

MATERIALS FOR THE GRANT PROJECTS

Textual Commentaries to *The Man in the Panther Skin*: Summarizing the Rustavelian Theory of Poetry

Zaza Khintibidze

Associate professor of TSU

Abstract: There are two reasons, due to which the need arises for a novel interpretation of the 17th stanza from the Prologue to *The Man in the Panther Skin*: 1) it is necessary to clarify or even revise N. Marr's interpretation of the above stanza, which was recognized to be correct by researchers of Rustaveli's poem in order to explain in any possible way the apparent consequential inconsistency that seems to exist between the second half-line of 17.4 (17.4b) and the first half-line of 12.4 (12.4a); 2) within the framework of the 17th stanza several peculiarities of various types are observed, which require explanation. The study conducted in the above-indicated direction revealed, that - as opposed to one of the newly proposed scholarly assumptions - the 17th stanza, as expected, not only cannot be regarded as a later insertion in the text of the poem, but it brings together and summarizes Rustaveli's whole aesthetic conception, reflected in the form of a unified discourse within all six stanzas (12-17) depicting the Rustavelian theory of poetry.

Key words: *Rustaveli, "The Man in the Panther Skin", prologue, Aristotle, Poetics, "what they say only clearly", "unable to say anything at length".*

„მესამე ლექსი კარგია სანადიმოდ, სამღერელად,
 “The third type of poems is good for the feast,
 declamation, (17.1)¹
 საამიკოდ, სალალობოდ, ამხანაგთა სათრეველად;
 The game of love, amusement, a jest between friends;
 (17.2)
 ჩვენ მათიცა გვეამების, რაცა ოდენ თქვან ნათელად,
 We derive pleasure from theirs [their poetry], as well,
 what
 [i.e., which] they say only clearly, (17.3)
 მოშიორე არა ჰქვიან, ვერას იტყვის ვინცა გრძელად.“
 [However,] he cannot be called a poet, who is unable
 to say anything at length.” (17.4)

The 17th stanza from the Prologue to *The Man in the Panther Skin* is the last among those six stanzas (12-17) depicting the Rustavelian theory of poetry. From the outset, the explanation of the stanza under question has been complicated due to several peculiarities of various types, which occur within it.

From this point of view, it should be noted that within the whole poem only here is observed the case of *real* mixing of the two different poetic rhythms, those of the so-called high shairi, with four times four syllables in the entire line (4-4-4-4), and of the so-called low shairi, with the alternation of five and three syllables (5-3-5-3) within the line; thus, instead of 4-4 // 4-4 or 5-3 // 5-3 syllabic alternations, in the line 17.1 it is found the 5-3 // 4-4 mixed rhythm [6, pp. 58-9]: „მესამე ლექსი კარგია“ (5-3) – “the third type of poems is good” // „სანადიმოდ, სამღერელად“ (4-4) – “for the feast, declamation”. N. Marr was the first scholar who has observed the above prosodic peculiarity [11, p. 41]. According to his proper analysis, it might not have been difficult for Rustaveli to avoid such an obvious violation of rhythm through the simple change of a sequence of the same words: „არს მესამე ლექსი კარგი“, - “it is good the third type of poems” [11, p. 5]. Thus, Rustaveli’s decision to create this line in such an unusual form - for *The Man in the Panther Skin*’s poetic metre - presumably had been caused by some significant reason, which deserved to be explained *logically*. Instead, in one of the recent comments on the 17th stanza, it has been stated that

¹ Here and below for numbering stanzas see [14].

the prosodic “mistake” under question reveals that this stanza is an interpolation and thus, it does not belong to Rustaveli [1, p. 30]².

The 17th stanza has repeatedly become a subject of scholarly discussions, although for different reasons. However, before discussing these reasons, attention should be focused on the issue that the authenticity of the stanza under consideration has never been questioned until now. As is known, N. Marr (due to irrelevant reasons) erroneously considered several well-known stanzas from the prologue to *The Man in the Panther Skin* as interpolation [11, pp. 45-53]; however, even he never questioned the authenticity of the 17th stanza [11, p. 41].

Thus, while taking into consideration N. Marr’s interpretation of the 17th stanza, the researchers of

² The author of the above-mentioned research is G. Arabuli [1, pp. 23-30]. In connection to the 17th stanza the scholar focuses his attention to several additional circumstances, as well: 1) unlike the other stanzas reflecting Rustaveli’s poetic theory, here (17.1-2) is found “a detailed thematic listing”, or “itemization”: „მესამე ლექსი კარგია, სანადიმოდ, სამღერელად, / სააშოკოდ სალაღობოდ, ამხანაგთა სათრეველად“, – “The third type of poems is good for the feast, declamation, / The game of love, amusement, a jest between friends” [1, pp. 27-8]; 2) an interpolator “lacks the solid and stable understanding of poetry; [...] with his final statement the interpolator supports the idea, the revision of which he tried initially”: “if at first he praised lyric poets no less than epic poets, suddenly he started to ignore them completely, stating that lyric poets do not deserve to be called a poet at all” [1, p. 30]; 3) “it is not specified a clear distinction between the second type of poems [16th stanza] and the third one [17th stanza]” [1, p. 26]; 4) “unintentionally [...] the author of the 17th stanza agrees with the idea expressed with various modifications in the previous stanzas [13, 14, 15] that only a true poet [“moshaire”] [...] can compose monumental poetic work [...] (*He cannot be called a poet, who is unable to say anything at length*)”; here not only the idea is simply repeated, but it is evident that an unnecessary lexical (phraseological) reiteration or “borrowing” is found, which must not be regarded as an artistic device or stylistic feature of *The Man in the Panther Skin*’s author” [1, pp. 29-30]. These four peculiarities, as well, are considered by the researcher to be the further arguments for regarding the stanza under question as a late insertion. The objective of the present paper is a novel interpretation of Rustaveli’s entire poetic theory and consequently, the review of its summarizing 17th stanza. At the same time, I shall make an attempt to illustrate, that like the previous stanzas reflecting aesthetic thought of Rustaveli, this final stanza reveals neither any sign of “internal inconsistencies” nor any kind of “incoherency” (but cf. [1, p. 30]).

