

**Towards Understanding Tmesis in the Line
of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin***

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Abstract: What captures our attention is one of the famous sections of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, the Davar episode, the final line of the stanza which deals with the scene depicting the suicide committed by King Parsadan's sister: ["She struck herself with a knife, died (mo-ca-k'vda), fell in a stream of blood"]. In our opinion, this instance of tmesis is one of the constituents of the poet's worldview, declaring his civic stance. Therefore, in this case, tmesis as a literary embellishment should be understood merely as an empirical fact. It is less debatable that splitting a verb, essentially serves as a tool for cultivating a literary domain of a language. Consequently, the tmesis of verbal forms seems to be a literary development; thus, it must not have emerged from a layer of a spoken language.

As for this particular line in *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, it is closely linked with the preceding lines ["Someone--who knows (vinca icis) who? - who heard (visca esma) this wrath of the king / told it to Davar the Kadj, who knows even heaven (caca is) by her sorcery"], through the poetic rhyme and the repetition as a literary device, which allow us to understand the homonymous nature of the -[m]ca particle. The c phoneme under discussion seems to be specifically selected and its ideogrammic character is suggested by the letter name "can". It is a fact that in alliteratively used c, Rustaveli's creative-literary vision is striving towards heaven ["caca icis" ("knows even heaven")]. It takes the form of an upward vertical, implying Davar's yearning for or embracing the heaven above.

More specifically, what do we deal with when Rustaveli employs ca in the final line of Davar's suicide scene ["mo-ca-k'vda"], inserting it into the verbal tmesis with his inherent authenticity? It seems unlikely that the poet intends to emphasize Davar's death alone ["mo-ca-k'vda" — "indeed died"]. Rustaveli's message must be more profound and concealed through poetry. We believe the soul of the woman who perceived heaven is drawn towards heaven after physical death; thus, as we see it, it returns to heaven [*mo-cad-k'vdeba (dies departing towards heaven)]. The wisdom arrived from heaven must be taken by the heaven itself; such interrelationship is arc-shaped just the same way as the c grapheme in the Asomtavruli and Mkhedruli alphabets. We believe such an interpretation of Davar's episode is constructing one of the significant Rustvelian concepts of the world.

Keywords: *The line of The Knight in the Panther's Skin; Tmesis; Worldview*

Language serves as an aesthetic arena for the literary works of a writer, manifesting his unique artistic world and witnessing his worldview, and when dealing with a thinker such as Rustaveli, any scholar encounters a wide array of insoluble problems behind the poetic writings of a genius. We believe, one line of the poem as a focus of our study acknowledges the fact that there is no easy way to overcome obstacles. This involves the final stanza of one of the famous sections, the Davar episode of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, specifically, the scene depicting the suicide committed by Davar, King Parsadan's sister:

*"Davar said: "Who would not stone me for doing this? Who?
Before he (P'harsadan) slay me, I shall die. Life is wearisome to me!"
She struck herself with a knife, died¹, fell in a stream of blood"²*
[7, p. 118, stanza 574].

What captures our attention among the quoted lines is the final line of the stanza concerning which an attempt will be made here to understand it from different (both literary and historical) perspectives. First of all, however, we will engage in a discussion on such a literary embellishment that in the Georgian linguistic literature is referred to as *tmesis*, which means "cutting" and which, in our opinion, is understood as merely an empirical fact in this particular case. Later, we will observe that the *-[m]ca* particle in the cited line will have extended semantic capacity and will express a lot more compared to what could have been conveyed merely through the use of *tmesis*. Yet, what is the cause for its emergence? And where should one look for the origins of *tmesis*? If we examine a classical and indisputable scholarly perspective, we will recognize that "*tmesis* has been a rather common phenomenon among verb forms with preverbs in Old Georgian and has often been encountered afterwards. *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* shows frequent occurrence of preverbs separated from verbs they modify, having inserted particles as well as pronouns between the two, claims Ak. Shanidze, further stating that "as the examples demonstrate, preverbs exhibit some measure of independence and are not necessarily inseparably attached to the verbs: *ga-ve-xda* = *gaxda-ve*" [11, p. 259]. Thus, it is a well-known fact in the

¹ "died" is the English equivalent of the form of verbal *tmesis* "mo-*ca*-k'vda".

