

THE CRAFTSMANSHIP OF TURGENEV

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CHAPTER I

INFLUENCES TOWARD CRAFTSMANSHIP

The ultimate objective of this study is to show the elements of Turgenev's craftsmanship. It is impossible, however, to approach even the craftsmanship of so significant an author in a vacuum. Something of his life and times must first be known, and to understand these things we must go back to the year 1552.

In that year, Ivan V drove the Tartars back to the southeast, opening new lands and, in turn, attracting swarms of immigrant laborers. These immigrants were forced to borrow from the large landholders and became bound to the soil as a result of their indebtedness. Many fled when their bondage became apparent, and, as a result, in 1597 Boris Godunov issued a decree by which they could be returned and forced to work the land. The practice continued, and during the reign of Michael Romanoff (1613-1645) serfdom became a legal Russian institution.

Peter the Great found Russia near ruin as a result of her past wars. He yearly mobilized a large army to man outposts which he established on the country's perimeter. In payment, the leaders of this army received large tracts of land complete with the peasants who occupied the land.

During Catherine's reign a cultured, noble class evolved, demanding vastly more maintenance and, as a result, far greater exploitation of the bonded peasant. At this time

the position of the Russian serf was roughly equivalent to that of the slave in the pre-civil war United States. Insurrections, in which both nobles and serf were slaughtered, resulted. Indeed, the Pugachev insurrection (1773) seriously threatened the existence of the Russian State.

When Alexander I came to the throne, he showed marked liberal tendencies. He liberated a large number of political prisoners and issued an imperial edict whereby landowners could voluntarily free their serfs, as a group or individually. He also ruled that peasants could not be sold individually, but only as improvements on, and in conjunction with, the sale of land.

In the period from 1815 to 1835, the number of serfs increased to the point of excess. Serfs were used as house servants, and some landowners experimented with estate-factories. These estate-factories could not, however, compete with merchant-factories. This situation became intolerable under Nicholas I, a period in which bloody insurrections had to be frequently curbed.

The solution, or partial solution, appeared in the form of the ascension of Czar Alexander II. Alexander was an intimate of the young liberals of the forties, and he gave tangible evidence of his friendship in 1861. In this year, he signed an act freeing all serfs.¹

¹Harry Hershkowitz, Democratic Ideals in Turgenev's Works, pp. 1-7.

This is the basic history out of which evolved Russian realism and the genius of Turgenev. An aristocracy and intelligentsia, close to the soil and to the peasant with his fresh, unhackneyed observation of life, produced a realism different from that of France and England. Then, too, the Russian novel, founded in reality by Pushkin, incorporated techniques and craftsmanship of poetry which can not be underestimated in understanding the craftsmanship of Turgenev. Prince Mirsky tells us that Russian realism, as we know it today, is a cross product of unusual parents. Basically it results from a skillful blending of the old sentimental realism of early Russia, with its melancholy sympathy for the struggles of man, and the satirical naturalism of Gogol, which in its pure form can depict only the more vulgar and grotesque aspects of life. The product was an art that could point out the faults of man and still retain a melancholy hope for his salvation.² In this new art form "People are not good or bad; they are only more or less unhappy and deserving of sympathy--this may be taken as the formula of all Russian novelists from Turgenev to Chekhov."³

These then are the tides of Russian government and art which influenced the young Turgenev. Born in the Province of Orel on October 28, 1818, he appeared at a time, and in

²Dmitrii Petrovich Mirsky, A History of Russian Literature, p. 217.

³Ibid., p. 218.

a position, quite opportune for the formation of his genius--
if not for a very happy life.

