

Textual Commentaries to *The Man in the Panther Skin*: Who does Rustaveli Refer to as a Witness and Why?

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Abstract:

The present article comments on one line from the MPS which has often been the subject of discussion in Rustaveli literature: “Dionosi the wise, Ezros bear me witness in this” („ამ საქმესა მემოწმების დიონოსი, ბრძენი ეზროს“). The idea that Rustaveli refers to the Greek God of love, Eros, as a witness is suggested by the author of the article. The published version of the line is not considered to be the original text, but rather an error introduced by scribes who copied the manuscript over the centuries.

Key words: *Rustaveli, Plato, Dionosi, Eros, Symposium.*

Avtandil, overjoyed with the oath of loyalty, made by his beloved one, abandons her, his country and sets out roaming, overwhelmed with painful love. Rustaveli starts retelling the story of the lover's roaming, his weeping for a neighbour and the story of the loneliness of the wretched lover with a lyric deviation:

“Dionosi the wise, Ezros bear me witness in this. It is pitiable when the rose wherewith the ruby of Badakhshan is not to be compared and whereto a reedstem serves as form, becomes covered with rime and frost-bitten” (Wardrop’s translation, 176).

Who does Rustaveli refer to as a witness?

Many ideas have been put forward to explain who may have meant by “Dionosi” or “Ezros”, mentioned in the stanza. There are many versions named, such as Dionysius the Areopagite, Dionysius of

Halicarnassus, a greek God Dionysus, Egyptian Deity Osiris; The prophet Ezra, Ibn Ezra – Spanish poet of Jewish origin (1070-1138); as well as Abraham Ben Meir Ibn Ezra (1092-1167), a book *Dyvani* by wise Ezros or *Dyagnos* by Biblical Ezra.

Many researchers and interpreters of the MPS; both ancient (Vakhtang the VI, Teimuraz Bagratrioni, David Chubinashvili, David Karichashvili, etc.) and new (Shalva Nutsunidze, Akaki Shanidze, Pavle Ingorokhva, Solomon Iordanishvili, Dimitri Qumsishvili, Zurab Kiknadze, Nodar Natadze, Bachana Bregvadze, Darejan Menabde, etc.) attempted to comment on this stanza. However, it should also be noted that several methodological principles which should have been taken into consideration by the researchers mentioned above, have been left unheeded.

The fact that the stanza is extremely difficult to understand and there are some discrepancies while matching the conjectural explanations to the context [16], should not lead us to thinking that the stanza is false [21; 24] as this stanza is represented in all of the manuscripts (unless the manuscript is incomplete or damaged).

The artistic style of Rustaveli is occasionally prone to deviations from the narration by developing a kind of theoretical position or the author's opinion about the story in the course of narration. For example, prior to retelling the story about defeating Kajeti Fortress, setting Nestan free and the return of the heroes to their dwelling, the author starts speculation about the non-existence of the evil and the existence of a divine essence of the good:

“This hidden truth was revealed to us by Dionysus,
the wise;

God creates only good; He lets no evil in the world
arise.

He makes the good unending; the bad, a momentary
surprise.

His creation He makes perfect; He makes sure it
never dies”

(Coffin’s translation, 1499).

The story describing Avtandil’s second farewell
with Taniel, describing the sorrow of the wretched
hero, separated from the beloved and a friend, is once
again preceded by philosophical comments:

“Alas! O world (Fate), what ails thee? Why dost
thou whirl us round? What (? ill) habit afflicts thee? All
who trust in thee weep ceaselessly like me? Whence
and whither carriest thou? Where and whence
uprootest thou? But God abandons not the man
forsaken by thee”(W.931).

The story of Avtandil’s second departure in order
to see Taniel and leaving Tinatin (having lost all hope
of seeing her again) is also represented by a lyrical
deviation:

“When the moon is far from the sun, distance
makes her bright; when she is near, his ray consumes
her – she is repelled, she cannot approach. But
soundlessness dries up the rose and lessens its colour.
Not seeing the beloved renews in us old grief” (W.811).

Since deviation from the development of the plot
is the most significant peculiarity of the MPS artistic
style and formation of the author’s theoretical position
or opinion, we should expect Rustaveli to start the
story of a farewell with the beloved one and the
description of his roaming with an adequate deviation,
relevant to the sentiment.

“...It is pitiable when the rose wherewith the ruby
of Badakhshan is not to be compared and where to a
reedstem serves as form, becomes covered with rime
and frost-bitten; wherever he wanders abroad he is
wearied of abodes”(W.176).

The only question arising after reading the
passage is who “Ezros” and “Dionosi”, mentioned in
the first line of the stanza, are: “Dionosi the wise, Ezros
bear me witness in this”(W.176).

From my point of view, another methodological
mistake is that of finding an explanation of the issue by
altering the existing text and making some corrections

to it without this being supported by any hitherto known famous manuscripts, changing the word დიონოსი (Dionosi) into დიაგნოსი (Diagnos) in particular [24; 28; 26].

When analyzing a difficult word or phrase of the MPS it is crucial to relate the conjectural explanation to the context of the poem, and if we see that the idea, expressed in the context, has a principal and theoretical value, we should observe it in relevance to the artistic style of the poem, as well as to the worldview of the author in general. Otherwise, the conjecture is totally deprived of scholarly grounds. For instance, the opinion that *wise Ezros* is the person by name Moshe Ben Jacob Ibn Ezra, living in Spain in the 12th century, only because the name *Ezra* is one of his names is not acceptable. Several questions arise such as whether any trace of the poet's work can be detected in the stanza or in any part of the poem? Were these poets known in Georgia or to the artistic circles related with restively at the time? Why is Spaniard *Ezra* mentioned along with Dionysius in the stanza? – Still remain unanswered.

