

THE IMAGE OF A SUPERCHILD IN HALYNA PAHUTIAK'S NOVEL 'THE KINGDOM'

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Abstract. American and British fantasy literature has well-established traditions. But Ukrainian fantasy is quite a young literature genre. Halyna Pahutiak is a modern Ukrainian fantasy writer. Her prose is a unique mixture of psychologism, mysticism, symbolism, feminism and urbanism. Almost all her works are permeated with western Ukrainian myths and folklore. Protagonists of her books are in search of their self-identity, that's why they have to accomplish their mission. Even her secondary characters are original. Her novel 'The Kingdom' could substitute the Harry Potter book series for Ukrainian young readers. The novel includes reflections on 'eternal' topics: family and friendship. The main character of the story is a 14-year-old girl, called Lucina. At the beginning of the novel she may seem to be a typical vulnerable teenager, and then she appears to be brave, strong and persistent.

1. Introduction. Fantasy as a literary genre

Fantasy is a versatile trend that has absorbed the centuries-old traditions of international culture and has penetrated into different spheres of culture like art, film industry, music, computer gaming and literature. Fantasy is now a popular culture though at first it was merely a literary genre, that is still developing.

In recent years fantasy literature has become increasingly popular among both children and adults. This could be explained by the phenomenon of so called 'cultural infantilism' (the name given by the sociologist Frank Furedi) [12, p. 43]. Most literary critics believe that the fantasy literature gives its readers 'an escape from our often prosaic existences' [11, p. 10]. But an expert in children's literature Sheila A. Egoff argues it, in her opinion, 'The purpose of fantasy is not to escape reality, but to illuminate it:

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to transport us to a world different from the real world, yet to demonstrate certain immutable truths that persist even there – and in every possible world’ [16, p. 63]. In her master thesis Laura Solomon explains why not only children, but also adults are avid fantasy readers. In her point of view, fantasy ‘readers are challenged to see beyond what is and to envision what could be. These novels may appear, without careful examination, to have little to do with the everyday experiences of children’ [55, p. 6]. Sometimes fantasy is criticized for its ‘positive portrayal of witchcraft’ and that it ‘may entice children to seek out Satanism in the real world’ [41, p. 27].

Why do people fancy reading fantasy? Austin Hackney investigates this issue in his social network post. In his point of view, there are three fundamental reasons why we read fantasy. He thinks that we read fantasy literature for educational, and entertainment purposes, and to get away from the reality. For him escapism (unrealistic portrayal of the world) in fantasy literature is not always bad, as it can ‘often offer life-saving escape routes for those, especially children, who find themselves in situations of insufferable neglect or abuse’ [17]. Some educators argue that children should read fantasy literature and they are confident that contemporary stories are better for them. Others believe that ‘a modern realistic novel can be out of date in five years, but well-written fantasy endures’ [25, p. 125]. Fantasy can ‘wrestle with the inadequacies of our human limits and imagine our world might be otherwise’ [25, p. 148]. Thus due to the popularity of the fantasy literature more critical attention has been paid to it, especially by literary critics and scholars.

Fantasy as a literary genre is not definite; it is a combination of various genres. In the article ‘Defining Fantasy’ Steven S. Long states that fantasy includes three main elements: magic, parallel universes and low technology. For Kathryn Hume fantasy is ‘any departure from consensus reality’ [20, p. 21]. According to ‘The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms’ fantasy ‘includes several literary genres (e. g. dream vision, fable, fairy tale, romance, science fiction) describing imaginary worlds in which magical powers and other impossibilities are accepted’ [1, p. 125].

It is believed that the fantasy literature started in Victorian Britain with George MacDonald (the author of ‘The Princess and the Goblin’ (1872) and ‘Phantastes: A Faerie Romance for Men and Women’ (1858)). ‘Phantastes’ is considered to be the first fantasy novel ever written [64, p. 106]. John

Ronald Reuel Tolkien, who is best known as the author of ‘The Lord of the Rings’ (1954–1955), is considered to be ‘the father’ of a modern high fantasy literature for adults.

Fantasy as a literature genre can be subdivided into several subcategories. Different criteria for its division into subgenres can be used. Most literary critics define two large subgenres of fantasy literature: high and low. High fantasy describes a secondary world. In high (epic) fantasy stories the setting is in the fictional (imaginary/secondary/alternative) world. According to ‘The A to Z Fantasy Literature’ the term ‘high fantasy’ was coined by Lloyd Chudley Alexander in his essay ‘High Fantasy and Heroic Romance’ (1971) [57, p. 198]. In low fantasy stories there are two worlds – the real world and the fictional one. Low fantasy involves a supernatural intrusion into the reality. ‘Magical’ events of the secondary world intrude on the real one (the two worlds are side by side – the events happen in the real world as well as in the secondary one). Some scholars think that the imaginary world is ‘usually based on recognizable features of the human world and may even be symbolic representations of the primary world’ [15, p. 102]. The secondary world can have physical boundaries and the supernatural can mostly occur in it.

Traditional heroes of high fantasy are males. Most of them are warriors or knights. But low fantasy stories with female protagonists are more typical.

Fantasy literature is always in development. Every few years, new subgenres of fantasy literature appear, combine and mash with other genres. According to BestFantasyBooks.com site there are 58 subgenres of fantasy [13]. It depends on what criteria of classification are taken into account. Some writers combine several fantasy subgenres in their works, as they write in cross-genres. Fantasy subgenres can be classified according to various criteria. According to themes or settings the most popular fantasy subgenres are:

– *bangsian fantasy* presupposes the use of famous literary or historical characters and their interactions in the afterlife [13];

– *comic or humorous fantasy* is funny in tone. Comic fantasy fiction often includes parody on other fantasy books [48, p. 31];

– *dark fantasy* has elements of horror with a gloomy, dark atmosphere [57, p. 97]. Sometimes it could be named as gothic fantasy;

– *romantic fantasy* has focus on relationships with the elements of the romance genre [13];

– Emily C. A. Snyder defines *political fantasy* as ‘the study of politics (the force-human or divine-that moves and shapes a society) in a fabricated world’ [54];

– *science fantasy* is hybrid genre of science fiction and fantasy. In Carl D. Malmgren’s opinion, it implies the creation of a world regulated by scientific laws, but ‘contains at least one violation of the laws that we derive from the current state of science’ [37, p. 261];

– in *magic(al) realism* fantastic things are treated not as possible, but as realistic ones [13];

– *sword and sorcery* could be synonymous to heroic fantasy, with features of adventure fantasy and elements of magic (supernatural). The heroes in *sword and sorcery* usually have swords, hence the name comes from [5, p. 915];

– in *urban fantasy* the setting is in a city, etc. [13].

