

ARISTOTLE'S CONCEPTION OF THE ARTISTIC UNITY OF HOMER'S
EPIC AND RUSTAVELI'S *THE MAN IN THE PANTHER'S SKIN*

Research into the relationship of Aristotle's *Poetics* with the *Man in the Panther's Skin* (the *MPS*) of Rustaveli was commenced by Georgian philologists quite some time ago (see 1). The same may be said in connection with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (for details see 2). In recent times comparative-structural analysis of Rustaveli's poem and Homer's epic has also been carried out (see 3; 4; 5). The purpose of the present paper is to continue research in the above direction.

According to the view current in Rustaveli Studies, Rustaveli's awareness of the *Poetics* of Aristotle is seen in the Prologue of his poem, specifically – in the statement about the philosophicalness of poetry (“minstrelsy is, from the first, a branch of wisdom”,¹ – 12, 1)². But, as I became convinced in the course of further analysis of the Prologue of the *MPS*, in it – and especially in the stanzas conveying the theory of minstrelsy (12-17) – along with the foregoing, the knowledge of and concurrence with Aristotle's view on *the artistic unity*³ of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and in general

¹ In reference to the text of the *Man in the Panther's Skin* use is made of the 1988 Georgian edition of the poem (see 6).

² M. Gogiberidze was the first to focus attention on the obvious resemblance between Chapter IX of the *Poetics* (1451b5-6: “poetry is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history”) and the first line of the 12th stanza of the Prologue of the *MPS* (see 1, 115...). Here and Further for the English translation of separate passages of the *Poetics* of Aristotle see: the *Poetics* of Aristotle, translated by S. H. Butcher, <http://gradesaver.com/etext/titles/poetics/section...> . In the case of my differing interpretation of individual words or specification of their meaning, my initials [Z. Kh] are placed in square brackets.

³ The author of the *Poetics* discusses *the artistic unity* – or in Aristotelian terms, *the unity of the action* – of the poetic work in several chapters of his treatise, but in relation to epic, namely Homeric poems, especially important are Chapters VIII and XXIII.

on the need for dramaticalness of epic *plot*¹ is reflected.² From this point of view most important are such key stanzas as 7,4; 16,2 (for details see 3, 79); 12,4: “a long word (i.e. story) is told briefly,³

¹ In the present translation the Russian terms *fabula*, *sujet* (or *sjuzhet*) and *line of sujet* (i.e. *plot line*), originally proposed by the Russian Formalists, according to modern narratological researches, are rendered in English as, respectively, *narrative story*, *plot* and *storyline*, whereas in the previous translations of my articles (e.g. see 3) the terms *fabula* and *sujet* (or *sjuzhet*) are rendered in English otherwise, namely, as *plot* and *subject*. Over and above, the words *story* (merely, – in contrast with *narrative story*) and *events* of the present translation are used not as narratological terms but in their literal sense, respectively, as a *tale*, *adventure* of characters (e.g. *the story* of Avtandil) and *happenings* (e.g. *the events* connected with Arabia) [Z.Kh.].

² According to Aristotle, “the [epic, - Z.Kh.] plot manifestly ought, as in a tragedy, to be constructed on dramatic principles. It should have for its subject a *single* action, whole and complete, with a beginning, a middle, and an end” (*Poetics*, XXIII: 1459a18-20). In discussing the plot of a tragedy Aristotle uses the same definition, but leaves out the word *single*, for it is self-evident – unlike an epic – a tragedy is ordinarily built around a *single* action: “tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete, and whole, ... a whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end” (*Poetics*, VII: 1450b23...27).

