

## FIGURE OF THE STATUE IN PUSHKIN'S TRAGEDY "THE STONE GUEST" AND P. MERIMEE'S NOVEL "THE VENUS OF ILL": COMPARATIVE ASPECT

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Abstract: The article deals with the comparative aspect of the works of Russian and French literature: the "small tragedy" of A.S. Pushkin's "The Stone Guest" and the novel by Prosper Merimee "The Venus of Ill". The similarities and differences between the two works at the genesis, plot-figurative, compositional levels, as well as in the ways of realization of the artistic convention are revealed. At the same time, genre differences in the article are not considered. Attention is paid to the creative collaboration of two writers.

Keywords: A.S. Pushkin, P. Merimee, "The Stone Guest", "The Venus of Ill", the image of a statue.

### 1 Introduction

Alexander Pushkin and Prosper Merimee are two great classics of Russian and French literature, closely and with interest watched each other's works. Merimee, who sincerely admired "Eugene Onegin", translated into French such works by the Russian writer as "The Queen of Spades", "The Shot", "The Gypsies", the poems "Gusar", "Anchar", "The Prophet", "What a Night! Frost bitter...". Pushkin, in turn, created the Songs of Western Slavs, focusing on Merimee's book "The Guzla, or a Selection of Illyric Poems Collected in Dalmatia, Bosnia, Croatia, and Herzegovina", noting in the preface to them the talent and originality of the French writer.

The creative collaboration of two artists of the word developed in parallel, sometimes touching on topics such as, for example, in the aforementioned "Songs of the Western Slavs" and "Guzla"; the image of Don Juan Tenorio was depicted by Pushkin in "The Stone Guest", and the image of Don Juan de Marana by Merimee in the novel "The Soul of the Purgatory", the revived statue operates in the same "Stone The Guest" and the novel "The Venus of Ill" by Merimee.

A comparison of the last two works of A. Pushkin and P. Merimee reveals their difference in the processing of one theme at the plot-compositional and figurative levels, as well as in the ways of implementing artistic conventionality. However, their generic differences in the article are not considered. Comparative analysis allows us to trace the originality of the development of Russian and French literature. At the same time, it should be noted that Pushkin could not have known "The Venus of Ill" published by Merimee in the year of the death of the Russian colleague.

### 2 Materials and Methods

A comparative analysis of the two works is proposed to be carried out at the following levels: genesis, plot-figurative, compositional, method of realization of artistic conventionality.

If we talk about the plot, the Russian and French writers drew it from a different source: A.S. Pushkin used the popular folk story about the libertine and sinner Don Juan, processed by the Spanish playwright Tirso de Molina, but is famous to Pushkin by opera "Don Juan" (1787) by Mozart and Molière's comedy "Don Juan, or, The Stone Banquet" (staged in 1665), and the plot of the Merimee's short story, by his own admission, goes back to the ancient Greek satirist writer Lucian of Samosata and the medieval legend from the book of the German historian Marquard Freher, "I decided to write this story after reading a medieval legend from Freher. In addition, I borrowed some details from Lucian, who tells about the statue that beats people" (1, p499) As if emphasizing the source of the plot, Merimee's epigraph to the novel takes lines from Lucian's "Lover of Lies, or Nevers", which tells about the copper statue of Corinthian commander Peliha, which could cure the sick. At night she came

to life, wandering through the garden. When one of the grooms dared to steal the gold coins that were presented to the statue as a sign of gratitude for healing, she punished him cruelly: he died, and bruises were visible all over his body.

The given plot is "superimposed" on the story of a dead bride who kills her fiancé, who was actively exploited by European romantics at the beginning of the 19th century, for example, I.V. Goethe's ballad "The Bride of Corinth" (1797), D.G. Byron's poem "The Siege of Corinth" (1816), T. Moore's ballad "The Lake of the Dead Bride" (1803), V. Irving's novel "The Adventure of the German Student" (1824), and others.

