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The Transformation of the Hero in '*Arash*' (by Bahram Beyzai)

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Abstract
Arash, the famous Archer and mythical-historical hero, is a significant absentee from Persian classical poetry, especially *Shahnameh*. However, in contemporary times, several poets and writers, including Bahram Beyzai, have adopted Arash's narrative. Beyzai creates the most distinctive version of this narrative by offering a modern approach and deconstructing the original narrative. Beyzai's *Arash* is not the renowned hero and archer but rather a stableman who transforms into a hero without any metaphysical support or physical strength, just by relying on the power of mind and heart. The present study examines the distinctive characteristics of the hero in Beyzai's narrative and, based on Lacan's psychoanalytic theory, analyzes the transformation of *Arash* from a stableman to a hero. The results show that the most critical differences between *Arash* in Beyzai's work and the original narrative are: the lack of support from divine forces, lack of extraordinary physical abilities, emphasis on an inner journey rather than an external one, and the focus on the power of heart and mind instead of physical strength. Studying the transformation of Arash's personality based on Lacan's theory shows two stages: the first is Arash's confrontation with the big Other, which separates him from his initial unified perception of the world and turns him into an alienated and split subject. The second and main stage is Arash's victory over the big Other during his symbolic ascent to Mount Alborz. This conquest enables Arash to break through the 'symbolic order' and attain the superior knowledge and power of a hero.
Keywords: Myth**,** Hero, *Arash*, Lacan, Bahram Beyzai.

1. Introduction

Arash, the mythical-historical Iranian hero, is one of the significant absentees from Persian classical poetry. The brief story of Arash is not fully mentioned in the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi or any other epic works from ancient times, except in Avesta, two pre-Islamic books, and several history books from the Islamic period. However, unlike in the classical era, during the modern era—mainly influenced by the Nationalism prevalent in post-Constitutional Iran—Arash's mythical fiction has attracted the attention of several contemporary poets and writers.

In 1957, Yarshater, in his book *Old Iranian Myths and Legends*, introduced Arash to Iranian people and led to several recreations of this story by some poets and writers such as Pourya (1959), Kasraei (1959), Ebrahimi (1963), Avesta (1965), and Beyzai (1977). Among these, Arash-e Kamangir (Arash, the Archer) by Siavash Kasraei became one of the most famous contemporary Persian poems. Bahram Beyzai's play '*Arash*' is also a renowned adaptation that has consistently drawn the attention of literary and artistic circles.

Beyzai's *Arash* is the most unique adoption of this story in contemporary times because he has fundamentally changed the story's structure. Unlike the original narrative in which Arash is a heroic archer who sacrifices his life to define the borders, in Beyzai's work, Arash is not a mythical hero but rather an ordinary and unknown stableman who has never held a bow; he does not possess extraordinary physical strength or any support from divine forces. Instead of Arash, Kashvad is the great Iranian archer with strong arms and a very muscular body. Beyzai's Arash, as an ordinary man, undergoes a long journey to become the mythical hero for carrying out the mission that Kashvad had failed to accomplish.

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In most of his plays, Bahram Beyzai selects fiction from classical Persian literature by taking an adaptive approach. He has adopted the narratives of Zahhak, Jamshid, and Arash from Iranian mythology, offering a different view by deconstructing them. These adaptations show Beyzai's mastery of blending Persian mythology, modernist themes, and his deep understanding of the human condition.

Beyzai's different approach to the concept of the hero is the significant aspect underlined in most research about this work. In an interview published in the 12th issue of Andisheh Pouya magazine in 2013, Beyzai considers the hero in Kasraei's poem, *Arash e Kamangir* (Arash, the Archer) overly idealized, so he discusses the necessity of desacralizing the hero. He states: "Heroes do not come from anywhere. Situations place people in conditions where they undertake actions they could never have imagined" (Akbari, 2013, p. 118). What Beyzai mentions about the creation of a hero from ordinary people demonstrates his modern approach to the notion of heroism. In relation to the concept of a modern-day hero, Sidney Hook considers that it is necessary to break down the distinctions between the hero and the masses or the average man in modern society by reinterpreting the meaning of the word "hero" (Hook, 2008, p. 238-239). Based on such an attitude, the hero can be present in all human beings.