³ In my view, a *long* (or *epic*) *word* (i.e. *story*, *tale*) *told briefly* means *artistic unity of well-ordered composition*, or according to Aristotle – *the plot, constructed on dramatic principles*. I have in mind the argument presented by Aristotle in the completing and summarizing Chapter 26 of the *Poetics*. Comparing epic and tragedy in favour of the latter, he says: “moreover, it [i.e. tragedy, - Z. Kh.] attains its end within *narrower* limits; ... What, for example, would be the effect of the *Oedipus* of *Sophocles*, if it were cast into a form *as long* as the *Iliad*?” (*Poetics*, XXVI: 1462a18-1462b1 ... 1462b2-3). In other places of the *Poetics* too Aristotle focuses attention on the circumstance that the considerable length or measure, characteristic of an epic, is not a factor facilitating the dramaticalness of composition. Here I quote one such passage by way of example: “as regards scale or length [of epic - Z. Kh.], ... the beginning and the end must be capable of being brought within a single view. This condition will be

herein lies the goodness of minstrelsy,” and 17,3: “we are also pleased by their (i.e. – of those poets’) [poetic works], which are *told* exclusively *clearly*”.¹ But theoretical knowledge of Aristotle’s *Poetics* is implemented artistically as well by Rustaveli. I mean the circumstance that the *MPS*, though it is an organic part of medieval – based on the *chronological* principle – Georgian Christian literature, by its essence is an example of poetic work constructed according to *dramatic*, nonchronographic, and therefore precisely *the Aristotelian conception* of artistic unity, this being indicated by several circumstances identified in the process of observation of its narrative story, plot, structure and composition from the same standpoint by which Homeric poems are analyzed in the *Poetics*.

a) The narrative story of the *Iliad*, as well as of the *Odyssey*, is based on closely linked, uniform mythological events (respectively, the Trojan War and the return home of the Greek heroes). Hence to achieve the dramatic unity of his poems, Homer needed to “concentrate” only on *constituent* parts, i.e. single episodes of these mythological events (such episodes are respectively, the wrath of Achilles and the final happenings of Odysseus’ return). Rustaveli faced a much more difficult architectonic task to solve. In particular, he had to unite in a single plot non-uniform events of narrative story which were *mostly* unconnected in time and space, on the one hand,

satisfied by poems *on a smaller scale* than the old [i.e. Homeric, - *Z.Kh.*] epics” (*The Poetics*, XXIV: 1459b18..21).

¹ Of course *clearly told* means *saying in such a way as to be easily understood*. According to the *MPS*, a long story or word is *boring*, for it is *hard to understand* (“I’ll not bore you, a long story is hard for us to understand,” 1516,4). Therefore, for it not to be *boring* and hence *hard to understand* (or for it to be easy to understand, i.e. *clearly told*), it should be said *briefly* (“long word (i.e. story) is tedious, so I’ll speak shortly to you,” 234,3). To sum it up, according to Rustaveli, to say something *clearly* means saying it *briefly*. For its part, the latter, as already noted [see previous reference], is tantamount to conveying *a vast plot*, i.e. “long story” (1516,4) or “long word” (12,4; 234,3) without violation of *the dramatic*, and in the final analysis, of *the artistic unity* of a whole poetic work.

and *largely* unconnected in terms of cause and effect, on the other; at the same time, in order to turn such a *multiple plot* into a *dramatic composition*, he had to assign to *only one of these events* the function of a compositionally basic or key *part*, i.e. story of the whole poem. I think it is clear without special discourse that among numerous events of the *MPS's* narrative story, connected with the various characters of the poem, namely, with Pridon, Patman, the Kajis and others, there are actually only two events which are used by Rustaveli for the development of the whole work's main storyline. These are the love-stories of Tariel / Nestan and Avtandil / Tinatin. But it is necessary for dramatic plot to be constructed on a single action. Thus, Rustaveli had to assign the *compositionally* basic or key function to *only one of the above two stories*. For obvious reasons (the events connected with the love-story of Tariel and Nestan chronologically precede those of Avtandil and Tinatin, and simultaneously they cover a much longer span of time) in order to attain a greater degree of dramatic unity Rustaveli reflected *directly* and to *the end* (though in maximally brief manner; for details, see below) only events connected with Arabia (not the whole story of the kingdom, but that of Avtandil and Tinatin), while the stories of the other kingdoms (of India, i.e. of Tariel and Nestan; of Mulghazanzar, i.e. of Pridon; of the Kingdom of the Seas, where Patman lives and of the Kajis' Kingdom) are composed although in *detail*, yet mainly *indirectly*, namely in the shape of reminiscences, i.e. of recallings – *without ending*, at that (with the *partial* exception of the story of Tariel and Nestan per se, – for details, see below).

