, and identity [11, p. 7]. Stephen Slemon interpreted magical realism as a mode that often emerges at points of collision between competing systems of representation and authority [16, p. 10]. Christopher Warnes and Kim Anderson Sasser, in turn, argue that magical realism should be understood not as a narrowly regional phenomenon but as a genuinely global literary formation [17, p. 2]. This broader comparative horizon makes it possible to revisit texts that developed outside the Latin American canon but display comparable poetic strategies.

The absence of a sustained comparative analysis between Kocherha's *Marko v pekli* and the Latin American tradition of magical realism therefore constitutes a genuine scholarly lacuna. Addressing this lacuna is important not only for Kocherha studies, but also for rethinking the literary geography of magical realism itself.

The aim of this article is to examine *Marko v pekli* through a comparative perspective that places it in dialogue with the early poetics of magical realism as later theorized and canonized in the Latin American tradition. The article seeks to identify key typological parallels, to clarify the specific features of Kocherha's artistic world, and to show that magical-realist poetics may develop in distinct literary cultures as a response to historical rupture, ideological pressure, and the instability of cultural memory.

Methodologically, the article proceeds not from a claim of direct influence but from the logic of typological comparison. There is no reason to assume that Kocherha's play influenced Latin American writers or participated in the later institutional formation of magical realism as a recognized global category. Rather, the comparison is grounded in recurrent poetic features, analogous narrative strategies, and comparable efforts to represent societies undergoing deep crisis and transformation. In this sense, the Latin American tradition functions here not as the exclusive origin of magical realism, but as the most fully theorized comparative horizon through which the poetics of *Marko v pekli* can be more clearly articulated.

Presentation of the main material. As a literary mode, magical realism is characterized by a form of representation in which the marvelous, the mythical, or the inexplicable is not cordoned off from reality as an autonomous fantastic sphere but appears within the texture of ordinary life. As L. P. Zamora and W. B. Faris note, "In magical realist texts, the supernatural is not a simple or obvious matter, but it is an

ordinary matter, an everyday occurrence” [19, p. 3]. Alejo Carpentier, writing from a different but related position, formulated the idea of *lo real maravilloso* as an understanding of reality in which the marvelous inheres in the historical and cultural texture of the Americas themselves rather than being artificially imposed upon them [10, pp. 75-79]. These formulations do not describe identical poetics, but together they help clarify the central issue for the present study: the marvelous becomes artistically significant not when it abandons reality, but when it reveals reality’s layered and unstable nature.

The historical context as a condition for the emergence of magical-realist poetics. A key point of departure for identifying typological parallels is the historical context in which magical-realist poetics become both possible and necessary. Latin American magical realism developed in culturally hybrid spaces shaped by colonial history, competing epistemologies, and the coexistence of heterogeneous symbolic systems. Its aesthetic force emerged not only from formal experimentation, but also from the need to represent realities that did not fit the conceptual limits of European rationalism. As Stephen Slemon argues, magical realism often appears where systems of representation are in conflict and where the authority of a single explanatory framework becomes unstable [16, pp. 10–15].

Ukraine in the 1920s, though historically distinct from Latin America, was likewise a site of profound rupture, ideological contestation, and unstable cultural self-definition. Revolution, civil war, the consolidation of Soviet power, and the rapid restructuring of symbolic and political life produced a situation in which inherited cultural forms collided with a newly imposed official order. Kocherha wrote at this threshold. His dramaturgy emerges at the intersection of symbolism, expressionism, romantic residue, and the mounting pressure of socialist realist norms. As V. Aheieva notes, Kocherha’s poetics is structured by an enduring tension between the expected and the real, the ideal and the tangible [1, p. 184]. This tension is not merely thematic; it shapes the play’s mode of representation.

For this reason, the comparison with Latin American magical realism should not be understood as a claim of sameness. Rather, it recognizes that in both traditions non-realist poetics become especially productive when historical experience itself appears fractured, unstable, and resistant to conventional realist depiction. In one case, this fracture is bound to postcolonial and culturally hybrid realities; in the other, it is shaped by post-imperial disorientation, revolutionary transformation, and ideological violence. In both cases, magical-realist strategies become a means of representing worlds in which reality is no longer singular, transparent, or stable.