His father was a handsome but impoverished squire, who had served in the cavalry and possessed a great attraction for the other sex. He married Mlle. Lutovinova, an heiress older than himself. She had had a very unhappy childhood and girlhood and adored her husband, who never loved her. This combined with the control of a large fortune to make of Mme. Turgenev an embittered and intolerable domestic tyranny (sic). Though she was attached to her son, she treated him with an exasperating despotism, and with her serfs and servants was plainly cruel.⁴

Here we see formed early in life, Turgenev's hatred of the abuses of serfdom as personified by his mother. That he retained a certain loyalty to her is remarkable, especially if we consider that she is reported to have sent two young men to Siberia for failing to bow to her.⁵ We must remember, too, that he witnessed the insurrection of 1830 even before he entered Moscow University in 1833, and that he was also destined to witness the insurrections of 1848 and 1871.⁶

A year later, in 1834, his mother moved to Petersburg, and Turgenev transferred to Petersburg University. There he became extremely fond of the writings of Shakespeare and Byron, whose Hamlet and Manfred had a significant influence on the characters of his novels.⁷ Indeed, Henry James reports that Turgenev was so thoroughly saturated with Shakespearean literature that his spoken English tended to be more Shakespearean

⁴Mirsky, A History of Russian Literature, p. 217.

⁵Hershkowitz, Democratic Ideals in Turgenev's Works, p. 13.

⁶Ibid., p. 11.

⁷Ibid., p. 14.

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than modern. Probably as strong an influence, however, was his period of study with Pushkin's friend, Pletnev, who in 1838 published Turgenev's first verses in Sovremennik. It was through Pletnev that Turgenev met and talked with Pushkin, who had so profoundly influenced the twenties and thirties and the movement toward a Russian national literature.⁸ This accentuated Turgenev's poetic feeling for the Russian language and the lyric quality often seen even in his prose work. It is possible, too, that it was at this period that he acquired his taste for the noble Russian heroine as originated in Pushkin's Evgeny Onyegin. It is significant that his heroines were always of that stamp though they were never typed. He remained primarily a poet until 1845, and, though he was much more powerful in prose, Belinsky, in 1843, praised his longest and most memorable poem, Parasha.⁹ In his choice of vivid images and figures, and in the poetic melody of his word choice this poetic training is reflected. He was moreover a close friend of the critic Belinsky, with whom he discussed at length the ideals of western art.¹⁰

It is impossible, too, to discount the influence of Mme. Viardot-Garcia on Turgenev. He met the famous singer while still at Petersburg and fell deeply in love with her. She was devoted to her husband and to her art, yet there remained

⁸Mirsky, A History of Russian Literature, p. 237.

⁹Ibid., p. 179.

¹⁰Hershkowitz, Democratic Ideals in Turgenev's Works, p. 17.

a platonic relationship which had a marked effect on Turgenev. In later years he was as often as possible near her and seems to have followed her over Europe.¹¹ There are traces of the virile and brilliant woman in most of Turgenev's heroines, and it is more than possible that her devotion to her art influenced him in the direction of conscious artistry. This point, of course, cannot be proved because of the inaccessibility of the great mass of their correspondence,¹² yet it would be foolish to discount it.

Receiving his degree from Petersburg, in 1837, Turgenev went to the University of Berlin, where Hegel was yet the reigning authority, to round out his philosophical education.¹³ In Berlin he became acquainted with his exiled uncle, Nicholas Turgenev, who had done much to improve the status of the serfs during the reign of Alexander I. Under his influence Ivan was confirmed in Westernism.¹⁴

Upon his return to Russia in 1891, he entered the civil service for two years instead of making a university career as he had intended. His leaving the civil service to make a career in literature is partially accounted for by Prince Kropotkin's comment:

¹¹Janko Lavrin, From Pushkin to Mayakovsky, p. 117.

¹²This correspondence is in the hands of Mme. Viardot's daughters, very old women, who have consistently refused even examination of all but a very few of the letters.

¹³Mirsky, A History of Russian Literature, p. 237.

¹⁴Hershkowitz, Democratic Ideals in Turgenev's Works, p. 21.

The reason why literature exercises such an influence in Russia is self-evident. There is no open political life . . . The consequence has been that the best minds of the country have chosen the poem, the novel, the satire, or literary criticism as the medium for expressing their aspirations.¹⁵

On his active entrance into the field of literature he was hailed as a rising young poet. He broke completely with his mother, who hated all writers and especially Russian writers, in 1850. In the meantime, Nekrasov's Sovremenik had, in 1847, begun publication of the stories that were to become known as Turgenev's Sportsman's Sketches, or Diary of a Sportsman.¹⁶ Subtle and unobtrusive if taken individually, these sketches had an effect on Russia similar to that which Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin had on the United States. They stirred depths, however, instead of touching off an explosion.¹⁷

The censor who passed the sketches was removed from the service. About the same time Turgenev wrote an obituary notice on the death of Gogol in which he referred to the "great" Gogol. The censor forbade the use of the epithet. Turgenev's friends, however, arranged for a publication of the article including the forbidden epithet. This episode, in conjunction with the publication of The Sketches, very nearly caused Turgenev to be sent to Siberia. He was, however, confined

¹⁵Kropotkin, Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature, p. vi.

