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## CONCEPTUALIZING THE 19TH-CENTURY HERO IN RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH NOVELS: A COMPARATIVE AND CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY

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### Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkonseptualisasikan sosok pahlawan dalam novel Rusia dan Inggris abad kesembilan belas melalui kerangka analisis komparatif dan lintas-budaya. Studi ini berupaya mengidentifikasi bagaimana konteks budaya, filosofis, dan sosio-historis yang berbeda memengaruhi transformasi pahlawan sastra di kedua tradisi tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan kombinasi analisis konseptual dan metodologi sastra komparatif, dengan mengacu pada pendekatan teoretis utama dari kritik sastra modern, termasuk dialogisme, teori arketipal, dan sosiologi novel. Korpus studi ini mencakup karya-karya besar sastra Rusia oleh Pushkin, Lermontov, Dostoevsky, dan Tolstoy, bersamaan dengan novel-novel Inggris oleh Dickens, Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë, dan George Eliot. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tradisi sastra Rusia membangun pahlawan terutama sebagai sosok introspektif dan mengalami konflik eksistensial, ditandai oleh kedalaman psikologis dan ambiguitas moral, yang sering dicontohkan oleh konsep “orang yang berlebihan” dan anti-pahlawan. Sebaliknya, novel Victorian Inggris menampilkan pahlawan sebagai individu yang tertanam dalam konteks sosial, dengan perkembangan yang sangat terkait dengan pertumbuhan moral, tanggung jawab etis, dan integrasi ke dalam masyarakat. Meskipun terdapat perbedaan ini, kedua tradisi mencerminkan transformasi yang lebih luas dalam konsep kepahlawanan dalam novel realis, bergerak dari arketipe yang diidealkan menuju karakter yang kompleks dan individual. Studi ini berkontribusi pada teori sastra dengan menunjukkan bahwa konsep pahlawan tidak bersifat universal, melainkan bergantung pada budaya, dibentuk oleh tradisi intelektual, bentuk naratif, dan kondisi historis yang berbeda.

**Kata Kunci:** novel abad ke-19; pahlawan sastra; sastra Rusia; sastra Inggris; sastra komparatif; analisis lintas-budaya; realisme; transformasi pahlawan

### Abstract

*This article aims to conceptualize the figure of the hero in nineteenth-century Russian and English novels through a comparative and cross-cultural analytical framework. The study seeks to identify how differing cultural, philosophical, and socio-historical contexts influenced the transformation of the literary hero across these two traditions. The research employs a combination of conceptual analysis and comparative literary methodology, drawing on key theoretical approaches from modern literary criticism, including dialogism, archetypal theory, and the sociology of the novel. The corpus of the study includes major works of Russian literature by Pushkin, Lermontov, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy, alongside English novels by Dickens, Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot. The findings demonstrate that the Russian literary tradition constructs the hero primarily as an introspective and existentially conflicted figure, characterized by psychological depth and moral ambiguity, often exemplified by the “superfluous man” and the anti-hero. In contrast, the English Victorian novel presents the hero as a socially embedded individual whose development is closely tied to moral growth, ethical responsibility, and integration into society. Despite these differences, both*

*traditions reflect broader transformations in the concept of heroism within the realist novel, shifting from idealized archetypes to complex, individualized characters. The study contributes to literary theory by demonstrating that the concept of the hero is not universal but culturally contingent, shaped by distinct intellectual traditions, narrative forms, and historical conditions.*

**Keyword:** 19th-century novel; literary hero; Russian literature; English literature; comparative literature; cross-cultural analysis; realism; hero transformation