Folklore and mythological foundations as sources of the marvelous within reality. One of the clearest typological parallels between Kocherha’s poetics and the Latin American tradition lies in the role of folklore and myth as foundations of artistic world-building. In Latin American magical realism, oral storytelling, communal memory, mythic structures, and local beliefs often shape the very

ontology of the text. In *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Gabriel García Márquez famously draws on the narrative tonality of oral tradition, beginning with the sentence: “Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice” [12, p. 1]. The sentence immediately establishes a narrative world in which memory, violence, wonder, and historical experience coexist without ontological rupture.

Kocherha’s strategy is different in genre, but comparable in function. In *Marko v pekli*, he reworks the Ukrainian folk legend of Marko Pekelnyi (Marko the Infernal), adapting it to the ideological, social, and psychological realities of the 1920s. Rather than merely reproducing folklore, he transforms it into a flexible artistic framework capable of accommodating contemporary historical tensions. The folkloric motif of the descent into hell is preserved, yet the infernal journey becomes inseparable from the disordered world of the post-revolutionary railway, bureaucratic absurdity, ideological distortion, and moral exhaustion. Marko is introduced not simply as a folkloric hero but as “an authorized representative of the special department of the second army” endowed with “extraordinary powers to search for missing wagons with cargo of the Red Army” [5, p. 183]. In this fusion of folk archetype and Soviet functionary, Kocherha produces a specifically modern version of the marvelous embedded in historical reality.

The comparison with García Márquez should not flatten the substantial differences between epic prose and dramatic form, or between Latin American mythic chronicle and Ukrainian infernal grotesque. Yet in both cases national folklore is not decorative material. It becomes a means of re-narrating the present through inherited symbolic structures. As Michael Bell notes in his discussion of García Márquez, magical realism is inseparable from the problem of cultural hybridization and from the coexistence of multiple temporal and symbolic layers within a single literary world [8, pp. 179-185]. This observation is equally helpful for Kocherha, whose play activates folklore not as nostalgic residue but as an active medium for interpreting historical disorder.

The doubling of reality as a central mechanism of representation. Another important point of convergence lies in the coexistence of different planes of reality within a single representational order. Magical realism does not usually separate the ordinary and the extraordinary into fully autonomous worlds; instead, it allows them to interpenetrate. As W. B. Faris notes, “The narrative matter-of-factly records precise details of the normal and abnormal in such a way that they create an acceptable composite reality” [11, p. 23].

Kocherha realizes this principle through the gradual infernalization of social space. In *Marko v pekli*, railway stations bear names that are at once comic, grotesque, and ominous: Osynovata (Aspen), Tartarary (evoking Tartarus), Try tuzy (Three Aces), Kintsi v vodu, Sobachyi nis, Chortomlyk, Kryviakino, Kozlova Rudnia, and Vysuniazuk [5, pp. 183–230]. These toponyms are not arbitrary. Many

of them are semantically charged and draw on idiomatic expressions, folk associations, and playful linguistic deformation, thereby turning the geography of the play into a dense field of double meanings. *Kintsi v vodu*, for example, recalls the idiom meaning “to hide the ends in water,” that is, to cover one’s tracks; *Sobachyi nis* invokes canine scent and tracking instinct; *Chortomlyk* fuses *chort* (“devil”) with *mlyk*, suggesting the devil’s disappearance or vanishing; *Vysuniazyk* evokes the gesture of sticking out one’s tongue in mockery or contempt. Even *Bestoloch*, the station from which Marko arrives at Plutanyna, appears to echo the Russian *bestoloch*’ and suggests senselessness, confusion, or lack of wit. In this way, Kocherha’s naming does more than create local color or grotesque effect: it destabilizes ordinary spatial reference and transforms language itself into a medium through which reality begins to split, slide, and acquire an infernal second layer. These names do not transport the action into a fully separate fantastic realm; rather, they deform the familiar coordinates of the real world from within, revealing its grotesque and infernal underside. Marko arrives at Plutanyna (Confusion) station from Bestoloch, and the symbolic shift from Chornyi Tupyk (Black Dead End) to Chortiv Tupyk (Devil’s Dead End) in his fevered perception marks the moment when the boundaries of reality begin to blur and the descent into hell becomes imaginable not as a break with reality, but as its hidden continuation.