b) Thus, in the process of reshaping the narrative story into an organic plot, and in the final analysis into a dramatic composition, Rustaveli, as well as Homer, maximally disregard the principle of *chronographic* narrating. I mean that the plot of the poem begins not by telling the chronologically earliest story of the Indian kingdom (which would be followed by the later story of Mulghazanzar and finally, that of Arabia), but with the latest, according to the narrative story, one, i.e. with the narration of events taken place in the Arabian kingdom. At the same time, the first episode of the poem (the

enthroning of Tinatin by King Rostevan) directly paves the way for the subsequent episode (the seeing by chance of a foreign knight or Tariel while Rostevan and Avtandil were hunting), at which begins the uniting of the stories of the two protagonists of the poem – Avtandil and Tariel – into a single story or in Aristotelian terms, a single action.

c) Thus, if we use Aristotle's terminology, Rustaveli turned Avtandil's story into the compositionally main, key story or *part* of his poem, which, therefore, is based on the dramatic principle of constructing the action. But how did the poet manage to implement practically such an artistic conception, if we take into consideration the fact that there are two protagonists in the poem (Avtandil and Tariel) and accordingly, in terms of *plot* and hence naturally *structurally too*, the second or Tariel's story emerges as the principal one as well? I think the following answer must be given to this question: the poet always narrates the events conveyed by the *MPS* up to the place Avtandil is their participant (i.e. witness or hearer), therefore Avtandil drives the evolution of the storyline in the poem, which points to the fact that, from *the standpoint of the so-called modal narratology*, in other words, *of the compositional organization of the plot, the basic story of the poem is actually Avtandil's story* – not of the second protagonist, i.e. Tariel.

d) Naturally enough, the compositionally basic or Avtandil's story is conveyed without violation of the chronological sequence. The case is the same in the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, considered by Aristotle as exemplary for an epic, from the standpoint of dramatic unity. I imply, respectively, the chronographic principle of narration by Homer of the final episodes of Odysseus's return home and the wrath of Achilles. But unlike Homer's epic, the compositionally basic story of Rustaveli's poem covers a much larger span of time;¹

¹ As is known, the wrath of Achilles in the *Iliad* continues for more than *fifty days*, but actually events of only *12 days* are narrated. Of the ten-year return voyage of Odysseus, in the *Odyssey* only the final events of *forty days* are described, of which the so-called action time span, described

in other words, it is not concentrated in time.¹ To overcome such architectonic difficulty Rustaveli makes *systematic* use of the principle of compositional organization of the plot which in Homer's epic is attested *only in separate, exceptional cases*, while it is *quite alien* to other works created within the epic tradition. Thus, I think that it should be considered an *innovation* introduced by Rustaveli himself. This is a maximally brief reflection of the digressions, hindering the poem's artistic unity, i.e. of those events which are linked only through cause and effect to the compositionally basic (and hence main for the *MPS's* plot and structure too²) story of

directly totals *16 days and 8 nights*. Avtandil's compositionally basic story in the *MPS* lasts *for years*, namely *more than 5 years*.

¹ In the concluding, 26th Chapter of his treatise Aristotle stresses specially that it is necessary for a dramatic plot to be concentrated in time: "for the concentrated effect is more pleasurable than one which is spread over a long time and so diluted." (*Poetics*, XXVI: 1462b1-2).

² But vice versa, the story being basic in terms of plot and hence, structurally as well, does not mean that from the compositional standpoint too it will be *always* and *necessarily* basic. Thus, e.g. Taniel's adventure, as noted above, is one of those two stories, which are main for the plot and structure of the *MPS*, though compositionally it is non-basic. But Avtandil's adventure is compositionally basic and hence main for the poem's plot and structure as well. The point is that it is impossible for a compositionally basic story of an *epic work of dramatic structure* (I mean the *MPS*), created with account of Aristotle's principle of the unity of action not to be at the same time basic in terms of plot and structure, for a compositionally basic story, according to Aristotle's conception, is implicitly one of the most important parts of the narrative story and hence, of the plot. Otherwise the function of the compositionally basic part of the entire work cannot be assigned to it. Bearing in mind this circumstance, in my view, it is obvious that without being a basic part – first of all – for the plot and structure of the *MPS*, it would be even theoretically inconceivable for Avtandil's story to be *only* the compositionally basic part of the entire poem. (I mean "compositionally principal" in Aristotelian terms). Otherwise it (i.e. Avtandil's story) would be, from the compositional standpoint, a basic element of a *different type*, namely the so-called *frame story* which