Although studies on Beyzai's *Arash* have highlighted his different perspective on the concept of the hero, no independent research has been conducted on the characteristics of Arash as a modern hero in Beyzai's work. Moreover, no study has examined the transformation of Arash's personality from the rank of a simple stableman to that of a mythical hero. Additionally, the factors behind this transformation have not yet been studied. This study aims to examine Beyzai's differing approach to the concept of heroism within the discursive context of the modern era, as well as to analyze the transformation of Arash's personality throughout the narrative. The research method is descriptive-analytical, and the primary approach focuses on the components of modern discourse and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory regarding the formation of the human psyche and personality.

1.1. Methodology

The study is library-based and utilizes a descriptive-analytical approach. It relies on data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The data were collected through the study of library sources. The primary approach focuses on the components of modernism theory along with Lacanian psychoanalytic theory regarding the formation of the human psyche and personality to describe the transformation process of Arash into a modern-day hero.

1. 2. Research Background

In recent years, research has been conducted on Arash's mythological narrative and Bahram Beyzai's *'Arash'*. The main issue addressed in most of the studies is the reason for Arash's absence from Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*. This topic has been extensively discussed in various books and articles. Bahar (1997), Minovi (1975), and Aydenlou (2004) have attributed it to Ferdowsi's deliberate choice. However, Jabri (2012) and Salemiyan (2014) argue that Arash was not mentioned in the Khodaynama or the *Shahnameh* of Abu Mansur, and therefore, Ferdowsi played no role in this absence.

Khatibi (2017) attributes the absence of *Arash* from *Shahnameh* to a version of the Khodaynameh composed during the Sassanian era. In this version, the story of Rostam's family was incorporated, leaving no room for the story of Arash to be included. Taheri (2017) argues that the omission of Arash's story was deliberate, aiming to avoid mentioning the Iranians' heavy defeat during the reign of Manuchehr. Kazemifar and Rezaei Dasht Arzhneh (2023) discussed a fundamental contradiction between the paradigm governing *Shahnameh* and the *Arash* myth regarding the significance of life or death. Tajmirriahi (2023) also considers the similar epic and mythological function of Arash and Rostam to be the reason for Arash's removal from *Shahnameh*. Vashaqani Farahani (2024) studied Zab Tahmasb as a transformed version of Arash; Mahmoudi Lahijani (2022) also attributes Arash's absence from *Shahnameh* to the presence of Nowzar and Zab. Zia al-Dini Dashtkhaki (2014) and Vashaqani Farahani (2020) have explored the shared Iranian and Indian roots of this myth. Gazerani (2014) studies the attribution of Arash to the Parthian Empire and suggests that this story's exclusion from *Shahnameh* resulted from the Sassanid policy of erasing Parthian heritage.

Zarei et al. (2017) studied the story elements of conflict in the story of Foroud in *Shahnameh* from the perspective of Freud's defense mechanisms. Nasiri & Khayyati (2024) examined the story structure of Javaherolasmar, using some concepts of psychoanalysis. Mousavi et al. (2017) studied the mythic structure and the Hero's journey in the black dome of the Haftpeikar.

Other research has been conducted on Beyzai's *Arash*. Taheri (2017) considered Beyzai's narrative a historical meta-story that desacralizes the myth and deconstructs its foundations. Tayefi (2021) compared Arash with Wittfogel's class theory through a transtextual approach. Tarnian et al. (2019) have analyzed Beyzai's narrative in terms of its lexicon, syntax, and intellectual framework, concluding that Beyzai's *Arash* aligns with the political conditions of contemporary Iran and reflects the efforts of Iranians to reconstruct their national identity following The 1953 Iranian coup d'état. Tarnian (2017) has explored this topic more broadly in a book titled *Bahram Beyzai, Language, Identity, and Power*, in which he examines several of Beyzai's works. However, no study has been carried out on the characteristics of Beyzai's Arash as a modern-day hero, nor on his transformation from an ordinary man to a mythical hero.