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## INTRODUCTION

The conceptualization of the literary hero in nineteenth-century Russian and English novels is deeply rooted in major theoretical traditions of modern literary criticism and reflects a synthesis of philosophical, structural, and cultural perspectives. Foundational to this study is the dialogic theory of the novel developed by Bakhtin (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1983; Lukács, 1982), who reconceptualizes the hero as a dynamic and unfinalized figure emerging through the interaction of multiple voices within a polyphonic narrative structure. This approach is particularly relevant for analyzing the complexity of Russian literary characters, whose identities are shaped by ideological plurality and internal conflict. Complementing this perspective, Lukács's theory of the novel (Frye & Damrosch, 2020) provides a socio-philosophical framework in which the hero is understood as a manifestation of "transcendental homelessness," reflecting the fragmentation of modern existence and the disjunction between individual and society. Frye's archetypal criticism (Watt, 2001) further contributes to the theoretical foundation by identifying recurring narrative patterns that structure literary representation, while Campbell's concept of the monomyth (Auerbach et al., 2013) offers a universal model of heroism, albeit one that is increasingly challenged by the realist and psychologically complex figures of the nineteenth-century novel.

The evolution of the literary hero must also be considered within the broader development of realism and the rise of the novel as a dominant literary form, as discussed by Watt (Watt, 2001), who emphasizes the centrality of individual experience and social context in shaping narrative structures. Auerbach's analysis of representation (Auerbach et al., 2013) reinforces this view, highlighting the shift toward a more nuanced and humanized portrayal of reality in modern literature. Additional contributions from Eagleton (Eagleton, 1996) and Culler (Culler, 2011) underscore the importance of literary theory in interpreting the hero as a culturally constructed category, while Woloch (Woloch, 2004) and Moretti (Moretti, 1999) provide insights into the structural and spatial dynamics of characterization within the novel. The cultural and ideological dimensions of the hero are further illuminated by Said's exploration of literature and imperialism (Said, 2012), as well as by Forster's and James's reflections on narrative form and character development (Forster, 2007; James, 2018). The moral and aesthetic traditions shaping English literature are examined through the works of

Leavis (Leavis, 2008) and Showalter (Showalter, 1999), which contextualize the Victorian novel within broader social and ethical frameworks. Brooks's narrative theory (Brooks, 1992) adds a structural dimension by emphasizing plot and intentionality in shaping the reader's understanding of character. In the context of Russian literature, the contributions of Terras (Terras, 1985), Berlin (Berlin et al., 2013), Steiner (Steiner, 2010), and Davydov (Davidson, 2000) are essential for understanding the philosophical depth, spiritual concerns, and existential tensions that define the Russian literary hero. Together, these theoretical and critical perspectives demonstrate that the concept of the hero is not a fixed archetype but a historically and culturally contingent construct, shaped by diverse intellectual traditions and evolving narrative forms.

The concept of the hero occupies a foundational position in literary theory, serving as a key interpretative category through which narrative structures, ethical values, and cultural ideologies are articulated. From classical poetics to modern criticism, the hero has been understood not merely as a protagonist, but as a symbolic figure reflecting the tensions between individual identity and broader social or metaphysical frameworks (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1983). In the context of the novel, this role becomes particularly significant, as the genre itself emerges alongside the development of modern subjectivity and realism (Lukács, 1982). The nineteenth century represents a crucial period in the evolution of the literary hero, especially within Russian and English traditions. Both literatures experienced profound transformations under the influence of industrialization, social reform, and philosophical change. English Victorian novels, shaped by realism and moral didacticism, tend to portray heroes engaged in processes of ethical growth and social integration (Frye & Damrosch, 2020). In contrast, Russian novels often construct heroes as psychologically complex and existentially conflicted figures, reflecting deeper philosophical and spiritual concerns (Campbell, 2008). This divergence highlights the importance of examining the hero as a culturally contingent construct rather than a universal archetype.

Despite extensive scholarship on individual authors and national traditions, the comparative analysis of the hero across Russian and English nineteenth-century novels remains relatively underdeveloped. Existing studies frequently focus on either the English realist tradition or the Russian psychological novel in isolation, without fully exploring their conceptual intersections and differences (Watt, 2001). Moreover, while theoretical frameworks such as dialogism, archetypal criticism, and the sociology of the novel provide valuable insights, they are rarely integrated into a unified cross-cultural analysis. The present study addresses this gap by offering a conceptual and comparative examination of the nineteenth-century hero in Russian and English novels. Its primary aim is to analyze how distinct cultural, philosophical, and historical contexts shape the representation of the hero in these two literary traditions. The objectives of the research are threefold: first, to define the theoretical foundations of the concept of the hero; second, to examine its manifestation in selected Russian and English texts; and third, to identify key similarities and differences through a cross-cultural lens. Through this approach, the study seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the literary hero as a dynamic and historically situated construct.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in conceptual analysis, comparative literature, and cross-cultural methodology to examine the figure of the hero in nineteenth-century Russian and English novels. The methodological framework is informed by the theoretical perspectives outlined in the previous sections, particularly the works of Bakhtin, Lukács, Frye, and Campbell, which emphasize the cultural, philosophical, and