According to the ethnic or national origin of fantasy writers: African-American (black), British, Nordic, Oriental, Slavic, Ukrainian fantasy, etc. fantasy can be differentiated. Furthermore, some fantasy fiction may have features of postmodernism and be a mixture of different cultures. In this case it is difficult to distinguish the type of fantasy fiction according to the ethnic or national origin of a fantasy writer.

It can also be classified according to the target reader: fantasy novels for adults and children’s or young adult fantasy literature. The difference according to the target reader may seem vague: adults may read children’s fantasy and vice versa. Ursula K. Le Guin argues this and considers that ‘Fantasy is the great age-equalizer, if it’s good when you’re twelve, it’s quite likely to be just as good, or better when you’re thirty-six’ [42, p. 24]. However, the themes and protagonists’ ages are different. A children’s or YA fantasy novel can’t have protagonists who are not children/teenagers. In adult fantasy the story is featured through the perspective of an adult. Of course, not all topics that are covered in adult fantasy are raised in children’s/YA fantasy literature like some ‘adult’ topics. Normally, there is less violence in children’s/YA fantasy literature than in adult one.

The Harry Potter book series written by Joanne Kathleen Rowling gained worldwide popularity. Since 1997, after the release of the first book

about a young wizard 'Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone', it has inspired writers all over the world to create more fantasy novels about children with magical powers and unique abilities.

Children's or young adult fantasy literature is fantasy intended for young readers (children or teenagers). Sometimes it is called juvenile fantasy. Some critics believe that young adult fantasy differs from children's fantasy and others consider that it is the same notion (in this article I support the idea that young adult and children's fantasy are homogeneous concepts). Typical main character archetypes in YA fantasy are: a warrior (knight), a magician and a simple person. Protagonists of YA adult fantasy literature normally are simple children/teens at the beginning of a story, but later they gain unique abilities and even superhuman powers in the secondary world.

Children like fantasy literature, as it allows them to live in the imaginary world, where anything is possible. Moreover, a distinguishing feature of adolescence is the search for the ideal. Fantasy literature could provide teenagers with such ideals. Fantasy protagonists inspire and empower them to meet challenges they face with confidence in the real world. As a prominent Soviet literary critic and children's writer Kornei Chukovskii stated: 'Fantasy is the most valuable attribute of the human mind and it should be diligently nurtured from earliest childhood, as one nurtures musical sensitivity – and not crushed... Without imaginative fantasy there would be complete stagnation in both physics and chemistry ... the value of such tactics in developing, strengthening, enriching, and directing children's thinking and emotional responses' [42, p. 26]. Lloyd Alexander declares that 'fantasy 'can be one of the most effective means of establishing a capacity for adult values' [42, p. 26]. Few genres pay so much attention to the problem of teenagers' self-identification and the question of teens values as young adult fantasy literature. Besides fantastic elements in children's fantasy literature, there are realistic elements which describe real children's problems. Some teenagers like fantasy, because it is for them and about them.

2. Fantasy literature in Ukraine

The Western fantasy tradition is associated with British and American literature. In comparison with American and British fantasy literature, the Ukrainian genre is quite young. The Ukrainian fantasy literature appeared

only at the end of the XXth century. In the former Soviet Union science fiction was more popular than fantasy. Ukrainian fantasy literature was established after the fall of the USSR. It differs from the classical western fantasy, as Ukrainian fantasy writers have tendency to use ethical and philosophical paradigms [34, p. 35]. Literary critics believe that the Ukrainian fantasy literature is immature and there are not enough fantasy books to satisfy adult readers' interests [49]. They think that only children's/juvenile fantasy literature has developed in Ukraine.

The problem is what writers could be identified as Ukrainian ones. As a result of the language situation in Ukraine many fantasy writers are Russophone and they get used to writing in Russian, only some of their works are translated into Ukrainian. The works of Maryna and Serhii Diachenko, Andrii Valentinov, Dmytro Hromov and Oleh Ladyzhenskyi could serve as an example. However, after the Revolution of Dignity, we see a significant rise in Ukrainian science fiction and fantasy. Every year the number of authentic Ukrainian fantasy books keeps going up and up. For e.g., 22 Ukrainian fantasy books were published in 2016 and half of them were for children/ teenagers [49].

Although modern Ukrainian fantasy is 'immature', it has started to develop and some writers, writing fantasy books for children and teenagers, should be mentioned. Among them are: Volodymyr Arenev, Liubko Deresh, Maryna Rybalko, Valerii and Natalia Lapikur, Olexandr Denysenko, Halyna Pahutiak, etc. [29, p. 122].

Volodymyr Arenev is a pen name of Volodymyr Puzyi. He is a journalist, a science fiction and fantasy writer. V. Arenev writes in the Ukrainian and Russian languages. One of his best known fantasy novels for teenagers is 'The Powder from Dragon Bones'. The main character of the book is Marta with a nickname Witch. She has typical teenage problems (she has no friends), and wants to get away from her provincial town to the capital. She wants to earn money for her further education, so she works in the incubator (a kind of an orphanage), as a tutor in her free time, and runs a journalism club there. She even gets involved in a dangerous occupation like digging out toxic dragon bones [49]. Marta has got the gift – she knows exactly where the dragon bones are and how to neutralize them. Dragons can make dreams come true. During bone decontamination Marta has the opportunity to change her appearance. Her beautiful wheaten hair colour is a gift from

a dragon. Her father goes abroad, so she lives with her stepmother, whom she can't stand. The novel ends when Marta goes through very difficult times: she gets to know that her father has returned from the war with 'pesyholovtsi' (dog-heads), so he was not working abroad and has changed forever.

Oleksandr Denysenko is a Ukrainian writer, screenwriter, actor, film director and the author of TV and radio programs. In 2010 he published his fantasy book 'Mezhnyk. On the edge of light and shadow'. The genre of the novel is a surrealistic fantasy [60]. The work begins with the birth of a child and his interpretation of the world. The main character is Marko Rysochka. He is called Mezhnyk, the one who can cross two worlds, being on the edge of light and shadow. The target reader should be a teenager, but the text contains many physiological details that only an adult can understand. It is even called anti-Harry Potter, where the main character does not escape from the family, but on the contrary finds it [63].