At the same time, the infernal space is densely marked by details that anchor it in concrete historical and political experience. The devils wear Petliura’s insignia; references are made to Cossack history and the destruction of the Zaporizhzhia Sich; bureaucratic, censorial, and institutional figures from both past and present appear within the same theatrical field [2, p. 95; 5, pp. 190–210]. Hell in Kocherha is therefore not elsewhere. It is a distorted mirror of historical reality itself.

A comparable ontological leveling can be observed in García Márquez’s prose, where extraordinary events are narrated with the same tonal neutrality as domestic routine. The ascension of Remedios the Beauty or the prolonged rain in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* does not fracture the narrative order; rather, the marvelous is absorbed into it. Kocherha’s dramatic idiom is sharper, more grotesque, and more allegorical, yet the underlying mechanism is similar: the real and the unreal coexist not as opposing categories, but as components of one composite world.

Infernal imagery as a mode of social critique. A particularly productive point of comparison is the use of infernal or marvelous imagery to disclose the hidden violence, absurdity, or corruption of social reality. In Latin American magical realism, the marvelous frequently serves not as an escape from history, but as a means of rendering historical experience more fully perceptible. Its anti-realist devices often expose forms of oppression and contradiction that linear realism cannot adequately register.

In *Marko v pekli*, the infernal world performs precisely this critical function. Plutanyna station is not simply a fantasy setting or a folkloric remnant; it is a symbolic condensation of social disorientation, ideological distortion, bureaucratic

cruelty, and moral decay. As S. Boroditsa observes, the station functions as a supernatural phenomenon that personifies destructive force directed against spiritual values [3, p. 52]. The infernal figures encountered by Marko – Nachstantsii Chortiv tupyk, Voron, telehrafist Pryiateliv, nachalnyk stantsii Plutanyna, Zolota mriia, Spokusa, Dezire, Filma – are not merely theatrical grotesques [5, pp. 190–210]. They embody different faces of corruption, temptation, opportunism, and institutionalized degradation.

Such imagery recalls the magical-realist tendency to reveal the hidden side of the real. As H. Syvachenko notes in discussing Roh's concept, the magical is not necessarily supernatural in a narrowly religious sense, but may designate the concealed dimension of reality itself [7, p. 67]. This formulation is especially apt for Kocherha. The infernal layer in *Marko v pekli* does not replace Soviet reality with fantasy; it exposes Soviet reality through symbolic deformation. The play thus approaches magical-realist poetics not because it abandons history, but because it represents history through a mode in which the grotesque, the mythical, and the socially concrete are inseparable.

The transformation of time and space. Disruption of linear temporality and stable spatial coordinates is another recurrent feature of magical-realist writing. Such disruption does not abolish reality; rather, it suggests that lived historical experience may be structured by repetition, compression, simultaneity, and symbolic return. As M. A. Bowers writes, magical realism often depends on the presentation of imagined or magical elements “as if they were real” [9, p. 21]. This has important consequences for the treatment of time and space alike.

In Kocherha's play, time is markedly distorted. Marko spends a full year in the infernal reality of Plutanyna, while a different quantity of time passes in the world outside [2, p. 110]. The result is not merely a fantasy device but a dramatization of historical dislocation. Time in the play loses its ordinary chronological proportionality and becomes symbolically charged. It expresses the experience of suspension, repetition, and entrapment characteristic of societies living through rupture.

Something comparable occurs in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, where time repeatedly loops, returns, and folds back upon itself. Names recur across generations; events echo earlier events; memory and prophecy overlap. The sense that “time had turned around and we were back at the beginning” [12, p. 350] suggests not only mythic temporality, but also the historical repetition of unresolved violence and failure. Kocherha and García Márquez arrive at this effect through very different aesthetic means, yet both challenge a stable linear model of time. In both traditions, disrupted temporality becomes one of the ways literature registers collective trauma and unstable historical transition.

Spatially, too, *Marko v pekli* works through deformation. The railway geography appears concrete and absurd at once, functioning simultaneously as

transport infrastructure, ideological labyrinth, and entrance to the infernal. This layered space is neither purely allegorical nor simply realistic. It operates in the threshold zone characteristic of magical-realist poetics, where geography becomes both social environment and symbolic topography.

