

From Poem to Painting: An Aspect of Intersemiotic Translation, a Case Study of Rustum and Sohrab Story

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Abstract—The purpose of this study is to identify the similarities and differences of Teahouse painting of Rustum and Sohrab, based on Shahnameh and its poem utilizing intersemiotic approach. The corpus of this investigation is the Rustum and Sohrab painting by Mansour Vafaei and the translated version of it by Mathew Arnold. The triadic model of Peirce and actantial model of Greimas are employed in this research as the major theoretical frameworks, in order to analyze the signs and specify their related representamens, objects and interpretations that would direct the audience to desired signification. This intersemiotic research intends to bridge the gaps of literature and translation, in the process of interference of meaning through media of painting and poetry. The researcher attempts to accomplish a new insight by examining the intricate techniques of Persian traditional Teahouse painting codes and exploring the possible significations of the signs of the Rustum and Sohrab story.

Index Terms—semiotics, intersemiotic translation, actantial model of greimas, teahouse painting, the Rustum and Sohrab story

I. INTRODUCTION

As Munday (2008) declares, “The term translation itself has several meanings: it can refer to the general subject field, the product (the text that has been translated) or the process (the act of producing the translation, otherwise known as translating)” (p. 5). In this study translation is refer to intersemiotic or transmutation which is a part of category of Russo-American structuralist Roman Jakobson (1959) in his seminal paper ‘On linguistic aspects of translation’. In his view “Intersemiotic translation or transmutation is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems” (p. 139).

What is defined here as ‘an interpretation of verbal signs’ firstly was introduced by Ferdinand de Saussure. In Course in General Linguistics (1983), Saussure forecasts forming a new science which he calls it semiology. Undoubtedly, his concept of the sign, signifier, signified, referent which are mentioned in the book of ‘Course in General Linguistics’ forms the core of the field. At the time of Saussure, an American philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce works on what he calls Semiotics. Peircean (1990) idea of signifying- translating from one semiotic system to another- and of reading-to construct a text- are both implicit. According to Jeha (1993) “what is transposed from one semiotic system to another, or in the present case, from literature to painting, is the meaning of a sign. The sign, as it stands for an object and as it conveys a meaning, will produce an idea- the interpretant” (p. 3).

This research was carried out in aspect of intersemiotic translation; hence, triadic model of Peirce was chosen as a framework in order to detect signs and codes of the story of Rustum and Sohrab painting. In this research it was supposed to observe the mentioned painting which was illustrated in Teahouse painting style and compare it with its related poem written by Hakim Abolqasem Ferdowsi. Besides, the narrated story of such poem was analyzed through Greimas actantial model which is a narratology model.

Husseini (2000) states that “Teahouse painting (Qahve Khane’ee) is a genuine manifestation of national and Islamic art which novel techniques started around a century ago. Such method of painting which is considered as an important and valuable heritage of Iranian art calls for full information about the historical and mythological meaning of Iranian national and religious epics, and such a rich background has added to the significance of that genuine art” (p. 8).

Nowadays when it is spoken about narrative, inevitably literary type of narrative are meant, the novel or the short story (Fludernik, 2009). But that is not all. Since studies are showing the human brain could “capture many complex relationships in the form of narrative structures, metaphors or analogies” (p.1). Therefore, narratives are not only novels in prose style, but also epic poetry or lyrics.

Cobley (2005) declares that “equally influential in narratology are the categories introduced by Greimas. Most importantly, he emphasizes the functional nature of Propp’s ‘dramatis personae’ by referring instead to ‘actants’. ‘Actants’ or ‘actantial roles’ are defined in relation to each other, in relation to their place in the narrative’s ‘spheres of

action' or 'functions,' and in relation to their place in the logic of a narrative. In Greimas's revision of the *dramatis personae* in *Sémantique structurale* (1966, *Structural Semantics*, 1983) the actants comprise 'subject vs. object', 'sender vs. receiver', and 'helper vs. opponent'" (p. 2).

