

POETICS AND TYPOLOGY OF THE FANTASY GENRE: MYTHOLOGICAL SOURCES AND STRUCTURAL DOMINANTS

Deviatko Nataliia Volodymyrivna,

Ph.D. in Philosophy, Associate Professor,
Associate Professor at the Department of Philosophy
Dnipro Academy of Continuing Education
ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0162-1194

The article offers a theoretical examination of the poetics of the fantasy genre within the framework of contemporary philological scholarship. The relevance of the study is determined by the absence of a unified conceptual model capable of integrating the archaic mythological foundations of fantasy with modern narrative practices, as well as by the persistent terminological ambiguity surrounding the boundaries between fantasy and related forms of speculative fiction. The aim of the article is to conceptualize the poetics of fantasy by identifying its mythological sources and systematizing key structural dominants, including the magical code, initial potential, and typological models.

The research employs a set of complementary methods: the comparative method is used to differentiate fantasy from science fiction; mythological and archetypal analysis is applied to examine the structure of the monomyth and the initial potential of fantasy texts; and the structural-semantic method serves to explicate the components of the magical code at various textual levels. The methodology is grounded in a systematic approach that combines theoretical analysis with practical tools for the examination of genre formulas.

The study demonstrates that the initial potential of fantasy is realized through the myth of initiation, which functions as a primary plot-forming mechanism. It is argued that magic within fantasy discourse operates not as a technical narrative device, but as a specific mode of rationality and an immanent characteristic of being, a feature that endows the genre with a pronounced anti-totalitarian potential. The sacralized attitude toward the category of the Name is identified as a key differential characteristic that distinguishes fantasy from science fiction. The classificatory approaches proposed by O. Afanasieva and V. Kzylova are systematized, providing the basis for the formulation of a universal analytical algorithm for the interpretation of fantasy texts, developed in accordance with the methodological principles articulated by O. Filonenko.

The research confirms that fantasy constitutes a holistic worldview system grounded in the archetypal opposition of Good and Evil and oriented toward the initiatory formation of the personality. The integration of genre formulas and the magical code enables a transition from a descriptive to a systematic analysis of fantasy poetics. Prospects for further research are associated with a focused investigation of the fantasy chronotope as a fundamental structure for modeling secondary worlds.

Key words: *fantasy literature, fantasy poetics, myth of initiation, monomyth, magical code, secondary world, genre typology, archetype, anti-totalitarian potential, category of the Name.*

Дев'ятко Наталія. Поетика та типологія жанру фентезі: міфологічні джерела і структурні домінанти

Статтю присвячено теоретичному осмисленню поетики жанру фентезі в контексті сучасної філологічної науки. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена відсутністю єдиної концептуальної моделі, яка б інтегрувала архаїчне коріння жанру з новітніми нарративними практиками, а також термінологічною розмитістю меж між фентезі та суміжними видами фантастики. Мета роботи полягає у концептуалізації поетики фентезі через виявлення його міфологічних джерел та систематизацію ключових структурних домінант, таких як магичний код, ініціальний потенціал та типологічні моделі.

У дослідженні використано комплекс наукових методів: компаративний – для розмежування фентезі та наукової фантастики; міфологічний та архетипний аналіз – для вивчення структури «мономіфу» та ініціального потенціалу творів; структурно-семантичний метод – для експлікації складників «магічного коду» на різних рівнях тексту. Методологія базується на системному підході, що поєднує теоретичні розвідки з практичним інструментарієм аналізу жанрових формул.



Доведено, що ініціальний потенціал фентезі реалізується через міф ініціації, який виступає головним сюжетоформувальним чинником. Обґрунтовано, що магія у фентезійному дискурсі постає не як технічний прийом, а як особливий тип раціональності та іманентна характеристика буття, що наділяє жанр потужним антитоталітарним потенціалом. Виявлено, що ключовою диференційною ознакою, яка відрізняє фентезі від наукової фантастики, є сакральне ставлення до категорії Імені. Систематизовано класифікаційні підходи О. Афанасьєвої та В. Кизиловой, на основі чого запропоновано універсальний алгоритм аналізу фентезійного тексту (за методикою О. Філоненко).

