

**SOHRAB AND RUSTEM: THE EPIC
THEME OF A COMBAT BETWEEN
FATHER AND SON, A STUDY OF ITS
GENESIS AND USE IN LITERATURE
AND POPULAR TRADITION**

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Sohrab and Rustem: the epic theme of a combat between father and son, a study of its genesis and use in literature and popular tradition by Murray Anthony Potter

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MURRAY ANTHONY POTTER

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THE EPIC THEME OF A COMBAT BETWEEN
FATHER AND SON

A Study of its Genesis and Use in Literature
and Popular Tradition

By

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P R E F A C E

THE following pages appeared in their original form as a doctorate thesis offered to and accepted by the authorities of Harvard University in 1899. As will be seen, I have tried to prove that the epic theme of a combat between father and son has its origin in certain primitive customs. I do not believe that it can be traced back to any one place; though in saying this, I do not wish to assert that there has been no travelling, and that each variant stands by itself. I do think that in many parts of the world conditions have been favourable for the birth of the tale, so that a number of variants are in all likelihood of independent origin. When they once appear they may wander indefinitely and affect each other, but this side of the question I have not thought necessary to discuss.

The variants offered range from the folktale to the episode in a very artificial romance. Naturally it is upon the former that I have based my theories, and I hope that in the body of the work I have made clear my opinion as to their relative importance. The others I have included, partly for the sake of completeness, and partly because, in spite of any amount of inventiveness on the part of the author, there is always a possibility of some old tradition being preserved.

Among those to whom I am indebted for suggestions and advice, I must first mention Professor Royce of Harvard. It was he who suggested that possibly the custom of Matriarchy might explain the theme. Should the theory I advance obtain some currency, he should be given full credit; should it fail, he is, of course, by no means responsible. I wish also to thank Mr. Arthur Richmond Marsh, Mr. G. Hamilton, Dr. Robinson, and Dr. Schofield, and by no means least of all Mr. Alfred Nutt for his help, and kindness in publishing the book.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

THE APPEARANCE OF THE THEME IN LITERATURE

	PAGE
A brief analysis of the theme—Its actual occurrence in real life—Its appearance in Tasso's <i>Jerusalem Delivered</i> —in Shakespeare's <i>Henry VI.</i> —in Voltaire's <i>Henriade</i> —in Lilo's <i>Fatal Curiosity</i> —in Müller's <i>Der neun und zwanzigste Februar</i> —in Werner's <i>Der vier und zwanzigste Februar</i> —in the dramas of Victor Hugo.	1

CHAPTER II

THE APPEARANCE OF THE THEME IN POPULAR LITERATURE

	PAGE
Attention first called to the theme by the Brothers Grimm—Subsequent lists of parallels—The method followed in discussing the different variants—The theme appears in its most complete form in the <i>Sohrab and Rustem</i> story—Classification of the other variants—IN THE FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT CLASS THE FATHER MARRIES AWAY FROM HOME AND THE UNION IS TRANSITORY— First subdivision, in which the father is a mortal —Variants of <i>Kokako</i> — <i>Hotooni</i> — <i>Tu-huruhuru</i> — <i>Pcha</i> and <i>Pcho</i> — <i>Arawak</i> story— <i>Cuchulainn</i> — <i>Ilya Murometz</i> — <i>Jeruslan Lasarewitch</i> — <i>Núr al-Dín Alí</i> — <i>Odysseus</i> and <i>Telegonus</i> — <i>Odysseus</i> and <i>Euryalos</i> — <i>An-Bui</i> — <i>Arjuna</i> and <i>Vabhruvahana</i> — <i>Doon</i> — <i>Mitun</i> — <i>Gawain</i> — <i>Richars li biaus</i> — <i>Ider</i> — <i>Sir Degarre</i> — <i>Sir Eglamour</i> — <i>Jan ut den Vergiere</i> — <i>Bauduin de Sebourg</i> — <i>Tristan de Nanteuil</i> — <i>Sir Generydes</i> — <i>Launcelot</i> and <i>Galahad</i> — <i>Renaud</i> and <i>Guidon</i> —Two cases from the Spanish romances	6

of chivalry—**Second subdivision, in which the father is not an ordinary mortal**—Variants of Hercules and Zeus—Nectanebus and Alexander the Great—Ortnit and Alberich—Robastre and Malabron—Eliures and Carados—Kurdish tale of the Leprous Prince—A variant which stands alone, a Transylvanian Gypsy Ballad—**SECOND CLASS OF VARIANTS IN WHICH THE UNION SEEMS INTENDED TO BE PERMANENT**—**First and most important subdivision, in which separation is caused by the father's being called away from home**—The Hildebrandslied and its different forms—Biterlof and Dietleib—King Saul and Constantin—Sain Batyr and Köjök Bai—Joloi and Bolot—A Servian Ballad—Tsamathòs and his son—Jen Kuci—Tale of the deposed Prince—Tale of the Merchant and his Sons—Olger Dansk—Demantin—Guillaume de la Barre—Varoche—Finn and Oisin—Collective cases in Gui de Bourgogne and Gaydon—**Second subdivision of variants, in which separation is brought about by some mishap befalling the child or its mother, or both**—Andrónikos—Bernier and his son—Raynouart and Maillefer—Florent and Octavien—Wigamur—The cases in Maugis—Tristan de Nanteuil and Garcion—The ten Wazirs—Leandro and Lepolemo—Flóris Kónigs Saga—Mstislaw and Valdimir—Floovant—Raymond and Hugues—Sir Tryamour—**Third subdivision, in which the child is exposed**—Oedipus and Laios—Judas—A Finnish tale—A Servian-Croatian tale—St. Julien—King Ibrahim and his son—Apollo and Sadoc-Brutus—A few variants in which the combat is a mere episode—Issembard and Bernard—King Hoel and Kahedin—Paravasus.

CHAPTER III

Explanations of the Father and Son Combat theme given by Uhland, Orest Miller, Liebrecht, and Miss Weston—These theories unsatisfactory—A few other tales which possess the same formula settling without the tragic meeting, and in