COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE CONFLICT, THE PLOT, AND THE CHARACTERS IN WOMEN'S FANTASY FICTION

Author: Dilshod Nasriddinov [1], Yoqub Safarov [2]
Affiliation: PhD, Associate Professor, Head of Foreign Language and Literature Department, Nordic International University[1], Master Student, University of Tashkent for Applied Sciences [2]

ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the typological features of the conflict, plot, and images in the works of women's fantasy. The fundamental difference from classical fantasy samples is the interpretation of female images and the feminine principle, the origins of which go back not only to a myth or a romantic fairy tale but also to a love novel, precisely to the novel "Jane Eyre" by Ch. Bronte. The type of heroine created by Brontë is widely replicated in the «female" fantasy and translates traditional moral values into European culture.

Keywords: fantasy, women's literature, popular literature, Charlotte Brontë

Fantasy literature, which has been extremely popular since the second half of the 20th century, is a phenomenon of very diverse quality: there are both undoubtedly outstanding examples and a huge number of texts related to popular fiction. The former undoubtedly include the works of the founders of fantasy – J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis; as for popular culture, fantasy is a widely disseminated phenomenon that has long gone beyond the boundaries of literature itself, stepping into cinema and the entertainment industry (for example, computer games) and becoming the basis for entire subcultures. When we speak of "women's" fantasy, we mean works written by women writers. This work does not have the character of a large-scale study covering all works written in the fantasy style by women authors; rather, these are some reflections on the typology of "women's" fantasy, and these reflections are based on the analysis of two classic examples (these are Ursula K. Le Guin's "A Wizard of Earthsea" series of novels and Maria Semenova's "Volkodav" series of novels), as well as several popular fantasy novels that are more related to mass culture than to high literature and represent various variations of the genre. Since the objective of the work lies in the field of studying the typological features of "women's" fantasy, then turning to popular mass culture examples allows us to identify this typology, since mass culture is built on the replication of typological conflicts, plots, situations and images, being a kind of "formula literature" [4, p. 4]. If we talk about the typology of the plot in fantasy in general, then we are talking, first of all, about the quest as a plot-forming beginning in fantasy: it is the journey of the hero, pursuing a certain goal and going through various trials along the way, that lies at the

heart of the plot. And from this point of view, fantasy directly relies not only and not so much on the traditions of the travel novel, widely represented in different literary eras, but, first of all, on myth and heroic epic: "It is myth as the most vivid manifestation of metaphorical and utopian thinking that lies at the heart of the fantasy genre." [4; p. 10] On the other hand, the goal of the quest in fantasy is (no more and no less) saving the world. In classical fantasy, the basis of the worldview is the idea of a global balance of good and evil, and if this balance is disturbed, the world begins to teeter on the brink of destruction. This is where the hero appears, who must correct the situation and save the world. This super-task that the hero must complete significantly distinguishes the typology of plot-forming conflict in fantasy from the travel novels created in previous literary eras, in which the hero often turns out to be a plaything of fate, accidentally thrown into a remote corner of the world, whose only goal is to return home (for example, as in the English novel of the Enlightenment: Gulliver's Travels by J. Swift or Robinson Crusoe by D. Defoe), and reveals the mythological roots of fantasy.

This exploration illustrates how such narratives reflect a deeper engagement with themes of destiny and the human condition. By analyzing these foundational texts, we can discern the enduring influence of myth on contemporary fantasy literature, shaping the archetypal journeys of modern heroes as they navigate their trials and tribulations.

