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An Archetypal Reading of *The Arabian Nights*: Mythic Hero and Monomyth in Selected Stories

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Abstract. *The Arabian Nights* is a literary masterpiece that has captivated readers for centuries with its magical elements, mythical creatures and traditional patterns of archetypes. This study delves into the underlying similarities and differences among the types of archetypal characters depicted in two tales, "Three Apples" and "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves". The focus is on the notion of mythic hero, exploring the use of archetypal symbols, images, characters and protagonists' quests to identify the principles of heroism central to their characterisation. The study draws upon Joseph Campbell's theory of Monomyth, which entails a pattern for the hero's journey that includes three rites of passage: separation, initiation and return. By examining the journeys of Ja'far and Ali Baba through this lens, we find that both possess essential qualities of a hero in accordance with the tenets of monomyth. Despite their idiosyncratic differences, they are portrayed as ordinary men without any supernatural heroic powers who are urged to reclaim their social status by embarking on an adventure where they go through rebirth, face death and triumph over evil. The findings highlight how the use of mythical elements such as magic and traditional patterns contribute to the perennial appeal of the collection.

Keywords and phrases: *The Arabian Nights*, archetype, monomyth, characterisation, heroism

Introduction

The Arabian Nights, a collection of Middle Eastern folk tales compiled during the Islamic golden age (eighth centuries to 13th centuries), has made a tremendous contribution to the timeless art of storytelling. This collection has captivated the imaginations of storytellers, writers, literary enthusiasts and scholars across generations and surpassed temporal and spatial boundaries, establishing itself as one of the world's premier imaginative works (Marzolph 2006; 2012). With its Middle Eastern traditions of mythology, magic and fantasy, *The Arabian Nights* has enriched the shared cultural heritage of both Easterners and Westerners, offering a common set of stories, symbols and archetypes (Makdisi and Nussbaum 2008; Marzolph 2014).

However, the existing body of criticism on *The Arabian Nights* exhibits considerable incoherence in terms of different interpretations, with each study focusing on specific stories in the collection and extrapolating from them to provide a total explication (Aliakbari 2016; Behdad 2018; Chraïbi and Romanova 2014; Duggan 2015; Horta 2016; Tarek 2017). While the critical discourse on Orientalism explores the ontological and epistemological features of the works (Nurse 2010; Randall 2021; Sabry 2011), postcolonial scholars argue that the collection can be seen as "both a symptom and symbol of post-colonial identity politics" (Ouyang 2004, ix). This study aims to present a twofold argument. First, we assert that the enduring and universal appeal of *The Arabian Nights* lies in the presence of magic, myths and archetypes within each tale, projecting a mythical world into the third millennium. Second, we contend that the key components characterising the perennial and universal appeal of *The Arabian Nights* are important literary qualities that highlight the relevance and significance of archetypal literary criticism and analysis.

Among the various archetypes present in *The Arabian Nights*, the concept of heroism stands out prominently. Heroic journeys shape the course of action in many of Shahrazad's (or Scheherazade's) tales, such as "Sindbad the Seaman", "Sindbad the Landsman", "Alaeddin", and "The Wonderful Lamp". While scholars have extensively studied other aspects of the stories, such as the notions of evil and villains (Duggan 2015; Marzolph et al. 2004; Stanton 2020), the exploration of heroism and the characteristics of heroes beyond their ties to myth and passing mentions of courage as a fundamental trait have received less attention. Recognising that fantasy has its roots in mythology and epic traditions (James and Mendlesohn 2012; Nikolajeva 2003), drawing an analogy between them provides inspiration for tracing the hero's journey. In *The Arabian Nights*, as a work of fantasy, various

archetypes of journeys and heroes prevail, transcending cultural, geographical and temporal boundaries.

Building upon Joseph Campbell's paradigm of the monomyth, this study examines diverse types of archetypal characters and investigates the notion of the hero and their quest in selected tales from *The Arabian Nights*. The concept of the monomyth encompasses a pattern for the hero's journey, comprising three stages: separation, initiation and return, each consisting of multiple sub-stages (Campbell 2008, 28). According to this theory, all myths and fables throughout history and across the world follow a "consciously controlled" pattern and structure, wherein the hero embarks on an adventure, crosses a threshold into an unfamiliar and mysterious world, undergoes tests and trials and often brings a boon for their friends and companions (Campbell 2008, 238).