Avtandil, but not being its constituent, i.e. organic parts and therefore *structurally* non-essential for the plot of the entire poetic work (“a long word (i.e. story) is told briefly, herein lies the goodness of minstrelsy,” 12,4). Thus, for example, the one-year futile search for the foreign knight by King Rostevan’s slaves on his order (being connected with the compositionally principal story of Avtandil, but *structurally not an indispensable part of it and the entire poem*) is described in brief – only with 5 stanzas (115-119). But the previous events happening only over three days, also connected with Avtandil’s story, and being, in addition, an indispensable part of the poem’s plot and structure (King Rostevan’s council with his viziers, the enthronement of Tinatin and the seeing of a foreign knight while hunting) are conveyed extensively, namely through 81 stanzas (34,3-42; 44-114). This compositional peculiarity is attested on the scale of the entire poem and causes a regular alternation of the parts of the text told briefly and extensively. In particular, the parts told briefly, *usually*, convey long periods of time (ordinarily lasting for several months or, in rare cases, from one to three years), while extensively told parts cover brief spans of time, depicting events that last for one, two or three days, which, in the view of the author of the *Poetics*,¹ is appropriate precisely for a tragedy and hence generally for a work with dramatic plot.

medievalists call *the narrative model of story within a story*, or its simplified form, the so-called *framing device*. Such a compositional technique, the earliest cases of which are found in the Indic epic, as is known, is generally characteristic of oriental epic tradition (e.g. the *Arabian Nights*) and in European literature it became established relatively later, namely from the second half of the 14th century (Boccaccio’s *Decameron* and Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*). However, individual cases of its use are already noticeable in classical literature (Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*). One of the results of close contacts of Georgian epic tradition with oriental, namely Persian literature, must have been the use by the author of the *Amirandarejaniani* of this compositional device, however apparently without much success.

¹ See *Poetics*, Chapter V:1449b12-13.

As noted above, according to Aristotle, dramaticalness of plot is necessary not only for tragedy but for epic as well. But in the view of Aristotle, unlike drama, epic poems have an additional capability of “imitating” many simultaneously occurring events that are different parts of one action, i.e. story. It is through such capacity that an epic acquires magnificence (*Megaloprepeia*) and diversity (*Epeisodioun anomiois epeisodiois*).¹ However, in the same passage (1459b27-28) Aristotle notes that due to this the length (i.e. size) of an epic grows, which in his view, is a factor diminishing the dramatic unity of an epic work.² Thus, according to Aristotle, although the greater length of an epic, in comparison to tragedy, should be considered a shortcoming of an epic, it is still necessary for an epic poem. Aristotle focuses attention on the same compositional “paradox” once more in the final, 26th Chapter of the *Poetics*. In his view, an epic cannot restrict itself by conveying only one story (myth), for owing to its small size it will become either shortened or colourless and watery. Thus, Aristotle arrives at the final conclusion that best for an epic is the case of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* which consist of many parts, on the one hand, yet imitating a single action, on the other.³

I think that the term *structural unity*, in addition to the term *dramatic unity*, gained a footing in recent Homerology⁴ due to the taking into consideration of precisely the above-discussed passages of the *Poetics*. In particular, Homerologists focus attention on the circumstance that the *artistic unity* of the Homeric poems is due to their *structural unity* too, along with *dramatic*⁵. According to the observations of researchers, Homer achieves such compositional aim in the *Odyssey* through the speeches made by the characters, which

¹ See *Poetics*, Chapter XXIV: 1459b22-31.

² See *Poetics*, Chapter XXVI: 1462a18-1462b3; Chapter XXIV: 1459b18-21.

³ See *Poetics*, Chapter XXVI: 1462b5-11.

