

## The art World Through the Eyes of I. S. Turgenev

Anton Repoň

Matej Bel University, Slovakia  
974 01 Banská Bystrica, Tajovského 40  
Faculty of Arts, Department of Slavic Languages  
Doctor of Filology  
E-mail: anton.repon@umb.sk

**Abstract.** The article deals with the creative work of I. S. Turgenev, which is one of the prominent representatives of Russian critical realism of the second half of the 19th century. Turgenev's books are very popular as the birthplace of writer and abroad. The writer has seen heavy side of human existence, so he could not ignore the social antithesis, individual and collective tragedy and disaster. His knowledge of real life has given rise to a direct criticism of society, but conciliatory melancholy position. The main ethical principle of acceptance of reality for Turgenev was the need of harmony and beauty in the world and the people; the desire to understand and be understood by all. Turgenev took from romantic lyrical element as the voice of the author.

**Keywords:** I.S. Turgenev; critical realism; Russian nature; theme of love; narrator; a typology of fictional characters.

### Introduction

Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev is one of the main representative of Russian realism who enriched European literature by strong analysis of smart problems of his time. In his works he shows a wide picture of Russian life in 1840s - 1870s. Turgenev's works became very successful at home as well as abroad. He belongs among the writers of 19 century, whose works are more than one hundred and twenty years issued, translated and enjoy reading a lasting popularity.

Turgenev never wanted to reach for a lawyer's gown and had never given a lecture about prophetic vision about the future of mankind; he was much more modest in his ambitions. The main power of his talent consisted in his ability to see and hear better than the others. Turgenev was maligned by both the political right and left. Over a period of 50 years he produced six novels, ten plays and numerous short stories and poems, mostly on death and the destructiveness of love. Many of his narrators are middle-aged men looking back on their youth. Today, Turgenev is criticized for his outdated political philosophy and sentimentality. Other modern readers recognize Turgenev's mastery of style and form and his realistic portrayal of characters.

This does not mean that Turgenev belonged to simple "painter" of the reality. A distinguishing feature of his realism is his ability to capture the realism of "social life in its typical manifestations" (XV, 110). He had also noticed painful pages of human existence so that he could not overlook differences in the society, social antitheses, individual and collective tragedies and disasters. His knowledge about the real life does not lead straight-linedly towards the open merciless accusation of the society; they lead into conciliatory melancholy position.

### Sources and methods

The material of the study covers entries of reference books, literary critical articles written in Russia and Slovakia, research papers, anthologies and collections of contemporary knowledge about Turgenev's prose. The paper employs the following analytical procedures: systematic analysis, concept categorization, modeling, contextual, conceptual, hermeneutic interpretational etc.

### Discussion

Analysis of the phenomena of the world is rather indirectly critical, it "emerges" from the common sense given the sequence of events. At first glance, such a display of real life might prove too disinterested, and even buck kind, but we must not forget that Turgenev masterly works with technique of hint and help.

Causes of such artistic strategies can be found in the author's nature. In his works he intended to reach a conciliatory position and reduced big words and exaggerated gestures; in a lifelong philosophy he professed a political and ideological pluralism.

The main role in the ethical acceptance and moulding the reality in Turgenev's work is the need of harmony and beauty in things and people; the effort to understand everything and be understood by everyone. Turgenev also accepted the lyric element in romanticism as a meaning of the author's voice.

When he was fifteen Turgenev entered Moscow University, but he soon transferred to St. Petersburg University, where he studied world history under Nikolai Gogol, the founder of the school of „critical realism“ in Russian literature. After graduating from college at the age of eighteen, he began the travels which would continue for the rest of his life. He studied at the University of Berlin until 1842, earning his master's degree. There he befriended Russian intellectual Nikolai Stankevich and anarchist Mikhail Bakunin. In Berlin he studied classical languages and was highly influenced by German classical philosophy (Hegel, Schopenhauer, Schelling).

Turgenev was not unknown as a writer and was given a good reception in the English literary world. He was able to renew his contacts with several prominent writers and poets and to make the acquaintance of others – Thomas Carlyle, George Eliot and her husband G. H. Lewis, Robert Browning, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and many others.

In love Turgenev accepted his ideal of natural and social unity as well as sentimental and spiritual unity. This is the main reason why Turgenev is considered to be one of the greatest romanticists among Russian realists in the 19th century.

