

Rustaveli's Masterpiece – A Renaissance Narrative Poem or a Medieval Novel?

Yordan Lyutskanov

(Summary)

The article introduces to the late medieval romance in verse *Vepkhistq'aosani* by Shota Rustaveli – the central artefact in Georgian cultural self-awareness and the top item of 'high' Georgian cultural export. It briefly presents its narrative content, indicating the correlation of two plot-lines (initially through enframing, after some point though horizontal interlacing). It briefly introduces to the main fluctuations and 20th-century tendency in translating the work's title, interpreting the fluctuations as indicative of aesthetic differences, and the tendency as an indication of the 'cultural market' success of the Soviet-Georgian (in its ideological and aesthetical basis – a Stalinist and socialist-realist) image of Rustaveli's masterpiece. It presents two influential to dominant claims of Georgian Rustvelology – that the work is a *poema* (and not a novel/romance) and that it displays, at least partially, Renaissance outlook and poetics, – considering these claims as tools (1) of Soviet "Culture Two" to allot a proper place to Georgian nation within the alternative modernity of the USSR and its premodern background-under-construction, and (2) of Soviet-Georgian cultural nationalism to define a usable past in Rustaveli (and, indirectly, Georgian cultural identity) in non-Eurocentric terms, providing some factographic and theoretic clues from the field of macrohistory (J. Abu-Lughod et al.) and a methodological one from sociology of arts (P. Bourdieu).

Keywords: Shota Rustaveli; poetics of title; poetics of translating; Soviet cultural export; national epic; chivalry romance; Renaissance; Middle Ages; Eurocentrism; anthropology of scholarship

Yordan Lyutskanov
Institute of literature
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
52 Shipchencki Prohod Blvd., Bl. 17
1113 Sofia, BULGARIA
yljuckanov@gmail.com