
**A Look at the Heroes' Journeys in the Seven Labors of Rostam and
Antarahah Ibn Shaddad al-Absi's "Mu'allaqah"**

Dr. Ahmadreza Heidarian Shahri

**Associate Professor in Arabic Language and Literature, Ferdowsi University of
Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran**

Mansoureh Haji Hadiyan¹

**PhD Candidate in Persian Language and Literature, Ferdowsi University of
Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran**

Received 18 May 2014

Accepted 3 February 2015

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The story of a hero's journey and weathering arduous stages for the purpose of accomplishing a specific objective and subsequently bestowing the gifts of that tortuous journey on companions is an archetype which instigated Joseph Campbell (1904-1987), an American mythologist, to propound a comprehensive outline to portray an archetype of a heroes' journey, with regard to numerous evidences in varied stories and myths.

The writers of the present study aim, using a descriptive-analytical methodology, to identify the structural similarities and differences of related patterns, from an archetypal literary criticism point of view, in the journeys of heroes in "the seven labors of Rostam" of Shahname [the epic of kings] written by the Persian master poet Ferdowsi and "Mu'allaqat" written by Antarah Ibn Shaddad, one of Jahiliyyah [ignorance] period's poets.

2. Theoretical Framework

Among the studies conducted on the Arabic literature, [to the best of author's knowledge] no research has been undertaken investigating Antarah's Muallaqeh utilizing the same approach and methodology as the present paper. Similarly, within the domain of contrastive literature, no research has investigated the two poems from the perspective of their heroes' pattern of journeys, contrasting their structures. Thus, the authors in the present study, in the light of mutual interactions, through presenting epic sings and re-reading heroic signs in both Antarah's poetry and Ferdowsi's The Seven Labors of Rostam, will look into their commonalities apropos the hero's journeys (as proposed by Campbell's Monomyth); to this end, the authors try to depict that regardless of some points of divergence, literary

¹ Corresponding Author: ma_ha514@stu_mail.aui.ac.ir

works in Arabic and Persian, based on the pattern of hero's journey propounded by Campbell, can be studied comparatively.

3. Research Method

In the present study, texts and library documents were reviewed using a descriptive-analytical methodology. Content pertaining to the issue at was obtained from credible sources and formed the basis for the background of the study and its literature while serving as a yardstick for describing, analyzing and comparing the archetypal criticism of the two works' structure.

The fundamental questions of the research, given that investigating with and adapting Campbell's structural pattern to the stories of various nations will undoubtedly yield similarities and differences in structural flow, are as follows: Considering the previously mentioned pattern, can Antarah's poetry be regarded as an epic like Ferdowsi's *The Seven Labors of Rostam* and does Antarah boast the sings of an epic hero like Rostam? Can points of convergence and divergence during the processes of heroes' monomyths in the works of the two authors be traced using mythological criticism and archetypal fundamentals, based on the mentioned theory? To what degree can the pattern proposed by Campbell account for the entirety of the stages of heroes' journey in this study?

4. Research Findings and Discussion

The findings of the present research concerning comparative reading of heroes' journeys in *The Seven Labors of Rostam* by Ferdowsi and *Mu'allaqah* by Antarah Ibn Shaddad al-*Abasi*, based on Campbell's structural pattern, are illustrative of struggles governing Antarah's poetry which is a combination of struggles with inner anomalies together with ethnic and national struggles; issues which have been the subject matter of narratives and myths. In a way that through having a main event, war, defending the tribe's honor and sacrificing selfhood to social demands and other extraneous stories, the hero is capable of surmounting his individual limits, undergoing tests in formidable stages, weathering all of that and eventually offering the outcome of his journey to his people, bringing about complete unity in the myth.

5. Conclusion

The conclusion which was reached following a comparative re-reading of the two works based on the Campbell's pattern reveals that points of divergence, refusal of invitation at the departure or separation in *The Seven Labors of Rostam* don't have any equivalent in Antarah's work, but the latter is s.th that in Antarah's poem the protagonist first refrains from accepting. Type and the number of hardships used as tests in the two poems constitutes another point of divergence. A third difference

is the phases of answering the call and deification which are amalgamated in Antarah's poem but in The Seven Labours of Rostam they correspond separately. During the stage of reunion with father, both heroes are freed from father/king's servitude and gain power and high status and present the outcome of their journey to the tribe / countrymen. During the return stage, which in the two poems is only comparable to "magic flight" or "rescue from without" in Campbell's stages, both heroes are the very supernatural aides which have come to assist the father/king, bestowing on them a prominent, epic status.

Keywords: archetype; hero's journey, the Seven Labors of Rostam, Antarah's Muallaqah.

References (in Persian)

- Ahmadi, B. (1999). *Creation and freedom*. Tehran, Iran: Nashre Markaz.
- Campbell, J. (1999). *The hero with a thousand faces* (S. Khosrowpanah, Trans.). Tehran, Iran: Gole Aftab.
- Campbell, J. (1999). *The power of myth*. Tehran, Iran: Nashre Markaz.
- Eliade, M. (1983). *The aspects of myth* (J. Sattari, Trans.). Tehran, Iran: Toos.
- Mortāz, A. (2007). *A semiotic study of al-Mu'allaqāt al-Sab'a* (S. H. Seydi, Trans.). Mashhad, Iran: Ferdowsi University Press.
- Zarrinkoub, A. (1990). *Aristotle and poetics*. Tehran, Iran: Amirkabir.

References (in Arabic)

- Ibn Manzour, A. J.-a. D. M.-b.-M. (1986). *Lisan al-Arab*. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Haya al-Arabi.
- Zouzani, A. H. b. A. (1993). *Sharhi al-Mu'allaqāt al-Sab'a*. Beirut, Lebanon: Al-Dar al-Alimiyyah.