Проведене дослідження підтверджує, що фентезі є цілісною світоглядною системою, яка базується на архетипній опозиції Добра і Зла та орієнтована на ініціальний розвиток особистості. Запропонована інтеграція жанрових формул та магічних кодів дає змогу перейти від описового до системного вивчення поетики фентезі. Перспектива подальших розвідок убачається у детальному аналізі фентезійного хронотопу як базової структури моделювання вторинних світів.

Ключові слова: фентезі, поетика фентезі, міф ініціації, мономіф, магічний код, вторинний світ, жанрова типологія, архетип, антитоталітарний потенціал, категорія Імені.

Introduction. In contemporary humanitarian discourse, an intensive reactivation of mythological thinking can be observed, within which the fantasy genre emerges not merely as a product of mass culture, but as a complex anthropological instrument. In the context of global socio-political transformations and contemporary ethical challenges, the study of the internal structures of fantasy prose—which offer models for overcoming value-based chaos through archetypes of initiation and moral choice—acquires particular significance. The need to systematize poetic dominants and magical codes is determined by the necessity of developing a holistic methodology for the analysis of modern literature, one that would enable a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which fantastic narratives influence the formation of ideological resilience in the contemporary individual.

Issues related to the poetics and typology of fantasy have been the focus of numerous contemporary scholars. The theoretical foundations for the study of genre transformations and the meta-genre nature of the fantastic are articulated in the works of O. Bondareva, N. Kopystyanska, O. Romanenko, and O. Stuzhuk.

A distinct body of research addresses the mythological roots and archetypal structure of the genre, as reflected in the studies of N. Sytnyk and O. Tykhomirova, as well as in the works of I. Pomazan, who emphasizes the harmonious interaction between the hero and nature as a source of inner strength. Issues concerning the formation of artistic reality and the specificity of the magical code are examined in the research of O. Boiko, O. Filonenko, and O. Shaposhnyk. Their findings on High Magic and the primacy of individual choice are particularly significant for understanding the axiological dimension of the genre.

Significant contributions to the development of genre classifications and typological models have been made by O. Afanasieva, V. Kyzlylova, and Yu. Zhuk. The genesis of Ukrainian fantasy and its connection with chimerical prose are examined in the works of T. Hrebenuk, S. Khorob, O. Leonenko and O. Zhuravska,. This diversity of scholarly approaches testifies to the multifaceted nature of fantasy as a genre; however, it also highlights the need for further synthesis aimed at identifying its universal structural dominants.

At the same time, despite the substantial body of literary scholarship devoted to fantasy, a unified conceptual model that would integrate the genre's archaic mythological roots with contemporary narrative practices remains absent in domestic philological research. The inconsistency of existing classifications and the blurred boundaries between fantasy and related genres generate terminological ambiguity, which hinders a comprehensive analysis of the internal logic of magical worlds. Consequently, there emerges a need for a clear definition of structural dominants and magical codes that would enable a transition from a predominantly descriptive approach to a systematic study of fantasy poetics as a holistic worldview system.

Research objectives. The objective of the article is to conceptualize the poetics of the fantasy genre through the identification of its mythological sources and the systematization of key structural dominants, including the magical code, initial potential, and typological models.

To achieve this objective, the following tasks are set:

- to explicate the content of the myth of initiation as a plot-forming factor in fantasy prose;

– to determine the functional role of magic and the figure of the mage within the ideological and thematic framework of fantasy works;

– to delineate the distinctive features of fantasy in comparison with science fiction, particularly through the category of the Name;

– to systematize existing classificatory approaches and to propose a universal analytical algorithm (a “formula”) for the interpretation of a fantasy text.

The study employs a set of complementary methods that enable the examination of fantasy as a holistic system. The comparative method is used to differentiate the genre-specific features of fantasy and science fiction. Mythological and archetypal analysis is applied to examine the initial potential of fantasy works and the structure of the monomyth. The structural-semantic method makes it possible to identify the components of the magical code at various textual levels. Overall, the research methodology is grounded in a systematic approach that integrates theoretical inquiry with practical analytical tools for the study of genre formulas.