From the point of view of the typology of space, the world of fantasy literature is "programmatically fantastic" [9, p. 319] and is based, first of all, on the traditions of romantic literature, namely, on the models of romantic duality developed in the romantic fairy tale or romantic novel. In the fantasy – J.ology of space, of course, various options for using spatial models are possible: these options were laid down at the dawn of the genre by the "fathers" of fantasy themselves, the Inklings – Tolkien and Lewis. Moreover, if Lewis used the "classical" two-world model, in which there is the real world of London during the war and post-war years and the fantasy world of Narnia, as well as "doors" between the worlds, then in Tolkien the setting is an independent world – the world of Middle-earth – with its cosmos, its history of creation, and its own closed loci; however, the world of Middle-earth does not correlate with the real world in any way, and, in fact, the two-world model "reality/fantasy" does not arise, but the action can move to separate loci with their own spatio-temporal laws. "Female" fantasy, based on its best examples in the typology of plot, conflict and construction of space, develops in line with the same established trends. Thus, in Le Guin's "A Wizard of Earthsea", space is constructed according to Tolkien's model (i.e., a self-sufficient fantasy world is created that does not intersect with the real one). The conflict is connected with the need to save the world, to restore the world balance, which was disturbed either by the fault of the hero himself or by the fault of someone else; the plot is based on a quest – i.e., a journey. [6] M. Semenova also creates a self-sufficient fantasy space in her cycle of novels about Volkodav, which, however, contains many references to Russian pagan and early medieval culture (that is why Semenova is called the author of "Slavic" fantasy). True, her artistic space is more complex: it opens up passages to other worlds, but these worlds cannot be called analogs of objective reality. The main character, Volkodav, also goes on a quest, but initially, his task is not at all in the area of saving the world; however, when faced with evil and injustice, he cannot pass by and constantly gets involved in conflicts, protecting the weak and the offended and punishing villains and scoundrels, thereby

ultimately saving the world. [10] In popular novels, which can belong to different sub-genres of fantasy or related genres, similar plots and spatial models of text organization are also implemented. It would seem that the main typological components of texts in "female" examples of fantasy develop within the framework of "male" traditions, and no special signs of specifically "female" literature have yet been discovered. However, an analysis of works created by women writers shows that, in addition to relying on mythology, heroic epics, romantic tales, and classic examples of the genre (the works of Tolkien and Lewis), "women's" fantasy demonstrates a completely different solution, first of all, to the "women's" theme, which directly affects the plot, the conflict, the characters and the attitude towards the feminine principle in general. This is not surprising, since by the end of the 20th century, as Yu. B. Borev writes, "Women's literature acquired clearly defined, specifically feminine, emphatically feminine features." [11, p. 468] These features often include a focus on emotional depth, interpersonal relationships, and the exploration of identity from a female perspective. As a result, "women's" fantasy not only reimagines traditional narratives but also challenges established norms, offering a rich tapestry of experiences that resonate with a diverse range of readers.

First of all, one notices the significant difference in the role played by love intrigue in the "male" and "female" versions of fantasy. In classic examples of the genre, for example, in Tolkien's "The Hobbit", love intrigue as such is absent, and female characters are only mentioned episodically (for example, "our hobbit's mother" [13, p. 6]). In "The Lord of the Rings", love intrigue (or rather, intrigues) is on the periphery of the novel. Thus, at the end of the epic, Rosie is mentioned, whom Sam marries [12, p. 997]. Arwen also appears at the end, whom Aragorn marries [12, p. 939]. The episode also features the amazingly beautiful story of the relationship between Tom Bombadil and his wife Goldfish, presented in poetic form – as a song [12, p. 136]. The theme of love is central to the inserted ballad of Beren and Lúthien [12, pp. 202–203]. However, these episodes are not plot-forming. Only the love story connected with Éowyn, for whom falling in love with Aragorn becomes an additional incentive to go to war, plays any role in the plot since it is Éowyn who must destroy the Supreme Nazgûl. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia also does not have a pronounced love affair, since the main characters are children, teenagers who have not yet reached the age of adult relationships. [7] For female authors, the role of the love story is much more important for the plot. Moreover, in several cases, it is the love collision that drives the plot. Thus, in Le Guin's A Wizard of Earthsea, it is a woman – the young daughter of Lord Re Albi – who first provokes Ged into a clash with the Shadow, and it is she who then saves Ged, sacrificing herself. In The Tombs of Atuan, a love that is not yet fully realized pushes Tenar to save Ged and determines the outcome of the conflict; in Tehanu, love is revealed to Ged as a new meaning in life when he loses his magical powers [6]. In Semenova's Wolfhound, the dream of love and home allows Volkodav to retain at least some hope for the future, and the love of Princess Yelena for Volkodav is the basis of the main plotline: after all, it is she who chooses Volkodav as a guardian, and it is for her sake that he sets out on his quest. [10] In popular literature, love stories serve as the basis for the plot-forming collisions of many popular bestsellers written by women: Howl's Moving Castle by D. W. Jones [2], The Hunger Games by S. Collins [5], Twilight [8], and The Beast by A. Flynn [14]. Along with the dominant role of the love affair in the development of the plot, the specificity