Rustaveli's poem explained the apparent consequential inconsistency that seems to exist between the fourth line of this final stanza ("He cannot be called a poet, who is unable *to say anything at length*" - 17.4) and the summarizing statement of the very first stanza among those reflecting the Rustavelian theory of poetry, according to which "a long word *is told briefly*, the poetry is, therefore, good" (12.4). In particular, according to traditional scholarly interpretation [12, pp. 312, 337-8; 3, p. 24; 5, pp. 45-8], in 17.4 Rustaveli indicates the priority of epic over lyric poetry and in 12.4 he discusses one of the stylistic or rhetorical aspects characteristic of poetry, that is, the brief, or laconic, manner of artistic speech. This above interpretation of the lines under consideration, as already mentioned, belongs to N. Marr and thus, since 1910 until the present time, it has been taught in the secondary schools of Georgia without any significant modification.

However, in recent years, it was considered that the statement – "a long word is told briefly" was unjustifiably regarded as a stylistic or rhetorical principle ([13, pp. 3-5]; esp. [8, pp. 145-7]). As for the second Rustavelian statement ("unable to say anything at length"), its traditional interpretation ("unable to create even one epic poem") it still has not been revised *in principle* [8, pp. 150-2]. Consequently, below I shall discuss, as briefly as possible, a novel, or untraditional, interpretation of line 12.4, focusing, however, on revision of line 17.4.

Thus, there are two reasons, due to which the need arises for a novel interpretation of the 17th stanza:

1) It is necessary to clarify or even revise N. Marr's interpretation of the above stanza, which was recognized to be correct by researchers of Rustaveli's poem, in order to explain in any possible way the apparent consequential inconsistency that seems to exist between the second half-line of 17.4 (17.4b) and the first half-line of 12.4 (12.4a);

2) It is obvious that within the framework of the 17th stanza several peculiarities of various types are observed [1, pp. 23-30], which require *logical* explanation.

The word "long" within the first half-line of 12.4 (12.4a: "a *long* word is told briefly"), in my view, is used with the meaning of "magnitude", or "epic size", of the poetic work. The issue is that, according to both

Aristotle (*Poetics*, 1450b36-37) and Rustaveli, truly worthy poetry is required to possess a certain magnitude; however, how large must be the size of a poetic work? As it seems to me, Rustaveli, an author of an epic poem, without any doubt, uses the expression “long word” with the sense of monumental size characteristic of epic poetry. As it turns out, in the 13th and 14th stanzas Rustaveli discusses exactly the same issue, although in details, and summarizing it in the final 17th stanza³.

As for “word” within the same half-line (12.4a: “a long *word* is told briefly”), it has two main meanings in *The Man in the Panther Skin*:

1) “thought” – according to N. Marr’s interpretation of the half-line 12.4a, “a long and extensive *thought*”, that is, the ancient Greek “Logos”, or “Word”, from the stylistic or rhetorical point of view, is “told briefly”, that is, concisely and laconically ([11, pp. 9, 40]; cf. [12, p. 146]);

2) “the subject of a talk” – according to M. Gogiberidze’s interpretation of the half-line 12.4a, “the poetry *depicts briefly a vast theme, or the subject of a talk*, and how much better this principle is carried out, the better will be a poem” [4, p. 117].

Since “a long” or even “extensive thought” is not a common expression for Georgian language, in my view, Rustavelian “long word” better corresponds to the second meaning; thus, it might mean “a vast theme”. However, taking into account the context of the 12th stanza, that is, reasoning dealing with the essence of poetry, as well as, considering the poem’s *Commentary* by King Vakhtang VI [18], “a long word”, i.e., a vast theme, the extensive subject of a talk, presumably means “a long tale”,⁴ or - taking into

³ As is known, in *Poetics*, while discussing the optimal size for a poetic work, Aristotle expresses a different view. In particular, he prefers the tragic plot, which is of a less size in comparison to the epic plot (*Poetics*, 1455b15-23, 1456a12, 1459b21, 1462b8-11; for commentary [2, pp. 256-7]). In this respect, it is evident that the conceptions of Aristotle and Rustaveli differ noticeably from each other. As it seems to me, this is the reason for somewhat critical tone, which is heard in the 13th and 14th stanzas, as well as in 17th.

⁴ cf. Tarieli’s words addressed to Pridoni during their first meeting: “I told him: stand still and give me a chance to hear your *case*, which interests me also” (598.3), and Pridoni’s reply: “then he told me: I shall inform you of the *words*, which you have just asked me” (599.2), i.e., you asked me my *case* and *story*, and not a *theme*, or *the subject of a talk*; and cf. also Avtandili’s words addressed to Patmani, when she told him the location of Nestani:

consideration the terms of contemporary literary criticism – “a long story”, that is, “a long fabula”. As it seems to me, the Rustavelian term “word” corresponds to Aristotle’s “myth” (μῦθος) [8, pp. 146-7 n. 6]; the main and initial meaning of which in Homeric poems, as well as generally in ancient Greek language was “word”. As for *Poetics* of Aristotle, the basic connotation of “word” (i.e., μῦθος) is “the story as organized into the plot [by poet]” [2, p. 53]. With the same meaning of “story”, or “fabula”, and “plot”, or “syuzhet”, one more ancient Greek term or concept is repeatedly used in *Poetics* – “logos” (λόγος), that is, again “word” (e.g. *Poetics*, 1449b8-9; for commentary [2, p. 91]).

“Is told briefly” (12.4a): “a long word”, or monumental story and long fabula, “is told” “briefly”, i.e., clearly,⁵ that is, to be easily understandable to listeners / readers; in my view, this might mean “the organization” of an epic plot⁶, that is, the epic plot “organized” in terms of composition and not that of

“your recent *tales*, *words* pleased me greatly” (1249.4), which, as it seems to me, make evident that “words” and “tales” are used herein as synonyms (cf. also below “is told briefly”).

⁵ According to Rustaveli, “briefly told” presumably means “clearly and distinctly stated” in terms of composition and not that of style; this becomes clear by detailed examination of the 17th stanza (for details see below).