Results. The application of a systematic approach to the study of fantasy poetics necessitates an initial focus on the genre’s genetic origins, which are rooted in mythological tradition. In particular, the initial potential of fantasy can be explained by the fact that this genre, much like the folktale, actively draws upon the myth of initiation, or the monomyth (as defined by J. Campbell [9]). This narrative structure typically determines the plot of the hero’s transition from one existential space to another. Even in cases where a work depicts a single fantasy world and no explicit plot-driven transition occurs, the function of a symbolic threshold is fulfilled by an event that divides the character’s life into “before” and “after”, thereby initiating psychological transformation in the form of an initiatory experience.

Among the thematic constants of fantasy—often simple in form yet profound in content—are ideas that retain their relevance across historical periods, including the formation of personality, the search for selfhood, and loyalty to love and friendship as supreme values. Central to the genre is also the struggle against Evil, which may assume diverse forms but most frequently manifests itself in the figures of tyrants, rulers, and conquerors striving for absolute personal power. As a result, a pronounced anti-

totalitarian potential is inherent in fantasy as a genre.

Alongside the individual’s pursuit of life-affirming fulfillment and personal development grounded in democratic values, nature functions as a second powerful source of energy in fantasy. I. Pomazan observes that nature in fantasy works “emerges as the cradle of humanity and the repository of its strength, knowledge, and magical energy employed by the heroes of these works” [5, p. 13]. Accordingly, fantasy protagonists establish a harmonious relationship with nature, a connection that is reflected even at the figurative level and represents an experience of fundamental significance for humanity.

In most fantasy works, magic is a constitutive element that may be either mythologically grounded or ludic in nature (as a postmodern variation). The presence of magic is identified in the Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture (2005) as a defining feature of fantasy [11, p. 516]. Equally fundamental to the genre is the archetypal opposition between Good and Evil, with a substantial portion of the protagonist’s quest devoted to discovering the means by which Evil may be overcome [11, p. 492].

Fantasy studies often encounter the view that a certain discrepancy exists between the fictional world and empirical reality, a discrepancy that may create communicative obstacles or shape the specific mode of the reader’s engagement with the text. Such a perception may have characterized the early stages of the genre’s formation; however, over time the audience developed a stable system for interpreting the fantastic narrative, thereby neutralizing potential conflicts of perception. T. Hrebenuk addresses this issue, noting that the fantasy world “is presented as fundamentally different from the real one, the driving force of which is the laws of magic and sorcery. No hesitation regarding the unusual arises in the reader; instead, the text is perceived as a fairy tale—with an inclination toward fiction and an expectation of the new and the unexpected already embedded within this framework” [1, p. 47]. This position is further clarified by O. Filonenko, who argues that in fantasy works “magic functions as a specific form of rationality” [6, p. 43].

It is often assumed that magic functions as the primary driving force of the plot in fantasy; however, this assumption proves insufficient when magic is interpreted merely as a technical nar-

rative device. The presence of magic—whether as a natural force, an elemental principle, or a source of abilities possessed by exceptional individuals—represents the most elementary form of fantastic assumption actively employed in fantasy. A comparable phenomenon can be observed in science fiction, where extraordinary abilities of humans or other beings are explained through ostensibly scientific frameworks and are thus presented as special capacities rather than as magic in the strict sense. Although the term magic and its derivatives are not used in science fiction, they frequently designate a comparable type of exceptional gift.

Within the axiological system of the fantasy world, magic does not function as a rationalization of the incomprehensible; instead, it emerges as an immanent characteristic of being. It constitutes an organic component of the universe's space–time structure—a fundamental given that is not subject to doubt. By performing the role of a universal mechanism of influence, magic enables characters to transform the surrounding reality and actively shape the course of events.

With regard to the internal differentiation of magic, it is important to emphasize that magic itself is not inherently “good” or “evil”. Even the distinction between “white” and “black” magic often remains largely conventional, a feature that fundamentally distinguishes fantasy from Christianity and, in some contexts, gives rise to social tensions. Nevertheless, magical activity is subject to certain boundaries that must not be transgressed, as their violation leads to criminality and to harm inflicted upon the world and living beings. This limitation clearly correlates with the mythological motif of taboo. Ultimately, it is the intention and identity of the spellcaster that determine the ethical orientation of magic, since it is through the character's actions that magic acquires either a beneficial, life-creating, or a destructive force.