There are two conjectures among the above mentioned explanations of “Dyonosi the wise, Ezros” that are worth considering. Some conjectures, expressed by Akaki Shanidze [24], that are also included in school books, should definitely be considered [28, p. 67, 469; 26, p. 39]. The scholar provides some arguments for the traditional views (Vakhtag the 6th, David Chubinashvili) according to which *Ezros* of the stanza is the biblical prophet Ezra. According to Shanidze the word დიონოსი (*Dionosi*), mentioned in the stanza of the manuscript, is an altered version made by a copyist and the word დიაგნოსი (*Διάγνωσις*) should have been read in the original version of the stanza. *Diagnosis* (*Διάγνωσις*) is the title of an astrological-meteorological treatise, attributed to the prophet Ezra in the Byzantine period MSS. The title of the treatise in Georgian manuscripts is კალანდაი (*Kalandai*) narrated by Ezra the prophet. In order to verify the viewpoint, the researcher highlights the fact that the story კალანდაი (*Kalandai*) by pseudo Ezra discusses weather. The researcher thinks that Rustaveli speaks about bad weather in this stanza as well: “It is pitiable when the rose ...becomes covered with the rime and frost-bitten” [W.176]

(„საბრალოა, ოდეს ვარდი დაეთრთვილოს, და-ცა-ეზროს“) [24, გვ. 195]¹.

It should be noted that the suggested word დიაგნოსი (*Diagnosi*) is not supported by any surviving manuscripts or editions of the MPS. The word is not mentioned in Rustaveli's epic either [see: 25, p. 56; 12. p. 120]. It should also be noted that the weather is not discussed in the stanza. The *rose* of the stanza is a metaphoric indication of the Man in love, suffering and sobbing („დაეთრთვილოს“) after being separated from his beloved and who is freezing cold („და-ცა-ეზროს“).

The definition of the stanza, made by Bachana Bregvadze is significant as well [9; 8; 10]. According to the researcher, “Ezros” mentioned by Rustaveli, is the same as “Eros – the God of a Greek Pantheon – the name of God (Ἐρως), or the name of Love (ἔρως) itself” [9, p. 366].

The opinion is based upon the fact that according to Plato, the word *eros* derives from the word *esros* (ἔσρος) since love flows (ἔσρεῖ) into our souls through eyes (*Cratylus* 420ab)². Based on that, according to the researcher, Ezros, mentioned by Rustaveli (Dionosi the wise, Ezros), is the same as *eros*, meaning love. *Dionosi the wise*, mentioned in the same phrase, according to Rustaveli scholars is Dionysius the Areopagite. Bregvadze makes an attempt to explain his opinion. The title of one chapter of the treatise “The Divine Names” by Dionysius the Areopagite is ‘Concerning ‘Good,’ ‘Light,’ ‘Beautiful,’ ‘Desire,’ ‘Ecstasy,’ ‘Jealousy’. Also that Evil is neither existant nor sprung from anything existant nor inherent in

¹ The definition is shared by the recent publications of the school edition [28](for instance, editions 2005, 2014, p. 67 and p. 469). The most important is the fact that the editor has changed the text of the poem as well as included conjectures. Instead of the word დიონოსი (*dionosi*) he wrote დიანოსი (*dianosi*); however, the word is defined as დიაგნოსი(*diagnosi*) in his commentaries. The school publications avoid noting that დიანოსი (*dianosi*) is a conjecture (which means that the text is edited by the scholar and this word cannot be found in any of manuscripts). Similar alteration and commenting of the stanza is also included in other publications, suggested to “the learners and readers of the literature” [26].

²The researcher also indicated that the pronunciation of the word ἔσρος in Byzantine epoch coincides with the one suggested by restively – ezros.

existant things”. In the original Greek version of this title, the word “Desire” corresponds to the word *erotos* (ἔρωτας). Dionysius the Areopagite expresses his concerns that the old Greek understanding of the word Eros (Love or the God of Love) was re-evaluated during the Byzantine period and acquired only the meaning of corporal love. He, himself refers to the word *eros* along with a Greek word *agape* (ἀγάπη) in an effort to adorn the Divine beauty. That is why the scholar thinks it is reasonable and likely that Rustaveli mentioned Eros along with Dionysius the Areopagite and based on that, he interprets the phrase by Rustaveli „ამ საქმესა მემოწმების დიონოსი ბრძენი, ეზროს“ – into: „ამ საქმესა მემოწმების ბრძენი დიონოსე, სიყვარულო“ (*This case is witnessed by Dionysius the wise, oh, love*) [9, p. 373; 8, p. 62; 10, p. 232]. However, awkwardness, caused by mentioning Dionysius the Areopagite in relation to Rustaveli’s love, (also mentioned by other commentators of the stanza), has been noted by the scholar himself. According to the scholar, the word *eros*, given in the stanza, is the word directly linked to Dionysius the Areopagite, however, the meaning of the word *love* in this context totally differs from the one perceived by Dionysius himself since the whole poem is totally based on a human’s love [9, p. 372; 8, p. 62; 10, p. 232]³. Furthermore, even if we disregard the rhetorical exclamation – “oh, love”, one thing should definitely be noted: this kind of understanding of the stanza cannot serve as a justification that Rustaveli summons someone as a witness for the events described in the whole stanza. It is illogical to think that Rustaveli would have mentioned Dionysius the Areopagite as a witness for showing how pitiable the weeping man in love is after being separated from his terrestrial beloved. Rustaveli knows quite well when and why to refer to Dionysius the Areopagite: “This hidden truth was revealed to us by Dionysus, the wise: God creates only good; he lets no evil in the world arise”(L. C. 1499).