With a specific focus on the concept of the mythic hero, our study aims to examine how archetypal symbols, images, characters and their quests are utilised in the stories, allowing us to explore the similarities and differences between modern and traditional understandings of heroism. To accomplish this, we adopt Archetypal criticism as our conceptual framework, which involves interpreting the texts by emphasising recurring cultural and psychological myths. Within this framework, we employ concepts such as monomyth, mythic hero, quest, departure, initiation and return to delve into the selected tales. Campbell's conceptualisation of the hero archetype is particularly relevant in this context, as it incorporates "ritualistic and psychoanalytic perspectives on the hero while adding elements of theology, mysticism and philosophy as well" (Indick 2014, 46). By conducting a systematic analysis of the archetypal hero and examining the specific incidents that occur at each phase of the hero's journey, we can gain insights into how the stories depict heroes and utilise archetypes among their mythic characters.

The collection of stories known as *One Thousand and One Nights*, also referred to as *The Arabian Nights* in the West, is an iconic compilation of Middle Eastern folk tales that were originally compiled in Arabic and have been translated into English since the early 18th centuries. It is worth noting that the Arabic versions of the collection do not actually contain one thousand and one tales. To compensate for this, many translators have added additional stories in an attempt to reach that number, resulting in the publication of "multiple versions of the same source text" (Hadley 2021, 678). Given the significant variation in the number of tales across different collections, our study will primarily focus on Richard F. Burton's translation, which remains the most comprehensive and unexpurgated version in English. The selected stories for analysis, namely "Three Apples" and "Ali Baba

and the Forty Thieves", are particularly relevant as they are replete with archetypes of heroes, heroism and heroic quests.

In the tale of "Three Apples", the story revolves around Ja'afar's mission to find the murderer of a young woman within a three-day deadline set by the caliph. Although Ja'afar fails to fulfil the task and faces execution, a young man eventually steps forward and confesses to the crime. The caliph then gives Ja'afar another three days to find the guilty slave. Despite failing once again, Ja'afar manages to escape the caliph's punishment. The second tale, "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves", follows the journey of two Persian brothers, Ali Baba and Kasim, who stumble upon a treasure hidden in a cave by a group of 40 thieves. After Ali Baba takes some of the treasures, the thieves attempt to track down the guilty party. However, their repeated attempts to punish Ali Baba are thwarted by Morgiana, his clever and sharp-witted servant. Both tales narrate the protagonists' journeys and their encounters with evil, highlighting the processes of initiation, separation and return.

Literature Review

Historical and literary background

The existing body of scholarship on the historical and geographical origin of *The Arabian Nights* (1992) suggests that the stories are rooted in a hybrid web of cultural and literary practices that span across various traditions, including (Buddhist) Indian, (Zoroastrian) Persian, (Muslim) Arabic and Jewish narrative traditions (Grant 2005; Marzolph 2006). This diverse origin of the collection highlights its significance as a transnational narrative, prompting scholars to conduct comparative and in-depth analyses of its typical characteristics (Kennedy and Warner 2013). The modern interest in this literary work has expanded beyond a critical examination of the tales, leading to an exploration of their thematic and structural properties that have greatly influenced contemporary creative and critical writings (Irwin 2013; Naddaff 2011; Nance 2009). Scholars have also delved into the aesthetics of storytelling and the thematic and technical intricacies of the narratives, leading to a multitude of critical studies (Irwin 2003; Ouyang and Gelder 2014; Pinault 1992). These studies have demonstrated the undeniable impact of the stories in shaping the Western perception of the Orient. This line of scholarship has gained significant attention as the critical analysis of representations of Easterners in general and Middle Eastern and South Asian individuals in particular, has witnessed a substantial rise over the past two decades (Asl 2019; 2020; 2023; Nurfarah Hadira and Asl 2022; Pourgharib et al. 2022; 2023; Pourgharib and Asl 2022). The narrative technique of magic realism employed by Scheherazade has been observed to have a profound influence on post-Joycean novelists such as

Gabriel García Márquez, Milan Kundra, Salman Rushdie, Tony Morrison and numerous others (Zamova and Faris 1995). According to Faris (1995, 163–164):

> These postmodern storytellers may need magic to battle death, a death more depersonalised even than the one their mother faced from King Shariyar; they inherit the literary memory, if not the actual experience, of death camps and totalitarian regimes, as well as the proverbial death of fiction itself.