O. Filonenko, in her detailed study of the magical code in British literature across various historical periods, demonstrates that “Black and White Magic are simultaneously antagonistic practices and varieties of the same High Magic, and only the free and conscious choice of the practitioner renders it an instrument of good or evil” [6, p. 56]. Consequently, the individual's conscious choice and personal responsibility for their actions—or, conversely, the deliberate transgression of established limits and the

attempt to violate the laws of nature and the morality of a life-affirming worldview ultimately shaped through initiation—acquire paramount significance.

As magic frequently functions as a plot-forming element in fantasy, this role is also manifested at the linguistic level, either through the creation of neologisms or through the use of established lexical and stylistic formulas traditionally associated with sorcery.

Alongside the linguistic dimension, most fantasy works feature magical creatures or beings that do not exist in empirical reality and are characterized by an alternative biology or ontology. However, this feature cannot be regarded as exclusive to fantasy, since such beings may also appear in works belonging to the broader fantastic paradigm.

Fantasy texts likewise frequently include objects endowed with magical power, as well as highly valued ancient or sacral artefacts. Nevertheless, science fiction also employs the motif of “ancient” or “other” technologies and inventions which, in terms of their narrative function, often closely correspond to magical objects. The principal distinction lies in quantitative and axiological emphasis: in fantasy, sacralized and magically marked items are typically far more numerous and play a more structurally central role than their technological counterparts in science fiction.

What fundamentally distinguishes fantasy from science fiction is its reverent attitude toward the Name as the essence of the human being—an attitude rooted in ancient mythological tradition. Encountering this motif at either the philosophical or the narrative level in science fiction is relatively rare. Even when analogous elements appear in science fiction texts, they are typically associated with the depiction of non-human or extraterrestrial civilizations rather than with humanity itself. The perception of the Name (or the True Name, concealed from outsiders) as a bearer of essential identity constitutes a primordial mythological concept shared by diverse cultures.

Interpretations of character nature in fantasy are likewise marked by a certain degree of inconsistency. On the one hand, one frequently encounters the view that the hero is “ordinary” or “average”, implying that virtually anyone may become the protagonist of a fantasy narrative. On the other hand, an equally widespread

perspective characterizes the fantasy hero as a purposeful and courageous figure endowed with a strong will; if these qualities are absent at the outset, they are acquired through the quest by overcoming trials. Truly mediocre characters, however, are more characteristic of postmodern and comic fantasy, where their internal “grayness” is constructed within a coordinate system that diminishes other characters and often serves as a central mechanism of the plot.

The figure of the “ordinary” schoolchild, urban resident, or seemingly average individual may be interpreted as a reflection of the idea that virtually anyone is capable of entering the initial space of the narrative. Whether such a character ultimately undergoes initiation and becomes a true hero, worthy of the trials and adventures encountered along the way, remains an open question. It is precisely along this path—often within a relatively limited temporal framework—that the formation and development of personality take place, corresponding to the goal of mythological initiation, which in contemporary culture is most frequently realized through art and, in particular, through literary fiction.

The figure of the mage, who is almost invariably present in fantasy narratives, requires separate consideration. This character—most often human, though in some cases belonging to a fundamentally non-human race—tends to differ from others not only in terms of magical ability but also in worldview. Since the mage’s capacity to influence the world and the living beings within it exceeds that of other characters, the awareness of the consequences of one’s actions and the degree of responsibility for magical activity increase proportionally. In a metaphorical sense, one must “grow into” the mage’s worldview in order to comprehend the complexity of their emotional and intellectual experience.

If a mage is not portrayed as an impersonal force that performs good or evil merely as a predetermined and unchanging function, then they are invariably represented as a personality. Otherwise, the dimension of personal choice—crucial to fantasy narratives—would be absent. This is why, as O. Filonenko observes, “even in the most positive images” one encounters “ambivalent characteristics as potentials for both good and evil” [6, p. 54]. In some cases, this ambivalence attains such a pronounced archetypal realization that the figures of the Wise Old Man and the Trickster, understood as manifestations of the

collective Shadow, may coexist within a single character.

