

MATTHEW ARNOLD'S "SOHRAB AND RUSTUM": AN EASTERN TALE

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ABSTRACT

"Sohrab and Rustum" derived from the legendary heroic materials embodied in John Malcolm's *History of Persia*, Alexander Burne's familiar *Travels into Bokhara* (especially for the description of the Oxus) and J.A. Atkinson's translation of Firdousi's *Shahanamah* Rustum and Sohrab, both display a pride and a fierceness that belong as much to the *Iliad* as to the *Shahnamah*, for these are indispensable common properties of the epic. The spirit of action in both the valiant warriors is tremendous. Their love and fierceness for action and duty is very similar to what Krishna wants Arjuna to learn in the *Gita* "Do thine allotted task!" Both the father and the son do not, for a single moment, think about the consequences, but are haunted by the fierceness of action. Satisfying the conditions laid by him in the Preface, the poem has no introspective brooding upon the poet's mental development—no sickly analysis of his "misery's birth and growth." From beginning to end, the poem is concerned with human actions and human situations.

KEYWORDS: Arnold, Firdausi, *Gita*, Rustum, Sohrab