East Meets West Along a Fault Line: Love in Shota Rustiveli's *The Man in the Panther's Skin* and Chrétien de Troyes' Arthurian Romances

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Abstract: Given the proximity in time of Chrétien de Troyes and Shota Rustaveli and some similarity in their writing, this paper examines the portrayal of love in Rustaveli's *The Man in the Panther's Skin* and the romances of Chrétien de Troyes. Close reading of the texts supports the position that for both poets, marriage, not adultery, was the proper fulfillment of love. Looking more closely at the development of love within the text, however, differences emerge. In Chrétien's romances, the married couples strengthen their love by finding the proper balance between their private love and their public lives, and adulterous couples are viewed negatively. In Avtandil, Rustaveli shows us a hero who already thinks and acts rationally from the beginning and whose love is not questioned. He is able to maintain emotional control by self-correcting his moments of grief and despair when he is parted from Tinatin. His role in the poem is not merely to find Nestan, but to restore the nobility and virtue which is inherent in Tariel. Rustaveli also develops the friendship-love between male characters far more than Chrétien does in his romances. An analysis of the love between Avtandil and Tariel shows some similarities to the Neoplatonic concepts of friendship between noble men which developed in the Western Middle Ages. There are striking similarities between the two poets, but the differences indicate that they developed independently of each other.

Keywords: *„The Man in the Panther's Skin", Rustaveli, Chrétien de Troyes, marriage, friendship, love*

Near the beginning of Shota Rustaveli's powerful poem *The Man in the Panther Skin*, King Rostavan, Avtandil, and other attendants of the king encounter Tariel, who is beside a stream weeping [14, v. 84-97]. Tariel does not reply when the king's messenger addresses him, and he kills or injures the men who try to bring him to the king forcibly. This is a startling and exciting event for Western readers familiar with the romances of Chrétien de Troyes because it so closely resembles an episode in the romance of Perceval [6,pp. 432-436]. Chrétien's knight is rapt in contemplation over three drops of blood on the snow that remind him of his lover's rosy cheeks to such an extent that he fails to hear Arthur's messenger Sagremor, who wants to escort him to King Arthur. Furthermore, Perceval severely wounds Sir Kay, who is sent next. As readers continue Rustaveli's story, however, they realize that in spite of many similarities between the Eastern and Western romances, Rustaveli's story is also very different. This paper attempts to identify the common points of view but also the nature of the differences between them.

Readers will easily find many similarities between Rustaveli's poem and the romances of Chrétien in the behavior of the couples. Lovers in both Chrétien and Rustaveli show the familiar symptoms of love: men and women alike praise their lovers' beauty; they sigh, turn pale and wither, weep, tear their hair or clothing, scratch their faces. Eastern and Western lovers alike agonize through inner monologues debating the cruelty of Fate, whether their love is returned by the other, and the painful absence of their lovers. They fall into reverie, swoon, and even go mad. Although modern readers might find these symptoms excessive, they in fact indicate the great power of the emotion and the strength of the hero [2, p. 223; 4, p. 242]. In addition to the scene from Perceval referred to earlier, Lancelot has his own reveries. On his way to the Sword Bridge, he is so wrapped in his thoughts about Guinevere that he "forgot who he was; he was uncertain whether or not he truly existed; he was unable to recall his own name..." [6, p. 216]. When a knight knocks him off his horse into a stream, only the cold water revives him. Tariel falls into a three-day swoon when, as an adult, he first sees

Nestan [14, v. 332, 336]. At the extreme end of despair, he is as the reader sees him in the beginning of the poem, unable to do anything more than wander like an animal [14, v. 572].

