

Folklore Images and Their Artistic Features in Storytelling (Based on The Works of Gafur Ghulam And the Brothers Grimm)

Boltayeva Lobar Isomiddin qizi

Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature, named after Alisher Navoi, 2 nd-year Basic Doctoral Student, Department of Uzbek Literature and Teaching Methods, Uzbekistan

Received: 16 March 2026; **Accepted:** 05 April 2026; **Published:** 30 April 2026

Abstract: This article provides a scholarly analysis of the healer and Death as depicted in Gafur Ghulam's short story "Afandi o'lmaydigan bo'ldi" ("Afandi Became Immortal") and the Brothers Grimm fairy tale "Godfather Death." In both works, satirical and fantastical elements characteristic of folk oral tradition are employed to illuminate humanity's attitudes toward fate, death, and deception. Based on the characters' traits, the study identifies both common ground and distinguishing features between them. The research further examines the artistic interpretation of these images, their social and aesthetic significance, and the moral lessons they convey to the reader.

Keywords: Afandi, Death, healer, folklore, image, satire, symbolism.

Introduction: Folklore images recur throughout the various stages of literary history, appearing in ever-renewed interpretations. The figure of the healer and Death, in particular, is widely prevalent in oral folk tradition, where humanity's relationship to mortality — the desire to escape fate or the belief that Death can be deceived — is expressed through satirical or philosophical registers. This archetype has been revisited by numerous writers in literary fiction, enriched each time with a distinctive ideological and artistic content.

One of the most vivid examples of this image in Uzbek literature is Gafur Ghulam's short story "Afandi o'lmaydigan bo'ldi." Written in a satirical style, the work conveys socially critical meaning through folk humor and wit. In the central character of Afandi — a simple yet brilliantly clever representative of the common people — the story portrays a uniquely bold and courageous stance in the face of Death.

A parallel image exists in Western literature as well. In the Brothers Grimm fairy tale "Godfather Death," the

character of the young man serves as a vehicle for exploring the themes of the healer's role, a face-to-face encounter with Death, and humanity's relationship to fate — rendered in a fantastical mode. In both works, the protagonists attempt to deceive Death, yet their ultimate fates are presented in markedly different ways.

This article undertakes a comparative and theoretical analysis of the healer and Death as figures in these two works, illuminating their artistic and philosophical dimensions as well as their symbolic interpretations within folk worldviews. The study's aim is to demonstrate, on a scholarly basis, how enduring folkloric archetypes manifest themselves across different cultural and literary contexts.

THE HEALER AND DEATH IN "AFANDI O'LMAYDIGAN BO'LDI"

Gafur Ghulam is one of the outstanding representatives of Uzbek prose, whose work harmoniously blends folk satire, keen observation of life, and a richly symbolic style of expression. He is recognized as a writer who

forged a distinctive voice not only in longer narrative fiction but in the short story genre as well. Such works as "Hiylayi shar'iy" ("A Pious Ruse," 1930), "Mening o'g'rigina bolam" ("My Rascal of a Child," 1965), "Luqmon," "Soat" ("The Watch"), "Farzandi solih" ("The Righteous Son"), and "Qizaloq" ("The Little Girl") give vivid expression to national character and folk ways of thinking. Among these, "Afandi o'lmaydigan bo'ldi" stands out for its philosophical and satirical orientation.

The plot of the story draws on one of the most celebrated figures in oral folk tradition — Nasriddin Afandi (Hodja Nasreddin). Events begin as Afandi returns from the market and, examining three copper coins in his hand, holds a conversation with himself. The passage illuminates the social power of money and its influence upon human consciousness:

"Without those coins, your dignity is worthless, your wit and wisdom amount to nothing, your kinsmen become strangers, friends and companions keep their distance, every door is shut in your face, your feet are cut off from the market, your children go hungry, and you yourself go naked..." [8.327].

Through this portrayal, the author reveals not merely the economic value of money, but its socio-psychological impact as well. Although Afandi's speech takes the form of folk humor, it depicts the genuine circumstances of those without means — their estrangement from others, the withdrawal even of those closest to them. In this way, money is interpreted as "the force that determines power and destiny within society." As the story unfolds, Afandi encounters Azrael (the Angel of Death). This episode constitutes the central nexus of the healer-and-Death motif. Azrael offers Afandi the role of healer:

"Healing requires learning, and I am utterly illiterate — I cannot even recognize the letter alif for a stick, and I cannot tell measles from a boil, sir," said Afandi. "Learning is not required for healing. The finest healers come from ordinary folk just like you," said Azrael... [8.331].

Through this exchange, the author raises the issue of charlatans within society — the unlettered who nonetheless present themselves as healers. This image has lost none of its contemporary relevance. The author delivers a sharp critique of such social ills as fraud, the pursuit of wealth without honest labor, and

the pretense of expertise in a field where one has none.

As the scholar notes [11.20], Gafur Ghulam drew productively on folk anecdotes and legends, transforming them into artistically shaped works charged with social meaning. Thus, "Afandi o'lmaydigan bo'ldi" is not merely an amusing tale, but a work that gives expression to a philosophy of life.

