Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies
Shevchenko Institute of Literature
National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine
Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University
Atatürk Üniversitesi, Erzurum, Türkiye

5th International Online Conference

THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF FANTASY LITERATURE STUDIES

MUSIC, DANCE, AND THEATRE IN FANTASY WORLDS: THE ROLE OF ENTERTAINMENT IN WORLDBUILDING, AND MAGIC SYSTEMS

hosted online

16 January 2026 – 10.00-18.45 Kyiv Time / 9.00-17.45 Central European Time

17 January 2026 – 10.00-18.00 Kyiv Time / 9.00-17.00 Central European Time

"The dance of renewal, the dance that made the world, was always danced here at the edge of things, on the brink, on the foggy coast."

Ursula K. Le Guin, *Dancing at the Edge of the World*

УДК: 82-312.9: [78+793.3+792]

Theoretical Aspects of Fantasy Literature Studies: Music, Dance and Theatre in Fantasy Worlds: The Role of Entertainment in World-Building and Magic Systems. Conference programme and book of abstracts of the 5th International Online Conference of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies at the Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the NAS of Ukraine (Kyiv, January 16-17, 2026) / edited by: O. O. Boyko, O. Filonenko, E. O. Kanchura, T. M. Ryazantseva, and O. Tykhomyrova. – Kyiv, 2026. – 39 p.

Dear participants,

We are hosting the conference from a safe location, but some of us may have unstable internet connections or power supplies. If you experience any unexpected issues, please notify the Organisational Committee.

CFLS email:fantasystudies2015@gmail.com

WhatsApp: ±90 53 131 109 76

Kyiv Time GMT+2

Conference Zoom links:

Topic: CFLS Conference 2026. Day 1

Time: Jan 16, 2026, 10.00 AM Kyiv/9.00 AM CET

Join Zoom Meeting

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88528091926?pwd=DUZlj7zckHZ9H34b4EIjLYORJyZQzR.1

Meeting ID: 885 2809 1926

Passcode: 308733

Topic: CFLS Conference 2026. Day 2

Time: Jan 17, 2026, 10:00 AM Kyiv/9.00 AM CET

Join Zoom Meeting

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85086728644?pwd=3v0TB8mqcy8FOfp5X0HVokwE8IPLJe.1

Meeting ID: 850 8672 8644

Passcode: 832338

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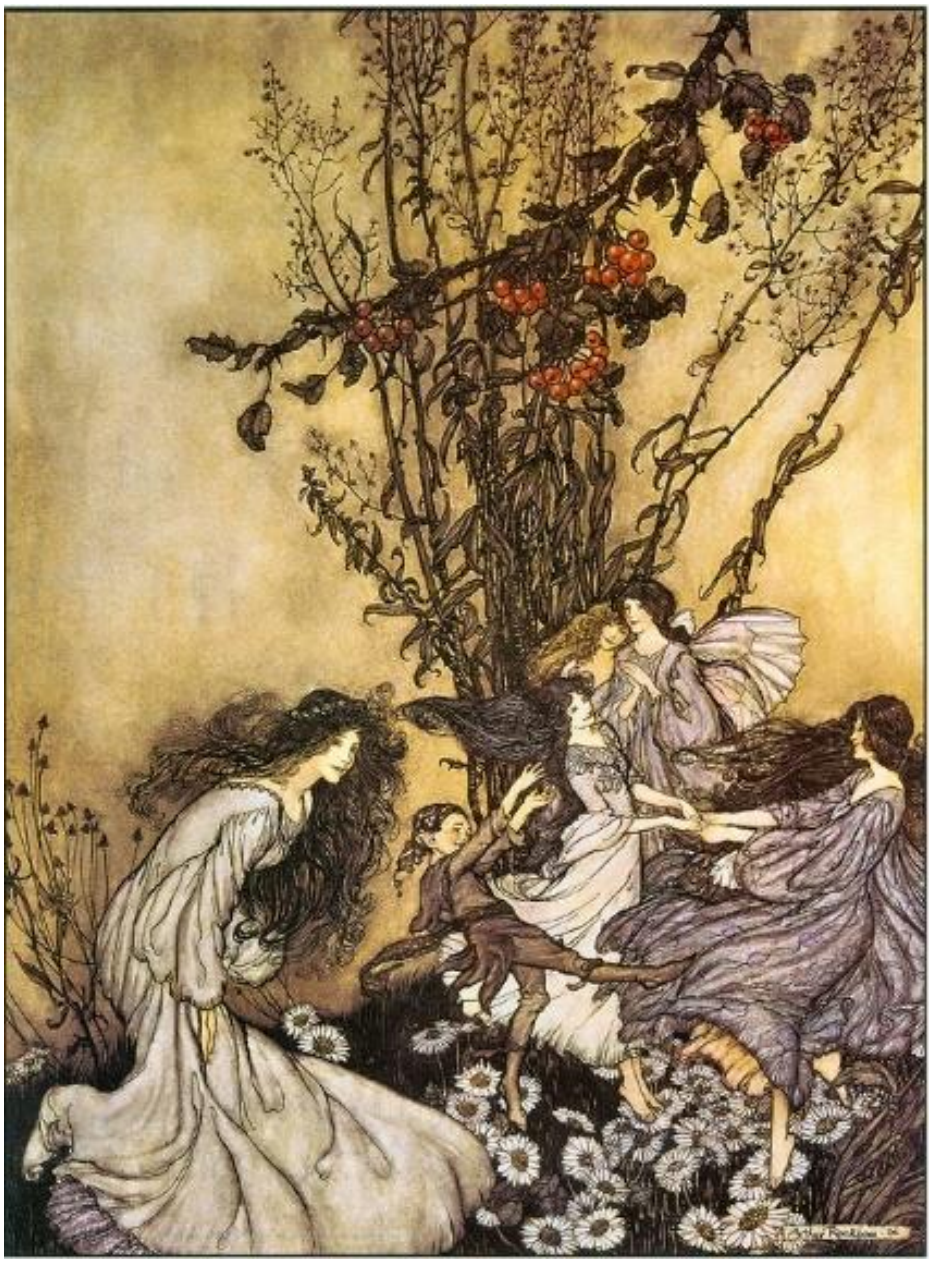

Arthur Rackham, "Dancing With The Fairies" (1906)

January 16, Friday

DAY 1. MUSIC AND DANCE IN FANTASY WORLDS

10.00-10.20 Kyiv Time / 9.00-9.20 Central European Time

Chair: Yevheniia Kanchura

Address by **Tetiana Riazantseva,** Head of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies (Shevchenko Institute of Literature)

"Miracles Performed Here. A Brief History of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies at Shevchenko Institute of Literature (2015-2025)"

Discussion **- 10.20-10.30 Kyiv Time / 9.20-9.30 Central European Time**

10.30-11.10 Kyiv Time / 9.30-10.10 Central European Time

Chair: Alexandra (Oleksandra) Filonenko

Keynote Talk

Hamish Williams (University of Groningen, Netherlands)

"Music, Metaphor, and Magical Mechanics: A Creative Perspective"

Discussion **- 11.10-11.25 Kyiv Time / 10.10-10.25 Central European Time**

11.30-12.45 Kyiv Time / 10.30-11.45 Central European Time

PANEL 1. *Listen to the Music: This Is How the World Began*

Chair: Yevheniia Kanchura

1. Alexandra (Oleksandra) Filonenko, Member of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies (Independent scholar, Ukraine)

"As Above, So Below: As Music, So Magic (in Tolkien's Legendarium)"

2. Paris Antoine (Université Catholique de Louvain, France)

"To Music of a Pipe Unseen: Music as Metaliterary Device in *The Lord of the Rings*"

3. Sarah Courtis (Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia)

"Lyrical Lauding in *The Lord of the Rings*: Adapting Tolkien's Songs for Film and Stage"