Maryna Rybalko is a pseudonym of Maryna Tovstenko. Her well-known fantasy novel is 'Marichka and the Red King'. It is a book trilogy about a little girl who appears in an incredible fantasy world. In the first book series Marichka, who was born at 3 o'clock, hears that someone is calling her and goes into the street. In the yard there is a snowman dressed in red, waiting for her. They fly together to the other world on an orange dragon. Marichka does not suspect that it will be difficult for her to get out of the fantasy world and that there is the danger hanging over her life. But she has brave friends (Denys, Iryna and Maksym) who are ready to go through many hardships with her. They want to rescue her and penetrate into the fantasy world. Young rescuers spend three years there, and Marichka nearly nine. Children have to work to feed themselves and learn how to survive. They got to know that not all people are good and not every word is true and learn to appreciate friendship [7]. In the second book Marichka and her friends appear again in the world of the Red King. The mysterious Emperor rules there and nobody knows who he is, but the police run after everyone who does not want to obey his authority. Marichka has to reveal the secret of the Emperor and defeat him. In the third book Marichka gets acquainted with a boy called Andrii, with whom she travels to the imaginary world. Fiery Serpent kidnaps her and wants her help in overcoming the ecological disaster [52].

The married couple of Valerii and Natalia Lapikur are authors of a historical and political fantasy work 'The Khazar Ballad'. In this novel they draw parallels between the Ukrainian ancient and modern history [43]. Their children's fantasy novel is 'The Magic Gate'. The main character is Bohdan Sokil. He is a teenage boy, who is obsessed with modern technology. But for a twist of fate, he has become a real, not a virtual computer player, who needs to go through different Cossack trials to cross the magic gate with his sworn brothers.

All the above mentioned authors belong to the older generation of Ukrainian fantasy writers. The representatives of the younger generation are: Liubko Deresh, Mia Marchenko, Yaryna Katorozh, etc.

Liubko Deresh belongs to a new generation of Ukrainian writers. In his works we can find a mixture of mysticism, fantasy and slang [6]. His best known fantasy novels are: 'The Cult' and 'The Intention'. 'The Cult' was translated into Bulgarian, German, Italian, Polish and Serbian. All the events of the novel take place in a small town in the Carpathian Mountains. The writer shows the confrontation between the old college facility manager and a young couple. Yurko Banzai and Dartsa Borhes live their ordinary lives, but they have a strange sense of danger. They find the opportunity to penetrate into Roman Korii's dreams, and he leads them to a death trap [9].

More detailed information about Mia Marchenko's and Yaryna Katorozh's works will be given in the subheading '**Female protagonists in children's and YA fantasy literature**'.

Ukrainian fantasy is normally restricted to children's or young adult fantasy, and adult fantasy is not so developed. That's why it is considered to be immature. Ukrainian adult fantasy is only in its 'bud'. In this context Natalia Savchuk's book series 'Chronicles of Semysvittia (the Seven Worlds)' is worth mentioning and could serve as an example of Ukrainian adult fantasy. It depicts the times of matriarchy, when everything depended on the will of the Great Ma. The mythical creatures felt free on the earth at those times, and humans were only a tribe. The guardian Haina disrupted the normal course of life, giving birth to siblings. Their names were Vroda (Beauty) and Voloshka (Cornflower). The guardian gave her strength to her son Voloshka instead of her daughter as it was in the tradition. The son inherited magical powers and the daughter got her beauty. As it is law-breaking, they are called 'the children of crime' [49].

Some Ukrainian writers, whose main genre is science fiction, have tried their hand at adult fantasy. Among them are: Andrii Valentynov and Henry Lyon Oldie. They are best known for their fantasy novel 'We are to live here' written in Russian. As a result of the activity of one of the laboratories of the Institute of Applied Mythology, a major man-made disaster occurs in an unknown city. The setting of the novel is ten years after the disaster. The Institute staff put thoughts into citizens' minds that to improve the situation, it is necessary to pray and make sacrifices to Christian saints, brownies, water spirits, and so on. The citizens get used to the mythical reality surrounding them and begin to see brownies, water spirits, snow maidens and other mythical characters, and they are obedient and bring profit. This phenomenon is called 'Semenov-Zuser theory'. Water spirits look after the water supply, brownies make repairs, modern centaurs (hybrids of men and motorcycles) rush around the city, and people on altars bring bloodless sacrifices to the saints and evil spirits. Having received power in their hands, the local mafia takes control of the information and energy flows. This causes irritation of the federal government, that decides to destroy the city. At the same time, agents of a powerful transnational organization carry out illegal activities in the city. Each zone of mythical reality has a so-called legate: a person able to create worlds on paper, and able to change the mythical reality. The leader of the local mafia Panchenko dies biologically and becomes a false god at the same time with the staff members the unnamed organization. The hunt for the true legate begins. The goal of the organization is to find the Legate and kill him, Panchenko's goal is to become the legate himself [62].

Andrii Horbunov is a young writer, not because of his age, but for being a novice in fiction writing. His novel 'Hlil' is an example of urban adult fantasy. The setting of the novel can't surprise Ukrainian fantasy readers, as L'viv as the center of supernatural appears in many Ukrainian fantasy stories. It describes two sides of the city of L'viv: a day L'viv and an evening L'viv, called Hlil. Hlil is the imaginary world, where the battle between good and evil happens and where demons, magicians and other supernatural creatures live. It is difficult to get to Hlil and next to impossible to get out of it. The story shows characters who arrive to Hlil under certain circumstances (Volodia, Valera, Yan Bachevskiy, Matvii, who lost memory and whom his nephew presents a smartphone with a virus program and which the poor man

unintentionally launches). There they come across a girl with a crossbow and a devil in her backpack. Her name is Sofia and she hunts demons. In this parallel world there are Ukrainian Insurgent Army soldiers who continue to fight with the Red Army, and other shadows of the past [19].

Ukrainian YA fantasy literature appeared in the 90th of the XXth century and today it is a booming genre of fiction. But adult fantasy literature has just started developing in Ukraine. This has led to the study of this genre by Ukrainian scholars. The Research Center of Fantasy Literature at the Institute of Literature, Taras Shevchenko National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, was established in 2015.