¹⁶Mirsky, A History of Russian Literature, pp. 237-238, passim.

¹⁷Henry James, The Art of Fiction, p. 118.

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to his estate for eighteen months.¹⁸ He had inherited this estate, on the death of his mother, in 1850, and his first act had been to free the serfs.¹⁹

It is probable that George Sand's Country Stories influenced him in his writings of the sketches. That he was influenced by this woman, who revived sentimental realism, is shown by a letter to Mme. Viardot, dated January 17, 1848, in which he said of George Sand:

She writes simply, truthfully, and in a captivating manner. That woman has the power to convey the most elusive impressions firmly and clearly.²⁰

These were techniques that fascinated Turgenev. He, too, conveyed elusive impressions powerfully as may be seen in the cumulative effect of the sketches. It is perhaps true that his sketches are hardly stories--simply slices of life, but they convey a sense of great restrained power. They are best when considered from a Gestalt aspect, for the whole is undoubtedly greater than the sum of the parts.

At the end of his eighteen months of exile, he returned to Petersburg to find himself the absolute authority among the progressive young men of the forties.²¹ These first years of Alexander II's reign were probably the happiest years of his life, for he was strongly affected by criticism.

¹⁸Mirsky, A History of Russian Literature, p. 238.

¹⁹Hershkowitz, Democratic Ideals in Turgenev's Works, p. 25.

²⁰Ibid., p. 24.

²¹Mirsky, A History of Russian Literature, p. 238.

He took the praise of the critics gracefully, and revelled in the literary society that he ruled. But he was not idle. He was only well launched on his thirty most productive years.

He touched every chord to which the public was responsive. In his early sketches and stories he had denounced serfdom; in Rudin (1855) paid homage to the idealism of the older generation while exposing its inefficiency; in A Nest of Gentlefolk (1858) glorified all that was noble in the old orthodox ideals of the old gentry; in On the Eve (1860) attempted to paint the heroic figure of a young girl of the new generation . . . His art answered to the demands of everyone. It was civic without being "tendentious." It painted life as it was and chose for its subjects the most burning problems of the day . . . It was the mean term, the middle style for which the forties had groped in vain . . .²²

Yet, in the face of his success Turgenev was censured. He had produced portraits of magnificent Russian heroines, but he had never given Russia a hero. His heroes were not men of action, but introspective Hamlet types of his own stamp. His only man of action was Insarov, a Bulgarian patriot in On the Eve. It was said that he did not feel Russia capable of producing a national hero.

He answered the charge by his creation of Bazarov in Fathers and Children. The radicals felt that Turgenev had created a caricature and not a hero in this nihilist, military materialist, with his rejection of all religious and aesthetic values.²³ He was repudiated by the young intellectuals who had previously chosen him as their leader. To say that he was disillusioned by their reaction would be a

²²Mirsky, A History of Russian Literature, pp. 238-239.
²³Ibid., p. 240.

milestone in understatement. In a letter to Mme. Viardot, dated February 1862, he said:

Bazarov puts all the other personalities in the shade. He is honest, straightforward, and a democrat of the purest water. The duel with Pavel Petrovitch is only introduced to show the intellect the real emptiness of the elegant, noble knighthood; in fact I even exaggerated and made it ridiculous. My conception of Bazarov is such as to make him superior to Pavel Petrovitch. Nevertheless, when he calls himself nihilist, you must read "revolutionist." If the reader is not won by Bazarov, not withstanding his roughness, absence of heart, pitiless dryness and terseness, then the fault is with me. I have missed my aim; but to sweeten him with syrup (to use Bazarov's own language), this I did not want to do, although perhaps through that I would have won Russian youth at once to my side.²⁴

That Turgenev could not compromise his creative intelligence, even for the praise he loved so well, is apparent in the last two lines quoted. The dictates of his craftsmanship would not allow him to create a character who did not act at all times in accordance with his nature. In disgust, he abandoned Russia, expressing his pessimism in the lyric, autobiographical prose work, Enough (1864).²⁵

He traveled then to Germany, where he settled near Baden-Baden (described so perfectly in Smoke). There he remained until the Franco-Prussian war, when he removed himself and settled near Paris, on the Seine.²⁶

In Paris he was active in French literary circles, including that of Merimee, Flaubert, and the young naturalists.

