

The Concept of Time and Space in the Mythopoetic Layer (Extended Version)

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ABSTRACT

This extended exploration delves into the mythopoetic dimensions of time and space, examining how these fundamental categories transcend physicality to embody sacred, symbolic, and existential meanings in human cognition and culture. Drawing from ancient cosmologies, modernist and postmodernist literature, and interdisciplinary methodologies, the study highlights the cyclical nature of sacred time, the qualitative structuring of symbolic space, and their transformations in contemporary narratives. By comparing Uzbek works such as Temur Pulatov's Taroziy's Tortoise with Western classics like James Joyce's Ulysses and Jorge Luis Borges's labyrinthine tales, it reveals universal archetypal patterns alongside culturally specific expressions. The analysis underscores how mythopoetic elements unify individual experience with collective memory, offering philosophical, psychological, and aesthetic insights into human existence. Ultimately, it argues that these frameworks remain vital for enriching literary imagination in an increasingly fragmented world.

Keywords: Mythopoetic, sacred time, symbolic space, archetypes, axis mundi, cyclical time, collective unconscious, chronotope, Uzbek literature, Western modernism, postmodernism, literary phenomenology, cultural semiotics, existential metaphors, narrative hermeneutics.

INTRODUCTION

Time and space represent two of the most profound and enduring categories in human cognition, shaping not only our perception of the physical world but also our deeper existential understanding. In the mythopoetic worldview, however, these categories transcend mere measurement or chronology; they become imbued with sacred, symbolic, and profoundly meaningful qualities that structure human experience on multiple levels. Unlike the neutral, objective frameworks of modern science, mythopoetic time and space are qualitative dimensions, laden with emotional, spiritual, and cultural significance. As Mircea Eliade insightfully observes, “myth abolishes profane linear time and replaces it with sacred time, the time of origins, which can be continually re-enacted through ritual” [7: 34]. This sacred time allows individuals and communities to reconnect with primordial beginnings, offering renewal and transcendence beyond the mundane flow of everyday existence. Similarly, space in myth is far from homogeneous or empty; it is hierarchically organized, divided into sacred centers of power and chaotic peripheries devoid of meaning. At the heart of this spatial organization lies the axis mundi – the symbolic world axis that connects the earthly realm with the divine, bridging heaven, earth, and the underworld, and serving as a conduit for spiritual energy and cosmic order.

Such archetypal conceptions of time and space are not confined to ancient or primitive societies; they permeate a vast array of cultural traditions, from Sumerian cosmology with its ziggurats symbolizing the axis mundi, to Greek myths of cyclical rebirth in figures like Persephone, Indian epics such as the *Mahabharata* where time unfolds in vast yugas, and Central Asian oral epics that evoke endless steppes as spaces of existential trial. These ideas also resonate in indigenous African cosmologies, where ancestral time loops back through rituals, or in Mesoamerican views of space as layered realms connected by sacred trees. Gaston Bachelard further enriches this perspective by emphasizing the intimate, imaginative qualities of space: 'Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot

remain neutral; it becomes an intimate and poetic space filled with human memory and dream [1, 36]. Bachelard's notion underscores how lived spaces – homes, forests, or mountains – accumulate layers of personal and collective memory, transforming them into poetic realms that nurture the human spirit.

In literature, particularly within modernist and postmodernist traditions, these mythopoetic categories are not merely inherited but actively reinterpreted and transformed to reflect contemporary anxieties and aspirations. For instance, Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* masterfully collapses linear chronology into a subjective, mnemonic temporality, where a simple sensory trigger – like the taste of a madeleine dipped in tea – unlocks vast inner universes of recollection, echoing the mythopoetic idea of time as eternally recurring through memory. James Joyce's *Ulysses* ingeniously overlays the ancient Homeric myth onto a single day in modern Dublin, turning the ordinary urban landscape into a mythic labyrinth of trials and revelations, where space becomes a maze of personal and cultural intersections. Jorge Luis Borges, in tales like *The Garden of Forking Paths*, renders libraries and labyrinths as metaphysical enigmas, where time branches infinitely and space folds recursively, challenging linear narratives and evoking mythopoetic infinity. Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* transforms a medieval monastery into a cosmic library, a microcosm encapsulating all knowledge and mystery, blending historical inquiry with mythic symbolism.

