

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Specifics of The Fantasy Genre in Russian And Uzbek Literature

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## Abstract

The fantasy genre occupies a significant place in contemporary world literature, reflecting mythological thinking, cultural memory, and philosophical interpretations of reality. In both Russian and Uzbek literatures, fantasy has developed under the influence of national folklore, historical experience, and literary traditions. This article examines the specific features of the fantasy genre in Russian and Uzbek literature, focusing on its origins, thematic characteristics, narrative structures, and cultural functions. The comparative analysis reveals both shared typological traits and distinctive national peculiarities that shape the genre in each literary tradition. The study also highlights the role of fantasy in expressing national identity and addressing social and ethical issues.

## KEYWORDS

Fantasy genre, Russian literature, Uzbek literature, mythology, folklore, comparative literature, national identity.

## INTRODUCTION

Fantasy as a literary genre has gained remarkable popularity in the modern literary process. It combines elements of myth, folklore, magic, and imaginative world-building, offering readers alternative realities that often reflect real social, philosophical, and moral concerns. While fantasy is frequently associated with Western literature, particularly English-language traditions, its development in Russian and Uzbek literature demonstrates unique national and cultural characteristics.

The relevance of this study lies in the growing interest in comparative literary analysis and genre studies. Examining fantasy in Russian and Uzbek literature allows us to identify how different cultural contexts shape the genre and how

national traditions influence narrative techniques, imagery, and themes. The purpose of this article is to analyze the specifics of the fantasy genre in Russian and Uzbek literature and to reveal both common features and distinctive traits.

## Theoretical Foundations of the Fantasy Genre

The term fantasy generally refers to literary works that depict imaginary worlds, supernatural phenomena, and magical elements that transcend the boundaries of realistic representation. Scholars often distinguish fantasy from related genres such as science fiction and magical realism. Unlike science fiction, fantasy does not rely on scientific explanations, and unlike magical realism, it constructs a fully autonomous imaginary world.

In literary theory, fantasy is viewed as a continuation of mythological thinking. According to many researchers, myth serves as the primary source of fantasy narratives, providing archetypal plots, characters, and symbols. This connection is particularly evident in national literatures with rich folklore traditions, including Russian and Uzbek literature.

### Origins of Fantasy in Russian Literature

Russian fantasy literature has deep roots in folklore, fairy tales (skazki), and epic narratives (byliny). Traditional Russian folklore is rich in magical characters such as Baba Yaga, Koschei the Deathless, and fire-breathing dragons, which later influenced literary works.

In the 19th century, elements of fantasy appeared in the works of authors such as Alexander Pushkin and Nikolai Gogol. Pushkin's fairy tales and Gogol's mystical stories, including *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*, combine folklore motifs with literary artistry, creating a bridge between traditional tales and modern fantasy.

In the 20th century, Russian fantasy developed further through the works of writers such as Mikhail Bulgakov, whose novel *The Master and Margarita* blends fantasy, satire, and philosophy. Later, authors like the Strugatsky brothers expanded the genre by incorporating social and ethical themes, although their works are often classified as science fiction with fantasy elements.

Contemporary Russian fantasy is characterized by diverse subgenres, including epic fantasy, urban fantasy, and historical fantasy. Writers such as Sergei Lukyanenko and Maria Semenova have contributed significantly to the popularization of fantasy in modern Russian literature.

### Origins of Fantasy in Uzbek Literature

Uzbek literature also has a strong foundation in folklore, mythology, and epic traditions. National epics such as *Alpomish* and numerous folk tales contain fantastical elements, heroic figures, magical creatures, and symbolic motifs. These oral traditions laid the groundwork for the emergence of fantasy in written literature.

In classical Uzbek literature, fantasy elements are often intertwined with philosophical and moral teachings. The works of Alisher Navoi, for example, include allegorical and symbolic imagery that can be interpreted as early forms of fantasy. Mystical and imaginative elements are used to explore spiritual and ethical questions.

