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Original Research Article

The Mythical Analysis of the Great War in the Illustrations of Shamloo's Shahnama, The Illustrated Epic of Kings Based on Northrop Frye's Archetypal Approach*

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Abstract

The art of any nation is deeply rooted in the beliefs, ideology, and mythology of its people, and decoding it requires knowledge of their myths. Mythical criticism is an interdisciplinary approach that deals with the interpretation of a literary work and identifying the sources of myths in that work based on anthropology, psychology, the history of religions, and the history of civilization. Since the Shahnama, The Epic of Kings by Ferdowsi has a profoundly mythological plot line, it's worthy of archetypal analysis. This research attempts to analyze and interpret the archetype of the Great War in the Epic of Kings based on Northrop Frye's viewpoint. Thus, the selected illustrations in this essay are analyzed using structuralism. Frye's view is based on the zeitgeist and draws attention to placing art and literature in the space created by archetypal symbols and the seasonal cycle with a universal classification. For this purpose, first, the theoretical definitions and the way the myths were created are studied. Then, the statistical population is introduced and described. In the following sections of the research study, the analysis will be done using Frye's approach as the dominant approach. At the end of the research, it turned out that the narrative of The Great War and The Selected illustrations of the Epic of Kings are significantly compatible with Frye's mythical approach. Frye's archetypal symbols, which are three types of archetypal, demonic, and analogical imagery, have covered a high percentage of selected illustrations of Shamloo's Epic of Kings. It can be concluded that mythological and archetypal concepts and themes can be identified in the stages and elements of the illustrations. And these images are the messengers that convey the archetypal symbols and the way concepts and meanings are displayed in different literal and visual stages.

Keywords: *The Shahnama Illustration Method, Mythical criticism, The Great War, Shamloo's Shahnama, Northrop Frye.*

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Introduction and Problem Statment

A large part of the mythology of each nation talks about the creation and the beginning of existence, gods, and the relationship between man and

existence, and it represents the worldview of that nation in all aspects of life. Myth is a reaction to a man's inability to deal with his helplessness and his weakness in fulfilling his wishes. Due to the power of human imagination in this field, gods sometimes turn into earthly heroes and kings, and other times, mortal heroes or historical characters achieve immortality or god-like status. There are many different viewpoints on mythological critics. Of all theorists, this research analyzes the works based on Northrop Frye's approach, which has been overlooked by researchers. However, since the *Shahnama*, the *Epic of Kings* is a great work with a mythical theme, and it's been widely analyzed, the main goal of this analysis is to study the archetype of the Great War in the *Shahnama* by focusing on the case example the illustrations of Shamloo's *Shahnama* with the mythological approach. By studying the common features of literary works through the lens of the hero's journey, and realizing that the reason for using the hero's journey archetype is consistent across a large part of world literature, Frye concludes that literary and artistic works always follow a common general pattern, regardless of the culture, language and time in which they are born. Based on this commonality, he proposed the concept of a common literary tradition system.

Based on this concept, Frye proposed a model for analyzing and criticizing the archetype of literary works. Through this model, not only can the commonality between hero archetypes in different literary works be criticized parallel to each other, but that same commonality can also be used as a basis for comparing the hero's journey and the characters of literary works.

Now, this question is raised: In what form has Frye's intended triple-imagery archetype presented in Shamloo's *Shahnama*? Considering the function of myth in the text and the role of myth in the *Shahnama*, the main goal of this analysis is to study

the archetype of the Great War in the *Shahnama* by focusing on the case example of the illustrations of Shamloo's *Shahnama* with the mythological approach.

Research Background

To introduce the stylistics of *Shahnameh* illustrations, Kaikhosravi Kiany (2016) presented a stylistic analysis of illustrations of Shamloo's *Shahnama*. at the University of Isfahan. In this thesis, she selected 11 illustrations out of 44 available editions after a comprehensive introduction and analyzed them based on the coloration, the selection and execution of composition and framing, and the influence of previous schools of thought.

On the other hand, Vahid Rooyani (2014), published an article in the *Journal of Literary Critical Studies* related to the ancient archetype of the Great War, which is the focus of this analysis, in which he concludes that the Great War of Kaykhosro employs a collective once again, and considering the archetype of Good and Evil in the collective unconscious of Iranians in this story, it manifests again and leads to harmony and coordination between earthly and human beings with mythical beings and unites human and the universe.

One of the pertinent studies in literature that adopted a mythological criticism approach was conducted by Farzad Ghaemi (2010) who analyzed the story of Kaykhosro in *Shahnama* based on the mythical criticism approach with an archetypal theme. He examined the narrative index of Kaykhosro in terms of conformity with the four main archetypes derived from the myth-cognitive turning points of the symbolic life and death of this mythical character and ultimately interpreted the end of the story based on this perspective.