In order to arrive at the correct identification of the Dionisi mentioned in stanza 178, it is insufficient simply to compare the contents of the stanza to the works of Dionysius the Areopagite. The fact is that

³It should be noted that in 2013 Bachana Bregvadze released the stanza in his own prosaic version of the *MPS* disregarding his interpretation [27, p. 39].

there are several surviving apocryphal stories in old Georgian manuscripts that reveal some biographical details about Dionysius the Areopagite's life⁴. These stories are:

1. *The life of Dionysius the Bishop, the son of Socratos and the head of the people living in Athens – the City of Wise Man* („ცხოვრებაჲ დიონოსიოსისი ეპისკოპოსისაჲ, რომელი იყო ძეი სოკრატისი და მთავარი ათენელთაჲ რომელსა ეწოდა ქალაქი ბრძენთაჲ“). The story is preserved in manuscripts – A-19, Mount Athos 57 [13, pp. 449-450], edited by Ilia Abuladze [30]. The other version of the same story is preserved in the Georgian manuscript collection of Jerusalem #120 [7].

2. The Epistle by Dionysius Head of the Wise and the Bishop of Athenians („ეპისტოლე წმიდისა დიონოსიოსი ბრძენთმთავრისაჲ და ათენელთა ეპისკოპოსისაჲ, რომელი მიუწერა ტიმოთეს საყუარელსა თჳსსა და მოწაფესა მოძღურისა თჳსისა პავლეისსა“). The story has been preserved in the manuscripts – A-19, A-95, Athos - 57; published by Gr. Peradze (Magazine 'Ελνις, 1937, Warsa. pp. 3-35).

These stories do not discuss love. The narrated events, do not show any connection to the discussed stanza of the MPS.

I should begin my comments on the stanza by announcing that my decision to give my own explanation regarding the “Dionosi the wise, Ezros” has been spurred by B. Bregvadze's finding that “Ezros”, given in the stanza, might mean Eros-mentioned in Ancient mythology, meaning the God of love and love itself. There is no doubt that the word *Eros*, according to Plato, originated from *esros*. This has been confirmed by fundamental dictionaries of the Greek Language: H.G. Liddell and R. Scott: ἔσρος, (ἐσ-ρῆω) coined as etym. of ἔρως by Plato (*Cra.*420 b) [4, p. 697].

What is the relationship between Rustaveli's *ezros* and the words preceding it - *Dionosi the wise*?

⁴ The stories are of immense significance for us as one of them calls Dionysius the Head of the Wise. Furthermore, following the traditions, the principal pagan temple was ruled by a group of wise men and the young Dionysius was appointed as the head of them by the pagan governor of the city. That is the reason why it is crucial to pay attention to the story while discussing Rustaveli's “Dionysius the wise, Ezros”.

The clue to this puzzle can be found in my previous research on Rustaveli's love that again led me to the philosophy of Plato [see. 32, p. 507]. A famous researcher of the Renaissance, Paul Kristeller notes that the main feature of the Italian Platonists was the emphasis placed on human beings and the distinguishing cognitive values of Love and Friendship as the highest manifestation of human relationship [14, p. 131]. In my view, Rustaveli is closely linked to the Platonism of the same epoch by putting the emphases on cognition as well as on the comprehension of Love and Friendship as the highest manifestation of human cognition [see. 32, p. 100]. I fully base my views on the fact that, according to the ancient Greek ideology, which Rustaveli relied upon, Love – Eros is the worship of wisdom, a striving for intelligence. This is the most important theme of *Symposium* – one of the masterpieces of Plato. According to Plato, Eros is wise⁵. Eros embraces, seeks for intelligence, and worships the wisdom with all his might⁶. Eros represents the love of beauty; wisdom is the most beautiful phenomenon; that is the reason Eros adores wisdom [32, p. 507]⁷.

Thus, according to Plato, Eros is wise. That is the main reason Rustaveli refers to Eros as wise while describing pain and suffering, caused by a great

⁵„ახლა მისი სიბრძნისთვის მოგახსენებთ;“ „ეროსი ის ბრძენი პოეტია, რომელიც სხვასაც პოეტად აქცევს“; „ყველა ცოცხალი არსების შემოქმედება ნაყოფია ეროსის სიბრძნისა“ [18, p. 43]. „καὶ ἀνδρείας τοῦ θεοῦ εἴρηται, περὶ δὲ σοφίας λείπεται“(196, d) [20, p.156]. „Относительно... храбрости этого бога сказано, остаётся сказать о его мудрости“ [19, p. 124].

⁶„გონიერებას ეტრფის, ეძებს და ძალაც შესწევს მისი პოვნისა და მთელი არსებით თაყვანს სცემს სიბრძნეს“ [18, p. 52].

“...φρονήσεως ἐπιθυμῇ τῆς καὶ πόριμος, φιλοσοφῶν διὰ παντὸς τοῦ βίου”(203d) [20, p. 180]. „desirous and competent of wisdom, throughout life ensuing the truth“ [20, p. 181].

