



Exploring Mythology as a Cultural, Religious, and Literary Device in Uzbek and English Literature

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ABSTRACT

Literature and mythology have always gone hand in hand, offering insight into human emotion, imagination, and belief. Myths, often rooted in ancient religious traditions, helped early civilizations make sense of their world, and literature continues this legacy by reimagining these stories. This article explores how mythology functions as a cultural, religious, and literary device in both English and Uzbek literature. Drawing from scholars such as Joseph Campbell, Northrop Frye, and Mircea Eliade, the study examines mythological elements—such as archetypes, symbols, and the hero's journey—and their recurring role in storytelling. It highlights how myth reflects not only literary creativity but also religious and spiritual worldviews, influencing how writers convey identity, morality, and universal truths. Through comparative literary analysis, the paper demonstrates how myths continue to resonate in both classical and modern texts, bridging cultural and spiritual understanding across time and geography.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Every culture has its legends of gods in the sky, spirits in the mountains, and sacred animals guarding rivers (Lestari, 2024; Haristiani *et al.*, 2017). These legends, known as myths, are as ancient as humanity itself. Far from being mere fairy tales, myths serve as religious and cultural narratives that help societies make sense of life, death, nature, and human existence. Religion and mythology are deeply intertwined; myths often emerge from religious beliefs and rituals, while also giving structure to a community's moral and spiritual worldview (Lestari, 2024; Haristiani *et al.*, 2017). Literature, in turn, has long been a vessel for retelling and reinterpreting these myths, allowing successive generations to explore existential themes through the lens of story.

From ancient epics to contemporary novels, literature reflects and reimagines mythic and religious archetypes. The heroic quest, divine intervention, the struggle between good and evil, and the search for meaning; These narrative patterns echo both religious doctrine and mythic storytelling. Even in modern popular media, traces of mythology and religion remain visible, such as the wise sage, the fallen angel, or the redemptive sacrifice.

This article explores how mythology functions as a cultural, religious, and literary device in both English and Uzbek literature. Drawing upon the foundational theories of Joseph Campbell's "Hero's Journey," Northrop Frye's literary archetypes, and Mircea Eliade's sacred narrative frameworks, the study illustrates the enduring role of myth in shaping human expression. In Uzbek literature, mythological and religious motifs are found in classical poetry and folklore, offering symbolic representations of virtue, fate, and divine justice. Similarly, English literature (from Shakespeare to fantasy fiction) employs mythic and spiritual themes to convey universal truths. By comparing these traditions, this paper reveals how myth continues to inform literary expression across cultures, bridging religious thought, cultural memory, and imaginative storytelling.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative, comparative literature approach to analyze the integration of mythology and religion in Uzbek and English literary traditions. The research involved close textual analysis of selected literary works and scholarly texts, particularly those dealing with mythic structure, religious symbolism, and cultural narratives. Several books were used:

- (i) Campbell, J. (2004). *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- (ii) Frye, N. (1957). *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- (iii) Eliade, M. (1954). *The Myth of the Eternal Return*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- (iv) Abduramanova, D. V. (2022). *Symbolism and Mythical Structures in World Literature*. Tashkent: Tashkent Literature Review.
- (v) Abduramanova, D. V. (2023). *The Role of Uzbek Mythology in Modern Fiction*. *Comparative Literary Studies Journal*.
- (vi) Gaiman, N. (2001). *American Gods*. New York: William Morrow.
- (vii) Riordan, R. (2005). *The Lightning Thief*. New York: Disney Hyperion.
- (viii) Gafur Ghulam, Mukimi, and Furkat – *Selected Uzbek Literary Texts and Poetry Archives*.

Primary theoretical frameworks were drawn from the works of Joseph Campbell, Northrop Frye, and Mircea Eliade. Campbell's concept of the Hero's Journey provided a universal template for mythic storytelling, while Frye's archetypal criticism offered insight into recurring narrative forms and symbols across literary genres. Eliade's theories on sacred time and myth as religious narrative were used to interpret how spiritual meaning is embedded in stories.

The analysis included both classical and modern texts from English literature, such as *The Lightning Thief* by Rick Riordan and *American Gods* by Neil Gaiman, alongside canonical Uzbek works, including epics like *Alpomish* and poetic texts by Alisher Navoi, Furkat, and Mukimi. Folkloric elements and oral traditions were also considered, particularly where they intersect with religious beliefs or practices.