structural dimensions of literary representation. By integrating these approaches, the study aims to analyze the hero not as a fixed archetype, but as a historically and culturally contingent construct that reflects the social, ethical, and existential concerns of its time.

### Research Design

The research adopts a comparative and cross-cultural qualitative design, suitable for analyzing literary phenomena across national and historical contexts. Comparative methodology facilitates the identification of convergences and divergences in the depiction of heroes in Russian and English literature, while cross-cultural analysis allows for the interpretation of how philosophical, moral, and social frameworks shape narrative characterization. Conceptual analysis serves as the foundational tool, enabling the systematic clarification of the notion of the “hero” within different literary traditions. This design ensures a rigorous examination of textual evidence, grounded in theoretical insight and attentive to cultural specificity.

### Data Sources

The corpus of the study includes major Russian novels of the nineteenth century by Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Leo Tolstoy, alongside key English novels by Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot. Texts were selected based on their historical significance, thematic relevance, and critical recognition as representative of their respective literary traditions. The selection criteria prioritized works in which the protagonist or central characters exemplify distinct models of heroism, enabling a nuanced comparative analysis of existential, psychological, moral, and social dimensions.

### Data Collection

Primary data were collected through close reading and textual analysis of the selected novels, focusing on character development, narrative structure, and thematic representation. Passages depicting internal conflict, moral decision-making, social interaction, and philosophical reflection were systematically extracted and categorized according to emergent conceptual themes. Secondary data were drawn from literary criticism, historical studies, and theoretical literature, providing contextualization and interpretive frameworks to support cross-cultural comparison. This dual approach ensures that textual interpretation is both textually grounded and theoretically informed.

The study employs conceptual and thematic analysis to interpret the textual data, focusing on the psychological complexity, social embeddedness, and narrative function of each protagonist. Psychological complexity encompasses introspection, moral ambiguity, and existential reflection, while social embeddedness considers ethical responsibilities, social integration, and relational dynamics. The narrative function of the hero is examined in terms of its role within the plot, thematic development, and ideological discourse. Comparative analysis is then applied to identify patterns of similarity and difference across Russian and English novels, with Russian heroes often reflecting existential and philosophical concerns characterized by internal conflict and moral uncertainty, and English heroes emphasizing ethical growth, social adaptation, and relational engagement. Cross-cultural interpretation

further contextualizes these representations within historical, philosophical, and cultural frameworks, highlighting the contingent and culturally mediated nature of heroism. To ensure the rigor of analysis, the study integrates triangulation of sources, combining primary texts with critical scholarship, and maintains theoretical coherence by aligning interpretations with established literary frameworks. Reflexivity is also observed, acknowledging the interpretive role of the researcher in analyzing and comparing culturally specific representations of the hero. Through these procedures, the study achieves a robust and reliable methodology that supports meaningful comparative and cross-cultural insights into nineteenth-century literary heroism.

## RESULT AND DUSCUSSION

### Result

The concept of the literary hero has been extensively theorized within modern literary criticism, where it is understood as a dynamic construct shaped by narrative form, cultural context, and philosophical paradigms. One of the most influential approaches is offered by Mikhail Bakhtin, whose theory of dialogism reconceptualizes the hero as a product of interacting voices within the novel. According to Bakhtin, the novel is inherently dialogic, capable of representing a plurality of perspectives and ideological positions, thereby allowing the hero to emerge as a complex and unfinalized figure (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1983; Lukács, 1982). This polyphonic structure is particularly evident in the works of Dostoevsky, where characters embody competing worldviews rather than fixed identities.