2. Review of Literature

The concept of the mythical hero originates in antiquity; however, contemporary interpretations of myth and heroism diverge significantly from those of earlier eras. Paul Ricoeur's famous quote highlights this very difference. He admits that 'Modern man can neither get rid of myth nor take it at face value. Myth will always be with us, but we must always approach it critically' (Ricoeur, 1978, p. 114). This is precisely why Ricoeur is one of the proponents of the theory of demythologization 'as a purification of the mythical cosmology from its mythological vestments, resulting in a re-interpretation that we can believe (Ricoeur, 1973, p. 212). Most of the myths were closely linked to religion or spirituality. Ancient humans served mythological narratives to overcome the lack of meaning in life (Bownas, 2018, p. 2). As Joseph Campbell explains 'myths serve as a link between the human and the divine' (Campbell, 1988, p. 132) or 'myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation'

(Campbell, 1993, p. 3). In the ancient worldview, everything on earth was meaningful only in relation to the celestial realm. As Mircea Eliade points out, in the ancient world—similar to Plato's 'Allegory of the Cave'— 'truth' or 'reality' was considered a sacred, transcendent, and unattainable element. Humans could only approach it through the repetition of eternal archetypes. Life and all its belongings were seen as mere shadows. Truth, happiness, joy, and perfection were in a superior transcendent world. An act or an object becomes real only by imitating or repeating an archetype. So, the reality is acquired solely through repetition or participation; everything without an exemplary model is 'meaningless', i.e., it lacks reality' (Eliade, 1959, p. 34).

So, in the unified ancient world, the gates of the sky were open to human beings, and transcendent forces supported the heroes; consequently, they could perform extraordinary deeds. Unlike in the contemporary demythologized and disenchanted world, there are boundaries between human beings and the sacred forces of heaven, so they have to rely on their intellectual abilities instead of connecting to the holy forces. In this new world, philosophers of the modern world, like Kant and René Descartes, proposed new concepts such as 'transcendental subject' and 'thinking subject' by focusing on the active role of the mind in shaping reality. In this regard, the 'thinking subject' and the 'modern hero' are deeply interconnected: both explore themes of self-awareness, autonomy, and the quest for meaning. They are self-reliant figures who question norms, challenge authority, and act according to their own principles. The concept of a modern-day hero also recalls Nietzsche's 'overman' in his famous book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (2006) who challenges traditional values and creates meaning in a godless world.

There is a significant relationship between the modern human concept and Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theories, especially in understanding identity, subjectivity, and the struggles of contemporary life. Lacan's ideas challenge traditional notions of selfhood and provide a framework for analyzing how modern humans navigate their inner and outer worlds.

- **Jacques Lacan and the formation of human personality**

Jacques Lacan, the prominent French psychoanalyst succeeding Freud, articulated a theory of human personality development and the formation of consciousness and the unconscious through a series of distinct stages. These stages are pivotal for understanding the modern human subject and the evolution of individual identity.

Prior to Lacan, Freud had divided the human psyche into two components: the conscious and the unconscious. Through this conceptual division, he challenged the longstanding notion of a unified, rational, and reflective self—a notion that had prevailed since ancient Greece. Freud also states that personality is composed of three elements known as the *id*, the *ego*, and the *superego*, which work together to create complex human behaviors (Boag, 2014, p.1).

In this classification, Freud's emphasis is placed on the "ego," which "represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions" (Homer, 2005, p. 19). In contrast to Freud, Lacan's emphasis is on the "Other".

Unlike Freud, whose emphasis lay on the ego, Lacan centered his theoretical framework on the concept of the "Other," which he regarded as essential to the constitution of the subject. He deliberately employed the term "subject" to differentiate it from the "ego". In articulating this notion, Lacan tried to introduce the concept as it has been used in classical philosophy rather than in psychology (Rabate, 2003, p. 27).

The Lacanian subject is a fragmented and divided being, inherently incapable of achieving wholeness or unity. A central component of Lacan's psychoanalytic theory is his articulation of the "self-Other" dialectic, as the emergence of the subject, as previously noted, only becomes possible through the intervention of the Other. So, the significant aspect of Lacan's theory is the central role of *language* in the formation of the subject.

The concept of the "Other" is one of the most fundamental notions in Lacan's theory, and he categorized it into different types:

- the Other as language
- the Other as demand
- the Other as desire
- the Other as jouissance (Fink, 1996, p. 13).

According to Lacan, the "Other" is manifested through language. In Lacan's view, we are born into the world of discourse—a discourse that predates our birth and continues beyond our death. Long before the child is born, a place is already reserved for them within the linguistic world of their parents: the parents speak about the unborn child, search for a suitable name, and anticipate their arrival. The words they use to speak of the child are shaped by centuries of linguistic and cultural tradition. As Lacan puts it, these inherited words constitute the "Other" of language (Fink, 1996, p. 4-5). The child, born into the "linguistic world of the parents," is compelled to situate his/her desires within the framework of this preexisting linguistic order, to survive and communicate with *Others*. Thus, it is *language* that ultimately shapes the *subject*. ' Lacan states very simply that the *unconscious* is *language*, meaning that language is that which makes up the unconscious' (Fink, 1996, p. 8).