This proposed research aspired to explore to what extents do techniques of Teahouse painting could narrate the story of Rostum and Sohrab poem in Rostum and Sohrab illustration. To do this, a full analysis of the Teahouse painting style was carried out and utilized to propose appropriate category which could diagnose the signs of mentioned illustration. This research as a distinguished study of intersemiotic tried to combine semiotics model of Peirce with actantial model of Greimas; hence, additionally a narratology model was selected to analyze the elements of poem and compare them with signs or codes of painting. Furthermore, the Teahouse painting classification was gathered through observing the Teahouse painting style of Iranian culture and studying through interviews and books of such style.

This research was studied on the story of Rostum and Sohrab poem which is according to Sadri (2013) one of the most interesting literary works of Iran and have an international place like other great epics such as Gilgamesh, The Odyssey, Nibelungenlied and Ramayana. This traditional Iranian epic was written by Hakim Abolqasem Ferdowsi in Samanid Era. Here the original story of Rostum and Sohrab in Shahnameh and its translation in the book of Sohrab and Rostum and other poems by Mathew Arnold; the copy which was published in 2007 by Read Books were studied. Furthermore, The Rostum and Sohrab Painting which was illustrated in 2003 by Mansour Vafaei was another corpus of this study. This painting which is considered as a Teahouse painting artworks narrates some parts of Rostum and Sohrab story in separate sections.

II. METHOD

Two exhaustive frameworks including the triadic model of Peirce and actantial model of Greimas were combined together to fulfill this study and as a frame controlled every steps of research. The triadic model is about the semiotics and helped researchers to apply intersemiotic approach in investigating the signs of the Rostum and Sohrab painting and comparing them with its poem. Also the Greimas actantial model was used as a guideline in order to analyze the actants of poem.

Here, a brief explanation of such mentioned models were presented:

A. *The Triadic Model of Peirce*

"In contrast to Saussure's model of the sign in the form of a 'self-contained dyad', Peirce offered a triadic (three-part) model consisting of:

- The representamen: the form which the sign takes (not necessarily material, though usually interpreted as such) – called by some theorists the 'sign vehicle'.

- An interpretant: not an interpreter but rather the sense made of the sign.

- An object: something beyond the sign to which it refers" (Chandler, 2004, p. 32).

Peirce (1990) defined signs as three categories; Icon, Index and Symbol:

- Icon/ Iconic: A sign that resembles or imitates the signified, such as photographs of people, portrait or cartoon.

- Index/ Indexical: A sign where there is a direct link (physically or causally) between the signifier and the signified.

- Symbol/ Symbolic: A sign which has no relation between it and the signified.

B. *The Greimas Actantial Model*

"The actantial model, developed by A.J. Greimas (1983), can be used to break an action down into three main axes:

- The axis of desire is consisted of subject and object: The subject is what is directed toward an object.

- The axis of power is included helper and opponent: The helper assists in achieving the desired junction between the subject and object; the opponent hinders the same. In other words, helper aids the subject to reach the desired object and opponent hinders the subject in his progression.

- The axis of transmission is contained sender and receiver: The sender is the element requesting the establishment of the junction between subject and object" (Hebert, 2011, p. 49).

The signs of Rostum and Sohrab painting were detected based on the triadic model of Peirce and Greimas actantial model in combination with Teahouse painting style. Furthermore, this study analyzed the narration, differences and similarities of Sohrab and Rostum poem by Mathew Arnold, and its illustration. By means of actantial model which is a narration model, the six actants such as subject, object, helper, etc. were clarified in the poem and then such actants were searched in Rostum and Sohrab painting in order to check the conformity or lack of it between poem and painting. Also after specifying the actants of poem by means of Greimas model, the narrated story of poem were detected in the painting. For instance, in following part of the canvas which is also considered as the climax of the story, the story of Sohrab's death by hand of his father is stated:

*"But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath; for now
The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew fierce,
And he desired to draw forth the steel,
And let the blood flow free, and so to die—
But first he would convince his stubborn foe;*

*And, rising sternly on one arm, he said:
"Man, who art thou who dost deny my words?
Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
And falsehood, while I lived, was far from mine.
I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear
That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
That she might prick it on the babe she bore"* (Arnold, 2004, p. 21).