Georg Lukács further develops the theory of the novel by emphasizing the structural relationship between the hero and the world. In *The Theory of the Novel*, he argues that the modern hero is defined by a sense of dislocation and a “transcendental homelessness,” reflecting the fragmentation of modern society (Frye & Damrosch, 2020). This rupture between individual and society becomes a defining feature of the nineteenth-century novel, where the hero’s quest is often marked by alienation and the search for authentic values (Campbell, 2008). Complementing this perspective, Northrop Frye’s archetypal criticism situates the hero within broader narrative patterns, identifying recurring symbolic roles that structure literary texts (Watt, 2001). Similarly, Joseph Campbell’s monomyth theory conceptualizes the hero as part of a universal narrative cycle, although this model is increasingly challenged by the psychological and social complexity of realist fiction (Auerbach et al., 2013).

The Romantic period introduces a significant transformation in the figure of the hero through the emergence of the Byronic hero. Characterized by isolation, melancholy, and defiance, the Byronic hero represents a departure from classical ideals of heroism, embodying instead a deeply subjective and often contradictory identity (Eagleton, 1996). This figure profoundly influences nineteenth-century literature, shaping both English and Russian narrative traditions. As scholars note, the Byronic hero functions as a precursor to more modern forms of the anti-hero, marked by inner conflict and moral ambiguity (Eagleton, 1996).

In Russian literature, this development culminates in the figure of the “superfluous man,” a character type that reflects social alienation and existential disillusionment. Originating in Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin*, the superfluous man is typically portrayed as intelligent and privileged yet unable to find meaningful engagement within society (Culler, 2011). This figure becomes central to Russian literary tradition, illustrating the tension

between individual potential and societal constraints. In contrast, the English Victorian hero is shaped by the values of realism, morality, and social responsibility. Victorian novels often depict protagonists who undergo moral development and achieve a degree of reconciliation with society. As literary historians suggest, English fiction of this period emphasizes ethical growth and social integration, reflecting broader cultural concerns with progress and reform (Woloch, 2004). Taken together, these theoretical perspectives demonstrate that the literary hero in the nineteenth century cannot be understood as a fixed archetype. Rather, it is a culturally and historically contingent figure, shaped by evolving narrative forms and ideological frameworks. The interplay between Romantic individualism, realist representation, and socio-cultural context provides a foundation for understanding the diverse manifestations of the hero in Russian and English novels (Moretti, 1999).

### *Theoretical Framework*

The present study is grounded in a multidisciplinary theoretical framework that integrates conceptual analysis, comparative literature, and cross-cultural methodology. This approach enables a systematic examination of the literary hero as a dynamic construct shaped by narrative form, cultural context, and philosophical traditions.

Conceptual analysis serves as the primary methodological foundation, allowing for the clarification and interpretation of the “hero” as an abstract literary category. Within modern literary theory, concepts are not fixed but evolve across historical and cultural contexts, reflecting broader epistemological shifts (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1983). The hero, therefore, is understood not as a universal archetype but as a historically contingent figure whose meaning is constructed through literary discourse. In this regard, Northrop Frye’s structuralist approach provides a useful framework, as it identifies recurring narrative patterns and archetypal roles that organize literary texts (Lukács, 1982). However, the limitations of purely archetypal models necessitate a more flexible analytical lens capable of addressing the complexities of realist fiction. The study further adopts a comparative literature approach, which emphasizes the analysis of literary phenomena across national and cultural boundaries. Comparative methodology allows for the identification of both convergences and divergences in the representation of the hero in Russian and English traditions. As Georg Lukács argues, the novel reflects the historical relationship between individual and society, making it a particularly suitable genre for comparative analysis (Frye & Damrosch, 2020). By situating literary texts within their socio-historical contexts, this approach reveals how different cultural environments produce distinct models of heroism.