⁴ For an example see 7, 56..., 62... .

⁵ See: 8, 98-114, with References.

recall the events passed long ago,¹ while the narrative technique of the so-called *soothsaying*² and *intensification of motifs*³ is mostly attested in the *Iliad*.

In the case of the *MPS* too, I think it is beyond doubt that *the artistic unity*, obviously characteristic of the poem, is caused, along with dramatic, by its structural unity as well. To demonstrate this I shall try to focus attention on several additional circumstances.

a) In the first place it should be noted that Rustaveli shares Aristotle's view on the necessity of considerable length of an epic.⁴ Along with other passages, the same is indicated by stanza 14 of the Prologue, according to which "the poet will show great virtue by not reducing Georgian (i.e. poetic speech) and word (i.e. story he has to tell)".

b) In order to determine whether the *MPS* is really characterized by structural unity, I think, it is necessary to answer one major

¹ In particular, in the *Odyssey*, while visiting the Phaeacians, Odysseus recalls the greatest part of his adventure, while the happy or tragic returnings of the other Greek heroes become known from the narrations of Menelaus, Nestor, Demodocus and the souls of the dead heroes.

² In particular, the two major events of the Trojan War, not reflected in the *Iliad*, become known in the form of soothsaying: the death of Achilles and the destruction of Ilium by the Achaeans.

³ In parallel to this term, "*the structural technique of creating an illusion*" is used in recent Homerology (9, 41-43): Homer creates an *illusion* that the events described by him convey the whole ten-year war rather than one episode of it. Thus e. g. the *Catalogue of Ships* creates an association of the arrival of the Achaeans at Troy. Helen's description to Priam of the Achaean leaders and the single combat of Menelaus and Paris suggests the beginning of the war. Numerous battles, which start in song V and end with the death of Patroclus, create the effect of the progress of the ten-year war. The defeat of Hector, the mainstay of the defence of Troy, by Achilles, foretells the final destruction of the city, thereby creating the illusion of the ending of the war, and so on.

⁴ And simultaneously, like the author of the *Poetics*, he believes that not all poets are capable of creating a poetic work characterized by a long plot and, at the same time, by an artistic unity as well (16,2, – see above).

question: from the point of view of the artistic reflection of information are the poem's compositionally non-basic but principal, in terms of plot, parts rendered by Rustaveli in such a way that, similarly to Homer's epic, the *MPS* may be considered a structural entirety, along with dramatic? Whereas separate events connected with Avtandil's story, though not its constituent, organic parts and hence *structurally not indispensable* to the artistic unity of the poem, for its entire plot, are told by Rustaveli maximally briefly (12,4, - see above), the poet uses a different principle of compositional organization of plot in the case of the so-called tributary stories, i.e. digressions connected with the story of Tariel, the second protagonist of the poem. This is the *incompleteness* of episodic stories (i.e. their representation *without ending*), despite being narrated in detail.¹ But apart from Tariel's adventure, all *compositionally non-basic* stories (Pridon's, Patman's, and others) are *nonbasic from the standpoint of plot* as well and, consequently, their incompleteness or fragmentariness does not cause a breakdown of the structural unity of the poem. In this regard, the situation in the case of the Indian kingdom, and hence of Tariel differs: the adventure of Tariel, as well as of Avtandil, is in terms of plot, the principal, organic part of the *MPS*. But by the incompleteness of the story of India in general, one expression of which is the non-return of Tariel to India, *at first sight*, it (i.e. Tariel's adventure) too, similarly to tributary stories, appears to be incomplete as it were.² And indeed, Rustaveli says nothing about the developments in India following the departure of Tariel and Nestan, and hence neither is the return of the pair in love to India and their enthronement conveyed in the poem.³ But, in my view, to gain

¹ Thus, e.g. we have no knowledge of the further developments in the Kingdom of the Seas after Nestan fled from there, i.e. we do not know what happened to Patman, etc.

² The incompleteness of the principal, in terms of plot, story is impermissible for an epic, for it causes a breakdown of the structural unity of the entire poem.