The reception of *The Arabian Nights* in world literature and its transnational influence have often been attributed to the allure, diversity and enigmatic nature of the stories. Warner (2012, 8), for example, describes the collection as a "polyvocal anthology of world myths, fables and fairy tales" that have captivated and delighted readers. The interaction between the collection and Western literature is particularly evident in early European travel writing and tales of marvel, where Western "heroes are depicted as journeying to the Orient to obtain treasures and to view wonders" (Tuczay 2005, 273). Despite being received with "apt enthusiasm", the anthology has also faced criticism for its inclusion of irrational supernatural elements, resulting in the infantilisation and exoticisation of its magical themes (Jullien 2014, 203). Additionally, the characterisation of the protagonist heroes in *The Arabian Nights* has been subject to scrutiny due to the existential contradictions they embody. They are portrayed as acting to fulfil their predetermined or "ordained fate" while simultaneously suffering from fated transgressions (Marzolph 2004, 179). However, this fluidity in character development allows for the possibility of the heroes eventually becoming aware of their own lives and morality. The present study aims to demonstrate how these conflicting attributes in the leading characters facilitate their transformation from ordinary individuals into heroic figures. This understanding of characterisation in *The Arabian Nights* is achieved through an analytical approach grounded in Campbell's perspective on the hero archetype. The significance of Campbell's perspective becomes apparent when considering the limited number of critical studies focused on the two selected tales. Apart from a few passing references in relation to other narratives (Aliakbari 2020; Francaviglia 2011; Hanzl 1993), the existing body of studies on these tales primarily revolves around their origins and various translations (Halliday 1920; Macdonald 1910, 1913; Torrey 1911). Before delving into the analysis, it is important to examine the politics of heroism as explored by Campbell, which will be discussed in the following section.

Theoretical background: The politics of heroism

Different cultures around the world have developed their own unique types of heroes, serving as symbols of their ideals, values and beliefs. Joseph Campbell, the author of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (2008), recognises this universal phenomenon and explains why heroes hold a significant place in human society, transcending geographical boundaries, religious affiliations and cultural differences. Campbell's concept of the monomyth, or the hero's journey, serves as a framework to describe a common narrative structure in which a hero embarks on an adventure, undergoes transformative experiences and returns home. Campbell (2008, 28) defines the monomyth as the "standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero [which] is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation—initiation—return: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth". According to Campbell, the hero begins the journey by venturing into a realm of supernatural wonder, encountering formidable forces and achieving a decisive victory. The hero then returns from this mysterious adventure with the ability to bestow blessings upon others (ibid.). This fundamental definition forms the core of Campbell's work.

Campbell outlines the archetypal heroic journey in three main phases: departure, initiation and return, each consisting of several sub-stages. The departure phase, in which the hero leaves behind familiar surroundings, comprises five stages: the call to adventure, refusal of the call, receiving supernatural aid, crossing the first threshold and entering the belly of the whale. The call represents the hero being summoned by fate and experiencing a spiritual shift into an unknown realm. Campbell (2008, 60) defines the second stage as the hero's initial reluctance to abandon their perceived self-interest. In the third stage, the hero receives assistance from a supernatural entity or a guiding figure, who aids the hero in commencing the journey. Upon embracing the call to adventure, the hero proceeds to confront their first major challenge. The final stage propels the hero into an unfamiliar domain, where they confront the possibility of death or encounter death itself (Campbell 1988).

The second phase of the hero's journey commences with the road of trials, during which the hero encounters a series of challenges. Campbell (2008, 100) designates the subsequent step, meeting with the Goddess, as the "ultimate adventure" for the hero to undergo. The Goddess, portrayed as a motherly or regal figure, serves as a guiding force, bestowing direction upon the hero. It is at this stage that the hero experiences a transformative and transcendent love before facing the temptations of worldly desires in the stage known as "Woman as the Temptress". Once the hero successfully overcomes these temptations, a shift occurs in the hero's journey.