The most significant similarity, however, demonstrates the shared view of both writers: love finds its proper fulfillment in marriage [7, p. 6; 11, p. 8; 10, p. 187]. Chrétien's portrayal of public and private life with regard to the couples is one indication of this viewpoint. In *Erec and Enide* and *Yvain*, the plot centers on couples whose love within their marriage lacks a balance between public and private life. Erec and Enide are so absorbed in their love that they neglect their court:

"But Erec was so in love with her that he cared no more for arms, nor did he go to tournaments... He turned all his attention to embracing and kissing her; he pursued no other delight" [6, p. 67]. Although Enide fears that she will anger Erec, Enide finally tells him that the court is talking about their seclusion: "Previously everyone used to say that there was no better or more valiant knight known in all the world' your equal was nowhere to be found. Now everyone calls you recreant....Everyone says it is because I have so bound and captured you that you are losing your reknown and your concern for anything else" [6, p. 68]. A series of adventures re-establishes Enide's trust in Erec and his belief in her love for him, and in a final episode, the Joy of the Court, Chrétien shows us that married love is both private and public [6, pp. 107-15]. This episode presents a parallel with Erec and Enide's absorption with each other at the beginning of their marriage. An unnamed lady keeps her lover Maboagrain constantly inside a garden to have him for herself. After defeating Maboagrain, the lady's control over him is broken, to her sorrow. The couple learns the lesson that Erec and Enide have learned, that seclusion from society is harmful [11, p. 27].

In a mirror image, Yvain is so devoted to courtly activities that he neglects Laudine. Gawain persuades Yvain to leave his wife, Laudine, and her lands to go with Arthur's knights in tournaments in order to maintain his reputation. Laudine agrees, so long as he remembers her and is back within a year. When he fails in this, Lunete, Laudine's serving lady, appears in court and publicly

denounces him. The narrator tells us, "She said that her lady sent greetings to the king and my lord Gawain and all the others except Yvain, that liar, that deceiver, that unfaithful cheat, for he had beguiled and deceived her" [6, p. 329]. Following a period of madness, Yvain strives to redeem himself by deeds of rescues, a more worthy endeavor than tournaments. It is only his rescue of Lunete in the nick of time that allows Lunete to restore Yvain to the good grace of Laudine. Thus both *Erec and Enide* and *The Knight with the Lion: Yvain* point to the balance of privacy of love and public duty to court life within a marriage.

This same contrast is shown within *Cligés*. Chrétien first tells of Alexander and Soredamors, who are both unable to confess their love to each other until Arthur's unnamed queen acts as intermediary and tells them to marry: "You are both behaving very foolishly in not revealing your thoughts, for by concealing them you will each be the death of the other, and murderers of Love. Now I urge you not to seek to dominate one another, nor merely to satisfy your desires, but rather join together honorably in marriage. In this way, it seems to me, your love will long endure" [6, p. 150].

However, in the love between their son Cligés and his lover Fenice, the situation is transformed into the Tristan story. Obviously the lovers cannot fulfill their love publicly because Fenice is married to the Emperor Alis. So they follow Fenice's plan to feign death in order to live privately with Cligés. The secret home for them is a tower with a garden and a concealed underground chamber [6, p.191]. They are, metaphorically, in a tomb. This seclusion of the tower's garden and chamber reminds the reader of the similar tomb imagery of the walled garden in the Joy of the Court episode in *Erec and Enide*. Although the romance concludes with the kingdom's joy in the marriage of Cligés and the not-dead Fenice, Chrétien's final words condemn their actions: "For ever since [Fenice's] days every emperor has been fearful of being deceived by his wife when he remembered how Fenice deceived Alis... He keeps her confined each day to her chamber... and allows no male to be with her unless he is a eunuch from childhood..." [6, p. 205].

The story of Lancelot supports the condemnation of adultery if we examine the point at which Chrétien ends his story. This hero too is locked in a tower: "The stone was shipped in by sea, and the tower was completed in less than two months. It was thick-walled and solid, broad and tall. When it was ready, Meleagant had Lancelot brought there and placed within the tower" [6, p. 282]. Given the significance of private gardens and towers, we can correctly interpret Lancelot's imprisonment in the same way. The imbalance of public and private life within a marriage is inappropriate, and the seclusion that adultery requires indicates Chrétien's condemnation of love outside marriage.