„My life is influenced by women“, he confessed to G. Flaubert in one of his letters. "No book, nothing in the world would not be able to replace a woman ... How to express it? In my opinion, each human being bloom by love, what do you say?" (D. VII., 23). The whole Turgenev's life had been the great example of the contrast between a young nervous weak man and a passionate energetic girl who is devoting to free life. Many readers are fascinated with Turgenev's 40-year passion for the singer Pauline Viardot – Garcia, a married woman of ordinary if not homely looks. Love and friendship to famous artist for years dissociated him from Russia and ultimately sentenced him to a lonely old age without family. Motive fatal attachment to mature, unavailable woman and her triumph over fresh youthfulness and girl's love with a temperamentally soft man permeated into all of his artistic creation. Despite the fact that his books are not missing critical social focus or time conditional maximum effort the correctness and phenomena conformity with objective reality, still within his generation - and even under the above facts - this element represents a sort of "viola d'amour" of Russian realism.

Turgenev in his prose practically completes half-century tradition of the love novel, in which the world's most important writers steered the human being problems of the modern contemporary society. Turgenev is more lyrical and melancholy artist as mentioned Flaubert. He bothers tragedy of people who find themselves in the power of nature that can not speak, whether it is a historical necessity or nature in them, fatality passion that underlies the importance of human beings. Turgenev's inherently pessimistic philosophy of love, however, is hidden in the figurative world of short stories, novellas and novels; way he gives stories adds his narrative and description rather soft and limpid lyricism.

Man of Turgenev's never exposed to such a flood of emotions and passions as the time of amorous feeling. In such moments his senses live the most intense live and mind is being the fullest develop, fulfilling its potential and discovering its value. Turgenev made the love drama one of the main central theme of his work.

The second main theme of Turgenev – together with the theme of love – had been the Russian nature as the expression of living power of the country. Turgenev often returned to his birthplace, to the parks, orchards, ponds. Of the articles that he wrote abroad we can feel his close relationship to the native land, the people and Russia.

Nature and her descriptions act as psychological "parallel" to coincide with the spiritual world disembarking characters; they form a lyrical parallel to their moods. Descriptions of nature usually end by lyrical chords that - due to author's confession of indivisible relationship between man and nature - bear a distinct psychological accent. Man emotionality is reflected, mirrored in the world outside of natural reality. Turgenev often uses similes, personification, epithets;

descriptions use of verb forms, alternating light shades and colours intersections. Turgenev is a master of poetic descriptions of nature with deep psychological and philosophical overtones, and even ideological, symbolic, and semantic culmination. Poetry of "pure experience" adds Turgenev landscape painting a significant lyrical tone and romantic tune.

The individual role in Turgenev's poetics has a narrator. He could be characterized by the set of qualities, sketches, symptoms as follows:

- he does not make any autobiographic features into the open;
- he does not have any individual psychological profile;
- he does not appear as an omnipotent narrator;
- he is close to the author; sometimes he directly presents the author's individual experiences and opinions, even (although very rarely) he considers himself to be author;
- he directly enters into the dialogue with the reader;
- in relation to the storyline and characters he has an independent, disinterested position typical of unbiased outside observer;
- in clearly defined cases (especially in the pursuit of the greatest psychological plausibility embodiment the inner world of the protagonist) the position of the narrator can be identified with the position of character, which is then portrayed as "inside", reveals her thought processes, emotional world, while the other participants of the same scenes are rendered "outside" through their words and deeds.

Another typical feature of the Turgenev's poetic is a typology of fictional characters. There are many full-blooded heroes and heroines and types in Turgenev's novels.

Turgenev defines two types of men. „Don Quixote types“ are ruled by faith and emotion, while „Hamlet types“ are egoistic analysts who are too afraid of life to experience emotion. Unlike many of his contemporaries Turgenev, however, does not invent them. He is primarily interested in the process of "seeking" the hero; shows this process in various stages or phases of spiritual development of Russian society.

Turgenev began his literary way by fighting against romantic "egoists" (Paras, Andrei Kolosov). The social meaning of this fight Turgenev explained in a review on the Russian translation of Faust. "Romanticism is nothing more than apotheosis of personality ... romantic hero is an unconscious egoist and as such loses social sensibilities, he is not interested in other casualty, he lives only for himself, and is therefore useless" (Bialyj, 1962, p. 15).

