

**THE MAN IN PANTHER-SKIN AND PHILASTER BY BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER\***

This paper is a direct continuation of my study appearing in "The Kartvelologist" № 14, in which an entirely new fact is brought to light in Rustaveli Studies, namely that *The Man in Panther-skin* first appeared in the European literary arena not early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Russia, as was believed earlier, but in England in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century; furthermore, the MPS served as the hitherto unknown subject source of *A King and No King*, a major play by Shakespeare's contemporaries Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher.

I published the study of this unique fact of Georgian-English literary contacts with the proviso that the discovery was in the nature of stating the problem, and that I planned to continue research in this direction. My subsequent research along these lines largely dealt with the study of the available rich literary-critical legacy on the subject – since the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. To this end I worked at major British centres – the British Library (London), the Bodleian Library (Oxford), and Shakespeare's archive and library (Stratford-upon-Avon).

First I should like to stress that to the present day English literary criticism considers the principal source of the plot of *A King and No King* to be unknown. Remote and approximate parallels of separate situations of the play are pointed out (e.g. the love of the prince and princess of the play are believed to parallel the love of the step-mother and the prince of the Classical sources) at the same time it is emphasized that "no single source for the plot has been

\* Rustaveli's *Vepkhistaqosani* is translated variously into English: *The Man in the Panther's Skin* (M. Wardrop), *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* (V. Urushadze), *The Knight in Panther's Skin* (K. Vivian), *The Lord of the Panther-skin* (R. Stevenson). I prefer to render the Georgian *vepkhistqaosani*, which in English literally means *Wearer of a panther's skin*, *The Man in Panther-skin*. However, as editor, I do not consider it necessary to correct the title of Rustaveli's Poem in all the papers appearing in the present issue of the journal.

discovered ...".<sup>1</sup>

Again about my research method. I begin to assert the derivation of the plot of *A King and No King* from the *MPS* not by my direct observation of the literary style and peculiarities of the English play but by an analysis of the facts and specificity brought to light in English literary criticism as a result of centuries-old research into this plot, and by interpreting the possible relation of this specificity to the *MPS*. The following is the rationale for the choice of this method: as I assert the dependence of the plot of *A King and No King* on the *MPS*, in order to maximally exclude subjectivism in my further research, I prefer to look at the details of the literary style of the play in question that are already considered to be specific in English literary criticism.

Large-scale literary polemic around *A King and No King* commenced in English literary criticism prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, launched by the renowned literary critic Thomas Rymer<sup>2</sup>. In 1678 Rymer published a critical article on two tragedies of Beaumont and Fletcher and one by Shakespeare, attacking them basically from the ethical position. ("The Tragedies of the Last Age Consider'd and Examin'd by the Practice of the Antients, and by the Common Sense of All Ages"). The principal among them is *A King and No King*. Rymer, for whom the love of the prince and princess of the play by Beaumont and Fletcher is unacceptable, sees in their marriage a very important and useful resolution of the intrigue of the royal court from the position of the state.<sup>3</sup> Indeed resolution of the rivalry between the

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<sup>1</sup> Philip J. Finkelpearl, *Court and Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher*, Princeton Univ. Press, Oxford 1990, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> Rymer's contemporary major literary critics, considered him a brilliant critic: "Thomas Rymer, in Dryden's opinion, wrote the best piece of criticism in English or perhaps in any of the modern languages; Pope spoke of him as one of the best critics we ever had. Later Macaulay mentioned him as the worst critic that ever lived, while kinder writers called him a literary Don Quixote tilting at windmills" ("The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer". Edited by Curt A. Zimansky. London. Oxford, Yale University Press 1956, p. iii).

<sup>3</sup> This marriage ... by manifest reasons of state appear'd absolutely necessary for the good of the Kingdom ..." ("The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer", p. 41).

two successors to the throne (the heiress and the son reared as successor) through their marriage was doubtless very important for a medieval monarchic state. Interestingly enough, this specific finale of the play claimed the attention of English literary criticism from the start. A solution of this kind regarding the succession to the royal throne is the basic implication of the *MPS*, the latter being the plot source of *A King and No King*. This implication is so obvious and essential in Rustaveli's poem that the historical memory of the Georgian people reconceptualized this political implication of the *MPS* into historical reality, creating legends on Rustaveli's descent from the royal dynasty and his love for Queen Tamar.

Rymer is the first researcher to give thought to the astonishing contrastiveness of the main character of *A King and No King*.<sup>1</sup> He notes that the authors of the play themselves stress this specificity of the character of Arbaces, voiced by General Mardonius, a friend of Arbaces and a character of the play: (I, i): "He is vainglorious and humble, and angry and patient, and merry and dull, and joyful and sorrowful, in extremities, in an hour".<sup>2</sup> Almost all principal researchers pay attention to this specificity of depicting the main character of *A King and No King*. According to E. Waith, a twentieth-century researcher, this peculiarity of the character of Arbaces distinguishes it from other plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. He notes that there is so much contrastive in the character of Arbaces as is not to be found in mutually contrastive characters in another play by the same authors ("Faithful Shepardess").<sup>3</sup> It has also been noted that such contrastivity is not only a specificity of the character of the main hero: it is generally the style of *A King and No King*: parallel and symmetrical contrasts in the characters of the personages with respect to each other.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer", p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> **Beaumont and Fletcher**, *A King and No King*. Edited by **Robert K. Turner**, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> **Waith E.** *The Pattern of Tragicomedy in Beaumont and Fletcher*, p. 30-31.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 37

