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THE PROBLEM OF THE HERO AND INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM IN THE ROMANTIC ERA (BASED ON SPANISH AND AZERBAIJANI LITERARY AND ARTISTIC EXAMPLES)

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ABSTRACT

The presented article is devoted to a comparative examination of heroism and individual freedom in the Romantic period through Spanish and Azerbaijani literary examples. It is noted that Romanticism introduced a new “world-organism” concept in opposition to the mechanistic Enlightenment worldview, foregrounding the irrational depths of the human psyche and the role of chance. From the late 18th to the mid-19th centuries, the theme of individual freedom and the figure of the hero became a hallmark of Romantic literature.

It is noted that the Napoleonic invasions, Ferdinand VII’s censorship, and the Carlist Wars (1833–1840) forced writers into exile and isolation, prompting them to place inner protest and the desire for liberty at the heart of their works. In Spanish Romantic drama, Ángel de Saavedra’s *Don Álvaro o la fuerza del sino* (“Don Álvaro and the Force of Fate”) is analyzed: it is noted that fatalism (“force of fate”), the conflict between love and honor, and the motif of the curse serve as the principal elements shaping the hero’s tragic destiny.

Turning to Azerbaijan, it is noted that Romanticism there emerging in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was intertwined with the spirit of national liberation. Beginning with Mirza Fatali Akhundzada, individual and social freedom were brought to the forefront of literary discourse. In Hüseyn Cavid’s tragedy *Səyavuş*, it is noted that the hero carries not only personal idealism but also a mission to alter his people’s fate and safeguard their national and spiritual identity.

The article concludes that both Spanish and Azerbaijani Romantic heroes struggle internally against constraints imposed by society, family, and inexorable fate. However, it is noted that Spanish examples tend to emphasize tragedy rooted in fatalism and curses, whereas Azerbaijani examples underscore national identity and collective freedom ideals. Thus, in the Romantic era, motifs of individual freedom and heroism are expressed in both traditions—under fatalism’s prism in Spanish theater and within the framework of national identity in Azerbaijani literature—through similarly resonant yet distinct artistic means.

KEYWORDS

Romanticism, Fate, Hero, Society, Literature

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Introduction. Romanticism opposed the historically formed image of the world-organism to the mechanistic concept of the world created by the science of the new era and accepted by the Enlightenment, revealing the existence of new dimensions in man related to the unconscious, imagination, and dreams. Thanks to Romanticism, the Enlightenment lost faith in the power of intelligence and at the same time in the rule of chance: Romanticism showed that in the world-organism, where endless correspondences and analogies take root, chance does not rule, and man, subjected to the violence of irrational elements, does not obey cognition. In literature, Romanticism created new free forms reflecting the openness and infinity of being and a new type of hero embodying the irrational depths of man [10]. One of the main features of the Romantic period, which was a literary and philosophical movement that focused on the inner world and feelings of man, starting from the end of the 18th century and continuing until the middle of the 19th century, was the emergence of the theme of individual freedom and heroism.

Romanticism manifested itself in various ways in both Spanish and Azerbaijani literature, and the theme of individual freedom and heroism was often associated with opposition to traditional social and political structures. Representatives of 19th-century Romanticism contrasted legendary and historical plots with extraordinary heroes and their boundless passions with the realism of Enlightenment drama.

Main characteristics of romanticism and heroism. The emergence of Romanticism in Spain is associated with the struggle against the Napoleonic occupation in 1808–1814 and the clashes between absolutism and liberalism in 1814–1833. During the reign of Peter Ferdinand I, strict censorship turned into a deep internal crisis among writers and strengthened the desire for freedom. The Carlist Wars (1833–1840) transformed national and social divisions into dramatic conflict in theater and poetry.

During the reign of Peter I Ferdinand (Ferdinand VII) (1813–1833), censorship of literature intensified, preventing the spread of liberal ideas. From 1814 until his death, he closed the liberal press and imprisoned editors and writers. According to sources, this political pressure “made it almost impossible for new ideas to flourish” [9].

The restoration of the absolutist regime forced many liberals into exile, while at home writers channeled their inner suffering and yearning for freedom into their works. After the French intervention in 1823, censorship became even stricter, beginning the period known as the “White Terror” and lasting until Ferdinand's death in 1833.

The First Carlist War (1833–1840) took place during the height of Spanish Romanticism, translating national and social divisions into literature. Poetry and drama about the war were widely published to bolster propaganda for both sides (Carlists and Liberals).

When the war broke out, Spanish Romanticism was at its peak, and the literary response was immediate and massive, with poets and playwrights following the events almost live and creating new works.

The Carlists, promoting the slogan “God-Fatherland-King”, wrote poems and plays that presented the liberation of the traditional monarchy as a symbol of heroism. In particular, theatrical scenes and poetry anthologies reflected the chronicles of the war in real time, creating both dramatic tension and ideological attitude in the audience and readers.

The liberals (Christinos) sought to create enthusiasm and smear the enemy with works that promoted parliamentary reforms and the ideals of an egalitarian society.