The role of a father figure becomes prominent in what Campbell refers to as the "Atonement with the Father". Subsequently, in the stage of Apotheosis, the hero realises their inherent divine nature, culminating in the ultimate achievement of the adventure's goal in the final stage of this phase, "The Ultimate Boon" (Campbell 2008).

In the third phase, Return, the hero undergoes a transformation, acquiring wisdom and spiritual power. Ultimately, the hero returns to their society, fulfilled and transformed, with a valuable lesson learned and potentially offering a solution to address societal disintegration. Campbell states that "the adventurer must return with his life-transmuting trophy" and fulfil the "full round" and "norm of monomyth" (Campbell 2008, 179). However, having found satisfaction and fulfilment in the realm of magic and adventure, the hero may resist returning to their original homeland or sharing the boon with their people. This stage, known as the Refusal of the Return, represents a phase where heroes are reluctant to embrace their past and reintegrate into their society. Consequently, in the subsequent stage, Magic Fight, the hero receives assistance from a guiding force that leads them back to their place of origin to restore society. If the hero has become so profoundly impacted by their journey that they are unable to extract themselves, other characters within the story can come to their rescue. The next stage is the "Crossing of the Return Threshold", where the returning hero must navigate the influences of the world they re-enter, stepping into the subsequent stage of "Master the Two Worlds", where a harmonious balance between the material and spiritual realms is achieved. Finally, in the last stage of the final phase, "Freedom to Live", the hero successfully completes their mission (Campbell 2008).

Campbell's mythical perspectives on heroism have resonated deeply with ordinary individuals and have had a significant impact on various fields of study, including humanistic and existential psychology. It is possible to extend the concept of heroism beyond myths and supernatural figures and recognise acts of heroism in our everyday lives. Heroism represents the inherent goodness of human nature and acts of heroism can be performed by ordinary individuals, not limited to an elite minority (Sellier 2015; Hall 2016). Furthermore, it is feasible to cultivate a mindset and attitude that enables us to assist those in need, show compassionate care towards others and develop confidence in our ability to undertake heroic actions (Franco and Zimbardo 2006; 2016).

After a period of neglect, the term "heroism" has been redefined. While some define it as individuals taking physical risks for the sake of others despite potential consequences (Becker and Eagly 2004), others argue that physical risk-taking alone is not comprehensive enough to encompass the various forms of heroism (Martens

2005). Kohen's definition (2013, 5) offers a broader perspective, describing heroes as "people who faced the reality of their mortality, took significant risks and/or overcame major hardships and did so in service of a principle". According to this definition, heroes can be ordinary individuals such as teachers, parents, firefighters and nurses. The essential traits of heroism are now identified as bravery, conviction, moral integrity, self-sacrifice, protection, honesty, selflessness, saving others, inspiration and determination (Franco et al. 2018).

Taking into account these contemporary traits and definitions, heroes are widely perceived as embodying psychological, social and physical functions that enhance the lives of others, exemplify morals, values and ethics and safeguard the well-being of others both physically and psychologically. Franco and Zimbardo (2016) connect these actions to perspectives on social justice, arguing that heroes act as shields for those who are unable to defend themselves, preserving human dignity (a psychological shield) and showing mercy (a physical shield). These contemporary traits and meanings associated with an ancient concept shed light on why heroes continue to hold significance in modern life. This paper adopts Campbell's framework, as it remains valuable for comparing literary traditions across different times and cultures, to develop a new perspective for analysing the selected stories.

Results and Discussion

Revisiting the hero in "Three Apples"

Like other fantasy narratives, "Three Apples" portrays a hero embarking on a quest that leads to self-discovery and a transformation of identity. The story aligns directly with Campbell's model of adventurous journeys, where the hero departs from the ordinary world and enters a supernatural realm, encountering extraordinary forces, achieving "decisive victories", and returning with the power to benefit others (Campbell 2008, 28). In "Three Apples", an example of such a heroic journey is presented at the outset when Caliph Harun al-Rashid instructs his minister, Wazir Ja'far, to solve a murder case in the city (Burton 2011, 186). The stakes are high as Ja'far faces execution if he fails to accomplish this mission within three days.

