

10. From the 'Udhri Legend of the Love of Majnūn and Laylā to "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" by Shota Rustaveli ¹

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Abstract

The paper aims to discuss the impact of the medieval Arabic literary tradition of love and madness on Shota Rustaveli's "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" from the perspective of modern literary-critical approaches and Niklas Luhmann's Sociological Theory. In the medieval Arabic literary tradition, love and madness symbolize a close spiritual connection with the divine, paths that are closely related to each other. Why exactly madness? If the recognition of social norms is equated with sound reason, it becomes easy to see how madness transforms into one of the best literary symbols of universal rebellion. Madness is a symbol of rebellion against "common sense" and turns the person who has transcended reason into almost a poetic ideal. The main storyline of Arabic *adab* literature regarding the theory of love from the very beginning unconditionally considers that love is madness and a person who falls in love often – if not always – goes against all reasoning. Love is blind or makes a person blind. Lovers are considered to be particularly inclined to go mad. These works of *adab* perfectly show the public's fascination with the irrational and extravagant - those aspects of love that are beyond the worldly mind and common sense and that can reveal the best and most noble in man. This charm of the strange, extravagant, or extraordinary behaviour of those who have lost their common sense in love, and yet their usefulness for literary purposes, seems to help the public realize that in a whirlpool of such reckless action there may be undeniably deep and paradoxical wisdom, which is beyond the comprehension of an ordinary mind. For such wise madmen obsessed with love, there is no boundary between their imagination and their actions in life. A permanent or transcendental connection with the Absolute is established only through symbolic channels. Therefore, the prototypical personality of one who has achieved such a form of union enjoys universal appeal. The path to such an union is precisely love, enveloped in divine madness, which turns love into a mystical union, an attempt to reconcile the conscious and the unconscious, the rational and the irrational. "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" should also be mentioned, where the same idea is also employed: "Such kind of courtship, such love can't be by many ones perceived; The tongue -

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explaining it – dries up, the listener's ears get tired of it" The theory by the sociologist Niklas Luhmann, who considers love as a communicative symbol, a social system of interpretation, is very serious and elegant. In his theory, the author considers love as a generalized symbolic means of communication that allows us to successfully communicate seemingly impossible communications. Generalized symbolic means of communication responsible for combining motivation and choice, use semantic matrices closely related to reality, such as, for example, love. Such mediums are always managed socially - based on an agreement on communication opportunities. Love considered in this context as a medium is not a feeling but a communication code through which we can shape feelings and emotions and find an answer to all the consequences that such communication can cause. A literary, idealized representation of love or a thematic choice is by no means arbitrary; it shows the public perception of love. Such descriptions don't need to express the real, factual side of love, yet they do help us to describe the functional needs of the social system. Consequently, the semantics of love in each case helps us to determine the type of relationship between the symbolic means and social structures. Thus, understanding love requires not the thematic level of communication but its codification. The function of love as a communication medium is to make the unbelievable possible. Paradoxically, love can expand communication without actual communication and turn the world into a horizon of inner experiences and actions. Even in the Middle Ages, people knew that despite viewing love as a passion, they were dealing with behavioural models that could be acted out. This factor was well thought out. In other words, the model of love was the source of knowledge.

Keywords: Medieval Arabic literature; The 'Udhri love story; The trace of Middle Eastern literature in "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" by Shota Rustaveli

Majnūn ve Laylā'nın Aşkına Dair 'Udhri Efsanesinden Shota Rustaveli'nin "Panter Derili Şövalye"sine ³