Uzbek literature, deeply rooted in Central Asian traditions, similarly resonates with these archetypal perceptions, often blending them with local historical and spiritual contexts. Temur Pulatov's *Taroziy's Tortoise* portrays time as a slow, almost geological force, intertwined with collective historical memory and the enduring rhythms of nature, much like the cyclical rebirth in ancient fertility myths. Omon Muxtor's *The Four Directions of the Qibla* elevates the desert from a mere geographical expanse to a sacred, existential arena where the protagonist confronts inner demons and seeks spiritual revelation, akin to mythic wastelands in global traditions. Ulugbek Hamdam's

Isyonva Itoat (Rebellion and Submission) weaves mythic time into psychological and historical conflicts, exploring rebellion against fate amid societal upheavals, reminiscent of heroic myths where time tests human resolve. These Uzbek narratives echo Roland Barthes's observation that "myth is a second-order semiological system that encodes cultural ideologies into naturalized narratives" [3: 115], transforming personal stories into vessels for broader cultural and archetypal truths. Thus, mythopoetic time and space in literature serve as bridges, linking individual human experiences to collective memory, archetypal symbols, and universal cultural codes, fostering a deeper understanding of our shared humanity across diverse traditions.

METHODS

This extended and interdisciplinary study employs a multifaceted methodology to dissect the intricate concepts of time and space within the mythopoetic layer, drawing from diverse scholarly traditions to provide a comprehensive analysis. The primary approach is mythopoetic analysis, grounded in Mircea Eliade's foundational concepts of sacred time and space as reversible and hierarchical, Yevgeny Meletinsky's detailed mythopoetic models that emphasize narrative structures and cultural functions.

Complementing this is structural-semiotic analysis, inspired by Roland Barthes's theory of second-order semiosis, where myths function as sign systems that naturalize ideology, and Yuri Lotman's cultural semiotics, which views time and space as semiotic constructs embedded in societal codes. This method examines how mythic time and space operate as layered signs, encoding deeper meanings in literary texts. Comparative literary analysis forms another pillar, juxtaposing Uzbek novels like Temur Pulatov's *Taroziy's Tortoise*, with its glacial temporal rhythms mirroring ancient earth myths, and Omon Muxtor's *The Four Directions of the Qibla*, where desert spaces evoke existential voids akin to Biblical wildernesses, against Western modernist and postmodernist counterparts such as Joyce's *Ulysses*, Borges's infinite labyrinths, and Eco's monastic microcosms. This comparison illuminates both universal

archetypes – like the hero’s journey – and culturally distinct inflections, such as the integration of Sufi mysticism in Uzbek works versus rational skepticism in Western ones.

Linguopoetic analysis focuses on linguistic encodings of mythic perceptions, treating metaphors like “the eternal return” (cyclical rebirth), “the sacred mountain” (axis mundi), and “the endless road” (existential quest) as mythologemes that unveil symbolic structures. This approach dissects how language in literature evokes timeless qualities, such as Proust’s mnemonic time or Borges’s recursive spaces. The psychoanalytic lens, drawn from Carl Jung’s archetypes and collective unconscious, interprets mythopoetic time and space as psychic manifestations; Jung notes, “Mythological motifs are not invented; they arise spontaneously and express archetypal truths” [7: 67], linking labyrinths to individuation processes or deserts to shadow confrontations. Chronotopic analysis, via Mikhail Bakhtin’s chronotope concept, explores how time-space fusions in narratives shape philosophical worldviews, as in the historical-mythical blend in Uzbek novels.

Finally, narrative hermeneutics, informed by Paul Ricœur’s narrative time, integrates historical, mythical, and existential temporalities in storytelling, uncovering how myths reconcile linear history with cyclic eternity. By synthesizing these methods, the study reveals mythopoetic time and space as dynamic narrative frameworks, symbolic codes, cultural archetypes, and existential metaphors, extending beyond mere analysis to illuminate their role in human meaning-making across eras and societies.

RESULTS

The results of this extended and deepened analysis reveal that mythopoetic time and space function on multiple interconnected levels, each rich with symbolic depth and implications for literature and human experience. These levels extend beyond initial observations, incorporating additional dimensions such as psychological resonance, cultural hybridization, and narrative innovation.