² **Note:** The text has been cited from the anniversary edition of 1966, namely, Shota Rustaveli, *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* (dedicated to the 800th birth anniversary of Shota Rustaveli), [7].

history of Georgian that, as an independent lexical unit at an earlier stage of development of the language, a preverb has come a long way “from being absolutely independent to being inseparable, developing into a bound morpheme” [11, 259]. Therefore, the forms such as “mi-**ve**-sce” [*mi-ve-sce (paid up) šen mc’ulili*] (“...you have paid up the very last lepton”): 10, Luke 12:59], “še-**ray**-vida” [*And when he entered (še-ray-vida) Capernaum*]: 10, Matt. 8:5] or “šta-**mca**-magdo” [*“to cast me (šta-mca-magdo) into the pool”*]: 10, John 5:7] are natural to the Old Georgian language and the original independence of a preverb allows a particle to cut a verb, bringing a preverb with a directional meaning on one side of the particle and the verb compound – on the other. To reiterate, this is a language-specific fact, thus the debate in this regard would be unjustified from a scholarly point of view. As for the answer to the second question – which layer of cognition presumably gave a stimulus to the probable emergence of tmesis – in our opinion, is no less important and could be formulated consistently as follows: since a spoken language employs an easy way of communication, being mostly concerned with conveying the meaning, it a priori excludes the possibility of development of the verbal tmesis in old Georgian on the level of spoken language. Certainly, the split forms considerably complicate the language, while providing it with elaborate embellishments. Under such circumstances, a particle as a lexical and grammatical tool is characterized by the literary colouring and is distinctly stylized. Language-specific manipulations always lead to a literary style in which the language experiences are profoundly intuitive and creative. Thus, tmesis of verbal forms (just as other variations of the tmesis) seems to be a literary development; no wonder that when evaluating the quality of the literary Georgian, the very ornament has its own distinct voice. This is probably why Rustaveli refused to abandon the tmesis as a legacy of high artistic value. Rustaveli’s poem marked the end of the phase of the Old Georgian language, however, the poet had maintained this part of a chain, linked to the past, stating in the following lines of the poem:

*“He recognized the letter and the fringe of the veil and unfolded
(ga-ca-šala) them,*

he pressed them to his face; he fell, a rose pale in hue”

[7, p. 253, stanza 1327].

Georgian scholars did not ignore the issue of the genesis of the *-[m]ca* particle, recognizing that “the given **-mca** particle has a complex structure that comprises the **m** and **ca** parts. The first part of it (**m**) must have been a remnant of some word, while another one (**ca**) is a well-known conjunction the meaning of which comes close to the conjunction *da* (“and”), and normal position of which is at the end of a word, just as in the case of *-que* in Latin: *k’acica*, *sit’q’uaca*, *c’ignica*, *saxlica*, *egreca*, *mermeca* and so on” [12, p. 37]. Indeed, if not for the

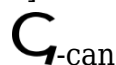
two-part structure of the above-mentioned particle, it would probably not have been fragmented and the loss of the prepositional **m** would not have so easily occurred in the process of development of modern Georgian. What could this **m'an** represent, the one identified as "some word" by Ak. Shanidze and which is missing in the language of Rustaveli? In our opinion, the first component of this particle that has a complex structure must be the particle **-me** [vin-**me**, ra-**me**...] which has undergone reduction after **-ca** was added to it. This **-me**, in its turn, allows the possibility to identify the pronominal element [**m'an**]. In this case, however, the research is mainly aimed at understanding the line by Rustaveli, therefore, the discussion is limited to a brief consideration of particles. To support our perspective, we will base our reasoning upon the given that, we believe, could be applied as the main argument. Namely, when exploring the history of the language, we notice that the simultaneous use of two different particles in Georgian is a natural phenomenon and that such combinations are apparent both in Old and Modern Georgian, for instance: ver-ga-ra ["no more (vergara) he was able": 2, Mark 1:45], ravden-ga-me ["If then the light within you is darkness, how great (ravden-ga-me) is that darkness": 2, Matt. 6:23³]; or vi-ga-c[a], ra-ga-c[a], sad-ga-c[a], ra-me-c[a] and the like. Therefore, we believe, the historical form of the **-mca** particle is reflected in the following sequence: ***-me-ca → -mca**.

