

The Missing Story of Zal's Death: A Mythological Approach to His Personality and Fate based on Post-Jungian Criticism

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Abstract

Post-Jungian criticism is an approach that has continued and developed Jungian criticism. Due to the ambiguity around Zal's fate in the existing sources, and his reputation for immortality, the present paper has, for the first time, identified the narrative of the death of Zal in a manuscript of *Shahnameh*, and, then, analyzed the relationship between this new narrative and the myth of Zal in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* and its sources. Because Zal's immortality is important in Jungian criticism of this myth, the discovery of the story of Zal's death is the most important reason for this paper's Post-Jungian critical approach. The paper shows that archetypal images associated with the myth of Zal represent the character of an ancient shaman. This figure fulfills such functions as magic, mediumship between the nation and their totemic gods, witch doctor, spiritual healer and intuitive knowledge. From a Jungian perspective, the archetypal image of Zal's personality gave him a complementary (secondary) role in the initiation of the hero (Rostam). But the post-Jungian approach replaces the old archetype of wisdom with the archetype of death and rebirth, and develops the core meaning of the myth of Zal to his initiation on the way to his unity with his totemic ancestor (Simorgh).

Keywords: Post-Jungian Criticism, Archetype, Dastan/Zal, Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, The Wise Old Man

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The fate of Zal in *Shahnamneh* is one of the most ambiguous parts of his story. In his book *Ostureh-ye Zal*, Mohammad Mokhatari regards Zal as the human manifestation of Zarvan (god of time) and interprets his fate as his immortality, which is one of the most accepted interpretations of this story. Most of the

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studies so far have come to the same conclusion. The present study challenges this idea and holds that the absence of Zal's death in the most widely read version of *Shahnameh* does not necessarily mean that this story is missing in other sources of *Shahnameh*. Regarding his immortality, three different fates can be found for Zal in the sources of Ferdowsi's era.

2. Theoretical Framework

In the present paper, the story of Zal is studied independently and his fate is examined based on some newly emerged documents that challenge the idea of his immortality held by most scholars. Here, the post-Jungian approach is adopted to examine the story of Zal as it enables us to compare this character with the archetype of the old wise man in Jungian psychology.

3. Methodology

The missing story of Zal's death in the older versions of *Shahnameh* is compared with a new text in the version kept in Berlin Library. The post-Jungian theory is utilized here to analyze the structure of the story of Zal and compare it with the Jungian archetype of the old wise man.

4. Discussion and Analysis

In the version of *Shahnamen* in Berlin Library, after selecting Hoday as his successor, Bahman is killed in a fight. In *Bahman-nameh*, Azarbarzin, Faramarz's son, accompanies Bahman in this fight but does not help him. But in the new version, he is Zal's son and kills the dragon and Bahman at the same time in revenge for Faramarz's murder, and Zal, who is beset by Bahman's injustice dies in peace as he says prayers after hearing the news. In the archetypal, post-Jungian analysis, Zal is the shaman of a god. His death while saying prayers can be interpreted as the mystical concept of the voluntary death. His death can be related to the archetype of death and rebirth, symbolizing immortality.

5. Conclusion

In the Jungian approach, the old wise man is an element that completes individuality, such as the role Zal plays for Rostam. From a post-Jungian perspective, the archetype is based on the plurality of images, most of which in the story of Zal are connected with his role as a shaman. Zal is a medium that, with the help of the symbolic *simorgh*, protects justice and peace in the world and curbs natural forces. Zal cannot be regarded as the human manifestation of Zarvan, as Kiyoumars, based on older sources, seems to fit this description better. The most important archetype in the analysis of the story of Zal is the

archetype of death and rebirth, which is the counterpart for the Jungian old wise man.

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