



DEMONOLOGICAL AND ANGELOLOGICAL IMAGERY IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LITERARY TRADITIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a comparative-typological analysis of demonological and Angelological images found in English and Uzbek folklore, epic poems, fairy tales, and religious texts. The study reveals the similarities and differences in the representation of evil and benevolent forces within mythological thinking, as well as their artistic functions and their role in the popular worldview.

KEYWORDS: Demonology, angelology, mythology, English folklore, Uzbek folklore, evil forces, benevolent forces, epic, epic poem, fairy tale, comparative literature.

INTRODUCTION

The mythological consciousness, worldview, and artistic production of peoples have historically functioned as fundamental sources reflecting their spiritual and cultural life. Since the earliest stages of human civilization, the enigmatic phenomena of nature have been conceptualized through a binary opposition of benevolent and malevolent forces, the representations of which have been systematically embodied in myths, epic narratives, folk tales, and religious texts.

The conceptualization of good and evil is articulated through demonological and angelological imagery, which occupies a significant place not only within mythopoetic systems but also in literary discourse. The genesis of such imagery in human cognition, along with its functional roles and artistic interpretations, reveals both typological commonalities and culturally specific distinctions.

In particular, within the literary traditions of the English and Uzbek peoples, the opposition between good and evil is manifested through distinctive plot structures, motifs, and symbolic representations, reflecting the unique cultural, religious, and philosophical foundations of each tradition.

The Old English epic *Beowulf* presents its primary antagonist, Grendel—a humanoid creature—as a classical example of demonological imagery. In the poem, Grendel is depicted as a descendant of the accursed Cain, embodying the forces of darkness and inhabiting marshlands and desolate spaces. The figure of Grendel thus represents a synthesis of pre-Christian Germanic mythological elements and the Christian archetype of the Devil [1].

In fourteenth-century English literature, Christian demonology and angelology are reflected in close alignment with established religious doctrines. In Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (c. 1387–1400), angels and demonic forces do not typically function as central characters but are instead interpreted within a framework of moral allegory. For instance, in "The Friar's Tale," the devil emerges as a symbolic embodiment of human greed and hypocrisy.

From the perspective of religious sources, the representation of the Devil in the English Christian tradition is grounded in Biblical texts. In John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), the figure of Satan reaches the apex of literary demonology. In this work, Satan is portrayed as an antagonistic yet complex character—simultaneously condemned for his rebellion and rendered with a certain aesthetic and rhetorical grandeur [6]. This duality ultimately laid the foundation for the development of the tradition of Romantic demonology.

In the Uzbek mythological system, malevolent forces are represented through a range of figures such as dev (demon), alvasti (witch-like female spirit), and jin (spirit). In the epic *Alpomish*, these forces are embodied in the form of social oppression and external enemies. The demonic representations of the Kalmyk warriors, the witch-like actions of Surkhayl Kampir, and the figure of Ultontoz together constitute an epic manifestation of the blurred boundary between demonological evil and historical-social injustice [6].

In Uzbek folklore, the figure of the dev occupies a particularly significant position. This image is characterized by a dualistic nature, manifesting both demonological and angelological features. In certain narratives, the dev functions as a helper of the hero, while in others it assumes the role of a direct antagonist. This phenomenon corresponds to the functional approach proposed by V. Y. Propp, according to which the dev may fulfill either the role of an “antagonist” or a “magical helper” [9].

With the advent of Islam in Central Asian culture, concepts such as iblis (Satan) and shayton (Devil) became integrated with local mythological representations. In Uzbek folk belief, jinn are interpreted in a polyvalent manner, ranging from malevolent and neutral entities to, in some cases, benevolent beings, particularly in narratives associated with paris (fairy-like spirits).

In the representation of benevolent forces, both English and Uzbek traditions reveal noteworthy similarities and differences. In the English Christian tradition, angels are designated by the term angel and are organized according to a hierarchical system derived from the Holy Scripture, including seraphim, cherubim, and archangels such as Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. In John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the figures of Michael and Raphael are depicted in detail, where they function as embodiments of divine justice and compassion toward humankind [4].

In the Uzbek tradition, benevolent forces are expressed through the figures of malak, farishta, hur, and, to a certain extent, pari. The pari in Uzbek folklore, as in the mythological systems of other cultures, represents a dual-layered image: in early Zoroastrian and Turanian mythologies, it was associated with natural forces, whereas under the influence of Islam it became syncretized with the concept of hur (celestial maidens of paradise).

In the cycle of epics known as *Gorogly*, fairies (paris) play a significant role as helper figures to the hero, which evokes the archetype of the angelic helper [4]. A shared characteristic of benevolent forces in both traditions is their subordination to divine command and their assistance to the hero in moments of critical difficulty.

The key distinction lies in the fact that angels in the English tradition are predominantly transcendent beings belonging to the divine realm, whereas Uzbek pari are more closely associated with the natural and human worlds. Moreover, in certain narratives, paris may even enter into romantic relationships with humans. This divergence reflects the underlying theological and cosmological differences in the worldview systems of the two cultures.

The comparative analysis reveals that demonological and angelological imagery in both English and Uzbek traditions share a number of universal archetypal features. First, in both traditions, the forces of good and evil are structured on the principle of dualism, where darkness and light, as well as evil and goodness, exist in inevitable opposition.

Second, supernatural forces frequently perform the function of a catalyst in the hero's process of trial and maturation [3].

Thirdly, both traditions exhibit a process in which religious influence merges with the traditional mythological substratum: in the English context, this is reflected in the impact of Christianity on Celtic and Germanic mythologies, while in the Uzbek tradition it is manifested through the influence of Islam on ancient Turanian mythological systems. As a result of this synthesis, syncretic images emerge, which constitute one of the most intriguing phenomena in comparative mythology. These include, for instance, the preservation of the Green Man archetype within Christian iconography in England, as well as the integration of the figure of Khidr in Turkic traditions with the pre-Islamic concept of a wise elder spirit [10].

Furthermore, both English and Uzbek demonological traditions demonstrate a strong association with geographical and natural objects, such as water spirits, mountain demons, and mountain spirits, among others.

The principal differences are manifested in the fact that, within English demonology, the category of fairies—that is, semi-malevolent and semi-neutral supernatural beings—is highly developed and functions as a distinct conceptual and narrative classification. In Uzbek mythology, however, this intermediate status is less clearly defined, and jinn are more distinctly categorized into opposing moral poles. Furthermore, in Uzbek demonological tradition, the intrusion of supernatural forces into social and domestic life (including the family sphere, cradle rituals, and childbirth-related beliefs) occupies a significantly more prominent role. This phenomenon is comparatively rare in English demonological traditions.

The comparative analysis of demonological and angelological representations in English and Uzbek literary traditions allows for the formulation of several significant conclusions. In both cultural contexts, mythological systems are structured around a universal cosmological scheme based on the opposition between benevolent and malevolent forces. However, this universal framework is artistically articulated in different ways under the influence of each nation's distinct history, geography, religion, and socio-cultural organization.

In the English tradition, demonological imagery tends to reflect primarily existential concerns (such as being, chaos, and order) as well as theological issues (such as sin and divine punishment). In contrast, within the Uzbek tradition, such imagery is more closely associated with socio-ethical values (justice, loyalty, and bravery) and communal and familial ideals. Angelological figures, however, in both traditions consistently function as symbols of divine justice and compassion toward humanity.

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