The *MPS* may be a source of this specificity of *A King and No King*. At any rate, conceptualization of contrastive qualities as a single whole is a characteristic feature of Rustaveli's literary style. It is seen nonfragmentally both in the portrait of a character (Rostevan was "exalted, generous, modest" – 22.), and in the depiction of the emotion of the character, e.g. Tariel's first encounter with Pridon is seeing a knight on the verge of madness: "a knight cried out haughtily ... he threatened his foes, was wrathful, cursed, complained" (576). Following the exchange of a few words with Pridon, Tariel views him as sweet father and tender man: "I led him with me; we went away fonder than father and son. I marvelled at the tender beauty of the knight" (580). The same contrastive style is visible in the action of the characters of Rustaveli's poem: the hero, blacked out by sentimental mood and shedding tears, comes to his mind instantly, relentlessly slaying the twelve men sent to capture him. There are many other examples.

This style of Rustaveli of depicting the characters is based in medieval mystic theology. I mean the single naming of the positive and negative characteristics of the Supreme being, i.e. cataphatics-apophatics, which also is Rustaveli's style in referring to the Supreme being: "Sunny night", "Being and Everlasting" (816). In Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King* this has no world view basis. It is taken over ready made, serving the alternation of the tragic and comic.

English critics, astonished at the combination of extreme oppositions in the character of Arbaces, subject his first entry into the play to repeated analysis. It is pointed out that the victorious Iberian king introduces the defeated Armenian King Tigranes "... with the utmost politeness and at the same time with insufferable arrogance."<sup>1</sup> Another researcher, namely P. Finkelpearl, is puzzled at such inordinate mercy and respect for the captive king, and he looks for the images of merciful kings in Classical sources. He draws attention

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<sup>1</sup>E. Waith, *The Pattern of Tragicomedy* ... p.31.

to traditions of Cyrus' mercifulness in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, images of merciful kings are not rare in Classical historical and literary sources, but in this case I want to pay attention to the main hero of the *MPS*, Tariel – a prototype of the main hero, Arbaces of *A King and No King*. In particular, the similarity of the reception at the royal court of a neighbouring king, defeated by Arbaces, and the reception at the royal court accorded to the neighbouring king defeated by Tariel. A famous theologian, Father Genadi Ekalovich, when asked to comment on a mystic concept in Rustaveli, recalled this scene, adding that such philanthropy was amazing: a defeated king is received at the royal court with great respect and suavity and is sent back to his own country with lavish presents.<sup>2</sup> Thus, in this case too an immediate parallel of this specific scene in *A King and No King* is found in the *MPS*.

The contrastive character of a hero is not the only specificity in the literary structure of *A King and No King* that points to the *MPS*. The most debatable issue around this play is its ethical world. As noted above, the play was attacked from this point of view by the first critic, Thomas Rymer, triggering a century-old polemic, which has diverse continuations and resolutions in English literary criticism.<sup>3</sup> I wish to draw attention to the generally accepted assessment of the moral position of the play, which was clearly expressed by Robert K. Turner, the editor of the critical text of *A King and No King* in his introductory study: the moral world of *A*

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<sup>1</sup> P. J. Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher*, p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> V. Nozadze, *The Imagery of the Sun in The Man in Panther-skin*. Santiago de Chile 1957, p. 194 (in Georgian)

<sup>3</sup> Even the view has been put forward that the play is inspired by an extremely high moral position (it is not essential that, according to the play, brother and sister are in love, but that the couple madly in love are morally tormented because they believe that they are brother and sister) and its appearance and popularity under this guise in the intellectual circles of England is in some way linked to the Puritan movement (see W.C. Woodson, *The Casuistry of Innocence in A King and No King and Its Implications for Tragicomedy: "English Literary Renaissance"*, vol. 8 №3, Autumn 1978, pp. 312-328.

*King and No King* is rather relaxed than the standards of Christian humanism.<sup>1</sup> For those foreign literary critics who are less acquainted with Rustaveli Studies I should like to point out that the *MPS* stands out with its non-dogmatic religious position – with a much freer, yet profound, religious outlook, formed on the basis of highly developed Christian theology, feeling constrained in the confessional frame prescribed by dogmatics.

Love is one of the basic themes by which the *MPS* fails to fit in the medieval prescribed moral. The worldly, human love of the *MPS* is devoid of the allegorical elements of mystic reinterpretation into divine love: However, through deep theological interpretation, it is a reconceptualization of man's free emotional world into the highest, hence divine, manifestation; it is based on deep theological interpretation of the love of Christian neighbour through courtly love,<sup>2</sup> as such love is an inordinately great, hurricane-like feeling, elevating one to divinity. This is considered to be the specificity of the love of the *MPS* by those researchers of world literature, who have included the *MPS* in their discussion of this process. The expression of feeling, namely love, by the characters of *A King and No King* in extremely vivid manner and at the same time exaggerated form is one more specificity of the literary structure of this play. The well-known dramatist and major representative of 17<sup>th</sup>-century English literary criticism John Dryden (1631–1700), who immediately came out against Rymer's criticism, was the first to note this specificity of the demonstration of this feeling. Dryden's discovery was subsequently elaborated by other literary critics. The feeling of love in the characters of Beaumont and Fletcher was claimed to be greater and possess more real solidity than the characters themselves.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R. K. Turner, Introduction – Beaumont and Fletcher, *A King and No King*, pp. XXV – XXVI.