³ This is why a large part of the students of the *MPS* considers the so-called first sequel to the poem – the *Story of the Indians and Khatavians*, in which

an insight into the essence of this question it is necessary to separate the love-story of Tariel and Nestan, on the one hand, and in general, the story of the Indian kingdom, on the other. Obviously, the former is fully reflected in the poem (contrary to their will, Tariel and Nestan, separated for a long time, ultimately do get married), for in terms of plot it is the basic story, and hence its narration to the end is necessary for the structural wholeness of the poem. The story of the *entire Indian kingdom (and not of the love of Nestan and Tariel per se) is not only non-basic compositionally but, in terms of plot as well, hence structurally too.*

Along with the foregoing, attention should be given to the circumstance that, in the same way as Homer creates in the *Iliad* an illusion of the beginning, course and end of a ten-year war, I think, Rustaveli, too, rouses in the reader the feeling of Tariel's final inevitable return to India and enthronement.¹ Such an effect of structural unity in the *MPS*, in my view, is achieved by the gradual intensification of Tariel's motif as King of India. I have in mind the fact that from the middle of the poem Tariel is ever more frequently mentioned as "King of the Indians" (notwithstanding the fact that his accession to the Indian throne is not really reflected in the poem), while towards the end of the *MPS* the Arabian King Rostevan receives him with royal honour (1508,4; 1509,2–1510,2; 1514,1; 1519–1523) and even enthrones symbolically the newly wed couple.

c) In Aristotle's view, in the *Iliad*, as well as in the *Odyssey* Homer elaborates artistically only a single part of the whole story and

the history of the Indian kingdom is conveyed "to the end" – an indispensable part of the *MPS*, rather than a later addition, written by an anonymous poet. Bearing in mind the regularities of the compositional organization of the plot of the *MPS*, as well as the artistic unity, characteristic of the poem, the above consideration seems to me unacceptable (see below).

¹ Thus, Rustaveli creates an illusion of narration to the end, not of the story of the entire Indian kingdom (i.e. of King Parsadan, his wife, King Ramaz and probable revenge of the Khvarazmians) but of the love-story of Nestan and Tariel per se.

divides and *diversifies* it by inserting other constituent parts of the same story, nevertheless being episodes of different content.¹ In the *MPS* too the compositionally basic story of Avtandil's and Tinatin's love, as noted above, is only *one* part of the whole narrative story, and it is divided by inserting various episodes of the love-story and attendant adventure of Tariel and Nestan, in other words, by inserting the *remaining parts* of the narrative story. It is through the artistic implementation of exactly this architectonic principle that the unity of the poem's plot and structure is achieved without breakdown of its dramatic-compositional unity. In particular, against the background of Avtandil's and Tinatin's love-story, which is rendered briefly, Rustaveli tells at length, i.e. in detail, not only the structurally basic love-adventure of Tariel and Nestan, but also the so-called tributary stories of the Khatavian brothers, of the Kings of India Saridan and Parsadan, the traitor King Ramaz, Pridon and his cousins, the merchants and the pirates, Patman, Chashnagir and the Kajis (however, the digressions differ from the stories of the protagonists, because they are represented fragmentarily, and hence not to the end); thereby the plot of the entire poem is *diversified*. As repeatedly noted in the present paper, this most important artistic-architectonic peculiarity of the *MPS* may be analyzed by the same logic of aesthetic thought on which Aristotle's view on Homeric unity – set forth in the *Poetics* – is based as well. I think, this circumstance is indicated once more by the fact that knowledge and acceptance in

¹ Namely, according to Aristotle: "Homer never attempts to make the whole war of Troy the subject of his poem, though that war had a beginning and an end. ... He detaches a single portion (the wrath of Achilles, – *Z. Kh*) and admits as episodes many events from the general story of the war – such as the Catalogue of the ships and others – thus *dividing and diversifying* (*dialambanein*, – *Z. Kh.*) the poem" (*Poetics*, XXIII: 1459a31-32 ... 35-37). Aristotle discusses the artistic unity of the *Odyssey* analogously (see *Poetics*, Chapter VIII, 1451a22-30 and Chapter XVII, 1455b16-23). The Modern Homerology analyses the artistic unity of Homer's epic taking into consideration mainly this view of the author of the *Poetics* (for details, see above).

