

in a separate chamber, without interrupting the flow of the action taking place on a terrace in the foreground. The scale of the terrace is implied by the purple floor color, which fills the vertical strips between columns of text. Finally, the swooping bird in the mural above Faridun's head emphasizes the focal point of the composition.

A *Shahnameh* of 1650 copied in Isfahan contains another version of this illustration.<sup>27</sup> Rather than minimize the number of figures to focus on the key elements of the story, the Isfahan artist has added soldiers and courtiers as observers. These figures detract from the drama of Zakhak's capture and point up the care with which Mu'in populated his scenes in order to present the crux of the narrative. Why Mu'in and the Isfahan artist should have chosen to depict this episode, as opposed to the hanging of Zakhak at Mt. Demavand, is unclear.

3. *Zal Comes to Rudabeh's Palace and Sees Her on the Roof*, fol. 24b.

The David Collection (fig. 17)

Zal, the ruler of Zabul, learned of Rudabeh, the beautiful daughter of his tributary, the king of Kabul, and after enlisting the help of her handmaidens, came to her palace. Here she has loosed her long, musk-scented locks, which the *Shahnameh* says reached the ground from her balcony. Zal chose to send up a lasso of his own and climb it to her chamber. Although a gatekeeper sits beside the door to the palace, he appears unaware of Zal's conversation with his charge. Meanwhile, the handmaidens stand in an upper chamber with wine and incense, ready to greet the lover of their mistress.

This composition, with a prince on horseback conversing with a princess on a balcony or second-storey terrace of a palace, has a long history in Persian painting. Early 15th-century images of Khusrau at Shirin's palace from the *Khamseh* of Nizami were copied and adapted to other manuscripts such as the *Shahnameh* through the 15th and 16th centuries. Mu'in has included trees and other vegetation here, not only to suggest the landscape outside the palace, but also to echo the description of Rudabeh as "A cypress over which the full moon

shone."<sup>28</sup> The balcony extending into the right-hand margin may be unfinished and serves no pictorial purpose. Nonetheless, this is one of Mu'in's favorite architectural elements, found in many of his illustrations.

Another version of this illustration from a mid-17th-century manuscript produced in Isfahan<sup>29</sup> contains many of the same elements: the gatekeeper, the handmaidens, and other servants, but Zal is greeted at the door by a duenna rather than preparing to climb up a rope to Rudabeh's chamber. The style of the Isfahan miniature conforms to that of the Windsor *Shahnameh*,<sup>30</sup> a style that was in favor at the court of Shah 'Abbas II and at the courts of the most powerful figures in his government. However, despite its reference to an archaic rendering of the prince at the palace of his beloved, Mu'in's painting depicts the story less ambiguously than its fashionable Isfahan counterpart.

4. *Rustam Kills the White Elephant*, fol. 32a.

The David Collection (fig. 18)

As a boy, Rustam and his father Zal traveled to Sistan. After a night of revelry Rustam was awakened from his sleep by people shouting that the local chief's white elephant had broken loose and was on a rampage. Armed with his grandfather Sam's mace, Rustam went forth to confront the beast, but the gatekeeper attempted to stop him. Rustam responded by striking the gatekeeper on the head, smashing his way through the gate, and felling the elephant with a mighty blow to the head. In the painting, Rustam, dressed in his nightclothes and without turban or shoes, has just landed his mace on the elephant's head, as the gatekeeper lies bleeding next to the open gate.

Mu'in has retained the palette of purple, red, and violet here while adding another trademark element, the stormy sky with clouds depicted in his characteristic watercolor technique. Moreover, the sagging flesh of the elephant's legs and belly anticipates Mu'in's later animal drawings. The twisting bark of the tree also will appear often in Mu'in's manuscript illustrations. While the text of the *Shahnameh* implies that Rustam emerged from a walled palace or

city to combat the elephant, Mu'in has depicted a yurt-shaped tent with its dome extending into the upper margin and one of its ropes attached to the tree.

Illustrations of this popular episode are found in 17th-century *Shahnamehs*, including the mid-century manuscript in the Gulistan Palace Library. There the artist has emphasized the rage of the elephant and has included several figures that it has trampled. Most other Safavid renderings of this scene include numerous figures and a detailed architectural setting. By contrast, Mu'in has limited the figures to two men and the elephant, and has chosen to illustrate the minute after Rustam has subdued the elephant. The prototype for this composition may thus be an illustration of Khusrau defeating the lion from the *Khamseh* of Nizami rather than a *Shahnameh* image.<sup>31</sup>

5. *Rustam Lifts Afrasiyab up by His Belt*, fol. 39b.

The David Collection (fig. 19)

Still young and beardless, Rustam had acquired his tiger-skin cuirass and his magnificent horse, Rakhsh, by the time of this episode. He is portrayed on the battlefield effortlessly lifting the archenemy of the Iranians, Afrasiyab, by his belt into mid-air. Unfortunately, the weight of the Turanian king was too great. The belt snapped and Afrasiyab crashed to the ground, where he was surrounded by his troops and saved.

In keeping with his other illustrations in this manuscript, Mu'in has focused sharply on the protagonists while clustering the onlookers along the horizon and below in the foreground. The vertical format of the picture surface and the use of the lavender ground as a backdrop for the action emphasizes Rustam's feat of lifting Afrasiyab straight up in the air with one hand. While versions of this illustration in other 17th-century *Shahnamehs* depict the same moment of the story, in most of them Rustam and Afrasiyab are placed in the midst of the army on the battlefield. Here the figures holding battle horns at the top of the image as well as those wearing helmets imply a battle without overpowering the primary significance of the story and its illustration.

6. *The Death of Afrasiyab*, fol. 41a.

The David Collection (fig. 20)

This painting is out of place in the manuscript and has been inserted near where *Rustam Kills the White Div* was removed. (See Appendix I.) Afrasiyab was finally caught by the Iranians and brought before Kay Khusrau. After reminding Afrasiyab of all the noble and royal Iranians he had executed, Kay Khusrau beheaded him. Through the splattered red-brown blood Afrasiyab's white moustache is visible, attesting to his advanced age at the time of his death. The treatment of rocks that swoop toward the moody sky is typical of the work of Mu'in, as is the grouping of figures around the periphery of the image. Unlike the first five illustrations in the manuscript, this one is signed in the border below the outer marginal lines.

7. *Rustam Kills the Dragon with the Help of Rakhsh*, fol. 44a. The David Collection (fig. 21)

One of the most dramatic and attractive paintings in the manuscript, this illustration depicts Rustam slicing the back of a dragon that has coiled itself around Rakhsh as the horse bites him. The episode was the third of seven so-called courses that Rustam endured as he traveled through Mazandaran to rescue Kay Kavus, who had been taken captive by the White Div. Unwittingly Rustam had chosen to sleep near a dragon's lair. Twice the dragon emerged and Rakhsh awakened Rustam, who chided the horse because he could not see the dragon. The third time, as he was about to become very angry at the horse, Rustam noticed the dragon and both man and horse attacked and killed it.

Maintaining his customary palette of pink, purple, bright blue, and red, Mu'in has effectively contrasted the writhing blue dragon with pinkish Rakhsh and the purple ground behind him. Here the dragon's head is almost obscured as it is tucked in between the horse's saddle and its own back. Mu'in's drawings of dragons attacking other animals and a painting of a man attacked by a dragon indicate his abiding interest in the monsters.<sup>32</sup> Despite the quarter of a century separating the David Collection *Shahnameh* and the single-page painting of a man