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### **Two Sides of the Coin. West & East 19th Century Portraits Face Each Other**

The history of humanity could be told as a journey or narrated as a story<sup>1</sup>; in this sense, Agustín Lacruz points out that “un texto artístico es siempre *un-texto-en-la-historia*” (Agustín, 2006: 52). By instinct, by necessity, by pleasure or for the sake of it, since the first awakening of its artistic consciousness, humanity has reproduced everything that was around it. And is there anything more common to all these stories and journeys than the face-subject? (Martínez-Artero, 2004: 54).

Regardless of the artistic medium, nor the historical moment neither the aesthetic theory that feeds each representation, when it comes to studying the portrait one could say that, trapped both on the representative surface, we are witnesses to the story and the journey *par excellence*. Viewed in this way, Francastel alludes to the fact that “una obra de arte es un medio de expresión y de comunicación de los sentimientos o del pensamiento” (Francastel, 1984: 12).

It is said that art is the product of its time. What is more, there are many definitions of portrait, and many characteristics that shape it (Gubern, 2001). One essential aspect of the portrait is the presence of the model so that it can be recognised. Is there any difference between the portraits of what today is considered the West and the portrait paintings of Eastern Europe? By focusing the pictorial sample on paintings belonging to the Prado and Hermitage Museums, the present work seeks to deepen this question and perhaps obtain an answer to it.

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<sup>1</sup>Not at all new, this concept appears in the suggestive title of the work that James Elkins published in 2002 *Stories of art*; a book that Furió comments in the sixth chapter of *Arte y reputación. Estudios sobre el reconocimiento artístico*.