⁶ Cf. “hitherto told as story and now, the pearls *put in order*” (7.4), i.e., ordered, or organized, pearls; Kh. Zaridze was the first researcher who noted that the utterance – “pearls put in order” (7.4b), i.e., ordered, or organized, pearls – unlike interpretation long established in Rustaveli studies – might not be understood as “a story which existed hitherto as a traditional tale” and afterwards “put into verse”, or transformed into poetic work, by poet: “the pearls put in order” “most of all may mean wholeness of a poem’s plot and composition” [19, p. 5], “that is, complete perfection [of poem]” [19, p. 9]. According to another correct view that belongs to G. Arabuli, taking into consideration the context of the line under question, “story” here means “ordinary fabula”, and as for “the pearls put in order”, it may be understood as “already completed poetic work” or “making a sample of poetic art” [1, p. 24]. In addition to the above, I would only like to point out through the terms of current literary criticism that the plot of a literary work is a result of compositional organization of its story, or fabula, as it is mentioned already by Aristotle in the very first paragraph of his *Poetics* (1447a9-10, for commentary [2, pp. 53-4]; cf. *Poetics*, 1450a4-5, for commentary [2, p. 100]). Besides, in *The Man in the Panther Skin* “the pearls *put in order*” ordinarily refers to the beauty of the shape and not to anything else; cf. 920.4: “Alas! A blooming rose withered! Alas! *Pearls put in order!*” [8, p. 136 n. 2].

style. The issue is that, according to Aristotle's conception of "Homeric unity", in terms of "the organization" of epic plot the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are much superior to any epic poem due to representing a single action; still, Homeric poems possess quite large constituent parts causing their monumental size. Thus, in comparison with the tragedy, the epic composition has less unity (cf. *Poetics*, 1462b8-15). As is well known, the *Poetics* is one of the main methodological sources for Rustaveli's aesthetic thought. Accordingly, as it seems to me, the author of *The Man in the Panther Skin* is taking into consideration Aristotle's above-said conception that the brief (i.e., clear and in orderly arranged form) depiction of a monumental story, or large fabula ("long word"); this is a decisive factor for the unity of epic plot from the point of view of composition [9, pp. 60-2]⁷.

Thus, according to Rustaveli, "briefly told" means "clearly told", or "the organized depiction of a plot" (i.e., in orderly arranged form) from the compositional point of view; however, not vice versa, in other words, "clearly told" does not mean always "briefly told": under certain circumstances, in particular, "when utterance grows hard for poet" (i.e., while composing the poem a poet begins to create the part, which is "hard to say"), then "clear" might be the result of "telling at length", rather than "telling briefly" (stanzas

⁷ Rustaveli's above discussed compositional principle is revealed even more explicitly in various places of *The Man in the Panther Skin*; Asmati's words addressed to Avtandili during their first meeting: "a long word is annoying [for a listener], thus I'll inform you briefly" (238.3) and cf. Tarieli's words addressed to Rostevani during their first meeting: "I'll not annoy you, a long story is incomprehensible for us [i.e., for listeners]" (1520.4), etc. [9, p. 62 n. 1]. The Drawing of comparison between Asmati's and Tarieli's above cited words reveals that in the artistic world of *The Man in the Panther Skin* the brief depiction of the subject of a talk, in particular, of a story means its comprehensible (i.e., clear and in orderly arranged form) narration. (Cf. Aristotle's *Poetics*, in which, while discussing the compositional unity of epic poems, the word ἐλάσσων ("smaller", "less") is used repeatedly: τοῦ μὲν οὖν μήκου ὅρος [...] δύνασθαι γὰρ δεῖ συνροᾶσθαι τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τὸ τέλος. εἴη δ' ἂν τοῦτο, εἰ τῶν μὲν ἀρχαίων ἐλάττους αἰ συστάσεις εἶεν – "[as for] the limit of length [of an epic poem, ...] it must be possible to embrace the beginning and the end in one view, which would be the case if the [epic] compositions were shorter than the ancient [Homeric] epics" - 1459b18-21; ἔτι τῷ ἐν ἐλάττονι μήκει τὸ τέλος τῆς μιμήσεως εἶναι – "it [the tragedy] attains its end with smaller length [in comparison to the epic]" - 1462a18-1462b1.)

13th and 14th). As it turns out, Rustaveli is referring to the same circumstance throughout the 17th stanza and in particular, in its 4th line; although in comparison with the 13th and 14th stanzas, in the 17th stanza the reasoning goes in the other direction (for details see below).

The first two peculiarities of the 17th stanza - the mixing of the two different poetic metres and, unlike the previous stanzas, “a detailed thematic listing”, or “itemization”, found only here (for details see above) – in my view, they are linked together. The issue is, that in line 17.1 the so-called high and low shairi metres are mixed at the exact same point, where a caesura occurs, as well; thus, the pronunciation of such caesura is impossible without unusually prolonged, that is, rhetorical pause: “the third type of poems is good ...” (5-3) [Pause: however, not generally, but particularly] “...for the feast, declamation” (4-4). Accordingly, the 17th stanza differs, indeed, from the previous stanzas, since, according to it, the so-called third type of poems is “good” *only* for having fun and *not generally*, as a specimen of true poetry. As it seems to me, unlike the case of other stanzas this above circumstance might be the cause of listing in details the various forms of entertaining and humorous poetry, as well as, for somewhat rhetorical pause caused by the deliberate mixing of metres; the latter, as an additional artistic device for attracting attention of listeners / readers.

