

## Abstract

The superfluous man and the Russian reception of the French personal novel.

This article aims at giving an account of the Russian reception of the French personal novel and its contribution to the development of Russian psychological realism. The heuristic qualities of self-disclosure embedded in the pseudo-autobiographical novels by Chateaubriand, Senancour, Constant and De Musset gave rise to a peculiar 'discursive practice', which required a sophisticated language, able to express the metaphysics of everyday life. This is the reason why Pushkin advocated the Russian translation of Constant's *Adolphe*. Yet, the first Russian psychological novel was to appear only three years after the poet's death. In *A Hero of Our Time* (1840) Lermontov finally evades the solipsistic turn of the French personal novel with a multi-focal narrative strategy and leads the way towards literary realism. Along with Onegin, Lermontov's (anti)hero was the forefather of the so-called superfluous men, social outcasts of the Nikolaian era, whose idealistic background (or rather, sterile speculation) prevented them to come to terms with society. Just like their French brethren, they were conscious of their 'superfluousness' and they felt they were living an aimless life in a time they perceived 'out of joint'.

Keywords: superfluous man, roman personnel, psychological realism, mal du siècle, refleksiya, outcast.