

The Man in the Panther Skin and Cymbeline

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Abstract: This article represents a continuation of the research published in the previous issue of *The Kartvelologist*: “*The Man in the Panther Skin – William Shakespeare’s Literary Source*”. This article analyses the similarity between the plot and compositional factors of Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* on the one hand, and the story of Nestan and Tariel in Rustaveli’s *The Man in the Panther Skin (MPS)* on the other. Part of the article discusses the origin and staging of *Cymbeline*, which still remains unresolved in Shakespeare Studies.

Key words: *Rustaveli; Shakespeare; Beaumont and Fletcher; The Man in the Panther Skin; Cymbeline; Philaster.*

The Problem

My research published in the previous issue of *The Kartvelologist* was unexpected (or more precisely, sensational) news in the field of comparative literature both for Rustaveli and Shakespeare Studies. It claimed that the plot of *Cymbeline*, one of the last works of Shakespeare, is based on the story of Tariel and Nestan in Rustaveli’s the *MPS*.

These conclusions followed my discovery that the *MPS* is the source of the plots of two plays by Shakespeare’s junior contemporaries Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher - *A King and No King* and *Philaster*. What led me to this conclusion is the fact that the action in *A King and No King* takes place in Georgia (Iberia) and, additionally, that the main character of the play, the princess and the successor of the throne who is in love with her brother

(adopted, as it transpires later), has a name that suggests Nestan by a homographic-homophonic pun, or punning speech.

My research proved that Beaumont and Fletcher built their plays on the narrative taken from the *MPS*, namely the story of Nestan and Tariel. Subsequently, English literary criticism led me to study the relations between *Cymbeline* and the *MPS*. Already in the 19th century a number of English literary critics noted the resemblance between *Philaster* and Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*.

Some critics consider that *Philaster* is a literary source of *Cymbeline*, other critics believe that on the contrary: *Cymbeline* is the literary source of *Philaster*. Either way, recent works of English literary critics indicate that there are obvious relationships between those two plays; however, the resemblance between Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* and Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* is due to their common literary source. This conclusion chronologically precedes my proposition on considering the story of Nestan and Tariel in the *MPS* as the source of the main plot of *Philaster*.

I assumed that the *MPS* might be the common source of *Philaster* and *Cymbeline* on the basis of the above mentioned opinions of British literary critics. Research into this question led me to conclude that the story of Nestan and Tariel is the main plot not only of *Philaster*, but also of *Cymbeline*. All the parallels between the plots of *Philaster* and *Cymbeline* noted in English literary criticism are based on the story of Nestan and Tariel in the *MPS*. The similarity of the plots of *Philaster* and *Cymbeline*, even though slightly different, clearly shows connections with the *MPS*. Thus, I have grounds for studying relations between *Cymbeline* and the *MPS* without considering *Philaster*.

On Proper Links of *Cymbeline* with *The Man in the Panther Skin*

As is seen from the research carried out, the dependence of *Cymbeline* on the plot of the *MPS* was studied by me in the wake of English literary criticism. My conclusions are based on the facts that have emerged concerning the relationship of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* and Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster*, and on the articles on the new style of English drama of the first decade of the

17th century concerning these plays. Of course, I chose this path after it transpired that the principal plots of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* as well as that of *A King and No King* are based on the story of the *MPS*, while the story itself – based on a reliable assumption – must have reached the circle of intellectuals in England connected with Shakespeare. I chose this method of research to insure myself maximally from subjective concepts in connection with *Cymbeline's* relation to the *MPS*. Upon becoming convinced – following the method of English literary criticism – that *Cymbeline* and the *MPS* were linked by similar plots as well as by an ideal-thematic link, I broadened the circle of parallels noticed between these two works, in addition to pointing out a few more parallels, observable between *Cymbeline* and the *MPS*.

My research has also shown that the relationship between *Philaster* and *Cymbeline* to the *MPS* is not uniform. In *Philaster* one main line of the *MPS* is used as the basic framework of the plot. This is also the case with *A King and No King*. In *Cymbeline*, however, the plot follows one story line of the *Decameron*. It (*Cymbeline*) shows its relations with the *MPS* mainly in the structure of the plot, in an ideal-thematic problem and in the plots of separate episodes. Some of these connections are in common with *Philaster*, being so significant that, as mentioned above, their discussion was central in English literary criticism for a century. In my opinion, there are other details also seen in Rustaveli's poem with respect to Shakespeare's play, which are less connected with *Philaster* and hence they can be brought to light only through direct juxtaposition with the *MPS*.

1. Let us begin with the generally accepted statement that *Cymbeline's* plot largely follows one story line of the *Decameron*. As noted above, the adventure of Imogen and Posthumus, following the expulsion of the latter and the return of both to the British royal court as Roman prisoners, is clearly based on the *Decameron's* story of the merchant Bernabo and his wife Zinevra. This episode is only one – though important – episode of the plot of *Cymbeline*. More significant is that this important part of the plot of the play is not

essential for the plays basic framework. In other words, this story is not part of the thematic-ideal framework of *Cymbeline*.

When discussing the relationship of *Cymbeline* and the story of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, we should take into consideration that Shakespeare must have known about the story of the wager on Imogen's chastity, not only from Boccaccio's work directly, but from the anonymous English modification of the German play *Frederyke of Jennen* as well [34a, p.264; 38a], which was published first in 1517 and later in the 1560s. What interests me at the moment is that the play does not revolve round this story. The basic thematic-ideal axis of *Cymbeline* is an intrigue at the British royal court. That is why in Shakespearean literature old English historical chronicles, in particular, the British King Kimbelinus's history, are mentioned as one of the plot's sources. However, as noted above, it is also indicated that from this part of the historical *Chronicles* (by Raphael Holinshed), Shakespeare takes only the names of the king and his children (in other parts of the *Chronicles*, the names of the other participants of *Cymbeline* emerge) along with the fact that Britain was in a military confrontation with Rome [32, p. 123; 28, p. 133; 35]; though after the reign of Kimbelinus/Cymbelinus and not, as the play says, during his rule. That is why the "story" told in this play is sometimes referred to as a "pseudo-story" [38a]. In this episode from the historical *Chronicles* of England the pseudo history of the play is localised. Thus, neither is *Cymbeline*'s principal thematic-ideal axis a story from the *Chronicles*.