THE HEALER AND DEATH IN "GODFATHER DEATH"

The Brothers Grimm's celebrated fairy tale "Godfather Death" is one of the philosophically and didactically charged narratives of European folklore. Through the portrayal of a poor young man, the work explores, in artistic terms, humanity's relationship to fate and death. Death is chosen as the young man's godfather precisely because Death is interpreted as the sole truly just force in the world — one who spares neither the rich nor the poor, neither the young nor the old. In this way, Death appears in the tale as "the sole force capable of creating balance in life." Death instructs the young man in the secret of healing:

"When thou art called to a patient, I will always appear to thee. If I stand by the head of the sick man, thou mayst say with confidence that thou wilt make him well again, and if thou givest him of this herb he will recover; but if I stand by the patient's feet, he is mine..." [1.172].

This episode demonstrates that the healer's true power lies not in knowledge or experience, but in Death's permission. In this tale, therefore, the healer is interpreted as "an intermediary of fate."

The protagonist initially cures numerous patients, as in the manner of the tale, and thereby acquires fame. The most critical turning point of the plot, however, comes when he defies Death's will and uses the herb in a forbidden circumstance. Consequently, Death warns him and punishes him. Through this, the tale conveys the message that if a person acts against the universal laws of life in pursuit of personal gain, he is destined to be defeated.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE HEALER AND DEATH IMAGES

Both Gafur Ghulam's "Afandi o'lmaydigan bo'ldi" and the Grimm fairy tale "Godfather Death" interpret, each in its own distinctive way, the relationship between human beings and mortality. In both works, the protagonist steps onto the stage driven by a desire to

prolong life or to deceive Death. Yet the manner in which this desire is presented, its interpretation, and its ultimate moral evaluation manifest themselves in markedly different ways.

First, the sources from which the image originates differ. "Afandi o'Imaydigan bo'ldi" belongs to the satirical-realist tradition, in which philosophical content is revealed through humor. The Grimm fairy tale, by contrast, is fantastical and didactic in character, with moral meaning occupying the dominant position.

Second, there is a significant difference in the protagonists' attitudes toward Death. Afandi regards Death as an equal adversary and strives to outwit him through cleverness and ingenuity. The Grimm protagonist, on the other hand, initially accepts Death as a master and fears him; ultimately, however, he acts in his own self-interest and is punished for his betrayal.

Third, the interpretation of the healer image also differs. In "Afandi o'Imaydigan bo'ldi," Afandi attains the role of healer through deception and cunning, and the work offers a critique of the fraudulent practitioners found within society. In the Brothers Grimm tale, on the other hand, the protagonist acquires the art of healing through the secret gifted to him by Death — his power depends not on knowledge but on the permission granted by fate. Thus, in both works, the figure of the healer is employed not as a sacred vocation, but as an instrument for exposing human failings.

As the foregoing analysis makes clear, although the images of the healer and Death are interpreted differently in Eastern and Western literary traditions, their essential content remains the same: human frailty in the face of fate and mortality, yet the simultaneous aspiration — through intellect and force of will — to persist in living. In Gafur Ghulam's work this image is rendered through laughter; in the Grimm fairy tale it is illuminated as a moral lesson. This analysis demonstrates that folkloric archetypes never lose their relevance in any era or society. The theme of Death is one of the most ancient philosophical questions in human history, one that continues to manifest itself in ever-new artistic forms and contemporary interpretations.

CONCLUSION

The comparative study of the healer and Death

archetypes in Gafur Ghulam's "Afandi o'Imaydigan bo'ldi" and the Brothers Grimm's "Godfather Death" reveals that despite their distinct cultural and literary origins, both works engage with the same fundamental human questions: the inevitability of mortality, the limits of human agency, and the social dimensions of power and deception. While Ghulam employs folk satire to critique contemporary social ills, the Grimm tale uses the fantastical mode to deliver a timeless moral warning. Together, these works demonstrate the enduring vitality of folkloric archetypes across Eastern and Western literary traditions, affirming that the images born of oral folk culture retain their artistic and philosophical relevance across generations and civilizations.

REFERENCES

1. Grimm, J. & Grimm, W. Household Tales, trans. Margaret Hunt. London: George Bell, 1884.
2. Karimov N., Mamajonov S., Nazarov B. et al. History of 20th Century Literature. Tashkent: O'qituvchi, 1999. 544 p.
3. Kiyikbayev F. Children's Literature. Andijan, 2020. 255 p.
4. Matyakubova T.R. Poetic character and its specific features. Theoretical & Applied Science. Marseille, 2015. pp. 40–43.
5. Matyakubova T., & Yakubov I. Laboratory works of Gafur Gulam: poetic image and imagery. Journal of Critical Reviews, No. 7, 2020. pp. 28–37.
6. Matyakubova T. Poetic imagery of nature. Theoretical & Applied Science, 2023. 02 (118). pp. 521–524.
7. Nosirjanovna Sh. Genre diversity and internal development of Gafur Ghulam's prose heritage. Proceedings of the 28th Republican Multi-Branch Scientific Online Conference on Scientific-Practical Research in Uzbekistan.
8. Gafur Ghulam. Selected Works: Poetry and Prose. Tashkent: Gafur Ghulam Publishing and Printing Creative House, 2021. p. 352.
9. Sharafiddinov O. Brilliance of Talent: Literary Portraits. Tashkent: Gafur Ghulam Literature and Art Publishing House, 1976. 232 p.
10. Gafur Ghulam in the Memoirs of His Contemporaries / Compiled by Olmos. Tashkent:

Gafur Ghulam Publishing and Printing Creative House, 2003. 95 p.

- 11.** The Spiritual and Educational Significance of Gafur Ghulam's Work. Editors: Doctors of Philology Naim Karimov and Tura Mirzayev. Tashkent: Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2003. 40 p.