<sup>2</sup> See E. Khintibidze, Love of *The Man in the Panther's Skin*, Tb. 2005 (in Georgian); E. Khintibidze, Rustaveli, Dante, Petrarca: *The Kartvelologist* № 11, Tb. 2004, pp. 78-79.

<sup>3</sup> E. Waith, *The Pattern of Tragicomedy ...*, p. 39.

Another specificity pointing to the vivid reality of the feeling of love in *A King and No King* is its ideal: marriage. The aspiration driving the pair in love in *A King and No King* is marriage. In this, too, the play echoes its plot prototype – the *MPS*. Marriage, as the goal and ideal of man and woman is one of the most important specificities of the love in the *MPS*. In this it differs not only from the divine love of Rustaveli's day, but also from worldly love - both of oriental Sufism and Western courtly love.

I want to end the parallels between *A King and No King* and the *MPS* in the peripeteias of the pairs in love with one more detail: the woman's initiative prevails in the relationship of woman and man, namely in making the decision. This is manifested before the unravelling of the amorous knot by the woman's letter to her love. In the *MPS* this letter is of plot purpose, while in *A King and No King* it is a functionless component, as it were: it seems to be forced, as though a simple etiquette or imitation. This imitation (the woman's letter to her future beloved) by Beaumont and Fletcher of the *MPS* will become clearer on another occasion, which will be shown below.

Imitation per se of separate components of the subject frame of the *MPS* is felt also in other details of the love intrigue of *A King and No King*. That these details are an imitation is seen from the fact that they are largely functionless for the plot of the play, being brought in artificially, as it were. Thus, for example, Arbaces has his love Panthea locked up in prison. Let me remind, or inform, the reader that Panthea's prototype Nestan of the *MPS* is also in prison. However, this is not a custody for an offender: Nestan is locked up in an inaccessible tower of a city-fortress, so that she might not escape or get lost, awaiting marriage to the prince who must return from a campaign. To Tariel she has been lost for a long time. After a futile search for her, Tariel has ground to consider her dead, which is naturally followed by his meditation on his reunion with his beloved in the other world. With its world view significance, this meditation is a new word in the reconceptualization of love in the space from the

Middle Ages to the Renaissance:<sup>1</sup> “Lovers here parted, there indeed may we be united, there again see each other, again find some joy” (862). “How shall the lover not see his love, how forsake her! Gladly I go to her; then will she wend to me. I shall meet her, she shall meet me; she shall weep for me and make me weep” (863).

This plot episode of the *MPS* does not work in *A King and No King*, but its main components are visible. Panthea – the double of Nestan – is put in prison; however, the necessity of this act is not strictly motivated by the plot of the play. More important is Arbaces’ imagining Panthea to be dead in the scene of his suddenly falling in love with her. This is so unexpected and unexplained that researchers persistently look for the causé (or example) by the dictation or influence of which Beaumont and Fletcher played this scene “detached from its context”.<sup>2</sup> And which is more important, the development of this scene – imagining his beloved to be dead by the hero – in *A King and No King* follows in the wake of the *MPS*: it develops into the hero’s meditation. Furthermore, the philosophical context of Arbaces’ meditation would seem to be a reminiscence of Tariel’s respective meditation in the *MPS*: the Iberian Prince philosophises on moving from this world to the other (III, 1):

“My sister! – is she dead? ...

... She died

A virgin though more innocent than sleep,

As clear as her own eyes, and blessedness

Eternal waits upon her where she is.

I know she could not make a wish to change

Her state for new, and you shall see me bear

My crosses like a man. We all must die,

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<sup>1</sup> E. Khintibidze, Reinterpretation of Love (Troubadours and Dante; Rustaveli): Love of *The Man in the Panther’s Skin*, pp. 63-73; E. Khintibidze, Rustaveli, Dante, Petrarca: *The Kartvelologist*, № 11, p.83

<sup>2</sup> T. S. Eliot, Selected Essays, 1917-1932, p. 135. See: A. Mizener, The High Design of *A King and No King*: “Modern Philology”, v. 38, 1940-41. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois, pp. 141-144.

