

**MSC 2020****International Scientific and Practical Conference «MAN. SOCIETY.  
COMMUNICATION»****THE WORLD OF HUMAN LIKENESSES IN FOREIGN  
LITERATURE**

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**Abstract**

The article examines the human likeness peculiar world models in foreign literature. The plot of love model for a "soulless friend", a wax image of her husband and the death of the heroine (Laodamia) associated with it was set by Euripides' tragedy "Protesilaus" and is developed in history of foreign literature. The reviving statue transformation into an "avenging" (P. Merime "Venus of Illa") is noted. The further vector of artistic development is transferred from the animated statue to the diverse image of the doll and the animated portrait. "Puppetry" touches on the ontological foundations of human behavior. Becoming a puppet in the powerful hands, a person pays a high price (death of the soul, loss of personality). The consequences of such a non-childish "game" turn out to be fatal not only for the "living puppet", but also for the "puppet master" himself, as the Spanish Princess image dynamics in Wilde's fairy tale "The Infanta's Birthday" demonstrates. Features of the revived portrait phenomenon are considered in Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray", Poe's "Life in Death", "The Oval Portrait", Meturin's "Melmoth the Wanderer". Retribution motive, which has become dominant in historical poetics, is complicated by the accentuation of the duality theme. In "The Picture of Dorian Gray" it is combined with the art vengeance theme, which is absent in Meturin's "Melmoth the Wanderer" and Poe's "Life in Death". The edge of this ethical pathos, which comes into contact with the reviving work (the portrait), is directed primarily against the current original.

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*Keywords:* Animated portrait, animated statue, dolls, duality, mirror, revenge motive



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## **1. Introduction**

Humanitarian science, from antiquity to the present, is looking for answers to questions about the relationship between the animate and the inanimate, the possibilities of reviving an inanimate object. Antique Larvae, dead dolls dancing on the banquet table symbolized memento mori, and at the same time “an autobiography of life overpowering death”, “an image of death-revival” (Freidenberg, 1997, p. 196, p. 194). Larvae, as well as ritual, ceremonial, playing dolls, theatrical puppets, or anthropomorphic dolls, and android machines endowed with divinatory and mystical abilities and actions in the subsequent history of their development stimulated the emergence of the world of human likenesses, conditional and diverse, parallel to the real one, in culture and literature. Thus, one can note the universality of the “ideas about the revival of a dead likeness and the transformation of a living being into a motionless image” that arose in the myth. “A statue, portrait, reflection in water, shadow or imprint give rise to various plots of displacement of the living by the dead, revealing the essence of the concept of “ life ” in a particular cultural system,” writes (Lotman, 1992, p. 378). Having a typologically common basis, these images are modified, reflecting the spiritual quest of a particular era as well as modernity.

## **2. Problem Statement**

In the presented article, it is proposed to identify the typology of the most characteristic images of human likenesses (dolls, revived statues and a portrait), the variability of their axiological basis.

## **3. Research Questions**

Starting from antiquity, the images of dolls, revived statues and portraits became a stable art object, reflecting the long history of existence in fiction. The work most distant from our time is the lost tragedy of Euripides “Protesilaus” about the heroine’s love for her “soulless friend”. According to the fragments that have reached our time, it is difficult to reconnect the death of the heroine with the statue, however, according to T.A. Kitanina,

“... the later echoes and refinements of this plot correlate Laodamia’s death precisely with the statue of her husband ...” (Kitanina, 2018, p. 177-178). The model of the Euripides’s plot is noticeably activated in the West European literature of the 19th century, demonstrating the transformation of an unusual character, a change of axiology, which is supposed to be studied in this article.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

Explore the models of the image in foreign literature of the world of human likenesses, the transformation of a reviving statue into a “revenge statue”, to trace the variability of the image of a doll and a revived portrait.

## 5. Research Methods

The wide field of the analyzed material involves the use of the comparative historical method along with the provisions of modern poetics about the “double nature” of coding and the secondary semantization of an artistic-figurative language.

