

## **Syncretism of the Fantastic and Realistic Categories within Joanne Rowling's "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone."**

**Mohira Tursunova**

*Teacher of Namangan State Institute of Foreign Languages*

**Abstract.** *This article explores how modern English children's literature, focusing on Joanne Rowling's "Harry Potter" novel, blends elements of fantasy and reality. It suggests that incorporating realistic elements like place names, animal names, plant names, characters, scientific principles, and natural phenomena in fantasy narratives bridges the gap between the fantastical and the real. This fusion ultimately fosters a harmonious coexistence of both realms.*

**Key words:** *literary chronotope, space and time, realism, fantasy, Harry Potter, mythology, Philosopher's Stone, Elixir of Life, real world, imaginary world.*

Fantasy literature typically unfolds within a fabricated realm, sometimes devoid of connections to real-world places, events, or individuals, although exceptions exist. These realms often feature magic, the supernatural, and fantastical creatures. Within these magical worlds, one might encounter flying carpets, enchanted rings, formidable giants, and majestic dragons. However, it's important to note that crafting a depiction of the magical realm shouldn't entirely disregard elements of logic and realism.

Establishing the framework of rules is fundamental when constructing a fantasy realm. This tacit agreement between the author and readers ensures an engaging narrative without improbable events that could detract from the plot's credibility. For instance, while a fantasy tale may feature dragons, wizards, and towering giants, if the protagonist is a humble peasant boy resembling someone from the real world, he wouldn't possess the ability to uproot trees. Should such an event occur, it would defy elementary laws of physics.

In fantasy literature, the juxtaposition of two realms—the tangible reality and the imaginative—occurs, leading to their intertwining. It's essential to recognize that the introduction of magic in such narratives influences its chronotope. As O.A. Kostrova observed, "the fantastical chronotope induces the bending, elongation, and compression of space, the speeding up and slowing down of time, swift movements and displacements of the characters through space and time, enabling rapid transitions, appearances, and disappearances of various objects" (Kostrova, 2009, p.29).

"Harry Potter," authored by J.K. Rowling, stands as one of her most renowned works. This novel amalgamates elements from various genres such as fantasy, adventure, detective, and thriller. Its narrative unfolds within a world reminiscent of England in the 1990s, albeit with a remarkable twist: coexisting with ordinary society are wizards and witches possessing magical abilities. These individuals, concealed from the knowledge of ordinary folk termed Muggles, inhabit a realm parallel to theirs. Despite dwelling among Muggles, wizards maintain a separate existence, avoiding interaction with them. Rowling's portrayal of the wizarding world refrains from idealization; akin to reality, it grapples with themes of good and evil, life and death, happiness, and challenges.

The real-world chronotope is represented by house №4 on a narrow street in the fictional town of Little Wing:

“A breeze ruffled the neat hedges of Privet Drive, which lay silent and tidy under the inky sky, the very last place you would expect astonishing things to happen.” (Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, p.18)

The wizarding world is represented by chronotopes of official institutions such as schools, banks, and chronotopes such as residences and individual regions of the wizarding world. The link between the real and magical worlds is Diagon Alley, located in London. You can only magically get there if you know the secret code through the Hole Boiler Inn. And the train to Hogwarts leaves from platform 9  $\frac{3}{4}$ :

He was about to go back upstairs when Uncle Vernon actually spoke.

‘Funny way to get to a wizards’ school, the train. Magic carpets all got punctures, have they?’

Harry didn’t say anything.

‘Where is this school, anyway?’

‘I don’t know,’ said Harry, realizing this for the first time. He pulled the ticket Hagrid had given him out of his pocket.

‘I just take the train from platform nine and three-quarters at eleven o’clock,’ he read.

His aunt and uncle stared.

‘Platform what?’

‘Nine and three-quarters.’

‘Don’t talk rubbish,’ said Uncle Vernon, ‘there is no platform nine and three-quarters.’

‘It’s on my ticket.’ (Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, p. 68)

For typical Londoners, the notion of platform 9  $\frac{3}{4}$  within a railway station remains confined to the realm of fiction. Yet, for wizards, it holds tangible significance. Located within London's genuine Kings Cross station, accessing this platform requires traversing both the railway and a seemingly solid wall—a feat beyond the capabilities of ordinary individuals. Notably, Kings Cross serves as a tangible hub where both mundane commuters and wizards converge. It marks the inception of adventures and the culmination of the school year within the novel's narrative. The barrier separating the platforms symbolizes the divide between the magical realm and the mundane world. It's plausible that J.K. Rowling purposefully selected the number 9 for its symbolic connotations; within the decimal system, 9 signifies the ultimate digit, suggesting a boundary between the real and the imaginary worlds, or vice versa.