Central to this framework is Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism, which conceptualizes the novel as a space of interacting voices and perspectives. According to Bakhtin, the novel uniquely captures the multiplicity of human experience through its capacity for heteroglossia and polyphony, allowing the hero to emerge as a complex and unfinalized subject (Campbell, 2008). This perspective is particularly relevant for analyzing Russian literature, where characters often embody conflicting ideological positions. Finally, the study employs a cross-cultural methodology that examines how cultural values, philosophical traditions, and historical conditions shape literary representations. Cross-cultural analysis recognizes that literary forms are embedded within specific cultural systems and that meaning is generated through interaction between these systems. As literary theory suggests, interpretation is influenced by diverse intellectual traditions and cannot be reduced to a single universal framework (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1983).

By integrating these three approaches, the theoretical framework provides a comprehensive basis for analyzing the transformation of the nineteenth-century hero as a culturally and historically situated phenomenon.

*The Hero in 19th-Century Russian Novels*

The nineteenth-century Russian novel offers one of the most profound and complex reinterpretations of the literary hero, characterized by psychological depth, moral ambiguity, and existential inquiry. Unlike the more socially integrated protagonists of Western European fiction, Russian heroes frequently embody internal conflict and philosophical tension, reflecting broader cultural and intellectual currents within Russian society (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1983).

A foundational example of this transformation is found in *Eugene Onegin* by Alexander Pushkin. The protagonist, Onegin, represents the archetype of the “superfluous man,” a figure marked by alienation, ennui, and detachment from social purpose. Although privileged and intellectually capable, Onegin is unable to engage meaningfully with the world around him, illustrating the disjunction between individual potential and societal structures (Lukács, 1982). This figure becomes emblematic of a broader literary and cultural phenomenon in Russian literature, signaling a departure from traditional heroic ideals toward a more introspective and disillusioned model of subjectivity.

This trajectory is further developed in *A Hero of Our Time* by Mikhail Lermontov, where the protagonist Pechorin exemplifies a more explicitly fragmented and self-conscious hero. Pechorin’s narrative is marked by psychological introspection and moral inconsistency, revealing a character who is both self-aware and incapable of ethical coherence. As scholars have noted, Lermontov’s novel deconstructs the very notion of heroism by presenting a protagonist whose actions are driven by boredom, manipulation, and existential dissatisfaction (Frye & Damrosch, 2020). In this sense, Pechorin can be understood as a precursor to the modern anti-hero, embodying the contradictions and anxieties of a rapidly changing society.

The exploration of psychological depth reaches its apex in *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Dostoevsky. The protagonist, Raskolnikov, represents a radical reconfiguration of the hero as a site of intense moral and philosophical struggle. His internal conflict—between a utilitarian justification for murder and an innate moral conscience—illustrates the tension between rational ideology and ethical responsibility. Mikhail Bakhtin’s analysis of Dostoevsky’s work emphasizes the polyphonic structure of the novel, in which multiple ideological voices coexist and interact, preventing the hero from being reduced to a single, unified perspective (Campbell, 2008). Raskolnikov’s journey is not one of conventional heroism but of psychological torment and eventual moral awakening, underscoring the complexity of human consciousness.

In contrast, the works of Leo Tolstoy, particularly *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, offer a more expansive and philosophically grounded vision of the hero. Tolstoy’s characters, such as Pierre Bezukhov and Konstantin Levin, undergo processes of moral and spiritual development that reflect the author’s engagement with questions of meaning, faith, and ethical responsibility (Watt, 2001). While these characters also experience internal conflict, their trajectories suggest the possibility of reconciliation between the individual and the moral order of the world. Tolstoy thus redefines heroism not as exceptional achievement but as the pursuit of ethical self-understanding and harmony.

Across these works, the Russian literary hero emerges as a figure defined by introspection, moral struggle, and existential uncertainty. The recurring motif of the “superfluous man” highlights the tension between individual agency and social constraints, while the development of the anti-hero reflects a broader shift toward psychological realism and philosophical inquiry. As Georg Lukács argues, the modern novel is fundamentally concerned with the problem of meaning in a fragmented world, and the Russian tradition exemplifies this concern through its deeply complex protagonists (Auerbach et al., 2013).