There is an interesting scheme: baddy (negative hero) is an egoist, positive hero is a man with the natural human emotions (*Bretjor*: egotist Luchkov and his antagonist - natural Kister; *Three Portraits*: egoist Lucin and its counterpart Rogachev). The conflict in these novels is still a psychological, torn from the social environment. Social feeling at Turgenev occurs later in *The Hunter's Sketches*, but the basic scheme of dividing people into egotistical and unegoistical of his works practically does not go away ever.

Andrej Červeňák tried to compile a ranking shedding contradictory characteristics – from the instinctive selfishness and his absolute opposition of total altruism - to a ground state, which is realized in the plot work. His findings was summarized in the following range:

10

0

10

#### Shedding egoism:

Dar'ya Mikhailovna Lasunskaya (*Rudin*)  
 Marya Dmitrievna Kalitina (A Nest of Gentlefol)  
 Madame Odintsova (Fathers and Sons)  
 Irina (Smoke)  
 Valentina Michajlovna (Virgin Soil)

#### Loss of altruism :

Natal'ya (*Rudin*)  
 Bersenev (A Nest of Gentlefolk )  
 Gemma Roselli (Torrens of Spring)  
 Vera (Smoke)  
 Mariana (Virgin Soil)

Such a scheme dividing the characters in two groups - egoistic and altruistic – seems to be very simple. It cannot capture the full complexity of the psychological and moral relationships between the characters. However, if it is perceived as a generalization of the dominant trend modeling characters in Turgenev's prose, it may be considered acceptable.

Turgenev characters have traits historicity, sometimes chronicle, but at the same time do not lose fundamental human rights, timeless dimension. There are many full-blooded heroes and heroines and types in Turgenev's novels. Turgenev defines two types of men. „Don Quixote types“ are ruled by faith and emotion, while „Hamlet types“ are egoistic analysts who are too afraid of life to experience emotion.

Turgenev sympathies are on the side of Don Quixote, who was for him a symbol of truth, faith and devotion to ideals for which he was able to sacrifice a life. "He appreciates his life as much as it can be a means to the embodiment of the ideal, to establish truth and justice on earth (see: Turgenev, I. S.: Hamlet and Don Quixote. In: The Hunter's Sketches, Rudin and others, 1977, p. 757).

The antithesis of Don Quixote is Turgenev's Hamlet - "... analysis in particular, selfishness and finally skepticism" (Ibid, p. 760). Hamlet is forever immersed in himself, not anything in the world, to which it could attach themselves, aware of its weakness, recognizes its shortcomings, despises them and himself. This type of human existence personified Turgenev across the pleiades of „useless people“. Typology of dividing literary figures is typically Turgenev's, although it may seem like an echo of the fight between romanticism and realism, which at the time to seduce not only Russia but the whole of European literature.

First Andrej Červenák divided Turgenev's character into two groups: egoists and altruists and, later in the intentions of the writer's terminology he talks about „Quixote types“ and „Hamlet types“. Turgenev's innovative scheme of characters looks then as follows:

Egoists	Hamlets	Quixotes
10	0	10

Turgenev's ideals are Quixotes; these people are able to self-sacrifice and committed obligations; people accepting responsibility for their actions and for the actions of others. These properties are also to be found in Turgenev's female characters that are the perfect expression of quixotism and self-sacrifice.

### Conclusion.

Partially in all Turgenev's novels there are stabilized groups of characters that could be hierarchically divided into the following categories:

- archaic characters ( people of long past times)
- lower-level characters
- higher-level characters
- the highest-level characters.

The first category configures the people of long past times. They are different from people of new generation by majestic peace and consciousness of proper dignity. The typical representatives of this category are: Marfa Timofeevna Pestovova (Rudin), Arina Vasil'evna Bazarovova (Fathers and Sons), Anton - Lavrecki's servant (A Nest of Gentlefolk), Timofejich - Bazarov's former servant (Fathers and Sons).

Egoism brings together the characters of the second category – the lower-level characters. The objective of their life is to enrich the individual success. But on their way they fail in the field of love, moral, belief. They can realize their own inability, but they are not able to change their status in the society. The typical representatives of this category are: Pandalevski and Pigasov (Rudin), Lisa Kalitina's father and Varvara Pavlovna – Lavrecki's wife (A Nest of Gentlefolk), Panshin and Godenovski (A Nest of Gentlefolk), Kurnatovski and Nikolai Artemievich Stachov (On the Eve).

