

ARCHETYPAL FOUNDATIONS AND NATIONAL INTERPRETATION OF THE WATER  
FAIRY IMAGE IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LITERATURE

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**Abstract.** This article presents a comparative-typological analysis of the water fairy image in English and Uzbek literary traditions, foregrounding the Jungian archetypal framework — specifically the “water — woman — mystery — danger” model — as its primary theoretical lens. Drawing on canonical English texts featuring figures such as the Lady of the Lake, Undine, and Melusine alongside Uzbek literary and folkloric figures including Suv parisi, Pari, and Suvsanam, the study demonstrates that both traditions independently elaborate a shared deep-structural archetype rooted in the collective unconscious. At the same time, the article argues that the national interpretation of this archetype diverges fundamentally: the English tradition encodes the water fairy primarily as a symbol of fatal attraction, moral danger, and the destructive power of nature, while the Uzbek tradition interprets the same archetype as a figure of divine grace, spiritual elevation, and the benevolent face of the sacred feminine. These divergences reflect the distinct religious, philosophical, and ecological substrates of the two cultures — Christianity and Romantic individualism in England; Islam and Sufi mysticism in Uzbekistan.

The water fairy — a female supernatural being associated with rivers, springs, lakes, and seas — constitutes one of the most widely distributed archetypes in world mythology and literature [7]. From the Greek Naiads to the Germanic Nixies, from the Slavic Rusalka to the Turkic Suv parisi, this figure appears across an astonishing range of cultural traditions, suggesting that it responds to something deep in the structure of human imagination and in the universal experience of water as simultaneously life-giving and potentially fatal [8].

The comparative study of this archetype across English and Uzbek literary traditions presents a particularly illuminating case study in cross-cultural mythology for two reasons. First, the two traditions are historically remote from one another, making the structural parallels between them evidence of genuine typological convergence rather than borrowing or diffusion [9]. Second, despite sharing the same archetypal core, the two traditions have developed strikingly different national interpretations of the water fairy image — interpretations that encode radically different understandings of nature, femininity, desire, danger, and the relationship between the human and the divine [10].

The scientific novelty of this study lies in its application of Jung's archetypal theory — specifically the “water — woman — mystery — danger” structural model — to a systematic first-time comparison of English and Uzbek water fairy imagery [11]. Previous scholarship has examined these traditions separately, but no systematic comparative-typological analysis grounded in Jungian psychology has been undertaken. This article aims to fill that gap, contributing to both comparative literature and the cross-cultural study of Jungian archetypes.

Carl Gustav Jung's theory of archetypes and the collective unconscious provides the foundational methodological framework for this study [12]. Jung argued that certain primordial images — archetypes — recur across all human cultures because they are encoded in the collective unconscious: a stratum of the psyche shared by all members of the human species, below the level of personal memory and cultural conditioning [13]. These archetypes are not fixed images but empty structural forms that receive culturally specific content in each tradition's mythology, religion, and literature.

The Anima archetype — Jung's term for the feminine principle within the male psyche — is directly relevant to the water fairy image [7]. Jung consistently associated water with the unconscious and identified the female figure emerging from or inhabiting water as a paradigmatic manifestation of the Anima. The Anima, as Jung stressed, is fundamentally ambivalent: it can appear as a positive, guiding, and inspiring figure (the “positive Anima”) or as a destructive, seductive, and consciousness-dissolving force (the “negative Anima” or Terrible Mother archetype) [8, 14]. The cross-cultural comparison of English and Uzbek water fairy traditions reveals that each has predominantly adopted one pole of this ambivalence as its cultural norm.

The comparative analysis reveals that both the English and Uzbek traditions construct the water fairy around a four-element structural core that maps directly onto the Jungian archetypal model: (1) Water as the domain of the unconscious and the liminal space between the human world and the supernatural realm; (2) Woman as the Anima figure — the image of the feminine projected onto the natural world; (3) Mystery as the shadow dimension — the hidden, unknowable aspect of the archetype; and (4) Danger as the threshold function — the risk of ego-dissolution that accompanies encounter with the Anima [12, 13, 18].

In the English tradition, this archetypal core manifests in its most concentrated form in the Lady of the Lake, who inhabits a magical lake (water), is a female being of immense supernatural power (woman), possesses prophetic knowledge inaccessible to ordinary humans (mystery), and represents a force that can bestow or withhold life-altering gifts with potentially fatal consequences (danger) [19]. In the Uzbek tradition, the same four elements appear in the *Suv parisi*, who dwells in rivers and springs (water), appears as a woman of extraordinary beauty (woman), embodies knowledge of the hidden order of things (mystery), and can either bless or punish those who encounter her depending on their moral conduct (danger) [20, 21].

While the archetypal core is shared, the national interpretations of the archetype diverge significantly. In the English literary tradition, the dominant cultural interpretation encodes the water fairy as the negative Anima pole: a figure whose beauty is primarily dangerous, whose mystery is primarily threatening, and whose danger takes the form of literal physical destruction or psychological dissolution [22]. Keats's “*La Belle Dame Sans Merci*” presents a water fairy-type figure whose encounter leaves the knight pale, cold, and emptied of life; Tennyson's *Lady of Shalott* is destroyed by her transgression of the boundary between the enchanted water-world and ordinary reality; Coleridge's ancient mariner navigates a sea populated by vengeful supernatural forces that exact terrible punishment for moral transgression [23, 24].