The researcher under study is Northrop Frye. In a thesis at Allameh Tabatabai University, Neda

Hajnorouzi (2012), analyzed the story of Siavash based on Northrop Frye's approach. She analyzed the narrative using a different approach and employed common concepts and terms of literary criticism. Initially, she presented the historical critique of the story of Siavash in Northrop Frye's proposed system, and then the story was studied from an ethical critique perspective.

In the research "Northrop Frye and mythical criticism, Mokhtarian (2009) also attempted to introduce this literary critic's experience in demonstrating the relationship between myth and literature, while briefly referring to Frye's position and new critique.

Among theorists in the field of myths, Northrop Frye, as a distinct theorist based on his works, has appeared the way that no viewpoint about archetype and mythology can ignore his viewpoint. This essay studies the illustrations of Shahnama from the perspective of analyzing myths based on the archetype of the Great War and seeks to explore and compare archetypal images and the theory of the four mythoi in these illustrations, which has not been adequately addressed in the previous essays.

Research Methodology

In this research, selected illustrations of Shamloo's Shahnama were analyzed based on Northrop Frye's theory using mythical criticism. The research data were collected using fieldwork and documentary methods from library resources and online platforms. At first, three illustrations of Shahnama were introduced and described. Then, three elements of Frye's archetypal approach, which are divine, demonic, and analogical, were identified and analyzed in these three images. Many features of this approach were presented using Frye's point of view and modeling archetypal images. The theory of four mythos was applied to the narrative of Kay Khosro's Great War, including the selected illustrations of Shahnama in this research.

Theoretical Foundations

• Archetype

Archetype (αρχέτυπο), is a Greek word. It consists of two Greek words: Arche and type. The term 'Arche' is an origin or beginning. In this case, it is an original pattern or template from which copies are made (Anuse, 1997, S.V. "Sarnemoon" in Persian). The archetype or archaic pattern is also translated as an eternal face, generic face, and a primordial model (Kazzazi, 1997, 72).

Archetype is a Jungian term referring to the contents of the collective unconscious, meaning deep-seated beliefs and instincts, or the human tendency to organize experiences based on pre-defined natural patterns (Shamisa, 2004, 39).

Jung divides the human psyche into two realms: consciousness and unconsciousness. All the mechanisms that are consciously carried out in a person are called consciousness, which means the bright side of the soul. On the contrary, unconsciousness includes the dark and mysterious side of the human psyche, which is beyond his consciousness (Jung, 2008, 59).

• Mythical criticism

The history of the mythical criticism approach should start with the anthropology of England and the research of anthropologists like Edward B. Taylor, Sir James G. Frazer, and the Hellenists of Cambridge, which started at the end of the 19th century.

In the 20th century, the use of this method became more literary, and the studies of the anthropologists who benefited from myth and literature were replaced by the creation of works that analyzed only literary and mythological works using these theoretical models and considered their literature review, not anthropological studies (Ghaemi et al., 2010, 48).

• Frye's semantic theory of symbols

Northrop Frye, a contemporary literary critic, divides archetypal imagery into three basic kinds:

apocalyptic, demonic, and analogical.

Apocalyptic images are pleasant images in which there's a tendency for unity, peace, and construction. On the other hand, there are demonic images, which are unpleasant and have a tendency for destruction, threat, and terror. In contrast to these completely pleasant and unpleasant worlds, there's an analogical world in which dual experience becomes possible as well (Namvar Motlagh, 2014, 38).

• **Apocalyptic imagery**

The first image that Frye refers to in his archetypal approach is apocalyptic imagery. The apocalyptic world or paradise of religions, in the first place, presents the concepts of reality in the form of human wishes; and the forms that it takes thanks to the work of human civilization are the indicators. For example, the form of human wishes in the vegetable world is a garden, a farm, a botanical garden, or a park. The humane form of the animal world is the world of domestic animals. In the human form of the mineral world, the form that a stone transforms into is a city.

The apocalyptic world presents the following model in the Bible.

- Divine world= society of gods= one God /trinity
- Human world society of men One man /men as members of one body
- Animal world sheepfold, one lamb
- Vegetable world garden or park= the tree of life
- Mineral world= a single building, a temple (or body), stone (Frye, 2012, 177)

• **Demonic imagery**

In contrast to apocalyptic images, we have demonic images. Compared to apocalyptic symbolism, the image of the world takes the form of a completely rejected in terms of wishes; and such a world is the world of nightmares, Azazel goat, captivity, agony, and distress. Such a world is where the human imagination hasn't reached yet, and the images of human wishes such as cities or gardens aren't firmly established yet. Such a world is a perverted work,

a wasted work, destruction and crypt, the means of torture and the memorials of madness (*ibid.*, 177).