⁷“სიბრძნე რომ უმშვენიერეს ფენომენტოა რიცხვს ეკუთვნის, ხოლო ეროსი მშვენიერებისადმი სიყვარულია, მაშასადამე ეროსს უეჭველად უყვარს სიბრძნე“ [18, p. 53]. „...ἔστι γὰρ δὴ τῶν καλλίστων ἡ σοφία, Ἐρως δ’ ἐστὶν ἔρως περὶ τὸ καλόν, ὥστε ἀναγκαῖον Ἐρῶτα φιλόσοφον εἶναι...“(204b) [20, p. 182]. „For wisdom has to do with the fairest things, and Love is a love directed to what is fair; so that Love must needs be a friend of wisdom“ [20, p. 183]. „Ведь мудрость – это одно из самых прекрасных на свете благ, а Эрот – это любовь к прекрасному, поэтому Эрот не может не быть философом, т.е. любителем мудрости“ [19, p. 134].

humane love: “Dionosi the wise, Ezros bear me witness in this”.

The word *dionosi* is mentioned in the same phrase preceding “Wise Ezros”. Who or what does the word stand for?

As already mentioned, searching for the identity of *Dionisi* from the stanza counts many centuries (Starting from the 18th). However, the innovative reading of the last words of the stanza (*wise ezros*), recognizing the God of the Greek mythology Eros in it, asks for re-discussion of the preceding word *Dionosi*, regarding new data. The fact that wise Ezros, mentioned by Rustaveli, refers to the God of the Greek mythology (Eros), should lead us to thinking that the word, preceding it (*Dionosi*) should represent Dionysius the God of the Greek mythology as well. This assumption has also been mentioned in Rustaveli Studies as well, however, the reason the assumption was considered unproven resulted from the lack of profound arguments. According to present assumption, *Dionosi* and *Ezros* of the stanza, along with *Dionosi*, mentioned in stanza 1491, represent one and the same person: the god of the Egyptian mythology Osiris, equated to the god Dionysius by Greeks [23a]. The fact that establishing the Good was attributed to *Dionosi* (-----1491) as well as he was regarded to be the protector of plants in general 178) was summoned as the main argument to the statement. The main reason I have made reference between *Dionosi* of Rustaveli and the Greek God Dionysius is conditioned by other specific circumstances. Firstly, Dionysus, mentioned next to the God of Greek mythology Eros is more likely to be considered the God of the Greek mythology as well. Secondly, the stanza calls for empathy towards Avtandil in love, therefore, in this context it would not be surprising to recall Dionysus - the god of the Antic mythology, a lot of love adventures are related with. The Greek mythology reads a lot about adventures on various Goddesses, nymphs, beautiful girls, having love affair with Dionysius. Finally, Eros wounded Dionysus with his arrow many times.

At the same time, to my way of thinking, the assumption cannot be fully trusted. Firstly, these love adventures are components of Dionysius’s having fun and Bacchanalia. Thus, in my opinion, it is less likely to think that Rustaveli mentioned them for comparing

with romantic stories of Avtandil and Tarieli. Secondly, the name of the Dionysius is closely associated with wine, drinking and having fun. However, none of these themes are favoured by Rustaveli. And finally, these love adventures of Dionysius, scattered through the Ancient mythology, are accumulated in the *Dionysiaca*, a 5th Century epic work by Nonnus. The MPS shows no relevance to the work.

It is also less likely to think that two persons are implied in the phrase “Dyonosi the wise, Ezros”. Mythological, historical or epic persons are mostly mentioned with their typical characteristics by Rustaveli. For example: “This hidden truth was revealed to us by Dionysus, the wise; God creates only good; He lets no evil in the world arise” (Coffin’s translation, 1499), “...I venture to remind thee of the teaching of a certain discourse made by Plato: ‘Falsehood and two-facedness injure the body and then the soul’ (W.770), “...Neither Vis nor Ramin saw such woe like unto his”(W.182).

And still, if *Dionosi* is mentioned next to the wise Ezros in the given stanza, it is more likely to assume that this *Dionosi* is the god of the Greek mythology Dionysius. Therefore, the question – who is mentioned along with the wise Ezros by Rustaveli, still remains unanswered.

In order to be able to answer the question we should refer to the MPS first. The word *dionosi* in the stanza first emerged in the first publication of the MPS (in 1712), and has been repeated in following publications of the Epic. However, ten manuscripts out of Fifty, which are considered to be the most important ones [see 12, pp. 7-8], support the version *dionisos* in the stanza discussed [see p. 12. 120]. 20 manuscripts present a different version of the word. The versions fall into two stem categories [see 12, p. 120 and 25, p. 56]: (1) *dion-osi*: *deonosi*, *deonose*, *dionisi*, *dionise*, *dionos*; (2) *devan-osi*: *devanose*, *divanosi*, *divanose*, *devanosai*. Regarding the fact that the first version *dion-osi* has already been established through the publications of the MPS, and that it has already been under discussion for two centuries, and no viewpoints concerning the identification of the word have been found reliable, in my view, it is more reasonable to move to discussing version number two (*devan-osi*).