²⁴As quoted by Hershkowitz, Democratic Ideals in Turgenev's Works, p. 69.

²⁵Mirsky, A History of Russian Literature, p. 240.

²⁶James, The Art of Fiction, p. 118.

He became the first Russian author of consequence to be translated into the French, and on the publication of his first translated work, "Flaubert, the most fastidious and intellectual of the lot, even went so far as to say 'This gigantic Sythian has surpassed us all'."²⁷ This was typical of his reception. He was important, too, as one of the first to discover the young Maupassant and Henry James, both notable craftsmen, who looked to him as the master.²⁸ Among the non-Russian group he was pleasant and charming--always at his ease. Among his fellow Russians he was thought arrogant, high-handed, and vain. It is his reception into this French group of select, literary artists that is especially significant. At no other time is there an example of a group of men so intent on conscious artistry. And into this group Turgenev was received--fit testimonial to his genius.

His physical size was equal to his genius, for he was an imposing figure, well over six feet tall, with heavy hair and a well-kept beard and mustache. In his eyes there was a deep look of brooding melancholy. A startling factor was his squeaky voice issuing from so gigantic a frame. His was an aspect always welcome, however, at literary gatherings or hunting matches, both of which he passionately enjoyed.

Smoke (1867) and Virgin Soil (1876) were attempts to portray the revolutionary movement which culminated in the

²⁷David Cecil, Poets and Story Tellers, p. 125.

²⁸Mirsky, A History of Russian Literature, p. 240.

seventies. In them he widened his powers of artistry and his detachment from Russia. As party feeling in Russia diminished, his popularity increased and made his last visit to Russia (1880) a triumphant progress. Shortly after his return from this trip, on August 22, 1883, in the small commune of Bougival on the Seine below Paris, he died.²⁹

Today, these many years after his death, Turgenev is no longer a teacher or an object of political controversy. The political content of his novels died shortly after he did. What remains is pure and consummate art. Turgenev may or may not have been surpassed by two other "gigantic Sythians." Perhaps the works of Tolstoy and Dostoyetsky will have a more lasting effect on the world. Tolstoy's strength was the penetration of his vision; but Turgenev's strength was in the consummate craftsmanship with which he depicted the subjects of his vision.

An examination of the facets of craftsmanship in Turgenev's major novels, Rudin, A Nobleman's Nest, On the Eve, Fathers and Children, Smoke, and Virgin Soil, will bring us to a greater understanding of his methods and intent.

²⁹Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature*, p. 241.

CHAPTER II
MASTERY OF PLOT

Usually classed as realism, the work of Ivan Turgenev defies classification by the discriminating critic, for it is not romanticism, nor does it hold that life is a sordid, animalistic affair, as does naturalism. His position in the realm of art is best defined in Joseph Conrad's comment on the true artist, in his admirable Preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus:

Realism, Romanticism, Naturalism, even the unofficial sentimentalism (which like the poor, is exceedingly difficult to get rid of,) all these gods must, after a short period of fellowship, abandon him--even on the very threshold of his temple--to the stammerings of his conscience and to the outspoken consciousness of the difficulties of his work.¹

The principal consideration in craftsmanship given Turgenev's novels has been in respect to the results they produced. Although these novels did have powerful political connotations, they are also important as particularized universals. Indeed, today these works are most important as works of art, for their particular political background has ceased to exist. As in all great art, the qualities of man which they depict are universal, and produce as powerful an effect today as they did in the late nineteenth century.