For Rustaveli's couples, marriage is also the proper placement for their love [7, p. 6]. Avtandil has seen Tinatin in public before and rejoices that she becomes queen because that will provide even more opportunities to see her. Her beauty "was slaying him," and "when he saw her, the fires were renewed, his wound smarted more" [14, v. 40-1].They acknowledge their love from the very start. When Tinatin sends for Avtandil privately to tell him to begin his search for Tariel, she acknowledges their love: "Although I have been unable to hold converse with thee hitherto, yet from afar have I perceived thy love for me." She charges Avtandil with a search for Tariel, and both lovers swear an oath of love before Avtandil sets out on his three-year search [14, v. 128, 132-5].

Tariel and Nestan's initial declaration of love is similar. Although the two were both raised by Parsadan, they were raised separately at least by the time they approached adulthood. Tariel's first glimpse of her as an adult occurs accidentally when Asmat parts the curtain to Nestan's house to receive the birds that Parsadan was bringing his daughter. This is the point of the three-day swoon [14, v. 332-41]. Like Tinatin, Nestan acknowledges their love in a letter following the swoon "O lion! Let not thy wound appear. I am thine... I was desirous to wed thee even before, but hitherto I have not found opportunity to speak" [14, v. 363, 365].He obeys her direction to stop fainting and to battle the Khatavians, and they swear oaths of love when he returns from battle with them [14, v.

402]. The decision to marry in Rustaveli places him in the same viewpoint on marriage as Chrétien's.

Although the reader recognizes these similarities between the two writers, the differences are also many. It is as if the reader stood along a fault line where tectonic plates had shifted slightly in opposite directions. The two sides just don't quite match. The development of love marks one significant difference between Chrétien and Rustaveli.

In *Erec and Enide* and *Yvain*, Chrétien presents marriages that are under stress, primarily from an imbalance of the lovers' private love and their public duties. Righting this imbalance through worthy actions is one of the driving forces of the narratives. Since Rustaveli's couples declare their love from the start, there is no love triangle, as in Chrétien's *Lancelot* and *Cligés*, and the action of the story focuses instead on reuniting Nestan and Tariel [4, 243].

Another important distinction between the two poets is the presence of a character who thinks and acts rationally from the beginning, in contrast to the couples of Chrétien whose love is out of balance or whose love is adulterous. Avtandil's quality of self-control has been discussed by several scholars. Elguja Khintibidze states that Avtandil's character is based on Aristotle's concept of the mean and is an "absolutely new type of lover in medieval literature" because of his ability to keep his emotions in check. This control frees him to follow his own will rather than conform to norms of expected behavior [8, p. 41; 9, pp. 268-9, 294]. Koolemans Beynen also recognizes this self-control by distinguishing the impulsiveness of the Indian characters -Parsadan, Tariel, and Nestan - from the rational thinking of the characters from Arabia - Rostavan, Avtandil, and Tinatin [2, p. 221].

Like other lovers in courtly literature, Avtandil displays symptoms such as weeping and lamenting his fate. His emotional control is shown by the way he frequently reverses his own negative emotions. A clear example of this is his meeting with Asmat when he has found Tariel's location. His first plan started out logically: "Since yon man [Tariel] is so unreasoning and dazed that he suffers not any to speak with him or look on him, if I go up we shall meet

only to slaughter each other" [14, v. 213]. So he waits for Tariel to depart again so that he can talk with Asmat. Here the plan goes astray; when she approaches, he seizes her and continues his efforts to get the information from her forcibly, even to the point of putting a knife to her throat [14, v. 234]. Finally he gives up and tells himself: "Thus shall I not make her speak, I must think of some other way; it is better to ponder the matter" [14, v. 239]. At that point, his weeping and his words identify him as a lover himself, and Asmat listens to him; they can talk because of their shared suffering. His self-control is evident when he goes to meet Pridon, lamenting to the sky because of his absence from both Tinatin and Tariel. But he concludes his lament by saying as he weeps, " 'If I remain, this is better for me' - he speaks to the uncertainty of life - 'perchance it will be my lot to see the sun (T'hinat'hin), I shall not forever cry Alas!' " [14, v. 946]. His grief is not assuaged, but he can continue his quest. In spite of his grief, he does not go mad. He maintains self-control and lessens his own despair.