***Discussion* - 12.45-13.00 Kyiv Time / 11.45-12.00 Central European Time**

13.00-13.15-Kyiv Time / 12.00-12.15 Central European Time

Coffee break

13.15-14.55 Kyiv Time / 12.15-13.55 Central European Time

PANEL 1. *Continuation*

4. Andrii Gurduz (Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University, Ukraine)

"The Corporeality of Music and the Music of Corporeality in the Novel Cycle *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah Janet Maas"

5. Francesco Tomasello (Independent scholar, Messina, Italy)

"'Music is One Thing Dragons Can't Do Better than Us': The Human and Non-Human Experience of Music in Rachel Hartman's *Seraphina*"

6. Marta Krapyvnytska (Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Ukraine)

"Music as Mediation: The Figure of the Musician in East Slavic Fantasy"

7. Nataliia Kondratenko (Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University, Ukraine)

"Modern Ukrainian Fantasy as a Multimodal Discourse: Song and Music in the Literary Text"

***Discussion* -14.55-15.15 Kyiv Time / 13.55-14.15 Central European Time**

15.15-15.45 Kyiv Time / 14.15-14.45 Central European Time

LUNCH BREAK

15.45-16.25 Kyiv Time / 14.45-15.25 Central European Time

Chair: Tetiana Riazantseva

Keynote Talk

Nataliya Krynytska (Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University)

"The Ontopoetic Model of the World as Rhythm in Modern Speculative Fiction"

***Discussion* - 16.25-16.40 Kyiv Time / 15.25-15.40 Central European Time**

16.40-18.20 Kyiv Time / 15.40-17.20 Central European Time

PANEL 2. *Follow the Rhythm: The Art and Magic of Dance*

Chair: Alexandra (Oleksandra) Filonenko

1. Janin Pisarek (Independent scholar, Jena, Germany)

"Dance with the Otherworldly: Folkloric Choreographies between Humans and the Supernatural in European Traditions"

2. Olena Tykhomyrova, Member of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies (Kyiv National Linguistic University, Ukraine)

"Dance and Social Structures in Fantasy Fiction"

4. Giovanni Carmine Costabile (Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Germany)

"Lúthien's Dance as Love Embodied"

5. Kseniia Vielchieva (Alfred Nobel University, Dnipro, Ukraine)

"Dance and Battle as Self-Discovery in the Young Adult Fantasy Novel *War Hour* by Lauren Loscig"

***Discussion* - 18.20-18.40 Kyiv Time / 17.20-17.40 Central European Time**

18.45 Kyiv Time / 17.45 Central European Time

END OF DAY 1

January 17, Saturday

DAY 2. THEATRE AND CIRCUS IN FANTASY WORLDS

10.00-11.40 Kyiv Time / 9.00-10.40 Central European Time

PANEL 1. *Enjoy the Illusion. The Drama of Performance*

Chair: Diana Melnyk

1. Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik (University of Lodz, Poland)

"'Justled from Your Senses:' Theatrical Illusion and the Wonder of Life in *The Tempest*"

2. Maria Iliuchenko (Kyiv National Linguistic University, Ukraine)

"Variations of the Temporal Performance of *A Christmas Carol* as a Refrain in the American Christmas Myth in Literature"

3. Luisa Paglieri (Independent scholar, Turin, Italy)

"Michael Ende: Ophelia and Her Theatre"

4. Paolo Pizzimento (University of Messina, Italy)

"'Beyond Secondary Belief': Faërian Drama as a Form of Elvish Performing Art"

***Discussion* - 11.40-12.00 Kyiv Time / 10.40-11.00 Central European Time**

12.00-12.15 Kyiv Time / 11.00-11.15 Central European Time

Coffee break

12.15-13.30 Kyiv Time / 11.15-12.30 Central European Time

PANEL 1. *Continuation*

4. Olena Dunieva (Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University, Ukraine / Ivan Franko National University, Lviv, Ukraine)

"Pratchett's Death: The Postironic and Sincere Theatrical Performance of Mortality (A Case Study of Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* Series)"

5. Jane Suzanne Carroll (Trinity College Dublin, Ireland)

"'Upon My Oath, I am not a Lying Man': Everyday Performance in Terry Pratchett's *Discworld*"

6. Yevheniia Kanchura, Deputy Head of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies (Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University, Ukraine)

"Plays and Players in *Discworld*: Magic without Magic"

***Discussion* - 13.30-13.45 Kyiv Time / 12.30-12.45 Central European Time**

13.45-14.15 Kyiv Time / 12.45-13.15 Central European Time

LUNCH BREAK

14.15-15.30 Kyiv Time / 13.15-14.30 Central European Time

PANEL 2. *Play the Part. From Theatre to Circus (and Back Again)*

Chair: Olena Tykhomyrova

1. Maria Arvaniti (University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK)

"Trouping Fairies: Theatre as a Means to Faerie in Contemporary Fantasy"

2. Olha Boiko, Member of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies (Atatürk University, Erzurum, Turkey)

"Game as the Foundation of Worldview in Max Frei's Fantasy Discourse"

3. Ana Carolina Pais (Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil)

"*Game of Thrones*: How the Popular Comic Culture is a Carnivalesque Performance"

***Discussion* - 15.30-15.45 Kyiv Time / 14.30-14.45 Central European Time**

15.45-16.00 Kyiv Time / 14.45-15.00 Central European Time

Coffee break

16.00-17.15 Kyiv Time / 15.00-16.15 Central European Time

PANEL 2. *Continuation*

4. Yuliia Kurylova (Zaporizhzhia National University, Ukraine)

"Circus on the Edge of the World: Liminality, Performance, and Magical Worldbuilding in Natalia Dovgopol's *The Travelling Circus of the Silvery Lady*"

5. Eirini Dimitra Bourontzi (Doctoral School of "Literary and Cultural Studies" at the University of Bucharest, Romania)

"Spectacle and Sorcery: The Role of Jousts, Fools, and Performers in Constructing Camelot's Magical World in the BBC's *Merlin*"

6. Francesco Bernuzzi (Independent scholar, Bergamo, Italy)

"Art as Beauty, Beauty as Magic: The Role of Art in Fantasy Short Stories by Lord Dunsany"

Discussion **- 17.15-17.30 Kyiv Time / 16.15-16.30 Central European Time**

17.30-18.00 Kyiv Time / 16.30-17.00 Central European Time

Closing Discussion

Chair: Yevheniia Kanchura

18.00 Kyiv Time / 17.00 Central European Time

END OF DAY 2

V International conference

THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF FANTASY LITERATURE STUDIES

MUSIC, DANCE, AND THEATRE IN FANTASY WORLDS: THE ROLE OF ENTERTAINMENT IN WORLDBUILDING AND MAGIC SYSTEMS

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Edward Robert Hughes, "Twilight Fantasies" (1911)

KEYNOTE LECTURES

{Alphabetically arranged by surname of keynote speakers}

The Ontopoetic Model of the World as Rhythm in Modern Speculative Fiction

Nataliya Krynytska

Member of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies

Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University

The paper examines the ontopoetic model of the world as rhythm in modern speculative fiction, focusing specifically on the interplay between music, dance, and cosmology. Rhythm is understood as a fundamental structuring principle that organises perception, magic, and creation within fictional worlds. The study highlights works in which musical and dance motifs are central, including Ursula K. Le Guin (*The Farthest Shore*, *Always Coming Home*), Samuel R. Delany (*Einstein Intersection*), Dan Simmons (*Hyperion*, *The Fall of Hyperion*), etc. In these texts, rhythm operates as an ontopoetic force, shaping both the microcosm of the characters and the macrocosm of the universe. Music and dance mediate memory, trauma, magical practice, and existential experience, revealing underlying structures of being and narrative. The analysis demonstrates that in speculative fiction, music and dance are not merely aesthetic elements, but essential ontopoetic mechanisms for world-building, connecting characters, communities, and cosmic order.

