Tracing Sinbad's heroic path in Naguib Mahfouz's *Layālī Alf Laylah*: A narrative perspective of Christopher Vogler

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ABSTRACT

Heroic narratives have always held a universal appeal as they portray the human struggle in facing life's challenges while simultaneously seeking the deeper meaning of existence. This study aims to examine the heroic journey of Sinbad in Naguib Mahfouz's Layālī Alf Laylah through the narrative framework of the Hero's Journey as developed by Christopher Vogler. The research focuses on two main aspects: identifying the stages of Sinbad's transformation and revealing the archetypes that shape the narrative structure. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, utilizing close reading, data annotation, and the Miles and Huberman interactive model of analysis, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that although Vogler's Hero's Journey model comprises twelve stages, Sinbad undergoes only ten of them. These stages include the ordinary world, meeting with the mentor, crossing the first threshold, test allies and enemies, approach, supreme ordeal, reward, the road back, resurrection, and return with the elixir. This indicates that Sinbad's heroic path does not strictly follow a linear pattern but rather adapts to the narrative context shaped by Mahfouz. Unlike earlier studies that often relied on Joseph Campbell's monomyth, this research demonstrates that Vogler's model being more structural, cinematic, and character centered provides a more dynamic and context-sensitive lens to interpret both the external adventure and inner transformation of the hero in Arabic narrative tradition. This distinction is significant because it extends the applicability of Western narrative theory to Arabic literature in a more flexible and culturally resonant way, revealing how Mahfouz's adaptation of the heroic pattern blends universal motifs with local moral and spiritual dimensions. These findings affirm that Mahfouz does not merely present an external adventure but also constructs an inner journey imbued with moral, spiritual, and existential values. This research contributes to the development of modern Arabic literary studies by applying Vogler's narrative model and offers a fresh perspective on the representation of heroism. Ultimately, Sinbad's journey illustrates that heroism transcends external triumphs and is equally defined by profound inner transformation, resonating across cultures and generations.

Keywords: archetype, hero's journey, novel, Naguib Mahfouz, Sinbad

Introduction

Heroic narratives hold a universal appeal as they depict struggles, sacrifice, and quests for identity across cultures (Marasigan, 2023). In Arabic literature, figures such as Antarah ibn Shadda, Hayy ibn Yaqzan, and Sinbad illustrate not only physical challenges but also profound inner transformation (Abouelela, 2020; Baroud, 2019). What was once considered mere adventure has been reinterpreted as moral and existential journey rich in symbolism (Stokes-Parish et al., 2023).

Heroic narratives serve not only as entertainment but also as meaningful reflections of human experience across different cultural and moral frameworks (Billah, 2023). They evoke empathy, resilience, and the belief that every individual can become a "hero" in their own way (Saputro & Pasopati, 2024; Valiantien & Ariani, 2021). Such stories also inspire identity formation and moral awareness (Azli et al., 2023; Prasetyo et al., 2025). Their

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relevance endures across time and cultures (Parry, 2020).

Heroism in literature is not limited to explicitly heroic figures, it can emerge from diverse characters regardless of social status or gender (Noviana, 2019; Woods, 2021). In Mahfouz's works, heroes undertake long journeys that lead to revelation, embedding moral values within the process (Alandira et al., 2025; Kelsey et al., 2023). His novel *Layālī Alf Laylah* (Mahfouz, 2015), presents multiple intertwined narratives, including Sinbad, 'Ujr al-Ḥallāq, and 'Alā' ad-Dīn Abū ash-Shāmāt. Among these, Sinbad exemplifies both physical adventure and inner transformation, encountering external conflicts and internal struggles that shape his search for identity (Nuranindya et al., 2023; Shahid et al., 2024).

Although Campbell's concept of the *monomyth* has been widely applied to various literary and cinematic works, Naguib Mahfouz's *Layālī Alf Laylah* particularly the narrative of Sinbad has not yet been systematically analyzed through Christopher Vogler's adaptation of the *Hero's Journey*. To date, studies on the *Hero's Journey* have predominantly relied on Campbell's framework, whereas Vogler's model, which emphasizes structural and psychological dimensions, has rarely been explored within the context of Arabic literature. This gap highlights the novelty of the present study, which applies Vogler's framework to offer a deeper examination of the moral and spiritual dimensions often overlooked in Campbell's monomyth. This paper argues that Sinbad's journey in Mahfouz's *Layālī Alf Laylah* largely aligns with Vogler's *Hero's Journey* model, yet its deviation from two key stages and its focus on inner transformation reveal a distinct philosophical interpretation of heroism in modern Arabic literature.

Previous studies on heroic narratives often employ Campbell's concept of the monomyth (Campbell, 1968). This research, however, adopts Vogler's adaptation which expands Campbell's framework into twelve stages: ordinary world, call to adventure, refusal, mentor, crossing the threshold, tests, allies, enemies, approach, supreme ordeal, reward, road back, resurrection, and return

with the elixir (Vogler, 2007). Vogler further emphasizes that the hero represents a universal archetype, transcending gender and social boundaries (Khan et al., 2021; Moran, 2025). Unlike scholars who separate hero and heroine (Waranggani, 2025). Vogler employs "hero" in a gender-neutral sense, applicable to any character undergoing transformation (Cameron et al., 2022; Humlung & Haddara, 2019). His framework highlights both narrative stages and archetypes hero, mentor, threshold guardian, herald, shapeshifter, shadow, ally, and trickster which clarify character functions in storytelling (Weller et al., 2023).