Particularly noteworthy is the researcher’s observation that, owing to their otherness, the mage often occupies a marginal position not only in relation to ordinary people, but even within their own kind. As O. Filonenko notes, “this tendency also extends to fantasy secondary worlds, where magic is a normal component of the world structure—here we observe a tendency toward the maximum defamiliarization and marginalization of the most powerful magical characters (who are most often either protagonists or key figures in the narrative), even against the background of an already strange magical environment” [6, p. 164]. Developing this idea further, one may conclude that the greater the mage’s power, the lower their degree of social integration and the more limited their communication with others, although the community’s attitude toward such figures may vary considerably, ranging from fear to profound reverence.

In general, each researcher contributes a distinct emphasis to the interpretation of the key elements and characteristics of fantasy. Thus, Yu. Zhuk highlights the importance and specificity of the reality of the fantasy world, which is realized “not through its resemblance to empirical reality, but through the fact that it is so internally consistent that it is capable of developing according to its own laws” [2, p. 91]. N. Chetova, in turn, observes that fantasy works often resemble historical-adventure novels [8]; as a result, the adventure component becomes primary, determining the dynamic development of the plot. Other scholars emphasize the synthetic nature of fantasy, which integrates fundamental archetypal ideas of humanity—such as utopia, magic, brotherhood, and play—into a coherent narrative system.

In many fantasy works, a special role is assigned to the formation of a community that gradually evolves into a cohesive group or even a brotherhood of like-minded individuals united by shared values and mutual support. The path toward such unity is not always free of psychological tension, yet it is precisely this process that proves essential for the development of interpersonal communication and the social formation of the individual. Through identification with the characters, the recipient symbolically participates in the creation of this “brotherhood”,

acquiring models of cooperation, solidarity, and ethical interaction.

It should also be noted that mythological archetypes may be reinterpreted through both the fairy tale and the chivalric romance, a process that affects certain semantic aspects of fantasy as well as its structural organization. The configuration of the fictional world is shaped by the boundaries imposed by the source genres from which it derives. At the same time, an increasingly direct connection between modern fantasy and the worldview myth can be observed, which accounts for the genre's heightened structural complexity and multidimensionality.

Fantasy also demonstrates a clear tendency toward large-scale artistic forms. As a result, trilogies, tetralogies, and extended cycles of novels or novellas are especially common within the genre. This tendency is determined by the need for an expansive textual space in which both the characters' personalities and the fictional world itself—with its laws, history, traditions, and internal logic—can be fully developed and articulated.

However, even within the framework of such conceptual approaches, the dynamic and continually evolving nature of fantasy necessitates further clarification. This is especially evident in attempts at genre and typological classification, since each variety of fantasy is characterized by its own specific invariant. While remaining connected to the base genre, these invariants are shaped by national tradition, historical period, and external cultural influences. As a result, existing classifications of fantasy often prove either insufficiently comprehensive or, conversely, excessively detailed.

Within domestic literary studies, two fundamentally different approaches to the classification of the fantasy genre merit particular attention.

One representative example is the classification based on essential and thematic features proposed by O. Afanasieva, within which several principles of differentiation are identified:

a) the plot-thematic principle, encompassing mythological, epic, “dark”, heroic, mystical, romantic fantasy, and related subtypes;

b) the principle of national specificity, which takes into account the author's engagement with national foundations and cultural traditions (Ukrainian, Slavic, Scandinavian, Celtic, etc.);

c) the temporal principle, determined by the time of action (the past, the present, the future, or affiliation with a specific historical period);

d) the axiological principle, involving a division into heroic and humorous fantasy;

e) the worldview principle, or the degree of syncretism, manifested in such forms as Christian fantasy, technomagic, “philosophical action”, and others;

f) the addressee-oriented principle, which differentiates fantasy texts according to their intended audience (children's, young adult, adult literature) [cited in 4, p. 9–10].

A fundamentally different approach is represented by the classification proposed by V. Kyzylova, in which primary attention is paid to the place and type of the hero within the fantasy narrative. According to this model, the following varieties are distinguished:

1. **Epic fantasy**, which depicts an epic confrontation between embodied Good and Evil. Authors construct a vivid fictional world that differs markedly from empirical reality and compels the reader to accept its internal logic. This type of fantasy is characterized by close attention to the psychological credibility of events, actions, and character traits, as well as by the meticulous construction of complex, often surreal worlds.

2. **Heroic fantasy**, marked by the absence of psychological conflict and by a limited degree of character development. As a rule, the protagonist confronts all antagonists directly and overcomes them through physical strength and moral superiority.