French researchers of P. Merimee works indicate the following sources of "The Venus of Ill" :

- 1) the legend, written in the chronicle of the twelfth-century English historian William of Malmesbury, "De gestis Regum Anglorum libri quinque" (Acts of the English Kings) (1125), which was used by the French composer P. Merimee's contemporary F. Gerold in his opera "Tsampa, or the marble bride" (1831). The libretto of the opera as a whole is repeated in the novel Merimee, "a certain Roman, by playing ball with the guests on his wedding day, put his wedding ring on the finger of the statue of Venus. When he then tried to remove the ring from the finger of the stone goddess, it bent, and the young man could not get the ring back. After some time, the finger straightened, but the ring was no longer on it. That same night, the newlyweds were visited by a female demon in the form of Venus, who declared herself the legitimate bride of a young man. Having lost his masculine strength, the latter turned for help to a priest, a black magician, and he banished the demon but paid for it with his own life." (2)
- 2) Italian diplomat Count Constantin Nigra in a letter to the author of the book "Merimee and His Friends" A. Philo wrote that "Venus Illas is a parody based on an Italian legend told by an old chronicler. This story is in the works of other authors: "The History of Gregory VII" by A.F. Villemain. Merimee found out about the legend from Villemain." This letter Philo quoted in his book.
- 3) Merimee, who knew English, could be inspired by the relevant passage from the "The Anatomy of Melancholy" of the seventeenth century English thinker Robert Burton, where the author examined the essence and causes of melancholy, generated, including witchcraft and magic.

In both works, there is a love triangle: but in Pushkin's work, there are two men and one woman, and in Merimee's work, on the contrary, two women and one man. The general scheme of the story is the same, it is the revenge of the resurgent statue, which led to the death of the hero, and death comes from the fact that the statue squeezed the victim in his cold embrace. And in this and another work, a person provokes a statue: in "The Stone Guest" Don Guan invites the statue of the Commander to come on his love meeting with the widow of the deceased, at Merimee Alfons de Peyrard puts on Venus's finger a wedding ring with the inscription, "Forever with you", thereby recognizing her as his wife. Merimee seems to lose the situation opposite to the Greek myth of Pygmalion and Galatea: what would have happened if Pygmalion had not fallen in love with a statue, but on the contrary, the statue would have fallen in love with a person? Of course, the complete metamorphosis of an idol into a living woman occurs in the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, and thus, the triumph and power of love are affirmed. Pushkin and Merimee's statues do not cease to remain cold statues, reviving only for a while.

R.G. Nazirov in the detailed and interesting article "The plot of the reviving statue" considers three types of such statues: the patroness statue, the avenger statue and the eerie "statue in love". (3, p28) In "The Stone Guest", according to the classification of R.G. Nazirova, we meet with a statue of the

avenger, in "The Venus of Ill" with a statue in love (it was not for nothing that a phrase in Latin was written out on the base of the statue "Watch out for the loving one"). Hence, the plot differences between the two works. The motive of the statue in love appears again in Merimee in his other novel "Lane of Mrs. Lucretia" (1846), where the plot of "The Venus of Ill" is practically repeated, except for mutual love between the statue and the man. The story about this is introduced in the novel as an episodic dialogue between the abbot and the narrator:

"- Just twenty years ago, a statue strangled an Englishman in Tivoli.

- The statue? - I exclaimed. - How did this happen?

- A certain milord has carried out excavations at Tivoli. He found a statue of Empress Agrippina Messalina... I do not remember which one. Anyway, he ordered her to be brought to his house, and all the time he looked at her, admired and eventually became unduly infatuated with her. <...> He called her his wife, his lady, kissed her, although she was marble. He said that the statue comes to life every night to please him. One fine morning, my milord was found dead in bed. And believe it or not? I found another Englishman who bought this statue. I would let her go on the lime." (1, p411)

The repeated motive about the killing statue testifies to its importance for the poetics of Merimee, in other words, "those aspects of reality, objects, and phenomena of the world that are most important to the poet are constantly present in his mind and determine the features of the author's word usage." (4, p102) It is no coincidence that Merimee considered "The Venus of Ill" as his best short story: in a letter to Madame de la Rochejacquin dated February 18, 1857, P. Merimee writes, "Did you read the ghost story I wrote about Venus of Ill? In my opinion, this is my masterpiece." (1, p127)

In Pushkin, although the drama is called "The Stone Guest", the statue of the Commander appears only in the penultimate scene, and the whole action develops around the adventures of Don Guan. In Merimee, the story of the found "idol" keeps in suspense from the first to the last pages. Venus is always a topic for conversations of all the characters of the novel, described several times (by the narrator's guide, the narrator himself, Mr. de Peyrarrad), they turn to her, they talk to her like with a woman ("rascal", "hellcat").