• **Analogical imagery**

Apart from apocalyptic and demonic imagery, which are respectively symmetrical with the faces of heroes and myths, three intermediate structures of imagery, correspond to analogical imagery of heroes, and roughly to the romantic, high mimetic, and low mimetic modes.

The metaphorical mode of these three structures is so powerless that when they're received together, they form something that has to be called the atmosphere.

The romantic mode implies an ideal world. The core of romantic images is the analogy of innocence. The organizing thought of high mimetic mode is romance and image, and it can be considered as the analogy of nature and reason.

The low mimesis mode is a world that can be considered the analogy of hieratic symbols, and this world is related to the demonic world as the romantic world of innocence is related to the apocalyptic world (*ibid.*, 182-186).

• **The shahnama illustration method**

The Shahnama illustration method is a tradition that was popular before the invasion of the Mongols and probably even before Islam. It was a decorative art that was used for designing and decorating manuscripts. But today, it's more than a decorative art. It would be naïve to think the illustrations exist solely to decorate and design manuscripts because the Shahnama includes metatextual illustrations of its illustrators, artists discussing opposing opinions of the art style featured therein, and gatherings of people reading it (Mahvan et al., 2004, 55-56). Most of the themes in these artists' works are people's traditional lifestyle, royals, and people with elegant and luxurious clothes, which shows these illustrations are a historical record in their own right, rather than mere adornment. What's more, this is the time when the art style of Toreutics, a

kind of metalwork called qalamzani (engraving), becomes more important too (Tirgar, 2006, 17).

• **Shamloo’s Shahnama, the illustrated Shahnama**

This newly found Shahnama which is still wrapped in its Qajari embroidered cashmere, which is made with golden and silver silk thread, dates back to the last quarter of the 17th century. It contains in total of 44 illustrations on several pages, two illuminated front pages, and two triangular designs on the last page. The manuscript was written in the Nastaliq, Naskh script, by Johnny Ibn Mohammad Qasem Mohammad Momen known as Assah Kermani, and it has 456 sheets of 25×5/38 cm. Based on the writer’s note on the last page, this version of Shahnama, which is written on Dolatabadi paper, was finished under the name of Hossein Khan Shamloo in the capital of Herat on Wednesday, Sep 11, 2368. Although there’s no signature or illustrator’s name on these works, you can call out at least two painters Habibollah Savehii and Mohammadi Haravi based

on the written and illustrated evidence. This version, which was refurbished in the 13th century, contains 44 illustrations nowadays, but it had 55 illustrations originally, based on a manuscript written in Siagh script and some missing pages (Hosseini Rad, 2014, 44-53).

• **About this edition**

Due to its unavailability, this book hasn’t been mentioned not in the book “The Shahnamas of Iran” by Seyed Mohamad Baqer Najafi (1997), nor in the book “Namvar-nameh” by Seyyed Abdolmajeed Sharifzadeh (1991). The only available information about this version is footnote No.38 Antony Welsh has mentioned on page 38 of his book “Artists for the Shah”. In this note, which is about the supportive role of Hossein Khan Shamloo in the art of book design in Herat in the early 11th century, he mentioned a Shahnama with 44 unsigned illustrations, dated 1008, was sold under the name of Hossein Khan Shamloo

Table. 1. The Meeting of Siavash and Afrasiab. Source: Authors based on Private library of the Niavaran

Title of Illustration	Specification of Illustration	Picture of Illustration
The Title of Shahnama	Shamloo’s Shahnama	
The Title of the Work	The 12th Meeting: The Meeting of Siavash and Afrasiab	
The size of the Illustration	253*137 mm	
The School of Thought	Isfahan	
Location	Private library of the Niavaran Complex	
The Illustration Date	Around 1600 C.E.	
Illustrator	Unknown	
The Subject	Royal Court/ gathering	

Table 2. Hooman striking Rostam with the lance, and Afrasiab escaping from Rostam's Grip. Source: Authors based on Private library of the Niavaran Complex.

Title of Illustration	Specification of Illustration	Picture of Illustration
The Title of Shahnama	Shamloo's Shahnama	
The Title of the Work	The 15th Meeting: Hooman strikes Rostam with the mace, and Afrasiab escaping from Rostam's Grip	
The size of the Illustration	300*140 mm	
The School of Thought	Isfahan	
Location	Private library of the Niavaran Complex	
The Illustration Date	Around 1600 C.E.	
Illustrator	Unknown	
The Subject	Battle	

Table 3. The Battle of Kaykhosro and Afrasiab and the Capture of Kangdez. Source: Authors based on Private library of the Niavaran Complex.