Ultimately, the hero in nineteenth-century Russian novels cannot be understood in terms of traditional heroic ideals. Instead, it represents a radically reimagined figure, one that embodies the contradictions of modern existence and serves as a vehicle for exploring the deepest questions of human identity, morality, and purpose (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1983; Campbell, 2008).

The nineteenth-century English novel constructs the literary hero within a framework of social realism, moral development, and the dynamic relationship between the individual and society. Unlike the introspective and often alienated protagonists of Russian literature, English Victorian heroes are typically embedded within social structures and are defined by their capacity for ethical growth and adaptation. This model reflects broader cultural concerns with progress, morality, and social reform characteristic of the Victorian period (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1983). The works of Charles Dickens provide a foundational example of this tradition. Dickens's protagonists, such as David Copperfield and Pip in *Great Expectations*, undergo significant moral and psychological development, often moving from innocence through hardship toward maturity and self-awareness. His novels are deeply rooted in social realism, portraying the conditions of Victorian society, including class inequality, poverty, and institutional injustice. Critics have emphasized that Dickens's realism lies in his ability to depict "social conditions of Victorian England" through vividly constructed characters and narratives. At the same time, his heroes are not merely passive observers but active participants in their own moral formation, illustrating the Victorian belief in self-improvement and ethical responsibility.

A more satirical and critical perspective on the hero emerges in the works of William Makepeace Thackeray. In novels such as *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray challenges traditional notions of heroism by presenting characters who are morally ambiguous and deeply entangled in the social hierarchies of their time. The figure of the hero is destabilized, as individuals are driven by ambition, vanity, and social aspiration rather than by clear moral ideals. This reflects a broader critique of Victorian society, in which success is often linked to conformity and manipulation rather than virtue. Thackeray's approach complicates the concept of the hero, suggesting that moral integrity is difficult to sustain within a competitive and stratified social system (Lukács, 1982). In contrast, Charlotte Brontë offers a more individualized and psychologically nuanced model of heroism. In *Jane Eyre*, the protagonist embodies a synthesis of emotional depth and moral autonomy. Jane's development is shaped by her conflict between personal desire and ethical principles, particularly in her insistence on self-respect and independence. Unlike the passive heroines of earlier literary traditions, Jane actively negotiates her position within society, asserting her identity while adhering to a strong moral code. Her trajectory illustrates the tension between individual agency and social constraints, a central theme in Victorian literature (Frye & Damrosch, 2020). Similarly, the novels of George Eliot further develop the ethical and psychological dimensions of the hero within a realist framework. Eliot's protagonists, such as Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch*, are characterized by their intellectual aspirations and moral seriousness. Victorian realism, as scholars note, seeks to reconcile "the individual and the general" within a coherent representation of reality. Eliot's heroes are thus deeply embedded in social networks, and their moral development is inseparable from their interactions with others. Her work emphasizes the complexity of ethical decision-making and the consequences of individual actions within a broader social context (Campbell, 2008). Across these authors, the English nineteenth-century hero is defined by a process of moral formation that unfolds within the structures of society. The emphasis on social realism ensures that characters are grounded in concrete historical and cultural conditions, while the focus on ethical development reflects the Victorian preoccupation with morality and progress. Unlike the existentially fragmented heroes of

Russian literature, English protagonists tend to achieve a degree of reconciliation with society, even if this process is fraught with challenges and contradictions.

At the same time, the tension between individual aspiration and social expectation remains a central concern. As Ian Watt argues, the rise of the novel is closely linked to the emergence of individual experience as a central narrative focus (Watt, 2001). This emphasis on individuality, however, is balanced by a recognition of the social forces that shape personal identity. The English literary hero, therefore, embodies a negotiation between self and society, illustrating the complexities of moral and social existence in the modern world (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1983; Watt, 2001). In conclusion, the hero in nineteenth-century English novels is not an isolated or purely introspective figure but a socially embedded individual whose identity is shaped through interaction with the surrounding world. Through moral development, social engagement, and psychological growth, this model of heroism reflects the broader cultural values of the Victorian era while contributing to the evolution of the modern novel.