The prominence of Avtandil and Tariel's love for each other as friends marks perhaps the most significant difference from Chrétien's romances, which focus on love between men and women. Nothing in Chrétien approaches the high level of commitment that Avtandil and Tariel share or the prominence of friendship to the story as a whole.

Knights in Chrétien's romances do form friendships and experience camaraderie. However, the closest example in these romances of a binding friendship is between Guivret and Erec. Defeated by Erec in a challenge, Guivret promises to come to Erec's aid whenever it is needed: "Each of them kissed and embraced the other. Never from such a fierce battle was there such a sweet parting, for moved by love and generosity each of them cut long, broad bands from the tail of his shirt, and they bound up each other's wounds" [6, p. 85].

The two knights encounter each other again after Erec is nearly dead. Hearing that Erec is dead, Guivret sets out to bring the body back for an honorable funeral. However, Erec is not dead, and when he sees Guivret approach but does not recognize him, he

battles with him. Enide intervenes, and Guivret learns that it is his friend. Erec excuses the mistake, and Guivret and his men remain in the surrounding area for Erec and Enide's protection and to provide food. The next day, when they are refreshed, Guivret takes them to one of his nearby castles until both Erec and Enide are in good health. When the couple is ready to leave for King Arthur's court, Guivret accompanies them out of friendship [6, pp. 97-102]. While this is clearly an example of strong friendship, Chrétien does not make this friendship the focal point of the story. In fact, the climax of the story happens next in the Joy of the Court.

In *The Man in the Panther Skin*, friendship plays a far more important role than in Chrétien. Avtandil has spent three years searching for Tariel before they become friends, and he then spends another year finding out where Nestan is. The heroes' friendship is recognized as a turning point in the poem because it shifts Avtandil's actions from obedience to his queen and beloved to his own choice to support his friend with the consent of Tinatin [8, p. 41; 4, p. 240-1]. Although Avtandil has already pledged to return to Tariel, he nevertheless receives Tinatin's approval: "Thou dost well not to break the oath thou didst swear; it is necessary to fulfill strong love for a friend, to seek for his cure, to know the unknown" [14, v. 688].

Avtandil's role in this quest is to bring Tariel out of his dysfunctional state by finding Nestan. In this respect, we are reminded of Erec in the Joy of the Court episode. By this point in the poem, Erec has not only established a state of balance between private love and public love in his own marriage, but he is now able to bring that balance to Maboagrain and his lover. Avtandil, in contrast, already possesses this balance in his own self-control. He longs to remain with Tinatin and grieves at being away from her, but he accepts the necessity to search for Tariel and then to find Nestan.

The difference between Rustaveli's two heroes has been described in terms of both Aristotle's logic and Neoplatonism's hierarchy of thinking [3]. This hierarchy places Avtandil at the level of Human, with Aristotelian rationality, while Tariel shows

characteristics of the Animal, relying only on sense perception. In his panther skin, he can do no more than hunt game to keep himself and Asmat alive. The leopard, sometimes named as the animal in Rustaveli's title [3], is identified with human behavior in a positive way because of its nobility and strength, in battle or hunting, for example. Tariel's dysfunctional despair while hunting on the plain is clearly negative, however.

