

# Valery Bryusov's Aesthetic Position on the Symbolist Idea of "Lifecreation": Dead Protesilaus, a "Pygmalion without Galatea"

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## Abstrak

This paper examines Valery Bryusov's interpretation of the idea of lifecreation (1878-1909; 1885-1907; 1904-1906; 1908-1909; 1907-1909; 1904-1906;), as crystallized in the myth of Pygmalion and established as the cornerstone of Russian symbolist aesthetics. Russian symbolism projected the idea of lifecreation, as the ideal artistic creation, into the ancient myth of the artist Pygmalion, who carved a statue of a woman named Galatea and then breathed life into it, making it into a living lover for himself. Three major symbolist writers—Innokenty Annensky, Fedor Sologub, and Valery Bryusov—formed their own views on the idea of lifecreation represented by the myth of Pygmalion by rewriting the related myth of Laodamia and Protesilaus. Bryusov's drama *Dead Protesilaus* (1905-1908; 1906-1909; 1907-1909; 1908-1909; 1903-1907; 1901-1909; 1904-1907; 1908-1909; 1906-1908; 1901;) demonstrates that he saw artistic creation in terms of epistemology. In representing the meaning of lifecreation, which unites life and art, Bryusov's lifecreating artist Pygmalion, implied in the figure of Laodamia, does not bring her husband Protesilaus back to life. Instead, Bryusov sees the unification of life and art in the artist's existence itself, in his own *modus vivendi* of living his life by measures of artistic creation such as intuition and passionate lunacy. The absence of a statue in his *Dead Protesilaus*, and denial of metamorphosis of Protesilaus from a dead into a living man, epitomize Bryusov's conviction that lifecreation means epistemological metamorphosis of the artist's existence.