While Ja'far's involuntary mythic journey initially portrays him as a victim of fate, it also positions him as a symbol of hope and vitality. As Duff (2015, 99) points out, such a heroic quest can transform the hero from a victim to a saviour as he "learns to be self-sufficient rather than dependent". However, after three days pass and Ja'far realises he is unable to find the murderer, he feels helpless and uncertain about "what to do" next (Burton 2011, 188). Fortunately, a young

man comes forward and confesses to the murder just before Ja'far's execution. In this scene, the guilt-ridden man and his confession symbolically represent what C.G. Jung (1968) referred to as the unconscious archetype, recurring themes found in myths, dreams, religion and artistic works. "Three Apples" thus incorporates elements of heroic fantasy, where a chosen hero confronts and triumphs over evil. Ja'far's mission begins with a call to embark on a perilous adventure, signifying a hero's pursuit of something lacking in his current experiences. As Campbell (1988, 124) asserts, "The hero's adventure typically begins with someone from whom something has been taken, or who feels a lack or a yearning for something beyond the normal experiences available in society". It is worth noting that unlike Ja'far, whose risky heroic endeavour is imposed by the caliph, the young man's venture arises from an internal moral mission.

Furthermore, in contrast to many mythical heroes who have prophecies foretelling their birth and heroic lives, Campbell's quest model does not commence with birth but rather with the initiation of the hero's adventure. Through a series of events, the young man reveals the circumstances surrounding the murder and the reasons for killing his wife in the first place. As he describes:

> Now on the first day of this month she fell ill with grievous sickness and I fetched in physicians to her; but recovery came to her little by little and, when I wished her to go to the Hammam-bath, she said: "There is a something I long for before I go to the bath and I long for it with an exceeding longing". "To hear is to comply", said I. "And what is it?" Quoth she, "I have a queasy craving for an apple, to smell it and bite a bit of it". I replied: "Hadst thou a thousand longings I would try to satisfy them!" (Burton 2011, 190)

In this part of the story, the young man's wife requests an exceedingly rare apple that he cannot find in any market. Consequently, he embarks on an arduous journey in search of these elusive apples, traveling to various cities with the desire to obtain this object of his wife's desire. While wandering through gardens, the husband eventually encounters an elderly gardener who reveals, "O my son, this fruit is a rarity with us and is not now to be found save in the garden of the Commander of the Faithful at Bassorah, where the gardener keepeth it for the Caliph's eating" (Burton 2011, 191). Determined to fulfil his wife's wish, he embarks on a two-week journey to reach Basra, where he finally finds the desired apples in the caliph's garden. Here, the apple serves as a symbol that intertwines the fates of the characters. In other words, the image of the apple, associated with the concept of original sin, functions as an archetype that exists within the collective unconscious of the characters. This collective experience, rooted in race and species, can be understood from a Jungian perspective where "the substances of the collective

unconscious have never been in consciousness to be acquired individually and owe their being to heredity and archetypes" (Jung 1968, 42). The symbolism of the original sin becomes evident when the motive behind the murder is revealed. Upon his return from Basra, the young man discovers that their slave is carrying one of the apples, which was given to him as a gift by his wife. Convinced that "the slave had spoken the truth" (Burton 2011, 191–192) and consumed by rage at the thought of his wife's betrayal, the young man kills her for her disloyalty. However, upon learning that it was his son who had given the apple to the slave and that the slave had lied to him, the young man confesses his crime before the caliph. Once again, Ja'far is sent on a perilous journey to find the deceitful slave.

Ja'far's second adventure is supported by what Campbell refers to as the mentor, typically depicted as a masculine and watchful figure who provides the hero with magical protection against evil forces. In this second journey, the Caliph assumes the role of the protective mentor, providing the adventurer with amulets. As Campbell describes, such a figure represents "the benign, protecting power of destiny" (Burton 2011, 63). While this part of the story lacks overt magic, it is through a combination of chance and the mentor's assistance that the hero manages to fulfil his mission. Having failed to locate the dishonest slave, Ja'far prepares for his impending punishment. Before departing for execution, he embraces his daughter, who reveals that she possesses one of the aforementioned apples in her pocket. When she mentions receiving the apple from one of their slaves, Ja'far discovers that the guilty slave is actually one of his own. In a final act of heroism, Ja'far vouches for the slave and seeks the Caliph's forgiveness, which is granted due to the wrongdoer's acceptance of their crime and their gullibility.

