SECOND PART OF THE SHĀHNĀMAH

Luhrāsp assumes the kingship and the remaining paladins pledge him their loyalty. He has two sons, Gushtāsp and Zarir. Gushtāsp wishes to be declared heir; when this is refused he goes to India, but is brought home by Zarir.
20. Gush特斯拉 slays the dragon (250b)

Gush特斯拉 betakes himself to Rüm, making his passage over the sea with a man named Hishiy. Gush特斯拉 proves unsuitable in various employments, but eventually a ḍihqan, descended from Faridün, takes him in. The Qaysar of Rüm has three daughters, Katayün, the eldest, has reached the age when, according to custom, she may choose a husband. She finds no one attractive among the nobles of the palace, and the Qaysar commands that nobles of wealth from all his lands should present themselves. The ḍihqan prevails on Gush特斯拉 to attend as a spectator; however, Katayün, who has seen Gush特斯拉 in a dream, selects him. They are permitted to marry, but the Qaysar is not willing to provide for them.

A nobleman named Mirin wishes to marry the Qaysar’s second daughter but to win her he must slay a karg. Hishiy introduces Gush特斯拉 to Mirin. Gush特斯拉 overcomes the monster, but leaves it to Mirin to claim the credit for the deed. Another noble, Ahran, wishes to marry the Qaysar’s third daughter. Mirin discloses to him that it was Gush特斯拉 who slew the karg, and directs him to Hishiy. Gush特斯拉 accepts this second undertaking, requesting a long dagger, with barbs like serpent’s teeth, a mace and a breastplate. Ahran and Hishiy guide him to the dragon’s lair on Mount Sagla and retire. With his helmet still hanging from his saddle, Gush特斯拉 gives a mighty shout. The dragon tries to suffocate him, but Gush特斯拉 showers arrows upon it, then thrusts his dagger into its maw. Blood and venom issue from the dragon as it weakens. Gush特斯拉 delivers the death-blow:

‘His sword stroke clove the crest of its head.

The mighty creature to the earth fell dead.

Gush特斯拉 dismounts and wrenches out two of the dragon’s teeth. Then he washes himself and makes a triumphant prayer. He remounts his horse and rejoins Ahran, who rewards him richly. Gush特斯拉 asks for secrecy and goes back to Katayün. Ahran brings the dragon’s carcass before the Qaysar. The following day the Qaysar summons a bishop to marry his third daughter to Ahran, and he rejoices in Mirin and Ahran as sons-in-law.

The artist has observed the use of the two weapons, dagger and sword, but Gush特斯拉 is shown already dismounted at the climactic moment. Robinson has pointed to the similarity of the dragon in this illustration, and that in the cognate subject, ‘Bahrüm Ġir slays the dragon’ in a Khamsah of Nizârî in Shiraz style of 839/1435–36 (British Library, Or. 12856). Similar features are a twisting dragon of Chinese form in a setting of coral pink rock, where dead, twiggy stumps reflect the frond-like elements that trail from its articulations; a waiting horse almost hidden behind the rock; and a hero who is almost out of the picture. The tradition must have been well established, since it is not likely that the Shâhnâmeh painter knew this particular copy of the Khamsah. But however he received this conception, the painter raised it to new heights. The sense of the pink rock, with its curling segments, as dragon habitat is emphasized by contrast with the blue rock in sharp sections, emblematic of the Gush特斯拉’s steely weapons.

In addition, there is a dazzling use of the margin. The crucial instant of the blow is indicated by the placing of Gush特斯拉. He is at a point where blue and pink rock meet, suggesting the contrast of weapon on dragon flesh; but he is also where this meeting is intersected by another feature, which, in a sense, is not there at all, the descent of the faces of gold rulings behind the hero’s head. Gush特斯拉 would have been entirely in the margin before this instant, and after it he will be entirely in the picture: thus space and arrested time are both implied. From Gush特斯拉’s face our eye descends with his sword-arm and scans the dragon. Gush特斯拉’s left arm and a slab of blue rock that has fallen horizontal balance the forward impetus. The horse remains behind the horizon and shows where the normal world continues.
of the margin.

indicated by point where
the contact
is also where
her feature
the descent
the hero’s
entirely in the
or it he will
ce and
on Gushasp’s
arm and
rm and a
orizontal
horse remains
normal