Lacan defines three stages to subdivide features of psychoanalytic experience: Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real. As Zizek explains 'this triad can be nicely illustrated by the game of chess. The rules one has to follow in order to play it are its symbolic dimension: from the purely formal symbolic standpoint, 'knight' is defined only by the moves this figure can make. This level is clearly different from the imaginary one, namely the way in which different pieces are shaped and characterized by their names… Finally, real is the entire complex set of contingent circumstances that affect the course of the game: the intelligence of the players, the unpredictable intrusions that may disconcert one player or directly cut the game short' (Zizek, 2006, p. 8-9).

These stages can also be interpreted, from another perspective, as the transition from the mythical past to the modern present. The first stage, 'imaginary' recalls the period that Eliade refers to as 'primordial unity'. The imaginary order is composed of illusions that structure the world, harmonies, composing unities, or relationships of similarity between persons and things. Darian Leader, in his article *Lacan Myths*, discusses the connections between Lacan's Imaginary order and the world of myths, focusing on the impact of the thoughts of Claude Levi Strauss (Rabate, 2003, p. 35-49).

By "imaginary" Lacan means "a condition in which we lack any defined center of self, in which what 'self' we have seems to pass into objects, and objects into it, in a ceaseless closed exchange". The child lives a 'symbiotic' relation with its mother's body which "blurs any sharp boundary between the two: it is dependent for its life on this body, but we can equally imagine the child as experiencing what it knows of the external world as dependent upon itself" (Eagleton, 1996, p. 142).

Imaginary order corresponds to the mirror stage and marks the movement of the subject from a primal need to what Lacan terms "demand". In other words, imaginary identity is rooted in the mirror stage and developed through the identification with others that is situated within the preexisting symbolic system of language (Lee, 1990, p. 20). 'Mirror Stage', is part of an infant's development between the ages of six and 18 months, when the infant begins to recognize his/her image in the mirror or any reflective surface, and this is usually accompanied by pleasure. The child is fascinated with its image and tries to control and play with it (Homer, 2005, p. 24). In brief, the mirror stage is the child's first recognition of a distinction between itself and the (m)other, the recognition of lack or absence, displacing the child's dependence on the (m)other with self-reliance, the genesis of the ego, and the advent of an internalized psychic sensory image of the self and the objects in the world. This phase marks the first stage in the child's acquisition of an identity independent of the mother, the genesis of a sense of self or personal unity (Grosz, 1990, p. 30).

'Symbolic' is the second order in Lacan's theory. 'From the structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss, therefore, Lacan derives the idea that what characterizes the human world is the symbolic function – a function that intervenes in all aspects of our lives' (Homer, 2005, p. 36). 'Once symbols have appeared, everything will be ordered, or structured, in accordance with those symbols and the laws of the symbolic, including the unconscious and human subjectivity' (Homer, 2005, p. 43-44).

Two main key terms in the symbolic stage are the "Name of the Father" and "language". The Name-of-the-Father is a symbolic function that intrudes into the illusory world of the child and breaks the imaginary dyad of the mother and child (Homer, 2005, p. 55-56). It is rooted in the dual imaginary relationship between mother and child - usually identified with the pre-oedipal relationship of mother and child that needs to be symbolically regulated or mediated. This occurs with the help of a term outside this dual structure, a third position beyond the mother-child dyad. This 'third term' is the Father (Grosz, 1990, p. 46-47); so, the "Name of the Father" are those restrictions and laws that control both your desire and communication rules.

The last order proposed by Lacan is Real, which is Lacan's most challenging concept. It is not a 'thing'; it is not a material object in the world or the human body or even 'reality' (Homer, 2005, p. 81). Lacan himself refers to the Real as 'the lack of a lack'; for him, the Real is not the same as reality. It has no boundaries, borders, divisions, or oppositions; it is a continuum of 'raw materials (Grosz, 1990, p. 34). Lacan believes that our reality consists of symbols and the process of signification. Therefore, what we call reality is associated with the symbolic order or 'social reality.