Biographic Note

Nataliya Krynytska, PhD, is the Head of the Department of Romance-Germanic Philology at Poltava V. G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University, Ukraine. Her PhD dissertation was focused on the ontological poetic elements in Ursula Le Guin's

SF and fantasy (2008). Her research interests cover English-language literature, science fiction, alternate history, dystopia, and fantasy.

Miracles Performed Here. A Brief History of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies at Shevchenko Institute of Literature (2015-2025)

Tetiana Riazantseva

Head of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies

Shevchenko Institute of Literature

The presentation briefly outlines the history of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies, which was founded at the Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in 2015. It introduces the CFLS's leading members and highlights the Centre's main achievements during the period 2015–2025. The focus is on the evolution of academic events organised by the Centre, its cooperation with other departments of the Shevchenko Institute of Literature, and its monitoring, publishing, bibliographic, and popular science projects.

Biographic Note

Tetiana Riazantseva received her Candidate of Philological Sciences degree (comparable to a PhD, 1995) and her Doctor of Philological Sciences degree (equivalent to a Habilitation, 2015) from Shevchenko Institute of Literature, NAS of Ukraine, where she currently holds the position of Leading Research Associate in the Department of Comparative Literature and serves as Head of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies. Her research interests include metaphysical poetry, photopoetry, and fantasy literature. She is the author of the following monographs (in Ukrainian): *To Paint a Thought: Conceptism as a Trend in Baroque Metaphysical Poetry* (Kyiv, 1999); *Prisoner of Eternity: The Poetry of Oleksa Stefanovych* (Kyiv, 2007); *Elements in the System: European Metaphysical Poetry from the 17th to the Early 20th Century — Themes, Poetics, Style* (Kyiv, 2014). Her publications on fantasy literature include articles that focus in particular on visualisation techniques, especially ekphrasis.

Music, Metaphor, and Magical Mechanics: A Creative Perspective

Hamish Williams

University of Groningen, Netherlands

The philosophy of Nietzsche is difficult to encapsulate in simple, accessible principles or theses. Contradictions and anti-theses abound in his writing. One such contradiction which he introduced was a tension between the Dionysiac and the Apolline drives. It is difficult to limit these drives to one particular domain such as aesthetics (what is art, beauty), ethics (what is right), or ontology (what is) because, in a sense, the Apolline-Dionysiac tension pervades all of these domains. In art, the Apolline artist strives for beauty, order, coherence, and unity, whilst the Dionysiac artist embraces disharmony or polyphony, chaos, the dark sublime. Unsurprisingly he also used music metaphors from the ancient world to describe what he meant by the Apolline – the calm melodic lyre-player – versus the Dionysiac – the rumbling, polyphonic, autopophagous madness of drums. Nietzsche of course saw these drives as transcending art, or, perhaps, art pervaded other domains, such that he could cast ethical aspersions on someone like Socrates (and modern science in general) for veering too far into the domain of the rational excessively Apolline side – taking our own longings for order by creating ordered scientific laws and imposing them onto a universe which was largely chaotic. This is an ethical affront because we are thereby behaving falsely towards our imperative as human beings to live in an appropriately affirmative way ('ethical' from Nietzsche's perspective). His discussion of the Apolline-Dionysiac tension transcends art and ethics, because it also describes our state of existence in the world, beings trying to create order amidst a substratal truth, which is pure chaos and endlessly competing interpretations.

It is the importance of this division between chaos and order, Dionysiac and Apolline, which I shall discuss in my own creative writing as well as works of fantasy fiction which have influenced me, including Tolkien, Lewis, and Rowling. It is, of course, somewhat unusual for an academic to discuss his or her own frivolous, ancillary creative escapades; nevertheless, I hope it casts a fresh perspective on how these kinds of forces can play a generative role in creative fantasy writing. My main interest is in how certain metaphors can be used to reflect and comment on the Apolline-Dionysiac tensions in creative writing. These metaphors include music, including different types of music and its interplay with other metaphorical vehicles, magical mechanics in fantasy (as the 'physics' of fantasy worlds), and perhaps other metaphorical domains such as the natural world and the visual world, more abstractly. My ultimate thesis is that all, or most, fantasy writing is concerned with the Apolline-Dionysiac tension and that an important way to understand the ethical and ontological views of a writer is to explore how she or he metaphorically represents this tension through various metaphorical spheres.

Biographic Note

Hamish Williams (PhD in Classics, University of Cape Town) is a lecturer at the University of Groningen, where he teaches Latin, Greek, literary studies, and creative writing. He has previously held a Junior Fellowship at the Polish Institute of Advanced Studies in Warsaw and Humboldt Postdoctoral Fellowships at the Institute of English and American Studies, Friedrich Schiller University Jena. His main research area is Classical Reception Studies, the reinventions of Greco-Roman thought in modern literature and popular genres, but he is broadly interested in modern literary studies, covering topics such as utopianism, decline, hospitality, and the sublime. His current project focuses on modern receptions of Minoan Crete, with the monograph *Thinking through the Minoan in English Fiction and Non-Fiction* (Liverpool University Press) currently in progress. His other book publications include *Tolkien and the Classical World* (ed.) (2021, Walking Tree Publishers); *The Ancient Sea: The Utopian and Catastrophic in Classical Narratives and their Reception* (ed.) (2022, Liverpool University Press); and *J.R.R. Tolkien's Utopianism and the Classics* (2023, Bloomsbury). Alongside his academic works, he also publishes creative fiction in the fantasy genre, including *The Southern Tide* (2021) and *Under the Green Cloud* (2025).

PAPERS

{Alphabetically arranged by surname of speakers}

Trouping Fairies: Theatre as a Means to Faerie in Contemporary Fantasy

Maria Arvaniti

University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK

Even before theatrical audiences were asked to clap to bring the fairy Tinkerbell back to life in JM Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1904), there has been a strong link between fairies and the theatrical stage. Indeed, Shakespeare's own vision of Faerie and its denizens has so captured the imagination that even 400 years later many a contemporary fantasy work of Faerie references Queen Titania, King Auberon, and their courts. Even authors who eschew specific references to Shakespeare often maintain Faerie's link to the world of theatre, including performances in their novels and drawing attention to the similarities between Faerie and the theatrical stage.

My research examines that very relationship between theatre and Faerie, focusing on the representation of theatre in what I call 'Fairy Fantasies', fantasy novels that feature Faerie and are primarily concerned with its relationship and interactions with the human world. For this paper, I will analyse Diana Wynne Jones' *Fire and Hemlock* (1985) and Pamela Dean's *Tam Lin* (1991), presenting some key examples of the way that each author uses theatre and showcasing how theatre is used as a means through which to explain our own world's relationship with Faerie.

Biographic Note

Marita Arvaniti is a PhD candidate and member of the Centre for Fantasy and the Fantastic at the University of Glasgow. Her research investigates the representations of theatre in contemporary Fairy Fantasy. She co-created the amateur theatre group Puck's Players, directing fantasy performances of Terry Pratchett's *The Truth* (2022) and Nicholas Stuart Gray's *The Seventh Swan* (2023). She can often be found contorted around her cat Sir Vinegar, with a book.

Art as Beauty, Beauty as Magic: The Role of Art in Fantasy Short Stories by Lord Dunsany

Francesco Bernuzzi

Independent scholar, Bergamo, Italy

An examination of how artistic performances and products, including music, dance, poetry and artisanal craft, are represented in selected fantasy short stories by Lord Dunsany from the first decades of the 20th century. The study also takes into account William F. Touponce's perspective on Dunsany, which characterises Dunsany's fantasy production as a pursuit of beauty, both natural and artistic, conceived as a reaction against a materialistic society and the alienating experience of modernity. Aspects considered include the power of art, especially poetry, music and dance, to evoke powerful feelings and operate on time and memory; the role of craftsmanship, exemplified in sculpting, jewellery-making, and city-building, in the relationship between humanity and nature and between humanity and its work.