principle by Rustaveli of the above-discussed key passage of the *Poetics* (Chapter XXIII: 1459a31-32 ... 35-37) is attested at theoretical level too. In particular, Aristotle's conception on Homeric unity, along with line 4 of stanza 12 of the Prologue ("a long word (i.e. story) is told briefly, herein lies the goodness of minstrelsy"), appears to be reflected in lines 1 and 3 of stanza 13 as well: "the poet reveals himself ... / ... by telling long verses and *tearing* (*them*, – in Georgian: *kheva*)" (13, 1/3). The line 3 of stanza 13 remains to the present day the most vague passage of the entire theory of minstrelsy, especially, the word *kheva* ("to tear off").¹ In the course of discussion² below I shall try to present a novel definition of the line under discussion, partly based on my earlier interpretations.

In my opinion, *long verses* should be understood as *separate* constituent *parts* or *episodes* of *a briefly told long word* (i.e. story, - [12,4]). I believe, such a conclusion corresponds well to Rustaveli's words – "cannot tell (i.e. compose) *anything* [in Georgian: *veras*] at length" – conveyed in line 4 of stanza 17: "he is not called a poet who cannot tell *anything* [i.e. *any part or episode of his poetic creation*] at length" and not, according to the traditional interpretation, *any entire work*.

The question is naturally raised whether the Prologue's theory of minstrelsy is of stylistic-rhetorical character or compositional, i.e. in stanzas 12-17 while discussing the peculiar principles of artistic speech Rustaveli attempts to deal with the problem of language and style or composition, i.e. *compositional organisation of a plot*? I think he largely deals with the latter.

In the context of the current reasoning and bearing in mind that *long verses* must imply not the entire poem but its constituent *extended episodes*, in my view, one more question must be answered:

¹ For details on the history of the question, see 10, 94-98. For my earlier conjectural interpretations of the word *kheva*, see 5, 134.

² The size of the paper precludes an extensive discussion of the topic, hence I shall limit myself to general conclusions, this time abstaining from their detailed argumentation.

on the one hand, the *telling of long verses* of the line in question (13,3) and on the other *tearing (kheva)* of the same line (13,3) is used by Rustaveli in mutually synonymous meaning or antonymous? I think in antonymous.

At the next stage of reasoning, taking into account the meanings of *kheva* in Old Georgian¹, it should be determined by means of this word what type of compositional (i.e. structural) technique Rustaveli speaks about, concerning the extended episodes of his poem? In other words it should be ascertained which principle(s) of compositional organisation, characteristic of the *MPS*'s extended episodes might be expressed in Old Georgian by the word *kheva*? To answer this question all the above circumstances should be taken into consideration: the word *kheva* of 13,3 refers not to the entire poetic work but to its single parts, i.e. extended episodes, and, for that matter, not to the peculiarities of their language and style, but to the technique of compositional organisation and, at the same, not by means of extention and continuation of narration but, on the contrary, through its (well-timed) shortening and reduction. Which compositional principle, what type of architectonic peculiarity, unquestionably characteristic of the *MPS*, combine all the above identified features? I believe this is *the unfinished state* of the so-called digressions, i.e. tributary stories, composed in the shape of extended episodes and hence, *the unfinished state of these episodes themselves* (see above), i.e. in Rustaveli's words, – “telling long verses and [their] tearing off”, as it takes place in the stories of the younger Khatavian brother, seriously wounded by Taniel, Patman who “ordered” the killing of Chashnagir, Pridon's warriors remaining in Kajeti fortress, and finally, King Parsadan who found himself in an extremely difficult position, and other similar cases.

¹ These meanings are: first and basic, which for their part denoted two similar but not completely identical actions: 1. *to tear off, to cut off*; 2. *to tear to bits, to tear into pieces*; and the second, narrow sense of the word was *treatment, dressing [of leather]* (for details, see 10, 94...).

The verb *dialambanein* is one of the key words of the passage (Chapter XXIII: 1459a31-32 ... 35-37) of the *Poetics* under consideration. In the Greek of Aristotle's time it had two basic meanings: 1. *to divide*; and 2. *to diversify*.¹ Thereby, from the standpoint of the possible relations of the above passage of the *Poetics* to the *telling long verses and [their] tearing* [line 13,3] of the *MPS's* Prologue, my attention was drawn by two more circumstances.