3. Halyna Pahutiak as a representative of modern Ukrainian fantasy writers

Halyna Pahutiak is a pen name of a contemporary Ukrainian writer – Halyna Moskalets’, who is known for her fantasy children’s (young adult) novels. She works in different subgenres of fantasy: mystical, philosophical, metaphorical, heroic and gothic prose [33, p. 10]. In her early works, the writer tends toward realism, and then she turns toward magical realism. Elements of fairy tales, meditation, fiction, mysticism are key in her works. Her prose is characterized by ‘surrealist tendencies, traditions of classical and postmodern play, symbolism and biblical reminiscences; emphasis on artistic techniques of dream (as a form of unconscious psyche), a fragmentary ‘stream of consciousness’ [37, p. 29]. In her later period, Gothic images appeared in her prose, like in the novels, ‘The Servant from Dobromyl’, ‘The Gothic of Urizh’, and ‘Charmed Musicians’. In Halyna Zhukovska’s opinion ‘The originality of the author’s artistic search is marked by non-Gothic markers: infernal characters, disturbing and mysterious atmosphere, appeal to mysticism, mythology, unconscious, use of sinister premonitions, prophetic dreams, detailed depiction of death, close coexistence of the world of the living and the world of the dead’ [67, p. 173]. Besides ‘H. Pahutiak’s prose also has certain features of ‘women’s writing’: female subjectivity, autobiography, lyricism, emotionality’ [37, p. 28]. For her prose book ‘The Servant from Dobromyl’ Halyna Pahutiak was awarded Taras Shevchenko National Prize in 2010 [31].

The Ukrainian scholar and fantasy researcher Daria Khokhel supposes that her place in contemporary Ukrainian prose is unique. Some literary

critics have tried to categorize her works, referring them to feminine, subjective, or intellectual prose [25]. In her opinion, the most suitable genre to characterise her latest works is fantasy.

Halyna Pahutiak possesses an individual style that makes her writing immediately recognizable. Researchers define distinguishing features of her style, namely: in her novels she shows her characters' tragic view of life; she highlights the problem of a moral decline in modern society. Through the prism of her mythology, she uncovered such problems of modern society, such as spiritual crisis, cultural decline and environmental disasters [3, p. 11]. Leading motives of her works are loneliness, abandonment and a conflict between artistic ideals and a social reality (she has got caring attitude to art, especially to books) [46, p. 246]. 'Organic mixtures of national folklore, myth-creation, philosophy, and symbolism' predominate in her novels [24]. She often refers to mythology in her fictional works, uses her own interpretation of local myths and creates her own mythology, especially connected with her native village Urizh [46, p. 246]. Western Ukrainian myths and folklore have provided raw material for her fantasy novels. The reader may come across international mythical creatures such as: brownies, ghosts, vampires, werewolves, witches as well as national ones: dovhomudy, slyniavtsi, plisniavtsi, zjidlyky, etc. In her autobiography she considers herself a descendant of the Romanian ruler Vlad Tsepesh from the Basarab family (better known as Dracula). It could be a writer's fiction or a kind of publicity stunt to attract more readers to her books, or truth. Probably, due to this fact and the use of mysticism in her works, she is called the most mystical writer in Ukraine [60].

Daria Khokhel characterizes her style and believes that Pahutiak's 'novels combine a deep pondering on Western Ukrainian mythology, the Ukrainian classical literary tradition, and hidden polemic against European and Eastern philosophy, with an exploration of the aesthetics of the fantasy genre. She blends myth with history and creates integrated universes' [24]. Yaroslav Holoborodko considers that 'Halyna Pahuiak's works are written in a trend, that does not direct her novels into the category of bestsellers and blockbusters and does not bring her to the podium of very trendy and ultra-popular prose writers, but that guarantees interest in her even after ten, twenty, fifty, and, predictably, that will guarantee interest in her texts

even after hundred years' [65]. Other modern Ukrainian writers and literary critics point out that her works are like dreams [46, p. 246].

Her novels have been translated into several European languages: Croatian, English, German, Russian and Slovak. An extract from 'The Servant from Dobromyl' ('The Minion From Dobromyl or The Vampire's Son') and her short story 'To Find Yourself in the Garden' have been translated into English [24].

Today, the writer pays more attention to essay writing. In her essays she explains her attitude to such themes as: loneliness, eternity, old age, life, god, freedom, happiness, peace, war, death, love, consciousness, creativity, etc. In Tetiana Shevchenko's point of view, her essays are marked by suggestibility with 'the use of slow rhythm, various repetitions, non-punctuation syntax, associative chains, concentration of words from one semantic field' [53].

4. Female protagonists in children's and YA fantasy literature

Male characters have dominated in juvenile fantasy since the earliest times. Young adult fantasy was male-centred and female characters were restricted to secondary roles and depicted only in relation to male characters. According to Sanna Lehtonen 'there has been surprisingly little interest in representations of girlhood in children's fantasy literature' [32, p. 2]. At the end of the XXth century fantasy writers, especially women, started creating stories in which heroines were girls [41, p. 113]. Female fantasy writers were first to realize that female characters could also be protagonists. They understood that female characters had stereotypical roles in older fantasy fiction books and 'used their writing to portray strong female characters' with the same responsibilities as male protagonists [26, p. 54]. Though in some tales with fantasy elements, written in the mid-late XIXth and the beginning of the XXth centuries there were images of girls who found themselves 'in a fantasy realm' and had to 'overcome the obstacles in their (*originally her*) path in order to return home' [56, p. 1]. For instance, Alice in 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' and Dorothy Gale in 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz'. These fairy tales were published before fantasy was established as a literary genre, but they had a considerable influence upon the formation of the genre. Natalia Kulintseva believes that Lewis Carroll's 'Alice in Wonderland' with 'its narrative course and structure, characters

and imagery has been enormously influential in both popular culture and literature, especially in the fantasy genre' [28, p. 24].