Öz

Bu makale, modern edebiyat eleştirisi yaklaşımları ve Niklas Luhmann'ın Sosyolojik Teorisi perspektifinden, Ortaçağ Arap edebiyat geleneğindeki aşk ve delilik temalarının Shota Rustaveli'nin "Panter Derili Şövalye"sine etkisini tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ortaçağ Arap edebiyat geleneğinde aşk ve delilik, ilahi olanla yakın bir ruhsal bağı simgeler; bu iki yol birbiriyle yakından ilişkilidir. Neden tam olarak delilik? Eğer toplumsal normların kabulü sağlam akıl ile eşdeğer tutulursa, deliliğin nasıl evrensel isyanın en iyi edebi sembollerinden birine dönüştüğü kolayca anlaşılır. Delilik, "sağduyu"ya karşı isyanın bir sembolüdür ve aklı aşan kişiyi neredeyse şiirsel bir ideale dönüştürür. Aşk teorisiyle ilgili Arap edebiyatının ana hikayesi, en başından beri koşulsuz olarak aşkın delilik olduğunu ve aşık olan bir kişinin her zaman olmasa da sıklıkla tüm mantığa aykırı davrandığını kabul eder. Aşk kördür ya da insanı kör eder. Aşıkların özellikle deliye dönmeye meyilli olduğu düşünülür. Bu adab eserleri, halkın irrasyonel ve abartılı olana – dünyevi zihin ve sağduyunun ötesinde olan ve insandaki en iyi ve en asil yanları ortaya çıkarabilen aşkın bu yönlerine – duyduğu hayranlığı mükemmel bir şekilde gösterir. Aşkta sağduyusunu yitirmiş olanların bu tuhaf, abartılı ya da olağanüstü davranışlarının cazibesi ve yine de edebi amaçlar için yararlılıkları, halkın, bu tür pervasız eylemlerin girdabında, sıradan bir zihnin kavrayışının ötesinde, inkar edilemez derecede derin ve paradoksal bir bilgelik olabileceğini fark etmesine yardımcı oluyor gibi görünmektedir. Aşka takıntılı bu bilge deliler için, hayal güçleri ile yaşamdaki eylemleri arasında bir sınır yoktur. Mutlak ile kalıcı veya aşkın bir bağlantı, yalnızca sembolik kanallar aracılığıyla kurulur. Bu nedenle, böyle bir birleşim biçimine ulaşmış bir kişinin prototip kişiliği evrensel bir çekiciliğe sahiptir. Böyle bir birleşime giden yol, tam da ilahi delilikle sarılmış aşktır; bu, aşkı mistik bir birleşime, bilinçli ile bilinçdışını, rasyonel ile irrasyoneli uzlaştırma girişimine dönüştürür. Aynı fikrin kullanıldığı "Panter Derisindeki Şövalye"den de bahsetmek gerekir: "Böyle bir kur yapma, böyle bir aşk pek çok kişi tarafından algılanamaz; bunu açıklayan dil kurur, dinleyicinin kulakları bundan yorulur." Aşkı iletişimsel bir sembol, bir sosyal yorumlama sistemi olarak gören sosyolog Niklas Luhmann'ın teorisi çok ciddi ve zariftir. Yazar, teorisinde aşkı, görünüşte imkansız iletişimi başarılı bir şekilde gerçekleştirmemizi sağlayan genelleştirilmiş sembolik bir iletişim aracı olarak ele alır. Motivasyon ve seçimi birleştiren genelleştirilmiş sembolik iletişim araçları, örneğin aşk gibi gerçeklikle yakından ilişkili anlamsal matrisler kullanır. Bu tür araçlar, iletişim fırsatları üzerine yapılan bir anlamaya dayalı olarak her zaman sosyal olarak yönetilir. Bu bağlamda bir araç olarak ele alınan aşk, bir duygu değil, duyguları ve hisleri şekillendirebileceğimiz ve bu iletişimin yol açabileceği tüm sonuçlara bir cevap bulabileceğimiz bir iletişim kodudur. Aşkın edebi, idealize edilmiş bir temsili veya tematik bir seçim, hiçbir şekilde keyfi değildir; bu, aşkın kamuoyundaki algısını gösterir. Bu tür tanımlamaların aşkın

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gerçek, olgusal y n n  ifade etmesi gerekmez, ancak sosyal sistemin iřlevsel ihtiya larını tanımlamamıza yardımcı olurlar. Sonu  olarak, her durumda ařkın anlamı, sembolik ara lar ile sosyal yapılar arasındaki iliřkinin t r n  belirlememize yardımcı olur. Dolayısıyla, ařkı anlamak i in iletiřimin tematik d zeyi deęil, kodifikasyonu gereklidir. Bir iletiřim aracı olarak ařkın iřlevi, inanılmazı m mk n kılmaktır. Paradoksal olarak, ařk, fiili iletiřim olmadan iletiřimi geniřletebilir ve d nyayı i sel deneyimler ve eylemlerin ufkuna d n řt rebilir. Orta  aę'da bile insanlar, ařkı bir tutku olarak g rmelerine raęmen, eyleme ge irilebilecek davranıř modelleriyle uęrařtıklarını biliyorlardı. Bu fakt r iyi d ř n lm řt . Bařka bir deyiřle, ařk modeli bilginin kaynaęıydı.