Title of Illustration	Specification of Illustration	Picture of Illustration
The Title of Shahnama	Shamloo's Shahnama	
The Title of the Work	The 30th Meeting: The Battle of Kay Khosro and Afrasiab and the Capture of Kangdez	
The size of the Illustration	250*137 mm	
The School of Thought	Isfahan	
Location	Private library of the Niavaran Complex	
The Illustration Date	Around 1600 C.E.	
Illustrator	Unknown	
The Subject	The Battle of Two Royal Guards	

recently (1975) (Welch, 1976, 173). According to the officials of the library of Niavaran Palace, this copy was transferred to the library in 1990, but nobody knew about it until it was uncovered in April 2001 (Kaikhosravi Kiany, 2017, 3).

• The illustrations of Shamloo's Shahnama

The illustrations of this edition are among the oldest illustration schools. "Although with the transfer of the royal library from Qazvin to Isfahan, the legacy of the developments of the Qazvin school in the late 10th century was transferred to the new capital, where it was deployed and fully developed under the leadership of Sadeghi, Reza Abbasi, and his student. But it should not be forgotten that this transformation began in the works of masters such as Molana Asghar Kashani, Sadeghi, Mohammadi, and Reza Javan, in Qazvin. Therefore, although the writing and production of this copy was done in Herat, the way of execution of its illustrations is connected to the works of painters of the late 10th and early 11th centuries in Qazvin and Isfahan" (Kaikhosravi Kiany, 2016, 316).

• The description of selected illustrations of Shamloo's Shahname

As stated in the title of this research, the goal of this research is the mythical analysis of the archetype of the Great War. Thus, the themes of the selected illustrations are related to the Great War, and they can be adapted to this archetype. The three selected statistical illustration models are "Siyavash and Afrasiab's meeting" (Table 1), "Hooman striking Rostam with the mace, and Afrasiab breaking free from Rostam's grip" (Table 2), and "the battle of Kaykhosro and Afrasiab and the capture of Kangdez" (Table 3).

Illustration No.1: Siavash and Afrasiab's Meeting

Discussion and Analysis

• Archetypal review of illustration 1: Siavash and Afrasiab's meeting

In this narrative, Siavash represents Frye's

archetype of apocalyptic imagery and innocence. Siavash, in his mythological meaning, represents death followed by resurrection. The spring and the autumn of the plants are embodied in Siavash's life and death. Siavash's failure to be seduced by Sudaba, as well as the suffering and torment he endures during his lifetime, comes from Siavash's ultimate enlightenment in the concept of the one singular divine will. In fact, in this illustration, Siavash serves as a symbol of society, embodying a collective quest for return. This is the unification of a group of human beings in the form of a single body and the issue of the general and specific unity of human society in the form of the parts of a huge body, which belongs to the human world in Frye's apocalyptic imagery.

Another example that is studied is the mineral world. Frye believes that in the hierarchy of archetypes, a city is categorized at the same level as a single building among apocalyptic imagery, as well as the metaphor of paths, streets, and roads, which are related to a spiritual journey. The story of Siavash's journey from Iran to Turan could correspond with the metaphor of the spiritual journey because this journey leads to his death, too, and as you can see, Siavash is still present in the narrative after his death (Hajnorouzi, 2012). Dr. Bahar describes Siavash as follows: "Siavash was the deity of blessing, vegetation, and fertility," and his myth is based on the Mesopotamian model of Tammuz or Dumuzi" (Bahar, 1997, 67).

The unity of gods with animals and plants as well as their similarity with human society forms the basis of totemic symbolism. The same flexibility is possible for the vegetable imagery, too. The cypress tree in the illustration is a symbol of Siavash as the deity of the tree, which is categorized in the vegetable world. Additionally, the transformation of Siavash, which is the archetype of the god of Tammuz in the form of a cypress tree, is a reminder of the totemic transformation of supernatural beings

into plants.

In contrast to apocalyptic imagery, there is demonic imagery. In the human world of demonic imagery, on one side, there is a cruel, mysterious, and ruthless leader who has an insatiable lust. Besides, he commands loyalty if he's self-disciplined enough to represent the collective self of his followers. On the other side, there is a sacrifice in which a human must be killed so the others can survive and live, just like Afrasiab sent Siavash into the jaws of death, and this death happened by the order of a power-hungry and cunning leadership.