In building "The Stone Guest", Pushkin, in our opinion, was guided by antique patterns, as evidenced by his use of such a dramatic technique of the ancient Greek tragedy as *deus ex machina* (literally: god from the machine). The huge statue of Commander ("Nephilim"), like God, appears in the final scene of Pushkin's drama and punishes the sinner with his heavy right hand. Pushkin knew the ancient tragedy perfectly well and on this occasion noted in the article "On classical and romantic poetry" (1825), "I don't consider it necessary to talk about the poetry of the Greeks and Romans; every educated European should have a sufficient concept of immortal creatures of stately antiquity." (5, p36) According to researcher N.A. Buranok, "Pushkin's reasoning about the essence of dramatic works testifies to his deep knowledge in the field of drama theory and, in particular, the ancient theory developed in the poetics of Aristotle and Horace." (6, p129)

In a completely different way, Merimee follows the development of the composition of his novel, in which the architectonics of the European Gothic novel is guessed with its supernatural "horrors", mysticism, and emotional intensity, increasing as the plot moves to the outcome.

Both Don Guan and Alphonse de Peyrarrad are jaded libertines, but unlike the calculating groom from the novel Merimee, who married not a young attractive girl, but on her rich inheritance, Don Guan in the last minutes of his life experiences a sincere feeling of love and dies with the name Doña Ana on the lips.

The statues are different in two works: in one case it is a man, and in the other is the statue of a beautiful woman, the ancient Roman goddess Venus. The "material" of which the statues are made is also different: stone and copper/bronze. Appearing at the end as a *deus ex machine*, the Commander, along with Don Juan, falls into hell, thus the statue of Pushkin is thought of as God's retribution to the sinner. As Anna Akhmatova writes in her article "The Stone Guest" by Pushkin, "The statue of the Commander is a symbol of retribution, but if she took Don Guan with her to the cemetery, there would also be no tragedy, but rather a horror theater." (7, p388) Pushkin, as you know, hadn't gone down this path. This development of the plot suggested Merimee. In the Merimee's novel, the statue was initially perceived as something satanic: when the statue was removed from the ground, it smashed the leg of one of the people dragging it, but when after all the sad events (deaths of the son and father de Peyrarrad), it was melted into a church bell, then the new appearance of the "rascal" is damaging, "Since the new bell tolls in Illa, the vineyards have already suffered twice from the frost."

For the first time, the appearance of Venus is described by the nameless conductor of the narrator, who was present at the time of the initial discovery of the statue. The fact that Venus is being dug out of the ground, i.e. as if extracted from the underworld, in the eyes of simple peasants it is proved by its blackness ("a black hand appeared, resembling the hand of a dead man, climbing from the ground", "a huge black woman, almost completely naked, from pure copper"), "with an unkind expression" of the face and with an "evil" gaze ("she looks at you with her large white eyes... as if she stares at me", "he has an unkind expression... and she herself is evil"). The next time she gives a rebuff to the two revelers who talk to her like with a street girl, "Are you here, rascal? <...> Are you still here? You broke Jean Kohl's leg! If I got you, I would have turned your neck." And after one hooligan tried to throw a stone at her, the stone bounced off and hit him in the head, "She threw a stone back at me!" the Catalan cries out, now confident that she is dealing with evil spirits.

The statue of Venus, beautiful and perfect in its forms, evokes fear not only among ordinary peasants but even among narrators: "It was not the calm and stern beauty of Greek sculptors, who by tradition always gave the features of a stately stillness. Here the artist clearly wanted to portray perfidy, turning into anger. All the features were slightly strained: the eyes were slightly sloping, the corners of the mouth were raised, the nostrils were slightly swollen. Contempt, ridicule, cruelty could be read on this incredibly beautiful face. <...> This expression of satanic irony was still intensified, perhaps, by the contrast between her brilliant silver eyes and the blackish-green patina imposed by time on the whole statue. These brilliant eyes created a certain illusion of reality that seemed alive. I remembered the words of my guide, who asserted that she was forcing those who were looking at her to lower their eyes. It was like the truth, and I even became angry with myself for having felt some kind of awkwardness in front of this bronze figure." (1, p138) After the death of Alphonse, the expression on the face of Venus acquires an evil and mocking expression, and the narrator compares it to the "infernal deity is exultant over the misfortune."