In J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter," the wizarding realm isn't isolated by an impenetrable barrier from the real world. Instead, these worlds are intricately intertwined, with the magical realm existing alongside the everyday world. Rowling's depiction of this universe is meticulously crafted, brimming with vivid descriptions, intricate details, quasi-historical timelines, and a well-defined internal mythology.

According to T.V. Volkodav, "Harry Potter" blends two narrative styles: the fantastical, where natural laws may be bent, and the realistic. At various points in the narrative, one of these styles may dominate over the other. Realistic settings are enhanced with fantastical elements, while fantastical environments incorporate realistic elements. For instance, the protagonist Harry embodies both the archetypal hero of fairy tales and a contemporary student. The novel's anthropomorphic landscape serves as a canvas to depict both the genuine, tangible world and the fantastical, imaginary realm simultaneously (Volkodav, 2006, p.24).

Moreover, the novel includes many elements drawn from real life. For instance, real plant names are referenced, such as in the passage: "For your information, Potter, asphodel and wormwood make a

sleeping potion so powerful it is known as the Draught of Living Death." (Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, p. 103). Asphodelus, mentioned here, is a species of perennial flowering plant within the Asphodelaceae family, initially described by Carl Linnaeus in 1753. This plant is native to regions across Europe, the Mediterranean basin, Africa, the Middle East, and India.

The foliage of this plant serves as a wrapping for cheese in Italy for a brief period. In Eastern Anatolia of Turkey, it finds utility in cooking. Asphodel holds a significant place in Greek mythology, often associated with visions of the deceased and the underworld. Homer depicted the gathering place of the deceased, a vast meadow, adorned with this plant. Traditionally, it was planted near graves, linked with Persephone, the goddess of the underworld. Its association with death stems from the tendency of its leaves to adopt gray and yellow hues, symbolic of the darkness of the underworld and the pallor of death in Greek culture. Impoverished Greeks consumed the plant's roots, considering them a delectable sustenance for the departed. Asphodel was also believed to possess antidotal properties against snake venom and witchcraft. Additionally, it was employed for rodent control, while Libyan settlers utilized it in constructing huts.

The second plant mentioned in the example also has real-life counterparts. *Artemisia absinthium*, commonly known as wormwood, is prevalent across North Africa, Eurasia, and North America. Certain species are cultivated for ornamental purposes, while others are utilized in the production of flavorful beverages. Moreover, it has historically been employed in the formulation of remedies for certain gynecological ailments, earning it the moniker Artemis, after the Greek goddess of childbirth.

In his first year, Harry discovers the concept of the bezoar stone from Professor Snape:

"A bezoar is a stone extracted from the stomach of a goat, and it can protect you from many poisons." (Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, p. 103).

Indeed, bezoars are not merely fictional; they exist in our reality. Bezoars are undigested food masses often located in the stomachs of goats, and they have been recognized as antidotes since the Moorish conquest of Spain.

In the novel, another plant known as the Mandrake is introduced, which also exists in real life. Harry and his friends encounter Mandrakes for the first time during their second year of Herbology. Mandrake roots are harvested for their ability to reverse the effects of the Petrificus Totalus curse, restoring victims to their normal state. However, these roots are not ordinary; they are sentient beings whose cries can be fatal once they mature. Hence, novice magic practitioners study young Mandrakes to avoid such dangers. Mandrake roots have held significant cultural importance since ancient times and have been depicted in folklore as resembling wrinkled human figures. Due to the fear of their lethal screams, people in folklore tied a dog to the plant to extract its roots, as described in the encyclopedia "The Book of Plants," which details the medicinal and mystical properties of these plants. Additionally, Mandrakes are renowned for their hallucinogenic and narcotic qualities.

Additionally, you'll encounter references to historical figures in the novel, such as Nicholas Flamel. Hermione shares information about Flamel with her friends, revealing that he supposedly lived to be 665 years old and possessed the Philosopher's Stone, capable of transmuting metals into gold and producing the Elixir of Life, granting eternal life. Interestingly, Nicholas Flamel was a genuine historical figure who lived in France from 1330 to 1418. He was primarily known as a bookseller but also dabbled in alchemy, purportedly seeking to create the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life.

Furthermore, birds and animals like owls and rats play roles in "Harry Potter," underscoring how familiar objects from the real world are incorporated into J.K. Rowling's fantastical universe.