The story-line or thematic-ideal framework of *Cymbeline* is that of the British royal court: King Cymbeline knows that the only heiress is Imogen, his daughter. The queen (Imogen's stepmother) and the king wish to marry her to the queen's son by her first husband. The princess is opposed to this plan. She is in love with a young man (Posthumus), adorned with many merits and brought up at the royal court. She marries him in secret. This is followed by his expulsion from the country. The court's intrigue takes place in a location different from the palace. The involved intrigue ends happily: the groom chosen by the princess is accepted, and the dynastic successor returns to the kingdom. Neither by its content,

theme or composition is this plot related to England's historical *Chronicle* or to the story of Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

At the same time, as known from the scholarly work dedicated to Shakespeare, the story has a parallel in an anonymous play *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune* which was staged in England in the 80s of the XVI century and was published for the first time in 1589 [34a; 38a]. King Phizantius adopts and raises a homeless and presumably orphan child, Hermione, with whom princess Fidelia falls in love. Armenio, boorish brother of the princess, notices this and decides to challenge Hermione to a duel. The King bans this fight and throws Hermione out of his palace. Hermione seeks shelter with the magician Bomelio, who lives in a cave and who, as it turns out later, is his father and who himself was once a courtier banished from the palace. Fidelia finds her lover in the cave and Jupiter makes peace between the opposing parties. Presumably, Shakespeare must have known this play well which is indicated by the phonetic closeness of the name Fidelia to Fidele, the name given by Imogen, as well as the introduction of Jupiter in the final scene. In addition, there are other, though less clear, similarities, such as Posthumus Leonatus - Hermione, Belarius - Bomelio, Cloten - Armenio, Prospero in *The Tempest* and the magician Bomelio. At the same time, as is undeniably noted in the literature dedicated to Shakespeare (J. M. Nosworthy; K. A. Muir), it would not be wise to overestimate the importance of such parallels (such as the lovers or nobles thrown out of the palace, caves, poisons or drugs) as all of these are considered to be common and banal tricks used by most writers [34a, p. 259]. It is also assumed that this play must have provided Shakespeare initially with pastoral scenes and also the final scene. However, the development of the plot was not essential and thus accidental, as well as not dramatic enough. It clearly lacked a solid foundation which Shakespeare must have taken from other sources (as presumed by scholars, from the above mentioned *Chronicles* [34a, p. 259]).

This principle-based thematic-problematic framework is structurally similar to the story of Nestan and Tariel: India's King Parsadan has only one daughter, Nestan. The king and queen wish

to marry her to a person of relevant royal dignity – the prince of Khvarazmia (Persia) and they have him brought to their country. The daughter is opposed to this deal, as she is in love with the amirspasalar (commander-in-chief) of the country, Tariel, a worthy person of noble birth, brought up together with her at the court. They secretly declare their love. The court intrigue that resulted in both of them leaving the country takes place outside the kingdom. The entangled court intrigue ends happily. The love of the enamoured couple triumphs; the dynastic couple returns to the royal court.

The following new elements give a new meaning to *Cymbeline* by Shakespeare: the throne is retained by the heir of the dynasty in the course of court intrigues. Also, the story's main problem has changed: the king chooses a prospective husband of a royal background for his only daughter, heiress of the throne. The daughter does not obey the decision made by her parents and makes a vow of conjugal devotion to a high-ranked official of the court. Additionally, the plot changes its composition when the romance intrigue leaves the boundaries of the court and finishes with complicated adventures and travels. The dramatic story unfolding in the palace is retold in the cave where the lover of the princess dwells. Lastly, the story has a happy ending: the heirs of the throne return safely to their land.

2. The thematic similarity between the plots of *Cymbeline* and the *MPS* is important. The problem of succession to the throne (which is so traditional in Shakespeare's tragedies) in this play undergoes a basic change: it develops into the marriage of the king's only daughter to an appropriate suitor. The change of these tragedies, built on the intrigue of the royal court in English dramaturgy of the period, is based precisely on the *MPS* (I imply a transfer of the same pattern of the *MPS* to *Philaster* and *A King and No King*).

The issue of succession to the throne in Shakespeare's tragedies ends happily in *Cymbeline*. English literary criticism assigns great importance to the emergence of the so-called "happy ending" in the English dramaturgy of this period – the first decade

of the 17th century [27; 37, pp.111–112; 43, p. 158]. It is analyzed as one of the main features of the new genre – the tragicomedy. This new ending of traditional dramas is demonstrated most successfully in plays written on the basis of the *MPS* (*Philaster, A King and No King*). It should be added here that in *Cymbeline* “the happy ending” does not come as the author’s imitation of the new dramatic trend. This is seen from the fact that English literary criticism concludes that *Cymbeline* does not imitate *Philaster* – both plays must have some other source. Attention should also be given to the fact that this play does not seem to have been thought of by the author and contemporaries as a new genre: it is pointed out that in the first folio in - 1623 it was named a tragedy [47, p. 101; 38a]. Notwithstanding all of this, *Cymbeline*’s happy finale structurally resembles that of *Philaster*. It has also been noticed that the finale reveals more in-depth treatment and its artistic mastery surpasses the technique of Beaumont and Fletcher. This superiority is attained by Shakespeare largely through free fantasy, by introducing a spontaneous imaginary, an idyllic scene and creating the emotional image of a sentimental woman [43, p. 158].¹ I want to make it clear that in this case it is the idyllic plot and the active emotional and sentimental female character, namely, Nestan in the *MPS*, that is the prototype of Shakespeare’s Imogen as well as Beaumont and Fletcher’s Arethusa and Panthea.