Among the images that are related to this area, there's a vegetable world, which sometimes appears in the form of a forest, a desert, or a magical garden in the demonic world, and sometimes this vegetable world that looks like gallows where humans are hanged. The tree is the tree of death. That's why, unlike the divine archetype, it's likely that the cypress tree represents the tree of death in the vegetable world. Many researchers consider the cypress tree to be a symbol of Siavash's mourning ritual. The presence of Siavash in his enemy's land was the messenger of his tragic fate, and probably, the illustrator is showing his fate somehow through the cypress tree in this illustration. The cypress tree was associated with demonic gods by the Greeks and Romans. That's why it's used to decorate cemeteries. The Celts also consider this tree as a symbol of death, the passing of time, and the moment of human death (Alebrahim Dehkordi, 2017). Furthermore, the water in this illustration can be a symbol of the water of death which Frye has placed in the demonic imagery. The water that I often equated with the spilled blood on the ground. In some myths snakes and dragons are connected with the element of water. In some myths, the dragon's habitat is considered to be the bottom of the sea (Cooper, 2007). In addition to the areas mentioned, the world of fire is the world of malevolent demons. However, fire, which is considered a purifying and sacred element

in apocalyptic images, is tormenting in demonic images. The flames of devilry that Garsivaz ignites are described in these demonic images.

To explain the aspect of romance in the shadow of analogical imagery, Frye presents a world in which the heroes are brave and the villains are evil, and the deprivations, complications, and confusions of ordinary life are not taken into account. In the analogy of innocence, faces are divine, and the fire in this world is usually purifying, and the only people who don't catch fire and can pass it safely are the innocent. Among the animals, sheep, horses, and greyhounds appear in the aspects of loyalty and attachment in this field, which are the characteristics such as passing through fire, the loyalty of Siavash's horse, Behzad, to him, his innocence and chastity, which express Siavash's character perfectly. Examples of Frye's semantic theory of symbols in the meeting of Siavash and Afrasiab illustration can be seen in summary in Table 4.

• **Archetypal Review of illustration 2: Hooman Striking Rostam with the Mace, and Afrasiab Breaking Free from Rostam's Grip**

Rostam's actions in this illustration represent apocalyptic imagery. Rostam is considered the only reliable person and the most powerful defense factor for Iran in front of all the dangers that threaten this land as if he's a strong fortress or a border. What's more, he's always the winner of all the battles. According to Dr. Mehrdad Bahar, "Paying attention to his heroic character, shows that he's similar to Indra, and sometimes to the earthly deity of this ancient god in many ways" (Yahaqi, 2007, 394). The image of a dragon on Rostam's stitching awl could be an example of this theory. The equivalent word for dragon in Sanskrit cognates with the word Vritrahan, which is Indra's surname. This word is translated to "the slayer of Vritra" (lit. the hero who kills the dragon) and "a person who overcomes defeat." According to this

Table 4. Examining examples of Frye's semantic theory of symbols in the meeting of Siavash and Afrasiab illustration. Source: Asadi, 2018, 85.

Type of Imagery in Frye's Semantic Theory of Symbols	Indicators Of Imagery	Example of Indicators
Apocalyptic Imagery	Divine World (The society of gods)	Siavash's ultimate enlightenment in the concept of the one singular divine will.
	Human World (The unity of a group of people in the form of a single body)	Siavash in the form of the parts of a huge body,
	Animal World (The unity of gods and humans with animals and vegetables)	Siavash, the god of vegetables and fertility in the form of a cypress tree
	Vegetable World	Siavash, the god of vegetables, tree deity
	Mineral World (spiritual journey)	Siavash's adventurous journey to Turan
	Fire World	It has no equivalent in this illustration.
	Water World	It has no equivalent in this illustration.
Demonic Imagery	Divine World	It has no equivalent in this illustration.
	Human World (conflict as the basis of connection to society)	Afrasiab as a ruthless leader
	Animal World (dragon and wild animals)	It has no equivalent in this illustration.
	Vegetable world	tree as a symbol of the death of Siavash
	Mineral World	It has no equivalent in this illustration.
	Fire World	Garsivaz's devilry
Analogical Imagery	Water World	A symbol of Siavash's death
	Romance (the analogy of innocence)	Passing through the fire is a symbol of the purification of Siavash, the loyalty of his horse, chastity, and innocence as a symbol of Siavash's innocence
	High mimetic (the analogy of nature and reason)	It has no equivalent in this illustration
	Low mimetic (the analogy of experience)	It has no equivalent in this illustration.

meaning, the dragon is a symbol of defense against the invader (Jangali, 2002, 54). Besides slaying the dragon, Rostam appears as a defensive wall against the invaders and defeats the enemy with his aggressive attacks. Thus, the image of a dragon on his stitching awl is actually indicative of his personality. Therefore, this image on his stitching awl can be a symbol of his family totem. Freud considers dressing in the skin of the totem animal one of the principles of "Totemism/ worshipping totem". (Freud, 1972) In the beliefs of ancient Persians, the purple color of Rostam's stitching awl is associated with Ahoora Mazda, the highest deity of Zoroastrianism, and this is indicative of the spiritual aspects of Rostam's personality. Frye considers the fire to be related and associated with the spiritual world, which is halfway between the

human world and the divine world.