In essence, fantasy shares similarities with traditional fairy tales but differs slightly in its chronotope and contains a notable infusion of realism. While fantasy maintains the essence of a fairy tale, it expands its spatial scope and brings its temporal setting closer to the present day. Unlike traditional fairy tales, where space is often confined and time is abstract and vague, fantasy offers a broader spatial landscape and a temporal framework that is either closely aligned with or linked to our contemporary era.

It should be emphasized that realism may not exist in fantasy, but reality must exist. The author is forced to use real things in order to believably and logically describe and convince the reader of the world he created, its laws, realities, the mentality of its peoples, heroes, and similar details. Realism is lost as the characters and the author begin to break the law in various ways. Even the most incredible and beautiful world loses its attractiveness in the eyes of the reader if the laws established by the author begin to be violated without any reason. How to come up with these laws, how to justify them and make them work depends on the skill of the writer. After all, nothing can be "just". Be it in the real world or in the imaginary world, everything must be grounded.

While talking about this topic, it is worth noting Brandon Sanderson's approach to creating a fantastic world. Because when he creates another world, he not only describes the rules by which magic works, but also pays attention to the rules of physics, biology and nature. For example, the world of Roshar has strong storms, so all forms of life have some form of protection: animals grow chitinous shells, and plants learn to hide underground (Sanderson, 2008). This creates a sense of confidence in the students.

No matter what world a fantasy writer creates in his imagination, his work is read taking into account the experience of our real world. Let's say there is a fighting army in a fantasy work - that means it needs to be fed and supplied like a similar army in the history of the world. The author may not tell us about the supply, but this should not contradict the realism of the events. If this army is forced to march through snowy peaks to besiege the Ice Queen's castle, and the soldiers do not suffer from hunger and cold, the author must create a convincing rationale for this. Otherwise, involuntarily mistrust of what is happening in the reader's mind will appear and the charm of the novel will be lost.

Realism is a direction that aims to faithfully reproduce real reality in its typical features in literature and art. So, how can a depiction of fantasy worlds that never existed be called realism, how can a fantasy world be realism with its witches, unscientific and not-so-intelligent animals? However, it should be noted that for the people of the imaginary world created by the author, existence in this world is in some sense realism. Magicians, imaginary peoples and their culture, dragons, gods, spirits, unprecedented animals and others are an integral part of the inhabitants of this world; they live according to certain realistic rules.

Every author, especially the author of his own world, is an unlimited creator in his imagination. He has the right to create a world similar to ours or completely different, to fill it with anyone, to define certain concepts with familiar terms or to invent his own. At the same time, he has to invent the laws that exist in his world. The level of realism is shown within these laws. In our opinion, it is often wrong to confuse the concept of "realism" with completely historical or one hundred percent life realities.

Ultimately, it can be asserted that certain names of places, animals, plants, characters, scientific concepts, natural occurrences, and principles employed in fantasy literature serve to bridge the gap between the fantastical realm and reality. Consequently, works within this genre blend elements of realism and fantasy, fostering a perception among readers that the depicted events are plausible. The integration of realistic details into the fantastical setting normalizes the reader's acceptance of the narrative, enhancing the credibility of the story's events.

### References:

1. Volkodav T.V. Strukturno-tipologicheskie i leksiko-semanticheskie parametri literaturnoy skazki d. k. rouling i resursi ix peredachi na russkiy i nemetskiy yaziki: avtoreferat dissertatsii na soiskanie uchenoy stepeni kandidata filologicheskix nauk: 10.02.20 / T.V. Volkodav. – Krasnodar, 2006.
2. Komlev N. G. Slovar inostrannix slov. – Moskva: Эkсмо-press, 2000. <http://rus-yaz.niv.ru/doc/foreign-words-komlev/index.htm>
3. Kostrova O.A. Prostranstvenno-vremennaya organizatsiya xudozhestvennogo mira v proizvedeniyax J.K. Rouling // Universitetskie chteniya – 2009, 12-13 yanv. 2009 g. / Pyatigor. gos. lingvist. un-t. – Pyatigorsk, 2009. – s 28-33;

4. Krulik T. A Few Words from Roger Zelazny. URL: [www.tor.com/2016/05/19/afew-words-from-roger-zelazny/](http://www.tor.com/2016/05/19/afew-words-from-roger-zelazny/)
5. Rowling J.K. Harry Potter and the Philosopher's stone. – London.: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1997.
6. Sanderson, Brendon. The Hero of The ages. - New York: Tor Publishing group, 2008.