The third character's category - higher-level characters – introduces the people who are honest, polite, brave. They are not able to do evil, serve the country not for a career or other benefits. They appreciate young people, freedom, keep the traditions and history. They represent „the golden middle way“. They can enjoy their lives best of all the categories. The typical representatives of this category are: Lezhnev and Volyncev (Rudin), Basistov and Michalevich (Rudin), Bersen'ev and Shubin (On the Eve), Pavel, Nikolai and Arkadi Kirsanov (Fathers and Sons).



The fourth character's category - the highest-level characters – includes the people who are strongly framed by their sujet task. These are the main heroes and heroines of Turgenev's major works, their characteristics and fate are the focus of the author's attention.

Key signs on which place them at the highest level characters, are their relationship to the environment, society and the world. These factors at first glance appeared unexpectedly and paradoxically brings together the opposing heroes such as Bazarov and Rudin with Yelena Nikolayevna Stachova or even Liza Kalitina.

Despite their differences, the very basis of their philosophy of life is basically the same. Sense of their lives is not bounded by norms and values of social organization in which they live. Their way of life is out from the environment in which they live. Environment, atmosphere and people are inherently alien to them. Even when they are consciously trying to understand social norms and subject them to their actions, they are unable to adapt to the foreign world.

For people who rank among the top-level figures in the Turgenev's novels there is no possibility of an amicable solution to the conflict with the social order and the world that surrounds them. This applies to Yelena Stachova, leaving her homeland, because throughout Russia there is no place for her or the possibility of a meaningful existence. This also applies to Liza Kalitina, leaving the worldly life, trying to break away from all the earth, but even in the monastery there is not an area in which the people achieve a common goal. Rather, it is a place full of resignation and isolation, a place of passive surrender into the hands of God.

Heroes have to go through the torments of their own conscience, often endure humiliation and ridicule from the world whose moral qualities are significantly below their level. In such conditions or situations they begin to explore real life, they are developing their personality, fully manifest their human capabilities and needs. Understanding of their ideals and visions of themselves are changing. They begin to realize that their ideas do not conform to the new dream ideas of youth.

The result is obvious: the objective of Turgenev's life heroes and heroines does not have a clearly positive social character. This does not mean, however, that Turgenev's novels does not have a socio-historical direction, on the contrary, Turgenev always suggests it. After all, the importance and status of hero determines his reaction to the contradictions of Russian social life, its mundane, emptiness and chaos.

Beyond this hierarchical scheme – there are the protagonists of novels of Turgenev: Rudin, Lavretzky ("superfluous men"), Bazarov ("new people").

Turgenev has no doubt about man's sense of existence and his need to join an eternal nature and love. One day he heard a thrush singing under the window. He knew he had found the voice of nature: the voice that is singing now and is going to continue singing forever...

## References

- Тургенев, И. С.: *Полное собрание сочинений и писем в 30-и томах*. Moskva 1978.  
Тургенев и современность. Moskva 1997.  
Тургенев в русской критике. Сборник статей. Moskva 1963.  
TURGENEV, I. S.: *Vzpomínky na literaturu*. Odeon, Praha 1985.  
TURGENEV, I. S.: *Hamlet a Don Quijote*. Tatran, Bratislava 1977.  
Turgenevovský zborník. Krajský pedagogický ústav, Bratislava 1984.  
BACHTIN, M. M.: *Román jako dialog*. Odeon, Praha 1980.  
BACHTIN, M. M.: *Problemy poetiky romana*. Bratislava. Slovenský spisovateľ, 1976.  
BAKOŠ, M.: *Problémy literárnej vedy včera a dnes*. Vydavateľstvo SAV, Bratislava 1964.  
ČERNÝŠEVSKIJ, N. G.: *O literatúre*. Československý spisovateľ 1955.  
ČERVEŇÁK, A.: *Človek a text*. Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa, Nitra 2001.  
ČERVEŇÁK, A.: *Vajanský a Turgenev*. Vydavateľstvo SAV, Bratislava 1968.  
HONZÍK, J.: *Turgenev, I. S. Vzpomínky na literaturu*. Odeon, Praha 1985.  
HRABÁK, J.: *Čtení o románu*. SPN, Praha 1981.  
JEHLÍČKA, M.: *Ivan Sergejevič Turgenev: Sborník statí k stému výročí úmrtí*. UK, Praha 1987.  
WOODWARD, J. B.: *Metaphysical conflict: a study of the major novels of Ivan Turgenev*. O. Sagner, Munchen 1990.