Anahtar kelimeler: Orta aę Arap edebiyatı; 'Udhri ařk  yk s ; Őota Rustaveli'nin "Panter Derili Ő valye"sinde Orta Doęu edebiyatının izleri

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The 'Udhri love story which originated in a small Bedouin Arab tribe ('Udhra), the legend of the love of Majnūn and Laylā, which later turned into the most romantic and immortal Middle Eastern love story, is the theme which most vividly expresses the medieval Arabic literary tradition – a triad of love, madness and poetry as the channels of close spiritual bond with the divine, turning madness into the best literary symbol, poetic ideal and making it almost impossible to draw an exact line between the spiritual and the earthly in love poetry.

Love, madness, and poetry are embodied in Majnūn—the legendary Arab poet who died from love, whose love story became the inspiration for an unusually large number of distinguished literary works in Middle Eastern literatures from the Middle Ages to the present. His influence even reached one of the most important and significant monuments of medieval Georgian literature - the *Knight in the Panther's Skin* by the genius 12th century poet Shota Rustaveli.

"Love is a spiritual, moral, and physical value that is changeable in time and space" (Alexidze, 1976, p.90). Humanity's long-standing effort to understand the nature of love, grasp its mysteries, explore its phenomenon and assign it a rightful place in the spiritual world of each era and nation finds its own solution in every epoch. It is precisely this effort, as well as the search for the "Absolute" in the confrontation between the "ego" and the "other," that is reflected in the 'Udhri concept of eternal love, which originated in a specific historical context. Despite this, the simple 'Udhri structure of the legendary tales – the mosaic of narratives and poetic fragments surrounding the poets in love, led to diverse interpretations. "It expressed a universal urge, a collective need for rebelling against the rationalist demands of the society. If we observe the basic peculiarities of these legends, we will see a poet who is insane with love" (Khairallah, 1980, p. 1). These three aspects form the general motives of 'Udhri poetry. In the Arabic context, they reveal Sufi implications due to their symbolic ambiguity and mystical dimensions.

The ambivalence characteristic of the 'Udhri phenomenon (between profane and divine love) was brilliantly embraced by the Sufis, who breathed new life into it with Sufi symbolism and allegorical hints. In doing so, they integrated various folk and unorthodox elements that were rejected by the literary tradition.

For the Sufis, Majnūn, the mad lover-poet, became the highest symbol of union with God, and of the soul's direct, unmediated approach to God, without the intervention of a prophet.

It is precisely this proximity between 'Udhri and Sufi love that led the Arabic literary scholar Muhammad Ghanīmī Hilāl to state: "Sufi love is nothing but 'Udhri love under the influence of progressive religious and philosophical factors. Both are under the influence of religion and religious texts, albeit with certain interpretation. Both arise from faith, and neither neglects the physical, corporeal aspect, because for the Sufis, love was the path to Allah through the contemplation of bodily beauty" (Hilāl , 1976, p. 38).

It seems that this ambiguity, which is so striking, arises from a fundamental dilemma. The essential similarity between erotic and mystical experiences, romantic and religious poetry (at least in Arabic literature), makes it nearly impossible to draw a clear line between the spiritual and the sensual in love poetry (Hamori, 1970). Both in concept and experience, love and mysticism are closely intertwined. Historically, since Plato's time, love has been considered a form of divine madness. The interconnection between mystical and bodily (earthly) feelings of love is part of the broader problem of universal anthropomorphism, which is very difficult to exclude from any imaginary, personal connection with the

divine. Therefore, not only the expression of this connection but even the very feeling itself is considered an exaggeration and expansion of the feelings that exist on the human level. In the blind (unconscious) expression of the human sense of self-exaltation, which is triggered by the mystical experience, the erotic metaphor seems to be the closest to a satisfying representation of this feeling. Contemporary scientific research still tends to emphasize the essential similarity between these two feelings - profane and mystical love (Khairallah, 1980, p. 100).