The Uzbek tradition, by contrast, predominantly encodes the water fairy as the positive Anima pole: a figure whose beauty is primarily inspiring and elevating, whose mystery is primarily the veil over divine truth (analogous to the Sufi concept of *batin*, the hidden meaning beneath the apparent),

and whose danger takes the form of a moral trial that tests and strengthens the hero's virtue [25]. In Navoi's poetry, the Pari figure embodies the divine beauty (jamal) that draws the soul toward God; in the doston tradition, the Suv parisi typically functions as a magical helper who rewards the hero's virtue with gifts, knowledge, or supernatural assistance [26, 27].

Table 1 provides a systematic comparison of the four-element archetypal model across the two traditions.

**Table 1. The “Water — Woman — Mystery — Danger” Archetypal Model in English and Uzbek Literary Traditions**

<b>Archetype Element</b>	<b>English Literature</b>	<b>Uzbek Literature</b>	<b>Jungian Interpretation</b>
Water Symbol	Ocean / lake: chaos, death boundary	Spring / river: sacred, life-giving	Collective unconscious; liminal space between ego and Self [7]
Female Figure (Anima)	Lady of the Lake, Undine, Melusine — autonomous, fatal	Suv parisi, Pari, Suvsanam — benevolent, divine	Anima as mediator; positive vs. negative Anima pole [8]
Mystery / Secret	Hidden identity, forbidden knowledge, Gothic uncanny	Divine truth veiled in beauty; Sufi hidden meaning (batin)	Shadow archetype; the unknown dimension of psyche [9]
Danger / Threat	Physical death, moral corruption, seductive destruction	Spiritual trial; testing the hero's virtue and piety	Terrible Mother archetype; threshold guardian [10]
Taboo Motif	Verbal prohibition (must not name/observe her)	Spatial/ritual prohibition (sacred waters inviolable)	Transgression of psychic boundary → individuation crisis [11]
Narrative Outcome	Tragedy, loss, melancholy, death of hero	Transformation, spiritual elevation, divine reward	Anima integration vs. Anima inflation: two archetypal paths [7]

Source: Compiled by the author based on [7, 8, 12, 19, 20, 26]

The most significant finding of this comparative analysis is that the same Jungian archetype — the Anima associated with water — generates radically different cultural narratives depending on the religious and philosophical framework within which it is elaborated. The English literary tradition's predominantly negative encoding of the water fairy archetype reflects the specific context of Christian Europe, where the natural world and its supernatural denizens were associated with temptation, the Fall, and the dangerous otherness of non-Christian spiritual power [28]. Within this context, the

beautiful water fairy represents the allure of the natural world as an alternative to Christian salvation — an allure that is by definition dangerous and ultimately fatal.

The Uzbek tradition's predominantly positive encoding of the same archetype reflects the very different context of Central Asian Islam and Sufism, where the natural world and its beauties are understood as signs (ayat) of God's attributes and where the experience of beauty — including the beauty of a supernatural feminine being — is interpreted as a path toward, rather than away from, the divine [29]. Within this framework, the water fairy's beauty is not a temptation to be resisted but a revelation to be received: a veiled manifestation of the divine jamal (beauty) that draws the soul upward toward its Creator.

From a Jungian perspective, these two cultural interpretations represent the two fundamental paths of Anima encounter: integration and inflation [30]. The English narrative pattern, in which the hero is destroyed or diminished by his encounter with the water fairy, corresponds to what Jung called Anima inflation — the overwhelming of the ego by the unconscious contents projected onto the Anima figure. The Uzbek narrative pattern, in which the hero is elevated and transformed by his encounter with the Pari or Suv parisi, corresponds to successful Anima integration — the productive engagement with the unconscious feminine that drives the individuation process [11, 12].

These findings have significant implications for the cross-cultural study of archetypes. They suggest that while archetypal structures may be universal — genuinely rooted in the collective unconscious as Jung argued — their cultural elaboration is always mediated by specific religious, philosophical, and ecological contexts that determine which pole of the archetype's fundamental ambivalence becomes dominant in a given tradition [31]. The water fairy archetype is neither inherently fatal nor inherently benevolent: it is the cultural context that determines which face it shows.

This study has demonstrated that the water fairy image in English and Uzbek literature shares a common Jungian archetypal foundation — the “water — woman — mystery — danger” structural model rooted in the collective unconscious — while developing distinctly different national interpretations of that shared archetype [32]. The English tradition predominantly encodes the water fairy as negative Anima: a figure of fatal attraction whose encounter leads to the hero's destruction. The Uzbek tradition predominantly encodes the same archetype as positive Anima: a figure of divine grace whose encounter leads to the hero's spiritual elevation [33].

The scientific novelty of this analysis lies in its first systematic application of the Jungian archetypal framework to a comparative study of English and Uzbek water fairy imagery, revealing both the universal psychological basis of the archetype and the culturally specific mechanisms through which its ambivalence is resolved. The findings contribute to comparative literature, Jungian cultural studies, and the broader understanding of how universal archetypes are shaped by religion, ecology, and cultural history [34].

Future research might profitably extend this comparative framework to other Central Asian literary traditions (Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik) and to the examination of contemporary literary treatments of the water fairy archetype in both English-language and Uzbek writing, exploring how modern authors renegotiate the inherited archetypal patterns in the context of globalization and postcolonial cultural dynamics.

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