Further to the narrated story, the actantial model of Greimas is selected to specify the actants of poem; so here after analyzing this part of the poem, the axis of desire were clarified: Rustum considered as the subject of this part of poem because he was doing the act of killing his son and Sohrab called object since he was affected by Rustum- the subject. Also the relationship established between the subject and the object is junction.



Image 1. The death of Sohrab by hands of Rustum

In addition, intersemiotic approach was considered as a bridge in order to make a relation between poem and painting; hence, the triadic model of Peirce has been chosen as an intersemiotic model of translation. As this model has three main elements including representamen, interpretant and object, by use of Peirce's model, the existed signs of this illustration were detected. This analysis was performed based on the mental effects which were generated by the relation between sign and object. Also in this way, the style of Teahouse painting has aided researchers to find these signs. For example, based on the Peirce's model, in the above presented part of painting 'bloody dagger' is representamen-the form the sign takes- and 'death' is the sense or idea which is made by that sign. Also, wound and battle are what could be called object for which the sign stands for. Hence, from that scene it could be found out that a bad event was happened in the story.

It is to be mentioned that the Sohrab and Rustum by Mathew Arnold has just narrated battle scene of the original story of Rustum and Sohrab; hence, many other sections including hunting the zebra by Rustum, disappearing the Rakhsh in Tooran, acquainting story of Rustum with Tahmina, their marriage, giving birth to Sohrab and so on which were depicted in this painting were omitted in his translation. Due to such differences some actants of poem could be different from the painting. For example, in whole process of that poem Sohrab is the subject, because he decided to seek for his father and started his trip. But in each scene of the painting the subject is different based on the content of that event. So that two separate classifications based on painting and Arnold's poem were determined.

Furthermore, as there is not any specific framework for analyzing Teahouse painting, a classification was designed through observing the recorded interviews of painters of this style such as Mansour Vafaei. Based on the style of Teahouse painting and statements of Mansour Vafaei in his interviews with Iran Daily Newspaper (2012) and (2013) about this style of painting, a framework was constructed for analyzing the Teahouse painting, specifically with epic subjects.

The developed category presented in six divisions and each of them has some subcategories:

- Theme: Epic, romantic, religion.
- Composition: Essence of crowd; presenting on same canvas miscellaneous, framed scenes without a logical relationship between time and place.
- Perspective: Two dimensional; avoiding copying anatomy and perspective rules; anti-naturalism; hieratic perspective.
- Focus: Imaginary; narrating the climax of story, faces.
- Codes: Narrating one or more subjects: Main or subsidiary subject; miniature's footprint.
- Color: Symbolic and arbitrary; sharp.

In most painting styles the artist usually creates drawings based on a natural model or picture. However, in Teahouse painting, the artist first listens to or reads a story or a piece of poetry and then depicts the trend of the story on canvas.

The painter fills the gaps with story-like images. Here, also the painter listened to the Rostum and Sohrab story of Shahnameh and then depicted the painting based on such story and its elements.

It might be possible not to follow the rules of perspective and size in their exact sense. In other words, characters in the story are depicted in big or small dimensions based on their importance and status. This is known as Status Perspective in Persian, because such unconventional rules are only possible to freedom of imagination in such style (Dehqan, 2013). Vafaei illustrated the figure of Rostum huger than Sohrab due to his understanding of this story which Rostum is the main character of his narration. In this art something of the essence of the crowd, caught in forms and colors could be felt. In addition, the climax of such story that was illustrated at the center of this canvas is the tragic moment of Sohrab's death by hand of his father, Rostum. This issue could be found out through the style of Teahouse painting in which focuses are on the vital statuses and those are depicted bigger, distinguished and bolder.

The techniques, the baroque styles, the painting in two dimensions next to scenes without perspective, the surrealism linked with the hieratic expressionism of icons, the evocation of the fanciful and mystical offer us an enjoyment which is not hat of purism, but rather that of the blossoming of communication (Battesti, 1979, p. 334).

“In this style of painting, one can easily detect elements of miniature painting. While they incorporated the delicateness of miniature, the narration of stories in the climax was inclined toward poetry. The Teahouse painter draws an imaginary picture. Vafaei illustrated this painting according to the epic poem of Shahnameh which is “mythical and to some extent the historical past of the Persian Empire from the creation of the world until the Islamic conquest of Persian in the 7th century” (Dehghan, 2013, p. 12).