of "women's" fantasy is manifested in the interpretation of female images and their role in the artistic structure of the work as a whole. In this context, a very productive step would be to consider the origins of the female character in the "women's" version of fantasy. Here it is necessary to note that these origins do not lie in the romantic fairy tale and certainly not in the classic examples of the genre but have completely different roots. The reader is accustomed to the fact that in European literature up until the beginning of the 19th century, female images were significantly typified and largely relied on archetypes formed in European culture. The female image can be presented either as the image of the Beautiful Lady, who is saved, protected, loved, and extolled, and for whose sake feats are performed, or the woman is a beautiful flower that is given as a reward for feats. Either the female character embodies the Cinderella archetype – a beautiful but unfortunate victim of fate who, again, needs to be saved, protected, and exalted. Or she is a noble wife and mother of a family, infinitely devoted to her husband (the Penelope archetype). Or, finally, a cunning temptress who, for the sake of power, revenge, or her own pleasure, takes the path of evil, tempts, seduces, and even kills (Circe, Lady Macbeth). It is also important that these roles – psychological and social – are usually separated and are practically not combined in one heroine. Of course, the reader, like Pushkin's Tatyana, can "imagine herself as the heroine" of this or that novel, but it is quite difficult to identify herself completely with this or that female character since the psychology of a woman is much more complex and does not fit into the framework of just one social role or one psychotype.

However, in the 19th century the literary situation changes. And if in the romantic fairy tale, which has its roots in classical fantasy, a woman is usually depicted as a beautiful flower to which the hero aspires and as a reward that he receives for completing his task (as, for example, in Novalis's "Heinrich von Ofterdingen" or Hoffmann's "The Golden Pot"), then in the literature of a later period it turns out that for a woman to be happy, it is not enough to be simply the beautiful lady or the saved Cinderella; it is not enough for her to simply be admired, saved and loved. She needs to be patronized; she needs to be equal to a man in strength of spirit and intelligence; she even needs to be superior to a man in some ways, to pity him and not just be saved but also to save herself. Perhaps the complexity of female psychology is most vividly and convincingly reflected in Charlotte Brontë's novel "Jane Eyre" (1847). Of course, Sh. Brontë relied in many ways on the achievements of her literary predecessors (J. Austen, George Sand, whose novel Consuelo Charlotte "loved very much" [3, p. 7]), but it was Charlotte Brontë who was able to make a real breakthrough in the depiction of a female character because her heroine embodies not just one template of a female image but a whole "set" of character traits, making this image extremely deep and multifaceted. What are these traits? On the one hand, Jane is a kind of Cinderella of the 19th century. She is an orphan who is bullied by her aunt and cousin and who was sent to be brought up in a closed institution with a strict regime. Jane herself forms her character through reading, studying, and working on herself, and this character allows her to find a place in life. Thus, in the novel, we see a clearly expressed idea of women's emancipation. This theme resonates throughout the narrative, as Jane not only seeks independence but also asserts her right to love and happiness on her terms. Her journey reflects the

broader struggle for women's rights during a time when societal expectations often confined them to subordinate roles.

Also, Jen embodies the idea of internal, spiritual beauty, as opposed to external - empty and cold (like, for example, Blanche Ingram). But at the same time, Jen unwittingly turns out to be a temptress - it is for her sake that Mr. Rochester is ready to break the law by marrying her while his wife is alive. Jen is a rebel, but at the same time her behavior is based on high moral principles. She cannot make a deal with the law, or with her conscience, or with her own feelings. She has a sense of self-worth, which causes respect from others. When creating the image of Jane Eyre, Sh. Bronte makes another win-win move: in Jen's behavior we see very curious "games" with self-esteem. Thus, Jen demonstrates low self-esteem, considering herself ugly, not very gifted, and not very smart. It is enough to recall the scene in which Jen, comparing herself with Blanche, paints a disparaging portrait of herself: "The portrait of a governess – a lonely, poor ugly woman" [1, p. 183] or: "Can one really allow him to take this plain, poor plebeian woman seriously?" [1, p. 184] But at the same time, through this low self-esteem, an inner confidence in her intelligence and her exceptionalism breaks through; she seems to repeat all the time: no one understood Mr. Rochester, but I did. And this exceptionalism of the heroine expresses the need to feel special, unique, which is extremely necessary for female psychology. Also, Jen is not just Cinderella, but also the embodiment of a savior; however, she saves Mr. Rochester's life when she prevents a fire, and in the finale of the novel she leads him out of a deep spiritual crisis.