Biographic Note

Francesco Bernuzzi graduated from the University of Bergamo, Italy, in 2015 with a Master's Degree in Foreign Languages and Literatures. His thesis focused on Lord Dunsany and fantasy literature, including a translation of one of Dunsany's stories into Italian. He currently teaches English language and literature at a high school. He has published papers and articles on Lord Dunsany and some short fiction.

Game as the Foundation of Worldview in Max Frei's Fantasy Discourse

Olha Boiko

Member of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies

Atatürk University, Erzurum, Turkey

The study analyses the role of the game in Max Frei's fantasy discourse as the basis for the characters' worldview and interaction with the world. The study is based on a corpus of Max Frei's works consisting of 66 texts and 4,716,292 tokens, which has been created on the website korpusomat.eu. A query for the lexeme 'game' returns 617 tokens, while a query for the lexeme 'play' returns 632 tokens. The analysed

contexts allow us to conclude that characters can play various games of chance with each other, such as backgammon, zlik and zlak and others; both real and fictional games contain worldview positions at their core. In addition, the stakes in games can be not only pure interest or material values, but also spiritual and abstract values, such as the weather. The game can take place in reality, in a dream, or in an alternative version of reality. Various games with the surrounding reality are based on the belief that this reality has a highly developed consciousness and is capable of changing for the better in response to the game, making a kind of counter-move. In Max Frei's discourse, the game appears as a benevolent interaction between the characters involved — both anthropomorphic and other developed entities, such as spirits, cities, or reality itself.

Biographic Note

Olha Boiko holds a PhD in Philology from the Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University. She is a Lecturer at the Faculty of Literature, Atatürk University (Erzurum, Türkiye) and an active member of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies. She is the author of 42 publications, including: *Imaginary Languages in Fantasy as a Text-Forming Element in Odesa Linguistic School: Research Trajectories: Collective Monograph* (Odesa: PolyPrint, 2021); "The concept of 'Memory' in Kshysia Fedorowich's novel *All the Gold of your Dreams"* in *International Humanitarian University Herald. Philology*, 2025, № 72, pp. 18-21. She has also co-authored the following articles: Olha Boiko, Natalia Kondratenko (2025). "The Conceptual Field of RUSSIAN in Ukrainian Literary Fantasy Discourse During the Full-Scale Invasion" in *Linguistic & Translation Dimensions*, pp. 8-22. Her research fields include fantasy studies, conceptual studies, linguistics of literary texts, the construction of imaginary languages in fiction, and linguistic aspects of digital text processors.

Spectacle and Sorcery: The Role of Jousts, Fools, and Performers in Constructing Camelot's Magical World in the BBC's *Merlin*

Eirini Dimitra Bourontzi

University of Bucharest, Romania

This presentation examines how entertainment elements such as music, dance, theatre, tournaments, the circus, and rituals function as central mechanisms for

worldbuilding and the representation of sorcery in the BBC series *Merlin*. I will analyse episodes such as *The Wicked Day* (S4E3), in which a circus group uses deadly magic, and *The Once and Future Queen* (S2E3), where jousts and tournaments act as ritualised performances showcasing how spectacles blend danger with social hierarchy. Furthermore, I will explore magical artefacts and prophesies as shown in episodes such as *The Lady of the Lake* (S3E6), which blend magical ceremonies with theatricality, creating a liminal space where magic and performance collide, all while being enhanced by the power of the mystical soundtrack and its choreographed sequences. Finally, I will apply an interdisciplinary approach by combining fantasy studies, performance theory, and literary analysis to prove that entertainment in the television series *Merlin* is not merely a way to expand the minutes of each episode, but a narrative catalyst which advances the development of the characters, showcases moral tensions, and provides examples of magic. Therefore, spectacle and sorcery create an immersive and multifaceted fantasy-neo-medieval universe.

Biographic Note

Eirini Dimitra Bourontzi is a Doctorate Candidate at the Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Bucharest. She received her bachelor's degree from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in the Department of English Language and Literature (2015-2017). She holds a Master's degree in British Cultural Studies (2019-2021) from the University of Bucharest. Her dissertation is focused on Arthurian Legends and their cinematic and TV adaptations and how they represent the position and agency of the women in them.

"Upon My Oath, I am not a Lying Man": Everyday Performance in Terry Pratchett's Discworld"

Jane Suzanne Carroll

Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

A core theme of Pratchett's Discworld books is the tension between truth and lies. While the reader is usually encouraged to take the side of the truth-tellers, some of supposedly 'good' characters are liars who assume false identities and intentionally deceive the people around them, sometimes for years at a time. Their false identities often depend on clothing and material 'props' that make the performance more

convincing and connect these quotidian performances to other kinds of performance like acting and opera. In contrast to what Leamons calls the "rigid ethical rhetorics" of many of Pratchett's core characters, these performers prompt new questions about the relationship between truth and stories. This paper examines the catalogue-bought 'boffo' of Eumenides Treason in *Wintersmith* (2006), the civic deceptions of reformed con-artist Moist Von Lipwig in *Going Postal* (2004) and the gendered performances of Polly/Oliver and Sergeant Jackrum in *Monstrous Regiment* (2003). I argue that these everyday performances can reveal as well as hide, showing readers how truth and lies are connected in very interesting ways in the Discworld.

Biographic Note

Jane Suzanne Carroll is an Associate Professor in Children's Literature in the School of English where she teaches modules on children's literature, book history, and fantasy. Her most recent book is *British Children's Literature and Material Culture: Commodities and Consumption, 1850-1914* (Bloomsbury, 2021).

Lúthien's Dance as Love Embodied

Giovanni Carmine Costabile

Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Germany

In *The Silmarillion*, Lúthien only dances in a hemlock clearing to inadvertently enchant Bergen's heart. However, in the earliest version of the story, *The Tale of Tinúviel*, she also dances before Morgoth, enchanting him into sleep in order to procure the Silmaril unnoticed, something which in *The Silmarillion* Lúthien accomplishes by singing alone. Clare Moore (2022) argues that the shift in emphasis from dance to song in subsequent versions signifies a strategy for empowering women by recognising their powers beyond the bodily sphere. Instead, I argue that the accent on dance in the earlier versions is a means of empowering women in their embodied nature, rather than some volatile abstraction. Finally, the song before Mandos did not exist in its current form before the 1930s *Quentas*. Thus, it could have been a dance performance.

Biographic Note

Giovanni Carmine Costabile was born in Italy in 1987. He holds an MPhil in

Philosophy from UNICAL. Currently, he is a PhD student in Jena. He published the Peter Lang monograph *The Mirror of Desire Unbidden: Retrieving the Imago Dei in Tolkien and Late Medieval English Literature* in 2024, as well as a commentary on a Tolkien essay for the 2024 edition of *Legendaria Ediciones*. He has also published notes, conference papers, reviews and articles in *Tolkien Studies*, *Mythlore,* and the *Journal of Tolkien Research*, among others. He has translated several volumes.

Lyrical Lauding in *The Lord of the Rings*: Adapting Tolkien's Songs for Film and Stage

Sarah Courtis

Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia

Tolkien's seminal work, *The Lord of the Rings*, includes up to 84 songs and verses (Eilmann and Turner 2013, xi) with a range of purposes including: providing historical textual ruins; cultural background; character studies; expressions of grief; and plot specific information. These songs have since been reworked for use in recent adaptations of Tolkien's Middle-earth, including *The Rings of Power*, *The War of the Rohirrim*, and *The Lord of the Rings: A Musical Tale*. In this paper I will examine the way Tolkien's original verses have been adapted to serve the worldbuilding of each new work, proving depth and acting as a bridge between the old and the new. I will provide a close reading of selected songs, including the 'semantic co-text' (Zimmerman 2013) as well as creative and performative choices being made by the artists of each production. I will consider what these songs add to their work and why these songs may have been chosen over others.