Now, let us return to the line in Rustaveli's poem and recognize a particular concept from the poet's outlook and the way of thinking encapsulated in the "**mo-ca-k'vda**" [died] form of tmesis, the concept that embraces artistry and aesthetics and, from our point of view, is part of his worldview. "The Georgian mentality would embrace widespread ideas according to which knowledge was divided into two major realms – "wisdom" (Sophia) and "art" (techne)", notes R. Siradze [8, p. 63]. It was the unique and exclusively Rustvelian synthesis of wisdom and art that attracted our attention. The point is that for the literary image of the Davar episode to be conceptualized, the readers are also provided with a syntactic pair of the alliterative pattern – "**caca icis**" ("knows even heaven"), apart from other word forms [such as "a black woman": 7, p. 118, stanza.572]; the very alliterative pattern, in its turn, is closely linked with the preceding line through the poetic rhythm and the repetition as a literary device:

"Someone--who knows (*vinca icis*) who?--who heard (*visca esma*) this wrath of
the king
told it to Davar the Kadj, who knows even heaven (*caca icis*) by her sorcery"
[7, p. 116, stanza 568].

³ The material has been gathered from the *Concordance-Lexicon of the Georgian Gospels* [2].

It is obvious that we are dealing with an alliterative sound play. In Georgian linguistics, we lack sufficient experience with regard to the study of euphony which pertains to the field of stylistics and remains unexplored until the present day. This deeply poetic device of language modelling clearly develops the tempo of the rhyme in the text. Clearly, the particular phoneme under discussion, the specifically selected sound “c”, in our opinion as well, is also ideogrammic in character, which is implied by its letter name “**can**”. When discussing the principles of the Georgian Asomtavruli alphabet in one of his works, R. Pataridze states: “It is interesting that the ideogram-acrophone for a door occurs in the Phoenician alphabet, while the last seven letters of the Georgian alphabet begin with “can” grapheme. Should we consider that this arc-shaped grapheme denotes heaven and gate of heaven?” [6, p. 29].



We believe that the scholar’s attempt to identify the way the “c” grapheme and the name of the letter [“can”] in the alphabet convey a particular idea is certainly not unfounded. Such a “coincidence” is unlikely and should not be regarded as just an associative relationship. We are not really aware of the extent of Rustaveli’s knowledge in this respect, however, in alliteratively used **c**, his creative-literary vision is clearly striving towards heaven; the “knowledge of heaven” [“knows even heaven”] is defined by divine contemplation or the light and cognition path, and takes a form of an upward vertical within his frame of reference for the perception of the world. Yearning for and embracing the heaven above, and an attempt on the part of a human to apprehend the Unknowable and Unutterable Lord should be taken as the main features of wise Davar. All this leads to what Rustaveli would refer to as an act of “true justice”. Everyone will be judged by Davar’s justice – her brother Parsadan who, due to his unfairness, deserves to live his life childless and go through worldly afflictions; Taniel is “engulfed in the ocean of this world” [9, p. 74], paying the price of being overpowered by the temptation from Biblical Eve, and Nestan, the inciter of murder who, according to justice delivered by her governess aunt, will, first of all, never meet the one (i.e. Taniel) who, compelled by her, committed murder [Now **God grant** thou mayst never meet him whom thou didst incite to hinder this!": 7, p. 118, stanza. 571]. Abandoned and left to the mercy of fate “into the depths of the deep”, she has to embark on an immensely difficult journey of self-perception. This is what the accusation looks like, the one brought by a female character, dressed in a procurator gown and, as Davar suggests, the delivery of judgement is God’s will, rather than her own. If we follow logic and reasoning, the cosmic connection between Davar and heaven becomes visible, and the

reason for Rustaveli to employ the affricate phoneme **c** [t+s] as well as the lexical unit “**ca**” (“heaven”) becomes apparent.