Using symbolic and sharp colors is the another element of such style, for example white and green use as the innocence, as well as red, black and brown stand for the adversity or the oppression (Shad Ghazvini, 2010).

III. RESULT

This study tried to specify the existed similarities and differences of this poem and painting. Although the content of story of Rostum and Sohrab is similar in these two texts, there are some differences between narrated story of painting and poem. Whereof, the painting of Rostum and Sohrab story was illustrated based on the original story of Shahnameh and the Sohrab and Rostum poem by Mathew Arnold is a free translation of the story of Rostum and Sohrab and only narrates the section of Rostum and Sohrab battlefield, some differences were detected. The study on style of Teahouse painting helped researchers to investigate on painting of this study and detect the signs of it; hence, the narration of story of painting were clarified and compared to the poem of Mathew Arnold. By means of mentioned frameworks the following data were gathered:

According to Peirce model, the signs of Rostum and Sohrab painting were interpreted and compared with text of poem. This analysis was based on the mental effects which were generated by the relation between sign and object. For instance, the hand motion of Keykhosro which is pointed to Hooman and Barman would be interpreted as the person who orders to his fellows. Also, further examples are listed as below:

TABLE I.
PAINING ANALYSIS BASED ON PEIRCE MODEL

Sign	Representamen	Interpretant	Object
Costume	Iranian traditional costume	Iranian tradition and Islamic background	Hijab
Dagger	Bloody dagger	Death, bad event	Wound, battle
Rostum's Costume	Tiger	Power	Caftan
Brown Color	Dark background	Oppression	Color
Cheerfulness	Playing Daf	Sohrab's birthday celebration	Playing instruments

The researchers specified the subjects and objects of Rostum and Sohrab story based on its painting and poem. As such poem is just narrated the Sohrab and Rostum battle scene, the subject is Sohrab who seeks to his father and Rostum is object because Sohrab is directed toward him. A part from the poem, this painting is composed of several stories of Rostum and Sohrab story, so each scene could have an individual subject and object which is differ from each other. In following table, the elements of axis of desire are presented based on painting:



Image 2. Rostum giving armlet to Tahmina

TABLE II.
PAINTING AXIS OF DESIRE

Subject	Object	Description
Rustum	Sohrab	Rustum stabbed Sohrab
Rustum	Tahmina	Rustum gave armlet to Tahmina (Image 2)
Rustum	Zhandeh-Razm	Rustum killing Zhandeh-Razm
Tahmina	Sohrab	Tahmina gave birth to Sohrab
Rustum	Zebra	Rustum hunted Zebra
Sohrab	Gord-Afarid	Sohrab fighting Gord-Afarid

In this study the helper and opponent are different in painting and poem. As in painting the subject and object are different in each scene, the helpers and opponents are varied as well. For example, the dagger and the spear help Rustum to reach to his different objects which are killing his rival -Sohrab- and zebra, respectively. Furthermore, due to some differences of narrations of these two media, such poem included some extra or different narrations like: the Peran-Wisa helps Sohrab to be courage and fight with Rustum (Peran- Wisa considered as the commander of Tatar instead of Toorianian in original story of Shahnameh); Tahmina aided Sohrab to achieve his main goal which was finding his father. Simultaneously, Tahmina is opponent because she refused to tell about his son (in original story of Shahnameh, Rustum knows about the birth of his son):

*“He spoke; and as he ceased, he wept aloud,
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
He spoke; but Rustum listen'd, plunged in thought.
Nor did he yet believe it was his son
Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew;
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all—
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear
Rustum should seek the boy, to train in arms—
And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son;
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.”* (Arnold, 2004, p. 20)

Hooman and Barman in command of Afrasiab are whom hinder Sohrab (the subject in poem) to know his real father. Moreover, unwillingly Rustum is considered as the opponent of Sohrab.