Biographic Note

Sarah Courtis, PhD, FHEA, (Murdoch University, Western Australia) is a Lecturer of University Preparation Pathways, and teaches at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA). Her research focus is the lyric in musical theatre and most recently she has been investigating the intersection of lyrics with race theory, disability studies, and Queer theory as well as Fantasy studies. Dr Courtis works professionally as a lyricist and actor, including with the comedy award-winning company Bogan Shakespeare.

Pratchett's Death: The Postironic and Sincere Theatrical Performance of Mortality (A Case Study of Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* Series)

Olena Dunieva

Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University, Ukraine / Ivan Franko National University, Lviv, Ukraine

This study examines the character Death through a close reading of Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels, focusing on *Reaper Man*, *Hogfather*, and *Soul Music* as primary case studies. Pratchett's anthropomorphic Death emerges as a distinctly postironic figure, the one who embodies postirony and self-awareness, profound sincerity and moral depth through his theatrical self-presentation (the black robe, the scythe and the capitalised speech). In *Reaper Man*, he attempts to live as Bill Door, turning everyday life into a kind of moral performance. In *Hogfather*, his role as the Discworld's Santa becomes a symbolic act that preserves human belief. In *Soul Music*, Death becomes both the audience and the actor, a figure who appreciates the beauty of performance but remains aware of its limitations. Throughout the *Discworld* series, Pratchett demonstrates that performance plays a crucial role in shaping the human understanding of life and death. Death is not merely an Ending but an actor, the one whose performance gives meaning to mortality.

Biographic Note

Olena Dunieva's alma mater is the Ivan Franko Zhytomyr State University, Institute of Foreign Philology (major: English Language and Literature, Master's Degree, 2014). She is the author of more than 10 academic and teaching-methodological publications. She is a senior lecturer at Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University and a postgraduate student of the Department of World Literature at the Ivan Franko National University in Lviv, Ukraine. Her research interests include linguistics, stylistics, postirony, and metamodernism.

As Above, So Below: As Music, So Magic (in Tolkien's Legendarium)

Alexandra (Oleksandra) Filonenko

Member of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies

Independent scholar, Ukraine

The famous esoteric maxim, 'As Above, So Below', alludes to the correspondences between the macrocosm (the universe) and the microcosm (a human being). Alternatively, it may be interpreted as the influence of celestial processes (the movements of stars and planets) upon earthly life. In my paper, based on the analysis of *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*, I aim to establish an analogous correspondence between the heavenly creational music of *Ainulindale* and the sub-creational and magical employment of music in the created cosmos of Arda. Drawing upon Tolkien's conception of the magical as outlined in his essay *On Fairy-stories* and in the draft of the letter to Naomi Mitchison (Letter 155) on the dichotomy of 'magia' and 'goeteia', I shall seek to elucidate the following points:

- If music performed in supracosmic reality leads to creation, according to the abovementioned principle of correspondences, it will inevitably be a sub-creative power inside the cosmos and become magic of a peculiar, artistic type.

- As music was employed for harmony and discord in the supracosmic reality, it becomes a source of both constructive (Yavanna, Melian, Luthien) and destructive (Sauron) magic in the incarnate world.

- Music/singing as sub-creative power or benevolent magic is predominantly associated with female characters (Yavanna, Melian, Luthien, Goldberry) who can effect changes in the material world with the help of it.

- The male characters are associated with the malevolent musical magic: Melkor/Morgoth as originator of discord in the supracosmic reality and Sauron within the cosmos.

- With the progress of time, in the Third Age, the music appears to undergo a shift in its magical potency, metamorphosing into the forms we recognise today: a medium of entertainment and joviality, a repository of lore, and a form of laments and hymns (ritual function), with the exclusion of Tom Bombadil and Goldberry, who can bring real changes in the material condition with their songs, and the vestiges of malevolent music-magic in the melodious voice of Saruman.

Biographic Note

Alexandra (Oleksandra) Filonenko, PhD, is an independent scholar from Ukraine and a founding member of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies. She graduated

from the National Academy of Visual Arts and Architecture (Kyiv) in 2000 and worked as an art curator until entering Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University (Mykolaiv, Ukraine) in 2007. She was awarded a PhD in Theory of Literature from the same university in 2017 and held the position of Senior Lecturer in the English Philology Department until the war in Ukraine began. From August to December 2022, she was a research fellow at Saarland University, Germany. From January 2023 to July 2025, she was a visiting scholar at Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Germany. Her main research interests lie in the correlation between Western magical and esoteric traditions and fiction. She has widely published in Ukrainian and English on the subjects of the fantastic and the magical, with a particular focus on the works of J.R.R. Tolkien and his fellow Inklings. In 2020, she published her first book of speculative fiction short stories, *Arabesques and Dreams*.

The Corporeality of Music and the Music of Corporeality in the Novel Cycle *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sarah Janet Maas

Andrii Gurduz

Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University, Ukraine

In fantasy works, the musical accompaniment of events, primarily associated with manifestations of magic, has become a conventional element, frequently serving to emphasise socio-philosophical accents. Music in the metagenre performs an extensive array of functions, ranging from the descriptive to the world- and structure-forming. Furthermore, the analysis of a text construction in accordance with musical genre principles, or the installation types of descriptions of melodies, is of interest in the sense of re-coding artistic languages. The approach to musical arrangement of the plot in the novel cycle *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by S. J. Maas, which has received little academic attention, deserves to be studied as an example of modern fantasy. Such an analysis, set against the background of the metagenre, allows tracing the degree of S. J. Maas's organicity to the tradition of representing fantasy phenomena through the prism of music and reveals the expansion of the arsenal of music-related types of installations in the cycle, particularly in the aspect of tactility.

Despite the descriptive nature of the music sound and the corresponding associative combinations in the cycle, the musical component functions in different registers of artistic organisation. The music in the cycle can be identified as a marker of the

environment, its division into spaces or a signifier of ritual and festive events; a medium for the transformation of the ideal and the material in the perception of the characters; a means of communication; a force and weapon; the characters' perception of phenomena and manifestations of the environment as music. In *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, the system of tactile characteristics is frequently manifested through musical accents. This reveals the materiality of music and the music of corporeality in the cycle.

Biographic Note

Andrii Gurduz, born in 1979, successfully defended his PhD thesis in comparative literary studies at the Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in 2007. Since 2009, he has held the position of Associate Professor. From 2020 to 2022, he pursued doctoral studies at Berdyansk State Pedagogical University, focusing his research on the subject of "Ukrainian fantasy novel 2000-2020 in Slavic, English and American contexts: features of the national myth-making code". He is the author of over 210 academic works, including ten monographs (two of which are solo), and has participated in over 130 national and international conferences.

Variations of the Temporal Performance of *A Christmas Carol* as a Refrain in the American Christmas Myth in Literature

Maria Iliuchenko

Kyiv National Linguistic University, Ukraine

This paper examines the chronofantastic legacy of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* in American literature, focusing on its performative dimensions as a recurring motif in the American Christmas myth. Rather than analysing Dickens's original text, the study explores modern reimaginings and adaptations, including works such as *The Greatest Gift* and other short stories or narratives that incorporate temporal anomalies, loops, or time-travel elements. By framing these variations as temporal performances, the paper highlights how authors use the repetition, manipulation, and structuring of time to enact redemption, transformation, and communal renewal—a literary ritual echoing the festive and moral dimensions of the original narrative. Drawing on theories of chronofiction and narrative performativity, the analysis considers the interplay between fantastical temporality, moral allegory, and

cultural myth-making. The paper argues that these modern variations not only extend Dickens's influence but also function as refrains that reinforce and reshape the American Christmas myth, creating a space where literary, moral, and temporal structures converge. This study contributes to fantasy literature studies by situating temporal performance as a central strategy in the adaptation of mythic narratives within contemporary cultural and literary contexts.