And she hath taught us how.”<sup>1</sup>

This “skilfully devised trick”,<sup>2</sup> as noted by English literary criticism, clearly preserves an “elegant and controlled exaggeration which is almost never found in Shakespeare’s verse”.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the relationship of *A King and No King* to the *MPS* appears to be more than the relation of the work’s plot to a definite subject source, as I had earlier assumed. On the whole, we are dealing with a literary creation occupying a significant place in the dramaturgy of Shakespeare’s epoch. This accounts for the fact that Thomas Rymer’s attack on *A King and No King* was immediately followed by John Dryden’s analysis of the literary art of this play in the general context of the works of Shakespeare and Fletcher (“The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy”, 1679), unhesitatingly pronouncing *A King and No King* as the best in design. It was Dryden who ranked *A King and No King* among the inferior sort of tragedies which have a happy end.<sup>4</sup> Dryden’s assessment did not remain a *vox clamantis in deserto*, being recalled by twentieth-century literary criticism. In his special study “The High Design of *A King and No King*” Arthur Mizener sought to account for the fact that throughout the seventeenth century was extremely popular and that the re-evaluation of this play, as well as the entire work of Beaumont and Fletcher began in the nineteenth century, and for our contemporaries they found themselves in the group of fourth-rate writers. The style established by Beaumont and Fletcher suffered reappraisal – a style that was so popular at its initial stage that even Shakespeare wrote his

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<sup>1</sup> “A King and No King” (R. Turner’s edition), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> A. Mizener, *The High Design*, p. 144.

<sup>3</sup> A. Mizener ..., p. 142.

<sup>4</sup> “The best of their designs, the most approaching to antiquity, and the most conducing to move pity, is the “King and No King”; which, if the force of Bessus were thrown away, is of that inferior sort of tragedies, which end with a prosperous event” (“The Works of John Dryden”. In *Eighteen Volumes*, Edited by Walter Scott. v. VI, London 1808. p. 248).

last plays in this style (“Winter’s Tale”, “Tempest”, “Cymbeline”). This testifies to the triumph of tragicomedy – a drama of a new style – on the English stage in the second decade of the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup>

*A King and No King* is a best specimen of this style whose link with Rustaveli’s *MPS* can now hardly be questioned. This once again raises with more intensity the question of what I have called “a mystery of the forgotten past.” From where, through what medium might Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher have gained knowledge of the *MPS*. This question makes almost all intellectuals familiar with Georgian literature to think whether Rustaveli at the end of the twelfth century and the English playwrights at the end of the sixteenth century might not have had one and the same plot source at hand. Indeed, Rustaveli students differ today too in the interpretation of the poet’s words: “This Persian tale, now done into Georgian ... I have found it and mounted it in a setting of verse” (16). Although taking these words for a direct indication of the source of the plot has been repeatedly rejected in scholarship, debate continues to the present day on the admissibility or inadmissibility of the existence of a plot source of Rustaveli’s poem. May we assume that the *MPS* and

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<sup>1</sup> “Whether Shakspeare was led to adopt the tragicomic method in his last plays by the example of Beaumont and Fletcher, who probably at this time surpassed him in popular favor, or by his own initiative, is a question of no especial importance here. The fact remains that ‘Cymbeline’, ‘Winter’s Tale’, ‘Tempest’, whatever the inspiration, are closely identified with the new drama of tragicomic romance, which at least testifies to the success that the new form was winning by the time Shakspeare and Beaumont were quitting the stage about 1612” (F. H. Ristine, *English Tragicomedy. Its Origin and History*. The Columbia University Press, 1910, p. 114).

The later generation of Shakespearean students abstains from acknowledging the influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on the last period of Shakespeare’s work, by transferring the accent to the ideal uniqueness in place of formal resemblance (A. Anikst. *Beaumont and Fletcher: Plays*, p. 14 - in Russian). The influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakespeare was the subject of a special monographic study (A.H. Thorndike, *The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakspeare*, Worcester, Mass. 1901).

*A King and No King* have a common subject source? My answer is negative, for my research gives no ground for such an assumption. The point is that *A King and No King* evinces clear plot relationship with Rustaveli's *MPS*: firstly, the story of *A King and No King* unfolds at the royal court of Iberia or Georgia. Thereby the authors intimate the Georgian provenance of the story (or some link with Georgia); indication of this in the supposed plot source of the *MPS* could not have existed. (I assume the reader is aware that the main story of the plot of the *MPS* takes place not in Georgia but in India and Arabia); secondly, the name of the princess of *A King and No King*, Panthea points to her *MPS* prototype, Nestan's symbolic name 'panther'. By this, too, the English authors overtly point to Rustaveli's *MPS* rather than to its conjectural plot source. Furthermore, I personally am inclined – though documents are not available to prove it – to believe that Beaumont and Fletcher had a Georgian consultant. They presented the story of Tariel and Nestan, a pair in love at the *MPS*'s Indian royal court as the story of an enamoured pair of the Iberian (Georgian) royal court. This is how the India of the *MPS* was understood in old Georgia. Sources of the nineteenth, and even eighteenth, century Georgian society believed the plot of the *MPS* to be an allegorical reflection of Georgia's story.

When I thought of the penetration of Rustaveli's poem into England early in the seventeenth century, I tried to indicate the path along which Georgian literature might have entered Europe, citing the contacts of the Georgian royal court with the Spanish royal court in fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Now I think of adding more casual paths, in particular, a Georgian consultant who, by chance or on some mission, found himself in England. These are the circumstances that prompt me to make this assumption.

As it transpires from European sources, earlier indications by European intellectuals of facts of Georgian literature or culture are made through Georgian consultants. Direct pointers to this are found in books published by German scholars in the eighteenth century (G.