The main point is that *Cymbeline*’s change in the court intrigue, typical of Shakespeare’s tragedies (namely, the search of a bridegroom for the king’s only daughter) with its happy ending, which is common for Beaumont and Fletcher’s plot of *Philaster*, follows exactly the story of the Indian royal court as given in the *MPS*: the king and queen choose a bridegroom for their sole daughter (Nestan): the girl opposes their decision and chooses her

¹ “He made his play ... recognizing the effectiveness of Beaumont and Fletcher’s use of happy ending, he labored especially over a happy dénouement. He introduced idyllic scenes and developed them more fully than had Beaumont and Fletcher and he introduced a sentimental heroine... The part of Imogene seems to have been created with freer fancy and more spontaneous expression than the rest of the play.” – [43, p. 158].

future husband herself; this is followed by an involved adventure verging on a tragic outcome. However, the end is happy.

3. Occasionally *Cymbeline* is called a “problematic play” inasmuch as the principal character, Imogen, opposes a strictly established moral by posing a social problem [20]. Indeed she does not obey the royal plan – the decision of the king and queen on her future bridegroom – by choosing a lower ranking person than herself. From this angle too, the play follows the story of Nestan and Tariel. Nestan, the only daughter of the Indian king, on her own will, without the consent of her parents, chooses her bridegroom (a lower-ranking person, subject of the court), disobeying the decision of the royal court about her marriage. This action of Nestan as a character of late medieval romance is new and actual against the background of the social atmosphere of the period. A reliable explanation of the introduction of this problematic issue into a European work of the early 17th century could be its provenance from the source of its plot. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that this problematic issue is posed and resolved analogously in *Philaster*, too, which I believe to be based on the plot of the *MPS*.

4. It is observed in English literary criticism that the strongest literary character of *Cymbeline* is the king’s only daughter Imogen [42, v.V, #17; 34]. An indefatigable fighter for her own human rights and against evil doers and slanderers, this image gives a heroic meaning to the entire play, which has been pointed out by Shakespearean students [43, p.158]. This heroic drive resembles that of her counterpart Nestan in the *MPS*, an artistic image of a fighter for her rights in the face of injustice [see 2].

5. Apart from an obvious structural similarity between the thematic-problematic elements of *Cymbeline* and those of the *MPS*, *Cymbeline* has other basic relationships linking it with Rustaveli’s romance of Tariel and Nestan, namely plot relations. In the first place, in *Cymbeline* the court intrigue originates in the royal court and develops in a different country, namely Italy, and, additionally, in nature: mountains and woods. English literary criticism focused attention on such a transfer of action when discussing Beaumont and Fletcher’s *Philaster* [25; 43, p.154]. The plot develops similarly

in the *MPS*. Special attention should be paid to the fact that the court intrigue moves to a cave in both the *MPS* and in *Cymbeline*. Shakespeare definitely was familiar with the hero who, ousted by others' will or by his own, lived in a cave. Among them the most significant is the story about Hermione, thrown out of the palace in *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*. However, Hermione's cave differs from *Cymbeline's* cave. (Hermione is not a prince and in the cave he dwells with a magician with his corresponding interests.)

The essence of the action taking place in *Cymbeline's* cave is structurally of the same type as in the cave of the *MPS*. People driven out of Britain's royal court live for years in a cave: the king's former closest noble, princes and their nurse. Among them is the heir to the throne Guiderius (III, 3). According to the *MPS*, the successor to the royal throne Tariel and the maid servant of the king's daughter Nestan also dwell in a cave for long time. The cave dwellers both in the *MPS* and in *Cymbeline* subsist on hunting. According to *Cymbeline*, the story of the British royal court is told in a cave (III, 3); the same is the case in the *MPS*: Tariel tells the story of the kingdom of India to Avtandil in a cave. In *Cymbeline*, Imogen, the main character of the play, comes to the cave dwellers (III, 6). In the *MPS*, too, one of the main characters visits the cave dwellers.

6. The structural axis of the conflict of the *MPS's* Tariel and Nestan with the royal court is given more precisely in *Cymbeline* than in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* and *A King and No King*. I mean the murder of the person chosen as bridegroom in the *MPS*. In Beaumont and Fletcher's plays the bridegroom is not murdered, instead, he returns to his home country (*Philaster*), while in *A King and No King* he is married to an earlier bride. This is characteristic of the new genre – tragicomedy: the main characters remaining alive. Structurally, *Cymbeline* follows the *MPS*: Cloten, the queen's son chosen by the king and queen as bridegroom for Imogen is murdered. Furthermore, Cloten, who wishes to seize Britain's throne through marrying Imogen, is slain by prince Gviderius, heir to the throne (IV, 2). This too is a structural coincidence with the *MPS* (with a subtext having a monarchic intrigue at that). The

prince of the Khwarazmshah, invited as a son-in-law, is killed by Tariel, dynastic heir to the Indian throne. Rustaveli stresses this motive in the fight for the royal throne. Tariel says: "If thou appointedst Khvarazmshah king, what would have been left for me in exchange? Can another king be seated on the throne of India while I wear my sword?"(549) [see 47]).

I think Shakespeare had conceptualized this aspect of the dynastic problem. Otherwise, according to the course of the play it is unexplainable that Cloten would come to the cave from the royal court, to be slain quite accidentally only by the heir to the throne Guiderius, at that.