In the Merimee's novel, the statue wounds with its love not only the son, but also his father: only the son she wounds in the literal meaning of the word, and the father is in the figurative, for you can see that the elder Peyrarrad is in love with Venus, according to Roman mythology, the goddess of love and beauty. For her, he appoints his son's wedding day on Friday, since "Friday is Venus's day <...> I chose Friday for her sake!" (1, p145), thereby ignoring the fact that, in the Christian tradition, Friday is perceived as the day of sorrow and mourning, since it was on this day that Jesus Christ was crucified. He is going to offer her sacrifices, lay a wreath of roses and lilies on her head and says that if Venus broke his leg, he would not have regretted it a bit. So in the novel, in addition to the classic love triangle - he (Alphonse), she (the bride) and the third wheel (Venus), there is another triangle: the father - the son - Venus. But this is not the

traditional triangle of lovers, because father and son do not compete with each other for the love of Venus. This is a triangle of complex relationships between people and the "idol". In his humorous speech, the father offers his son the choice of two Venuses, "Choose yourself what Venus you want - Roman or Catalan. <...> The Roman is black; the Catalan is white. The Roman woman is cold, the Catalan catches burn everything that approaches her." (1, p150). So, the father, comparing the two "brides" of his son, predicts a terrible outcome: in the marriage bed are two Venus, waiting for his betrothed.

The name of Pushkin's drama "The Stone Guest" testifies that for him the main character was, after all, not Don Guan, but a statue of the Commander. Here, a love triangle is built - Don Guan, Dona Ana, and the statue, and "the role of an opponent jealous of the dead clearly falls to the lot of Don Guan". (8, p150, 9-11) Thus, Pushkin's jealous man is not a statue, like Merimee, but a living person, a "demon", as A. Akhmatova's article proves, "Pushkin's Guan, in spite of its elegance and its secular manners, is much worse than its predecessors. (12-13)

Both heroines, each in their own way, say this: Dona Ana, "You are a demon"; Laura, "Rake, the devil".

If Laura, maybe, just scolding, then the "demon" in the mouth of Dona Ana accurately conveys the impression that Don Guan was supposed to produce according to the author's plan. (7, p384)

Thus, Pushkin radically "overturns" the situation of Merimee, whose demonic force is, on the contrary, the statue of Venus. (14)

Roman Jacobson in the article "A Statue in Pushkin's Poetic Mythology," by examining the image of the statue on the examples of Pushkin's works "The Stone Guest", "The Bronze Horseman" and "The Tale of the Golden Cockerel", seems to contradict himself, first claiming that the image of the statue is Pushkin is the "master of human destiny" (8, p172), and in another place he writes that the Orthodox tradition inspired Pushkin "a solid association of statues with idolatry, with satanic forces, with witchcraft" (8, p173, 16). Only God and his divine manifestation can be the executor of human destiny in the same Orthodox tradition, and, as we believe, Pushkin gives this interpretation to the image of the Commander in his "little tragedy".

So, we can observe that the role and functions of the two statues in Russian and French literature are different.

Different in both works and ways of implementing the artistic convention. Interestingly, in his article "Alexander Pushkin" (1868), Merimee notes "sobriety and art" as a distinctive feature of the "magic tales" style of the Russian writer, and citing as an example the poem "Ruslan and Lyudmila", says Pushkin reduces his "scary" novels, "His giants are like scarecrows, they lose almost all their dignity as soon as they cease to inspire fear in us. On a dark night, he leads his character through the steppes and leads him to one of the ancient mounds, the so-called kurgans, left in the valleys of Russia by some unknown tribe. Suddenly, Ruslan's horse rears up. I am expecting the appearance of something terrible, I am ready to share the fear of the mount... At the top of the hill lies the head of a sleeping giant. It is a bit like

a pie stuffed with partridges sticking their heads out from under the top crust. To wake the giant, Ruslan tickles his nostrils with a spear; the giant sneezes, the steppe shakes... and then the end of everything miraculous. Who will be afraid of a sneezing giant?" (1, p250-251) The feature caught by Merimee can also be attributed to "The Stone Guest": the author does not have the task to frighten the reader, instill in him a mystical horror, but to show the inevitability of divine retribution for the crimes committed. Merimee, as mentioned above, develops a mystical story, following all the canons of the genre: infernal subjects, otherworldly characters, events that cannot be explained logically, supernatural phenomena, the expectation of fear and mystique accompany the reader throughout history. (15)

Thus, if Pushkin creates artistic convention by using the category of the fantastic, then Merimee, following the Gothic novel, uses mysticism for this purpose.