J. Adler, *Museum cuficum Borgianum Velitris, Romae 1782*; F.K. Alter, *Über georgianische Literatur, Wien 1798*).<sup>1</sup>

European diplomats, travellers, merchants and intellectual circles interested in the East in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had frequent and close contacts with the royal courts of Persia and Turkey, where the permanent presence of numerous Georgian women in the harems of the shahs and sultans claims the attention of Europeans – not only for the beauty and cleverness of these women but also for their constant thought and worry for their homeland. This is clearly reflected in European literature of the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries.<sup>2</sup> Attention should also be given to the fact that the earliest evidence – not very meagre – on the Georgian language, alphabet, script, ecclesiastical writings was first published in Europe on the basis of material obtained by a German traveller during his journey in Turkey in 1579.<sup>3</sup> Information reaching Europe in this way merits attention.

Confirmation of such an essential relationship of Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King* and Rustaveli's *MPS* will raise one more important question for the researcher to tackle: if Beaumont and Fletcher were so well familiar with and used Rustaveli's *MPS* – at the early stage of their maturity, at that – it is conceivable for a trace of this work to appear not only in one play but in some other as well. I directed my research along this line too. The result proved positive, and quite new to English literary criticism. The *MPS* served as an important source for one more play of Beaumont and Fletcher, namely *Philaster*.

To begin with, *Philaster* is Beaumont and Fletcher's play written in collaboration, in the same way as *A King and No King*, both plays having been created approximately at the same time. *A King and No King* was licensed for production in 1611, while

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<sup>1</sup> E. Khintibidze, *Georgian Literature in European Scholarship*, Amsterdam 2001, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. pp. 25-26.

<sup>3</sup> Salomon Schweigger, *Eine neue Reisebeschreibung auss Teutschland nach Constantinopel und Jerusalem, Nürnberg 1608*, pp. S.85.

*Philaster* is assumed to have been written in 1608-1610. It is also believed that these two plays, which won Beaumont and Fletcher the highest fame and were staged in England to the close of the century, differ in something from their other plays.<sup>1</sup> And this resemblance, as well as difference from others is not due only to the happy end of the tragedy of *A King and No King*, as singled out by Dryden. At the very first stage of a monographic study of English tragicomedy in a single context it was noted that precisely these two plays were the first specimens of a new type of tragicomedy that brought the romantic-heroic theme back into English literature.<sup>2</sup>

It has also been noticed that Shakespeare's influence (namely of "Hamlet") is seen in *Philaster*, more than in *A King and No King*. However, the direct source of the main plot of *Philaster* is not evident; it is believed to derive from pastoral love story chivalrous romance: "Although no one source for the play can be proved beyond doubt, the material of *Philaster* certainly derives from pastoral romance".<sup>3</sup> This conclusion is largely based on the study of the conjectural historical sources of *Philaster*. The point is that the tragicomedy of love is played out in *Philaster* – against the background of a conflict of the royal courts of two neighbouring kingdoms: Sicily and Calabria (similarly to the military confrontation between Iberia and Armenia of *A King and No King*). Hence the eager search by researchers for a similar story in historical and literary sources in these two countries of South Italy. The outcome is clearly negative: the stories described in *Philaster* fail to correspond to any situation in the history of Sicily: the work constitutes "a combination of pseudo-history and romance"<sup>4</sup> The area of

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. pp. 113, 114, 179.

<sup>2</sup> "Of Fletcher's actual collaboration with Beaumont ... which resulted in the group of dramas whose great success signaled the return to romantic and heroic themes, two plays, "Philaster" and "A King and No King", stand forth as the forerunners of the new type of English tragicomedy" (F. H. Ristine, *English Tragicomedy*, p. 111.)

<sup>3</sup> E. M. Waith, *The Pattern ...*, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. pp. 15-16.

combination is even broader: a romantic and hardly credible story is put into the intrigue of the royal court whose kings' behaviour is questionable from positions of justice or ethics. And this is a common characteristic of *Philaster* and *A King and No King*.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the common characteristic of the basic plot of *Philaster* and *A King and No King* is broader, which was immediately noticed by English literary criticism, namely "The scene is always located far enough away in foreign realms to allow the imagination to wander at will, unhampered by the restrictions of reality; and melodramatic actions, warring passions and marvelous events are right in keeping with the romantic atmosphere and heroic protagonist to which we are introduced".<sup>2</sup>

All these common characteristics link *Philaster* and *A King and No King* with their common plot source: the pseudo-historical story of the love of Nestan and Tariel played out at the Indian royal court of the *MPS*.

It has also been pointed out that these two plays of Beaumont and Fletcher have basic common features by which they differ from tragic romances: "It is chiefly by the character of the *denouement* that "Philaster" and "A King and No King" are to be distinguished from the tragic romances with which they are so closely identified in all else. Both follow the essentials of the Beaumont-Fletcher innovation: distant setting, royal persons, complicated plot, balance and contrast in character and emotion: and both end happily. Yet the two plays are anything but repetitions."<sup>3</sup>

Summing up the foregoing, I should like to add that all the common characteristics of *Philaster* and *A King and No King*, identified in English literary criticism, as well as the common distinguishing feature of the literary style of these two plays from the common style of English tragedy, genetically relates them to the *MPS* – the common plot source of these two tragicomedies. The *MPS* is a

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. pp. 132-133.

