7. Suhrāb slain by Rustam (67b)

Tahminah bears a son of the same warrior mould as Rustam and she names him Suhrāb. When Suhrāb is old enough to ask who his father might be, Tahminah tells him and shows him a letter and gifts sent at his birth. Suhrāb conceives the idea of setting his father on the throne of Iran. Afrasiyab, now ruler of Turan, hears of this, and decides to use Suhrāb. Suhrāb advances with an army on Iran's outlying White Fortress. A message of alarm is sent to Kay Kā'ūs, who in his turn sends a summons to Rustam. Rustam reflects that he has a son in the land of Turan, who may one day make himself known as a warrior; to the considerable annoyance of Kay Kā'ūs, he takes his time over answering the call to arms, but at length sets out with the army of Iran. In the meantime Suhrāb has taken the fortress. Of an evening, Rustam comes to observe the camp; by an accident of fate he kills Zhandah Razm, Suhrāb's uncle, whom Tahminah had asked to point out Rustam to his son. Rustam reports to the shah that the young commander resembles Sam. In the morning Suhrāb looks from the castle walls and asks Hajir, the castle's former commander, to identify the banners of the various warriors of Iran; in particular he wishes to know if Rustam is present, but Hajir says he is not. Suhrāb issues a challenge for an Iranian champion to meet him in the field. Rustam answers the challenge. Suhrāb demands to know if the other is not Rustam, but Rustam denies it. They move away from the armies and fight to a standoff, then they attack each other's army. That evening Rustam gives his brother Zavārāb a message for their mother in the event of his death; Suhrāb continues to wonder if his opponent might be his father. In the morning he again invites Rustam to say who he is, but the latter brushes the question aside. Suhrāb taunts Rustam with his age. They tether their horses and fight on foot; Suhrāb falls Rustam, and draws a dagger to dispatch him. Rustam claims that according to custom a warrior must be brought down twice before he is killed; Suhrāb believes this and releases him. Suhrāb is disabused by Hūmān; and Rustam prays to regain his strength. The combat is resumed; they tether their horses and wrestle. Rustam downs Suhrāb:

'Swiftly the sharp sword from his side he drew
And ran that living lion's bosom through.'

Suhrāb laments that he is dying by his own fault; however, his father Rustam will avenge him.

Rustam is horror-stricken. Suhrāb tells him to undo his armour to see the token that his mother gave him. As night falls, the Iranians begin to search for Rustam; Suhrāb asks his father to see that the battle is not continued. Rustam returns weeping to the army; he tells Hūmān of Turan that battle is to cease. The Iranian warriors prevent Rustam from killing himself. Rustam sends to ask Kay Kā'ūs for a healing draught that might save Suhrāb, but the king finds it expedient to refuse. Rustam has Suhrāb laid on a fine robe and sets out to the shah; he is overtaken by the news that his son has died.

The tragedy resulting from the stubbornness and pride of Rustam, and to an extent of his son also, is conveyed by the landscape's colour. The ground is suffused with a purplish hue, into which the turquoise rocks of the horizon seem to drain their vital forces, while touches of colour from bright flowers form a counterpoint, which may refer to Suhrāb's youth. This powerful expression of the pathetic fallacy by colour goes beyond any other at the period. The two figures form an isolated grouping, small in the picture, that will be a recurrent motif in this manuscript. Though an earlier illustration has shown the White Div killed, this is the first (or first surviving) human killing depicted in the manuscript. Rustam kneels to lean over the prostrate Suhrāb, the father frowns with effort; the son's face is serene. The composition is in fact closely related to that of the 'Combat of Humay and Humayun' in the Majnun of Khwajâ Kirmâni of the British Library (pl. 10). The grouping of the combatants is similar, though Humaun is to survive; the habiliments in both consist of armour and clothing of vermilion-orange and green. In both pictures the two central figures are flanked by their waiting steeds. More than this, both pictures have in their upper centre a pair of overlapping trees, which can be read as an image of the overlapping human figures. Most of all, the Jalayirid picture shows the combatants as isolated in a landscape framed with rock—in this respect, it is significant that in the Herat picture the rock falls away on the left, and is indicated along the foreground line, so that the scoop-like form of the earlier picture is almost present. As in the Jalayirid picture, the horses are barded with lamellar armour, but a difference is that their chamfrons are surmounted with triple prongs.
b tells him to

that his mother

his father to see

Rustam returns

man of Turān

warriors

he. Rustam

being dracht

finds it

shrub laid on

he is

has died,

braveness and

of his son also,

our. The ground

which the

m to drain

colour from

it, which may

ful expression

es beyond any

form an

ure, that will

cipt. Though

White Div

(ing) human

Rustam kneels

father

serene. The

led to that of

'ān in the

British Library

ants is

ive; the

r and clothing

oth pictures

y their

pictures have

apping trees,

e overlapping

t picture

n picture

landscape

it is significant

alls away on the

round line,

ller picture

armour,

ons are