### 3 Results and Discussion

The figure of the resurgent statue, which was transformed into Pushkin's drama from a legend, was interpreted by him in his own way. There is no trace of religious and moral content. This is not the messenger of the angry sky, the punishing atheist and libertine. There is no hint of this idea in the words of the statue. Pushkin's statue is an inexorable, inexorable "fate" that destroys Don Guan at the moment when he is close to happiness. Recalling the whole traditional biography of Don Guan, it is easy to decipher the meaning of the image of the statue of the Commander, as a symbol of all the past of Doi Guan, of his frivolous, unaccountable life, of everything he has accomplished: the grief of abandoned women, the resentment of deceived husbands, the blood of the opponents killed in fights... No matter how Don Guan "reborn" under the influence of Don Anna's love, the past cannot be destroyed, it is as solid as a stone statue, and at the hour when happiness seems finally achieved, this past comes to life and becomes between Don Guan and his happiness. This thought and the resulting call for a serious, caring attitude to their actions, which sooner or later will have a particular impact on the fate of a person, and is, one might think, the idea that Pushkin put into his interpretation of the traditional plot. (18-20)

One of the most important principles of fiction is the principle of coherence, i.e. internal matching elements of the fantastic to each other. Thus, the revival of the statue in the finale of the novel P. Merimee "The Venus of Ill" is perceived as reliable due to previous events that prepare the arrival of the statue to the house (perceiving it as a living creature, Alfons's marriage, a story with a ring that the hero puts on the statue's ring finger etc.). In other cases, such coherence of a fantastic "image of the world" is achieved by a multiplicity of points of view on an "irrecoverable" event, each of which not only denies it but on the contrary, confirms the fact of accomplishment, highlighting new facets of what happened.

### 4 Conclusion

Brief conclusions on the comparative analysis of works of Russian and French literature are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis

Compared criteria	"The Stone Guest", "The Venus of Ill" by A.S. Pushkin	"The Venus of Ill" by P. Merimee
<b>Similarities</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ presence of a love triangle;</li> <li>▪ both heroes of Pushkin and Merimee are libertines and sinners;</li> <li>▪ in its sculptural form, the statue is beautiful, but at the same time formidable and terrifying;</li> <li>▪ a person provokes the statue to actions: by Puskin, Don Pushan invites her to him, by Merimee, Alphimes puts the wedding ring on the statue's finger;</li> <li>▪ revenge of the resurgent statue;</li> <li>▪ death is caused by the statue that squeezed the victim in her arms;</li> <li>▪ death of the character.</li> </ul>		
<b>Differences</b>		

<b>Plot source</b>	Folklore legends and cultural and historical interpretations of the “eternal image” of Don Juan.	Mythological and medieval legends about the resurgent statue and the dead bride.
<b>Story-shaped level</b>	The love triangle consists of 1 woman and 2 men.	The love triangle consists of 2 women and 2 man.
	Statue’s sex: male	Statue’s sex: female
	The material from which the statue is made is stone	The material from which the statue is made is copper.
	The role and function of the statue is God's retribution to the sinner.	The role and function of the statue is devilish revenge on the groom.
	Attitude to love: Don Guan for the first time in his life fell in love and died with the name of his beloved on his lips.	Attitude to love: Alphonse refers to his marriage as a money transaction.
<b>Compositional level</b>	Resolution: Commander and Don Guan fail in hell.	Resolution: the statue that came out of the underworld is poured into the church bell, i.e. trying to use on divine affairs.
	Focus on the ancient samples (the dramatic technique of the ancient Greek tragedy deus ex machine).	Focus on the architectonics of the European Gothic novel.
<b>Ways of implementing the artistic convention</b>	The appearance of the statue of the Commander (moving) at the very end of the last scene.	The story of digging up the statue is the premise of the plot, which keeps in suspense until the very last pages.
	Through fiction to show the inevitability of divine retribution for the crimes committed.	Through mystic to frighten the reader, instill in him a mystical horror.

So, a comparative analysis allowed to determine the originality of each work of Russian and French literature, their ideological and aesthetic originality, trace their contact-genetic connections and typological affinity, see the creative and ideological interplay of Alexander Pushkin and Prosper Merimee and, thereby, reveal the dialogue of cultures in the literary process of Russia and France in the 1830s.

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