<sup>2</sup> Ristine, *English Tragicomedy*, p. 111.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 111-112.

heroic romance of a plot thought up on a pseudo-historical story of distant foreign countries. The main protagonists are the highest persons of the royal house hierarchy. The plot of the poem – the main story - is complex, and involved and hardly credible; the emotions of the characters are at the same contrastive and balanced. The plot is melodramatic and the ending happy.

The argumentation of my assertion that the *MPS* is the common source of *Philaster* and *A King and No King*, must primarily start with an outline of the love story of Nestan and Tariel (with an eye on the reader who has scanty familiarity with the *MPS*).

India was comprised of seven kingdoms. Of these six were united under King Parsadan, The seventh was ruled by King Saridan, who voluntarily joined his kingdom to the united India. Parsadan repaid this loyalty by befriending and making Saridan Grand Marshal of the court and Commander-in-Chief of India. King Parsadan was childless. Soon a sun, Tariel, was born to Saridan. Parsadan adopted the child immediately. Tariel was of his royal house and Parsadan began to rear him as successor to the royal house and the throne. The boy, adopted as successor, was five years old when the queen conceived and gave birth to a girl, Nestan. For a long time, the brother and sister were reared together, the parents bestowing equal love on both. When Nestan reached the age of seven, and showed proper qualities for becoming queen, Tariel was returned to his father. However, Parsadan still treated him as his own son. Before long Tariel's father died. After deep and long mourning, the king fully bestowed on Tariel his father's office of Grand Marshal and Commander-in-Chief. Once the king took the young Tariel to see his daughter who had long since been brought up in a specially built, detached palace. Tariel had not seen Nestan since they parted in childhood, Viewing Nestan from afar was followed by Tariel suddenly falling in love inordinately. He hardly had time to give his maidservant the game for Nestan, when he fell and lost consciousness. When he came to, he found himself lying in the royal palace and the king and queen tending him. All were amazed at Tariel's malady: he acted inappropriately and occasionally his speech

was confused. Feeling the need to conceal his love, he expressed his wish to have a walk in the fields: so he went back to his own house. After some time, he was brought an amorous letter written by Nestan's maid-servant Asmat. Tariel replied. In the next letter the woman desired to meet him. Tariel again responded positively. Soon these exchanges resulted in Asmat's visit to him; the maid handed him Nestan's letter. The princess revealed her love for the Grand Marshal and, as her first task, she asked him to reduce a province that had seceded from the kingdom. The peripeteias of chivalrous love began: meetings on the initiative of the woman, a magnificent war fought by the Commander-in-Chief and his bringing the king of the neighbouring country as captive, then his release with great honour and return home. Noticing the secret love of their daughter and adopted son, the king and the queen took an urgent decision of inviting the son of another country as their son-in-law. Tariel was asked to receive the would-be bridegroom. On Nestan's initiative, another meeting of the lovers took place, which began with the woman giving vent to her anger. When Tariel succeeded in convincing Nestan of his innocence and loyalty, both held a strategic council. The final decision was again taken on the woman's initiative: to save their love and to preserve full sovereignty of India's royal house it was decided to secretly do away with the bridegroom. Tariel took upon himself the shedding of innocent blood, followed by his secession from King Parsadan. The peace of the palace was broken. Nestan was punished cruelly: being put in a wooden chest, she was cast into the boundless ocean. Tariel looked for his love for a long time, but in vain: all who attended him in his quest perished and as a comfortless, madman in love, he roamed in boundless forests and deserts, living in the dens of beasts. A happy end of the dramatic story was due to the arrival and friendly devotion of Avtandil – another knight sent by the latter's beloved to find and help him. Avtandil fell upon the trace of the captured Nestan and she was rescued in an unequal battle from an inaccessible fortified city with the aid of Tariel and his friends. This was soon followed by the

wedding of Tariel and Nestan, together with the wedding of Avthandil and his love.

From this story, Beaumont and Fletcher take only the adventure of Nestan and Tariel in the setting of the Indian royal court: in *A King and No King* the childless king and queen adopt the newly-born son of a close noble; about six years later a daughter is born to them; the boy and girl are separated from childhood and, later, the young man faints at the first meeting with the girl; action is taken to remove the prince invited from a neighbouring country as a would be son-in-law; happy end – wedding. In *Philaster*: the king of one country abolishes a neighbouring one, annexing it; the prince is deprived of succession to the throne, and a prince of another kingdom is invited as bridegroom for the king's single daughter; the latter invites the prince deprived of royal succession to visit her; their love is disclosed. The invited son-in-law is removed. The issue of succession to the throne is resolved through the marriage of these two successors, with a happy end – wedding. In both cases, the resemblance of the basic contours is attended by a coincidence of essential details as well, of which I spoke in a special study of *A King and No King*. This time I shall discuss *Philaster* alone.