## 6. Findings

Distancing themselves from their temple ancestors who performed magical rites, sacred statues, becoming an art object, gave way to a living statue – an android that can arouse love. Subsequently, the image is transformed into a “vengeful statue”, as it happens in Mérimée’s short story “Venus of Illa”. The “vengefulness” of the statue is axiologically oriented towards upholding violated moral and ethical, aesthetic norms. In the short story, the narrator talks about the copper statue of Venus found in Mr. Peyrorad’s garden, created by one of the descendants of the great Greek sculptor Miron and called “idol” because of the unusual look and expression of her face: “she is looking at you point-blank ... as if she is staring at you,” she has “an unkind expression ... and she herself is evil” (Mérimée, 1963, p. 130-131). The description of the face is enhanced by its further characterological image: a “demonic expression” is noted, a combination of “marvelous beauty” with “utter heartlessness” reinforced by the epithets “violent”, “indignant” (Turbulenta) (Mérimée, 1963, p. 138). Negative connotations perform a pre-informative function reinforced by foreign vocabulary (on the pedestal the scientist sees a semiotically accentuated half-erased warning inscription in Latin: *Save amantem – Beware of the loving woman*). In Mérimée’s short story, the gender roles of the mentioned typological model of the Cnidian myth and the Euripides’s story about Laodamia’s love for the wax “soulless friend” are inverted. The connection between Mérimée’s work and antiquity is strengthened by the epigraph from the work of Lucian – the dialogue “*Lover of Lies, or Disbeliever*”: “May the statue be gracious and merciful, being so courageous!” (Mérimée, 1963, p. 128) <sup>1</sup>. The epigraph, as well as the characterological imagery associated with Venus of Illa, accentuates the motive of punishment for scolding love.

The motive of the revived statue is also used in the fairy tale by O. Wilde “*The Happy Prince*”. Its central character is not the prince himself, which would be characteristic of the fairy-tale genre, but his statue. The first hypostasis of the image – “the living Prince” – is understood in the tale as the stage already passed in the development of the protagonist, this is his “past”, which is presented in the form of a laconic story-retrospective of the Prince-statue. The main body of the text of the tale is the story of the “repeated” (“aesthetic”) embodiment of the central image of the Happy Prince – the statue. The “aesthetic” revival of the character, connected with the comprehension of the beauty of ethical values, ends typologically – with death. However, the death of the hero marks a transition to a higher, divine world and is associated with the motive of acquiring the future in eternity.

The derivation of the development in literature of the images of the statue are dolls. Analyzing the role of three main elements of the triad “author – text – audience”, Y. M. Lotman discovers significant

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<sup>1</sup> The epigraph (strong text position) of Mérimée’s short story is reminiscent of the Corinthian commander Pelich who had a statue endowed with the gift of healing the sick and wandering around the garden at night, leaving its pedestal. The revived statue punishes the hero.

differences between seemingly similar at first glance phenomena – a doll and a statue, noting the following features of their semiosis: in the case of the statue “all activity is enclosed in the author, the text contains all the essentials that the audience needs to perceive, and this latter plays the role of the perceiving addressee. <...> The statue contains that high artistic world that the viewer cannot independently develop <...>. The statue is a mediator, transmitting to us another's creativity” (Lotman, 1992, p. 378).

The “real” life tragedy in Wilde’s fairy tale “Infanta's Birthday” is correlated with the performance of wooden puppets, and not with the usual theatrical story associated with Sybil Wayne, as described in “The Picture of Dorian Gray”. In the tale, Wilde “double-filters” his own aesthetic construction. Exposure of the method demonstrates its predetermination, conventionality, schematism. Characteristic is the author’s choice from the variety of puppet “actors” (Knyazeva, 2002, p. 57-58)<sup>2</sup>, “the most “dependent”, according to Vasilkova (2003) of all the dolls.” “... Puppets are seemingly closer to a person than others, their movements are most natural” (p. 135). Popova (2020) notes this feature as well (p. 118-135)<sup>3</sup>.

However, excessive “anthropomorphism”, the naturalness of the doll, turns into a significant danger that threatens to cross out its original nature (Lotman, 1992, p. 378), turning into a loss of self-identity and individuality. Very subtly “grasping” the extremely dangerous moment of erasing the line between a living actor and a wooden puppet, and more broadly – between a man and a doll, Wilde shows how destructive this path can be in his tale. “Puppetry” touches upon ontological foundations of human behavior. The displacement of the game to the periphery of children's world and its replacement with a theatrical performance gives rise to the desire to “play” with living people, to make them one’s own dolls. However, this line is fraught with the destructiveness of the role assigned to a man as a puppet in the hands of the power players. Such a role entails the death of the soul, the loss of individuality. The game with people as living puppets takes on a tragic coloring, it brings new features to the text, changing its typology and semiotics. The consequences of such a non-childish “game” are fatal not only for the “living puppet”, but also for the “puppeteer” himself, as the dynamics of the image of the Spanish Princess convincingly testify to. Puppet iconography in a fairy tale symbolically links together the key problems of the fairy tale: children – acting – cruelty – death. Wilde, anticipating one of the main lines of the twentieth century’s development of artistic consciousness, outlined the problem of the puppetry of human relations based on the interdependence of the puppet and the puppeteer. Here appears a reminder of the tragedy of Platonic anthology, on the one hand, and the dehumanization of modern civilization, on the other hand.