Tariel's encounter with the male lion and female panther illustrates his hierarchical placement [14, v. 887-93]. He has worn a panther skin before this point in the poem because it reminded him of Nestan: "Since a beautiful panther is portrayed to me as her image, for this I love its skin, I keep it as a coat for myself" [14, v. 639]. He is so sympathetic with the panther in this encounter - as a beloved being attacked by her lover - that he slays the lion. He expects the panther to return the affection he has shown her but she nearly kills him. She has reminded him of Nestan, and the lion's attack on the panther and the panther's on him has reminded him of their angry parting. He is at his lowest point in the poem, near death and longing to die. Avtandil reasons with him: "Thou weepest in the plain and livest with the beasts; what desire canst thou thus fulfil? If thou renounce the world thou canst not attain her for whose sake thou diest" [14, v. 856]. After long reasoning, to no avail, Avtandil restores Tariel somewhat only by finally getting him onto his horse and talking gently with him as they return slowly to the cave. When Avtandil finally brings news of Nestan's whereabouts, Tariel's noble self is awakened, and he takes charge of the rescue himself [14, v. 1378-81]. Even more striking is the role reversal at the end of the poem when everyone returns to Arabia. Since Avtandil had left to search for Nestan in spite of Rostevan's specific direction not to go, he is reluctant to appear and ask for Tinatin as his wife. It is none other than Tariel who intercedes, in a "speech wisely chosen," to tell Rostevan of Avtandil and Tinatin's love for each other and then to kneel in request for the marriage. His intercession works, and Rostevan happily grants his request [14, v. 1495-1502].

Scholars have commented on the strong friendship between the two heroes as complementary to the love between the lovers [7, p. 12; 8, p. 42]. As a general rule, friendship has been viewed as an ennobling virtue that leads the individual to an outward expansion from love of self through love of an increasing number of others to love of the whole of society [4, pp.240-1]. The basis for this concept of friendship has been related to the Georgian feeling of brotherhood, the Christian precept of loving one's neighbor, and the teachings of Aristotle [9, p. 274]. However, the concept of love between friends is recognized but not analyzed within the text. At this point, such an exploration might be helpful in determining whether friendship in Rusteveli's poem is similar to that in Western medieval literature.

In discussing the concepts of courtly love in Western literature, Dianne Farrell raises an important question in a footnote:

> In the dedication of the poem... Rustaveli made himself the emblematic lover of the queen. The queen he was eulogizing was married. He includes her spouse in his dedication, yet his courtly ardor is directed at her. Has Rustaveli created a political version of courtly love, much as was the case at the court of Queen Elizabeth I? He does not call upon her to reciprocate his feelings. His feelings are meant to honor her [7, pp. 59-60].

My response would be "yes" to her word "political" and "perhaps" to her word "created." The language and actions between Avtandil and Tariel and the language addressed to Tamar in the prologue do show some similarity with language and actions in the West. The concept of ennobling love in the political, scholastic, religious, and literary arenas of Western medieval culture is exactly the topic addressed by Stephen Jaeger's *Ennobling Love*.

What Jaeger establishes is that Western societies in antiquity and early Christianity saw virtue as an ethical matter that led to love/friendship [10, pp. 27-9]. By the time of Charlemagne, the language of passionate love was the language of friendship between noble men; it was erotic or at least erotically suggestive, but non-erotic in meaning [10, p. 22].

In what must be one of his favorite examples, Jaeger quotes a passage from the late twelfth/early thirteenth century recorded by the chronicler Roger of Hovedon on the relationship between Richard and Philip at the conclusion of the French siege of the English at Châteroux:

"Richard, Duke of Aquitaine, son of the king of England, remained with Philip, the King of France, who so honored him for so long that they ate every day at the same table and from the same dish, and at night their beds did not separate them. And the King of France loved him as his own soul; and they loved each other so much that the King of England was absolutely astonished at the vehement love between them and marveled at what it could mean" [10, pp. 11-12].

Jaeger explains that although this passage would cause the modern reader to question the sexual orientation of the two men, the public nature of the historical document that describes their relationship would be correctly understood at that time as the fashionably excessive language of friendship, not homosexuality. Furthermore, Jaeger explains that the King of England is "astonished" at the friendship because of how it affects the war, not what his son and the King of France might be doing in private [10, p.12].