7. A structural-compositional parallel with the *MPS* is apparent not only in the general construction of the entire plot of *Cymbeline* but in the structure of individual episodes as well. I shall dwell upon one important parallel. The couple in love in the *MPS* exchange presents as a token of fidelity and remembrance. Nestan sends Tariel her armband which remains his only memento of her in his long solitary life in uninhabited forests and mountains: "Bind on thine arm this bracelet if thou honourest what is mine" (480 [see 38]). For her part, Nestan wears the veil given by Tariel, and many years later she sends him a seam of it as an unmistakable sign of her being alive: "Lo, mark the token from the veil that was thine; from one end I have cut off a strip" (1285). The mementos exchanged in *Cymbeline* by the loving couple have stronger functional significance. Imogen presents Posthumus with a ring, and the latter reciprocates with a bracelet [I, 1]. It is this bracelet that Iachimo steals from Imogen, taking it to Posthumus to prove that he has spent a night with her [II, 4]. Both Tariel and Posthumus Leonatus recognize their own presents given by them to their love and become sure of the truth of what they have heard. Furthermore, Nestan herself sent a piece of the veil presented by her to her love. In *Cymbeline* the situation differs: the talk is about presenting a casual love with a memento of conjugal love. A variant of the plot's source did appear in the English play: Posthumus asks the bringer of the bracelet whether Imogen had plucked off the bracelet in order

to send it to him: "May be she pluck'd it off to send it me" [39, p. 56].

Instant recognition of the present given to the lover has a function in both the *MPS* and *Cymbeline*. Taniel does not believe the words heralding good news from his friend, Avtandil, "I have learned tidings which will please thee" (1313); Then Avtandil instantly "drew forth the veil of her" (1315). Seeing and recognizing the gift given to Nestan by himself makes Taniel not only believe the news regarding finding Nestan but also faint with happiness: "He recognized the letter and the fringe of the veil and unfolded them, he pressed them to his face" (1316).

According to Shakespeare, Posthumus did not believe Iachimo's story about the latter sharing the bed of Posthumus' wife, which was accompanied by the detailed description of Imogen's bedroom, but when the slanderer showed him Imogen's bracelet, Posthumus implored God to make him strong: "Jove! Once more let me behold it. Is it that which I left with her?..".(39, p.56). After this, he does not need more proof and considers the wager to be lost.

In discussing the possible relation of the episode in *Cymbeline* with the *MPS*, one should bear in mind that the part of the story of *Cymbeline* that deals with the relations of Posthumus, Iachimo and Imogen, is built by Shakespeare according to the *Decameron* while in Boccaccio's *novella*, the *keepsake* bracelet is not mentioned. The exchange of adornments and their significance in this part of the story is a Shakespearean addition. Here, too, we have a trace of the *MPS*.

According to the original Italian source, in order to convince the cheated-on husband, it was not sufficient to show the latter valuables belonging to his wife. The crucial factor was to describe the wife's breasts. Shakespeare changes the significance of the arguments enumerated by the slanderer. Like the *MPS*, he shifts the emphasis onto the bracelet and thus leaves the description of the wife's breasts beyond Posthumus' interests. Moreover, in the novel by Boccaccio, the gift presented by the husband is not mentioned among the jewelry stolen from the wife's bedroom by the slanderer. As mentioned above, Shakespeare knows about this story from

another source too (the play *Frederyke of Jennen*): several details from *Cymbeline* in this episode resemble the differences in the play. Neither of these differences mentions the *keep-sake* bracelet presented by the husband, among the things stolen by the thief [34a, p. 264]. In Shakespeare studies there are other stories revealing a similar fact: making the husband jealous by showing him the things stolen from his wife (*Westward for Smelts* and *The Unfortunate Traveller*) and several details are considered significant analogues of this episode from *Cymbeline* [22a]. However, none of them describes changing gifts between husband and wife and afterwards giving much significance to them. Exchanging gifts and later attributing significance to them is a detail added by Shakespeare. Here as well, the trace leads to the source of the plot, to the *MPS*.

Reminiscences of the *MPS* or casual resemblances

Apart from these obvious structural (ideal-thematic and compositional) similarities of *Cymbeline's* story with the main structural line of Rustaveli's poem, less important and relatively less reliable parallels are noticeable in the details of separate episodes. It is not ruled out that they (or some of them) could constitute loans of separate plot episodes or facts from the *MPS*. However, we may be dealing with accidental resemblances. I think it advisable to point to some of them, simply to state facts and not to give additional arguments to assert the relationship of *Cymbeline* to the *MPS*.

1. In *Cymbeline*, as well as in the *MPS*, the queen of the royal court has no name. In Rustaveli's poem this fact is understandable: the queen is not the principal actor in the story. She is only mentioned along with the king as a decision maker together with the king. In *Cymbeline*, however, the queen - Imogen's stepmother - is a highly important character. As noticed in Shakespearean literature, *the trio of characters* - the queen wishing to marry her own son to her stepdaughter, the only daughter of the king, and the queen's son - was created by Shakespeare according to the History of the ancient Roman court of Augustus Caesar: Livia - the queen, Julia - the daughter of Augustus and Tiberius - Livia's son

(*The Annales* of Cornelius Tacitus; Suetonius – *Historie of Twelve Caesars, Emperours of Rome*). Shakespearean literature pays attention to the fact that from these three characters, only the queen is left unnamed by Shakespeare [18a, p. 38], which, as I see it, can again be accounted for by the influence of the source story (the *MPS*).

2. Rustaveli makes special mention of a curious cloak which Tariel kept as a present for Nestan: “I saw together a marvelous mantle and veil, if thou didst see it thou wouldst desire to know its name (445). I could not learn what (stuff) it was nor what kind of work; everyone to whom I showed it marvelled (and) said it was a divine miracle” (446) [see 38]. The curious mantle is mentioned in *Cymbeline* as well:

“Your younger princely son; he, sir, was lapp’d
In a most curious mantle, wrought by th’ hand
Of his queen mother ”... [39, p. 143]

3. I should like to draw attention to one more distant parallel between these two works. In Rustaveli studies one highly significant episode of the *MPS* is repeatedly discussed, namely the peculiar variety of justice: martali samartali (“true justice”) and rare form of miracle: “the revival of a dry tree” [see 12, pp. 439-473]. Nestan-Darejan gives a piece of advice to Tariel: “Slay the bridegroom without killing his armies. To do true justice makes even a dry tree green” (526) [see 38].