More helpers and opponents of painting are listed as following table:

TABLE III.
PAINTING AXIS OF POWER

Helper	Description
Dagger	Dagger helped Rustum to kill his rival, Sohrab
Armlet	Armlet helped Rustum to find his son
Spear	Spear helped Rustum to hunt the zebra
Horse	Horse helped Sohrab to fight with Gord-Afarid
Spear	Spear helped Sohrab to fight with Gord-Afarid
Opponent	Description
Hooman and Barman	Hooman and Barman hindered Rustum to find his son
Afrasiab	Afrasiab hindered Rustum to find his son
Pride	Rustum's pride hindered him to know his son

Rustum is object and unwillingly is considered as an opponent, as well. One point should be mentioned that since the main character Sohrab decided to seek his father Rustum and tried to find him, the main subject and object of story is Sohrab and Rustum in content of both stories.

Since Hebert (2011) states “The sender is the element requesting the establishment of the junction between subject and object” (p. 49). For example, Keykavous asks Rustum to fight with Sohrab. “The receiver is the element for which the quest is being undertaken” (p.49). To simplify, “the receiver (or beneficiary-receiver) is interpreted as that which benefits from achieving the junction between subject and object” (p.49), like Afrasiab who do not want Sohrab confront with Rustum as a father. Sender elements are often receiver elements as well, for example Afrasiab send Hooman and Barman to avoid Sohrab to meet his father, simultaneously he also benefits from this event. “Traditionally, the sender is considered to be that which initiates the action; anything that occurs along the way to stir up desire for the junction to be achieved will be assigned to the helper class instead” (p. 49).

TABLE IV.
PAINTING AXIS OF POWER

Sender	Receiver	Description
Afrasiab	Afrasiab	Afrasiab asked Hooman and Barman to keep Rustum unknown
Rustum	Sohrab	Rustum asked Tahmina to deliver his Sign to Sohrab
Iranian	Keykavoos	Iranian army sent Rustum to fight with Sohrab
Tooranian	Afrasiab	Tooranian army deceived Sorhab to fight with his father
Keykavoos	Keykavoos	Keykavoos sent Goodarz to convince Rustum

“And to Ferood his brother chiefs came up
To counsel; Gudurz and Zoarrah came,
And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host
Second, and was the uncle of the King;
These came and counsell'd, and then Gudurz said:—
"Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,
Yet champion have we none to match this youth.
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.
But Rustum came last night; aloof he sits
And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart.
Him will I seek, and carry to his ear
The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name.
Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up.” (Arnold, 2004, p. 6)

TABLE V.
PAINTING AXIS OF POWER

Sender	Receiver	Description
Tatar	Afrasiab	Tatar army deceived Sohrab to fight with Rustum
Afrasiab	Afrasiab	Afrasiab asked Hooman and Barman to keep Rustum unknown
Peran-Wisa	Afrasiab	Peran-Wisa talked with Sohrab to fight with Rustum
Gudurz	Afrasiab	Gudurz asked Rustum to accept the battle

IV. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Analyzing these two texts refers to some differences and similarities. The main difference is that Arnold reduced the number of verses and just developed the main parts of such story including the battle of Rustum and Sohrab and death of Sohrab by hand of his father, Rustum. In spite of original copy of Shahnameh, in Arnold's narration, Sohrab is the main character who the whole story is mostly about him and also the title of this poem is beginning with his name instead of Rustum.

The existed contradiction between narration of Arnold and Vafaei could be originated from different media which is language. Mansour Vafaei- one of the famous Teahouse painters- has narrated this story from the original Persian copy of Shahnameh and utilized the same signs; hence, the signifier and signified or representamen and object are similar. In contrary to painting, because of the language differences in source and target texts the poet of Sohrab and Rustum story interpreted signs differently. Furthermore, in spite of common western mythology which father kills his son, in Iranian version son is killed by his father. This issue made the story more tragic for Arnold and attracted him to work on that.

The analysis of these two narrations showed the different points of view of Arnold to this story. In spite of the original story of Rustum and Sohrab of Shahnameh, Arnold considered Sohrab as the main character of this study who is a protagonist, centre of narration and comes into conflict with an opposing major character, Rustum. The front position of Sohrab in naming the poem as well as narrating the scene of Rustum and Sohrab battlefield instead of whole story represented the focus of Arnold on Sohrab as the main character.

The result of such data analysis showed that the subject, sender and object or target are the same in both narrations but receiver (Tatar or Tooraninan) as well as helper and opponent are different in these stories.

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