As soon as they reach a state of ecstasy, earthly and mystical love tend to have the same effect. Moreover, in the context of 'Udhri love, the physical aspect of desire is suppressed (repressed), and romantic metaphors become equally applicable to both the divine and sensual lover. Not only the mystical poets were influenced by the new religion – the religious piety of Islam, but, more importantly, they transferred the religious concept of human devotion to God to the level of human devotion to an earthly lover. Figuratively speaking, they perished in the "religion of love."

It was precisely these aforementioned circumstances that later made it easier for the Sufis to use erotic language to express their love for God. At the same time, these same circumstances often complicate the understanding of the symbolic level in the works of 'Udhri Ghazal.

In this regard, the theory of contemporary sociologist Niklas Luhmann is very interesting. According to his definition, the primary symbol that is considered most significant in the thematic structure of love is "passion." Passion, in this context, means that we are subjective toward something which is irreplaceable for us and uncontrolled by us. Other images, some of which date back to ancient times, share the same semantic value. For example, the prevailing idea that love is a manifestation of illness, the cure for which lies within itself; love is madness; love puts us in chains; love is a mystery that cannot be explained and does not need to be justified. All these symbols point to the deviation from social norms. We accept this deviation and attach it a special role (Luhmann, 1986, p. 26).

Why exactly madness? If the recognition of social norms is equated with sound reason, it becomes easy to see how madness transforms into one of the best literary symbols of universal rebellion. Madness is a symbol of rebellion against "common sense" and turns the person who has transcended reason into almost a poetic ideal (Khairallah, 1980, p. 20).

In the theory of love within Arabic *adab* literature, the central line from the very beginning unconditionally considers love to be madness, and the lover is often, if not always, opposed to all reason (Dols, 1992, p. 314). Love is blind, it makes a person blind. Lovers are seen as especially prone to turning insane (transcending reason). The *adab* works present the society's fascination with the irrational and the extravagant – the aspects of love that lie beyond worldly reason and common sense and reveal the most noble and virtuous qualities in a person. The allure of love, through the strange, extravagant, or extraordinary behavior of those who have transcended reason, and their usage for literary purposes, seems to portray the society's recognition that within the whirlpool of such foolish actions, there may exist profound and paradoxical wisdom, which lies beyond the reach of ordinary understanding (Giffen, 1973, p. 113). For such wise fools, obsessed with love, there is no boundary between their imagination and real life actions.

A constant or transcendent connection with the divine is established only through symbolic channels.

4 *Adab* – a genre of medieval Arabic Moslem literature, Classical Arabic Belles-Lettres. Reading *adab* was considered a sign of social etiquette, ethics, good manners and education. *Adab* comprised the best philological collections and was considered an inalienable part of the royal court life.

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Accordingly, the prototypical character of one who has attained such a form of connection enjoys universal appeal. The path to this connection is precisely love, shrouded in divine madness, which transforms love into a mystical union (Khairallah, 1980, pp.21-23), an attempt to reconcile the conscious and the unconscious, the rational and the irrational.

Niklas Luhmann's theory, which views love as a communicative symbol and a social system of interpretation, is a well-structured sociological theory (Luhmann, 1986). In this theory, the author considers love to be a generalized symbolic communicative means that allows us to succeed in communication which, at a glance, might seem impossible.

Communication tools with generalized symbolic meaning, the function of which is to unite motivation and choice, use semantic matrices closely linked to reality, such as, for example, love. These mediums are always used and managed socially, based on agreements about the possibilities of communication. In this framework, love, viewed as a medium, is not a feeling, but rather a communicative code through which we can shape emotions and feelings and respond to all the outcomes that such communication might provoke.