Applying Vogler's model to Mahfouz's Sinbad is relevant because, first, the narrative intuitively follows the Hero's Journey structure, suggesting its inherent presence in storytelling (Altabaa & Zahari, 2022). Second, Sinbad is reimagined not merely as an adventurer but as a character whose intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth reflects modern heroism. His story reveals that heroism is not confined to external triumphs but also encompasses inner transformation.

Previous studies on heroic narratives generally fall into two main directions. The first applies Campbell's *Hero's Journey* to various literary and cinematic texts, including children's adaptations of *Sinbad* (Mahmudah, 2024) and other global narratives (Noviana, 2019), emphasizing the universality of the heroic structure but often overlooking its moral and psychological depth. The second adopts Vogler's adaptation, as seen in analyses of modern works such as *Prey* (Charlieta, 2023), which demonstrate the flexibility of Vogler's structural and archetypal model across cultures. However, no research has systematically applied Vogler's framework to Mahfouz's *Layālī Alf Laylah*. While some scholars have explored Mahfouz's works through sociopolitical and philosophical perspectives (Alandira et al., 2025; Kelsey et al., 2023), the heroic dimension especially Sinbad's psychological and spiritual transformation remains largely underexamined. This gap highlights the novelty of the present study, which employs Vogler's model to reinterpret Mahfouz's redefinition of heroism within modern Arabic literature.

These studies underline the novelty of the present research. While earlier works either examined different aspects of *Layālī Alf Laylah* or applied Vogler's model to other narratives, this study centers on Sinbad in Mahfouz's version, analyzing both his heroic stages and archetypes. The research seeks to demonstrate that Mahfouz's Sinbad embodies not only physical adventure but also moral, spiritual, and existential values.

Therefore, the objectives of this study are twofold: (1) to identify the stages of Sinbad's heroic journey in *Layālī Alf Laylah* based on Vogler's framework, and (2) to analyze the archetypes associated with his character. This research contributes to modern Arabic literary studies by applying Vogler's narrative model and offers a new perspective on the representation of heroism. Ultimately, Sinbad's journey illustrates that heroism transcends outward success, representing inner growth and universal values relevant across generations.

Method

This research is a descriptive qualitative study. It emphasizes a deeper understanding of the issue rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2013). The analysis adopts a structuralist–narratological perspective, focusing on the formal aspects of the text, particularly the narrative patterns and archetypes that reflect Christopher Vogler's Hero's Journey model. This approach is suitable for uncovering how Mahfouz constructs Sinbad's transformation through a sequence of narrative functions and symbolic stages (Ihsan, 2018).

The primary data source was obtained through the classification of Sinbad's heroic journey in the novel *Layālī Alf Laylah* by Naguib Mahfouz, published in 2015 (Mahfouz, 2015). The data extracted from the novel focused solely on the story of Sinbad to identify specific parts of the narrative that represent the stages of the hero's journey. Meanwhile, the secondary data sources comprising books, articles, and relevant journals served as supporting references to provide a comprehensive perspective on the topic under study. By integrating both primary and secondary sources, this research aims to produce a more in-depth analysis and findings with a high degree of validity within the field of literary studies.

Data collection was conducted through several interconnected procedures. The researcher first translated the relevant Arabic excerpts of *Layālī Alf Laylah* into English and Indonesian to facilitate textual analysis and ensure comprehension. To maintain accuracy, the translation was verified through reviewed by a bilingual academic colleague. After translation, a close reading was conducted repeatedly to capture explicit and implicit meanings embedded in the narrative. The researcher then annotated and coded relevant excerpts based on Vogler's twelve stages and eight archetypes. A codebook was developed to guide this process, containing definitions and examples for each stage (e.g., *Ordinary World*, *Supreme Ordeal*, *Resurrection*). The selected excerpts were chosen based on their relevance to Sinbad's actions, decisions, and conflicts, as well as their indications of moral and psychological transformation. The coded data were then organized thematically according to Vogler's framework.

The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). During the data reduction stage, only excerpts that clearly represented Vogler's stages or archetypes were retained, while irrelevant text was excluded. The reduced data were then analyzed descriptively by grouping the relevant excerpts according to Vogler's stages and archetypes, in order to trace the connection between Sinbad's experiences and the *Hero's Journey* narrative structure. The final stage involved interpreting recurring patterns and deviations from Vogler's framework to uncover how Mahfouz reimagines the concept of heroism in the context of modern Arabic literature. The validity of interpretation was ensured through theoretical triangulation, peer debriefing, and translation accuracy checks to maintain fidelity to Mahfouz's stylistic and thematic intent. These procedures ensured methodological rigor and analytical credibility throughout the study.

