

Ekaterine Kobakhidze

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

Tbilisi, Georgia

The passage from Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* in *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*?¹

Traces of the Greco – Roman tradition within Rustaveli's work are still being discovered to this day, as, in author's view, is clearly demonstrated by a new instance of the reception of Greek myths in *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*. This piece of reception is related to an episode of Avtandil's adventure described in the chapter "Avtandil's Departure from Phridon to Seek Nestan – Daredjan", where the main character, who epitomizes goodness as a defender of the oppressed, is disguised as a merchant, and strives alone to come to grips with pirates.

Pirates appear in fictional works that depict historical events, as well as in legends and myths. Amongst the latter, one of the most archaic and, at the same time, – popular plots in the Western and Eastern worlds is the myth about Dionysus and the Tyrrhenian Pirates. This narrative is upheld in the Homeric Hymns and later cited by Euripides, Ovid and Nonnus. In contrast to relevant passages belonging to Homeric Hymn 7, Euripides and Ovid, Nonnus characterizes Dionysus not as an innocent victim who accidentally encounters pirates while drunk with wine, but a hero fighting against greedy buccaneers, who himself entraps the pirates. Certain parallels that go well beyond the level of typological similarity can be observed between the above – mentioned episode from *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* and the given passage from the *Dionysiaca*. By comparing excerpts from these two works, it becomes evident that the author of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* should have been familiar with the myth of Dionysus and the Tyrrhenian Pirates and, moreover, with the variant of the literary adaptation found in *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus. It seems quite organic that Rustaveli's *The Knight in Panther's Skin*, where traces of Neo – Platonism have been pointed out by a number of scholars, would have used the *Dionysiaca* permeated with the spirit of Neo – Platonism.

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