Henry James, who was deeply influenced by Turgenev, says that the first form of a Turgenev story was not plot, but a group of selected individuals whom he wished to see reacting

¹p. xv.

to each other. Once these characters were selected, however, they were placed in a situation where they could not but act on each other. On this basis, plot evolved as a result of, and in absolute accord with, the character of the individuals portrayed.² This does not, however, presuppose that Turgenev places character above plot in order of importance, for the mere suggestion that Turgenev placed his characters in a situation where they would act on each other presupposes the importance of plot. This situation in which Turgenev places his characters is nothing more or less than a plot--a design of incidents in causal relationship to each other so that the final incident is the inevitable result of the first.

Such incidents, in causal relationship to each other, are, it is true, not characteristic of life. In life, the incidents relevant to the working out of a plot are interwoven with completely irrelevant actions. It is for this reason that Aristotle tells us that tragedy is the "imitation of an action,"³ thus emphasizing the importance of plot. This necessity for design is expressed in On the Eve, as Shubin, a young sculptor, and Berseniev, who is planning an academic career, regard nature. The friends have been resting under a lime tree on a warm spring day. Berseniev speaks:

²James, The Art of Fiction and Other Essays, p. 111.

³Aristotle, Poetics as printed in Greek Literary Criticism, p. 120.

"I was enjoying the view. Look how hotly those fields are shimmering in the sun!" (Berseniev hissed a little when pronouncing sibilants).

"The color's been put on thick," Shubin replied. "It's nature, in a word!"

Berseniev shook his head.

"You should admire it all even more than I do. It's in your line: you're an artist."

"No; its not in my line," Shubin retorted, setting his hat on the back of his head. "I'm a butcher; my business is concerned with meat, sticking meat together--shoulders, legs, and arms. But here there isn't any form, or any completeness, it's gone all ways--and you try catching it!"⁴

Characteristically, Turgenev does not speak directly to the reader but through his characters. Shubin is right--a picture of fields shimmering in the sun is a picture of nature, and the real thing does seem to go every way when an artist tries to catch it. It is the business of the artist to catch the scene by catching its salient details, leaving out all that is not absolutely relevant. Turgenev catches a series of incidents in each of his six novels, and holds up before us a portrait, not a mere replica, of nature.

Turgenev's first novel, Rudin (1855), was the refined result of a thorough polishing process, for he rewrote the novel many times during the eighteen months that he spent exiled on his estate.⁵ The novel opens with an introductory scene, standard in all his novels, in which we meet our characters and learn the situation out of which the complication is to arise.

⁴Turgenev, The Borzoi Turgenev, p. 414.
⁵Garnett, Turgenev, p. 60.

Daria Mikhailovna, a middle aged society-woman, is living on her summer estate surrounded by a retinue intended solely to amuse and flatter her. Daria is amused as she awaits the visit of a Baron Muffel, by a young, dependent pianist, Pandalevsky, and by the splenetic remarks of the elderly Pigasov. The scene ends as the butler announces that a Mr. Rudin has arrived with a message from the awaited Baron Muffel. The concise manner in which Turgenev disposes of his introductory material is characteristic of his art. The novel is essentially the story of the tragedy of Rudin, so he is introduced at the earliest possible moment. To state it another way, the story begins at the last possible moment before Rudin's entrance.

From the moment of his entry, Rudin is, by reason of his eloquence, the commanding spirit of the room. He has brought an article by the Baron to Daria Mikhailovna, and he thoroughly subdues Pigasov, who questions the quality of the work. This is the beginning of a portrait of three men who strive for the favor of Daria Mikhailovna: Pandalevsky is an absolute hypocrite; Pigasov is favored because of his social position and the amusement afforded Daria by his wit; and Rudin stays on because of his brilliant logic and eloquence.

After his initial triumph, Rudin virtually rules the household. Daria Mikhailovna's daughter, Natalia, stands in awe of him, while her tutor, Mlle. Boncourt, looks on him with awe and a French distrust. Alexandra Pavlovna, a young

neighbor woman, is fascinated by his brilliance but can feel no real friendship for him. Volintsov, Alexandra's brother, is in love with Natalia, and, therefore, looks on Rudin as a potential rival.

By this time, the reader is wondering about Rudin's origin, which must, of course, be given as antecedent action. The manner in which an author handles antecedent action is a key to his skill, and Turgenev passes this test brilliantly.