Biographic Note

Maria Iliuchenko is a PhD student at Kyiv National Linguistic University. Her research focuses on the evolution of temporal concepts in American fiction, with particular attention to nonlinear structures and phenomenological approaches to time.

Plays and Players in *Discworld*: Magic without Magic

Yevheniia Kanchura

Deputy Head of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies

Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University, Ukraine

The metaphoric remark made by Duke Senior in *As You Like It* (II.3) about the "wide and universal theatre" and the famous response of Jaques, "All the world's a stage" resonate strongly in Discworld, a secondary world where "all the metaphors are potentially real" (Pratchett, *Imaginary Worlds, Real Stories*). This metaphorical permeability evokes a world populated by players on both the theatrical stage and the game board. Shaped by stories through narrative causality, with 'inspirations' acting as 'fundamental particles,' and where 'fantasy' constitutes the vital human force, this world naturally becomes a space of play and playfulness.

My paper examines the various forms of entertainment in Discworld, such as theatre, performance troupes, opera, and games, paying particular attention to the roles and identities of those involved. These range from those who entertain an audience (a strolling performers' band, actors of the Dysk, the Opera singers), to those who entertain themselves (all those gods great and small, casual gamblers, and figures attempting to enact the role of the age-long enemy). I analyse the contrast between structured games governed by strict rules (thus, aligned with coercive narrative) and the free play of inspiration, through which characters can gain their identity.

Although the rules can be broken and playfulness can hurt, the 'pageants' create magic without magicians, only with a "rich and wonderful voice" or personal choice. Yet this 'magic without magic' changes the world. Through this lens, the paper studies the players of Discworld as the embodiment of the worldbuilding force of play and game structures within Terry Pratchett's poetics.

Biographic Note

Yevheniia Kanchura is the Head of the Theoretical and Applied Linguistics Department at Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University (Zhytomyr, Ukraine), teaching Literature and Translation Studies. She is also the Deputy Head of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies at the Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. Her research interests include post-modern fantasy, comparative literature, translation studies, as well as theoretical aspects of fantasy literature studies (methodology, terminology, and secondary worlds' models). In 2023, she was awarded a three-month Visiting Research Fellowship at the Trinity Long Room Hub Arts and Humanities Research Institute (Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland) as an integral part of a long collaboration in Terry Pratchett studies (The Pratchett Project, TCD).

Modern Ukrainian Fantasy as a Multimodal Discourse: Song and Music in the Literary Text

Nataliia Kondratenko

Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University, Ukraine

The artistic discourse of Ukrainian fantasy demonstrates the incorporation of elements from various sign systems into the authorial world. Contemporary Ukrainian music and songs have become one of the elements of synesthesia within this artistic discourse. Song lyrics function as epigraphs to literary works and to individual chapters. The precedent nature of quotations from song texts actualises the connection between the text and music. In this way, the author creates for the reader a polycode reality filled with musical sound. Song lyrics become a component of the internal textual structure and are associated with a particular performer, author, or musical group. Thus, the literary text interacts with mass culture and exists within an informational space shared with the reader. The author's choice of songs

and performers for incorporation into the created world depends on the concept of the artistic world. Modern Ukrainian fantasy demonstrates increased attention to song discourse. Characters within fantasy works listen to songs, sing, and exchange impressions of what they have heard. The correlation between music, song, and the fantasy world adds multidimensionality and new meaning to the text.

Biographic Note

Natalia Kondratenko is a Doctor of Philology. She is currently Professor and Head of the Department of Applied Linguistics at the Faculty of Philology of Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University in Ukraine. She is the author of numerous publications, including the following monographs: *Ukrainian Political Discourse: Textualisation of Reality* (Odesa: Chornomoria, 2007); Syntax *of Ukrainian Modernist and Postmodernist Literary Discourse* Kyiv: Dmytro Burago Publishing House, 2012); and *Linguopragmatics of Political Discourse: Typology of Speech Genres* (co-authored with L. I. Strii and O. S. Bylinska; edited by N. V. Kondratenko, Odesa: Astroprint, 2019). Her research interests include the linguopragmatics of political discourse, text linguistics, the syntax of modernist and postmodernist Ukrainian literary discourse, the communicative-pragmatic parameters of professional discourse, the rhetoric of political leaders, semantic-textual linguistic expertise, and media and discourse studies in contemporary Ukraine. In 2025, she published a collection of fantasy short stories. Currently, she is working on her first fantasy novel.

"Justled from Your Senses": Theatrical Illusion and the Wonder of Life in *The Tempest*

Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik

University of Lodz, Poland

This paper discusses the masque in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* which serves as a crucial theatrical and thematic device for the use of magic onstage, imbuing the play-within-the-play with symbolic meaning. Presented in Act IV, the masque is performed by spirits summoned by Prospero to celebrate the impending marriage of the princely Ferdinand and Prospero's daughter Miranda. This momentary pageant, rich in music, dance, and allegorical figures of the goddesses Juno, Ceres, and Iris, embodies the Renaissance ideals of harmony, fertility, and divine blessing,

reinforcing the play's themes of renewal and reconciliation. Dramatically, it highlights the transformation of the island from a place of conflict and usurpation to one of order and unity under Prospero's control. The lavish ceremonial aspect of the whole underscores the power of art and ritual to transcend earthly turmoil, aligning with the masque tradition popular during Shakespeare's time; the masque's imagery of celestial harmony and bountiful nature symbolises in the play the restoration of social and moral order, reflecting Prospero's role as a mediator and orchestrator of events. The masque's interruption by Prospero's abrupt command to end it introduces, however, a tension between illusion and reality, reminding the audience of the artifice inherent in theatre. The paper asks how this ephemeral spectacle is presented in performance and discusses selected productions of Shakespeare's most fantastical play in terms of how the masque's construction reflects the cultural sentiment surrounding the question of what the theatrical/supernatural illusion is supposed to be about.

Biographic Note

Anna Kowalcze-Pawlik, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor at University of Lodz. She specialises in translation history, Shakespeare in translation and performance as well as cultural history of emotions.

Music as Mediation: The Figure of the Musician in East Slavic Fantasy

Marta Krapyvnytska

Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Ukraine

The image of the musician in fantasy fiction serves not merely as decoration but as a profound symbol of the connection between the external and internal. This paper explores the role of music in two Eastern European fantasy narratives: Andrzej Sapkowski's *The Witcher Saga* and Pavlo Derevianko's *Chronicle of the Grey Order*. Although Sapkowski draws heavily on Western fantasy models (Tolkien, Le Guin), his universe is based on East Slavic mythopoetics, where music functions as a ritual and mnemonic form of connection. Jaskier (Dandelion), the bard and companion of Geralt, embodies the dimension of verbal memory — the song as narrative and as ironic commentary on myth itself. In contrast, Pylyp, a warrior who plays the jaw harp in Derevianko's novel, represents an inward, meditative form of music — not performed for an audience but aimed at harmonising one's being with the world.

Comparing these figures reveals a transformation of the musician's archetype within East Slavic fantasy: from bard to shaman, from outward narration to inner resonance. Music thus emerges not only as a poetic motif but as a metaphysical model in which art becomes an act of memory, purification, and regeneration.

Biographic Note

Marta Krapyvnytska is a PhD candidate at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, specialising in Literary Theory, History of Literature, and Comparative Literature. Her dissertation focuses on the mythological dimensions in Andrzej Sapkowski's novel cycle. She spent three years at Jagiellonian University under the supervision of Tomasz Majkowski, researching Sapkowski's works and the broader field of fantasy literature.