Thus, taking into account the above said, still one more peculiarity of the 17th stanza should not be considered as a case of inconsistency: at first, lyric poets are praised (their poetry is “good”, “causing pleasure”, and “clearly told”), finally, however, they are severely criticized (like the so-called non-professional poets discussed in the 15th stanza, these authors, as well, do not deserve to be called poets at all). The issue is that at the outset of the reasoning depicted in the 17th stanza, Rustaveli emphasizes the strengths of the type of poetry, which is “third” among those he criticized;⁸ afterwards, however, Rustaveli declares

⁸ Within the previous four stanzas (13th – 16th) Rustaveli discusses three different types of poets: initially, he praises a certain type of poets (13th – 14th) and severely criticizes other poets of the opposite type (therefore, those authors, according to Rustaveli, do not deserve to be called poets at all – 15th); as for the authors of the so-called “second type of poems” (16th), it is evident, that Rustaveli criticizes them less strictly (cf. [15, pp. 466-7]). Thus,

that these virtues are still insufficient and, thus, the authors of “the third type of poems”, again, “cannot be called a poet”⁹. The following circumstance, nevertheless, still remains unclear: is such a sharp criticism of lyric poetry - and, furthermore, condemnation actually of the best type of the lyric poetry (“the third type of poems *is good*” – 17.1a) - argued sufficiently within the 17th stanza? To answer the above question it must be found out first the context, within which Rustaveli uses the keywords of the lines under question (17.3-4), that is, the words – “only” („ოდენ“ – 17.3b) and “anything” („ვერას“ – 17.4b).

The meaning of old Georgian word – „ოდენ“ (17.3b), according to *The Man in the Panther Skin*, is “only” [17, p. 377]¹⁰. Nevertheless, within line 17.3 the word under question, that is, “only” might not have any syntactic meaning itself, since it occurs in stereotyped expression – “what only” (old Georgian – „რაცა ოდენ“): “we derive pleasure from theirs [their poetry], as well, *what only* clearly they say” (17.3). In most cases the old Georgian stereotyped expression – “what only” is used in *The Man in the Panther Skin* with its *figurative* meaning, or “that what” (modern Georgian „რაც ვო“ [17, p. 377]), and only in some rare cases it has its *literal* or *direct* meaning, that is, “what only” (modern Georgian „რაც მხოლოდ“). In particular, the stereotyped expression – “what only” („რაცა ოდენ“) is found in *The Man in the Panther Skin* seven times [16, p. 256]. In five cases - out of the above seven – it is evident, that the stereotyped expression under question, according to the context of each place, is used with its *figurative* meaning - “that what” (and not with its *literal* meaning - “what only”). In order to illustrate the *figurative* meaning - “that what” of the stereotyped expression – “what only”; in his *Dictionary for The Man in the Panther Skin*, A. Shanidze quotes exactly these five places from the text

the type of poem criticized within the 17th stanza is the third by turn among those been criticized; therefore, Rustaveli refers to it as “the third type of poems”, despite the fact that in regular order it is the forth.

⁹ For the two remaining peculiarities of the 17th stanza see below.

¹⁰ Cf. “She [Nestani] was not able to give any answer [to Davari], she [Nestani] *only* [ოდენ] sighed and *only* [ოდენ] moaned” (582.3).

of the poem. The issue is that within the two remaining places the stereotyped expression – “what only” – might be understood in both ways: with the *figurative* meaning – “that what”, as well as with its *literal* meaning, that is, “what only”. Just one of these two cases is the “what only” of line 17.3 [17, p. 377]¹¹. Thus, A. Shanidze presumably preferred to understand literally the expression – “what only” at this point of the poem or, in his view, both interpretations were, theoretically, feasible. As it seems to me, the figurative understanding of “what only” at 17.3 (as “that what” – [15, p. 18]¹²) makes the line under question (17.3) ambiguous, since it is possible to interpret it in two different ways:

1. We derive pleasure from theirs [their poetry], as well, [from] *that what*, i.e., [from] *that part what* they say clearly; in other words, we derive pleasure from clearly told parts of their poems, as well, or we derive pleasure from their clearly told poems (it is implied that either they do not or cannot say clearly the other parts of the poem or the remaining poems);

2. We derive pleasure from theirs [their poetry], as well, [from] *that what*, i.e., [from] *whatever*, or [from] *everything what*¹³, they clearly say; in other words, we derive pleasure from their poems told *entirely* clearly.

In my view, it is the second interpretation, which must be regarded as correct; the issue is that “*the good*” (17.1a) lyric poem, it is impossible to be clearly told only partially and not entirely: otherwise it will not be good anymore! I mean the following: Rustaveli designates the third type of poems as “good” and “causing pleasure” presumably for being clearly told

¹¹ The other such case is found in the line 948.2 (947.2); cf. [17, p. 377]: prior to their second parting, Tarieli “told” Avtandili “*what only* he was able to say”. As in line 17.3 here, as well, “*what only*” may be understood in both ways: “that what”, i.e., figuratively, and “what only”, i.e., literally. Such alternative, apparently, has not been taken into account in the so-called *The School Edition of The Man in the Panther Skin*; cf. [15, p. 280].

¹² Without any reason at all, N. Marr considers the “what only” at 17.3 as “if” [11, p. 9].

¹³ Within the certain context the modern Georgian phrase – „რაც
30“ (“that what”) corresponds to the English word – “whatever” in the expression – “*whatever* you want”, that is, “*everything* you want”. Thus, in my view, the Georgian – “that what” (understood within the context under question as “whatever”) may mean “everything”.

entirely and not partially. In particular, the strengths of “the third and good type of poems” are caused by circumstance that – like the “shairi”, or the type of poem, praised by Rustaveli in the stanzas 12th - 14th - it is *also* told entirely clearly and therefore, it is *also* causing pleasure. This is exactly the reason, that, according to Rustaveli, not only “our briefly told a long word causes pleasure” (12.3-4), but “theirs only clearly told causes pleasure, *as well*“(17.3)¹⁴.

Thus, as it seems to me, it is extremely unlikely that Rustaveli is hinting as if the so-called third type of poems were causing pleasure due to being clearly told only partially. On the contrary, Rustaveli declares distinctly: although “their” third type of poems is causing pleasure in the same way as “our” “briefly told long word”, since it is told *only* clearly, as well, all the same, its author cannot be regarded as a poet. Consequently, the literal understanding of the collocation - “what only” (as “what only” and not figuratively - “that what”), in my view, makes the sense of the disputed line (17.3) more clear and obvious: “we derive pleasure from theirs [their poetry], as well, what [in Georgian - „რასაც“, i.e., „რომელსაც“, or “which”¹⁵] only [i.e., entirely] clearly¹⁶ they say”.