We believe, the foregoing manifests both the logos and aesthetics of Rustaveli, however, things still remain to be discussed. Neither will the remaining part of our research escape the unification of these two major domains [logos and aesthetics]. E. Khintibidze notes: “a great deal of attention has been given to the issues of Rustaveli’s worldview in the Georgian scholarly literature. Frequently, a certain line, a motif or a problem in *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* has led to a research topic with reference to the worldview. However, in most cases, the attitudes of scholars towards these research problems, consciously or subconsciously, develop against the background of a general idea on Rustaveli’s worldview” [15, p. 33]. Indeed, it is difficult to disagree with the scholar’s opinion when realizing that the discussion merely on the forms with tmesis or the alliteration of the “c” sound in the above-quoted lines would neither resurface the depth of the topic nor assist us in accurately unravelling a particular concept of the poet’s worldview.

Another essential point to indicate in the case of alliterative phonics, in our opinion, is that such syntactic structures almost always allow us to identify a dominant lexical unit; the latter is what guides the thought model to which the other words are attached employing a phoneme or a syllable. The lexical unit undertakes a guiding function, and often occurs in the form of the semantically principal stem in combinations of poetic phrases. “ca” is this type of designation; it does not merely denote a material thing, rather it is an image of a divine idea. It acquires domination through such dualism in the above-cited lines. But the point is that the very “ca” has two different semantic paths both in the Georgian language of the Rustaveli era and the modern Georgian. In brief, it is a homonym and in one instance it assumes the function of denoting heaven, while in another – it is a particle, one of the main functions of which is to indicate emphasis. As Ak. Shanidze remarks, “one of the functions of the *ca* particle is to emphasize the word to which it is attached to” [11, p. 611].

What are we dealing with when Rustaveli employs *ca* with his inherent authenticity, inserting it into a split verbal form in the final line of Davar’s suicide scene [*“She struck herself with a knife, died (mo-ca-k’vda), fell in a stream of blood”*]? What does the author of measured poesy want to say here? Maybe the intent here is only to emphasize Davar’s death and suggest that she “indeed died”, or maybe also to indicate that the woman who perceived “the Heavenly Harmony” is drawn towards heaven after the completion of the soul’s departure phase; thus, as we interpret, Davar, equipped with the divine knowledge, returns to heaven. [*mo-cad-k’vda (died departing towards heaven)]. Generally, *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* emerges before us with its flow of homonymous rhymes. Also from

this point of view, Rustaveli transcends the limits of a poet and no wonder that the “ca”, with its double entendre, displayed in this line has more than one meaning. Rustaveli had already suggested that Davar had been provided with divine wisdom through her senses or the light of the heart [“who knows even heaven (*caca icis*) by her **sorcery**”], therefore, from our perspective, we would refrain from finding fault with her judgement. She leaves the human bias or partiality beyond the bounds of the mantle of the prosecutor-judge and remains as fierce and firm as the supreme God at the time of the divine judgement. The text clearly indicates that when it comes to the deliverance of justice and law, she as a judge has no sentiments regarding either her brother or her foster daughter. And yet, who were those whom she has undertaken to judge when confronted by unfair accusation on the part of Parsadan [*“I told her God's, she has caught her in the devil's net”*: 7, p. 116, stanza 567]; who if not for her brother and her brother's daughter, her closest blood relatives? In such a case, human temptation, and surrender to passion could have eased the verdict by Davar, however, no such action occurs in the poem. The judgement by a black woman [*“a black woman was of no avail, she could not heal her wounds”*: 7, p. 118, stanza 572] is divine and, even if not absolute, it embraces divinity, reaching the heaven just like the committed crime [*“Tsitsola's wrongdoing reaches up to heaven”*, - Vazha-Pshavela]. The latter will not be able to escape God's Last Judgement. The judgement seems to be impartial, rigid, uncompromising and flawless. Davar's earthly mission has been accomplished, therefore, she gets engulfed in a stream of blood [*“fell in a stream of blood”*]. Sins and cleansing from sin are inherent in the human setting and, as mentioned above, a soul is drawn towards heaven through the vertical earth-to-heaven path. The wisdom arrived from heaven must be taken by the heaven itself, such interrelationship is arc-shaped just the same way as the **c** grapheme itself already in the Mkhedruli alphabet and, most importantly, we believe, such interpretation is constructing the Rustvelian concept of the world.