Soon after Rudin's arrival, an eccentric neighbor, Lezhnirov, comes to discuss the boundary of his estate, and it is discovered that he and Rudin were in school together. Alexandra questions Lezhnirov about their relationship, but only an artistic foreshadowing is given at this time. Lezhnirov reveals only that Rudin once lived abroad in the household of a woman who was fascinated by his wit, and that he treated his mother, who sacrificed everything for his education, badly.

Rudin continues to dominate the household and becomes infatuated with Natalia. In the meantime he has borrowed two hundred rubles, and Daria Mikahilovna has given him five hundred. Lezhnirov has a second discussion with Alexandra, in which he tells her that in their college group Rudin was eloquent, good intentioned, and disastrous. Rudin had broken up a love affair for Lezhnirov, after eloquently persuading him it was for the best.

One afternoon, while walking in the garden with Natalia, Rudin proposes to her. Pandalevsky has been hiding in the

bushes listening. This is the climax of the novel, for the reader cannot but sense that the fawning Pandalevsky will run to Daria Mikhailovna with his information and that Rudin will lack the ability to take any spirited action to gain Natalia. The scene is handled unobtrusively, however, so that it only increases the fascination of the unravelling. The scene is subtle because Pandalevsky does not emerge from the garden with any of the characteristics of the melodramatic villain. It is simply stated that he was present, and the imagination must do the rest.

On hearing Pandalevsky's story, Daria Mikhailovna confines Natalia to her room. Natalia succeeds, however, in sending Rudin a letter, telling him to meet her near a ruined pond at seven the next morning. She obviously feels that Rudin will act in the spirit of the gallant knight and carry her away on a thundering charger in the face of her mother and all the furies of hell. It comes as no great surprise to the reader, however, to learn that Rudin lacks the determination to face even the wrath of the mother.

There is pathos in this scene, and it is handled delicately. It is not a lurid but a melancholy pathos, heightening the tragedy of Rudin's decline, which begins with this moment.

Lezhniov, who has spent the night with Volientsov, is passing as Rudin leaves the scene of his failure, and noting the disconcerted look on his face, returns to discuss this

strange happening. While he is there, a note comes to Volintsov informing him that Rudin is leaving that day.

Knowing he is no longer welcome, Rudin goes to Daria Mikhailovna, tells her he has been called away, and makes a graceful exit. Fear for his fate is inevitable as he leaves the household, for Rudin is noble in every respect except in his inability to take decisive action.

In the epilogue of the novel, we learn that Rudin has gone on to a series of unsuccessful enterprises. He has attempted the management of an estate, become involved in a project to make an obscure river navigable and failed miserably as a high-school professor of Russian Literature. We see his end in a few terse dramatic lines as he dies in an unsuccessful rising of the National Workshops.⁶ We also learn that Alexandra and Lezhnirov are happily married; that Pigasov is married to, and dominated by, an elderly widow; that Pandalevsky continues to curry favor with Daria Mikhailovna; and that Volintsov and Natalia are to be married. The few short pages of the epilogue remove the sense of frustration a reader would feel if they were not included.

Here is a clear-cut beginning, middle, and end of Aristotelian quality. Intensity of vision is evident in the choice of detail, and the tragic anticipation of Rudin's end is more effective than a surprise ending. There is a pleasing symmetry in the novel, satisfactory to even Aristotelian

⁶Paris, 1848.

standards. The plot covers a span of both time and action easily comprehended by the reader, yet of sufficient magnitude to merit the attention given it.⁷

At the same time, one of the great elements of Turgenev's craftsmanship lies in the fact that though the plot has a clear-cut beginning and end, he always shows that his design is only part of the stream of life.

The novel is made even more symmetrical by Turgenev's use of a series of dramatic scenes, whose intensity is varied with importance of the part of the action they portray. On first reading, it seems that Turgenev has used a succession of great scenes, for each scene is vivid and of dramatic proportions. But, when the entire novel is considered, each scene is given just the emphasis merited by its position in the plot. The successive scenes mount in intensity until the peak is reached in the scene by the dismal pond, in which Natalia learns of Rudin's inadequacy. Yet, as important as Turgenev's ability to portray great scenes is the almost classic restraint by means of which he holds in check scenes which, in the hands of a less able author, could overshadow the more important ones.