In conclusion, the reason for which Rustaveli criticizes the authors of the so-called third type of poems obviously is not that they cannot create good poems within the lyric genre, that is, they do not use duly the possibilities of the lyric poetry (i.e., they compose clearly *only partially*); Rustaveli condemns

¹⁴ Cf. “it causes pleasure (12.3a and 17.3a), and cf. also “he cannot be called a poet” (15.1a and 17.4a); these half-lines, in my view, must not be regarded as „an unnecessary lexical (phraseological) reiteration“, since they are obviously the so-called epic formulas. (The epic formulas - although with different frequency and *compositional function* - are used both within the Classical epic tradition, in Homeric epic, particularly, and the Medieval European poems; in this respect, as it turns out, *The Man in the Panther Skin*, as well, is no exception.)

¹⁵ Cf. “does it, still, have any value, such light, what [in Georgian - „რასაც“, i.e., „რომელსაც“, or “which”] is followed by darkness” (37.3).

¹⁶ The above detailed examination of 17.3 reveals, that the so-called third type of poems is clearly told *entirely*; the issue is that the word – “only”, as it turns out, is used with its literal meaning and, consequently, “only clearly told” means “clearly told entirely” and not partially.

completely a good lyric poem, or he rejects the lyric poetry in general. The reason for such a sharp criticism is depicted in the immediately following, that is, 4th line, which not only summarizes the 17th stanza itself, but brings together the whole Rustavelian theory of poetry.

According to the traditional (for Rustaveli studies) scholarly interpretation of the line under question (“He cannot be called a poet, who is unable to say *anything at length*” – 17.4), it must be understood as follows: he who is unable to create *even one epic poem* is not a poet. This above interpretation, as already mentioned, explains, at first glance, successfully the apparent consequential inconsistency that seems to exist between 17.4b (“unable to say anything *at length*”) and 12.4a (“a long word is told *briefly*”; for details see above). However, it remains outside the field of the researchers’ view (who support the above mentioned traditional interpretation) that line 12.4, at first glance, is incompatible with another two statements, as well, found within the stanzas depicting the Rustavelian theory of poetry: a true poet must be capable “of composing long verses” (13.3b) and “he must not reduce Georgian [speech], and must not allow shortness of a word” (14.3).

Thus, in order to explain the above identified circumstances, in my view, the only possible conclusion should be drawn: “long verses” and “Georgian [speech]” of the stanzas 13th and 14th – unlike “a long word” of the half-line 12.4a – are used by Rustaveli in connection with the individual constituent parts of an epic composition and thus, they do not indicate the entire poem itself, in other words, its whole story, or fabula [8, pp. 145-6]. Therefore, Rustavelian aesthetic principles declared within the stanzas 12th, 13th, and 14th should be construed as follows: on the whole “a long word” (i.e., an epic story, or a fabula; as well as a plot) must be “told briefly” (i.e., clearly and in orderly arranged form; in respect of the composition of a poem); however, the individual constituent parts (or separate places of “a long word”), which are hard to say (“when utterance grows hard for him [i.e., for a poet]” – 13.4a; “when due to Georgian [i.e., due to the subject of talk] he [i.e., a poet] is at a loss” – 14.2a), must be depicted at length (“a poet [must] compose long verses” – 13.3;

“he [i.e., a poet] must not reduce Georgian [speech], and must not allow *shortness of word*” - 14.3)¹⁷.

Consequently, it transpires that, taking into consideration the above revealed circumstances, it is necessary to clarify or even revise the traditional scholarly interpretation of line 17.4b and the word “anything”, in particular. I mean the following: the Rustavelian statement – “he cannot be called a poet, who is unable to say *anything at length*” (17.4), in my view, it is impossible to be understood as “he who is unable to create *even one epic poem* cannot be called a poet”; the issue is that, according to the above - traditional scholarly - interpretation, Rustaveli condemns the lyric poetry without any reason and, again, without providing any argument, he prefers epic to lyric poetry.

Such tendency, however, is not observed in any of the previous five stanzas depicting the Rustavelian theory of poetry. In particular, throughout these five stanzas (12-16), Rustaveli’s statements are based on a detailed reasoning, by means of which he argues: 1) what makes poetry useful (12.1-2); 2) why is poetry “good”, that is, both goodness (i.e. it makes people happy already “here”, or during this earthly life) and beauty (12.2b-4); 3) which special ability makes a gifted – but, still, ordinary - writer of poetry an outstanding poet (13-14); 4) why it happens, that some authors of (lyric) poems “cannot be called a poet at all” (15); 5) why are the poems of inexperienced or ungifted epic poets imperfect (16)¹⁸. Consequently, in respect of the above circumstances, it seems to me hardly conceivable, Rustaveli declaring within the 17th stanza (which summarizes his theory of poetry) that

¹⁷ The reduction of the constituent parts (“verses” – 13.3a, and “Georgian” – 14.3a) of a composition shortens the entire composition itself, in other words, the length of “a long word” (12.4a) itself becomes “short” (14.3b) and not just “briefly told” (12.4a), that is, “told” clearly and in orderly arranged form.

¹⁸ Thus, the difference between the poets criticized within the stanzas 16th and 17th, in my view, is that the former category (16) consists of the inexperienced or ungifted *epic* poets; meanwhile, the latter implies the best representatives of the *lyric* poetry. This interpretation of the 16th stanza, taking into consideration the given context, does not contradict not even one of the two possible connotations of the keyword - “to accomplish” (old Georgian „სრულქმნა“ - 16.2a): 1) “to finish” “heart-piercing words”, however, in a timely manner, or without over lengthening ([10, p. 129 n. 2]; cf. [15, p. 18]); 2) “to make [“heart-piercing words”] whole”, or “to make [them] perfect” [11, pp. 9, 40].

the author of “a good” lyric poem - which is clearly told completely and thus, causing in us pleasure – still, cannot be called a poet at all, due to ... not being an epic poet, in other words, because he is unable to compose even one epic poem (“unable to say anything at length” – 17.4b).