In the last scene [V,5] of Shakespeare’s play, the soothsayer reads the text of prophecy, in which reference is made to the revival of a dry tree: “... when from a stately cedar shall be lopp’d branches which, being dead many years, shall after revive, be jointed to the old stock, and freshly grow; then shall Posthumus end his miseries...” (39, p. 145). It might be mentioned, that Rustaveli’s “true justice” finds a distant parallel in the same scene. Shakespeare mentions “nobly doomed”. *Cymbeline* addressed Posthumus who pardoned the rogue Iachimo: “Nobly doom’d! We’ll learn our freeness of a son-in-law” (39, p. 145).

4. One more detail deserves to be given attention. This is the finale of *Cymbeline*: the release of the defeated Roman captives by the British royal court and confirmation of Britain still remaining a tributary of the Romans. Again the *MPS* provides a highly important example of granting mercy to a vanquished enemy. The major war fought by Tariel, commander-in-chief of India, which served the preservation of the vassal relation, ended with great success and amazing Christian mercy and magnanimity with respect to the vanquished. The unique literary transformation of the Christian soul, revealed in this episode has been given special attention in Rustaveli studies [5, p. 194; 11, p. 51]. In *Cymbeline*, the last capacious scene is preceded by a major war between the Britons and Romans: three brave Britons (two princes and the former noble of the palace) and the principal character – the princesses' beloved husband, expelled from Britain, fight a relentless war. Again we should recall the *MPS*. The finale of Rustaveli's poem – the weddings of the pairs in love at the court of Rostevan – is preceded by an unequal attack against the Kajeti fortress, led by the three knights, including the main character Tariel, in love with the princess.¹

Thus, *Cymbeline* echoes the *MPS* in the structure of the finale as well as in the unprecedented medieval Christian ideal found in it (unprecedented mercy with regard to a defeated enemy) and the ideal of medieval feudalism (continuation of vassalage).²

I called these several episodic parallels between the *MPS* and *Cymbeline* relatively less reliable because it is not ruled out that we may be dealing with accidental coincidences. It is possible that

¹ Presumably by the end of 16th century that redaction of the *MPS* was popular whose finale is the wedding held at the Indian Royal court. This finale too is preceded by a great war fought by three knights against an invading enemy.

² It may also be assumed that the declaration in Shakespeare's play of the victorious Britain as a tributary of the defeated Rome stemmed from the *History of the Kings of Britain* by Geoffrey of Monmouth. However, it should also be borne in mind that by this *Chronicle*, as indicated above, there was no war between Britain and Rome in the time of Cunobeline. It took place during his successors and Britain remained Rome's tributary according to the peace terms (Book 4, 14) and not on Britain's own initiatives, as is given in *Cymbeline*.

parallels of the cited cases may be found in other works as well, including those of Shakespeare. But all of them taken together, against the backdrop of *Cymbeline's* dependence on the story of Nestan and Tariel being confirmed through direct – ideal-thematic and structural relations, as well as through parallels common with Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster*, as well as with the *MPS*, it is natural and logical to be explained by the relation of *Cymbeline* with the *MPS*.

By Way of Conclusion

Shakespeare's play *Cymbeline*, chronologically one of the first of the last period's works of the great English dramatist and poet, uses as its literary source the story of the *MPS*, a medieval courtly literature type romance by the Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli. This literary relationship is revealed by both the ideal-thematic links between these two works (the royal court intrigue: the question of the successor to the throne is posed, looking for the bridegroom of the only daughter) and the resolution of the problem in a style different from Shakespeare's tragic solution (happy ending and leaving the throne to the dynastic successor), as well as the structural development of the plot (moving the court intrigue outside the palace – to another country, in the mountains and forests), the literary character of the hero (heroic literary image of a woman fighting for her rights and high human emotions), depiction of a heroic love of an utmost strength and emotional nuances and the similarity of the principal details of the story (multi-year life of the successors to the throne in a cave, and the telling of the earlier intrigue at the royal court in the cave, the murder of the invited bridegroom by the heir to the throne, the falling in love of the heiress to the throne with a distinguished subject of the court reared in childhood with her by the king) or by the resemblance of other episodes.

The apparent use by Shakespeare of the story of the love of Tariel and Nestan for the plot of *Cymbeline* is not unexpected, for the same story was known to the other playwrights of the royal theatre troupe of the period under discussion. In particular, the

highly popular plays *Philaster* and *A King and No King* by Beaumont and Fletcher, junior colleagues of Shakespeare, are based on Rustaveli's plot.

One of the ways by which the story of Rustaveli's *MPS*, highly popular in Georgia, might have reached the circle of English dramatists early in the 17th century, was probably by way of an expedition of English diplomats and travelers led by the well-known diplomat Anthony Sherley that sojourned at the court of Shah Abbas I in Persia. Sending the story to Europe by way of Sherley must have been the initiative of grand viziers of Georgian extraction holding high offices at the shah's court. Alaverdi Khan Undiladze, who might be credited with this initiative, was a very trusted and high-ranking vizier at the shah's court; he defended Georgian national interests and patronized learning; he had close contacts with Anthony Sherley. The patrons and financial supporters of Sherley's Persian expedition were well-known English counts, in *kinship* relations with him. These earls were great admirers of the royal troupe and in close contact with it. Shakespeare had close contacts with the society of these earls and his work reveals knowledge of Sherley's voyage.

It is for the history of Georgian social life and cultural-literary processes extremely important to shed light on how, back in the early 17th century, Rustaveli's *MPS* became known in Europe, increased its popularity among the high intellectual circles of England, and was used by Shakespeare as a literary source. This raises absolutely new prospects for research into medieval Georgian socio-literary thinking and its relation to the European world.