Dramatic conflict became not only about the actor's actions on stage, but also about the poet's and playwright's personal feelings, shame, and desire for revenge. As a result, medieval battle scenes and symbolic depictions of social disintegration were also widely featured in historical novels written during this period.

During this period, poetry featured battle scenes, brave warriors, and patriotic themes, using epic and lyrical imagery in poetic style to strengthen the national sentiments of both sides in the reader. On the theatrical stage, military patriotic melodramas were produced, demonizing the image of the enemy in front of the audience; these artists often conveyed a modern message on a historical screen to circumvent censorship restrictions. Romantic theater rejected the principles of balance and three unity (time, space, action) and mixed comedy with tragedy, resorting to emotional themes in order to strengthen the national emotions of the audience.

In 19th-century Spanish Romantic literature, the concept of heroism changed radically, moving from battlefield bravery to an internal struggle against fate and social constraints. This new Romantic hero displays extreme passions and internal conflicts, transforming his feelings into acts of true heroism. Challenging the symphony (“fuerza del sino”) and achieving personal freedom are the main aspirations of these playwrights

and poets. This new approach to literature, by emphasizing the war of the soul as opposed to external warfare, created a literary revolution.

The Romantic hero, torn between duty and desire, often confronts symbols of tradition and authority. This conflict requires moral and existential courage, not physical prowess. Rather than conquering lands, the hero seeks freedom from family and societal expectations. His challenge to honor and tradition embodies a general movement for individual independence.

One of the most famous artists of this period, Angel de Saavedra, Duque de Rivas (1791–1865), is one of the main figures of Spanish Romanticism. His work, which began with neoclassical prose and continued with epic poetry, covers a wide range of forms, from dramatic to comedic and fairy tales. His most famous work, *Don Alvaro or the Force of Destiny* (*Don Alvaro o la fuerza del sino*), symbolized the triumph of Romantic theatre and had a profound influence on subsequent generations.

His works such as “Poesías” (Poems), published in 1814, and “Lanuza” (1822) belong to this period. However, after being sentenced to death for his liberal views in 1823, he fled to England, later living in Italy, Malta and France. These years of exile were a turning point in his literary views. During his stay in Malta and France, he became acquainted with the works of romantic writers such as W. Shakespeare, W. Scott and L. Byron and began to lean towards romanticism. These influences were reflected in his works such as “El desterrado” (The Exiled) and “El faro de Malta” (The Lighthouse of Malta).

Saavedra’s Romantic poetry found its most vivid expression in the collection “*Romances históricos*” (Historical Novels, 1841). In these works, he drew inspiration from the medieval history and legends of Spain, and portrayed themes of national identity and heroism in a romantic style. “*El moro expósito*” (The Muslim Exposed, 1834) is considered one of the main works of Spanish Romanticism, and its preface expresses the main principles of Romanticism.

The events described in this work, which combines the main themes of the Romantic era - love, honor, revenge, religion, death and the power of fate, take place in various regions of Spain and Italy at the beginning of the 18th century. The main character, Don Alvaro, is a wealthy man of unknown origin who has just returned from India. He falls in love with a lady named Dona Leonor, from an aristocratic family. However, Leonor’s father, the Marquis of Calatrava, is against this relationship and does not allow them to marry. Don Alvaro and Dona Leonor decide to run away together, but their plan fails. As a result of the events that occur during the escape, the Marquis of Calatrava is accidentally shot and killed by Don Alvaro’s gun.

After this incident, Dona Leonor takes refuge in a monastery to escape her father’s curse and the effects of the events she has experienced. However, the inevitable force of fate brings her back to face Don Alvaro, resulting in tragic events. Don Alfonso, Doña Leonor’s brother, thinks that his sister has defiled his honor when he sees her with Don Alvaro and kills her.

In general, curse - as the beginning of a tragic ending - appears as a traditional motif from ancient Greek works to the Romantic period. In literature, the curse motif is an element with symbolic and dramatic power, playing an important role in the formation of individual and collective destinies.

In Spanish Romanticism, the curse motif plays an important role in the dramatic formation of individual and family destinies, acting as a powerful tool to reflect the inner world of the heroes and their conflicts with society. In José de Espronceda’s “*El estudiante de Salamanca*”, the protagonist Félix de Montemar curses his own fate after the death of his beloved Elvira. At the same time, in Joaquín Francisco Pacheco’s “*Alfredo*”, the hero curses himself by saying “¡Maldición sobre mí!” and commits suicide. These examples show that curses are used in Spanish Romantic literature to express the inner suffering of the heroes and the inevitability of fate.[1]

In the play, Don Alvaro enlists in the military in Italy, where he meets Leonor’s brother, Don Carlos. After recognizing Don Alvaro, Don Carlos challenges him to a duel, in which he is also killed. Don Alvaro returns to Spain, weighed down by his sins, and takes refuge in a monastery. However, Leonor’s other brother, Don Alfonso, finds him and challenges him to a duel again.