Another symbolism in this illustration is Rostam's war suit called "Palangina" or "Babre Bayan", which not only has a totemic function to get close to the strong and supportive spirits of these animals but also has a durable protective function that shields Rostam from dangers just like an invulnerable body and gives him such strength that leaves his enemies with no choice but surrender. Frye considers these illustrations to be apocalyptic.

The demonic world portrays the absurdity and futility of humans in the face of the natural order, as if Nature and fate Break Afrasiab free from death with the help of Hooman. The human world is another element that is categorized in the demonic imagery. An example of this in this illustration is the strike of Hooman on Rostam's shoulder blade,

which is the center of human physical strength, to take his power and strength, and the ego, arrogance for the power of self, represents the demonic nature of Hooman, which puts him in the demonic human world. There is another example of demonic imagery, in which Frye believes the war scenes are categorized in the archetypal hierarchy. Probably, the river that flows in the battle scene is equal to the water world, which is often equated with the spilled blood on the ground.

The bravery of Rostam on the battlefields, his divine and innocent personality, as well as the horse that accompanies him throughout his lifetime represent the apocalyptic imagery, which narrates the romance mode of Frye's in the analogy of the human world. In this illustration, Rostam shows another mode of analogical imagery, which Frye

categorizes it in high mimetic. In these images, the magical tree appears as a waving flag, animals are proud and beautiful, and the divinity is manifested in the king personally. These images that are related to high mimetic are in line with this illustration perfectly. Examples of Frye's semantic theory of symbols in Hooman striking Rostam with the Mace, and Afrasiab breaking free from Rostam's grip illustration can be seen in summary in Table 5.

• **Archetypal Review of illustration 3: The Battle of Kaykhosro and Afrasiab and the Capture of Gangdaj**
Northrop Frye considers demonic imagery to be the images in which there is destruction, threat, and terror. This illustration shows Frye's intended scenes of war, destruction, and terror. In demonic imagery, the human world is a society in which conflict is the basis of connection. In the demonic

Table 5. Examining examples of Frye's semantic theory of symbols in Hooman striking Rostam with the Mace, and Afrasiab breaking free from Rostam's grip illustration. Source: Asadi, 2018, 85.

Type of Imagery in Frye's Semantic Theory of Symbols	Indicators Of Imagery	Example of Indicators
Apocalyptic Imagery	Divine World (The society of gods)	Rostam as a symbol of Indra in the form of one singular divine will
	Human World (The unity of a group of people in the form of a single body)	The wishes and desires of society in the form of Rostam as a hero and the guardian of the empire
	Animal World (The unity of gods and humans with animals and vegetables)	Babre Bayan and the dragon on the stitching awl as a totem of Rostam
	Vegetable World	Cypress tree as a symbol of immortality
	Mineral World (spiritual journey)	Trooping under the lead of Rostam to take Siavash's revenge
	Fire World	Spiritual aspects of Rostam's personality as a symbol of fire
	Water World	It has no equivalent in this illustration.
Demonic Imagery	Divine World	the absurdity and futility of Afrasiab in the face of fate and nature
	Human World (conflict as the basis of connection to society)	Hooman's vanity in self-strength
	Animal World (dragon and wild animals)	It has no equivalent in this illustration.
	Vegetable world	It has no equivalent in this illustration
	Mineral World	The battle scene and Weapons and war tools
	Fire World	It has no equivalent in this illustration.
Analogical Imagery	Water World	River as the water of death
	Romance (the analogy of innocence)	Courage, innocence, wise face, the loyalty of Rostam's horse called Rakhsh
	High mimetic (the analogy of nature and reason)	Waving flags, Rostam's beautiful horse which is indicative of his enlightenment, and Rostam's divinity
	Low mimetic (the analogy of experience)	It has no equivalent in this illustration.