I believe that another issue that is also worth mentioning is that we usually come across different

versions of those words the copyist must have found difficult to understand. More obscure versions of the word mostly derived from the author himself, have been edited by the copyist and replaced with more familiar ones. The name *Dyonosi*, along with the word *wise*, seems to have been clearer and more familiar to the copyist as well as to the reader. Regarding the fact that the Epic does mention Dionysius the Areopagite (“the wise Dionos” 1491), it is less likely that the copyist replaced the name *Dionisi* with an unknown form of the name – *devan-osi*. The fact that the roots *dion//deon* and *divan//devan* in the Georgian language hint at one name (in Georgian, in the process of syncope, the vowel *o* is replaced by the consonant *v*). In my opinion, this is one of the reasons why these two stems are interchangeably used in the stanza. That also accounts for the fact that *Wise Dionos* of stanza 1491 („ამ საქმესა დაფარულსა ბრძენ დიონოს გააცხადებს“) in manuscripts (mostly in editions) has been replaced by *Wise Divnos* („ბრძენი დივნოს“). That is the reason why, from my point of view, commentators and editors of MPS have paid less attention to the version of the MPS manuscripts – *devan-osi*.

What may the word *devan-osi* imply (or any version of this stem) in the text of the MPS („...დევანოსი ბრძენი ეზროს“ – *devanosi brdzeni ezros*)? I prefer to continue the previous direction of my research and return to Eros from Plato’s *Symposium*.

The *Symposium* is a discussion on eros – love, or on the God of love – Eros: what his behaviour is like, where it has derived from and finally, what it is in general? Socrates and his younger companions lead consecutive discussions which are finalised by Socrates’ conversation. He discusses the matter in a dialogue format imagining a mystified foreigner-a daughter of magus Diotima – as an interlocutor. He recalls old conversations with her and has Diotima answer the major question. “What is Eros then?” -asks Socrates. „A great spirit (Demon – E.Kh.) Socrates: for the whole of the spiritual is between divine and mortal“ [18, p. 51] – Diotima answers. (“Δαίμων μέγας ὃ Σώκρατες καὶ γὰρ πᾶντὸ δαιμόνιον μεταξύ ἐστὶ Θεοῦ τε καὶ Θνητοῦ”(202E) [20, p. 178]). Diotima defines that demon is not the name of Eros, in other words,

Eros is not the only demon. The essence of Eros is demonic by all means, he is one of demons: demons are numerous and various, Eros is only one of them: „Many and multifarious are these spirits (demon – E.Kh.) and one of them is Love“ [18, p. 52]; (οὗτοι δὲ οἱ δαίμονες πολλοὶ καὶ παντοδαποίεσιν, εἷς δὲ ταύτων ἐστὶ καὶ ὁ Ἔρως” – 203A) [20, p. 178].

Regarding the fact that Rustaveli bases his concept of love upon the philosophy of Plato, *Symposium* in particular, praising Eros by calling him wise (in the wake of the treatise), it will be relevant to put a timely question – is it not reasonable to think that Rustaveli stays loyal to the ancient philosophical source by defining love or the God of love (Ἔρως), as demonic or calling him a demon?.

The Ancient Greek texts define the word demon – δαίμον as the God, Goddesses, deity, divine power, spiritual or semi God, servants of Gods or Goddesses, kind or evil genius [4, pp. 365-366]. There are various translations of the word *demon* δαίμον of Plato's *Symposium* in different languages, however, a Georgian translator prefers to maintain an original version of the word *demon* (დემონი) [18]. English translation suggests a *Great Spirit* [20, p. 179]). The Russian translator refers to the word as *genius* (Гении). An English translation of the passage of the *Symposium* defines the words *demon* and *demonic* (δαίμον; δαίμονιον) as a mystic essence, through which Gods connect mortals and influence them [20, p. 179].

The Byzantine Epoch, in the wake of Christian attitude to Ancient deity pantheon, emphasized a negative connotation of the Greek words *demon* and *demonic*. The Greek word δαίμων is mostly defined as an evil spirit, Satan, Devil, in the works of the period [22, p. 344; 5, p. 328]. Even some gods from the antique Pantheon are sometimes referred as Demon. There are some cases when the demons are subjects of worship. Sometimes they are equaled to angels too, sometimes the word δαιμόνιος, deriving from the same root, bears the meaning of supernatural, divine [5, pp. 327-329].

Old Georgian biblical texts translate the word δαιμόνιον as *devil*. The same translation of the word is suggested by *Khanmeti* text of the Gospel⁸(Luke 7, 33;

⁸ The Old Georgian version of Gospel written in a specific alphabet of the Georgian Language, called *Khanmet'i*.

Jhane 8, 52; Marc. 5, 18; Matthew. 11,18; 15, 22) [see 31]. The word *devil* is retained in corresponding verses of the both editions of the old Georgian Gospel — Euthymius Athonite and Giorgi Athonite [2; 23].

The Greek word δαίμων is translated as *devil* in the Georgian translations of Dionysius the Areopagite's *The Divine Names*, performed by Ephrem Mtsire(26, 27; 26,34) [17, p. 53, 57].

Let us go back to the author of the epic the MPS. We should think that Rustaveli, being a Christian intellectual person of the middle ages, must have considered the word δαίμων, given in the Symposium referring to Eros, as the devil, as an evil spirit and in order to express his idea in Georgian, he may have chosen from the words *evil*- ბოროტი, *devil* — ეშმაკი, *devi* — ღეგო. Apparently, he picks up a stem of Georgian word *devi* in order to refer to Greek δαίμων, defining Eros in *Symposium*.

The word *devi* — ღეგო in old Georgian meant not only a fairy tale character with horns but also an evil spirit.