Data collection involved reviewing literary texts, academic journals, and cultural studies, with special attention to how myths reflect religious values, moral lessons, and metaphysical questions. Comparative analysis was applied to identify similarities and differences in how myth and religion shape narrative structures, character development, and symbolic meaning in both cultures.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis revealed several key findings regarding the use of mythology and religion in Uzbek and English literature:

- (i) **Shared Archetypal Structures:** Both Uzbek and English literary traditions heavily employ the Hero's Journey archetype, highlighting universal themes such as sacrifice, transformation, and redemption. This structure is often infused with religious undertones, emphasizing divine intervention, fate, or moral duty.
- (ii) **Religious Symbolism in Mythic Figures:** In Uzbek literature, characters such as Div, Umay, and Albasti symbolize spiritual concepts like protection, fertility, and evil, akin to deities or supernatural beings in religious narratives. Similarly, English literature draws on mythological gods and religious figures, repurposing them in modern forms, such as Riordan's reinterpretation of Greek gods in a contemporary setting.
- (iii) **Myth as Moral and Spiritual Commentary:** Both traditions use myth not only as a narrative tool but as a means of conveying ethical and religious values. For instance, themes of divine justice, afterlife, and human purpose are present in both Uzbek epics and English fantasy literature, reflecting the moral compass of their respective societies.
- (iv) **Mythology Bridging the Sacred and the Secular:** The findings support Mircea Eliade's theory that myths offer a sacred dimension to everyday narratives. In both cultures, stories use myth to explore religious questions, such as the nature of the soul, divine will, and cosmic balance, without necessarily being confined to religious texts.
- (v) **Continued Relevance of Myth and Religion in Modern Literature:** Contemporary authors in both cultures continue to integrate mythic and religious elements to address modern issues such as identity, technology, environmental crisis, and spirituality. This ongoing relevance demonstrates that mythology remains a dynamic and adaptable force in literature.

The findings demonstrate that mythology and religion remain intertwined and serve as essential components of literary expression in both Uzbek and English cultures. In Uzbek literature, mythological figures often embody religious and moral values rooted in Central Asian belief systems and folklore. Characters such as Umay and Albasti do not merely

represent mythical beings but are reflections of divine protection, fertility, and moral retribution-concepts that overlap with religious interpretations of good and evil. These elements show how mythology functions as a carrier of spiritual and ethical narratives.

English literature, on the other hand, often fuses classical mythologies (Greek, Roman, and Norse) with Christian motifs. Writers like C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien have skillfully incorporated myth with religious undertones, weaving narratives that explore redemption, sacrifice, and divine guidance. This illustrates how literature can simultaneously reflect and question religious ideals, encouraging readers to engage in philosophical inquiry.

Furthermore, the concept of the Hero's Journey, as articulated by Campbell, offers a framework that transcends cultural and religious boundaries. Whether it is Odysseus returning home, Alphonse rescuing his beloved, or Harry Potter facing Voldemort, the journey signifies not just physical trials, but inner transformation, often catalyzed by divine forces or moral awakenings. This archetype reveals the psychological and spiritual significance of myth in shaping human consciousness and societal norms.

Importantly, the use of mythology in literature fosters empathy and cultural understanding. By embedding religious and mythic symbolism in stories, authors enable readers to engage with universal human experiences—love, fear, loss, and hope. In Uzbek literature, religious symbols often represent communal values and collective history, while in English literature, myth may serve as a critique or reimagining of spiritual belief systems.

In today's globalized world, the fusion of myth and religion in literature is not only a reflection of cultural identity but also a response to modern existential questions. As environmental crises, technological advances, and ideological divides grow, writers continue to return to myth and religion to articulate their visions of humanity's future. This emphasizes that mythology, far from being obsolete, remains a vital and evolving literary device grounded in both ancient belief systems and contemporary realities. Finally, this study adds new information relating to myths, religion, literature, and education, as reported elsewhere (Anggraeni & Maryanti, 2021; Azizah *et al.*, 2022; Nugraha *et al.*, 2022; Francis *et al.*, 2023; Rohim & Nugraha, 2024; Thoriq *et al.*, 2023; Darojah *et al.*, 2024; Kayode & Jibril, 2023; Hidayat *et al.*, 2024).

4. CONCLUSION

The intersection of mythology, literature, and religion highlights the timeless role of storytelling in shaping human thought, culture, and identity. Across both Uzbek and English traditions, myths are not merely remnants of the past—they are dynamic tools through which writers explore ethical questions, spiritual beliefs, and societal challenges. Whether grounded in folklore, sacred traditions, or literary imagination, mythological elements continue to offer profound insights into the human experience.

By analyzing key theories from Campbell, Frye, and Eliade alongside literary examples from both cultures, this paper has shown how myths serve as both cultural memory and narrative framework. In Uzbek literature, myth often draws from religious values and local folklore to reinforce collective identity and moral responsibility. In English literature, mythology is reinterpreted through various religious and philosophical lenses to question, affirm, or reinterpret universal truths.

Ultimately, mythology functions as a bridge—linking the sacred with the secular, the past with the present, and the individual with the collective. Its presence in literature ensures that spiritual, ethical, and emotional themes remain central to human storytelling. As literature evolves, mythology—deeply tied to religion and culture—will continue to guide readers through the complexities of modern life and inspire new ways of understanding the world.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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