Results and Discussion

The findings of this study were organized under two main aspects: the stages of Sinbad's heroic journey and the archetypes associated with his character. In this section, the analysis is presented according to these two aspects. Relevant excerpts from the narrative are cited directly to illustrate each stage and archetype. To maintain clarity, the discussion follows the sequence of Vogler's Hero's Journey stages and the identification of archetypes in relation to Sinbad's transformation.

Sinbad's Hero's Journey

The novel *Layālī Alf Laylah* by Naguib Mahfouz contains several stages of the Hero's Journey, which indicate that the character of Sinbad possesses a true heroic spirit. The following are the stages of Sinbad's Hero's Journey as depicted in the novel *Layālī Alf Laylah*:

Sinbad's Ordinary World

According to Christopher Vogler's model of the Hero's Journey, the first stage, known as the ordinary world, represents the protagonist's initial life circumstances prior to the commencement of the adventure (Vogler, 2007). This stage introduces the hero, outlines his daily life, and highlights the initial imbalance or conflict that prompts the journey.

Novel *Layālī Alf Laylah*, Sinbad is portrayed as an ordinary young man with a modest background. This is reflected in the following excerpt:

وقال إبراهيم السقاء: لا شك في أنك أصبحت من الأغنياء يا سندباد(Mahfouz, 2015)

"Wa-qāla Ibrāhīmu al-Saqqā': lā syakka fī annaka aṣbaḥta mina al-aghniyā'i yā Sindibād"

"And Ibrahim al-Saqqa said: "There is no doubt that you have become one of the wealthy, O Sinbad"

This excerpt illustrates that Sinbad once lived a life not much different from his peers who worked as water carriers or porters. He came from an ordinary background, lacking wealth or significant social influence. This past marks the fact that Sinbad began his journey from a humble starting point. His simple life serves as a crucial moral and emotional foundation within the narrative. When he eventually becomes wealthy and renowned due to his adventures, he remains capable of interacting warmly with those who once shared his hardships, such as Ibrahim and Ragab. Sinbad's ordinary world is not merely a narrative backdrop but a source of strong internal motivation. He exemplifies a heroic figure who was not born into grandeur but forged his identity through struggle and exploration. His heroism emerges from humility and a powerful desire to transform his life circumstances.

Interestingly, Mahfouz deliberately omits the stages of the "Call to Adventure" and the "Refusal of the Call," which are conventionally central in Vogler's Hero's Journey. This narrative choice signifies that Sinbad's drive for adventure does not originate from an external summons or conflict but rather from an innate spiritual and moral restlessness. In Mahfouz's modern reinterpretation, heroism is not a response to circumstance but a manifestation of internal readiness and existential yearning—a metaphor for the human quest for meaning in a fragmented modern world. By bypassing hesitation or external motivation, Mahfouz reshapes the archetype of the hero as a self-aware individual who embarks on the journey of transformation out of personal conviction rather than external compulsion. This deviation also reflects an Islamic philosophical undertone, suggesting that true adventure is a form of *jihād al-nafs* (struggle of the self), where courage is born from faith and introspection rather than fate or destiny.

Meeting with Sheikh Abdullah al-Balkhi

The meeting with the mentor stage in the Hero's Journey represents the moment when the protagonist encounters a wise figure who offers guidance, resources, or encouragement before embarking on a major journey (Vogler, 2007). The mentor figure is not merely a teacher but someone who shapes the hero's path intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally. In *Layālī Alf Laylah*, Sinbad experiences this stage when he returns to visit

his mentor, Sheikh Abdullah al-Balkhi. This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

وزار معلم صباه الشيخ عبد الله البلخي فقبل يديه وقال له :
لم أمكث في رحابك إلا ما اقتضته التربية الأولية، ولكنى ربحت منه
كلمات أضاءت لى الظلام في الملمات(Mahfouz, 2015)

"Wa-zāra mu'allima ṣabāhi al-syaikha 'Abdallāh al-Balkhī fa-qabbala yadaihi wa-qāla lahu: lam amkuth fī riḥābika illā mā iqtaḍat-hu al-tarbiyatu al-awwaliyya, wa-lākin-nī rabiḥtu min-hu kalimātin aḍā'at lī al-ẓalāma fī al-mulimmat"

"He visited his childhood teacher, Sheikh Abdullah al-Balkhi, kissed his hands, and said to him: "I only stayed in your company as much as was required for the elementary education, yet I gained from it words that illuminated the darkness for me in times of hardship""

This excerpt clearly illustrates the relationship between Sinbad and his mentor.