“Devi (ღეგო) — devil, ... evil” [1, p. 139]; “Devi (ღეგო) — Dragon, beast; demon, monster, impure spirit” [29, p. 474]. I think it is quite enough to indicate a passage from the oldest work of Georgian literature *The Martyrdom of St. Shushanik*, where a word *devi* has the meaning of an impure spirit [29a, p. 87].

The Georgian word *devi* was borrowed from Persian: Iranian *daiva*, Avesta *daeua* — a demon, devil, an evil spirit; Sanskrit *déva* — God; Latin *deus*, *divus*, Lithuanian — *dėvas*, Middle Persian *dēv* — an evil spirit, demon, new Persian — *dīv*: 1. devil, dev, demon, evil spirit 2. Gigant, Giant, Armenian — evil spirit, demon. Sirian — *daiva* — demon“ [3, p. 311].

We should also pay attention to the fact that the word *devi* (ღეგო) in the MPS is not only a huge, gigantic creature (Tariel in the MPS deprives devis of their caves), but also a mysterious spirit (the evil spirit, presumably):

“His footprints they sought, and marveled to find no trace. Thus, leaving no vestige, the man passed away like a Devi”(W.98).

The same idea below is expressed differently in the Epic.

“I cried out that he must be seized; he utterly destroyed my men; like an evil spirit”(W. 110).

Apparently, Rustaveli refers to Eros as demon in the work of Plato's *Symposium* and translates *Symposium* demon (δαίμων) as an evil spirit, regarding the meaning of the word prevalent in the Byzantine epoch. This is the reason why he employs the Georgian word *Devi* — “დევანოსი...ეზროს” (Devanos...Ezros); meaning *Demon Eros* or *demonic Eros*.

Regarding the versions of the manuscripts of the stanza being discussed, as already mentioned above, the first version stem must have derived from *დევან/დივან* (*devan//divan*) — *დევანოსი*, *დევანოსე*, *დევანოსაი*, *დივანოსი*, *დივანოსე* (*devanosi*, *devanose*, *devanosai*, *divanosi*, *divanose*). The secondary version stem must be *დიონ/დეონ* (*dion//deon*) — *დიონოსი*, *დეონოსი*, *დეონოსე*, *დიონისი*, *დიონისე*, *დიონოსე*, *დიონოს* (*dionosi*, *deonosi*, *deonose*, *dionisi*, *dionise*, *dionose*, *dionos*). As already mentioned above, an ambiguous word — *devanosi* („დევანოსი ბრძენ”) must have been replaced by a familiar word *dionosi*.

The versions, having derived from the stems *devan/divan* do not belong to the late period manuscripts. Three out of 6 manuscripts of the group belong to the period preceding the first edition of the MPS (1712). They are: Q 930 — the 17th century (*დევანოსი*), Q1082 - the 17th century, so called Zaza's version (*დივანოსე*); Paris 10 — 1702 year (*დევანოსაი*). The variation of the two roots *დევან/დივან* is not unexpected at all. One stem — *დევი* shows links with middle Persian while the other one - *დივი* refers to new Persian. We should assume that the copyist must have matched the unfamiliar word to a more familiar one, therefore, it is more likely that the stem, *დევი* rather than *დივი*, was the original version of the word. The stem of *დევანოსი* (*devanosi*), given in the MPS, shows a greater connection with a common Indo-European version *deva-daiva*. It is not surprising that there is not a full coincidence between the original and the survived version of the stanza (*devanosi*) but I still think that the Georgian word, having been derived from the stem (*dev*, *deva*) was employed by Rustaveli to refer to the person he summoned as a witness.

The version *დევან-ობო* (*Devan-osi*) can be broken down into the stem *დევან* (*Devan*), suffix *-ობ* (*-os*), and *-ო* (*-i*) the case marker. The suffix *-ობ* (*-os*) has penetrated into Georgian from the Greek language. It denotes the nominative case (*-os*) of masculine and feminine nouns of the second declension with the *o* stem in the Greek language. Occasionally, we find it in Georgian words borrowed from the Greek language, forming a new stem that follows the rules of noun cases in Georgian. Words borrowed from European languages (Greek primarily) tend to have such a worldbuilding. This is the way common nouns are formed to denote the people belonging to one particular group: philosophy—*filosof-os-i* (φιλόσοφος); geography—*geograf-os-i* (γεωγράφος); history—*istorik-os-i* (ιστορικός); politics—*politik-os-i* (πολιτικός); physics—*fizik-os-i* (φυσικός); phonetics—*fonetik-os-i*; chemistry—*qimik-os-i*; academy—*akademik-os-i*.

The stem *devan* was referred to as an equivalent of a Greek word δαίμων or δαιμόνιος. The Georgian stem *deva-n* is matched with a Greek word δαίμων. The appearance of a non-functional *n* (*ბ*), placed between the stem *deva* and the suffix *-os*, carrying the function of dividing vowels, is not uncommon for the Georgian wordbuilding system [20a, pp. 61-65].

The Georgian word *dev*, borrowed from Persian (Old Persian *deva*) is a full equivalent of the Byzantine understanding of *Symposium's* word δαίμων, (devil, evil spirit). With the help of the suffix *-os* the word acquires the same meaning as the word δαίμων has in Plato's *Symposium* while referring to Eros – God of Love: one, out of definite totality, multiplicity (οὔτοι δὲ οἱ δαίμονες πολλοὶ καὶ παντοδαποὶ εἰσιν, εἷς δὲ τοῦ τῶν ἐστὶ καὶ ὁ Ἔρως” — “Many and multifarious are these spirits, and one of them is Love”)(203A) [18, p. 52]).