Thus, Le Guin's main female characters, Tenar and Tehanu, are "social" orphans. Tenar is taken away from her family to serve the gods; in fact, she becomes an orphan, deprived of even the name given to her at birth; Tehanu is also an orphan, whom Tenar saves and takes into care. Tenar is beautiful, but when she leaves the tombs of Atuan to the north, her beauty differs from the beauty of the local women, and Tehanu has been disfigured since childhood: after being raped, she was thrown into a fire, and the girl lives with terrible burns on her body. They are both victims and saviours of the world at the same time, since it is Tenar who saves Ged and helps him find and reunite the halves of the destroyed ring; Tehanu, at a critical moment, calls for help from her true kin – the dragon Kalessin. Tenar also plays the role of a faithful wife and mother (Penelope's psychotype) and ultimately receives personal happiness with Ged as a reward for her path. [6] In Maria Semenova's "Wolfhound", the central female characters are orphans: the princess Elen and Niilit. Both gain the knowledge they need through their own efforts. Both are victims: the princess is hunted, and Niilit is sold into slavery. But at the same time, Niilit, for example, also embodies the "saviour" psychotype: it is she who keeps Wolfhound from dying in the burning castle of the Cannibal; it is she who finds a way out of the castle and helps both Wolfhound and Tilorn to escape; it is she who quickly learns healing and ultimately receives personal happiness with Tilorn. And in the princess Elenima, as in the case of Jen, we observe games with self-esteem: she considers herself not brave enough, comparing herself with the image of a warrior mother. In "Wolfhound", Kenderat's mother is also mentioned many times – the woman who taught Wolfhound to fight. For Semenova, Kenderat's mother is the embodiment of a woman healer, saviour and guru all rolled into one. It is her life principle – "Love rules the world" – that guideline on which Wolfhound tries to rely, but which remains

unattainable for him. [10] In popular novels, we see the same features characteristic of women's novels, which have already acquired the character of clichés: in "Howl's Moving Castle", "The Hunger Games", "Twilight", and "The Beast", the main characters are either orphans or girls from single-parent families. They make their way in life on their own. They constantly voice low self-esteem and do not consider themselves beauties, possessing inferiority complexes, although in the eyes of others, they look quite attractive, so their games with self-esteem are perceived as a kind of coquetry. All of them are victims, objects of the hunt, but they also save the world (on different scales) and are rewarded with personal happiness in the finale.

"Female" fantasy treats male heroes with unfeminine severity, which is typical of a female romance novel. Let's remember Mr Rochester: he combines strength and a certain wild beauty, different from the antique ideal; brutal attractiveness; a difficult character; and love for our smaller brothers – those traits that cause admiration in women. But at the same time, it is not enough for a woman to simply admire; to love, a woman must also pity her chosen one, which is why Mr Rochester's family treated him so unfairly, marrying him to a madwoman; therefore, no one except Jane sees true suffering in him, and in the finale of the novel, Charlotte Brontë had to cripple her hero: trying to save his mad wife from a fire, he loses fingers on his hand and goes blind. And it is to this Mr Rochester that Jen returns: I love you both strong and weak at the same time, the former handsome man and today's cripple; I will give you strength and believe in you, and with me you will become a hero again – here it is, the message of the savior psycho type, and here it is, the male image that evokes both compassion and admiration.