world, there is a ruthless leader who has an insatiable lust. Afrasiab, who is overly ambitious and opportunist and sacrifices someone when approaches his decline, exactly fits this model. Frye equates the fire world to the burning cities. Such a fire is the opposite of the purifying fire. The presence of fire in the illustration and the burning of Kangdez are symbols of death and incendiaryism in this world. Images of deviant actions belong to the mineral world, just like weapons and war tools, and images of dead mechanisms, are vividly depicted in the scenes of this illustration. Another example of the mineral world is Kangdez, which here functions as a prison for the Turanians, where they are confined. “A crow sitting on a tree is an aggressive and annoying character in common belief. It is often associated with battlefields, corpses, and death” (Warner, 2010, 547), which can be equated with the demonic world. However, this scene can be also related to the vegetable world and the animal world in the apocalyptic imagery. A world in which the unity of the human body and the vegetable world presents us with a recurring image of the green world, which shows the equity of the human body and this vegetable world as if the soul looks like a bird sitting on the branches of a tree that represents the human body. Also, the transformation of supernatural beings into the animals and plants known to us is a representation of the animal world. “In the middle Persian texts, the crow is a divine bird, and because of its divinity, John Hinnells calls it Varqanbird, the seventh body of the deity Bahram, sitting on a cypress tree”, which is a symbol of immortality (Gholizadeh, 2013, 40).

Other examples of Frye’s intended apocalyptic imagery are the concepts of loyalty, heroism, and faithful believers related to the human world. The individual will and desire, which appear as the representative and the guardians of the empire, are based on this metaphor.

Considering Rostam’s unique characteristics, he still carries the remnants of Godliness and eternity while descending to the boundaries of human behaviors. But his actions represent an image of heroism and loyalty towards Kay Khosro. The mysterious journeys of Kay Khosro to Afrasiab to take revenge for Siavash’s blood, and return hope and prosperity to the society is a manifestation of the mineral world.

Just as the organizing ideas of romance are chastity and magic, the organizing ideas of high mimetic mode are love and form. This area emphasizes the center of gravity with an inward look, and the tendency to idealize the symbols of the divine world that belong to the high mimetic mode. The illustrated scenes in this image are related to this area. Divinity manifests as Kay Khosro. The magical tree has taken the form of a waving flag. Kangdez, where Afrasiab’s royal court is located, is the central point of the story, and the events center around it. Examples of Frye’s Semantic Theory of Symbols in *The Hooman Striking Rostam with the Mace*, and *Afrasiab Breaking Free from Rostam’s Grip* illustration can be seen in summary in [Table 6](#).

Conclusion

Based on the approaches in this analysis, Frye’s apocalyptic symbols, which include apocalyptic, demonic, and analogical imagery, seem to have covered a high percentage of the three selected illustrations of *Shahnama*. The symbols and the archetypes include a wide range of visual expressions of the Great War in the illustrations, which are based on the events of the story.

According to the chart below ([Fig. 1](#)), it can be concluded that the symbols and the archetypes used in the illustrations include an archetype of apocalyptic imagery in which the most repeated images are related to the human world, animal world, vegetable world, and mineral world, and the

Table 6. Examining examples of Frye's semantic theory of symbols in battle of Kihrsru with Afrasiab and the capture of Gangdaj illustration.
Source: Asadi, 2018, 85.

Type of Imagery in Frye's Semantic Theory of Symbols	Indicators Of Imagery	Example of Indicators
Apocalyptic Imagery	Divine World (The society of gods)	It has no equivalent in this illustration.
	Human World (The unity of a group of people in the form of a single body)	Rostam as a symbol of heroism and loyalty
	Animal World (The unity of gods and humans with animals and vegetables)	Kay Khosro as a metaphor for the crow and the symbol of the deity Bahram (the god of war)
	Vegetable World	The equality of the human soul (Kay Khosro) and a bird (a symbol of the deity Bahram) sitting on a cypress tree (a symbol of immortality).
	Mineral World (spiritual journey)	The mysterious journeys of Kay Khosro to Afrasiab
	Fire World	It has no equivalent in this illustration.
Demonic Imagery	Water World	It has no equivalent in this illustration.
	Divine World	It has no equivalent in this illustration.
	Human World (conflict as the basis of connection to society)	Afrasiab, with his insatiable lust, sacrifices someone to gain power.
	Animal World (dragon and wild animals)	It has no equivalent in this illustration.
	Vegetable world	A crow sitting on a tree as a symbol of death
	Mineral World	Weapons and war tools, dead mechanisms
Analogical Imagery	Fire World	Kangdez as a symbol of prison
	Water World	Fire is a symbol of death and incendiarism
	Romance (the analogy of innocence)	It has no equivalent in this illustration.
	High mimetic (the analogy of nature and reason)	It has no equivalent in this illustration.
	Low mimetic (the analogy of experience)	The divinity of Kay Khosro, the waving flag, and Kangdez as a symbol of the city and empire
		It has no equivalent in this illustration.

least repeated images are related to the fire world and the water world. In this apocalyptic world, human beings and deities are united with animals and vegetables and live in harmony. This unity of human beings and vegetables has created an image of a green paradise. In these illustrations, too, fire is located in a higher position than human life, and water is below, just as in Frye's view. Additionally, the images that fulfill the wishes and desires of humans in the vegetable world are those of gardens, fields, and botanical gardens.