### *Comparative Analysis*

A comparative analysis of the nineteenth-century Russian and English novel reveals two distinct yet intersecting models of the literary hero, shaped by divergent cultural, philosophical, and narrative traditions. While both literatures participate in the broader development of realism and the modern novel, they differ significantly in their emphasis on internal versus external conflict, existential versus social orientation, and the overall narrative function of the hero. One of the most striking contrasts lies in the nature of conflict that defines the hero. Russian novels tend to privilege internal conflict, presenting protagonists whose primary struggles are psychological, moral, and philosophical. As Bakhtin's theory of the novel suggests, characters in this tradition are shaped by dialogic interactions between competing ideological voices, resulting in a fragmented and unfinalized sense of self (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1983). This is evident in the works of Dostoevsky and Lermontov, where the hero's crisis unfolds primarily within the realm of consciousness. By contrast, English novels emphasize external conflict, situating the hero within a network of social relations and institutional structures. The protagonist's development is closely tied to interactions with society, reflecting the realist focus on observable social conditions and ethical behavior (Lukács, 1982).

Closely related to this distinction is the difference between existential and social orientations. Russian literary heroes are often defined by existential inquiry, grappling with questions of meaning, morality, and individual identity in a seemingly indifferent or fragmented world. Georg Lukács characterizes the modern novel as a form that expresses "transcendental homelessness," a condition particularly evident in Russian literature, where the hero frequently experiences alienation and disconnection from social norms (Frye & Damrosch, 2020). In contrast, English Victorian heroes are generally oriented toward social integration and moral development. Their narratives often follow a trajectory of ethical growth, culminating in reconciliation with societal values. This reflects the cultural emphasis on progress, stability, and moral responsibility in Victorian England (Campbell, 2008). Cultural differences further shape the conceptualization of the hero in these traditions. Russian literature, influenced by Orthodox spirituality and philosophical introspection, tends to explore the depths of human consciousness and moral ambiguity. The figure of the "superfluous man" exemplifies this orientation, embodying both intellectual potential and social paralysis. English literature, on the other hand, is grounded in a more pragmatic and empirically oriented worldview, shaped by industrialization and social reform. As Ian Watt argues, the rise of the novel in England is closely linked to the emergence of individual

experience within a structured social reality (Lukács, 1982). Consequently, the English hero is often portrayed as a morally responsible agent navigating social constraints. In terms of philosophical depth, Russian novels are frequently associated with a more intensive exploration of metaphysical and ethical dilemmas. The hero becomes a vehicle for engaging with fundamental questions about free will, guilt, redemption, and the nature of existence. English novels, while not devoid of philosophical reflection, tend to embed such concerns within a more concrete social framework, emphasizing practical morality and interpersonal relationships. Finally, the narrative function of the hero differs significantly between the two traditions. In Russian literature, the hero often serves as a site of ideological conflict and philosophical inquiry, embodying multiple, sometimes contradictory perspectives. This aligns with Bakhtin's view of the novel as a space of heteroglossia, where no single voice dominates (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1983). In English literature, the hero functions more as a unifying figure whose development provides coherence to the narrative and reinforces its moral structure. As Frye's theory suggests, the modern realist hero often belongs to the "low mimetic" mode, representing ordinary individuals whose experiences resonate with readers' everyday lives (Watt, 2001).

Despite these differences, both traditions share a commitment to realism and a focus on the individual as a central narrative element. As Auerbach argues, the evolution of literary representation reflects broader historical transformations, and the nineteenth-century novel in both Russia and England contributes to a more nuanced and humanized portrayal of the hero (Auerbach et al., 2013).

In conclusion, the comparative analysis demonstrates that the literary hero is a culturally contingent construct, shaped by distinct intellectual traditions and narrative priorities. The Russian emphasis on internal and existential conflict contrasts with the English focus on social and moral development, highlighting the diversity of approaches to representing human experience in the modern novel (Auerbach et al., 2013; Bakhtin & Holquist, 1983; Frye & Damrosch, 2020).