Heroism in "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves"

"Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" narrates the tale of two brothers, Ali Baba and Cassim (also known as Kasim), who are the sons of a merchant. After their father's demise, the greedy Cassim marries a wealthy woman and continues their father's business, while Ali Baba marries a poor woman and starts his trade in woodcutting. One day, while Ali Baba is working in the forest, he overhears a group of thieves discussing a cave sealed with magical words that conceals their treasure. This conversation among the thieves represents Ali Baba's yearning for discovery and adventure. As soon as the thieves depart, he embarks on a journey to locate the cave and unearth the hidden riches. This expedition and desire for discovery are the elements that transform Ali Baba from an ordinary individual into a heroic figure. Although "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" is sometimes considered children's fiction, it is worth noting that mythic heroes like Ali Baba can also be depicted as young. As Hourihan (1997, 74) asserts, "The archetypal

hero is not merely young, he is essentially adolescent; sometimes, in children's literature, he is even younger". That being said, "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" indeed possesses the elements of heroic fiction, as it features a hero who embarks on a quest. Furthermore, Campbell's model of the monomyth is applicable to the story, as it precisely aligns with the narrative's basic plot and structure, which involves the cycle of departure, initiation and return.

According to Campbell (2008, 298), the theme of the hero's journey and subsequent return is "a prominent feature in all legends, folk tales and myths". Moreover, the hero in the monomyth is endowed with exceptional gifts and is acknowledged, respected and celebrated for their accomplishments and triumphs. Although Ali Baba lacks extraordinary powers and abilities, his courage elevates him to the status of a hero according to Campbell's principles. His journey can be traced from early childhood to maturity, during which his position transitions from a chosen yet lost child to the hero of his own story. Based on Campbell's model, in order to discover his true self, Ali Baba must overcome the threats posed by the thieves after taking their treasures. Consistent with Campbell's model, Ali Baba, as a hero, must cross the threshold between the world of ordinary life and the mythical realm of adventure. While he has entered the mythical cave, he has not yet traversed the threshold between the realms of life and death. His family decides to protect him from the dangerous thieves, but he requires wisdom to successfully navigate the realm of death. Campbell explains that "the hero goes forward in his adventure until he comes to the 'threshold guardian' at the entrance to the zone of magnified power" (2008, 71). In other words, the protagonist must cross the threshold and encounter a guardian who they will either overcome or ally with. For Ali Baba, the guardian is embodied by the head thief, who is the most dangerous of them all. He reveals the threshold to Ali Baba. In Campbell's terms, as the hero crosses the threshold, they must pass "either alive or in death, into a new zone of experience" (2008, 75). The chief of the thieves disguises himself as an oil merchant and visits Ali Baba's house, bringing mules loaded with 38 oil jars. However, only one jar is filled with oil, while the remaining 37 conceal other thieves. Once Ali Baba falls asleep, the thieves plan to kill him. Once again, Morgiana realises their scheme and attempts to thwart it by pouring boiling oil on the 37 thieves concealed in the jars, killing them.

The final phase of a hero's quest in Campbell's paradigm involves a journey into the underworld and a confrontation with death. It is through this journey that the hero undergoes a transition "into a sphere of rebirth" and is "engulfed by the unknown" (Campbell 2008, 82). This site, often guarded by fearsome creatures like "dragons, lions, devil-slayers with drawn swords, resentful dwarfs, [and] winged bulls" (Campbell 2008, 84), serves as the setting for the hero's enlightenment and

transformation. Similarly, Ali Baba transforms from being a victim to a rescuer of himself through his encounter with the head thief, who plots to eliminate Ali Baba (Burton 2011, 395). To exact revenge, the thief cunningly disguises himself as a merchant, befriends Ali Baba's son, who is responsible for Cassim's business and is invited to dinner at Ali Baba's house. However, the thief is discovered and killed by Morgiana, a clever slave-girl from Cassim's household. Although initially furious with Morgiana, Ali Baba grants her freedom and offers her hand in marriage to his son once he learns of the merchant's intentions. This event marks a crucial step in Ali Baba's quest, as it represents the last time that he faces real danger and must overcome it with the assistance of his protectors.