3. Discussion

In the traditional myth, Arash is a heroic archer who sacrifices his life to define the borders of Iran after a devastating war with Turan. The boundary dispute is resolved by a challenge: Arash must shoot an arrow from Mount Alborz, and the point where the arrow lands will mark the border. Arash pours all his strength, soul, and essence into the shot, dying as a result but securing peace and the land for Iran. Based on the Avesta, Arash's arrow is supported by Ahura Mazda (the supreme god of light) and Mithra (the god of the sun) (Doustkhah, 2006, p. 331, 338).

As mentioned earlier, Bahram Beyzai's recreation of Arash is fundamentally and significantly different from all other works. To find out more about these differences, it is better first to provide a summary of Beyzai's narrative:

'Arash is an ordinary anonymous stableman who joins the war to treat the horses. Following Iran's defeat by Turan's army, it is agreed that the border between the two lands will be marked by an arrow shot by the most excellent Iranian archer. Kashvad, a renowned Iranian archer, refuses to do it, knowing he cannot shoot an arrow that would prevent Iran's defeat. Hoping to convince Kashvad to shoot, the commander of the Iranian army sends Arash, the stableman who knows the Turanian language, to request more time. In collaboration with Houman —a former Iranian warrior who has defected to the Turanian side — the king of Turan plans to humiliate and defeat Iran by choosing Arash, who has never held a bow in his life, for shooting the decisive arrow. When Iranians learned of the Turanian king's decision, they accused Arash of collaborating with the enemy and cast him out.

Alone, rejected, and filled with sorrow, Arash ascends Mount Alborz to shoot the arrow while undergoing a profound inner transformation. On his way to the summit, Arash encounters Kashvad, a second Arash that seems to be his unconscious mind, And an ambiguous figure whom Arash calls "Father". Arash faces each of them, one by one, and successfully surpasses them, ascending to a higher level corresponding to higher stages of awareness and perception. Arash learns an important secret from the Father: he must shoot the arrow with the power of heart and mind, not physical strength. Upon reaching the summit, Arash has transformed from an ordinary man into a mythical hero, as described in the original narrative, with the same arrow that will always fly over Iran to protect it forever.

By reviewing Beyzai's narrative, we realize that the most significant differences between Arash in Beyzai's narrative and Arash in the Avesta and other traditional texts are as follows:

- Disconnection from sacred forces
- lack of superior physical strength
- Emphasis on the power of the heart and mind instead of physical strength
- Hero's Mental Journey (Instead of the Physical Adventure)

In the following, the aforementioned concepts will be examined in relation to Lacanian theory: especially regarding the Imaginary and the Symbolic order.

3.1. Imaginary order

The "Imaginary Order" refers to a stage in which the human child has not yet acquired a sense of 'self' as an independent being. Consequently, the child experiences complete unity with the surrounding world. The Imaginary is characterized by a sense of unity and boundlessness, wherein the external world is perceived as an extension of the subject's own body. At this stage, the child has no clear concept of a distinct "self," and does not differentiate between the external world and itself. The imaginary for Lacan "is precisely this realm of images in which we make identifications, but in the very act of doing so are led to misperceive and misrecognize ourselves" (Eagleton, 1996, p. 143).

According to Beyzai's narrative, Arash is a stableman with no background in war and no special physical abilities. He joined the army out of love for his homeland and to assist the soldiers by treating their horses. Based on Beyzai's text, the most important characteristics of Arash's personality are Kindness, Generosity, and Peacefulness. His relationship with the world revolves around peace and friendship. He has never harmed anyone, always forgives others, and holds no resentment or anger toward anyone (Beyzai, 2003, p. 47). At the beginning of the story, he even becomes excited by Kashvad's muscular physique and strong arms and praises him. As pointed out earlier, the modern hero often stands in contrast to the traditional hero of ancient myth, where physical strength was paramount. In fact, many modern depictions of heroes focus more on qualities like intelligence, emotional strength, moral integrity, and resilience rather than physical abilities.