Circus on the Edge of the World: Liminality, Performance, and Magical Worldbuilding in Natalia Dovgopol's *The Travelling Circus of the Silvery Lady*

Yuliia Kurylova

Zaporizhzhia National University, Ukraine

The paper explores the role of circus performance as a site of liminality, power, and magic in the Ukrainian historical fantasy novel *The Travelling Circus of the Silvery Lady* by Natalia Dovgopol. Set in the early twentieth century and centred on a struggling travelling circus led by the charismatic Frau Grete, the novel constructs a world in which entertainment is not merely a form of popular culture, but a key mechanism of worldbuilding and a vehicle for the uncanny. The circus ring functions as a liminal threshold between town and road, everyday life and festive transgression, safety and danger.

Drawing on the concept of the carnivalesque, Victor Turner's theory of liminality and rites of passage, and performance studies, the paper analyses how acts of performance – above all the taming of the giant wolf by a young 'witch-like' girl – operate as magical rituals that rewrite relations between humans, animals, and power. Special attention is paid to female agency: both the circus owner and the girl performer challenge gendered expectations within a patriarchal setting, using spectacle, costume, and bodily risk as tools of self-assertion. Thus, the novel offers

a specifically Eastern European, Ukrainian variation on fantasy worldbuilding, in which entertainment becomes a fragile yet potent magic system grounded in corporeality, humour, and everyday survival.

Biographic Note

Yuliya Kurylova is a Candidate of Philological Sciences and an Associate Professor in the Department of Ukrainian Literature at Zaporizhzhia National University. She is the coordinator of the Jean Monnet module 'EUROGIUREO: Gender Inclusion in Ukraine's Recovery Programmes'. Her research interests include gender and memory studies, trauma and fantasy literature, performative culture, and the intersection of aesthetics, ethics and cultural identity in narratives.

Michael Ende: Ophelia and Her Theatre

Luisa Paglieri

Independent scholar, Turin, Italy

Michael Ende was a renowned author of fantasy novels, the most famous of which is *The Neverending Story*. However, drama was his first love and his first calling. He also wrote several well-received plays. After high school, he attended a drama academy in Munich and became an actor. After becoming a successful novelist, he often organised theatrical shows and literary-musical performances. This explains why he wrote a short story about theatre. In this talk, I shall examine one of his children's tales, *Ophelias Schattentheater* (*Ophelia's Shadow Theatre*). The tale concerns theatre, imagination and creativity. It narrates a story of an unsuccessful old actress who creates a magical kind of theatre in which the actors are shadows. Although it is intended for children, the story can be interpreted as a metaphor for the transformative power of creativity to overcome obstacles such as age and solitude. It explores themes of success, prejudice, hope, death and the boundary between a vivid imagination and mental illness. My analysis will examine how Ende creates a sense of hope from the fragility and unpredictability of success, which is not always granted to those who deserve it most.

Biographic Note

Luisa Paglieri graduated with degrees in Languages and Italian Literature from the

University of Turin. She is a translator, novelist and essayist. She has published papers and essays on Tolkien, Lewis and the marvellous element in medieval literature in Italian and foreign journals and periodicals. She has also published fantasy short stories and an urban fantasy novel. She actively participates in conferences in Italy and abroad.

Game of Thrones: How the Popular Comic Culture is a Carnivalesque Performance

Ana Carolina Pais

Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the integration of theatre and performance images into the plot of the US television series *Game of Thrones*, with a view to revealing the medieval Carnival and aspects of popular comic culture. To achieve this objective, an analysis is conducted of select scenes from the series, utilising Mikhail Bakhtin's theoretical framework, mainly based on his work *Rabelais and his World* (1987[1965]), with particular reference to the concepts of Carnival, Carnivalization and Grotesque Realism. The objective of this study is to comprehend the manner in which festive joy is depicted in fantasy works intended for a mass audience, with a particular focus on the concept of freedom to deviate from social norms, standards, and hierarchies. The presentation will comprise scene excerpts featuring the characters Arya Stark and Tyrion Lannister, with a particular focus on the role of theatre and theatrical performance. It is observed that theatre and performance function as instruments for the dethroning and satirising of superiors, as well as for the facilitation of a cathartic movement in the characters within the plot.

Biographic Note

Ana Carolina Pais is a PhD student in Philology and Portuguese Language at the University of São Paulo, Brazil. Master's in Languages and member of the Diálogo Research Group (USP/CNPq). She conducts research, with a CAPES scholarship, in the area of Bakhtinian metalinguistics, focusing on verbivocovisual language, on translation between languages/cultures, and on the concepts of Carnivalization and Grotesque Realism present in mass literature, fantasy literature, and TV series.

To Music of a Pipe Unseen: Music as Metaliterary Device in *The Lord of the Rings*

Antoine Paris

Université Catholique de Louvain, France

Music appears in Tolkien's legendarium as a way of shaping the fictional world, notably at the beginning of *The Silmarillion*. This idea is more discreetly present, but equally important in *The Lord of the Rings*. First, some poems remember of the primeval link between the world and the original music, such as Strider's "Tale of Tinúviel" (I, 11) and some narrative details build on this intrinsic link: elvish music makes Frodo dream of landscapes (II, 1) and, conversely, the "running of water" of Lorien is "an endless changeful music" (II, 6). Second, there is an opposition between the Ring and music. When Bilbo is tempted to take it in Rivendell, "[t]he music and singing round them seemed to falter, and a silence fell" (II, 1). Third, music in *The Lord of the Rings* is a metaliterary way to speak about creation, as something both positive and potentially dangerous. To that aspect, it is no coincidence that music is both connected to language and to – good or evil – spell. While Saruman's treacherous, enchanting voice is described as "the music of Saruman" (III, 10), elvish music "held him [Frodo] in a spell" (II, 1).

Biographic Note

Antoin Paris holds a PhD in Greek Philology, Biblical Studies and Comparative Literature. He is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Université Catholique de Louvain, working within a research group that studies measure and fair measure in antiquity. His research interests in Tolkien Studies include *The Lord of the Rings* as a metaliterary work, Tolkien's theory of fiction, and the correlations between Christianism and fantasy. He also writes poetry, stand-up comedy, and scenarios.

Dance with the Otherworldly: Folkloric Choreographies between Humans and the Supernatural in European Traditions

Janin Pisarek

Independent scholar, Jena, Germany

"When the Nixen come to the village dance, they sing, laugh, love—and suffer."

Throughout European folklore, music and dance mark the liminal threshold between the human and the supernatural. Legends of nixies, dwarfs, and other otherworldly beings portray dancing not merely as entertainment, but as a powerful act of social and magical communion. Drawing on narrative research and folklore studies, this paper explores the manifold roles of dance in European folklore: as a ritualised expression of vitality and community, a medium of enchantment and seduction, and at times, a transgressive act that invokes punishment or transformation. The motif of dancing with the supernatural encapsulates both the joy of shared festivity and the peril of crossing cosmic boundaries. By examining narratives of circle dances, ghostly processions, and infernal punishments such as the eternal dance, this paper investigates how dance functions as a site of interaction between worldbuilding and belief, between entertainment and the sacred. In these choreographies of myth, the boundary between human and otherworldly worlds becomes rhythmically and narratively blurred.

Biographic Note

Janin Pisarek is a folklorist, narrative researcher, and cultural scholar. She serves as Vice President of the Europäische Märchengesellschaft (European Fairy Tale Society) and is a member of the Kommission für Erzählforschung (Commission for Narrative Research). Her research focuses on European fairy tales, demonological legends, and mythical figures in German-speaking regions. She publishes in journals and contributes to edited volumes (e.g. University of Exeter Press). Pisarek has co-authored two interdisciplinary books on house spirits and mythical animals in German folklore.