Once again, Davar... Parsadan is well aware that she has embraced the divine wisdom [*“to her the king gave his child to be taught wisdom”*: 7, p. 86, stanza 323]⁴, therefore, the Indian ruler entrusts the learned woman (who can perceive through her senses) with the task of the upbringing of his daughter; however, bias did have consequences, clouding king's eyes, dragging him into a swamp of injustice as he found Nestan's governess aunt guilty. He aimed at getting his daughter intact out of muddy waters that were burdened with sin.

⁴ The following statement by T. Khvedeliani is the only thing we can unconditionally agree with: “Davar is not the Kadj, the sorcerer or the servant of evil, rather she is the personification of wisdom. She is the one who is bringing Nestan up... at the same time, surpassing her in terms of knowledge” [14, p. 154-155].

Parsadan put an end to justice and found shelter in Cain – prepared his own damned soul and body for killing his own sibling. Could all this be left unnoticed by heavenly justice, in this case, Davar? The righteous earth-born has come to a dead-end, and the way out depends on the perception of the widowed female sage. The governess who once had been wedded in Kajeti had to go through the heavenly trial; and we have the benefit of seeing an unusually dramatic scene of Davar's justice unfolding in front of us. We think that Rustaveli's worldview and, at the same time, his civic stance are concentrated in Davar, the reality evolves into a creative endeavour, and the poet delivers his message through concealed (/creative) clarity. It is not our intention to insist that Rustaveli applies the only realistic model while shaping this character (just as in other instances) and represents the tragedy of only David V or Prince Demna in the image of Davar [see below]. On the contrary, we believe that the divine extract is made by mixing the kinds in the winepress of his consciousness, thus unveiling an absolutely brilliant mixture of colours created by the greatest artist. In this case, we intended to claim that the failure to identify Rusudan⁵, the sister of George III of Georgia in a general image of Davar's character would be due to the inability to recognise her when dealt with by any scholar, however, as we believe, "Davar-Rusudan" is just a battle shield, masterfully used by Rustaveli. The message of the poet has different depths; Rustaveli's easel is stable, and it will not even slightly sway under the weight of colours and models created on the artist's easel board.

For greater clarity, what could also be inferred about Davar? David Tserediani claims: "Davar is the king's sister. But why exactly the king's sister? What is the urgency that dictates such closest kinship ties? The urgency that is even reflected in the name "Da-var". Da var ("*I am a sister*"), for whom torture and death are waiting at the hands of her own brother, so I would prefer killing myself to being killed in such a gruesome way" [13, p. 19]. We should have in mind that what is a clear present moment for Rustaveli, remains slightly ambiguous for us, though, not in a way that would let us miss the full extent of the tragedy that occurred at the royal court in the poet's lifetime. "Insinuation is rather tricky", remarks the scholar and underlines the wrongdoing, committed by George III of Georgia within the frame of domestic policy. We indeed agree, however, we will simply look into *The Georgian Chronicles* ("*Life of Kartli*") from the same perspective and listen to the points of view proposed in history, in order to add another dimension to the image of "Da-var".

⁵ The account of Queen Tamar's first historian reads: "*and Queen Rusudan behaved in a seemly manner towards her foster-daughter as well as towards her own self*" [3, 29]; or Vakhushti Batonishvili notes: "... *Queen Rusudan, Tamar's aunt and governess*" [1, p. 173].