Consequently, in the line under question (17.4) Rustaveli, apparently, indicates the reason for which he prefers epic poetry rather than lyric poems;¹⁹ in addition, it should be noted that the above mentioned criticism is expressed by Rustaveli so categorically, that the good lyric poets - similar to non-professional (lyric) poets - are not regarded as poets at all (“He cannot be called a poet”: 15.1 and 17.4). The reason for such a harsh criticism of the good lyric poets will become clear if the words he “ [...] who is unable to say anything at length” (17.4b) will be understood as he “ [...] who is unable to say any part [or any place] of a poem at length”, and not as he “ [...] who is unable to compose even one epic poem”.

Thus, as it turns out, the reason due to which Rustaveli criticizes the lyric poems is as follows: the entire poems of their authors, that is, of the lyric poets are composed clearly in such a way that within them nothing is “told at length”, or in detail. Taking into consideration the statements within stanzas 13th and 14th (“when utterance grows hard for him [i.e., for a poet]” – 13.4a; “when due to Georgian [i.e., due to subject of a specific part of a talk] he [i.e., a poet] is at a loss” – 14.2a), it becomes clear how, according to Rustaveli, it happens that in the lyric poetry everything is “told” clearly, without anything having been “told” at length (he “ [...] who is unable to say anything at length – 17.4b”); the issue is that the authors of such poems say nothing at all, which is “hard to say” (20.2a and 13.4a) and thus, the need does not arise at all, for anything to be “told at length”. In other words, Rustaveli criticizes the lyric poetry for the reason that it does not contain anything considerable, and, consequentially, “an utterance” will

¹⁹ Taking into consideration the above circumstance, in my view, the traditional punctuation of the line under question (17.3) should be revised. In particular, since the reasoning from the third line, as it turns out, is continued in the fourth line, it seems to me preferable at the end of the third line to put a comma (see above) or a semicolon, but not the full stop, as is common for the various printed editions of *The Man in the Panther Skin*.

never “grow hard” (cf. 13.4a) and “verse” will never “begin to falter” (cf. 14.2b) for such a poet, because such a poem “is good [only] for the feast, declamation” (17.1b), etc.

And indeed, it is evident (due to the small size generally characteristic of lyric poems), that it is impossible for their individual constituent parts to be “told at length”; this circumstance, on the other hand, causes the specificity of the lyric themes, their lack of depth, in particular, unlike in epic poetry. This is exactly why it happens, that though within “the third”, or “good”, lyric poems, as it seems at first glance, everything is “told briefly” - as it must be in truly worthy poetry (“ [...] is told briefly, poetry is, therefore, good” – 12.4) – within them, in fact, it is “briefly told”, only “one or two” thoughts (15.1b) and not “a long word” (that is, the subject of a talk or a story), which is “greatly useful and heart-piercing for the listeners” (12; 16.2). Though these “one or two” thoughts “are told” in the so-called third poems clearly and pleasantly and not “dissonantly and inconsistently” (as in the poems of non-professional lyric poets; cf. 15.1-3), according to Rustaveli, their authors, nevertheless, cannot be regarded as poets.

Thus, according to the Rustavelian theory of poetry, only a pleasure caused by even “entirely clearly told” poems, but, still, of a less size in comparison to the epic plot, is insufficient for regarding them as a truly worthy poetry. The truly worthy is such poetry, which is, “first of all greatly useful for the listeners” (12.1-2), i.e., it is “a branch [or product] of wisdom, divine and divinely intelligible long word” (12.1-2, 4). This type of poem “pleases” (12.3a) “the worthy listeners” (12.3b), or persons appropriate for the perception of the poetry, due to being told concisely, on the whole (“a long word is told briefly” – 12.4a). However, in certain cases - when necessary, that is, when “utterance grows hard” for a poet (13.4a) - the key parts of such poems are depicted at length (“a poet [must] compose long verses [...]” – 13.3); though, still, without over lengthening, i.e., on the whole, all the same, in accordance with the principle of “briefly telling”, or that of compositional unity (“a poet [must] compose long verses and tear them off [in Georgian

„ბგჯს“²⁰]” – 13.3). Due to this exact circumstance, or “telling long verses”, “a briefly told long word” is not shortened to the size of only “briefly told one or two” ideas (“he [i.e., a poet] must not reduce Georgian [speech], and must not allow shortness of word” – 14.3; if the poem is “told” only briefly – that is, wholly briefly alone and not, simultaneously, briefly on the whole, as well – then it becomes less meaningful, that such a poem is only, or entirely, clearly “told” and thus, evokes pleasure, as well). Consequently, Rustavelian “shairi” (or verse) – unlike entirely briefly “told” (and, entirely – due to this – clearly “told” poem) the so-called third “good poem”²¹ – is not just the specimen of poetry, evoking aesthetic pleasure through its “clear” and “orderly arranged” form,²² but, simultaneously, it is “useful and long word”, as well. Only such type of poetry is “good” (12.4b), that is, both beauty and goodness, i.e., it makes people happy already “here” (12.3a), or during this earthly life.

Thus, the fourth and last line, in my view, brings to a final point and, at the same time, summarizes not only the 17th stanza, but the whole Rustavelian theory

²⁰ The meaning of word „ბგჯს“ in old Georgian is “to tear off”, “to cut off”; thus, the utterance “a poet [must] compose long verses and tear them off”, in my view, means depicting the subject of a talk, or a story, in details, but, still, without over lengthening [9, pp. 73-5].

²¹ “The third poem” is entirely briefly told: the issue is that in line 17.4, as it turns out, “the third poem” is criticized for this exact reason, that “nothing” is told within it at length; in other words, everything, or every part, in it is represented concisely, i.e., wholly, “the third poem” is “briefly told”. Thus, while analyzing 17.3-4, – as it is with 238.3 and 1520.4 – it becomes clear, that Rustavelian statement “briefly told” means “told clearly and in orderly arranged form” just from the compositional point of view and not that of stylistic or rhetorical.