Jaeger bases his analysis primarily on Cicero's *De Amicitia*, since Greek philosophers were not generally known in the West until the thirteenth century; however, he does quote Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*:

"The friendship of good men is a good thing. It grows constantly through close association. And as experience shows, the friends increase in ethical worth. This is a friendship of actions and of mutual perfecting. For each forms in himself, as it were, the excellent qualities which please him in the other by taking each other as a pattern" [10, p. 27].

Friendship at the aristocratic level was a behavior that recognized the virtue and nobility of a person of power through a response of awe which found its expression in erotic language. The use of erotic language ennobled the person being praised: "It

demonstrates worth, raises status, and coalesces political support" [10, p. 19]. It differs from Christian *caritas*, "social duty to all alike," which continued to exist along with the Ciceronian friendship [10, p. 31].

In *The Man in the Panther Skin*, three examples show similarities with Jaeger's analysis of friendship: the love of Avtandil and Tariel as friends, Rustaveli's relationship with Queen Tamar, and the episode between Avtandil and Patman.

Aristotle's teaching explains the nature of Avtandil and Tariel's love for each other more precisely than attributing it merely to a desire to help a friend or a general social act of kindness. In spite of Tariel's dysfunctional state, his inherent virtue and nobility are recognized by language that ennobles him. The narrator first tells of it when the two heroes meet: "They were both fit to be ranked as suns, or as the moon in heaven, cloudless, spreading her rays on the plain beneath" [14, v. 275]. Avtandil addresses him as "O lion and hero Tariel" [14, v. 279]. And their actions resemble those of Richard and Philip: "They kissed each other, they were not bashful at being strangers... They embraced each other's neck, together they wept" [14, v. 276]. Such language and behavior permeate the poem, identified by most scholars as a part of the excessive language characteristic of courtly love. Jaeger would agree, considering courtly love to be the behavior of nobles at a court, not a set of rules that define what is or is not courtly love [10, p. 82]. His analysis shows the evolution of that love from antiquity through the Western Middle Ages and even beyond.

Jaeger maintains that the ennobling love of friendship between men began to include women as "major players in ennobling love relationships" only in the late eleventh century, an "essential and traumatic change" [10, p. 82]. By their inclusion, the erotic language/non-erotic meaning in male friendship developed to include sexuality in male-female relationships; at the same time, it maintained the older tradition of love as "a school of manners and virtue" and love as an "exalting, and prestige-giving force" [10, p. 82].

Rustaveli's prologue in praise of Tamar shows the continuity of the older tradition by addressing her in terms of love:

"Of that lion whom the use of lance, shield and sword adorns, of the king, the sun T'hamara, the ruby cheeked, the jet-haired, of her I know not how I shall dare to sing the manifold praise"[14, v. 3].

"I, Rust'haveli, have composed this work by my art. For her whom a multitude of hosts obey, I lose my wits, I die! I am sick of love, and for me there is no cure from anywhere, unless she give me healing or the earth a grave" [14, v. 15].

Rustaveli addresses his queen with the same kind of language as that between Avtandil and Tariel and by each lover with reference to the beloved. The prologue is a public declaration, intended to acknowledge Tamar's worth and enhance her prestige; it is not a private confession of love spoken publicly. It is political in nature because it acknowledges Rustaveli's position in Tamar's court as her subject. It reflects the concept of friendship from antiquity as Jaeger describes the Western tradition.

Avtandil's sexual relationship with Patman illustrates three distinctions in the tradition that Jaeger describes: male-female sexual love, ennobling love/friendship between men, and *caritas*. First, as Avtandil considers Patman's offer of love, he responds with disgust and thinks by comparison of Tinatin: "What I want I have not, what I have I want not" [14, v. 1071]. She, not Patman, is his beloved. His choice to accept Patman's offer is based solely on his hope of obtaining information about Nestan, a rational decision based on his ennobling love for his friend Tariel. Since Patman is married to the chief merchant and often acts in his absence, she is quite well situated to have heard any news of Nestan. So he has done "the right thing in a difficult situation" [5, p. 176]. But when he carries out her wish to kill the *chashnagiri*, he acts out of his feelings of human kindness, *caritas* [9, p. 44].She has told him, "thus shalt thou save me and all my house from slaughter" [14, v. 1085]. Avtandil's feeling for Patman is distinct from both the love he feels for Tinatin and what he feels for Tariel.