The brief record by the chronicler of *The Georgian Chronicles*, the contemporary of Lasha Giorgi (also known as George IV of Georgia), concerning the accession of David V to the throne and his reign in six months [*“His son David (son of Demetre I) was made king. He reigned for six months and died”*: 4, p. 366] is tendentious, emphasizing the claim concerning supremacy of the royal branch of George III of Georgia. The political battle, instigated to win the throne at the Bagrationi royal court, was a result of the violation of the law of succession to the crown which has been in force hitherto and the introduction of a new rule thereof. As R. Metreveli states, “according to the Georgian feudal law, since the 9th century CE, the establishment of reign in Georgia has depended on the direct inheritance and primogeniture. The very rule of throne inheritance has been introduced as a stable norm” [5, p. 75]; however, the precedent incorporated in the will of David the Builder (dated 1125) which, within the realm of possibility, would imply the accession of his younger son (Tsvata) to the throne, let the country to immerse itself into the vicissitudes of the dynasty, becoming a battlefield for a merciless war. Here we will refrain from an in-depth investigation of history, however, the fact is that George III of Georgia, the youngest son of Demetre I seizes the throne of the Bagrationi dynasty due to some reasons. He rejects the established law of succession and, following the revolt led by the Orbelis (1177), treats Demna, the son of David V of Georgia in an intolerably cruel way. The historical source reads: *“...the Orbelis were tempted out and slain. Demetre was locked up in the fortress of Kldekari, and later his eyes were gouged out, after which he died. He was buried in Mtskheta”* [4, p. 367]. According to the traditional feudal law, blinded and castrated Demna was a direct heir to the throne. Given the foregoing, no wonder he participated in the revolt and engaged in an armed confrontation against his uncle. Surely, Demna was skillfully removed from the throne deprived of the right to be buried in the burial ground of the Bagrationi dynasty in Gelati. We believe, this brief historical excursus is enough to appreciate Davar’s justice or simply to ask for the day of judgment to come. We think the Davar episode is, indeed, the judgment day – the heaven is roaring and thundering with wisdom and righteousness, descending upon the sinners. Both injustice and blood that has been shed call upon heaven for restitution for past injustice. Here again, Tserediani and our version of his concept – whether it be your sister, your nearest kin, your brother or your nephew, just what are you doing? Unbiased judgement must perfectly balance the scale pans, and allot their share of Golgotha to everyone in this world, sending them on their way to pay back in blood, and shaping the spirit of Davar (that fulfils the divine justice) into an arc in heaven - *mo-ca[d]-k’vdes.

We believe, the position as well as the worldview of Rustaveli as a contemporary of his era, in this respect, is explicit. The breach of the feudal law

of succession was a senseless mistake made from the very beginning, dragging the country down to the depths of immorality (leading to internal disturbances and political discord); because of this, Rustaveli was greatly saddened and these distressing troubles never ceased to exist. He was creating the poem to praise Tamar, meanwhile suggesting his own narrative either within the tale about India or when continuing the story of Mulghazanzari.

“My grandfather shared his territory between my father and uncle.

In the sea is an island, this he said was my share”

[7, p. 121, stanza 593],-

Says Pridon distressed and hurt due to his quarrelling uncle and adds: *“I did not give it up to them, they quarrelled with me”*.

Rustaveli, spanning across the centuries, was still the son of his time (Chronos), therefore, everyone – Parsadan and Pridon’s uncle or uncle’s sons were judged by his measure [*“With his sword he cast down both his cousins, / he cut their hands clean off; thus he crippled them”*: 7, p. 125, stanza 609], while Davar and, at times, Pridon himself or Tariel sat on a chair of judgment; and when in this earthly world, the judgement that brings a dry tree to life is nowhere to be found, yet the justice of the supreme God remains the only hope of men. When looking at the reasoning, it becomes obvious that there is a solid basis for the ascension of Davar’s soul to heaven, the soul depleted by sins of the flesh.

Yes, everything in the literary fabric of *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* is articulated in a different way and dubious deeds are concealed by the hand of a master. Our commentary on only one line of the poem will not cover everything we would like to discuss. However, we will keep the remaining research material for a later time (as our proposed perspective has been examined in greater detail); and, as a closing statement, we would note that what genuine mastery requires is not just copying the reality in a naturalistic way, rather it is choosing a creative labyrinth and entrusting the reader with finding the way out of it.

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