Sinbad's First Journey

Crossing the First Threshold is a pivotal moment in the hero's journey, marking the point at which the protagonist leaves the familiar world behind and fully enters a new realm filled with challenges and obstacles (Vogler, 2007). This stage represents a point of no return, where the hero consciously chooses to abandon the comfort of the known world and embrace the uncertainties of a dangerous and unfamiliar adventure. This transition is powerfully reflected in the following excerpt:

فإنه لما غرقت سفينتنا فى رحلتنا الأولى سبحت متعلقا بلوح
من ألواحها حتى اهتديت إلى جزيرة سوداء(Mahfouz, 2015)

Tests, Allies, and Enemies

The next stage in the hero's journey is Tests, Allies, and Enemies. After crossing the first threshold, the hero enters a phase in which they must face a series of trials, begin to identify allies and enemies, and learn the new rules of an unfamiliar world (Vogler, 2007). This stage serves as a testing ground where the hero's character is shaped through direct experiences. This is vividly illustrated in the following excerpts:

فإنه لما غرقت سفينتنا فى رحلتنا الأولى سبحت متعلقا
بلوح من ألواحها حتى اهتديت إلى جزيرة سوداء
الأرض تتحرك ! (Mahfouz, 2015)

Syeikh Abdullah is not merely a teacher who imparts basic knowledge, but also a spiritual and intellectual figure who leaves a profound impact on Sinbad's life. Even after Sinbad matures and undertakes great journeys, he continues to remember and value the wisdom imparted by his mentor.

This stage is particularly significant as it reveals the origin of Sinbad's inner strength. He is not a hero who relies solely on courage and cleverness, but also on the wisdom and introspection instilled through his mentor's guidance. Thus, Syeikh Abdullah al-Balkhi serves as the foundational figure in shaping Sinbad's heroic character, even though he does not physically accompany him on his adventures.

"Fa-innahū lammā ghariqat safīnatunā fī riḥlatinā al-ūlā sabaḥtu muta'alliqa" bi-lawḥin min alwāḥihā ḥattā ihtadaitu ilā jazīratin sawdā'a"

"When our ship sank during our first voyage, I swam clinging to one of its planks until I found my way to a dark island"

This excerpt marks Sinbad's first step as a true adventurer. His initial journey does not proceed smoothly; instead, he is immediately confronted with a major disaster the shipwreck. This event is not merely physical but also symbolic, signifying that Sinbad has left behind his stable and secure world and entered an adventurous realm filled with risks and uncertainties.

"Fa-innahū lammā ghariqat safīnatunā fī riḥlatinā al-ūlā sabaḥtu muta'alliqa" bi-lawḥin min alwāḥihā ḥattā ihtadaitu ilā jazīratin sawdā'a"
"al-arḍu tataḥarraku"

"When our ship sank during our first voyage, I swam clinging to one of its planks until I found my way to a dark island"
"The earth is moving"

In this stage, Mahfouz enriches the "Tests, Allies, and Enemies" phase with symbolic depth rather than focusing solely on external conflict. Sinbad's encounter with the deceptive island revealed later as a giant whale reflects not only a physical challenge but also an allegory of human delusion and the fragile

boundary between reality and illusion. This episode marks Sinbad's awakening to the instability of the material world and the necessity of faith and wisdom in navigating uncertainty. The recurring shipwreck motif throughout his adventures reinforces this idea, portraying life as a cyclical test in which

Approach to the Inmost Cave

Christopher Vogler identifies the Approach to the Inmost Cave as a stage in the hero's journey that represents the moment when the hero draws closer to the heart of their greatest challenge (Vogler, 2007). The "inmost cave" symbolically represents the most dangerous, mysterious, and threatening place both physically and emotionally. This phase serves as a space for reflection and preparation before the hero faces the ultimate ordeal that will test their resolve and determination. In *Layālī Alf Laylah*, this stage is vividly portrayed through a series of terrifying and enigmatic experiences that Sinbad encounters during his journey:

فقد ارتطمت السفينة بصخور ناتئة فتحطمت وانتقل من عليها إلى جزيرة جزيرة جرداء لا ماء فيها ولا شجر ولكننا حملنا معنا أغذية وقرب مياه

فقد تحطمت السفينة كسابقتها فوجدنا أنفسنا في جزيرة يحكمها ملك عملاق لكنه كريم مضياف

فقد غرقت السفينة وهي في طريقها إلى الصين(Mahfouz, 2015)

"Faqad irtaṭamat al-safīnatu bi-ṣukhūrin nāti'ah fa-taḥaṭṭamat wa-intaqala man 'alayhā ilā jazīratiⁿ jaradā'a lā mā'a fīhā wa-lā shajar, wa-lākin-nā ḥamalnā ma'anā aghdhiyatan wa-qiraba mā'"

"Faqad taḥaṭṭamat al-safīnatu ka-sābiqatihā fa-wajadnā anfusanā fī jazīratiⁿ yaḥkumuhā malikun 'imlāqun lākinna-hu karīmun muḍyāf"

"Faqad ghariqat al-safīnatu wa-hiya fī ṭarīqihā ilā al-Ṣīn"

"The ship had struck against sharp rocks and was shattered, and those on board moved to a barren island without water or trees. However, we carried with us some food and water-skins."

"The ship was wrecked like the one before it, and we found ourselves on an island

ruled by a giant king, yet he was generous and hospitable."

"The ship sank while it was on its way to China."

The excerpts above illustrate Sinbad's journey from one island to another, each harboring significant threats. From repeated shipwrecks and desolate, uninhabited islands to seemingly welcoming places that conceal deadly dangers, these experiences collectively form the Approach to the Inmost Cave. This stage marks the point at which the hero comes dangerously close to the climax, confronting the possibility of personal destruction. It represents the ultimate test before the hero can achieve enlightenment, transformation, or victory in the subsequent stages.

