

FANTASY GENRE IN RUSSIAN AND UZBEK LITERATURE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the fantasy genre in both Russian and Uzbek literature, analyzing the ways in which each literary tradition utilizes magical realms, mythical creatures, and supernatural forces to convey cultural, philosophical, and historical themes. It highlights key works by notable authors such as Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Bulgakov, Sergei Lukyanenko, Chingiz Aitmatov, and Abdulla Qodiriy, offering a comparative analysis of their approaches to fantasy. The study reveals both shared influences—such as folklore and mysticism—and distinct characteristics in how the genre is employed to address questions of morality, spirituality, and human experience. Through a combination of primary texts and secondary sources, the article provides insights into the role of fantasy in reflecting the societies and worldviews of Russia and Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Fantasy literature, Russian literature, Uzbek literature, Folklore, Mythology, Magical realism, Supernatural, Cultural traditions, Pushkin, Bulgakov, Lukyanenko.

Introduction. Fantasy as a literary genre allows authors to explore worlds beyond the constraints of reality, introducing magical realms, mythical creatures, and extraordinary adventures. Both Russian and Uzbek literatures have long embraced this genre, weaving rich tapestries of imagination, folklore, and cultural traditions. This article aims to explore the role and development of the fantasy genre in both Russian and Uzbek literature, focusing on the unique elements that characterize each literary tradition, as well as the shared influences and themes.

Methods. This study employs a comparative literary analysis, examining key works from both Russian and Uzbek fantasy traditions. Primary texts include works by notable Russian authors such as Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Bulgakov, and contemporary writers like Sergei Lukyanenko, as well as Uzbek authors like Chinghiz Aitmatov and Abdulla Qodiriy. The research also integrates secondary sources, including literary critiques, historical overviews, and comparative studies on the fantasy genre in both countries.

Results

1. Russian Fantasy Literature Russian fantasy literature has roots in folklore, mythology, and Orthodox Christianity, reflecting the vast cultural and historical landscape of the country. Early examples of fantasy in Russian literature can be traced back to the fairy tales and epic poems (byliny) passed down through generations. These tales often involved supernatural beings such as domovoi (house spirits) and rusalki (water spirits), which served as symbols of the natural world's power and mystery.

One of the most significant works in Russian fantasy literature is Alexander Pushkin's *Ruslan and Ludmila*, a narrative poem based on Slavic folklore. Pushkin's blend of myth, magic, and romance set a precedent for later Russian writers. In the 20th century, writers like Mikhail Bulgakov, with his *The Master and Margarita*, brought a darker, more philosophical approach to fantasy. Bulgakov's novel blends realism, surrealism, and mysticism, creating a rich narrative that questions the nature of good and evil, human freedom, and the divine.

In contemporary Russian fantasy, authors like Sergei Lukyanenko have introduced urban fantasy, often blending the genre with science fiction. His *Night Watch* series, for example, explores the eternal struggle between light and dark through a modern lens, set in contemporary Moscow.

2. Uzbek Fantasy Literature Uzbek literature, deeply influenced by Central Asian folklore, Islamic traditions, and Persian literary heritage, has its own unique approach to fantasy. Like Russian literature, the Uzbek literary tradition is enriched with tales of jinn, mythical creatures, and supernatural forces. Early works, such as the epic *Alpomish*, an Uzbek national epic, present a hero's journey filled with supernatural elements. *Alpomish*, like many other heroes in Central Asian folklore, faces mythical beings and must navigate the boundaries between the real and the supernatural.

Modern Uzbek fantasy literature draws heavily from Islamic mysticism, Sufism, and the cultural myths of the region. Abdulla Qodiriy's *The Last Days of the Khanate* explores historical themes intertwined with the supernatural. Contemporary writers such as Chinghiz Aitmatov, while more famous for his works of social realism, often employed elements of fantasy and mysticism to reflect on the human condition, nature, and spirituality. His novel *Jamila* touches upon themes of love, sacrifice, and fate, while *The White Steam* delves into the surreal and symbolic, blending reality with dreams and fantastical visions.

The fantasy genre in Uzbekistan often merges historical and contemporary themes with magical realism, where fantastical elements are embedded in the everyday lives of the characters.

This style creates a sense of wonder, questioning the line between the natural world and the supernatural.

Discussion. The fantasy genre in both Russian and Uzbek literatures shares common themes such as the interplay of good and evil, the struggle between fate and free will, and the exploration of the human condition. Both traditions also draw heavily from their respective folklores, with mythological creatures and magical forces playing significant roles. However, the ways in which these elements are presented differ.

In Russian literature, particularly in the works of Bulgakov and Lukyanenko, there is a strong emphasis on philosophical and existential questions, with the fantasy genre often serving as a medium for exploring complex issues like power, morality, and human desires. Russian fantasy also tends to have a darker, more introspective tone, often blending elements of surrealism and absurdism.

In contrast, Uzbek fantasy tends to be more rooted in spirituality and mysticism. The fantastical elements are often used to highlight the deeper moral or philosophical lessons drawn from Sufi traditions and Central Asian folklore. Additionally, Uzbek fantasy literature often merges history with the supernatural, reflecting the region's long history of cultural exchange and the blending of Eastern and Western literary traditions.

Despite these differences, both Russian and Uzbek fantasy literatures serve as tools for cultural expression, providing insights into the values, fears, and hopes of their respective societies. Both traditions offer a lens through which readers can explore not only the mystical and fantastical but also the real-world struggles of humanity.

Conclusion. The fantasy genre in Russian and Uzbek literature showcases the rich cultural and historical traditions of both countries. While Russian fantasy often engages with existential and philosophical themes, Uzbek fantasy is deeply rooted in mysticism and spirituality. Despite these differences, both literary traditions utilize fantasy as a means to explore the human condition, using magic, myth, and the supernatural to reflect on the real world. As the genre continues to evolve in both nations, the blending of tradition and modernity will undoubtedly shape the future of fantasy literature in Russia and Uzbekistan.

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