The conflict between love and honor, as the rules of society and family oppose individual desires, is also a theme in Lope de Vega’s “*The Star of Seville*” (“*La estrella de Sevilla*”), where lovers are prevented from reuniting due to social rules. The play is set in the 13th century and describes the passion of King Sancho IV for a beautiful woman named Estrella Tavera. The king wants to marry Estrella, but her brother Bustos Tavera opposes this. The king orders Bustos to be killed and entrusts the task to Estrella’s fiancé, Sancho Ortiz. Sancho Ortiz obeys the order and kills Bustos, while Estrella retires to a monastery.

The *Star of Seville* is a play written during the Spanish Golden Age and dealing with themes of love, honor, and national identity. Continuing this tradition, Angel de Saavedra presents similar themes through the

prism of romantic literature in Don Alvaro and the Power of Destiny. This play played an important role in the development of Spanish romantic theater and continued to influence later periods. The unchanging and inevitable power of fate is presented as the main theme in the play. According to researchers, the theme of the unchanging and inevitable power of fate in Angel de Saavedra's Don Alvaro and the Power of Destiny was influenced by the concept of fatalism from ancient Greek literature [1,3,4,5].

Don Alvaro is a victim of a destructive, fateful force that has replaced outdated values. Some researchers say that both Christian and ancient Greek (pagan) worldviews coexist in this work. Edward Alexander Peers (E. A. Peers) believes that the contradictions in the work are due to the author's interest in both Catholicism and fatalistic romanticism [1].

Don Alvaro is presented as a typical hero of Romantic literature, living in solitude, with a mysterious past and a victim of fate. The work is a conflict between love and honor. While the heroes fight for love, they are confronted with the rules of honor imposed by society and family. This work, as one of the most striking examples of Spanish Romantic literature, also inspired the opera "La forza del destino" composed by Giuseppe Verdi. It reflects the main principles of Romantic literature - individual freedom, the rule of fate, national identity and emotional expression - and is still highly appreciated by literary lovers today.

Romanticism and heroism in Azerbaijani literature. Romanticism in Azerbaijani literature developed especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. During this period, the themes of individual freedom and heroism came to the fore in the works of Azerbaijani writers. One of the main features of Azerbaijani romanticism is the attitude of the people to the national liberation struggles and the concept of individual freedom.

Writers such as Mirza Fatali Akhundov and Ali bey Huseynzadeh emphasized issues of both individual freedom and social liberation in their literary works. Heroism in Azerbaijani romantic literature is often associated with the struggle against the conservative pressures of society, the challenge of traditional norms, and the inner development of the individual.

During the Romantic period, heroes struggle not only in wars and battles, but also in their personal lives to maintain their freedom, resist the demands of society, and overcome their internal struggles. This idea represented rebellion against the restrictive influences of society in both Spanish and Azerbaijani literature.

In the work of Huseyn Javid, the problem of the romantic hero and national identity is one of the main themes of his works, and these themes have added a deep philosophical and social content to the poet's literature. In Javid's works, the romantic hero usually appears as a person who is in an internal struggle, loyal to ideals and high moral values, and sometimes misunderstood by society. This helps to understand both the main heroes of Javid's works and the images of national identity he created.

These heroes are connected to high ideals and moral values, but the social and political environment cannot understand them. In H. Javid's dramatic works, especially in "Sayavuş", such heroes are mainly personalities who are in an internal struggle and clash between their own values and the values of society. This struggle reflects the struggle of individual freedom and the desire for idealism, which is a classic feature of romantic literature.[8] There are remarkable parallels between Angel de Saavedra's "Don Alvaro and the Power of Fate" and Huseyn Javid's tragedy "Sayavuş". In both works, themes such as the inevitability of fate, the limitations of individual will, and the pressures of society are at the forefront. Huseyn Javid's "Sayavuş" is written based on the motifs of the epic "Sayavush and Sudaba" from Firdovsi's "Shahnameh". The events that occur in the life of Sayavuş in the work reflect the inevitability of his fate and the pressures of society.

In both works, romantic heroes change places in order to gain freedom. One of the typical characteristics of romantic heroes is the search for happiness far away. Sayavush goes from Iran to Turan, and Don Alvaro goes to Italy.

The connection between the romantic hero and national identity is more clearly visible in the works of Huseyn Javid. Javid's heroes struggle not only with personal struggles, but also with the aim of changing the fate of the people, preserving and developing their cultural and spiritual identity. This struggle encompasses both the issue of individual freedom and collective national consciousness. In Javid's works, heroes who try to find the soul of the people and think about the future of their nation are usually idealistic and have high values.

In "Sayavush", the connection between the romantic hero and national identity is expressed through the bridge built between the hero's personal and social ideals. This is an indicator of Javid's contribution to romantic literature and the depth of his understanding of national identity.

Conclusion. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the problem of heroism and individual freedom in the Romantic period was developed in a similar way in both literatures. In Spanish and Azerbaijani literature, heroes try to protect their freedom not only by overcoming the pressures of society, but also by overcoming their own internal struggles. In the literature of the Romantic period, heroism was reflected not only in physical battles, but also in social and internal struggles. Individual freedom became one of the main motives of the struggle against the restrictions of society in both literatures.

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