In this, Turgenev's first complete novel, there is no evidence of the weakness in plot often evident in a first novel. Probably his skill is due to his early training as

⁷See Aristotle's discussion of plot, Poetics as printed in Greek Literary Criticism, pp. 123-124.

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a poet and a dramatist, for both of these art forms call for concision, which Henry James regarded as Turgenev's "great external mark."⁸

Concision and dramatic technique are also evident in Turgenev's second novel, A Nobleman's Nest. Again the novel is begun at the last possible moment, in the drawing room of Marya Dmitrievna, who is the full-blown, middle-aged remnant of a pretty blonde. The widow of a minor government employee, she retains in her household her aged aunt, Marfa Timofeena, and her daughter, Liza. Almost as on a stage, this first scene introduces the characters of the novel in inverse order of their importance.

Vladimar Nikolaitch Fanshin, a rising young government official, comes to call. After his introduction to the reader, a brief statement of the antecedent action of his life, as it affects the story, is given from the author-omniscient viewpoint. This method of introducing antecedent action is not as strong as that used in Rudin, yet it is accomplished in a concise, unobtrusive manner and seems to come in answer to the reader's curiosity. Next, the town music teacher, Monsieur Lemm, a broken German musician, is introduced as he comes to give the children of the house their music lesson.

The entrance of Lavretsky is prepared for by comments of the minor characters on his return to the area. By this

⁸James, The Art of Fiction and Other Essays, p. 116.

means, antecedent action in his life is artistically given as gossip between the minor characters. We learn that his wife has been untrue and that he has left her in Paris and returned to Russia. As Liza escorts Monsieur Lenn to the gate, Lavretsky arrives to pay his respects to Marya Dmitrievna. In this first meeting of the two principal characters is a delicately shaded forecast of a kindred spirit in the two people. This is the inciting force of the drama, so subtly introduced that the reader is scarcely aware of it.

After his visit to Marya Dmitrievna, Lavretsky goes to the small estate left him by the aunt who was his childhood nurse. There he meets Anton, the aged retainer, who has cared for the estate since Glafira Petrovna's death. This first night in his new home causes his mind to be flooded by memories of his early life and of his marriage, and antecedent action is introduced in this skillful guise.

The next day he begins the rehabilitation of his small estate and spends a fortnight in this occupation; then, becoming bored, he journeys to town where he spends an evening in the company of Liza and Lenn. He becomes quite fond of both people and insists that the musician visit him for a few days. During Lenn's visit a kinship is born as a result of the mutually broken lives of the two men. Together they view their friends and decide that Panshin is an undesirable suitor for Liza. They decide that the

Kalatin family should be invited to Lavretsky's estate, hoping that he will be able to persuade Liza that Panshin is not a fit match for her. There is a delicate, subtle irony present as both men see the tragedy which would result from the marriage of Panshin and Liza, and yet cannot see another tragedy being born.

While visiting the Kalatin home, for the purpose of tendering his invitation, Lavretsky is drawn into a discussion with Liza, who believes that he should become reconciled to his wife. Even in this adverse atmosphere, their feeling for each other begins to grow. Lavretsky's invitation is accepted, and Panshin is delicately excluded from the group. He returns home to find that Mikhalevitch, the student companion through which he had met his wife, has stopped to visit him. Lavretsky discovers that there is no longer any common ground between him and this man.

Two days later, Marya Dmitrievna, Liza, and the two younger daughters arrive for their day's visit. The high point of the visit is a magnificent scene in which the party goes fishing on the banks of Lavretsky's small pond. During the scene, Liza attempts to reconcile Lavretsky to his wife, and he tries to persuade her that she should not marry Panshin. Liza admits she does not love Panshin, yet she does not promise not to marry him. Lavretsky cannot be persuaded to reconcile himself to his wife, yet he is impressed by Liza's deep devotion to moral duty. Their

feeling for each other is deepened by this discussion, though neither of them is consciously aware of it. When it comes time for the family's return to town, Lavretzky rides beside Liza's window of the coach, not noticing that he rides past the halfway point of the journey. This is a delicate foreshadowing of the growing feeling between them.