This type of hero and similar plot points are widely replicated in "women's" fantasy. Thus, Le Guin's Ged is an orphan; Wolfhound is also an orphan (he sees the entire Grey Dog clan being killed before his eyes); Howl in Howl's Moving Castle is an orphan, and Kyle Kingsbury in The Beast is also a kind of orphan (first abandoned by his mother, then betrayed by his father). Female authors like to cripple their male heroes: Ged has a scar on his face after a collision with the Shadow; Wolfhound too – in fact, he doesn't have any living meta on him at all, because he was repeatedly beaten with a whip in the mines of the Gem Mountains; in The Hunger Games, Peeta loses a leg, and Gabe is beaten with a whip at the pillory, and even children's fantasy cannot escape this cliche: J. Rowling's Harry Potter is also an orphan with a scar on his forehead. In addition, all these characters' love nature: the heroes' companions are a lemming – Ged, a bat – Wolfhound, an owl – Harry and even the unbearable Kyle Kingsbury grows roses. At the same time, all the hardships of life and the abuse they endured only harden the characters: they quickly get back on their feet (often not without the help of the ladies) and are ready to perform further feats. Why do female writers need this? All these clichés "work" for the "saviour" psychotype because this is the kind of man that female readers want to see next to them: strong and weak at the same time; worthy of admiration and pity. In addition, love for such a man allows a woman to believe in her own exceptionalism: no one sees his true beauty in him, but she – special – sees it. Also, the attitude of "female" fantasy to the feminine principle in general plays a crucial role. A man must simultaneously love, deify, pity, and protect a woman but at the same time recognize her as his equal and even worship her as his beloved and as a mother, and a

8

crime against a woman is unthinkable and therefore cruelly punishable. This is the ideology of "women's" fantasy broadcasts in their various variants. Thus, "women's" fantasy literature, replicating the clichés and templates characteristic of women's novels, does not ideologically express the ideas of "extremist" feminism but rather reinforces a complex, often contradictory vision of femininity that both elevates and confines women within traditional roles. This duality serves to both celebrate and critique societal expectations, ultimately reflecting the ongoing struggle for genuine equality amidst romantic idealization. but rather represents a certain mix of traditional family values, birchy [11, p. 468], and the idea of emancipation.

REFERENCES

1. Bronte Sh. Jane Eyre. - M .: Pravda, 1983 .-- 512 p. - Text: direct.

2. Jones D. W. Howl's Moving Castle. - M .: Azbuka, Azbuka-Atticus, 2018 .-- 448 p. - Text: direct.

3. Grazhdanskaya Z. T. Charlotte Bronte's novel "Jane Eyre". // Bronte Sh. Jane Eyre. - M .: Pravda, 1982 .-- pp. 3-10. - Text: direct.

4. Zharinov E. V. "Fantasy" and detective as genres of modern Anglo-American literature. - M .: International Academy of Informatization, 1996 .-- 126 p. - Text: direct.

5. Collins S. The Hunger Games. Catching Fire. Mockingjay. – M.: AST, 2014. – 894 p. – Text: direct.

6. Le Guin W. A Wizard of Earthsea: Fantastic Works. – M.: EKSMO-Press, 2002. – 800 p. – Text: direct.

7. Lewis K.S. The Chronicles of Narnia. – M.: Eksmo, 2014. – 848 p. – Text: direct.

8. Mayer S. Twilight. – M.: AST, 2008. – 448 p. – Text: direct.

9. Mozhaeva A.B. Myth in the Literature of the Twentieth Century: Structure and Meanings. // Artistic Landmarks of Foreign Literature of the Twentieth Century. – M.: IMLI RAS, 2002. – 568 p. – Text: direct.

10. Semenova M. Volkodav. - SPb.: Azbuka-classic, 2003. - 640 p. - Text: direct.

11. Theory of literature. T. IV. Literary process. /Ed. by Yu. B. Borev. - M .: IMLI RAS "Heritage", 2001 .-- 624 p. - Text: direct.

12. Tolkien J. R. R. The Lord of the Rings. - L .: Severo-Zapad, 1991 .-- 1008 p. - Text: direct.

13. Tolkien J. R. R. The Hobbit, or There and Back Again: A Tale-Story. - L .: Children's Literature, 1991 .-- 254 p. - Text: direct.

14. Flynn A. The Monster. - Text: electronic. – URL: https://libking.ru/ books/sf-/sf-horror/405939-aleks-flinn-chudovishche.html