In parallel with the reviving statues, the concept of a revived portrait is also developing, which introduced a number of various reduplications into literature. Taking this thesis into account, we can talk about a deep logical connection between them. The concept of animated portrait is based on the mythological motive of painting as “taking the soul” from the one posing, which occupied O. Wilde. The appearance of his novel “The Picture of Dorian Gray” was preceded by the novels of E. A. Poe: “Life in Death” (1842) and “The Oval Portrait” (in the edition of 1845).

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<sup>2</sup> Puppet theater, “existing since antiquity, is unusually rich and diverse in types of dolls - glove and mask dolls, puppets and puppets on reeds live there” (Knyazeva, 2002, p. 57-58).

<sup>3</sup> The researcher also associates the opposition “animate - inanimate” with the doll, comparing the traditional doll with the mechanical one, shifting, however, the emphasis on the contrast between the natural and the artificial. Game improvisation is alien to the automaton, hence its programmed nature. Only animated by the creative, gaming impulse of a person, the doll receives individual traits. From this point of view, the closest puppet to humans is the glove puppet (Popova, 2020, p. 118-135).

Poe (1976) is concerned with the contradiction between the vivid living feeling which invigorates the inspired process of creating a painting, and the spiritual blindness of the artist who does not want to see “that he took away the paints that he applied to the canvas from the one who sat in front of him and hour by hour became paler and more transparent” (Poe, 1976, p. 356). In terms of motive this feature brought together E. Poe's story with medieval legends about the painters who kidnapped the souls of those whom they painted. The motive of kidnapping the soul of the portrayed person also attracted the attention of Henry James, who used the plot of the image coming to life in the portrait in the novel “The Tragic Muse” (1890) to pass a peculiar sentence on aestheticism: after the disappearance from the canvas of the original not worthy of commemorating, its image gradually disappears too (Elman, 2000, p. 355). The story of creating a portrait in Wilde's novel is also described as the process of “taking away the soul” from the person posing: “I have a feeling that this portrait is a part of myself,” says Basil Hallward (Wilde, 2003, p. 51).

In Wilde's novel, as in Maturin's “Melmoth the Wanderer”, two motives intertwine: the longevity and the mysterious connection of a person with his portrait. The fantastic and miraculous organically intersperse in the realistic narratives of the writers. Inheritance by the novel of “the story about a man and a portrait” reinforced the conventions of Wilde's novel's composition, the playful, fantastic source in the turns of the plot (Alekseev, 1976, p. 610). The portrait was given an important role of a twin that reminded of the contract that the original held with the devil. A mirror and a portrait were endowed with such a fantastic function since the Middle Ages (Melshior-Bonnet, 2005, p. 17) <sup>4</sup>. In accordance with the existing traditions, Maturin gives the portrait unusual properties <sup>5</sup> that could not fail to attract Wilde's attention. The text of “Melmoth the Wanderer” emphasizes the high quality and imperishability of the image in the portrait. The exclusivity of the image itself correlates with the extraordinary fate of the original and is coordinated by it: the face, despite the past hundred and fifty years, has not been overshadowed by a single wrinkle, not a single spot, not a single gray hair, not a single sign of decrepitude and weakness. Wilde uses a similar effect. Dorian's face becomes a symbolic “bearer” of the idea of longevity and unfading youth.

Drawing attention to philosophical and ethical problems using the unusual properties of the portrait, Maturin, however, does not set a goal to organically interweave all the vicissitudes of the plot with the picturesque painting: as the tasks assigned to the portrait are solved, it is destroyed in the fire of the family fireplace almost at the very beginning of the novel. Confirming our observation, we note that the disappearance of the portrait does not fatally influence (unlike with Dorian Gray) the one who was painted in it. This is evidenced by the episode of the meeting of the younger Melmoth with his ancestor, the latter met him in a dream with the words that “such a fire does not have the power to destroy me. I'm alive; I'm here beside you.” (Maturin, 1976, p. 62). Melmoth's life is not endless. However, its length is not associated with the portrait, as in Wilde, but depends on the term (one hundred and fifty years) allocated to Melmoth by the contract. The Mephistophelesian beginning, seen in Maturin's novel, is also evident in Wilde's novel, in which the portrait turns into the main factor in the organization of the plot. The tragedy of the

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<sup>4</sup> According to the text of the novel by Maturin, the portrait appearing in it was painted in 1646. At this time, mirrors become quite common, and, according to Sabine Melshior-Bonnet, a person now looks in the mirror very differently, “than a man of the 12th century, for whom reflection was quite closely connected with the devil” (Melshior-Bonnet, 2005, p. 17).