Confirmation of the use of Rustaveli's *MPS* – a late medieval Georgian work – as a literary source by early 17th century English dramaturgy will shed light on hitherto unsolved problems, studied for centuries, of the links between Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* and *A King and No King* and questions of the sources of their plots, and opening up new prospects of study of the new literary style that arose in English dramaturgy of the first decade of the 17th century.

Free Discourses and Assumptions

The findings of the present article are primarily of a philological character, based on analysis and juxtapositions of literary texts. But the problems arising will naturally involve historical aspects as well. In the absence of data on specific facts that happened some four hundred years ago either in Georgian sources or in English historical legacy, the historical part of the study is expected to be only hypothetical and presented as assumptions. But my assumptions on the route of Rustaveli's *MPS* to English playwrights were taken by me as convincing because of the firm ground of its basic components. At the same time the scale of the problem posed raised a number of questions on which it is difficult to put forth convincing assumptions or ideas owing to the scarcity of factual material. Nevertheless, I think it necessary to pay attention to some questions that arose while working on it.

In the first place the question arises as to the type of material the English dramatists could have used (Shakespeare, Beaumont, Fletcher). How might one become familiar with the text of the *MPS*? It cannot be assumed that one of the English playwrights read Rustaveli's poem in the Georgian original. We may assume some consultation with a Georgian or someone with knowledge of the Georgian language. As is known, information on Georgian literature and culture entered 18th - century German scholarly literature largely through Georgian consultants [16; 17]. The first scholarly monograph on Georgia was compiled in Russia in the early 19th century [19] in collaboration with Georgian men of letters. Also, it can be assumed that the story of the *MPS* on Nestan and Tariel's love was supplied to the English dramatists in an English translation. It is not unlikely that such a working translation or record was made by members of the English expedition, with the personal cooperation of Anthony Sherley himself, or with the help of the aristocracy of Georgian extraction at the shah's court. However, such conjectural record or version of the story of the *MPS* (if it did exist) could not have been a short narration of the love of Nestan and Tariel. English dramaturgy reveals not only the knowledge of the plot structure but detailed knowledge of separate episodes of the

MPS. For example: coming across a weeping strange knight on a river bank during a hunt; sending the king's daughter's maid with a letter to her beloved, who mistook the maid for his mistress; the main character's conviction that his beloved had died and his monologue, expressing his desire to visit her; suggestions of the symbolic image of the main character of the *MPS* (Nestan); exact repetition of some unimportant details of the *MPS* (the queen becoming pregnant five years after the adoption of the newly-born son of a palace noble ...) etc. If we assume the existence of an adapted foreign language version of the love of Nestan and Tariel, then it cannot be ruled out that this version may have come out of a laboratory of the English dramatists and be preserved in some form (or a report on it), but unknown to us.

I should like to remark here that I am talking only about the story of the love of Nestan and Tariel and not the entire *MPS*, for in the works of the English playwrights only the story of their love is noticeable. I think it less probable for any other language translation of the *MPS* to have found its way into the circle of English intellectuals, although there is an unconfirmed report of the existence of an Arabic translation of Rustaveli's work (more precisely of one verse) in Arabic, done in the early centuries [45; see 9, p. 22].

The present free discussion of how the *MPS* reached English intellectuals does not imply adducing additional arguments to prove that the plot of the *MPS* was used by English playwrights as a literary source early in the 17th century. Here only free views are expressed on a number of questions that arose additionally in the course of research, and to which no answer can be given due to lack of relevant facts. However, they may be of some value for future researchers.

Of the same type are the free assumptions on some questions facing English literary criticism in connection with Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. As has been noted, both *Cymbeline* and Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* are directly based on the *MPS*, and I can make a conjecture on the creation of *Cymbeline*, which may prove of interest to English literary criticism. However, I repeat, it is my free

fantasy based on some facts and hints aired in English literary criticism, and has no direct link to the assertion that *Cymbeline's* literary source is the romance of Nestan and Tariel; at any rate, this assumption has not been sufficiently worked out to support this fact.

I shall try, at the level of conjecture, to develop a point of view that I consider relatively more reliable, namely that Shakespeare in his *Cymbeline*, based on the *MPS* plot, became acquainted with the latter at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, through the material supplied by the expedition of Anthony Sherley (1600 and 1601), through his friend or sponsor Henry Southampton [24, p. 64], or in the latter's salon or society. In my view, references to Southampton are apparent in *Cymbeline*.

The historical backdrop of *Cymbeline* is based on the period of England's old chronicles in which the heroic soul of the south-eastern provinces of Britain is visible. The counties of Essex and Hampshire formed the basic core of these provinces, whose rulers were relatives and financial supporters of Anthony Sherley (The Earl of Essex, Robert Devereux and Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton, the main port of south-eastern Britain). King Cunobelinus or Kymbelinus (Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* is a variation of his name), was in the 1st century king of the principal part of south-eastern England and on good terms with the Romans (*History of the Kings of Britain* by Geoffrey of Monmouth, Book 4,11). In *Cymbeline* mention is made of a more legendary king of the same kingdom, Cassibelanus, who reigned earlier than Kymbelinus (*History*, B.4. 2-10). Shakespeare points to the noble origin of Posthumus Leonatus, beloved of the main character Imogen, by reference to his father having attended this legendary King Cassibelanus in war (Act I, scene I)¹. Furthermore, according to Geoffrey's *History*, on which Shakespeare builds the framework of *Cymbeline*, the war with the Romans was started by the sons of Kymbelinus: Gviderius and Arviragus. (Shakespeare introduces them as actors, without using Geoffrey's *History*). Here I focus

¹ "I cannot trace him to the root; his father was call'd Sicilius, who did join his honour against the Romans with Cassibelan" [39, p. 14].

attention on the fact that according to this *History*, in the war of the Roman Emperor Claudius and the Britons, the Romans' commander was Leuis Hamo, whom Arviragus besieged at the south coast, killing him. The *History* goes on to say that henceforth the harbour was called Hamo's port, today still bearing a name derived from Hamo - Southampton (*History*, B.4, 13)¹. This makes me think that Shakespeare builds his play on the basis of the legendary history of Southampton, according to the literary source found in the circle of the Earl of Southampton. At any rate, I think that the use by Shakespeare of that part of the English chronicles on *Cymbeline* that contains the legendary report of the founding of Southampton, suggests – not directly, but still - his friend the Earl of Southampton, through whom or in whose society, in my conjecture, Shakespeare must have become acquainted with the literary source, according to whose thematic structure he created his play (*Cymbeline*).