By applying Lacan's theory to analyze Arash's personality, at the beginning of the narrative, Arash can be placed in Lacan's 'Imaginary order,' Or, more precisely, he is in 'the mirror stage'. He holds a unified, coherent, and pleasant perception of the world around him. Arash dreams of the Iranian army as united and harmonious, with warriors who sacrifice their lives for the homeland. He is thrilled by seeing Kashvad's strength, hoping that Kashvad can shoot an arrow with his muscular arms and save the country and people. Arash thinks of friendship, even in conversation with the King of Turan, where he refers to the Iranians as the friends (of the Turan): "I am a stableman who has now brought a message from the friend; marked with this red seal" (Beyzai, 2003, p. 26). Contrary to Arash's perception of unity, the narrative contains multiple signs of division and fragmentation in the world around him, especially in Iran's army. The most important divisions are:

- There is a disagreement between Kashvad and the Iranian commander because Kashvad refuses to shoot the fateful arrow and is blamed for the defeat of the Iranians.
- The betrayal of Human, the great Iranian hero who joins the Turanian army. The betrayal of Human, the great Iranian hero, who joins the Turanian army.

On a larger scale, the confrontation between Iran and Turan is also a result of the past division between the sons of Fereydun (Iraj, Salm, and Toor), leading to the division of Iran, which was once entirely unified into two parts: Iran and Turan. Therefore, the unity that Arash experiences at this stage – much like the mirror image – is merely an illusion. As mentioned earlier, the modern era is a period of disenchantment and secularism. In this era, the unity of the mythical age no longer exists. Similarly, in Beyzai's narrative, there is no sign of sacred or divine forces that manifest in light and brightness, as seen in Iranian thought. In Beyzai's narrative, the sun has fled, the moon is hidden, and darkness has covered everything. All of this means that the demon and evil have spread everywhere. The defeat of the Iranian army, which symbolizes Ahura Mazda, is further proof of this truth.

In Beyzaie's narrative, unlike the Avesta and other traditional versions, no sacred or higher celestial force exists. The sun has fled, the moon is hidden, and darkness has covered everything (Beyzai, 2003, p. 20). In ancient Iranian philosophy, darkness symbolizes Ahriman (the evil spirit), while light symbolizes Ahura Mazda (the supreme god of light). Typically, kings are endowed with divine glory (Farrah Izadi), but in this story, the king of Iran is absent, and even his name is not mentioned. Darkness, or Ahriman, has taken over everything, and there is no sign of sacred or divine forces.

In the original story, Arash is chosen by Ahura Mazda or King Manuchehr to shoot the arrow, but in Beyzai's version, the king of Turan, who himself symbolizes Ahriman, chooses Arash. Arash is an ordinary man and has no divine backing. The atmosphere depicted in Beyzai's narrative recalls the fundamental theories of modernism, which often emphasizes the decline of traditional authority, religion, and metaphysical beliefs in favor of reason, science, and individual autonomy; in fact, for 'modern enlightened individuals, all gods and devils have been rationalized out of existence' (Campbell, 1993, p. 96).

This shift is often described in terms of secularization — the process by which religious and spiritual values lose their influence on public and social life. In a more philosophical sense, modernity is often associated with the 'disenchantment' of the world, a term famously coined by sociologist Max Weber (2004) to describe the character of a modernized and secularized Western society. In the context of modern theory, the disconnection from sacred or higher forces is not necessarily viewed negatively. Instead, it is often seen as a step toward individual empowerment, self-determination, and progress, which is related to the centrality of human existence (Saran, 2007, p. 84).

3.2. Symbolic order

In Lacan's theory, what disrupts the unified world is the concept of the 'Other' that emerges in the Mirror Stage. The Other in Lacan's theory is a foundational concept that refers to external structures (like language, society, and authority) and internal representations (like the self-image in the mirror). It shapes how we understand ourselves and what we desire, playing a key role in identity formation and psychic development. In Beyzai's narrative, the world around Arash, which initially appeared unified, gradually becomes fragmented and filled with others.

This is where Arash transitions from the 'Imaginary' to the 'Symbolic' order, stepping out of his domain and entering society. The Symbolic order is the domain of the Other, manifesting through language, law, and even the unconscious. Arash, an obscure and insignificant stableman, takes on new roles and steps into the world of social and political relations. He is sent as a messenger to deliver the Iranian commander's message to the king of Turan. However, On the one hand, he becomes a victim of the conspiracy of Turan's king to humiliate and defeat the Iranians. On the other hand, despite his innocence, Arash is accused by the Iranian army of infidelity. He is rejected and discredited for betraying his homeland.