²² While analyzing 17.3-4 – as it is with 14.2-3 – it becomes clear, that the individual constituent parts of Rustavelian “shairi” (or verse), which are told at length – like those told briefly – are represented clearly and thus, in orderly arranged form. The issue is that “the third poem” – like a Rustavelian “shairi” (or verse) – is pleasant, since it is entirely clearly told, as well (“We derive pleasure from theirs [their poetry], as well, what [i.e., which] only clearly they say” – 17.3). As for the difference between them, the former (“the third poem”) is told only briefly; the latter (the Rustavelian “shairi”), however, comprises separate parts, some of which are represented concisely, while the remaining parts are developed in detail. This means that both the briefly told parts and the parts told at length – since they are constituent parts of an entirely clearly told composition (or the Rustavelian “shairi”) – are clearly told, as well.

of poetry, that is, Rustaveli's aesthetic thought (reflected in the form of a detailed reasoning, or "long verses"): "he cannot be called a poet, who is unable to say anything at length!".

As it turns out, Rustaveli considers Aristotle in detail and thus, is in general agreement not only with Aristotle's ethical conception [7, pp. 384-473, 497-581], but with his aesthetic thought, as well, depicted in the *Poetics*.

Lastly, the interpretation long established in Rustaveli studies, according to which, within the 17th stanza and its fourth line, in particular, Rustaveli prefers epic to lyric poetry, as it turns out, is correct. Once again, however, Rustaveli sets out his vision of poetry, as usual, through careful reasoning, not only in the form of a brief aphorism.

In conclusion, the above provided novel interpretation of the 17th stanza revealed that:

1) The stanza analyzed above not only cannot be regarded as an inorganic component of the Rustavelian theory of poetry, but it brings to a final point and summarizes Rustaveli's whole aesthetic conception, since within it various poetic principles of Rustaveli – depicted in the previous stanzas – are brought together; moreover, these principles are mutually coordinated. Within the 17th stanza, in particular, it is specified and explained, that:

a) the Rustavelian "shairi", or the specimen of true poetry, is such an epic poem, which is "told" entirely "briefly", in other words, it is wholly "told" in orderly arranged form and clearly and not just on the whole (12.4a): its individual constituent parts, depicted in detail (13-14), are also "told" clearly, i.e., they are represented without over lengthening and consequently, in orderly arranged form, as well. Thus, the first compositional principle – "a long word is told briefly" (12.4a), which means that an epic poem must be "told" in orderly arranged form and clearly *on the whole*, it does not contradict the second compositional principle ("telling" the "long word", or an epic poem, *wholly* clearly): the key *parts* of the same poem must be "told at length", or in detail, but, still, without over lengthening ("tear off" – 13.3b) and in orderly arranged form ("accomplish" – 16.2a). This circumstance becomes ultimately clear only from the reasoning within the remaining stanzas (13-17), especially, the 17th stanza; therefore,

b) “told briefly”, or in orderly arranged form, means “told clearly”; however, not vice versa, in other words, “clearly told” does not mean only “briefly told”, since a true poet (i.e., “moshaire”, or the author of “*shairi*”, that is, *true poetry*) is able to “tell” clearly, when he composes “at length”, as well; in other words, while composing individual key parts or episodes of a poem. (The above Rustavelian compositional principle differs noticeably from that of Aristotle’s, depicted within the framework of *Poetics* [cf. esp. 1451a10-11, 1455b15-16, 1462a18-1462b10 და 1462b14-15]. However, the former should be considered as a result of innovative interpretation of the latter);

c) the entire subject of the Rustavelian theory of poetry is that of composition, i.e., organization of the epic story and plot (rather than style, or even a variety of rhetorical principles), since all six stanzas (12-17) depicting this theory are linked together through a unified discourse of aesthetic character concerning the various, but still interrelated, principles organizing the epic plot in terms of composition and not that of style or rhetorical devices;

2) according to the correct interpretation long established in Rustaveli studies, within the 17th stanza Rustaveli prefers epic to lyric poetry; however, not unconsciously, or without awareness, but, as usual, through reasoning his point of view. In particular, in accordance with the conception of Rustaveli, a poem of any type “told” only, or entirely, clearly causes pleasure; however, the main assessment criteria for such a poem is whether or not the key parts (from the point of view of composition and/or plot) of this poem are “told at length”, or in detail: such an approach undoubtedly means that preference is given to epic poetry, rather than to lyric poetry, since the latter lacks this feature. In the case of an epic composition, the aesthetic pleasure (cf. “heart-piercing words” – 16.2; cf. also 4.4b and 7.1b/3b) is delivered not only due to the fact that the poem “is clearly told, on the whole,” but through the other circumstance, as well; in particular, that the individual parts of the poem “are told” at length (i.e., in detail), though, still, in orderly arranged form, without an over lengthening and thus, again, “clearly”, what (i.e., “telling” key parts, that is, “heart-piercing words”, simultaneously, in both ways at length, or in detail, and in orderly arranged form, or clearly) is impossible to be achieved by inexperienced

and ungifted epic poets (16.1-2). Consequently, in the summarizing line (17.4) of the Rustavelian theory of poetry by means of epic formula (17.4a and 15.1a), that is, through purposive reiteration of the words – “he cannot be called a poet”, the authors of good lyric poems (17) are equated with non-professional poets, the ungifted lyric poets (15), in particular; thus, with this is declared actually, that poems of a less size in comparison to the epic – both unsuccessful, as well as successful – cannot be equal to the true poetry – “shairi”.