In Mahfouz's narrative, the *Approach to the Inmost Cave* stage symbolizes Sinbad's gradual movement toward the core of his existential and moral confrontation. Each shipwreck and island encountered does not merely represent physical danger but serves as a metaphor for the fragmentation of human certainty and the repeated testing of faith. The "inmost cave" in this context is not a literal space but a psychological and spiritual threshold where Sinbad must confront the essence of human limitation and dependence on divine providence. Through cycles of destruction and renewal, Mahfouz reinterprets this stage as a process of inner purification. The repetition of suffering and survival reflects the Sufi notion of *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul), emphasizing that heroism, in its truest form, is born from acceptance, humility, and the awareness of divine wisdom.

knowledge and moral clarity become the hero's true compass. Thus, Mahfouz transforms what in Vogler's model is an external trial into an internal confrontation with fear, doubt, and the search for meaning, aligning the narrative with Sufi-inspired introspection within the Arabic literary tradition.

The Supreme Ordeal

The Supreme Ordeal stage in the hero's journey represents the peak of suffering, an existential crisis, and the deepest confrontation

with death whether physical or symbolic (Vogler, 2007). At this point, the protagonist faces their darkest moment, loses all hope, and struggles on the brink of complete destruction.

In Sinbad's narrative, this experience is portrayed through a series of traumatic events, immense pressure, and moments that push the limits of human endurance.

ودهمنى الفزع من ذاك العدو المجهول وأنا أغوص في خلاء
الموت البطيء
وجعلت أراقب زوجتى مشفقا، وكلما اشتكت توعكا خفيفا
زلزل كيانى كله .. وعندما جاءها المخاض ساءت حالتها فما كان
منى إلا أن هربت إلى الغابة
فقد لقيت سفينتنا عاصفة أودت بها فلم ينج من رجالها أحد
سواى (Mahfouz, 2015)

"Wadahamani al-faza'u min dhālika al-'aduwwi al-majhūl wa-anā aghūṣu fī khalā'i al-mawti al-baṭī'"

"Wa-ja'altu urāqibu zawjatī musyfiqan, wa-kullamā isytakat tawakka'an khafīfan zalzala kayānī kullahu .. wa-'indamā jā'ahā al-mukhāḍu sā'at ḥālatahā famā kāna minnī illā an harabtu ilā al-ghābah"

"Faqad laqiyat safīnatunā 'āṣifatan awdat bihā falam yanjū min rijālihā aḥadun siwāya"

"Terror from that unknown enemy overwhelmed me as I sank into the emptiness of a slow death"

"I kept watching my wife with deep concern, and whenever she complained of a slight discomfort, my whole being was shaken… and when labor came upon her, her condition worsened, so I had no choice but to flee into the forest"

Reward

The Reward (seizing the sword) is a stage in the hero's journey according to Vogler. It represents the moment when the protagonist gains a result or gift after successfully overcoming the most challenging trials (Vogler, 2007). In the novel *Layālī Alf Laylah*, this stage is clearly depicted when Sinbad finally manages to escape from the situation that nearly cost him his life and is subsequently rescued by a ship. This is reflected in the following excerpt:

وهربت إلى الشاطئ حتى أنقذتني سفينة (Mahfouz, 2015)

"Wa-harabtu ilā al-shāṭi'i ḥattā anqadztatnī safīnatun"

"And I fled to the shore until a ship rescued me"

At first glance, this episode signifies physical salvation, but within the symbolic structure of the Hero's Journey, it represents

"Our ship had met a storm that destroyed it, and none of its men survived except me"

This excerpt marks the moment when Sinbad's journey descends into its darkest phase, confronting both physical peril and psychological despair. When a violent storm destroys his ship and kills everyone on board, Sinbad becomes the only survivor symbolically cast into the abyss of death and isolation. His struggle for survival continues as he reaches an island and attempts to rebuild his life. However, his encounter with a frail old man, whom he helps out of compassion, turns into a moment of betrayal and enslavement. This experience strips Sinbad not only of his physical freedom but also of his dignity and self-control, forcing him to confront the limits of human endurance.

Mahfouz uses this episode to portray the *Supreme Ordeal* as more than a test of strength it becomes a spiritual descent and symbolic death preceding renewal. Sinbad's suffering reflects the dissolution of ego and the loss of worldly attachments, preparing him for transformation and rebirth in later stages. In this sense, Mahfouz reinterprets Vogler's stage as an existential struggle through which heroism emerges not from victory, but from endurance, humility, and self-awareness.

much more. Sinbad's rescue marks the beginning of spiritual renewal his survival is a form of rebirth. When he later discovers the land filled with uncut diamonds, these gems function not merely as material wealth, but as symbols of wisdom and enlightenment attained through suffering. The diamonds embody the purified self, refined by trial and adversity, and thus serve as the boon or inner treasure that the hero earns.