Ali Baba's quest is a deliberate journey for personal growth and knowledge, aligning him closely with Campbell's concept of a hero. The hero must cross the threshold of magic and venture into the realm of the unknown, adventure and rebirth. This crossing is followed by the belly of the whale, where, as Campbell (2008, 83) explains, "The hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown and would appear to have died". In the context of fantasy literature, the belly of the whale can be symbolised by caves, dark forests, or deserts. For Ali Baba, this phase occurs during his near-death experiences in the cave and his own house, as he becomes a target of dangerous thieves. According to Ancarani (2010, 56), inside the belly or temple, "the hero will be faced with the reality of who and what he is". In the case of a child hero, this involves confronting their fears. However, unlike the quest of a mythic hero that involves traversing between the real world and the supernatural, Ali Baba's adventure takes place in a cave, representing a realm of fantasy and his encounter with death. Therefore, instead of facing dragons, monsters, or serpents, he confronts ruthless thieves whom he must defeat in order to save himself. He successfully triumphs over them through his "wit" and "wisdom" in unsealing the cave's entrance, aided by his servant Morgiana.

Like "The Three Apples", the story of "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" reveals the commonality of mythological narratives and archetypes, underscoring the significance of the collective unconscious. From a Jungian perspective, the collective unconscious not only facilitates private communication but also drives individuals to revelations, confessions and even "dramatic representations of their fantasies" (The Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism 2021, 7). Archetypes thus serve as symbols representing the cultural and mythological experiences of individuals and communities, manifesting in various forms. Despite their common origins, changes in space, time and socio-cultural contexts can influence the formal aspects of archetypes. "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" exemplifies how the inherent greed of human beings can drive them to commit

tragic and ruthless acts of murder. What sets Ali Baba apart from the other thieves is the assistance he receives from external sources, or what Campbell referred to as a "rescue from without". Campbell suggests that "the hero may have to be brought back from his supernatural adventure by assistance from without", implying that "the world may have to come and get him" (Campbell 2008, 192). The aid Ali Baba receives during the return stage enables him to become a master of two worlds, capable of navigating between the realms of magic and ordinary life.

Conclusion

This study utilised Campbell's concept of monomyth to conduct an archetypal analysis of two stories from *The Arabian Nights*, specifically "The Three Apples" and "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves". The findings revealed that both narratives possess a hero on a quest, aligning with Campbell's model of the heroic journey. The protagonists, Ja'far and Ali Baba, exhibit the essential qualities of a hero according to Campbell's monomyth. However, they also display idiosyncratic differences and deviations, as they are not chosen for their heroic adventures but rather embark on quests that arise from chance circumstances, prompting them to seek adventure and reclaim their status. Despite their similarities to mythic heroes, Ja'far and Ali Baba are depicted as ordinary individuals without supernatural or extraordinary powers, resembling modern fantasy heroes. Furthermore, both narratives feature a group of characters with exceptional and superhuman abilities, deviating from traditional myths where a single hero is more prevalent. Although the stories present the heroes as virtuous characters who ultimately triumph over evil, they are not depicted as flawless and perfect like traditional heroes. Additionally, both stories deviate slightly from the fantasy fiction genre by including the return to the characters' permanent homes as the final stage of their journey.

"The Three Apples" and "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" blend the elements of heroic adventure and gothic elements. Like in all fantasy stories, the narratives depict a hero on a quest, aligning with Campbell's model of the heroic journey. This mythic mission holds great significance for all characters, particularly Ja'far and Ali Baba. The hero must devote their life to something greater than themselves and embrace their destiny when the moment calls for action. In this way, both protagonists represent the potential and capabilities inherent in all human beings, symbolising hope and life. The heroic journey profoundly impacts both characters, transforming them from victims to saviours. Ultimately, both Ja'far and Ali Baba demonstrate their ability to overcome their final challenge, which, according to Campbell, corresponds to the belly of the whale or the hero's descent into the underworld and confrontation with death. This phase of the journey serves as a crucial step in the characters' growth, as they experience a rebirth or near-death

experience. Through these findings, the study argues that the variations in the concept of the hero primarily stem from social and cultural transformations reflected in popular literature, particularly works of fantasy. As Campbell suggests, myths and heroes can differ across various cultures. Mythic narratives aim to address social conditions and provide instruction and guidance to the audience.

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