Genre and style hybridity. Hybridization is another important feature that supports a comparative reading. Magical realism often emerges not as a pure genre but as a crossing of narrative codes, aesthetic registers, and representational traditions. As Anne C. Hegerfeldt notes, magical-realist texts frequently transgress and blur conventional narrative boundaries [13, p. 60].

Kocherha's artistic method in *Marko v pekli* is profoundly synthetic. As V. Aheieva emphasizes, his writing is characterized by genre experimentation and by the modeling of diverse principles of artistic representation [1, p. 184]. In this play, expressionist fragmentation, infernal grotesque, romantic residue, folkloric motifs, social satire, and ideological pressure coexist within a single dramatic structure. The war and post-war world appear as chaos, nightmare, and temptation, while the play simultaneously retains features of a drama-féerie, a social allegory, and a modernist theatrical experiment [2, p. 115].

This hybridity does not make *Marko v pekli* identical to Latin American magical realism, which developed in prose and often combined baroque amplification, oral narrative forms, indigenous mythologies, and documentary realism. Yet the comparison remains illuminating because in both cases magical-realist effects arise from the interaction of heterogeneous modes rather than from adherence to a single aesthetic system. Kocherha's play is especially important in this regard because it suggests that magical-realist poetics can emerge within drama, and not only within prose fiction.

It is also worth noting that Kocherha's drama often foregrounds the theatrical and symbolic agency of things. Particular objects or stage elements may acquire a status approaching that of characters, assuming narrative and semantic functions beyond simple decoration [4, p. 145]. Such semiotic animation of the material world resonates with the magical-realist tendency to destabilize hierarchies between subject and object, human and environment, event and symbol.

Marusya and the reconfiguration of the romantic feminine image. The representation of Marusya in *Marko v pekli* deserves separate attention, although this aspect should be treated more cautiously than some of the structural parallels discussed above. Marusya is not simply a continuation of the idealized feminine figure characteristic of romantic or symbolist poetics. She exists within an infernalized social environment, surrounded by grotesque distortions and ideological contamination [3, p. 53]. Her position in the play suggests not the

preservation of an elevated feminine ideal, but its transformation under pressure from historical and social disintegration.

The term *tovarish* applied to her is especially significant. Within Soviet lexical usage it carries an ostensibly neutral or positive collectivist resonance, yet in the dramatic world of *Marko v pekli* it acquires a darker and more estranged tonality. The romantic aura of femininity is stripped away and replaced by a figure whose subjectivity is shaped by entrapment, social coercion, and infernal atmosphere.

A cautious comparison may be drawn here with female figures in Latin American magical realism, who often exceed reductive idealization and inhabit a space between historical reality, social function, and mythic resonance. Such comparison should not be overstated, since the gender poetics of the two traditions differ substantially. Still, both Kocherha and García Márquez move away from simplified romantic femininity toward female figures shaped by the pressures of history and the density of symbolic worlds.

Toward a post-imperial and anti-colonial reading. One of the most intellectually productive dimensions of this comparison concerns the broader cultural politics of magical realism. In scholarship on Latin American literature, magical realism has often been interpreted as a mode through which writers articulate realities excluded or distorted by metropolitan epistemologies. As Christopher Warnes argues, magical realism combines realism and the fantastic so that magical elements emerge organically from the reality represented [18, p. 3]. This organic emergence is closely tied to the cultural legitimacy of non-metropolitan forms of knowledge, belief, and memory.

In the Ukrainian context of the 1920s, the historical situation is different, yet certain analytical parallels remain meaningful. Ukraine was not a postcolonial state in the same sense as Latin American nations, but it was unquestionably a culture shaped by long imperial domination, contested sovereignty, and violent ideological restructuring. For that reason, a post-imperial or anti-colonial reading of *Marko v pekli* is more precise than a direct transfer of Latin American postcolonial terminology. The play is saturated with markers of national memory and suppressed historical identity: Petliura's symbols, the Cossack martyr, references to the destruction of the Zaporizhzhia Sich, and censorship directed against nationally marked theatrical content [2, p. 98]. These details do not function as neutral historical references. They encode cultural pressure, historical conflict, and symbolic resistance.