Mahfouz subtly shifts the meaning of "reward" from external success to inner awakening. Sinbad's true victory is not in the wealth he acquires, but in the insight and humility forged through his experiences. His transformation reflects a synthesis between the material and spiritual realms, revealing that the essence of heroism lies in moral consciousness and inner illumination values deeply rooted in Arabic ethical and mystical traditions.

The Road Back

This stage corresponds to The Road Back in Vogler's hero's journey. It marks the moment when the hero decides to leave the world of adventure and return to the ordinary world, often bringing with them some form of "elixir" whether it be knowledge, treasure, or life-changing experience (Vogler, 2007). At this point, a final conflict or remaining challenge often arises to test whether the hero is truly worthy of returning with safety and victory. The following excerpt illustrates this stage of the hero's journey:

وتناولت حجرا فحطمت به رأسه وأنقذت العالم من شره ..
وسكنت في الجزيرة زمنا سعيدا لم أدره حتى أنقذتنى سفينة
(Mahfouz, 2015)

"Wa-tanāwaltu ḥajaran faḥaṭṭamtu bihi ra'sahu wa-anqadztu al-'ālama min sharrih .. wa-sakantu fī al-jazīrati zamanan sa'īdan lam adrihi ḥattā anqadztatnī safīnatun"

"I picked up a stone and crushed his head with it, saving the world from his evil. And I lived on the island for a happy time I had not known, until a ship rescued me"

At a surface level, this episode depicts Sinbad's liberation from physical captivity.

Resurrection

The next stage in the hero's journey in the novel *Layālī Alf Laylah* is the Resurrection. This is the final emotional climax of the narrative (Vogler, 2007). In this phase, the hero undergoes a profound transformation both physical and spiritual before fully returning to ordinary life. He has changed significantly, not only bringing something tangible from the world of adventure, but also carrying a renewed soul shaped by the trials, suffering, and triumphs he has endured. The following excerpt illustrates this stage:

كل شيء مرهون بوقته، على أن أبتاع قصرا، وأفتح وكالة لعرض النوادر من نفائس الجبال وأعماق البحار ومجهول الجزر وسأدعوكم قريبا لعشاء أقدم فيه غرائب الأطعمة والأشربة ثم أروى لكم رحلاتي العجيبة
وسبحت في الجو طويلا ولا هدف لي إلا مدينتى حتى بلغتها بعد أن أيست من ذلك، فالحمد لله رب العالمين (Mahfouz, 2015)

"Kullu syai'in marhūnun bi-waqtih, 'alā an abtā'a qaṣran, wa-aftaḥa wikālatan li-'arḍi al-nawādir min nafā'isi al-jibāl wa-a'māqi al-biḥār wa-majhūli al-juzur, wa-sa-ad'ūkum qarīban li-'asā'i

However, on a deeper symbolic level, it represents the hero's moral awakening and the assertion of his free will. The act of striking the old man is not simply a reaction to oppression, but a metaphor for overcoming the darker aspects of the self fear, submission, and moral paralysis. By destroying the figure who embodies tyranny and deceit, Sinbad metaphorically conquers his own internal weakness and reclaims spiritual autonomy.

Mahfouz reinterprets *The Road Back* not as a literal journey home, but as a phase of self-reconciliation and inner peace. Sinbad's temporary stay on the island after defeating his oppressor becomes a contemplative interlude a pause before reintegration into ordinary life. This moment of stillness marks a psychological recovery, where the hero internalizes the wisdom gained from suffering. Thus, Sinbad's road back is both physical and metaphysical, bridging the realm of trial with the realm of renewal. It signifies readiness to return, not only with experience, but with a purified soul anchored in moral and spiritual balance.

uqaddimu fīhi gharā'iba al-aṭ'imati wa-al-asyri bah, thumma arwī lakum riḥalātī al-'ajībata"

"Wa-sabaḥtu fī al-jawwi ṭawīlan wa-lā hadafa lī illā madīnatī ḥattā balaghtuhā ba'da an ayistu min dhālika, fa-al-ḥamdu lillāhi rabbi al-'ālamīn"

"Everything is bound to its time: I will buy a palace, open an agency to display rarities from the treasures of the mountains, the depths of the seas, and the mysteries of the islands. Soon I shall invite you to a dinner where I will present strange foods and drinks, and then recount to you my wondrous journeys"

"I drifted in the air for a long time, with no goal but my city, until I finally reached it after I had despaired of doing so. Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds"

The excerpt shows that Sinbad does not merely return physically to his hometown, but he is also reborn as a transformed individual. He is now wiser, more resilient, and enriched both materially and spiritually. The words of gratitude he expresses signify his spiritual awakening. He now understands that the purpose of his journey was not merely to amass wealth, but to comprehend destiny, embrace gratitude, and return as a whole and renewed

human being. This moment marks the culmination of Sinbad's transformation a hero who has passed through the cycle of life,

Return with the Elixir

The final stage of the hero's journey is Return with the Elixir. According to Vogler, this stage represents the completion and fulfillment of the entire heroic cycle (Vogler, 2007). In this phase, the hero returns to the ordinary world but not empty-handed. He brings with him an elixir that not only transforms his own life but can also benefit others. This elixir may take the form of a tangible object, knowledge, wisdom, personal transformation, or even a renewed sense of hope for his community. The following excerpt illustrates this moment:

صمت الملك مليا، ثم قال: لقد رأيت من عجائب الدنيا ما لم تره عين بشر، وتعلمت دروسا عن معاناة وخبرة فاهنا بما رزقك الله من مال وحكمة (Mahfouz, 2015)

"Ṣamata al-maliku maliyyan, thumma qāla: laqad ra'aytu min 'ajā'ibi al-dunyā mā lam tarahu 'aynu basyar, wa-ta'allamtu durūsan 'an mu'ānātin wa-khibrah, fa-hna' bimā razaqaka Allāhu min mālin wa-ḥikmah"

"The king remained silent for a long while, then said: "I have seen the wonders of the world that no human eye has ever seen, and I have learned lessons of suffering and experience. So rejoice in what God has granted you of wealth and wisdom"

This passage encapsulates the dual nature of Sinbad's *elixir*: wealth and wisdom. While he indeed returns with material success, Mahfouz emphasizes that Sinbad's true gift lies in the spiritual and moral enlightenment gained through adversity. The king's acknowledgment symbolizes society's recognition of Sinbad's transformation not merely as a voyager who conquered the seas, but as a man who has attained self-knowledge through divine guidance and human endurance. Mahfouz redefines the *elixir* as the harmony between the external and the internal the coexistence of prosperity and piety. Sinbad's adventures lead him to realize that material achievement alone

symbolically died through suffering, and risen again as a new man.

cannot fulfill human purpose; only when coupled with ethical awareness and gratitude does success acquire meaning. The stories he promises to share with others represent the transmission of moral wisdom, transforming his personal experience into collective benefit.

Through this reinterpretation, Mahfouz elevates Sinbad from a traditional epic hero to a moral philosopher a representative of the modern Arabic hero whose greatness is measured not by conquest but by consciousness. His *return with the elixir* thus symbolizes the ultimate synthesis of knowledge and virtue, affirming that the highest form of heroism is to enlighten others through one's own journey of self-discovery.

Based on the detailed analysis above, it can be concluded that Sinbad's journey in *Layālī Alf Laylah* by Naguib Mahfouz encompasses only ten out of twelve stages of Vogler's *Hero's Journey*, omitting the *Call to Adventure* and *Refusal of the Call*. The absence of these two stages is not merely structural but carries interpretive significance. It indicates that Mahfouz reimagines heroism as an act of moral readiness rather than one prompted by external compulsion. Sinbad's journey begins not from resistance or hesitation, but from acceptance of destiny as part of divine will a concept deeply rooted in Arabic-Islamic worldview. This deviation highlights a key distinction between Vogler's model, which emphasizes psychological motivation, and Mahfouz's adaptation, which foregrounds spiritual awareness. Therefore, this finding contributes to a broader understanding of how the *Hero's Journey* framework can be culturally and philosophically reshaped within Arabic literature, bridging universal narrative structures with local moral and mystical dimensions.

Table 1. Sinbad's Hero's Journey in *Layālī Alf Laylah*

No	Hero's Journey Vogler	Status in Sinbad's Story
1.	Ordinary World	Experienced
2.	Call to Adventure	Not Experienced
3.	Refusal of the Call	Not Experienced
4.	Meeting with the Mentor	Experienced
5.	Crossing the First Threshold	Experienced
6.	Tests, Allies, Enemies	Experienced
7.	Approach	Experienced

8.	Supreme Ordeal	Experienced
9.	Reward	Experienced
10.	The Road Back	Experienced
11.	Resurrection	Experienced
12.	Return with the Elixir	Experienced

Archetypes in the Story of Sinbad

Based on the stages of the *Hero's Journey* described above, several key archetypes can be identified in Mahfouz's narrative. According to (Vogler, 2007), archetypes represent recurring psychological roles and symbolic functions that guide the hero's transformation. They are not fixed identities but dynamic forces that shape the moral and emotional trajectory of the story.

Sinbad as the Hero

The character of Sinbad in *Layālī Alf Laylah* by Naguib Mahfouz clearly represents the archetype of the Hero in Christopher Vogler's theory. Sinbad is the central figure who undergoes a transformation through a series of heroic journey stages. He begins his story in the "ordinary world" as someone from a modest background, lacking wealth or significant social influence. This humble origin marks that Sinbad starts from a low point.

Throughout his journey, he leaves his comfort zone and enters an unfamiliar world filled with symbols, obstacles, and spiritual trials. His journey is not only physical but also mental and emotional. He encounters strange creatures, explores the realm of spirits, and confronts the reality of death and the meaning

Syeikh Abdullah al-Balkhi as Sinbad's Mentor

In Sinbad's heroic journey, the Mentor archetype is embodied by the character of Sheikh Abdullah al-Balkhi. This figure plays a fundamental role in guiding and preparing Sinbad to undertake his spiritual quest. As described by Vogler, the mentor is the one who offers motivation, insight, and both spiritual and practical support to help the hero overcome fear and doubt.