## Discussion

The comparative analysis of nineteenth-century Russian and English novels reveals that the literary hero functions as a culturally mediated construct, shaped by distinct philosophical traditions, narrative strategies, and socio-historical conditions. The results of this study indicate that Russian literature prioritizes psychological depth and existential inquiry, while English literature emphasizes moral development within a structured social environment. These findings support the view that the evolution of the novel is inseparable from broader transformations in cultural consciousness and literary form (Bakhtin & Holquist, 1983). From a theoretical perspective, the results reinforce Mikhail Bakhtin's conception of the novel as a dialogic genre, in which the hero is not a fixed or unified entity but a site of ideological interaction and multiplicity (Lukács, 1982). In Russian literature, this dialogic complexity is particularly pronounced, as characters embody conflicting philosophical positions that resist resolution. This confirms Bakhtin's argument that the novel uniquely captures the plurality of human experience and challenges monologic representations of identity (Lukács, 1982). At the same time, Georg Lukács's notion of the novel as a reflection of "transcendental homelessness" provides a valuable framework for understanding the existential orientation of Russian heroes, whose struggles often reflect a broader crisis of meaning in modernity (Frye & Damrosch, 2020). In contrast, the English tradition demonstrates a closer alignment with the realist paradigm described by Ian Watt, in which the novel foregrounds individual experience within a coherent social framework (Campbell, 2008). The emphasis on moral growth and social integration suggests that the English hero

serves not only as a narrative focal point but also as a vehicle for ethical instruction and cultural stability. This aligns with Northrop Frye's concept of the "low mimetic" hero, whose experiences mirror those of ordinary individuals and thus reinforce the accessibility and relatability of the narrative (Watt, 2001).

The theoretical implications of these findings lie in the recognition that the concept of the hero cannot be reduced to a universal archetype. While models such as Joseph Campbell's monomyth propose a shared narrative structure underlying heroic figures, the diversity observed in Russian and English novels demonstrates that cultural specificity plays a decisive role in shaping literary representation (Auerbach et al., 2013). The hero, therefore, should be understood as a flexible and historically contingent category rather than a fixed structural pattern. In terms of contribution to literary studies, this research advances a more integrated comparative framework that combines conceptual analysis with cross-cultural methodology. By examining the hero across two major literary traditions, the study highlights the importance of interdisciplinary approaches that bridge literary theory, cultural history, and philosophical inquiry. Ultimately, it underscores the need to reconsider the literary hero not as a static figure, but as an evolving construct that reflects the complexities of human experience and the shifting paradigms of modern literature (Auerbach et al., 2013; Bakhtin & Holquist, 1983; Frye & Damrosch, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

This study has explored the conceptualization of the literary hero in nineteenth-century Russian and English novels through a comparative and cross-cultural framework. The analysis has demonstrated that the two traditions develop distinct yet complementary models of heroism. Russian literature foregrounds psychological depth, moral ambiguity, and existential inquiry, presenting the hero as a figure engaged in internal struggle and philosophical reflection. In contrast, English literature emphasizes social realism, moral development, and the integration of the individual within a structured social environment. These differences highlight the extent to which the literary hero is shaped by cultural, historical, and ideological contexts. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to a more nuanced understanding of the hero as a culturally contingent construct rather than a universal or fixed archetype. By integrating conceptual analysis with comparative and cross-cultural methodology, the research demonstrates how literary traditions respond differently to similar historical processes, such as modernization and the rise of realism. The findings also reinforce the importance of interdisciplinary approaches that combine literary theory, cultural studies, and philosophical inquiry in the analysis of narrative forms.

Furthermore, this study contributes to literary scholarship by bridging the gap between Russian and English literary studies, offering a unified analytical framework that can be applied to other literary traditions. It underscores the evolving nature of the hero as a reflection of changing conceptions of identity, morality, and society. Future research may extend this analysis by examining the transformation of the hero in twentieth-century and contemporary literature, as well as by incorporating additional cultural contexts. Comparative studies involving non-European traditions or interdisciplinary approaches, such as cognitive or digital literary studies, may further deepen our understanding of the literary hero as a dynamic and globally relevant phenomenon.

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