Grecisms in the old Georgian language are quite common, mostly in the works translated from Greek. Grecisms in the vocabulary, word formation, as well as in the compositions of terminology can be detected in Georgian translations of the XI-XII Century (Ephrem Mtsire, Ioane Petritsi...). Ioane Petritsi tends to create a new Georgian term by translating the stem of the Greek word and attaching a Georgian affix to it [15, p. 172, 178]. *დევანობო* (*devanosi*), given in the context

being discussed, fully corresponds to this style of the term formation.

Therefore, *devanosi*, as an example of the neologism, suggested by Rustaveli, regarding surviving old Georgian written works, is not unexpected at all. The word *devanos* from MPS is derived from the Greek δαίμων or δαιμόνιος and carries the meaning of *demon* or *demonic* in Georgian. There is another question arising: should this particular example of the word formation be regarded as Rustaveli's neologism or did the word exist in Georgian vocabulary at the time? In order to be able to answer the question, we should examine both ancient and the new lexical fund of the Georgian language. I have not been able to find the version of the word in ancient Georgian texts so far, however, the existence of two Georgian surnames Devnosadze and Devnozashvili can lead us to thinking the form did exist in Georgian Language [21a]. The suffix *os* in the surnames (*devn-os*) refer to the contracted stem *devan-os* - *devn-os*.

Thus, Rustaveli refers to the Greek God of Love, mythological Eros as a witness and calls him wise and a demon in accordance with Plato's *Symposium*. The name *Eros* is referred to by Rustaveli as *Ezros*, applied only by Plato. According to the modern lexicologists *Ezros* is considered to be Plato's etymology of the Greek word *Eros*. „ამ საქმესა მემოწმების დევანოსი ბრძენი ეზროს“ – A wise demon/a demonic wise Eros bears me witness in this.

Based on a modern scholarly methodology of interpretation, any phrase from a Biblical, philosophical or poetic text should be analyzed within the context after having been deciphered from its lexical point of view. It should also be clarified whether this lexical understanding corresponds to the point expressed in the context or not. What does Rustaveli imply while referring to *demonic wise Eros* or *wise demon-Eros*?

The discussion of the rest of the stanza should be commenced by mentioning the fact that weather is not implied in the stanza. Describing bad weather strengthens Avtandil's condition and is referred to as a metaphor. Rustaveli commences narrating the story by describing how Avtandil abandons his country. *Rose* (ვარდო) is Avtandil, *covered with rime* (დათრთვილვა) is weeping, *frost bitten* (დაზრობა) is

to become frozen (numb by frost): „საბრალთა, ოდეს ვარდი დაეთრთვილოს, და-ცა-ეზროს“. “It is pitiable when the rose becomes covered with rime and frost-bitten”. The same metaphoric characters more vividly indicate the grief of the hero having abandoned his beloved: “Fresh snow had fallen, and, freezing on the rose, blasted it. He wished to strike his heart; sometimes he uplifted his knife”(W.178); “The rose separated from its sun faded more and more”(179).

The last two lines of the stanza discussed, still adorn the hero in love with metaphoric and hyperbolic images and indicate the abandonment of the country by the hero: the one incomparable even with a red ruby(*Badakhshan*), with the waist like a reed („და ლერწამი ტანად ეზროს“) has become a stranger wandering in a remote area. The only grief of the hero, described by the author, is being separated from his beloved. Almost a three-year long travel, experienced by Avtandil, is described by the author solely by focusing on the burden and pain of the farewell. “There seeks he the shedder of tears which flowed to increase the sea. The land seems to him a couch, his arm his pillow. He says to himself: “O beloved, I am far from thee, my heart stays with thee”(W.180).

This is the main reason why the author starts the story by referring to the person who is an expert in igniting anyone with love.

Furthermore, this lyrical deviation from the text is not an organic prelude peculiar only to this story. This lyrical deviation starts the collisions of sufferings of the characters, igniting the demonic fire of love, in the whole Epic as well, which is approaching death through the sufferings of love: “Love is grievous, for it brings thee nigh unto death”(W.895). Relating the story about roaming enamoured Avtandil, suffering a lot and is overwhelmed by the painful love, grows into the tragedy of another fellow — Taniel, raged with love (W.481), and afterwards into the incomparable, igniting love between the fellow — friends(W.769). Who should Rustaveli refer to in his lyrical deviation at the beginning of the romance of love? Only to Eros — a personified love of Ancient Mythology, of course.

It is also quite natural that while describing the raging homeless fellow's wandering and suffering through love, Rustaveli refers to Eros by Plato's *Symposium* — the most philosophical treatise ever

made on love. This is what Plato's Eros is like: wisdom and praising beauty is only one side of its character. According to the words of Diotima, an interlocutor of Plato, Eros is rough and homeless: "...he is... by nature a lover bent on beauty... First, he is ever poor, and far from tender or beautiful as most suppose him: rather is he hard and parched, shoeless and homeless; on the bare ground always he lies with no bedding, and takes his rest on doorsteps and waysides in the open air..." [20, p. 181]. Let us compare the words by Rustaveli in the same stanza, summoned to describe Avtandil's roaming: "The land seems to him a couch, his arm his pillow"(W. 180); in the above-mentioned passage from *Symposium*, describing Eros with the stanza where Rustaveli describes Avtandil's sufferings, while referring to the wise demon Eros: Diotima (or Plato): "ἀλλὰ τοτὲ μὲν τῆς αὐτῆς ἡμέρας θάλλει τε καὶ θῆ, ὅταν εὐπορήσῃ, τοτὲ δὲ ἀποθνήσκει..."(203e) [20, 83. 180]. "...In the selfsame day he is flourishing and alive at the hour when he is abounding in resource; at another he is dying..." [20, 83. 181] – Rustaveli: "The rose separated from its sun faded more and more" (W.179); Diotima: "... ἀεὶ ἐνδεία σύννοκος"(203d) [20, 83. 180]. "...he ever dwells with want..." [20, 83. 181] – Rustaveli: "He said: Fate (the world) has increased my grief ninety, an hundred fold"(W.178), or "Neither Vis nor Ramin saw such woe like unto his" (W. 182).