The literary, idealized representation of love, or thematic choice, is by no means arbitrary; it reflects the society's perception of love. These depictions do not necessarily reflect the real, factual aspect of love, but they certainly help in describing the functional needs of the social system. Accordingly, the semantics of love, in each case, helps us determine the relationship between symbolic means and social structures. Therefore, to understand love, it is not the thematic level of communication that matters, but rather its codification (Luhmann, 1986, p. 21). The function of love as a communicative medium is precisely to make the unbelievable possible. It is paradoxical, but love has the ability to expand communication without communication itself. Love can transform the world into a horizon of inner experience and actions.

Even in the Middle Ages, people knew that despite the discussion of love as a passion, they were dealing with behavioral models that could be enacted. This factor was well understood by them. In other words, the model of love was a source of knowledge (Luhmann, 1986, p. 20).

According to sociologist Niklas Luhmann, love is a symbolically generalized communicative code. Love in the society and social products (culture, literature, etc.) is presented not as a feeling, but as a socially manageable medium, a conventional communicative code. The semantics of love, therefore, expresses the functional needs of the social system and represents the communicative medium of symbolic means and social structures. Suffering from love is an intensification of this code, a demonstration of the depth of the code. Dying for love is the extreme form of romantic semantics. In Luhmann's theory, "dying for love" is also a cultural model which represents the individual's complete self-identification with the code of love.

Thus, it can be said that the timeless themes and motifs of 'Udhri romantic lyrics — the suffering from love and madness, dying for love — which gained widespread resonance and popularity in subsequent Middle Eastern literatures and other literatures influenced by them (in our case, Georgian literature), encompassed and nurtured various levels of interpretation. (In this case, we mean the mystical dimensions of 'Udhri themes, the widespread usage of poetic forms and clichés in Sufi poetic symbolism). Thanks to the prevailing "aesthetics of similarity" in the Middle Ages, which was centered around the "familiar" and "known," rather than the "unknown" and "strange," these themes and motifs

endlessly circulated in the literary world of that era.

Research of oriental literary influences on the 12th-century genius Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli and his poem *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* occupies a significant place in Georgian scholarship and has been a subject of great debate and polemic. The starting point of this discussion is the author's statement in the prologue, "This story is Persian, translated into Georgian... I found it and turned it into a poem," (Rustaveli, 1986, p. 10) which has been endlessly examined by researchers since the time of King Vakhtang VI. This riddle has sparked much ink, and numerous pages have been dedicated to the attempt of unraveling this riddle. The debates have often been accompanied by passionate controversies in Georgian scientific and literary circles. It is also worth mentioning that almost every notable Georgian public figure and outstanding researcher of Georgian literature in the 19th and 20th centuries has dedicated at least a few lines to the given issue. Even a simple list of their names and bibliography would fill many pages, because this polemic, considering the immense national value of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* for the Georgian people, has always had a broad resonance in the Georgian society. It has never remained the subject of discussion for a narrow circle of specialists. Every new idea has been and continues to be presented for the judgment of the society at large...

In the context of the theme of my article, I would like to touch upon Prof. Magali Todua's interesting monographic work, *The Leap of the Panther, or Why Rustaveli Surpasses Shakespeare and Goethe*, where the author attempts to clarify the meaning of "the story" and apply the modern literary terminology to it. As he notes, it is precisely in this area that the greatest confusion appears in the works of researchers of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*. Some equate "the story" with the plot, others with the narrative, and some use the terms *plot* and *narrative* interchangeably. Prof. Magali Todua defines Rustaveli's "story" as the *plot*, which, according to the author's own definition, is "the most compressed version of the narrative," a kind of framework, skeleton, or schema, the artistic unfolding and embodiment of which forms the actual narrative". In order to analyze the plot of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, the researcher employs Vladimir Propp's structural analysis method, dividing the plot of the poem into seven functions (The term "plot" used by Todua is equivalent to Propp's "composition" or "compositional schema"; V. Propp argues that one composition can serve as the foundation for multiple narratives. The composition is a stable element, while the plots are variable):

- I. Function: The young woman and man love each other.
- II. Function: The girl's parents disapprove of the relationship.
- III. Function: The lovers are separated by force.
- IV. Function: The young man seeks his beloved.
- V. Function: The young man meets a person who can help him.
- VI. Function: The helper finds a way for the young woman and the man to reunite.
- VII. Function: The lovers are united. (Todua, 1993, p. 38)