"Beyond Secondary Belief": Faërian Drama as a Form of Elvish Performing Art

Paolo Pizzimento

University of Messina, Italy

In his famous essay *On Fairy-stories*, J.R.R. Tolkien peremptorily states that "Drama is naturally hostile to Fantasy" (p. 61) because, while inducing a Secondary Belief in the spectator through "the visible and audible presentation of imaginary men in a story" (p. 62), it cannot create a narrative mechanism to represent Fantasy or Magic without breaking the Secondary Belief itself. However, in contrast to the 'human

drama', the author introduces the concept of Faërian Drama, referring to "those plays which, according to abundant records, the elves have often presented to men" and asserting that it "can produce Fantasy with a realism and immediacy beyond the compass of any human mechanism" (p. 63). This form of artistic representation of the highest order would allow the human spectator "to go beyond Secondary Belief" and be "bodily inside its Secondary World" (Ibid.). While exposing the 'dangers' of such an enchantment, Tolkien provides no examples of "those plays which […] the elves have often presented to men," leaving a veil of mystery over them. Since the author states that "the experience may be very similar to Dreaming" (Ibid.), many critics have attempted to interpret Faërian Drama by comparing it to the many dreamlike visions contained in medieval literature (e.g., *Gawain* and *Pearl*); others have sought to see Faërian Drama at work, for example, in the elvish 'magic' through which Lothlórien appears to the Fellowship of the Ring as a perfect place, untouched by time. All these readings appear at times convincing but may neglect the specifically performative effects of Faërian Drama, which instead seem to acquire a clear preponderance in the definition provided by Tolkien and in its theoretical implications. The aim of this paper is to contribute to the debate on this matter. First, a stringent definition of Faërian Drama will be suggested through the lens of Performance Studies and through the efficacy/entertainment dyad they propose; then, its effects on the spectator will be assessed in terms of Primary and Secondary Belief and in relation to the contacts between Primary and Secondary World; finally, it will be attempted to determine whether there are indeed appreciable examples of Faërian Drama in Tolkien's legendarium.

Biographic Note

Paolo Pizzimento holds a Master's degree with honours in Modern Philology and a PhD in Cognitive Sciences. He collaborates with the Department of Cognitive Sciences, Psychology, Pedagogy and Cultural Studies (COSPECS) of the University of Messina. Already a contract professor of Cultures of Contemporary Italy at the a.y. 2022/2023, he is a part of the editorial committee of the journals "Mantichora. Italian Journal of Performance Studies" and "Magisterium. Journal of Philosophy, Literature, and Arts" and a member of AIST (Italian Association of Tolkien Studies), of which he is also a board member. His fields of research are Comparative Literature, Theory of Literature, and the application of Performance Studies to literature, with particular attention, on the one hand, to the Middle Ages and, on the other, to the 20th century. He has numerous publications dedicated to Dante and authors such as J.R.R. Tolkien, Ernst Jünger and Curzio Malaparte, as well as fantasy and comics literature.

"Music is One Thing Dragons Can't Do Better than Us": The Human and Non-Human Experience of Music in Rachel Hartman's *Seraphina*

Francesco Tomasello

Independent scholar, Messina, Italy

Although several dragons of fantasy are quite attuned to music, in Rachel Hartman's young adult duology *Seraphina and Shadow Scale* dragons possess a rather logical, unemotional intelligence, devoid of interest towards any artistic experience. Yet the main character, Seraphina, one of the secretive half-dragons of the kingdom of Goredd, is a renowned court musician and music teacher enhanced by the convergence of human creativity and draconic affinity with mathematics. Besides reaffirming the value of human qualities through the invention of an antithetical point of view, this perspective gives the several dragon characters featured in the novels a distinct mental structure and portrays the possible inclination of a non-human intelligence towards music. The lack of emotional competence in beings of such advanced cognitive abilities highlights the specific function of music in conveying passions and feelings, differentiating it from language and other intellectual expressions. Through her half-dragon characters, conversely, Hartman explores the fictional possibilities of a mind that, combining emotional intelligence and a deeper-than-human comprehension of metres and rhythm, is able to grasp the connection between the emotive world and the structure-based aspects of reality. This dialectical view turns the half-breeds into a distinct and more complete kind of beings.

Biographic Note

Francesco Tomasello lives in Italy and is chiefly dedicated to the study of dragons. He obtained a Master's degree in Modern Philology with a thesis on the firedrake of Beowulf, followed by a professional Master's programme in Publishing. He runs the website "L'Anima del Mostro", devoted to the analysis of monsters in ancient and modern media. He is also a member of the Italian Tolkien Society AIST (Associazione Italiana Studi Tolkieniani).

Dance and Social Structures in Fantasy Fiction

Olena Tykhomyrova

Member of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies

Kyiv National Linguistic University, Ukraine

In fantasy worldbuilding, invented societies present a wide spectrum of social models. Whether feudal, bourgeois or post-industrial, these systems depend on forms of social stratification that shape how art and entertainment are produced, accessed and interpreted. Social dance, especially in its more regulated manifestations, such as the formal ball or the communal village gathering, can foreground class tensions and render underlying hierarchies visible.

This paper examines social dance in fantasy fiction, tracing its function as a worldbuilding device and identifying moments in which dance scenes become arenas for pivotal encounters, including those with the supernatural. It explores the complexities of social interaction and the heightened dramaturgy of dance that transcends the mundane. The research draws on major dance scenes found in the texts by Hope Mirrlees, Terry Pratchett, Susanna Clarke, Naomi Novik and other fantasy authors.

Biographic Note

Olena Tykhomyrova, PhD, Associate Professor at Kyiv National Linguistic University, is an active member of the Centre for Fantasy Literature Studies. She defended her dissertation on J.R.R. Tolkien in 2003 and has studied fantasy fiction ever since. She has incorporated fantasy worlds into her English classes, as well as courses on translation and creative writing. Olena's academic interests include fantasy fiction, postmodernism, metafiction, cognitive linguistics, stylistics, humour studies, food and drink studies. She is also passionate about learning foreign languages and historical dancing. Despite the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, Olena remains in Kyiv and participates in volunteering and fund-raising activities aimed at helping her country.

Dance and Battle as Self-Discovery in the Young Adult Fantasy Novel *War Hour* by Lauren Loscig

Kseniia Vielchieva

Alfred Nobel University, Dnipro, Ukraine

In her debut novel, *War Hour*, Lauren Loscig explores themes such as the struggle against oppression in a world ruled by adults, the pressures exerted by parents, first love, and the insecurities characteristic of adolescence. The narrative is set in a world where magical abilities are acquired through the successful completion of perilous trials. The narrator is Lysta, a young woman of intransigent disposition, driven by a commitment to protect her fellow citizens and to avert the looming threat of war. The capital, in which she anticipates receiving support, is renowned for its Peace Ball tradition. Seizing the opportunity to forge alliances in such a hostile environment, the heroine, who hails from a disadvantaged background and has never previously attended such an event, compels herself to participate. Despite her physical allure, she perceives herself as an outsider in this "swirling sea of sparkles and silk, velvet and lace", and experiences a sense of discomfort and humiliation. Dancing with a lord's heir, despite the evident mutual attraction, leads her to the realisation that she is acting against her fundamental survival instincts. The motif of 'being versus seeming' is further elaborated upon in the battle episode, which mirrors the ball episode. The episode has its own 'music' at the beginning – the spectators' stomping "like a war drum". There is a notable physical contact between the protagonists, with Lysta's rival being depicted as a young and powerful lord, though an outsider. However, in this 'dance', a morally ambiguous hero helps the heroine to find her inner strength without usurping her active role, a departure from the dynamic observed in the ball scene. The author establishes a compelling female protagonist who refuses to acquiesce to the dictates of her circumstances and who demonstrates the capacity to effect profound change in the world.

Biographic Note

Kseniia Vielchieva obtained her degree from Oles Honchar Dnipro National University in 2001. In 2017, she successfully defended a thesis for the Candidate of Philology Degree, titled "William Langland's Piers Plowman: The Genre Poetics". She is currently employed as an Associate Professor in the European and Oriental Languages and Translation Department at Alfred Nobel University. In 2024, she assumed the role of Acting Head of the Department. In 2025, Kseniia translated *War Hour* by Lauren Loscig for the publishing house "Laboratory".