The supposed date of creating *Cymbeline* in Shakespeare studies ranges from 1608 to 1610. It is also mentioned that the arguments to narrow down this date are not yet available, however, it can still be proposed [22a]. I believe it is feasible to express such a supposition.

Shakespeare must have made an outline of *Cymbeline* before the Earls of Essex and Southampton fell out of favour with Queen Elizabeth I. But he must have put it aside, probably due to the harsh punishment of his friend or patron earls. As is known, certain restrictions were carried out against the royal troupe as well, which is confirmed by the fact that following Queen Elizabeth's death, the enthroned James I (until then King of Scotland), ten days after his arrival in London issued an order to grant the royal theatre a patent, allowing the servants of the troupe (Laurence Fletcher, William Shakespeare, and others) free use of their art in dramatic and theatrical work [7, p. V]. Anthony Sherley was not permitted to

¹ "Arviragus... pursued him with all speed, ...till he overtook him on a part of the seacoast, which, from the name of Hamo, is now called Southampton... Arviragus came upon him unawares, and forthwith killed him. And ever since that time the haven has been called Hamo's port" (Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, B.4, 13).

return to England [24, p. 84], and publications about his expedition were banned or limited [24, p. 61]. Shakespeare too was likely to be suppressed but the royal court spared his great name [24, p. 66]. Clearly, from 1601 – from the time of punishment of the plotters, – till 1603, i.e. to the enthronement of King James, Shakespeare would have abstained from publishing those aspects of his work that linked him to the Earl of Southampton. This is proved also by the fact that, as noted above, he recalls this period in dark colours in a sonnet dedicated to the release of Henry Southampton (Sonnet 107).

As assessed in English literary criticism, the language of *Cymbeline* is deep (Shakespearean - E. Kh.), but crude (untreated - E. Kh.) [34]. That is why some critics consider it a rough draft rather than an accomplished play [32, p. 123]. Some even think that Shakespeare wrote those unbelievable, absurd stories as superficial sketches for his own amusement [41, p. 64]. Ashley Thorndike, a well-known researcher into the parallels of *Cymbeline* and *Philaster*, who considers *Cymbeline* as dependent on *Philaster*, believes it conceivable that Shakespeare had written it as a rough draft and then completed it with scenes taken from *Philaster* [43, p.158]. Demonstration of the fact that both *Philaster* and *Cymbeline* are independently related to Rustaveli's *MPS*, knocks the bottom out of the assumption that Shakespeare supplemented or revised the earlier version of his play later according to *Philaster*.

In my view, *Cymbeline* must have been written much earlier than it appeared on British theatrical stages. Perhaps it is because of this that *Cymbeline* evinces the earlier manner of Shakespeare's tragedies; e.g. the murder of the bridegroom (Act. IV, scene 2), rather the shunning of the death of the main characters, which is more characteristic of the genre of tragicomedy; as happens in the parallel situation in *Philaster* and *A King and No King*. This is why *Cymbeline* was named a tragedy in the earlier publications (the first folio of 1623). It is also noticeable that the comic element in the play is much fainter than would be expected for the tragicomic genre (at any rate much weaker than in *Philaster* and *A King and No King*). Furthermore, it has been noticed that the play does not follow

Battista Guarini's laws of tragicomedy [27, p. 31, 32]¹ which, according to English literary criticism, is considered to have been the theoretical guide of Beaumont and Fletcher; Guarini's influence, is seen in Shakespeare's dramatic works of the later period as well [27, p. 26]. *Cymbeline* clearly reveals elements of the new style in English drama. However, I believe that this is not an imitation of the so-called new Fletcher style (or tragical comedy), but the movement of the author from tragedy towards romance.

It may be conjectured that this play, written by Shakespeare earlier but not properly worked on, went later to the troupe, and its entry into the repertory needed another author. It is also thought that some scenes (Act III, scene 7, Act V, scene 2) must have been entered by a different author [20].

I think we may assume that the literary source available to Shakespeare (or his circle), the story of the *MPS*, fell into the hands of the young dramatists Beaumont and Fletcher (after the trial of the Earls of Essex and Southampton was relegated to oblivion). Hence, the junior playwrights may have worked longer on it. We may assume the approximate same-time appearance of these two plays, perhaps for different theatrical troupes – of *Philaster* on the one hand, and of *Cymbeline*, on the other [see 34]. It should be assumed that *Cymbeline* appeared on the stage much later than the time of its creation.

Let me repeat: these free assumptions do not support the claim that *Cymbeline* is related to the *MPS*. Nor am I convinced that they will be important for researchers into Shakespeare's rather unknown and vague biography. But I considered it necessary to specify the ideas that occurred to me while working on the question. They may prove interesting to some researchers working on *Cymbeline*. The more so since these assumptions stem from a new fact hitherto unknown to English literary criticism: Rustaveli's medieval romance of Nestan and Tariel is one important literary source of *Cymbeline*.

¹ The Italian poet and dramatist Giambattista Guarini//Gian Battista Guarini – [1537-1612]) made popular the new dramatic style – pastoral drama – with his well-known play *Il pastor Fido* and theoretical essay *Compendio della poesia tragicomica*.