Modern girls need strong female role models that could be found in fantasy literature for children and young adults. In Diandra Kopke's opinion, 'Modern fantasies give female protagonists the opportunity to be the hero instead of standing by and watching the male hero save the day' [26, pp. 55–56]. Deborah Kaplan believes that 'The transformation of the fight for gender equality to the fight for sexuality equality has been a growing trend in realistic young adult fiction for some time' [51, p. 271]. More and more independent female characters, that do not rely on masculine influence, are appearing. It is considered that usually female fantasy writers make girls their protagonists, like Shannon Hale's *Miri*, Catherynne Valente's *September*, etc. But even male fantasists choose girls as main characters of their novels like *Lila* in Philip Pullman's 'The Firework-Maker's Daughter', *Lyra* in his trilogy of fantasy novels 'His Dark Materials'. *Hermiona* was initially J. K. Rowling's protagonist, but she was recommended to change her female into a male main character – *Harry Potter*. Luckily, these days female authors are not afraid of making girls main characters in their books. *Sadie Trombetta* states that 'By nature, fantasy includes complex characters that go beyond the typical one-dimensional women so often inked onto the page' [61].

The depiction of strong female characters has also influenced Ukrainian YA fantasy. *Mia Marchenko*'s novel 'The City of Shadows' shows a twelve-year-old protagonist called *Marta*. Her world shatters after her mother's death, the girl has to move to another city and to live with her father and his girlfriend. She gets used to new circumstances: she has to go to a new school and make new friends. *Marta* has got a porcelain angel left by her mother. *Marta* appears in an enchanted city – the City of Shadows. Almost immediately, the reader understands that much is connected with this porcelain angel. *Marta* calls it 'Seraphine', unlike other people from the City of Shadows, who give it the name of 'Yola'. It is a spirit of joy, that was banished from the city for contempt of the king's grief. From time to time the events of the real city and the fairy city are mixed in such a way that the reader can not understand what is really happening with *Marta* or it is just her imagination. *Marta* has got a mission to save the City of Shadows. Most of the characters of the City of Shadows don't do anything to change their

lives and Marta came to rescue them. She shares her inner ‘light’ with them, and shows that there is nothing to be afraid of. She proves that if you want something, you have to achieve it yourself [39].

Yaryna Katorozh in her book series ‘Palimpsest’ portrays a fifteen-year-old girl of the conquered nation. Her name is Hannah and she decides to join the army, mainly Darwenhardt for the elite guardians. She does not see other way for emancipation for a woman from an impoverished part of the world. The setting is in the world of Patria, but under the brutal rule of the Empire Tsyrcuta, no-one is free. The author depicts her painful path of forced collaboration with all pitfalls until Hannah realizes that she can’t stand it any longer. At the end of the first book she meets the second female protagonist – Anna, an alien, who is endowed with incredible magical power. Together they travel to Tsyrcuta, where they are able to reveal their true colours [21–23].

Who is a typical female protagonist in young adult fantasy? Is it different from a male protagonist in children’s fantasy? A typical female protagonist in children’s fantasy is a teenage girl, who can’t get on with her peers, parents or foster parents. Sometimes she could be bullied by her classmates. Male protagonists in young adult fantasy have the same traits of character as female ones, so the main difference is in gender related topics. In spite of mission related problems, female characters raise truly girly topics like fashion and male ones like war.

5. Halyna Pahutiak’s novel ‘The Kingdom’

‘The Kingdom’ is Halyna Pahutiak’s first children’s book, that she has dedicated to her teenage daughter Vladyslava and whose photo was on the first book cover. The novel consists of two parts, for which the writer chooses almost similar titles ‘Return to the Kingdom’ and ‘Return of the Kingdom’. It is a thought-provoking novel, that has philosophical reflections on family values, friendship, love and life choice. Its main motive is the journey to self-discovery [33, p. 11–12]. The story has many twists and turns and the main character may have many conflicts along the way.

Taking into the account the above mentioned features of low fantasy, this novel can be classified as a low fantasy story. But literary critics argue on the subgenre of the novel. Some critics define it as a heroic fantasy [33, p. 11], others believe that it’s a political fantasy [50]. In her novel

she tries to cover topics of high interest to teenagers (feeling of loneliness, friendship, love). Without doubt, the target reader of the novel is a teenager, so its genre may be classified as children's/juvenile or young adult fantasy.

The setting is in two parallel worlds: real and imaginary (secondary). The chain of events in the real world takes place in a contemporary L'viv. The choice of the setting is not accidental. The ancient city of L'viv has always been full of legends and mystical stories, and of course it is well-known for the author, because she lives there. The writer describes real toponyms like Kulbaba street, Medova Pechera street, Pohulyanka, the chapel of St. Anthony, etc. The real world is called the Middle World. In the Middle World lives the protagonist with her mother Olympia. 'Magical' events happen in the Border world, the Kingdom and the Empire. The Kingdom is an ideal world and the main center of the enlightenment with the ideal reading society. It is a utopian model of the ideal state with an ideal government, where only kindness, love, wisdom, beauty and harmony exist. The Border World is inhabited by evil spirits. The Empire is a world ruled by the emperor, who is a dictator and wants to conquer the Kingdom. Slavery, obedience and fear appeared in the Kingdom from the Empire. The citizens of the Empire are called krutyholovtsi. 'However, nearby there was the Empire, where krutyholovtsilived, it was three times larger than the Kingdom, although deserted, because wars destroyed all irrigation channels, and incompetent owners cut down forests and poisoned rivers' [47, p. 54]. The opposition of the Kingdom and the Empire represents the everlasting conflict of good against evil.

Halyna Pahutiak uses elements of intertextuality and allusions testify this. Probably, she wanted to create a female 'antipode' to Harry Potter, and the use of the allusions like 'Nimbus 2000' and 'Nimbus 2001' (the names of brooms used in Harry Potter book series) could prove this [47, p. 147, 171].

As it was mentioned previously, according to the specificity of juvenile fantasy the protagonist should be a child (usually a teenager) with extraordinary magical powers. The main character is quite common, but up to some certain moment when he or she uncovers his/her non-standard abilities, and when he/she becomes aware of the existence of a magical realm. The protagonist in H. Pahutiak's novel 'The Kingdom' partly has these qualities, but it is only at the first sight.

The main character of the novel is a 14-year-old Lucina, raised in a single-parent family by her mother. Her name is of Latin origin and means 'light' and was given to the 'goddess of childbirth who safeguarded the lives of women in labour' [2, p. 411]. The same name has a tropical butterfly that is included into the Red Data Book of Ukraine. Lucina travels through different worlds like a butterfly [45]. She is a booklover and surprises her classmates that there are lots of books in her flat, even in those places, where they should not be. It runs in her family, her great grandfather started collecting books. Here we can draw parallels between Cornelia Funke's Meggie Folchart in the fantasy novel 'Inkheart' and Lucina. She is also an atypical teenage girl, who loves books, and an avid reader. Lucina is quite independent for her age. She does nearly all the household chores like going shopping, tidying up her flat and feeding her cat as her mother is often away from home. Besides reading, Lucina likes drawing and listening to music. Despite her loneliness, she is polite and friendly with elderly people.