In modern Uzbek literature, fantasy as an independent genre began to take shape in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Contemporary writers increasingly employ fantasy elements to reinterpret folklore, history, and national identity. Uzbek fantasy often emphasizes moral values, collective memory, and the harmony between humans and nature.

### Thematic Characteristics of Russian Fantasy

One of the defining features of Russian fantasy is its philosophical depth. Russian authors frequently use fantasy worlds to reflect on existential questions, morality, and the fate of humanity. The struggle between good and evil is often presented in complex, ambiguous ways.

Another important theme is the interaction between the real and the supernatural. In many Russian fantasy works, magical elements coexist with everyday reality, creating a sense of duality. This is particularly evident in urban fantasy, where modern cities become spaces for mystical events.

Historical memory also plays a significant role. Russian fantasy often draws upon Slavic mythology, medieval history, and pagan beliefs, blending them with modern narratives. This connection to the past helps preserve cultural heritage while adapting it to contemporary contexts.

### Thematic Characteristics of Uzbek Fantasy

Uzbek fantasy is closely connected to national folklore and ethical values. Themes such as heroism, justice, loyalty, and respect for tradition are central to many works. Fantasy narratives often emphasize the moral development of characters and the importance of communal harmony.

Another key feature is the symbolic use of nature. Mountains, deserts, rivers, and gardens frequently appear as enchanted spaces that reflect spiritual states. This symbolic geography is rooted in traditional worldviews and cultural symbolism.

Uzbek fantasy also tends to focus on historical and legendary settings. By revisiting the past through imaginative narratives, authors reinforce national identity and cultural continuity. Fantasy becomes a means of preserving and reinterpreting historical memory.

### Narrative Structures and Character Types

In Russian fantasy, narrative structures often involve complex plotlines, multiple perspectives, and morally ambiguous characters. Protagonists may struggle with internal conflicts as much as external threats. Anti-heroes and flawed characters

are common, reflecting psychological realism.

In contrast, Uzbek fantasy narratives frequently follow a more traditional structure, with a clear moral trajectory. Heroes often embark on journeys that symbolize personal and spiritual growth. Characters are closely tied to archetypal roles found in folklore, such as the wise elder, the brave warrior, and the trickster.

Despite these differences, both traditions employ archetypal motifs such as the quest, the battle between good and evil, and the transformation of the hero.

### Cultural and Social Functions of Fantasy

Fantasy serves important cultural and social functions in both Russian and Uzbek literature. It allows authors to address sensitive social issues indirectly, using metaphor and symbolism. Through fantasy, writers can critique political systems, social injustice, and moral decay without direct realism.

Additionally, fantasy contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage. By incorporating folklore and mythology, authors ensure that traditional narratives remain relevant to modern readers. This function is particularly significant in the context of globalization, where national cultures face the risk of homogenization.

### Comparative Analysis

A comparative analysis reveals both similarities and differences between Russian and Uzbek fantasy. Both traditions rely heavily on folklore and mythological sources, and both use fantasy as a means of exploring moral and philosophical issues. However, Russian fantasy tends to emphasize psychological complexity and philosophical ambiguity, while Uzbek fantasy focuses more on ethical clarity and cultural symbolism.

These differences reflect broader cultural and historical contexts. Russian literature has long been characterized by introspection and philosophical inquiry, whereas Uzbek literature places strong emphasis on communal values and moral instruction.

### CONCLUSION

The fantasy genre in Russian and Uzbek literature demonstrates rich diversity and cultural specificity. Rooted in folklore and mythology, fantasy in both traditions serves as a powerful tool for expressing national identity, philosophical

reflection, and social critique. While sharing common archetypal foundations, Russian and Uzbek fantasy differ in thematic focus, narrative structure, and character development.

The study of fantasy in these literary traditions not only enhances our understanding of genre evolution but also highlights the importance of cultural context in shaping literary forms. Further research may explore individual authors, subgenres, and the influence of global fantasy trends on national literatures.

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