Bibliography:

1. Arabuli, G., *The Issues of Ascertaining the Text of The Man in the Panther Skin*, “Zekari”, Tbilisi, 2004. (In Georgian) / არაბული, გ., ვეფხისტყაოსნის ტექსტის დადგენის პრობლემები, „ზეკარი“, თბ., 2004.
2. Aristotle, *Poetics* (Introduction, Commentary and Appendices by D. W. Lucas), Clarendon paperbacks, 1980 (“Oxford University Press”, 1968).
3. Baramidze, A., *Shota Rustaveli*, “Tbilisi University press”, Tbilisi, 1975. (In Georgian) / ბარამიძე, ა., შოთა რუსთველი, „თბილისის უნივერსიტეტის გამომცემლობა“, თბ., 1975.
4. Gogiberidze, M. (1961) *Rustaveli, Petritsi, Preludes*, “Sabchota Mtserali“, Tbilisi. (In Georgian) / გოგიბერიძე მ., რუსთველი, პეტრიჭი, პრელუდიები, „საბჭოთა მწერალი“, თბ., 1961.
5. Jibladze, G., *Rustaveli's Aesthetic World*, “Ganatileba”, Tbilisi, 1966. (In Georgian) / ჯიბლაძე, გ., რუსთაველის ესთეტიკური სამყარო, „განათლება“, თბ., 1966.
6. Khintibidze, A., *The Essays in Versification*, Tbilisi, 2000. (In Georgian) / ხინთიბიძე, ა., პერსიფიკაციული ნარკვევები, თბ., 2000.
7. Khintibidze, E., *The World View of Rustaveli's Vepkhistaosani - The Man in the Panther Skin*, “Kartvelologi”, Tbilisi, 2009 (In Georgian) / ხინთიბიძე, ე., „ვეფხისტყაოსნის“ იდეურ-მსოფლმხედველობითი სამყარო, თბ., „ქართველოლოგი“, 2009.

8. Khintibidze, Z., *Homer and Rustaveli – The Homeric Principles of Compositional Organization and the Epic Tradition*, “Logos”, Tbilisi, 2005 (In Georgian) /ხინთიბიძე, ზ., *ჰომეროსი და რუსთველი - კომპოზიციური ორგანიზაციის ჰომეროსისეული პრინციპები და ეპიკური ტრადიცია*, „ლოგოსი“, თბ., 2005.
9. Khintibidze, Z., “Aristotle’s Conception of the Artistic Unity of Homer’s Epic and Rustaveli’s *The Man in the Panther Skin*”, “*The Kartvelologist*” - *The Journal of Georgian Studies*, vol. 15, Tbilisi, 2009, pp. 60-77.
10. Khintibidze, Z., “Towards the Relation of Rustaveli’s Poetic Theory to the Classical Tradition”, “*The Kartvelologist*” - *The Journal of Georgian Studies*, vol. 17 (2), Tbilisi, 2012, pp. 119-37 (=http://kartvelologi.tsu.ge. N 2).
11. Marr, N., *The opening and final stanzas of Shota Rustaveli’s The Man in the Panther Skin*, St.Petersburg, 1910. (In Russian) / მარი ნ., *შოთა რუსთველის „ვეფხისტყაოსნის“ საწყისი და დასკვნითი სტროფები*, სანკტ პეტერბურგი, 1910 (რუსულ ენაზე).
12. Nadiradze, G., *The Aesthetics of Rustaveli, “Sabchota Sakartvelo”*, Tbilisi, 1958. (In Georgian) / ნადირაძე, გ., *რუსთაველის ესთეტიკა*, სახელმწიფო გამომცემლობა „საბჭოთა საქართველო“, თბ., 1958.
13. Parulava, G., “The Divine branch of Wisdom, Divinely Intelligible”, “*Georgian Literature*” (Scientific and Methodological Journal), N 2, Tbilisi, 1998, pp. 3-29. / ფარულავა, გ., „სიბრძნის დარგი საღმრთო, საღმრთოდ გასაგონი“, “*ქართული ლიტერატურა*” (სამეცნიერო-მეთოდოლოგიური ჟურნალი), N 2, თბ., 1998, გვ. 3-29.
14. Rustaveli Shota, *The Man in the Panther Skin*, (v. I, Text and Versions, edited by A. Shanidze and A. Baramidze), Tbilisi, 1966. (In Georgian) / შოთა რუსთველი, *ვეფხისტყაოსანი* (ტ. I, ტექსტი და ვარიანტები ა. შანიძისა და ა. ბარამიძის რედაქციით), თბ., 1966.
15. Rustaveli Shota, *The Man in the Panther Skin, School Edition* (with Introduction, Literary Review, Dictionary and Commentary, Edited by N. Natadze), Tbilisi. (In Georgian) / შოთა რუსთველი,

ვეფხისტყაოსანი, სასკოლო გამოცემა, ტექსტი გამოსაცემად მოამზადა, შესავალი, განმარტებანი, კომენტარი და ლიტერატურული გარჩევა დაურთო *ნ. ნათაძემ*, თბ., 2006.

16. Shanidze, A., *A Concordance to The Man in the Panther Skin*, "Tbilisi University press", Tbilisi, 1956. (In Georgian) / შანიძე, ა., ვეფხისტყაოსნის *სიმღონია*, „თსუ გამომცემლობა“, თბ., 1956.

17. Shanidze, A., *Dictionary for The Man in the Panther Skin*, in the book: Shota Rustaveli, *The Man in the Panther Skin* (edited by A. Baramidze, K. Kekelidze and A. Shanidze), pp. 345-99, "Sakhelgami", Tbilisi, 1957. (In Georgian) / შანიძე, ა., ვეფხისტყაოსნის *ლექსიკონი*, წიგნში: *შოთა რუსთაველი, ვეფხისტყაოსანი* (სარედაქციო კოლეგია: ა. ბარამიძე, კ. კეკელიძე, ა. შანიძე), გვ. 345-99, „სახელგამი“, თბ., 1957.

18. Vakhtang VI, *The First Explanation of the Book of The Man in the Panther Skin*, in the book: *Shota Rustaveli, The Man in the Panther Skin*, Tbilisi, 1712 (restored edition by A. Shanidze), Tbilisi, 1975. (In Georgian) / ვახტანგ მეექვსე, *თარგმანი პირველი ამის ვეფხისტყაოსნისა*, წიგნში: *შოთა რუსთაველი, ვეფხისტყაოსანი*, 1712 (ა. შანიძის აღდგენილი გამოცემა), თბ., 1975.

19. Zaridze, Kh., *The Composition of The Man in the Panther Skin*, Tbilisi, 2002. (In Georgian) / ჯარიძე, ხ., ვეფხისტყაოსნის *კომპოზიცია*, თბ., 2002.