Lucina is a stay-at-home and a lonely teenager, without any friends in the real world. Halyna Pahutiak, having created the image of a teenage girl, tries to bring it closer to teenage recipients, emphasizes adolescent estrangement, the teenage pessimistic view on the the world. These emotional states are often associated with personal development. In the real world the day is often gloomy and endless for her, she is bored and enviously looks at smaller children, who can easily entertain themselves playing tricks [29, p. 10].

She may often feel abandoned as her mother Olimpia works in a small publishing house. Olimpia frequently goes on business trips to earn more money, because she is always on a tight budget. Her only friend is a cat, called Felix. Halyna Pahutiak describes a typical teenager, who feels lonely and often shuts down. She writes 'Every adult remembers what age it is' [47, p. 84].

The motive of loneliness is evident in the novel. The author offers Lucina a solution how to overcome her loneliness; she could become a super heroine, but only in the secondary (imaginary) world. With the motive of social alienation, the author emphasizes the defenselessness of the person before a cruel world, which imposes its will on him. Although she has to undergo a metamorphosis, that could give her a 'decisive impulse' for her 'search for meaning and identity' [18, p. 173]. Then she receives a fixed

mission and got to know how much depends on her. Lucina has become conscious of her duty to protect the Kingdom from intruders that are called *krutyholovtsi*. ‘The motive of the quest performs a plot-creating function, involves the search for something important for all mankind, and on a psychological level is a way to self-identification’ [3, p. 151].

Romance is not the main motive of the novel, but the writer intimates Lucina’s first feeling of love: ‘She couldn’t think of anything else. She had no idea that youth was approaching, because when you are not happy with children’s entertainment, and you are bored, it means that you are growing up’ [47, p. 371]. She falls in love with a red-haired Marko, the son of the chief royal archivist in the Kingdom, and who can turn into a fox.

We may find similarities between Pahutiak’s Lucina and the child protagonists in British and American fantasy literature. Catherynne Valente’s September in her book series about Fairyland has alike life-story as Lucina. She is also a teenager, a 12-year-old girl, who can’t get on with her peers. Like Lucina she is not aware of her uniqueness until she visits the secondary world – the Fairyland. Both girls feel abandoned by their parents: September by both of her parents (her father works in Europe and her mother works all day building airplane engines in a factory) and Lucina by her mother. Shannon Hale’s Miri is similar to Lucina, she is brought up in a single-parent family as her mother died, and she is also a bookworm and not accepted by some of her fellow villagers.

As it was mentioned previously, the author creates her own mythology, in this book, traditional evil creatures have become ‘up-to-date’. They live like modern people. The writer shows that evil creatures live in the real world next to ordinary people, they go by cars, buses and trams. H. Pahutiak gives them names that suit their lifestyle. H. Bokshan’ calls this peculiarity of her idiostyle ‘neomythologism’ [3, p. 13]. Most of her evil forces of the real world she depicts humorously. It’s a parody for portraying demons and evil spirits. For instance, a vampire named von Stroncius is more addicted to the Vampirnet (the Internet for vampires) than to blood sucking. He has his favourite computer, which he calls ‘Tosyk’. The elderly Stroncius gives up attacking people, and ordered blood via the Vampirnet. Then he substitutes blood for tomato juice and becomes obsessed with computer games. He seldom goes out into the city to admire bats’ flights and the ancient cemetery in the moonlight. The nobiliary particle ‘von’ hints at

his noble origins, which contrasts with his true condition. Von Strontius's misery is accentuated by portrait details: he is dressed in a patched robe and rough woollen socks. All his property is nearly ruined by dampness. In Lord's house lives a bogey called Spriachyk, who likes hitchhiking with his friends in summer and attends music festivals, because he is a rock fan. The mischievous tricks of dovhomuds are limited to the theft of lamp bulbs in the porches. Though some evil forces remain in the dark ages, like illiterate witches, who are members of the Book Lovers Club, where they burn truly valuable books. They despise books, try to destroy them. Witches Olivia and Hortenzia are Lucina's neighbours. Not accidentally, witches and other evil spirits behave in H. Pahutiak's novel like modern people; they can be the embodiment of people's flaws and the negative features in their outlook.

One of the writer's inventions in the novel is the creation of book dwarfs and the images of 'perelitik' (also known as elves) [33, p. 12]. Book dwarfs and the royal archivist are responsible for the security of the royal book archive and if necessary they are able to travel around the world to find even one torn page. 'Perelitky' are believed to be good gardeners and have designed the royal garden, where harmony has always dominated, and no one could mutilate the tree crowns with scissors. They do not have human beauty, 'but magical beauty, which caused in the heart longing for something long lost' [47, p. 313]. The desire to live in harmony with nature is another motive of the novel. The author believes that 'It is time for people to get along with animals. They both will be able to give advice or help each other' [47, p. 299]. The deep connection of fantasy characters with nature is rethinking of pantheistic ideas.

The happy ending of the novel can be regarded not as a triumph of justice, but as a discovery of the characters' emotional balance and harmony in the imaginary world and the real one.

6. The image of a superchild in modern children's/YA fantasy

The success of a fantasy novel depends on the strength of its protagonist. The main character in fantasy literature is a representation of the author's outlook on what is good. He or she is endowed with good character traits, unlike an antagonist.

It should be taken into account that in this research the works of British and American fantasy children's writers have been used as main sources

for identifying the image of a superchild like The Harry Potter book series, book series 'Academy Princess' by Shannon Hale, 'The Orphan's Tales', and book series about Fairyland by Catherynne Valente.