1. As I noted above, the infinitive form of verb "*kheva*" in Old Georgian expressed another action also, slightly differing from Modern Georgian *mokheva* (*tearing off*, used by Rustaveli, conjecturally, as *leaving unfinished*, – see above), in particular, *tearing into pieces*, – Modern Georgian *dakheva*. I think this connotation too fully corresponds to one more highly important architectonic peculiarity of the *MPS*: the *division-diversification* (see above), i.e. *dakheva* (*tearing into pieces*) of the compositionally basic, *briefly told* part of the poem by means of the extended episodes inserted into it.

2. I think the above assumption is strengthened, along with others, by the circumstance that the basic meanings of the key word *dialambanein* – used by Aristotle in the *Poetics's* above discussed, one of the most important passages (Chapter XXIII, 1459a31-32...35-37) – correspond, to a certain extent, exactly to those connotations that *kheva* had in Old Georgian: 1. *tearing into pieces*, i.e. *division*; and 2. *treatment, dressing [of leather] through tearing into pieces*, which in my view, corresponds precisely to the second

¹ Accordingly, the commentators of the *Poetics* translate this word in two ways: some as *divide* and others as *diversify*. Inasmuch as these meanings derive from each other, while division of a poetic work by means of the extended episodes inserted into it causes its diversification, and vice versa – diversification of the plot is feasible precisely with inserted episodes, in translating this passage (see above), I bore in mind both connotations of the verb *dialambanein*.

meaning of the *Poetics*'s *dialambanein*, i.e. to the *diversification through division*.

Thus, it transpires that the word *kheva*, because of its meaning, at first sight completely fallen out of the general context of stanza 13, in fact renders precisely those basic compositional peculiarities characteristic of the *MPS* (see above) by means of which without the violation of the dramatic unity of the poem – (“a long word [i.e. story] is told briefly, herein lies the goodness of minstrelsy,” 12,4; “telling long verses [i.e. episodes] and tearing [them]”, 13,3; “to attain perfection of words [i.e. stories]”, 16,2; “told exclusively clearly”, 17,3) – the structural unity of the same poetic work is also reached (“telling long verses [i.e. episodes] and tearing [them]”, 13,3; “not reducing Georgian and word [i.e. story]”, 14,3; “he is not called a poet who cannot tell anything [i.e. episodes] at length”, 17,4). Thus, I think that, in discussing the essence of poetry, Rustaveli, through the word *kheva* (*to tear*), must be pointing to the *compositional technique*¹ based on the principle of the so-called *mokheva* (“tearing off”), by means of which single extended episodes of the *MPS* are composed; as well as referring to the most important principle of the artistic organisation of the entire plot of his poem – *tearing into pieces* or *dividing* and thus, *thematically diversifying* the compositionally main (based on a single, i.e. united action) textual part of the poem, by means of inserting into it extended parts, episodes which are constituents of the same action or closely related to it.

Thus, as it transpires from the discussion carried on in the present study, on the whole, Rustaveli shares Aristotle's conception – mainly

¹ By means of which, according to Aristotle, a kind of shortcoming is neutralized, which is generally characteristic of an epic, namely, excessive length of epic poems, in contrast to tragedies, caused by excessive extension of epic poems' single episodes (see *Poetics*, Chapter XVII: 1455b1-2 ... 1455b15-16). I mean the unfinished state of the single, extended episodes in the *MPS* (for details, see above) and hence, their relative conciseness.

his view on the artistic or, as referred to in modern scholarly studies, Homeric unity of an epic poetic work – set forth in the *Poetics*. At the same time, Rustaveli makes it more precise and refines it.¹ It is exactly through this *knowledge of philosophers' wisdom* that in the process of creating the *MPS* Rustaveli attains his main poetic purpose – *to be united with supreme, heavenly perfection*: “what avails me the knowledge of philosophers' wisdom, if I do not act according to it! / we are taught with the purpose of being united with the supreme perfection of heavens” (788, 3-4).

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