1. The proposition I have formulated regarding the main source of the basic subject of *Philaster* being the love story of Tariel and Nestan of the *MPS*, as seen from the above-cited details of content, is based on the clear relation of the basic facts of the plot story of *Philaster*, or the framework of the play, to the *MPS*. The conclusion of English literary critics that the confrontation of the kingdoms of Sicily and Calabria was a pseudo-history proved right; the source of this subject is some unknown medieval love or chivalrous romantic story. The love of Nestan and Tariel of the *MPS* is precisely such a story. To add credibility to this statement here follows a brief outline of the main subject line of *Philaster*.

Philaster is the only legal successor to the throne of the Sicilian kingdom. His father was deposed by the king of Calabria, annexing the kingdom. Philaster enjoyed the people's great love and support, hence he was released from prison. In order to hand both

kingdoms to his only daughter Arethusa, the king invites the Spanish Prince Pharamond as his son-in-law, seeking to strengthen his country by marrying his daughter to him. Arethusa sends her maid to Philaster, at the same time inviting the prince to visit her. The latter is already secretly in love with Arethusa. The girl confesses to the prince her deep love for him. Many dramatic and comic scenes are played out at the royal court, involving Pharamond and women of the palace, on the one hand, and Philaster and Arethusa and their confidante maid, on the other. Driven mad by love and confused with jealousy, Philaster roams in a dense forest. Ultimately, all the intrigues are unfolded; the Spanish prince is sent home, the king welcomes the wedding of Philaster and Arethusa, blessing Philaster as his heir.

Against the background of the essential resemblance of the temporal and spatial coordinates of the basic outline of the *Philaster* story with the *MPS* (the joining of two kingdoms, the problem of succession – the rivalry between the single daughter of the king of the united kingdom and the heir apparent of the incorporated kingdom; the invitation of a prince of another country as son-in-law to solve the issue of succession; the love story between the heir and heiress; happy ending by their wedding) one cannot overlook a striking difference: according to the *MPS*, Saridan joined his own part of India to the united India voluntarily. According to *Philaster* the king of Sicily was deposed illegally and deprived of kingship. I want to turn this private question into a more theoretical general problem on the relation to the primary source of each play in the genre of tragicomedy. As a rule, the author of a tragicomedy takes some framework from his source, or one section of the frame. He alters separate components of the framework taken to adapt it to the purpose of his own play and conception. His relation to the primary source does not entail his responsibility for conveying the facts of the source more or less precisely. The author of a tragicomedy receives only an intimation from the source, which may be in the shape of an idea, yet oftener it is narrative. The development and altering of the story create a new work with a new artistic and ideal conception.

Thus, Beaumont and Fletcher's stand on one kingdom incorporating another through conquest, in contrast to *MPS*'s private initiative of the king of a united kingdom (similarly to the removal of the prince invited as son-in-law by returning him home, unlike murdering, him in the *MPS*) remains within full right of relationship with the source of a tragicomedy. The *MPS*'s version of joining kingdoms is a regular component of Rustaveli's world view credo. He is a protagonist of the state system of a centralized monarchy; he dreams of a social mode of life based on harmonious, tolerant life and love of human beings. The ideal person of King Saridan is an element of such dream world. Beaumont and Fletcher have no relation to such a conception. They need a story likened to history in which there is an interesting resolution of a burning question facing their contemporary society - establishment of love between heirs in place of enmity. (They inherited interest in this theme from their great predecessor Shakespeare – "Romeo and Juliet"). They were furnished with this by the source plot, namely the love story of Tariel and Nestan of the *MPS*.

Even if we overlook this literary license, we may assume that Beaumont and Fletcher might have perceived the *MPS* relationship of Parsadan and Saridan as the conquest of one kingdom by another. One example will suffice to prove this. It was in this way that one modern Georgian student of Rustaveli conceived the *MPS*'s story of the unification of India: "Has it ever happened that anybody has exchanged his own hereditary kingship voluntarily for the service of another king?" Saridan "was made to yield his kingdom", probably against his will.<sup>1</sup>

We may conclude that *Philaster*'s plot framework derives from the story of the *MPS*'s Indian royal court.

2. The love story plot of the *MPS* in *Philaster* evinces certain characteristic features of the *MPS* love:

a) In Rustaveli Studies attention has repeatedly been drawn to the inordinate hypebolization of the love of Nestan and Tariel, as if it

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<sup>1</sup> Z. Kiknadze, *Avtandil's Testament*, Tbilisi 2001, pp. 6-7 (in Georgian)

were greater than life, and so on. This amazing grandeur – feeling brought to insanity – has found its way from the *MPS* to *A King and No King* as well as *Philaster*. English literary critics have noted this peculiar specificity of love in both plays.

b) The love of Nestan and Tariel is somehow intertwined with their desire to inherit the throne. To avoid a long excursus in support of this statement it will suffice to quote Nestan's words addressed to Tariel: "I and thou shall be sovereigns - that is the best of all matches!"(521).

The same is noticeable in *Philaster* too – rather categorically at that. Note the scene in which Arethusa discloses her love for Philaster (I.2)<sup>1</sup>

"Arethusa: Philaster, know,

I must enjoy these kingdoms.

Philaster: Madam, both?

...