Did Rustaveli create this political version of courtly love that Farrell wondered about? There are two possibilities to consider, the first of which is the existence of Georgian writing that would have introduced the concept of ennobling love similar to what Jaeger found in Western writing. Before this question can be answered, it needs more research into Georgian writing prior to Rustaveli. However, the only such earlier writing, according to A. G. Baramidze, was "exclusively ecclesiastical and religious literature" [1, p. 221]. In addition, Rustaveli knew Neoplatonic works translated during the preceding century by Efrem Mtsire and Ioann Petritsi [7, p. 47; 9, pp. 265-6] as well as Aristotle translated by Patritsi [9, p. 265]. This would seem to rule out writing of a courtly nature before Rustaveli and would support the idea that he created this type of political courtly love.

The second possibility is that Rustaveli might have been familiar with Western medieval writing. Chrétien's background was based on Latin writing. In his prologue to *Cligés*, the poet claims to have translated Ovid's *Remedia Amoris* and *Ars Amatoria* as well as *The Shoulder Bite* from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book 6. No manuscripts of these works have been found, if indeed they ever existed; however, his statement that he translated them certainly indicates his knowledge of them. A translation of the metamorphosis of the hoopoe, swallow, and nightingale from the same Ovidian work might be his, based on a thirteenth-century manuscript of an allegorical treatise from the *Metamorphoses*, but it is uncertain [6, pp. 3-4]. In addition to Ovid, he would clearly have known Boethius Martianus Capella, and Macrobius [8, p. 40; 15, pp. 42-25]. Given the dates of his patrons, Marie de Champagne and Philip, Chrétien's romances were written between approximately 1160-1190 [6, pp. 4-5].

Scholars agree that Rustaveli's literary background was firmly rooted in Eastern literature and culture, not Latin [7, p. 48; 8, 262-65; 3]. He was familiar with *Visramiani* by Gurgani, *Layla and Majnun* by Nizame, and *Shah-Nama* by Firdausi because they are mentioned in his own poem [7, p. 11; 13, pp. xiv-xix]. As to whether Rustaveli knew Chrétien's romances or Western courtly literature in

general, no scholars find a direct connection. The closest explanation for the similarities between the two writers is expressed in phrases like "common cultural background" [3] and "intermingling" through trade and warfare [12, p. 25-6]. Although finding no direct relationship between courtly love in the West and East, Farrell wonders about a courtly love "contagion" in the twelfth century and concludes that Rustaveli's poem draws ultimately on Neoplatonism that was prevalent in both West and East [7, pp. 4, 57].

In conclusion, the numerous symptoms associated with courtly love appear in the works of both Chrétien and Rustaveli. More importantly, both poets believe that erotic love between men and women finds its proper place in a marriage. The differences in their portrayal of love, however, are significant. For Chrétien, his lovers must find their own way to balance their marriage between their private and public lives or be condemned for their adultery. Rustaveli, on the other hand, presents the reader with Avtandil, a hero who is already a model of balance, reason, and self-control. He is able to correct his own negative thoughts when he begins to lose hope, and he restores Tariel to a proper state of virtue, nobility and worthiness. The heroes' friendship is clearly important, suggesting a basis in Greek concept of ennobling love/friendship which recognizes virtue and worth in men, and which in the Western Middle Ages finds its expression in the language of erotic love without erotic meaning.

As these similarities and differences show us, in the case of Chrétien and Rustaveli, the twains meet across a fault line with just enough similarity and a great deal of difference on each side to continue the scholarly dialogue.

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