A Semiotic Analysis of the Story of Bahram Gur with the Peasant’s Wife

Khalil Kahrizí
Dr. Gholamreza Salemian* 
Dr. Sousan Jabri 
Dr. Vahid Mobarak

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Abstract
Myth is a kind of language that can be studied semiotically. In this way, a myth can be considered a secondary semiotic system which, after the primary semiotic analysis, is, in the second stage, studied with regards to the meaning or the previous sign. Thus, the latent meaning of the myth can be attained. The meaning of a myth, which may be obscure and not completely attainable, can have connections to the rituals, traditions and latent behavior of the people who have created it. On the other hand, it is possible to clarify the obscure meaning of myths with the help of the transformed narratives of every myth. Using this method, we tried to compare the story of “Bahram Gur with the Peasant’s Wife” from Shahnameh with the tale of “Khorreh Nama with Bahram” from Marzbannameh, in order to show that these two stories are different versions of a single story which, due to cultural transformations, has been narrated in two forms. According to the semiotic analysis of these two narratives, it is shown that this story has a coherent structure of narrativity, which, underlining the theme of “the disappearance of blessing because of the King’s oppression,” contains a significant point about Bahram Gur that can be attributed to his different upbringing.

Key words: Semiotics, Myth, Shahnameh, Marzbannameh
Extended Abstract

1. Introduction
Every nation’s myths serve as the basis of its cultural life. In other words, humans require myths to find the meaning of life and learn about existence. The semiotic analysis of myths can help us discover what is hidden in the cultural history of every nation. Barthes (2011:33) regards mythology as a subset of semiotics, and contends that mythology is in fact nothing but a part of the vast knowledge of signs, which Saussure called semiotics. He finds mythology as a secondary semiotic system that need to be analyzed two times to be understood. In this type of analysis, the displacement of myths is of paramount importance as throughout the cultural life of every nation most myths change in accordance with cultural and social developments. Hence, the semiotic analysis of every myth requires a close examination of its different forms and relevant narratives.

2. Theoretical Framework
Semiotics can be applied to the study of signs in various areas of human life, including myths. Many mythologists hold that myth is a kind of language with a specific framework and every mythic story cast in the framework of language is made up of countless intertwined signifieds and signifiers, together forming a sign. The sign serves a signifier whose signified should be identified. In other words, following preliminary semiotics, the meaning thus developed should be considered as a new signifier and its signified should be identified. A semiotic analysis of the story “Bahram Gur with the Peasant’s Wife” is presented here based on these considerations.

3. Methodology
The present article relies on semiotic theories and the content analysis method to compare the stories “Bahram Gur and the Peasant’s Wife” from Shahnameh and “Khorenama with Bahram” from Marzabannnameh.
4. Findings and Discussion
Both stories have a single theme: scarcity of divine blessing as a result of the King’s anger and oppressive rule. Our analysis of these two stories, which is based on Strauss’s theory about myth, reveals that both stories represent a cultural era of Iran, changing with developments in the national culture. In both stories the King is blind to the truths in society and the two main female characters are wiser than the men surrounding them. In both stories the old narratives change into new narratives.

5. Conclusion
The semiotic analysis of these stories showed that they can be two different narratives of a single story. They have a coherent narrative structure; however they have been narrated in two different ways: 1. Bahram takes refuge in the peasant’s house, and is warmly welcomed by the peasant’s wife. The relationship between Bahram and the peasant’s wife may have been eliminated in the old version. 2. Bahram goes to Khorrenama’s house and falls in love with the girl of the family who receives him warmly. When Bahram takes the throne back, he marries the girl. In this narrative, the marriage of Bahram with the girl follows the rules of sharia and is adapted to the new changes in the culture of the time. This difference can have two causes: Bahram’s special upbringing, which has changed him into a kind and caring king; and the new form of marriage in the society, which many believe was never put into practice.

Bibliography