Gradually, the world around Arash becomes filled with the Others: The King of Turan, Human, the commander of the Iranian army, and the Iranian soldiers are the others who stand in opposition to Arash. As previously mentioned, the 'Big Other' is a central concept that refers to an abstract symbolic order, a structure of language, laws, norms, and social conventions that shape individual subjectivity. For Arash, Turan's king and the commander of Iran's army play the 'big Other' role, imposing their desires and concepts onto Arash.

Arash faces the 'big Other' and the unjust rules imposed by him, so he becomes a solitary, resentful, and suffering subject. Lacan distinguishes the ego from the subject. He believes that the ego is an 'imaginary function' formed primarily through the subject's

relationship to their own body. Still, the subject, conversely, is constituted in the symbolic order determined by language (Homer, 2005, p. 44-45). Lacan believes in an 'alienated' or 'split' subject who is determined by the symbolic order and language, so the Lacanian subject is constitutively split or divided because language and the unconscious structure our identities in a way that prevents us from ever being whole or fully self-aware.

The analysis of Beyzai's text reveals multiple instances of Arash transforming into a split and alienated subject. Examples include:

"*Then, the commander moves away, and the others follow him. Arash looks around and sees that he is alone; deeply wounded*" (Beyzai, 2003, p. 32).

"*Everyone has turned their back on you, Arash; you are alone*" (Beyzai, 2003, p. 42).

"*No one will stand with you except yourself, Arash*!" (Beyzai, 2003, p. 43).

"(Arash) hears nothing anymore, except the sound of his own footsteps on the shoulders of the earth" (Beyzai, 2003, p. 44).

Arash undergoes various stages of inner struggles while ascending Mount Alborz. Along the way, he encounters concepts embodied in symbolic characters. The three characters that Arash encounters during his ascent are: Kashvad, his unconscious mind, and a mysterious figure called the "father," who seems to be a manifestation of God. In his conversation with the father, Arash discovers a great secret, and after understanding this secret, he is able to reach the level of a hero. The father informs him that Arash will be stronger than him (his father) on the condition that he shoots the arrow by the power of his heart (or his mind), not by the strength of his arms.

As pointed out in the previous part, the idea that heroism in the modern world does not require physical strength but rather the power of thought is one of the fundamental principles of modernism theory. The concept of the hero's mental journey as opposed to his physical journey is an essential idea in modern literature and philosophy. In this narrative shift, the hero's path and growth occur internally and psychologically rather than through physical achievements.

Unlike Rostam or Esfandiar, the great heroes of *Shahnameh*, in Beyzai's text, Arash does not undertake the heroic journey of Haft Khan or even the three stages that Joseph Campbell (1993) presented in the Hero's Journey pattern (Departure, Initiation, and Return). In his mental and inner journey, Arash moves from ignorance to knowledge. He progresses from being an object to the stage of subjectivity. The inner transformation that Arash undergoes leads him to a higher awareness.

The most important stage in Arash's transformation is overcoming the 'Other'. This stage, which can be considered a subset of Lacan's symbolic order, marks a critical turning point in the subject's development. It begins when Arash, a split subject, alone and resentful, is forced to shoot the arrow and starts climbing Mount Alborz. The ascent of the mountain - Which also carries a symbolic meaning- is simultaneously a mental and spiritual journey that leads him toward awareness and wisdom. As Zizek explains: "In spite of all its grounding power, the big Other is fragile, insubstantial, properly virtual, in the sense that its status is that of a subjective presupposition (Zizek, 2006, p. 10). So, it seems that, as the subject becomes more self-conscious, the authority of the Big Other becomes more questionable.

Back to Beyzai's text, we can see that, on his way to the summit, Arash encounters three different manifestations of the Other: Kashvad, the Unconscious mind, and the Father. Arash faces each of them, one by one, and successfully surpasses them, ascending to a higher level. Among these three manifestations of the Other, Kashvad and the Unconscious mind seek to remind Arash of his weakness and prevent him from shooting the arrow. However, the Father, in contrast, focuses on Arash's strength and reveals to him the secret of becoming a hero.

- **Confronting Kashvad**

Kashvad stands in Arash's way twice to prevent him from shooting the arrow. From the beginning of the narrative—due to political reasons that are outside the scope of this study—Kashvad opposes using the arrow to determine boundaries, as he sees it as a kind of deceit and a cause of the Iranians' humiliation and defeat. However, he is unable to prevent Arash from making his decision.