Sheikh Abdullah serves as a source of wisdom who enlightens Sinbad to the realization that the world he inhabits is not the final destination, but merely a gateway to deeper understanding. Through his exemplary life, Sheikh Abdullah imparts profound Sufi teachings on devotion and the quest for self-

In *Layālī Alf Laylah*, Mahfouz utilizes these archetypes—such as the Hero, Mentor, Shadow, and Trickster—not merely as narrative devices, but as reflections of Sinbad's inner conflict between faith and fear, knowledge and ignorance, freedom and submission. Each archetype, therefore, serves both a psychological purpose (revealing aspects of Sinbad's consciousness) and a symbolic one (illustrating the spiritual stages of human struggle). The following analysis explores how these archetypes operate within the narrative and how they contribute to Mahfouz's reinterpretation of heroism in a modern Arabic context.

of life. These experiences serve as tests and challenges that strengthen his soul and deepen his awareness of life and responsibility.

In the end, Sinbad returns with the elixir in the form of enlightenment and new understanding. This gift is not solely for himself, but also a lesson for his companions and society. These experiences cultivate moral insight and ethical discernment, demonstrating that Sinbad's heroism in Mahfouz's narrative is grounded in psychological and moral growth rather than physical prowess alone. He grows into a character who undergoes not just personal change, but becomes a bearer of insight and transformation for others. This affirms his role as the Hero in Vogler's narrative structure.

realization. He not only provides moral direction but also nurtures Sinbad from a young age, encouraging him to renounce worldly desires in pursuit of inner peace.

The mentor's role becomes especially crucial when Sinbad loses his sense of direction. In moments of uncertainty, Sheikh Abdullah appears as a guiding light, helping Sinbad to find true meaning in suffering and the journey of life. Thus, Sheikh Abdullah is not merely a spiritual guide, but also a representation of divine knowledge a bridge leading the Hero toward enlightenment. Through Sheikh Abdullah's guidance, Sinbad internalizes wisdom that shapes his decisions and prepares him for continuous moral and spiritual transformation throughout his journey.

The Trickster in Sinbad's World

The Trickster archetype in the story of Sinbad emerges in the form of the magical world and the symbolic beings he encounters throughout his adventures. Vogler defines the trickster as a narrative element that disrupts the order of the old world, shakes stability, and forces transformation in the main character (Vogler, 2007).

In *Layālī Alf Laylah*, the presence of strange creatures, talking spirits, mysterious dead cities, and other supernatural phenomena serves as a catalyst for Sinbad to abandon his former worldview (Mahfouz, 2015. These elements often mislead, deceive, or challenge

Conclusion

This study affirms the importance of examining heroic narratives in Arabic literature, particularly in *Layālī Alf Laylah* by Naguib Mahfouz, as a means of understanding the moral, spiritual, and existential dimensions embedded within Sinbad's adventure. The findings reveal that Sinbad undergoes ten essential stages of Vogler's Hero's Journey: the Ordinary World, Meeting with the Mentor, Crossing the First Threshold, Tests, Allies, and Enemies, Approach, Supreme Ordeal, Reward, The Road Back, Resurrection, and Return with the Elixir. Furthermore, three central archetypes Hero, Mentor, and Trickster were identified as the key forces shaping Sinbad's transformation.

From a theoretical perspective, these results show that the Hero's Journey is not a rigid structure but one that adapts flexibly to the cultural and literary context of Arabic prose. While some stages are condensed or implied rather than explicitly narrated, the narrative still conveys the essence of heroic transformation. Compared with other literary traditions, Mahfouz's Sinbad emphasizes inner awakening and moral responsibility rather than material triumph or military conquest, reflecting a form of modern heroism rooted in ethical reflection and spiritual growth.

The novelty of this study lies in demonstrating how Mahfouz reinterprets the

human logic, compelling Sinbad to perceive the world through a new lens.

The trickster is not necessarily evil, but their presence generates conflict, chaos, and doubt all of which are essential for the hero's growth. For Sinbad, these disturbances become opportunities for self-reflection and spiritual discovery. Therefore, although the trickster may take on inconsistent or shifting forms, its narrative function is vital in the hero's journey, as it forces Sinbad to grow, awaken, and ultimately discover his true self. Each encounter with the Trickster challenges Sinbad to confront moral dilemmas, reassess his values, and strengthen his psychological resilience, showing that narrative disruptions are essential to his inner transformation.

classical figure of Sinbad into a symbol of moral and spiritual heroism. By applying Vogler's framework to this Arabic narrative, the research expands the understanding of the Hero's Journey and shows that heroism, while universal, acquires unique dimensions when expressed through Arabic cultural and literary traditions. This contributes new insights into cross-cultural studies of narrative and highlights how world literature continues to broaden the meaning of the heroic journey.

Future research may extend this approach to other characters in *Layālī Alf Laylah*, such as 'Alā' ad-Dīn Abū ash-Shāmāt or 'Ujr al-Ḥallāq', or to other modern Arabic novels, to explore whether similar adaptations of the *Hero's Journey* occur. Such comparative inquiries would deepen the understanding of how Arabic authors continue to reshape universal mythic patterns to express cultural identity, moral consciousness, and human transformation.

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