Cyclical and sacred time – Mythopoetic time rejects linearity, favoring cycles of eternal return to origins, where rituals revive primordial moments and dissolve historical burdens. Eliade emphasizes that “sacred time is reversible and endlessly repeatable” [7: 69], allowing participants to escape profane chronology. In literature, this manifests variably: Joyce’s *Ulysses* condenses the epic Homeric cycle into one Dublin day, blending mythic archetypes with mundane reality; Pulatov’s *Taroziy’s Tortoise* evokes time as eternal and glacial, akin to geological myths of earth formation; Borges’s *The Garden of Forking Paths* presents time as branching infinities, echoing quantum-like mythopoetic multiplicity. Extending this, postmodern extensions like Viktor Pelevin’s virtual realms in *Generation P* hybridize cycles with digital loops, suggesting eternal return in hyperreality.

Sacred and symbolic space – Space in myth is qualitatively differentiated: sacred centers versus chaotic peripheries, with the axis mundi as the pivotal link. Bachelard poetically asserts, “Space is never neutral; it becomes an intimate house of memory and dream” [1: 211], transforming neutral voids into lived intimacies. In Muxtor’s *The Four Directions of the Qibla*, the desert embodies an archetypal void for spiritual trials, paralleling Borges’s labyrinths or Eco’s monasteries as knowledge-power nexuses. Further, this level incorporates ontological dimensions: Jungian analysis views spaces like mountains as individuation symbols, while in Uzbek texts, sacred sites mirror inward journeys, blending physical and psychic realms.

Fragmented and intertextual postmodern time-space – Postmodernism fractures mythic coherence, destabilizing centers and peripheries. Borges’s infinite libraries and Eco’s narratives turn time nonlinear and space into sign-plays, as in Pelevin’s hyperreal myths. This fragmentation ironizes sacred-profane binaries, emphasizing intertextual fluidity over metaphysical certainty.

Psychological and ontological dimension – Jung’s theory uncovers psychic depths: labyrinths symbolize complexity, deserts purification. In *The Four Directions of the Qibla*, journeys reflect individuation; Campbell’s hero myth supports

this archetypal path. Bakhtin's chronotope frames Uzbek time as historical-mythical hybrids, linking memory to experience.

Additionally, these levels interact dynamically: postmodern irony revitalizes ancient cycles, while psychological archetypes humanize symbolic spaces, fostering polyphonic narratives.

DISCUSSION

Mythopoetic time and space extend far beyond aesthetic embellishments; they form foundational cultural, philosophical, and psychological architectures that profoundly influence literature and human consciousness. Culturally, they delineate cosmos from chaos, with sacred sites – mountains, shrines, pilgrimage routes – serving as existential anchors. Eliade notes, "To step into sacred space is to step into reality; all else is profane illusion" [7: 24], highlighting how these constructs provide meaning amid uncertainty.

In modernist adaptations, mythic time evolves into subjective memory: Proust's involuntary recollections and Joyce's epiphanic day mirror cosmic archetypes through personal lenses. Bakhtin's chronotope elucidates how time-space embodies narrative philosophy. Postmodernism, however, introduces irony and deconstruction: Borges and Eco craft playful labyrinths, subverting mythic certainty for intertextual exploration. Eco writes, "Postmodernism is the awareness that the past cannot be destroyed but must be revisited with irony" [6: 67], emphasizing reinterpretation over erasure.

Psychologically, these elements tap the collective unconscious: Jungian labyrinths metaphorize psyche's intricacies, deserts existential catharsis. Ricœur's narrative time binds mythic, historical, and existential strands. Aesthetically, Bachelard highlights poetic evocation: deserts signify inner voids, mountains transcendence, roads destiny. In modern and Uzbek novels, these become inner metaphors, unifying memory, archetypes, and symbolism into multi-layered texts.

CONCLUSION

This extended study affirms mythopoetic time and space as enduring archetypal frameworks profoundly influencing literary imagination across cultures and eras. Mythic time dismantles historical linearity, cycling back to sacred origins, yet modern novels adapt it into subjective memory-time (Proust) or cosmic compression (Joyce). Mythic space, sacred and centered, evolves in literature into metaphysical landscapes (Borges's labyrinths, Muxtor's desert) mirroring existential challenges. Postmodern works fragment and ironize these, creating sign-plays (Borges, Eco, Pelevin).

Psychologically, they manifest archetypal truths, enabling journeys of individuation and self-confrontation (Jung, Campbell). Barthes's insight endures: "Myth is a system of communication, a message; it transforms history into nature" [3: 109]. Thus, mythopoetic elements link narratives to cultural memory, archetypes, and existential depth, enriching texts philosophically, psychologically, and aesthetically.

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