It is worth noting that Propp's method has already been applied in the field of Rustaveli studies, particularly in terms of the structural study of the plot of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*. Specifically, an interesting idea was put forward by researcher Mariam Karbelashvili regarding the identification of the composition (Todua's "plot") of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* with the invariant of the magical fairy tale. Karbelashvili presents the construction of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* as a modification of the universal formula of the magical fairy tale (Karbelashvili, 1980). Previously, the same author wrote an article on the structural typology of the folk *Knight in the Panther's Skin*, in which she links it to the invariant of the

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magical fairy tale and concludes as follows: although the folk Knight in the Panther's Skin has a literary foundation and emerged from it, in Georgian folklore there was a symbiosis between Rustaveli's Knight in the Panther's Skin and the folklore genre of the magical fairy tale (Karbelashvili, 1980).

Is this method acceptable for the analysis of The Knight in the Panther's Skin? The methodology of medieval literary research (including structural-typological analysis) relies on the principle of historicism when examining the genesis and typology of such literature. This means that the analysis must take into account the worldview of medieval society, its mythological, religious-philosophical and artistic thought.

Using such structural-analytical methods to study the genre specifics of the magical fairy tale led V. Propp to the discovery of its structural formula. Similarly, the renowned mythologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, through the structural study of myths, concluded that myths are also based on a formulaic system and can be classified according to certain stable models.

In contemporary literary studies, it is now widely accepted that there is a certain connection between myth, fairy tale, folklore and heroic-romantic epic, and that the differences among them are historical gradations. They are historically sequential in relation to one another. Lévi-Strauss views the fairy tale as a weakened form of the myth, while Propp considers the fairy tale in terms of the genesis of the myth. Thus, the myth serves as the primary source and foundation, which over time undergoes metamorphosis in the fairy tales, legends and folk epics of various nations.

This viewpoint is echoed in M. Karbelashvili's idea that at the foundation of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* a certain mythologem is encoded, whose universal model — "loss - search - discovery," realized through a modification of the structure of the magical fairy tale formula — underlies the narrative composition of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* (Karbelashvili, 1982). A researcher of medieval Arabic-Persian literature can draw many parallels between Todua's "plot" schema of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* and the life schema of the 'Udhri poet-lover, just as the credo of love presented in the prologue of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* shows considerable proximity to the etiquette of 'Udhri love, with some passages being directly identical:

"In the Arabic tongue they call the lover 'madman'"

"No one can understand his devotion to a single beloved..."

"When he is separated from his beloved, his longing only grows..."

"Let the heart be faithful to solely one..."

"A true lover is he who leaves behind all worldly pleasures..."

"There is no greater devotion than that which endures through suffering..."

"If a lover weeps for his beloved, sheds tears in sorrow, his walking is righteous, and his suffering will be duly counted..."

"Chaste love is necessary; it brings one close to death, excites the learned, and teaches the unlearned" and so on. (Rustaveli, 1986, pp. 22-24)

As is well known, the story of Majnūn and Laylā, created at the end of the 7th century, formed the basis for Nizami Ganjavi's (12th century) poem *Laylā and Majnūn*.

Given the centuries-long close relationship between medieval Georgian and Persian literatures, Georgian literary scholars have, of course, paid attention to Nizami's poem in their work on *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*. Scholars have noted the thematic proximity of the *Knight in the Panther's Skin*

prologue to the introduction of *Laylâ and Majnün* (Niko Marr, Iustine Abuladze, Alexandre Baramidze), as well as the substantive similarities between the poems themselves (K. Kekelidze). Korneli Kekelidze argues that the mention of Qays in *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* serves as evidence that Rustaveli was familiar with the poem of his senior contemporary, Nizami, and was influenced by the latter (Tserteli, 2021, pp.13-18). It has also been suggested that these literary influences may derive directly from the Arabic version of the Majnün and Laylâ story; evidence for this is the established usage of the term "mijnuri" (lover) in Rustaveli's time – /mijnuri shmagsa gvikvian arabulita enita/ ("In the Arabic tongue they call the lover 'madman'") (Todua, 1993, p. 12). At the same time, Georgian scholars have not overlooked the substantive differences between Rustaveli's and Nizami's heroes: Nizami's Majnün is consumed by mystical love, and his isolation and wandering are mystical in nature, whereas Tariel searches for his lost beloved in order to be reunited with her, and his love is worldly (Baramidze, 1945, pp. 164–165; Nozadze, 1975, p. 161). In this respect, Rustaveli's own words remain especially noteworthy:

"Mishap pursues the lover; It consumes the world like fire;
Yet, in the end it gives him joy, If he endures the first distress." (Rustaveli, 1986, p. 297)

The experienced suffering, grief and misfortune enhance the feeling of victory and bring great joy, because "Who hath ever reaped delight without first labouring in sorrow?" (Rustaveli, 1986, p. 287); hence, "Sweet is joy to him who has passed through sorrow." (Rustaveli, 1986, p. 476), i.e.: "No man can relish pleasure who has not tasted pain." (Rustaveli, 1986, p. 510)

It is also interesting to view *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* through the perspective of Eastern scholars. Professor Jalil Kamāl ad-Dīn of University of Baghdad, in his article "*Arabs in Old Georgian Literary Heritage*", written as a response to the Arabic translation of Rustaveli's poem, sees many parallels between this masterpiece of Georgian literature and Eastern poetry. He directly identifies Rustaveli's concept of romantic love (*mijnuroba*) with the tradition of 'Udhri love in Arabic literature. In his opinion, the suffering of the Georgian lover resembles the suffering of the Arab lover who is insane with love. His attitude toward love is similar to the attitude of the Arab lover. The Arabic background of the poem further strengthens this emotional affinity (Kamāl ad-Dīn, 1980). Turkish researcher Sudan Altun also provides an interesting analysis of Rustaveli's concept of love – *mijnuroba* (Altun, 2017).

Interestingly enough, the Egyptian scholar of Arabic literature Shawqī Dayif, in his collection of love stories of the 'Udhri poets compiled on the basis of "The Book of Songs", argues that 'Udhri love was a bodily and real form of love experienced by the Arabs in the early Islamic period. Attempts of some scholars to detach this tradition from its human, earthly dimension and clothe it solely in the Sufi interpretation are unsuccessful and ungrounded (Dayif, 2005, pp. 7-17).

Conclusion

In response to the above-mentioned, we would add that, on a certain level, there is indeed a resemblance between Tariel and the 'Udhri poet-lover, and between Rustaveli's concept of love and 'Udhri love; this affinity cannot be denied. However, according to the Arabic sources, the life pattern of the 'Udhri poet-lover is entirely different in its narrative and thematic structure:

While preserving the dynamic character of the conceptual opposition, the model may be outlined as follows: love at first sight → fatal and eternal separation and loss → death caused by love, where the

central conflict is fully expressed in the opposition: eternal longing ↔ eternal separation⁵.

On the one hand, presenting this model, and, on the other, comparing it with the plot structure of “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”, clearly demonstrates that typologically these are two different schemes. Admittedly, the resemblance on the level of individual components is evident, and certain narrative lines do coincide. Yet, the structural “skeleton” of the former is “loss — search — finding,” whereas that of the latter is “falling in love — fatal and eternal separation — death from love.” Thus, however tangible and concrete the similarities between them may seem, they remain essentially external. The shared attributes that bring these heroes closer together, and the tonalities with which the two forms of love are portrayed, appear to be reflections of that common fund of artistic values and expressive means which existed in the Middle Ages and nourished every more-or-less significant literary creation, not to mention that the system of values and the artistic phenomenon of *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* are something different and far greater than a mere plot, which, within that broader system of values, occupies a comparatively modest place.

⁵ It should be mentioned that this scheme of myths about ‘Udhri poet-lovers has been outlined by Taha Hussein, who was quite skeptical towards to historical nature of these myths. In his *Hadīth al-Arbi‘ā* he noted quite ironically but justly that the entire story of Majnūn can be told in six sentences: Majnūn fell in love with Laylā, proposed to her, was rejected by her parents, who forced Laylā to marry another person. Majnūn became insane with grief and died (Krachkovsky, 1956, p. 609; Hussein, 2014, p. 184).

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