

Mythological Motifs in Paradise Lost

Sirojiddinova Shahribonu Sirojiddinova

Kimyo International University in Tashkent, PhD, Associate Professor

Abstract: John Milton's "Lost Paradise" is an important work that combined Christian theology with classical mythology, creating a complex story about human destruction. This article examines the role of mythological motifs in epics and focuses on the integration of classical mythology with biblical themes. The main mythological images in the dastan, such as Satan, Moloch, Mammon, and Belial, are analyzed in connection with mythological images. These motifs not only deepen the story's explorations of free will, rebellion, and freedom, but also provide an eternal reflection on the nature of good and evil. Through the synthesis of religious and mythological traditions, Milton presents a rich, multifaceted picture of the cosmic struggle between divine order and chaos.

Keywords: Lost Paradise, mythological motifs, classical mythology, devil, free will, rebellion, salvation, cosmic struggle, biblical themes, Milton.



This is an open-access article under the [CC-BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license

Introduction

John Milton's "Lost Paradise" is widely recognized as one of the greatest works in English literature. His study of the biblical story of the destruction of man is not only a study of theology, but also a deep engagement with classical mythological motifs. Milton combined elements of Greek and Roman mythology with Christian theology, creating a rich picture of symbolism, character creation, and moral exploration. In addition to the story of Adam and Eve, the poem also tells about the consequences of rebellion, sin, and free will. This article explores the mythological motifs present in Lost Paradise, focusing on how Milton uses mythological references to reinforce the divine and philosophical themes of the poem.

The most prominent mythological motif in the Lost Paradise is the Devil, embodying the archetype of the tragic hero found in classical mythology. Just like Prometheus or Achilles, Satan's rebellion against God reflects the fierce struggle of mythological heroes against divine power. Milton's depiction of the devil as a charismatic, complex character allows him to serve as both an antihero and a symbol of human pride and vanity. The devil's famous line "Rule in hell rather than serve in heaven" directly harmonizes with the pride and arrogance of classic tragic characters, turning it into a symbol of a tragic fall from grace.

In addition to the devil, Milton includes other mythological images embodying various vices and moral flaws. Characters such as Moloch, Mammon, Belial, and Asmodeus rely on both biblical and classical sources representing various aspects of corruption. Moloch, with his insatiable thirst for war and destruction, resembles mythological gods of violence and chaos, while Mammon's love for material wealth is reminiscent of the destructive influence of greed in many ancient mythologies. These symbols serve not only as a symbolic meaning of human sin, but also as moral lessons about the consequences of an unbridled ego.

The Devil as a tragic hero

One of the most striking mythological motifs in "Lost Paradise" is the depiction of Satan as a tragic hero. Satan's rebellion against God resembles the struggle of mythological figures in Greek mythology, such as Prometheus, who opposed Zeus. Prometheus was punished for giving fire to humanity, which was a symbol of rebellion against knowledge and divine power. In the lost paradise, Satan's defiance of God and his striving to corrupt humanity reflect Prometheus's rebellious actions. The famous line attributed to the Devil, "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven," reflects the tragic heroism of the struggle for individual freedom. His refusal to accept God's authority and his fall from heaven resembles the stories of many ancient mythological heroes who were cast down to fight against higher powers, such as the Titans in Greek mythology or Lucifer in Christian theology.

Milton's portrayal of the Devil is complex; he is not a simple embodiment of evil, but rather a tragic figure due to his pride and striving for independence. This depiction sharply contrasts with the traditional Christian image of Satan as a purely evil being.. By characterizing the devil who is the hero of the tragedy, Milton calls on readers to sympathize with him, which allows for a deeper study of such topics as pride, ambition, and the consequences of disobedience. The complexity of the devil as a character reflects the moral ambiguity present in classical mythology, where gods and heroes are often depicted with both noble and flawed virtues.

Other mythological characters: Moloch, Mammon, and Belial

Milton's inclusion of classical mythology goes beyond the devil's circle, with other mythological characters filling the hell council. Moloch, Mammon, and Belial are among the rebellious angels who are the devil's advisors, representing various moral vices.