Furthermore, in contrast to apocalyptic imagery, there is demonic imagery, in which, in the statistical society of this research, the human world has the most symbols related to this world, and the divine

world and animal world have the least symbols.

The last Frye's intended imagery is analogical imagery, which is between the apocalyptic and demonic worlds. The most common usage of analogical imagery is dedicated to the world of romance, which is also called innocence. In fact, in Frye's approach, mythological models are hidden in a world that is closely related to human experience.

To conclude, although the interpretation of these three worlds in the selected illustrations cannot be considered the definitive content, the narrative inside these illustrations can be transferred from a literary and historical narrative to an archetypal and universal level through critical analysis.

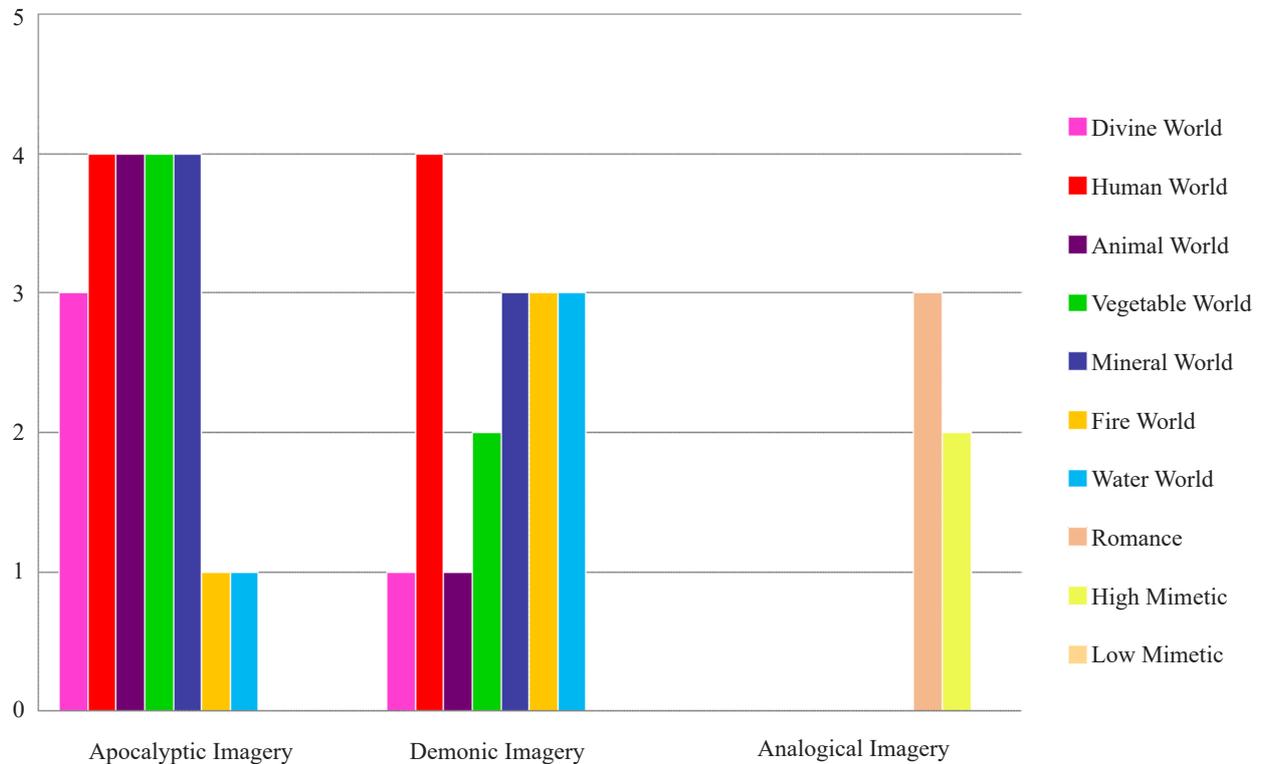


Fig. 1. The number of apocalyptic imagery in the illustrations. Source: Asadi, 2018, 95.

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