3. **Horror fantasy**, which focuses on narratives about dark forces and malevolent creatures.

4. **Humorous fantasy and chimerical prose**, in which adventures unfolding in various mythological worlds are presented in an ironic mode.

5. **“Fantastic wonder”** (*fantastychna chudasyiia*), a type inclined toward philosophical reflection. In works of this category, conventional features of fantasy may be absent; however, the presence of a singular fantastic event or character shifts the narrative beyond the boundaries of the ordinary.

6. **Children's fantasy**, distinguished by a fairy-tale mode and an explicitly didactic orientation.

7. **Philosophical fantasy**, closely related to the tradition of the literary fairy-tale parable;

8. **Historical fantasy**, in which magical events are embedded within a historically defined setting.

9. **Game fantasy**, which emerged under the influence of computer games and remains closely interconnected with them [3, p. 120–121].

The combination of these fundamentally different classificatory models makes it possible to more accurately determine the position of a fantasy work within the genre system and to assess its potential impact on the audience.

For a more analytically effective analysis of the specific features of a given genre and of individual works belonging to it, it is methodologically justified to apply the “guideposts” of mass literature proposed by H. Milhorn. According to Milhorn, “to create an imaginary world that will seem real to the reader, a writer needs six key elements: 1) plot, story, structure; 2) setting (background, scenery); 3) characters; 4) point of view; 5) artistic narrative; 6) theme and subject” [10, p. 4]. In addition, a more detailed genre “formula” developed by A. Berger in the course of his study of the Western may also be employed. This model includes the following components: 1) time of action; 2) place of action; 3) heroes; 4) heroines; 5) villains; 6) secondary characters; 7) typical plots; 8) themes; 9) clothing; 10) means of transportation; 11) weapons [cited in 7, p. 83]. Notably, the majority of these parameters require little or no adaptation when applied to the analysis of fantasy texts.

If one more analytical formula is added to these methodological frameworks, the comprehension of the deep structural organization of fantasy works becomes even more transparent. In the form of a system of guiding questions, O. Filonenko formulated the core components of the basic magical code. Through practical application to an extensive corpus of texts from different historical periods and subsequent refinement in accordance with their specific features, this model has attained a high degree of generalization. Presented in the form of a formula, the magical code may be effectively employed in the analysis of both classical examples of the fantastic and a wide range of contemporary fantasy texts:

1. “Where and when does the action take place?” – the spatial and temporal parameters of the narrative, that is, the chronotope (primary or secondary world, a system of specific loci).

2. “Who acts?” – the system of characters.

3. “What happens?” – the plot matrix or fabula, including the unfolding of the quest and the realization of initiation.

4. “By what means does it happen?” – the dominant type of magic within the given chronotope, the mode of the magical in which the text is constructed, and the specific magical practices and instruments employed.

5. “Why and for what purpose does everything happen?” – the ideological and thematic level of the work.

6. “How is it told?” – the narrative strategies through which the story is conveyed [6, pp. 65–66].

By applying these analytical tools and taking the outlined specificities into account, the study of fantasy texts becomes methodologically productive, as it enables a more precise understanding of the genre’s deep structural and worldview foundations. At the same time, special attention should be devoted to the analysis of the fantasy chronotope, which requires separate and focused consideration, since it is precisely the chronotope that determines the fundamental worldview configuration of fantasy works.

Conclusions. The research conducted allows for the conclusion that the poetics of fantasy is grounded in a profound primordial foundation, within which the structure of the monomyth functions as the principal mechanism of the hero’s psychological formation. Within the genre, magic does not operate merely as a technical narrative device, but rather as a specific mode of rationality and a space for ethical choice, a feature that endows fantasy with a pronounced anti-totalitarian potential. The sacralization of the Name has been identified as a key differential characteristic that links fantasy to archaic mythological conceptions and clearly distinguishes it from science fiction. The systematization of theoretical approaches and models of the magical code confirms that contemporary fantasy constitutes a complex worldview system which, through artistic means, models the process of personal formation in conditions of axiological instability.

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Дата першого надходження статті до видання: 11.01.2026

Дата прийняття статті до друку після рецензування: 31.01.2026

Дата публікації (оприлюднення) статті: 15.04.2026