There are three types of protagonists in traditional English fantasy: a warrior hero, a noble hero and a small hero. The meanings and features of 'a warrior hero' and 'a noble hero' can be easily guessed. The notion of a 'small hero' needs more detailed description. It denotes the type of a character without extraordinary abilities. This character is endowed with neither significant physical nor magical powers; he is not a skilled warrior, and does not possess important theoretical or practical knowledge, but has a well-developed intuition. At the beginning of the story such a character is often despised and has no motivation, it is easy to mislead him or her, but with a plot development, he/she becomes wiser, shows courage and hidden talents. The protagonist has to embark on a journey to fulfill a mission. The mission/quest of such characters is to encourage their 'self-development, inner spiritual evolution, overcoming his negative personal qualities' [66, p. 24]. Such small heroes undergo transformation and can become 'superchildren' in children's/YA fantasy literature.

Before defining the typical qualities of a superchild in modern children's/YA fantasy we should answer the following questions. What characters could be defined as 'superchildren'? Are they protagonists or antagonists? Is their gender important?

Having analysed primary sources, the following conclusions could be done. Such children are usually main characters, who are on the side of good. That is why they could be identified as protagonists. As a rule at the beginning of a novel they are lonely teenagers, but later they gain unique superpowers or magical abilities. Traditionally male characters have predominated over female characters even among female writers. But in recent years there have appeared more female fantasy YA writers with female protagonists.

Hence, the typical traits of a superchild in modern children's or YA fantasy literature are:

- having typical teenage problems, especially the feeling of loneliness in the real world. The main child character feels neglected by peers and adults and believes that no one understands him/her. In some cases a teenage protagonist may be bullied at school or is not accepted by his/her

fellow citizens. ‘Some protagonists begin their journeys as outsiders or loners’ [38, p. 22]. It is believed that they are withdrawn, but they need communication, to be listened to attentively;

– the sense of empowerment and realization only in the secondary world. In the imaginary world he or she becomes an influential person, a leader and a real hero or a heroine with the mission to save the secondary world and defeat evil forces;

– coming from an elite background in the imaginary world, but from a poor one in the real world. Some of them could even come from noble families or upper-class wizarding families;

– being an orphan or living in a single-parent family. A true story about the death of an immediate family member is normally not told or kept secret from him/her by relatives. As a rule, it is connected with his/her non-standard (magical) origins. One of the parents or both can come from a magical realm;

– possessing supernatural abilities: to travel through time, through inner, outer, or cyberspace [4], use some magical objects (wands, invisible cloaks, etc.) and live in magical realms. But there are limits to magical powers and this ‘helps create struggles in the stories’ [38, p. 14];

– he or she usually makes friends in other worlds, because of being too shy or insecure. ‘The friendships among the characters help make the stories realistic’ [38, p. 20]. These friends are loyal companions through the quest of the superchild;

– very often a child protagonist has a companion animal. The animal can even have magical abilities. It is a custom that every ‘hero’ has a pet guardian in juvenile fantasy (an owl Hedwig in Harry Potter series, a cat Taggle in ‘Plain Kate’, a dog with a name Fox in ‘Foxheart’, etc.) [31]. Pets ‘often serve as faithful sidekicks. They are always ready to lend helping hands (or paws, or wings) ... For some characters, it is easier to whisper fears and frustrations to furry friends’ [38, p. 23];

– becoming a ‘superchild’ includes experiencing extraordinary events before achieving success. To receive boons fantasy superchildren have to endure many trials and challenges. Such protagonists have to leave home to go through the quest. According to T. Maloof and Ch. Hill ‘The beauty of the quest is learning more about the magical realms. And the excitement of the journeys lies in the adventures found along the way’ [38, p. 36];

– he/she has to cross the threshold to a magical realm like Harry Potter who has to cross the secret platform 9^{3/4}.

However, their appearance could be plain, even not so good-looking. For e.g. Hale's Miri is quite small for her age; Harry Potter has got a scar in the shape of a lightning bolt on his forehead and wears glasses; the girl in 'The Night Garden' has strange tattoos around her eyes, and that is why no one wants to talk to her, except the prince.

Are such 'superchildren' positive role models? For young readers fantasy protagonists could be positive role models. They are just like them and it encourages them to pursue their dreams, gives them hope that they can make a change in their world. What values can a female protagonist in young adult fantasy offer teenagers? First of all, teenage girls should not be afraid of loneliness, they should know that their friends and beloved ones are waiting for them in the future. Secondly, they should believe in their own abilities.

Although this may seem to be a paradox, such protagonists are miserable teenagers in the real world, but very influential in the imaginary world. For instance, Harry Potter was even a 'punch box' for his cousin Dudley, but a celebrity at Hogwarts; Miri from 'Princess Academy' was a common village girl, but received the title of the academy princess; Kiranmala from 'The Serpent's Secret' turns out to be a real Indian princess, etc.

7. Lucina as the embodiment of a superchild

All the characters in the novel 'The Kingdom' have their priority according to the function they perform. Lucina is a central figure in the story and all the events are understood through her attitude to them. The main mission in the novel is to save the Kingdom from invasion, and only Lucina can fulfill it and that is why she is a key character. In fact, she is a typical protagonist of YA fantasy novels. Lucina might be a western Ukrainian female variant of Harry Potter. The girl can be identified as a superchild, because she possesses nearly all the above mentioned traits:

– like a typical teenager, she feels miserable, lonely, and bored, and wants someone to drag her out of her daily routine as everything seems gloomy to her. She is a 'passive recluse', lacks communication with her peers, new experiences, and does not do anything to make friends in the real world, and her only true friend in the Middle world is her cat. In the real world, she wants to turn to her mother's friends, not her own;

– Lucina has penetrated into the secondary world (the Kingdom), that she has to rescue. She sets out to help her mother to fight evil forces called *krutyholovtsi* and her brother prince August to inherit the crown. She is not portrayed as a girl-warrior, only a supporter. Lucina encourages her next of kin in their struggle against the Empire;

– the only difference from traditional YA fantasy protagonists is that she does not have any magical powers, unlike other secondary characters (Marko and prince August possess magical abilities). At the beginning of the novel she is just a small hero. Although during her travelling to parallel worlds, she gains her inner strength and manages to be a powerful character. I suppose that it could be treated as a more important feature than having magical powers;

– her social role has changed. At the beginning of the novel Lucina is just a teenage girl, but she appeared to be the princess of the Kingdom. Thought she did not know about her noble origins, but her mother Olympia is the queen. She is a princess of blood, but the writer has rarely used this title in relation to her. The author intentionally does not focus readers' attention on the importance of her title and the word 'princess' is used only three times in the text, more common are words like 'divchynka' or 'pannochka';