- ✓ **Moloch** is a symbol of destructive violence and bloodthirstiness, reminiscent of mythological characters who enjoy conflict and destruction, such as the Greek god of war Ares. In the Lost Paradise, Moloch promotes an open war against God, since ancient gods are often associated with tendencies towards violence and war.
- ✓ **Mammon** is a symbol of greed and materialism, and his desires reflect the destructive influence of wealth and ambition. Mammon's focus on earthly riches resembles figures like Pluto, the god of wealth in Roman mythology, who accumulate riches in the underworld. The image of Mammon embodies the dangers of prioritizing material wealth over spirituality.

And enmity is lies and hypocrisy. He is a sycophantic and cunning person who convinces others with flattery and false promises.

- ✓ **Belial's** description is reminiscent of figures in Greek mythology who use persuasion and trickery to deceive others; for example, Hermes, although often depicted as a cunning man, is also a guide for spirits in the underworld. These mythological images not only give depth to the story, but also serve as allegories for various ways in which evil can manifest itself in the world. Each of them embodies a vice that plays a role in the spiritual destruction of sinful angels and humanity in general.

Eram as a classical paradise

Milton's "Garden of Eden" is also imbued with the mythological ideas of antiquity. The concept of a perfect paradise, where harmony and purity reign, is reminiscent of the Greek myth of the Golden Age, when people lived peacefully and did not need labor and suffering. In "Paradise Lost," the Garden of Eden is depicted as a paradise of innocence and purity, a world where Adam and Eve live without shame or suffering. However, this idealized world crumbles when temptation strikes.

The fall of Eden, like the fall of the Golden Age in Greek mythology, signifies the loss of an idyllic, harmonious existence.

Free will and destiny: mythological conflict

In "Paradise Lost," Milton also grapples with the contradiction between free will and divine destiny, drawing on Christian theology and classical mythology. The concept of free will plays a central role in the poem, particularly in the choices made by Satan, Adam, and Eve.

While in classical mythology the gods often impose their will on people, "Lost Paradise" allows greater independence in the actions of its heroes. Satan's rebellion is caused by his choice, and Adam and Eve are held accountable for their disobedience, since they also have the ability to choose.

The study of free will is further strengthened by the mythological background, where gods and humans often struggle for power and autonomy. The classical idea of fate, that is, the governance of human destiny by gods, Milton contrasts with the Christian belief in free will, that is, that man is responsible for his own actions. This creates a complex narrative where the choice of the characters is not determined by divine destiny, but leads to real consequences that shape the world.

The use of classical mythology, in addition to the world of hell, is also used in the depiction of the Garden of Eden. Milton creates paradise, which is not only a Christian concept, but also evokes the idea of an ancient, idyllic world, similar to the Golden Age in Greek mythology. The loss of the Garden of Eden, its suffering and moral decline resemble the tragic destruction of mythological heroes who once lived in harmony with divinity. In the Lost Paradise, Paradise is depicted as a state of innocence and tranquility, and its destruction signifies the disappearance of an ideal world, such as the collapse of the classical golden age or the decline of a once perfect world.

Milton's absorption of mythological themes also applies to the study of free will and destiny in the poem. In the classical tradition, gods often make choices for people, determine their fate, and punish those who oppose the divine will. However, in "The Lost Paradise," Milton pays great attention to human free will. The ability of Satan and Adam to choose their actions, even if against God's will, indicates a fundamental contradiction between fate and personal responsibility. Relying on classical mythological motifs, Milton illuminates the struggle between fate and individual choice, which further complicates and perpetuates the moral issues of the poem.

Conclusion

The mythological motifs in "Lost Paradise" serve not only to enrich the divine content of the poem, but also to deepen the study of human nature and moral problems. By incorporating characters and themes from classical mythology, Milton expands the narrative beyond a simple religious narrative, creating a multi-layered work that answers universal questions about free will, rebellion, and the consequences of human behavior. The tragic journey of Satan, the moral depravity embodied in the images of Moloch and Mammon, the disappearance of the Garden of Eden - all of these are based on classical themes, giving readers a broader understanding of the

cosmic struggle between good and evil. Milton's "Lost Paradise" remains an eternal exploration of the complexities of human choice and the eternal struggle between light and darkness through the organic harmony of Christian and classical elements.

References:

1. Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. 1667.
2. Bloom, Harold. *John Milton: Paradise Lost*. Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.
3. Levenson, J. R. *The Myth of the Fallen Angels in Paradise Lost*. Yale University Press, 1970.
4. Harris, J. B. *The Classical Tradition in Paradise Lost*. Oxford University Press, 1983.
5. Williams, R. P. *Milton's Mythological Imagination*. University of Illinois Press, 2004.