We should also add that, during the epoch when Rustaveli created his Epic, Eros — the love of Ancient Greek Philosophy was considered to be the only mundane, humane love. The saint fathers and hermits employed the Greek word *agape* (ἀγάπη) to express their love to God. In his Epic Rustaveli praises mundane "igniting love" and friendship: "I must tell of lower frenzies, which befall human beings"(W.28). That is the reason why he refers to the personified love — Eros, from an ancient mythology, while commencing speaking about the tormenter love. Adorning this Love — Eros with demonic epithet and calling the Demon himself is not surprising either. The word for Rustaveli is not only implication to Eros of Plato, but is also a hint about the essence of the MPS love. Rustaveli's love is not Nirvana, light-hearted bliss, Sufistic Paradise. It is a divine genie, divine flame, a divine suffering. It is a divine love, existing in the reality, (non-allegorical) within the relationship of human beings. This is the

love Jhone the Apostle speaks about(I, Jhone, 4,7-8) [see. 33]. Rustaveli's flame of love burns, ignites, causes pain (W.895). Even after overcoming the boundaries of life and death he is able to retain human pain, tears and torment: "I shall meet her, she shall meet me; she shall weep for me and make me weep"(W.863) [see 32, pp. 608-609].

And finally, to my way of thinking, one question requires an immediate answer. Why has Rustaveli made such furtive and obscurely artistic allusion to the wise and demonic genius of personified Eros while indicating the essence of the epic's love? This allusion was left beyond understanding for commentators of the MPS and underwent alterations by scribes.

Rustaveli is a multifaceted writer. The poem shows the author's great responsibility in front of modern society. He is fully aware of the power of his words and their doubtful perspective as well. He feels that in his contemporary society which praises love to God (ἀγάπη), mentioning the great Eros, belonging to the pagan deity pantheon, can be rather doubtful. Therefore he prefers to refer to him in a furtive way [see. 9, p. 372]. The popular biblical style of a furtive speech of the the middle centuries is one of the substantial characteristics of Rustaveli's multifaceted speeches(W.26). That is why Rustaveli employs the similar epithet, used by his contemporaries as a reference to Eros: demonic, demon. At the same time, the lines from *Symposium* serve as an implication to the word *demon* for the author while thinking about Eros. That is why it is reasonable to think that the *wise Ezros*, Rustaveli refers to in the stanza, is a God of love from the Ancient Mythology, despite Rustaveli's knowing that Plato mentions *Eros* as *Ezros* in his treatise *Cratylus*. Especially since the stanza, in which Rustaveli places the word *Ezros*, is homonymically rhymed (polysyllabic rhymes): „ბრძენი ეზროს“ – „დაცა-ეზროს“ – „ტანად ეზროს“ – „იბეზროს“.

Another dilemma, faced by the poet, while referring to Eros as demon, is that the demon of the *Symposium* is a great genius, divine spirit "for the whole of the spiritual is between divine and mortal"(202E). As already mentioned above, the word acquired a negative connotation in the Byzantine epoch and the word adopted the meaning of a wicked spirit. That is why the Greek word δαίμων is translated as a devil or demonic in Georgian translations of

Gospel. Rustaveli abstracted himself from these traditional translations and moved closer to a *Symposium* understanding of the word δαίμων. At the same time, he gave a consideration to the medieval understanding of the word by retaining a negative connotation of it in his Epic which resulted in the neologism დევანოსი – *devanosi*.

That is the reason he felt the need for using the Greek word demon either with the long forgotten version of the word or with the neologism, invented by him – დევანოსი – *devanosi*, rather than employing its biblical understanding of the word evil.

Rustaveli's *devanosi* retains a medieval understanding of the Greek word δαίμων, however, maintains the negative connotation of the word in a furtive way and by creating a neologism – *devanos*, based on a Greek borrowing (traced drawing), maintains the great spirit which the word δαίμων had in Plato's *Symposium*. The connotation of *Symposium's Eros* involves the nuance carried by a Georgian word *devanosi*. He, (Eros of the *Symposium*) is neither beautiful nor good(201E). He is the source of magic, sorcery and sooth-saying(202E); he is a magic genius.

Rustaveli's love is not Plato's eros, love. However, the personified love of ancient mythology wise Eros is a great expert of tormenter love, Rustaveli's characters suffer from.

Rustaveli's love is also magical. Rustaveli describes this magic fire, blazing in the hearts of the MPS characters – ideal friends and lovers. The flame of fires are triggered by the farewell with the beloved and the commencement of the endless roaming of the man in love. That is the main reason why Rustaveli refers to a personified Eros as a witness – demonic wise Eros//wise demon Eros at the beginning of the story – „ამ საქმესა მემოწმების დევანოსი ბრძენი ეზროს“/“Demonic wise Eros bear me witness in this”.

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