<sup>5</sup> In the room where the painting is located, the candles burn with a dim blue fire, and this is a bad omen; the image in the portrait, as later in Wilde's novel, turns out to be an animated creature with a lively repulsive look and eyes sparkling, like the original's, with an unusual sinister fire.

protagonist's history in "Melmoth the Wanderer" is reinterpreted by Wilde in line with other traditions. In Wilde's novel, as in H. de Balzac's novel "Forgiven Melmoth" (1835), and in R. L. Stevenson's late short story "The Bottle Imp" (1891), the seducer easily succeeds to find material for his experiment. Coinciding in the satirical development of the seduction motive with Balzac and Stevenson, Wilde at the same time gives this motive new shades, which is determined by the problems of ethics and aesthetics that concern him, his interest in the role of art in a man's discovery of his own spiritual as well as "underground" structures. To carry out his plan, Wilde emphasizes the theme of duality in the motive of a reviving portrait, avenging the original. The principle of duality used in Wilde's novel is typologically and functionally close to the stories by A. Chamisso ("The Extraordinary Story of Peter Schlemihl"), E. Poe ("William Wilson"), R. L. Stevenson ("The Strange History of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde"), as well as H. de Balzac ("The wild Ass's skin"), into the intrigue of which the motive and image of an unusual shadow are interwoven. Wilde's character is connected with the characters of the works by Chamisso, Poe and Stevenson by the problem of the mirror doubling of the figurative system, with Balzac's story – by the thought of a sensitive screen on which all the movements of the soul <sup>6</sup> and visually changing features become visible. However, unlike the shadow-twin from the works by Poe and Stevenson, Wilde's "twin" cannot speak and move. At the same time, the portrait in Wilde's novel, like the shagreen skin in Balzac's novel, is capable of transformations, but is a silent and a static object (Zenkin, 2018). <sup>7</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, the retribution motive, gaining dominance in historical poetics, associated with the depiction of dolls and puppetry, reviving statues and portraits in literature, for centuries has been transformed, becoming more complex, due to its combination with the theme of the vengefulness of art. The ethical and aesthetic pathos of this line is directed, first of all, against the current original. In this regard, a magic mirror – a portrait – carries out actions that are somewhat close to the functions of the statue from the novel by P. Mérimée "Venus of Illa", as well as from Wilde's poem "Charmides". This line found further continuation in modern times, corresponding with "new ideas about truth, realism and determinism", stimulating "the appearance in the literature of Great Britain of works that are located on the borders of the real and the unreal" (Vladimirova & Kupriyanova 2018, p. 209) which creates a special oneiric art space, "which is characterized by the principle of "non-merging / inseparability"(M. Bakhtin) of the conditionally real and the imaginative space constructed by the writer" (Vladimirova et al., 2019, p. 173). This corresponds with a specific system of characters that create a kind of intermediate world of human likenesses.

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<sup>6</sup> According to the researchers, "William Wilson" by E. Poe, "The Strange History of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" by R. L. Stevenson and "The wild Ass's skin" by H. de Balzac are connected by means of allusion with Maturin's novel "Melmoth the Wanderer".

<sup>7</sup> Let us recall that the portrait in Wilde's novel is contrasted with a photograph of Dorian reproduced by Lord Henry. N.S. Bochkareva and K.A. Maysheva base their opinions on Bart's statement: "a person never coincides with his image in photography" ("myself never coincides with my image"). The researchers add that this strengthens the "conflict between illusion and reality" (Bochkareva & Maisheva, 2017, p. 152). A. A. Kholikov notes the discrepancy between the source and the photographic image, which can reduce, distort the original (Kholikov, 2017). The intended problem gains variability in further research: for example, S. N. Zenkin raises the question of the relationship between an artificial visual image (a pictorial image of a person) and the deforming effect on it of a verbal text (Zenkin, 2018).

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