Here Slemon's well-known formulation becomes especially relevant: magical realism often locates its problematic at points where two systems come into collision [16, p. 15]. In Kocherha's case, the collision is not simply between reality and fantasy, but between official ideology and cultural memory, Soviet modernity and national historical consciousness, imposed discourse and residual symbolic worlds. This makes magical-realist poetics particularly useful as an interpretive framework,

because it helps reveal how the play stages not one reality but several competing claims upon reality.

In this sense, Kocherha's dramatic world may be said to move beyond a simple dual structure. Alongside the degraded or illusory surface of social reality and the deeper symbolic or infernal order that exposes it, the play also gestures toward another horizon: the unrealized but desired reality of national self-recognition and historical continuity. This horizon should not be reified into a rigid scheme. Yet as an interpretive tendency, it helps explain why Kocherha's poetics cannot be reduced either to pure allegory or to a binary opposition between truth and illusion. The drama remains open toward an absent but desired order that is historical, ethical, and national at once.

Conclusions. A comparative reading of Ivan Kocherha's *Marko v pekli* and the later Latin American tradition of magical realism allows several important conclusions to be drawn.

First, the play demonstrates a number of features that make it productive to read through the lens of early magical-realist poetics: the integration of folklore and myth into contemporary historical reality, the interpenetration of ordinary and extraordinary planes of experience, the use of infernal imagery as a means of social critique, the destabilization of time and space, and the hybridization of genre and style. These features do not erase the specificity of Kocherha's dramatic method, but they do place his work in meaningful dialogue with a broader transnational history of magical-realist representation.

Second, the chronology of *Marko v pekli* is genuinely significant. Written in 1928, the play precedes the Latin American canonization of magical realism by several decades. This does not justify a simplified claim that Kocherha "invented" magical realism, nor does it diminish the distinct historical and aesthetic achievements of Latin American writers. It does, however, challenge the habit of treating magical realism as if it were exclusively or originally Latin American in all essential respects. Kocherha's play may instead be understood as an early and underrecognized East European articulation of magical-realist poetics that emerged independently under different historical pressures.

Third, both the Latin American and the Ukrainian materials considered here suggest that magical-realist strategies become especially productive in periods of rupture, instability, and pressure on cultural memory. In Latin America, this productivity is linked to postcolonial hybridity and resistance to metropolitan epistemologies. In Kocherha's Ukraine, it is linked to post-imperial disorientation, revolutionary transformation, ideological violence, and the struggle to preserve national symbolic continuity. In this sense, the broader claim made by Warnes and Sasser – that magical realism should be approached as a genuinely global phenomenon – proves especially useful [17, p. 2]. It allows texts such as *Marko v*

pekli to be seen not as peripheral anomalies, but as part of a wider literary logic through which fractured societies represent themselves.

Fourth, Kocherha's play appears to organize reality in a particularly complex way. Rather than presenting only a contrast between surface reality and its deeper symbolic or infernal dimension, *Marko v pekli* also points toward an unrealized horizon of national self-perception and ethical restoration. This horizon should not be treated as a fixed schema, but it does distinguish Kocherha's dramatic world from more familiar magical-realist models and testifies to the originality of his artistic vision.

Finally, the comparative perspective adopted in this article has implications beyond the interpretation of a single play. It suggests that Ukrainian literature, especially the literature of the interwar period, should be more fully integrated into global discussions of genre formation, literary modernity, and non-realist modes of historical representation. Recognizing Kocherha's contribution does not mean displacing the Latin American tradition from its central place in the theory of magical realism. It means, rather, complicating the literary map and making visible those early experiments that developed outside the frameworks through which world literature has usually been canonized.

Further research may productively extend this comparative inquiry to other works by Ivan Kocherha, especially *Pidesh – ne verneshsia (Go and You Shall Not Return)*, as well as to other Ukrainian authors of the interwar period, including Oleksandr Dovzhenko. It would also be fruitful to examine how Ukrainian magical-realist or proto-magical-realist texts might be situated within broader comparative constellations that include Eastern European, Latin American, African, and Asian literatures shaped by historical trauma, cultural suppression, and uneven modernity.

Such work would not simply add Ukrainian texts to an already established canon. It would help reframe the canon itself.

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