Arethusa: Then know, I must have them and thee.

Philaster: And me?

Arethusa: Thy love; without which, all the land  
Discovered yet will serve me for no use  
But to be buried in.

...

Arethusa: With it, it were too little to bestow

On thee. Now, though thy breath do strike me dead,  
(Which know it may,) I have unripped my breast."

c)The disclosure of love with the pair of the *MPS* – in the context analysed above – comes from the woman. The same is the case with *Philaster*. The woman's initiative in tying the knot of love is noticeable in *A King and No King* too.

d) In the *MPS* the one in love but frustrated or left hopeless seeks refuge in uninhabited forests and caves. This is a specificity of

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<sup>1</sup> All excerpts from *Philaster* are made from the edition: F. Beaumont and J. Fletcher, *Philaster or, Love Lies A-bleeding*. Edited by Andrew Gurr. Manchester and New York, 2003.

oriental lyrics and legitimate for the *MPS*. The same happens in *Philaster*. Bound by love and blinded by jealousy, Philaster finds refuge in a dense forest. His maid Euphrasia (the same Bellario) does the same.

e) The love plot of Nestan and Tariel from the *MPS* inherits in *Philaster* specific details of weaving a love intrigue. This is primarily the woman's letters to her love, which is a specific style of the love story of Nestan and Tariel in the *MPS*. Its trace is perceivable in *A King and No King*, but resemblance with the *MPS* is more pronounced in *Philaster*.

The love relations between Nestan and Tariel begin through the intermediary of Nestan's maid sent by her. In order for Nestan's secret not become known in the palace, Asmat visits Tariel under the guise of his mistress. This motif – Asmat acting as a pseudo-mistress – is interpreted from many angles in Rustaveli's poem. Arethusa too begins her love story with her future love by sending her maid to him. In composing this scene by the English playwrights the reminiscence of the respective scene of the *MPS* seems to be evident. Arethusa asks the maid back from her visit to Philaster (I,2):

“Did you deliver those plain words I sent,  
With such a winning gesture and quick look  
That you have caught him?”

Here is a summary of the principal conclusions. The main source of the plot of Beaumont and Fletcher's tragicomedy *Philaster* is the love story of Nestan and Tariel of the *MPS*. The same story of the *MPS* is a direct subject source of Beaumont and Fletcher's tragicomedy *A King and No King*, written in the same period (1608-1611). *Philaster* and *A King and No King* are the most popular plays of Beaumont and Fletcher, considered by English literary criticism to be the principal works in the establishment of the dramatic style of English tragicomedy.

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From the viewpoint of the future study of the subject I shall like to make a few methodological observations.

The establishment of such an active involvement of the *MPS* in early-seventeenth-century English literary life (bearing in mind that hitherto the *MPS* was believed to have become known in Europe only early in the nineteenth century) opens up new prospects for future Rustaveli Studies.

Rustaveli's work calls for a study in the developmental process of medieval and Renaissance literary-philosophical and social thought – both in the area of oriental and Western cultural relations, as well as in the European proper intellectual life peripeteias – not only from the typological angle but along the line of direct contacts as well. This unexpected emergence of the *MPS* in the centre of Europe's social and literary life may not have been an entirely accidental and isolated development. Long-term research is needed in this direction.

It cannot be ruled out that the *MPS* came out of Beaumont and Fletcher's library and became independently known to European literary circles, or a vagrant story of the *MPS*, current among Europe's intellectuals, reached Beaumont and Fletcher's library rather than through a Georgian commentator of the *MPS*. I considered the latter possibility more probable. This suspicion is prompted in me by the fact that Beaumont and Fletcher make use of only one – though principal – story of the *MPS*, namely that of the love of Nestan and Tariel, with no evidence of relation to the other sections of the poem. This last statement stands in need of further study: are *Philaster* and *A King and No King* the only two plays of Beaumont and Fletcher in which a trace of the *MPS* is clearly seen?

Does the change that these two works made in the literary style of Beaumont and Fletcher's tragicomedy, and categorically

pointed out by English literary critics,<sup>1</sup> evince any relation to the literary system of the *MPS*?

Let me repeat in summary that Beaumont and Fletcher were the most popular playwrights of seventeenth century English literature, being direct successors to the great English literature of the end of the Renaissance period (William Shakespeare, Ben Johnson ...) and giving great creative impulse to the seventeenth-century English – and hence European – dramaturgy. Aren't we justified in looking for the links – not only typological – of Rustaveli's *MPS* in this broad area of European civilization?

*Elguja Khintibidze*

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<sup>1</sup> "The historical position of "Philaster" and "A King and No King" as the first two tragicomedies of the young collaborators ... somewhat separates them from the whole series of similar plays that came from the pen of Fletcher either writing alone or in collaboration with others during the next dozen years in which he continued to produce for the theater" (F. H. Ristine, *English Tragicomedy*, p. 114). "Surprisingly enough, the pattern which brought them to the pinnacle of their popularity is prefigured in the unsuccessful *The Faithful Shepherdess*. In *Philaster* it is partly achieved, but it appears for the first time in its full development in *A King and No King*." (E. Waith, *The Pattern of Tragicomedy ...*, p.3).