

## IMAGOLOGICAL IMAGE IN LITERATURE: SPECIFICITY OF THE TERM AND FEATURES OF REPRESENTATION

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**Abstract:** The article examines the issues of imagology as a literary discipline. It defines the parameters of the image of the “Other,” which exhibits features of an archetype and can be interpreted as an ethnostereotype. The interrelation of the categories “self – other,” mentality, and national character is analyzed in the context of forming a literary image. Special attention is paid to the modern understanding of imagology within the framework of comparative studies and interdisciplinary humanities research.

**Keywords:** image, imagology, archetype, ethnostereotype, worldview, comparative studies, mentality.

The term “imagology” goes back to the English word image. The subject of this discipline is the stable, stereotypical representations of “other” peoples, cultures, and countries that do not belong to one’s own national experience. Every national consciousness strives to develop a certain paradigm for perceiving the “foreign” within its cultural worldview. In literary studies, imagology, as part of comparative literature, deals with the analysis and interpretation of images of representatives of other nations in works of verbal art. The image of the “Other” is composed of such components as particular character traits, national mentality, system of values, patterns of behavior, and worldview. These elements form an ethnostereotype — a stable representation of one people about another. An ethnostereotype is interpreted as “a simplified, schematic, emotionally colored and persistent image of an ethnic group applied to all its representatives” [1, p. 19]. Another definition considers it as “a picture in the minds of people in relation to their own or other national groups” [2, p. 149].

The basic concept of imagology is the opposition “self – other,” defined by Yu.S. Stepanov as “a contrast permeating the entire culture and being one of the key concepts of collective, folk, and national world perception” [3, p. 137].

The division into “one’s own” and “foreign” has existed since ancient times at all levels of human existence. It is reflected in religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and spatial–territorial boundaries. Attitudes toward the “other” have always depended on the historical and social context, and therefore the semantic content of this opposition has changed from epoch to epoch.

The image of the “Other” carries features of an archetype — a primary perceptual scheme functioning at the level of the collective unconscious. The category of the “self” serves as the reference point for evaluating any foreigner. The boundary between “self” and “other” is first drawn according to external features (appearance, clothing, rituals) and later according to internal, mental characteristics manifested in language and behavior.

Imagology makes it possible to identify the set of cognitive and spiritual attitudes characteristic of a particular nation or cultural group — that is, its mentality. The concept of national mentality is close to the concept of national character: both reflect historically formed similarities in psychological makeup, value systems, and forms of national self-awareness.

National self-awareness is expressed through reflection — a person's awareness of belonging to a particular ethnic group and assessment of their own people. These representations are emotionally colored and built upon the antithesis “we – they,” which includes the most significant external and internal signs of difference.

The linguistic worldview is of great importance for imagology, since language is closely connected with the historical and psychological structure of a people. Stable designations of representatives of other nations (for example, Italian — “macaroni eater,” German — “sausage eater”) demonstrate entrenched ethnic stereotypes. Thus, the English are often perceived as reserved and formal, Germans — as practical and thorough, French — as frivolous, and Spaniards — as temperamental.

The concept “self – other” is closely connected with the archetypal model of thinking based on binary opposition. As V. Bolshakova noted, such archetypes are built on contrasts separating the “self” and the “other.” The image of the “Other” is inherited from cultural tradition and functions as an element of collective experience transmitted across generations.

Modern imagology defines itself as “the study of cross-national perceptions and images expressed in literary discourse” [4]. According to J. Leerssen, it studies “ethnotypes” — stable characteristics attributed to nations and peoples in cultural and literary contexts [5].

The methodological basis of modern imagology combines textual, contextual, and intertextual analysis. Research is aimed not at empirically verifying national traits, but at studying the ways in which they are culturally and artistically constructed [6].

Imagology, as a branch of comparative studies, turns to the theme of the “Other” — a representative of another culture — and studies how literature forms and reflects these images [7]. In contemporary humanities, new directions have emerged in imagological studies:

- the shift from national to transnational and post-national models of identity;
- expansion of the research field (literature, translation, journalism, media);
- analysis of latent stereotypes and banal forms of ethnic representations [8].

Literary imagology considers the text as a space of cultural dialogue, where not only differences but also mutual penetration of mentalities, values, and ways of perceiving the world are reflected. It reveals how authors of various epochs and countries create images of the Other, relying on collective cultural codes.

Thus, modern imagology goes beyond the traditional analysis of ethnical stereotypes and becomes an instrument for studying the mechanisms of cultural representation. In this sense, it unites literary studies, cultural studies, anthropology, and linguistics while preserving its comparative foundation.

Imagology, as a science of the perception of the “Other” in literature, represents a unique field of the humanities that examines the mechanisms of cultural image formation. Through the category “self – other,” it reveals the specificity of national mentality reflected in language and literary texts. In contemporary literary scholarship, imagology is increasingly regarded as an interdisciplinary area combining methods of textual analysis and cultural hermeneutics.

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