– she was brought up in a single-parent family, only by her mother. Lucina has never seen her father Danyil, the king, in the real world. She got to know that he had died only in the imaginary world. The writer points out that 'King Danyil died in his prime, although a long illness turned him into a frail old man' [47, p. 342];

– she travels to parallel worlds (the Kingdom and the Boundary World) and encounters strange creatures and mysterious forces. 'In her nearly fifteen years old, Lucina understood that there were many worlds' [47, p. 9]. She has to travel to the other world as it is difficult for her to get used to the contemporary world. The writer explains this 'But there are other parents and other children, such as Lucina with her mother. Such people are said to be 'out of this world'. That is, not from the Middle World. And because of this, sometimes they may have hard times. However, the opposite happens. When you pay attention to nothing, you don't care what your close or distant neighbours think of you. They are just happy, and that's all. They also have their Kingdom, and they know where it is: not in the heaven, not on the earth, not under it, but in their heart. Therefore, it is easy to understand

Lucina, who having her own Kingdom, appeared in an alien world, running away from the evil' [47, p. 121]. She has to experience some events in the Kingdom to help her grow, as before the journey Lucina was not mature emotionally;

– she has made friends with Marko, Sonia, Mortius (whose name in the real world is Hrytsko) and the tiger called Illia (Kolobok) in the parallel world. The author hasn't mentioned any Lucina's friends in the real world, only once she specifies that her classmates must have visited her, as they know that books are everywhere in Lucina's flat. That's why the author writes that 'Nothing noteworthy was happening in the Middle World; but when Lucina left it, she immediately found friends, and now she can't imagine how she can part with them, because she feels at home in the Kingdom' [47, p. 299];

– the author does not describe Lucina's appearance in much detail. It is only pointed out that she has got a fragile shoulder [47, p. 90]. She wears typical casual clothes for teenagers: 'Lucina put a clove of withered garlic in her jeans pocket' [47, p. 103]. Perhaps, the writer deliberately does not depict her appearance, and draws a readers' attention to her experiences, and her emotional state;

– she has got her own pet guardian – a cat called Felix. It can understand and speak a human language and is in the retinue of the king cat Syvolap, in the Kingdom, and it guards Lucina's flat in the real world. Being a cat lover, Halyna Pahutiak depicts cats in many of her literary works, ascribing good qualities to them, unlike their traditional depiction as representatives of evil forces. 'Cats are the best guardians in the world. They guess evil thoughts, they can't be flattered, and they will defend themselves to the end' [47, p. 42];

– there are three thresholds to the Kingdom: the abandoned castle of Shkrobek, the underground river and the 'in the hearts of people who are not from this world'. At first Lucina was not looking for the path to the Kingdom, and she wanted to find the way back home, to her flat in L'viv.

What values (virtues) can Lucina teach teenagers? She is a booklover unlike most teenagers of the XXI century, who are mostly technophiles and prefer surfing the Internet to reading books. I suppose that the author has created such a protagonist to encourage teenagers to read books and spend less time on the Internet, as 'This virtual reality can drive a person to

madness...’ [47, p. 114]. In our digital society, traditional paper books are partially substituted by ebooks. But despite this fact, the issue of content remains important, and books are source of knowledge and can still be friends and advisors to the younger generation. By book dwarfs’ words the writer expresses her opinion that ‘Real books don’t burn in fire or sink in water...’ [47, p. 374]. In Lucina’s family books are passed down from generation to generation and are more valuable than money. It is uncommon in nowadays money-centric society. The book can be of a didactic value to teenagers. ‘Golden Words of the Kingdom’, at the end of the novel, look like quotes and can be pieces of profound wisdom about life for children. Many teenagers like Lucina, who want to get away from their disadvantaged backgrounds, have a key to better life and should study to be prosperous.

8. Conclusions

In conclusion, Halyna Pahutiak’s Lucina could be identified as a superchild. In fantasy literature everything is possible: a loser could become a hero. So even neglected children could feel themselves unique and appreciated. Lucina finds her first love – Mark, and her reunion with her family (her father and brother) brings harmony and meaning to her life. Some literary critics might doubt that she is a superchild, because she does not have any supernatural or magical powers. In their opinion, her character is marked by infantility; she is a victim of circumstances and relies on fate. But Halyna Pahutiak shows us that bravery, honesty, determination are real virtues; they are more valuable than magical abilities and a real super power could appear when you have a noble mission. Throughout the novel, she tests her own stamina, nobility, loyalty, agility, determination, responsibility, and spiritual strength.

Fantasy literature is a source of ‘emotional realism’ [15, p. 101]. It allows teenagers to develop their personalities in various directions, to comprehend the depths of human nature, features of relationships, and to get acquainted with such complex concepts as a moral choice. Fantasy books could help children/teenagers to raise their self-esteem. I consider that it is the main message of all fantasy young adult novels as children and especially teenagers need to be accepted by society (parents, peers, etc.).

Fantasy superchildren are an example for young readers how to face fears and teach them not to give up. All the magical events around young adult

fantasy protagonists are just an entourage of magical objects that are only conductors for their inner (often hidden) strength. Real, not supernatural powers, are inside them and they should find them. So teenagers have to find their inner strength to overcome their hardships. Fantasy superchildren give hope for teenagers for the best, so if there isn't a society where you are accepted, you can find another one. They give motivation for children to find their hidden talents, abilities and can show ways to their self-knowledge. Fantasy superchildren teach teens that surviving young adulthood is possible. They also show teenagers that they should survive against all the odds and discover their courage and tenacity through hardship. Fantasy superchildren prepare young readers to withstand the challenges that await them. They show that you could be tough no matter the obstacles and find your purpose in life. They can help teen readers with the growth of their character and help them discover who they really are. No matter where the events happen (in the real world or the imaginary one), fantasy superchildren deal with pains of adolescence, and YA readers learn how to overcome the woes of adolescence. Readers can benefit from the lessons fantasy superchildren in coping with the life problems, as 'these characters act as guides to help shape and mentor the younger characters' [38, p. 24]. Teenage readers get deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them after the end of the superchild's adventures.

Halyna Pahutiak has written the continuation to the novel under the title 'Booksellers from the Kingdom' that could undergo a linguistic and literary analysis. Further research needs the comparison of her female images with other ones in the works of another Ukrainian fantasy writers. In addition, it would be good to compare the portrayal of female images in Slavic fantasy literature.

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