"*It is Kashvad who blocks his path: "Stay, Arash... I have come to bring you back". Arash replies: "Step aside from my way". ... Kashvad looks at his hand, which is trembling: "Arash, you are not a good archer. So why are you shooting the arrow?" And Arash shouts, "In the hope that I may die". Then Kashvad steps aside from his path with his strong, muscular body* (Beyzai, 2003, p. 38-39).

- **Confronting the Unconscious Mind**

From Lacan's perspective, the Unconscious mind is one of the chief manifestations of the Other. It is one of the factors that has caused the loss of human original unity, leading to the formation of the Lacanian split subject. Therefore, overcoming the Unconscious serves as a means to restore the lost unity. When Arash stands against the Unconscious and defies it, he begins to feel the first signs of power. This victory prepares Arash to become a hero.

"*Now, Arash stands before Arash. He looks at him, and both set off on their journey. Neither's steps are longer than the other's. The wind blows equally in the hair of both. "Do not come with me, Arash. Stay away from me. You are corrupting me". "Where should I stay, Arash? I am the only one you have. Where can you escape from me*?" (Beyzai, 2003, p. 39).

" *-I did not deserve it. -You deserve worse, Arash... They blame you for your righteousness, and you deserve it. Why didn't you flee the battlefield? - I am ignorant, Arash. - Now the world has chosen you to be mocked"* (Beyzai, 2003, p. 40).

- **Confronting the Father**

The third stage that Arash goes through while ascending is encountering an ambiguous figure, whom Arash refers to by three titles or attributes: Shadow, Father, and God. In contrast to Kashvad and the unconscious, who take a negative stance toward Arash's archery and heroism, the third figure is positive, kind, and wise. Meeting this figure allows Arash to understand the most important secret of becoming a hero, and through this knowledge, he gains extraordinary power. The secret is that Arash must be equipped with the power of thought and proper perception rather than mere physical strength.

"*Arash falls to the ground: - "Father, teach me kindness!" He: "No". Arash: "Grant me strength". He: "No. If you hate, if you hate what it is, then I have nothing to give you. For you are stronger than I. See, it is your heart that shoots the arrow, not your arm"* (Beyzai, 2003, p. 43).

After this stage, the transformation of Arash's character is completed. He has now shattered the Lacanian symbolic order, freed himself from the domination of others, and gained profound knowledge and power. The figure who appeared in the role of the Father,

seemingly the divine force, has explicitly stated that Arash is stronger than him. Arash has reached the summit, symbolizing the attainment of the highest stage of knowledge and power. This is where Arash, an obscure stableman, transforms into a hero.

In Beizaie's narrative, Arash is a modern hero, similar to Nietzsche's depiction of Zarathustra as an "Übermensch" (Overman). Nietzsche's Overman possesses two key traits: "love" and "self-overcoming" (Nietzsche, 2006, p. 13), the same qualities that Arash attains on his journey of spiritual transformation.

4. Conclusion

Bahram Beizaie adopts a modern approach in the narrative of *'Arash'*. He removes the narrative from its religious context to place it in the modern discourse. The main signs of this shift in approach include the replacement of the mythical hero with an ordinary human who is an obscure stableman, the desacralizing of the narrative, and the centrality of the human being instead of the divine and metaphysical forces. The most significant differences between Arash in Beyzai's narrative and Arash in the Avesta and other traditional texts are as follows:

- Disconnection from sacred forces
- lack of superior physical strength
- Emphasis on the power of the heart and mind instead of physical and bodily strength
- Hero's Mental Journey (Instead of the Physical Adventure)

Thus, in Beizaie's text, an ordinary man undergoes an inner transformation to become a mythical hero, displaying the same functions attributed to Arash and his arrow in the Avesta. Based on Lacan psychoanalytic theory, Arash holds a unified, coherent, and pleasant perception of the world around him in the first stage which can be regarded as equivalent to Lacan's Imaginary order. Gradually, the world becomes filled with the '*Others'*. Arash faces the '*big Other'* and the unjust rules imposed by him, so he becomes a solitary, resentful, and suffering subject. The second stage begins when Arash climbs Mount Alborz and encounters three different manifestations of the Other: Kashvad, the Unconscious mind, and the Father. By overcoming all the Others around him, Arash reaches the summit, symbolizing attaining the highest stage of knowledge and power. This is where Arash, an obscure stableman, transforms into a hero.

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