To these assumptions I should like to add a statement that my argumentation of this novelty in Shakespearean research, namely that the most important thematic, ideological and compositional source of *Cymbeline* is the *MPS* – is not dependent on problems of Shakespeare's vague biography. My argumentation is of the character of literary criticism, and is based on *Cymbeline's* thematic, ideological, compositional and artistic-aesthetic relations with the text of the *MPS*, directly, on the one hand, and with links to *Philaster*, noted in English literary criticism, on the other. Nor should it be thought that the assumption, considered by me to be trustworthy, on the story of the *MPS* reaching the English dramatic circle through the expedition of Anthony Sherley, is based on any one of Shakespeare's biographies. As I noted above, the material of Sherley's expedition was known to a wide circle of English intellectuals, and one person who knew about this expedition was Francis Bacon, with whose broad intellectual world the royal theatre's troupe and dramatists had close contacts. The theory of Bacon's authorship of Shakespeare's works, originating in the 19th century [17a] was one of the most popular among other numerous theories (the Stratford William Shakespeare, the philosopher Francis Bacon, the poet Christopher Marlowe, the Earl of Oxford, the Earl of Southampton, Queen Elizabeth, Mary Sidney Pembroke, the Earl of Rutland and his spouse - Roger Manners and Elizabeth Sidney Rutland ...). Nor is my assumption, that the story that the *MPS* had been promoted by the Earl of Southampton or his surrounding circles as the source of *Cymbeline*, based on any one of the set of Shakespeare's conjectural biographies. Henry Southampton's circle united extremely high-ranking intellectuals of England, who had free access to Bacon's philosophical circle and the Queen's Court. My assumption rests only on the fact that the real author of Shakespeare's works was actually the closest friend of the Earl of Southampton, Henry Wriothesley (Shakespeare dedicated several sonnets and a poem to him), who for his part was a brilliant young aristocrat. We may add here that according to a highly popular theory [21a], current today in Shakespearean circles, this mysterious Shakespeare was his like-minded friend the Earl of Rutland, Roger

Manners, together with his spouse Elizabeth Sidney Rutland [see – 21a; 24 a]. We should add that these three possible authors of Shakespeare's works were in the closest relationship with the Earl of Essex, Robert Devereux (Roger Rutland and Henry Southampton were his friends and most loyal accomplices; both were tried together with him because of their plot against Queen Elizabeth. Elizabeth Sidney Rutland was the stepdaughter of the Earl of Essex), and that the latter organized and funded the expedition led by Anthony Sherley; he was the major addressee of most of Sherley's messages sent from the continent.

Finally, I wish to say a few words about my impression on the literary style of Shakespeare on the one hand, and Beaumont and Fletcher, on the other. They create dramatic works (*Cymbeline*, *Philaster*, *A King and No King*) on a single plot source, gradually establishing plays of a new style and composition on the English theatre stage. What is their attitude to the source? Shakespeare's relation to the plot of the *MPS* shows a great man of art – a great dramatist, who borrows from the source not the story but the thematic composition, the ideal conception, the course or movement: preservation of the dynastic continuity, the choice by the single heiress of her own spouse by her own free will rather than the interest of royal court, the commencement of the story at the king's court, its transfer to nature and return to the palace; the ideal and heroic character in involved and hardly real situations, and a happy ending with all problems solved. In its style, *Cymbeline* clearly differs from Shakespeare's entire dramatic heritage. It has been called the most original and peculiar play ever created by Shakespeare [27, p. 30].¹ The pair of Beaumont and Fletcher, as clever but inexperienced playwrights, take a story's narrative from a literary source, as if to adapt it for the stage, introduce their artistic or ideal changes and innovations, as well as comic situations. The success of their plays was due primarily to the extraordinary character of the story, harmonious structure, as well as correct use of a new theoretical scheme (Guarini's laws for pastoral

¹ David L. Hirst: "*Cymbeline* is one of the most original and unusual plays Shakespeare ever wrote."

tragicomedy) and the refined poetic taste of the authors. The gradual loss of their popularity, and relegation of the authors to oblivion, which took place largely in the 19th century, must have been due to this genre falling out of fashion, on the one hand, and a more profound art-and-aesthetic and philosophical analysis of the great dramaturgy of the epoch under discussion, on the other.

Post scriptum

The point of view set forth in the present study is a new element in the history of both English and Georgian literature. When and what place it will hold in English literary criticism is hard to say, and beyond my competence. As to the history of Georgian literature, this fact, newly brought to light, should take an important place, starting from the present. The point is that the entire Early Medieval Georgian literary tradition was of a Western orientation. The rich Georgian ecclesiastical writings are of the same type by their themes, ideal and style of artistic expression. Georgian secular literature, from the 12th century, continued the process of Christian literature in the same direction as it developed in West-European culture of the same period. Its only specificity was that oriental themes were supplanted by ideals of Medieval Christian and Classical philosophy and were placed in the Renaissance perspective of European civilization. Rustaveli's work is the highest manifestation of this process. Whereas hitherto (i.e., precisely before light was shed on the entry of the plot of Rustaveli's *MPS* into English dramaturgy) Georgian literary criticism discussed only the qualitative relation of Rustaveli's literary and socio-philosophical thought to late medieval European thought, henceforth attention should be paid to its place in the European literary process.

Nor should we think that we are dealing only with a manifestation of a literary fact - the plot of the *MPS* is used as a literary source in a couple of plays of English literature. Tragicomedy with its so-called happy ending - a new literary style of English dramaturgy was successfully manifested first precisely in these plays: *Cymbeline*, *Philaster* and *A King and No King*. In later

centuries it influenced the overall style of European literary thought, appearing with such writers as Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, Gerhart Hauptman and Anton Chekhov. It must not be thought that the *MPS* introduced the style of tragicomedy into English dramaturgy. This style was already theoretically worked out and practically implemented in the European literary thought of the period. Rustaveli's poem has no links with it. But the plot of the *MPS* introduced the themes and ideals that proved to be highly successful material at the initial stage of the establishment of this new literary style in English dramaturgy. This fact brought to light another aspect of the European literary process: the movement of late medieval themes and ideals and their transformation in the literary process of the new epoch. And this happened on the basis of the *MPS*.

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