The following morning, Lavretzky reads in the gossip column of a French society-paper that his wife is dead. He spends a restless night considering the meanings of this new development and goes the next day to tell Liza of what he has learned. A fashionable party is in progress, however, so he simply hands her the paper with the news of his wife's death underlined. Since a discussion of the news is impossible at this time, he leaves and returns the next day. He learns that Liza is stunned that he feels no sorrow for his wife's death and that she has just received a letter of proposal from Panshin. Lavretzky begs her not to accept Panshin's offer, and though she will not promise, both of them are secretly aware that a door has opened through which their love can enter openly.

That evening he returns to the Kalatin home, with the supposed purpose of visiting Marfa Timofeevna. He succeeds in talking to Liza, who tells him that she has put Panshin off. Lavretzky attends church the following Sunday because Liza wishes it, and because he wishes to see her. In their meeting after the service, a further subtle unfolding of the love story is seen.

A short while later Lavretzky attends an All-Night Vigil service at the Kalatin home, and during the service he becomes convinced of his love for Liza. After the service he wanders aimlessly about the streets of the town finally discovering that he has arrived back in the Kalatin garden. While he is standing there, Liza comes down to the library for a book, and he calls her into the garden, where they confess their love for each other. Turgenev handles this avowal scene tenderly, keeping it within its bounds, for it could easily overshadow the climax of the story. The scene's beauty is enhanced by its understatement.

The next day Lavretzky goes to visit the Kalatin home but finds that they are not receiving visitors. As he returns to his rooms, the climax of the novel is reached, for there he discovers his wife. This scene has been prepared for by the very nature of the false discovery of Varvara Pavlovna's death and by Lavretzky's futile attempts to confirm the report. The discovery comes as a surprise, yet it arises directly out of the structure of the plot and does not, therefore, shock the reader to disbelief, as would otherwise be the case. This careful preparation for any unusual happening is characteristic of Turgenev.

Shocked, Lavretzky attempts to see Liza to tell her of his discovery, but the household remains closed to visitors. In desperation he goes that night to Lomn who, while giving music lessons in the household, takes the news to Liza. Lomn

learns that Marya Dmitrievna has closed the household because Liza has refused Panshin's offer of marriage.

Lavretsky's wife goes to visit Marya Dmitrievna and ingratiates herself with all save Liza, who is disgusted by her. Liza nevertheless prevails on Lavretsky to become reunited with his wife. Lavretsky refuses, but as he is leaving, Marya Dmitrievna sends for him. She has been greatly impressed by Varvara Pavlovna, and she is determined to see her forgiven by Lavretsky. Marya Dmitrievna is in all her glory when she brings the husband and wife together and manages to extract a promise from Lavretsky that he will at least care for Varvara Pavlovna for the sake of their daughter. Liza knows she can never love again, and it is in keeping with her deep devotion to moral values that she becomes a nun.

A great tragedy has taken place in the lives of at least two people, yet they must pick up the threads of life and go on, as life goes on around them. Turgenev shows this in the epilogue as Varvara Pavlovna cannot remain true and returns to her old way of life. Lavretsky, who has become a skilled agrarian, goes once to seek Liza, but as she passes him in the nunnery she gives no sign of recognition except the flickering of an eye-lid and a tightening of her fingers on her rosary. Although Turgenev sees design in life, he is great enough to see that life goes beyond design.

In this plot, particular names and characteristics are given, yet it is, and will remain, universal, as long as there remain unfaithful wives and as long as men exist who

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only bow to fate and have not the courage to defy custom. Even by Aristotelian standards, which are not easy standards, this plot is well formed. It is a complex plot, for both peripety and discovery are present, arising, in direct causal relationship, from preceding action.⁹ Lavretsky is essentially a good man, defeated because of flaws in his character which are discovered as a direct result of the incidents in the story.

We find that this is also the case in On the Eve, (1859), for Insarov is a young Bulgarian patriot, fully confident of his strength and of his ability to aid in the liberation of his country. Against his will he falls in love with Yelena and resolves to take her with him to Bulgaria. As a result of his too complete belief in his own power and his disregard of his own welfare, he contracts pneumonia and dies on the way to join in the revolution, for which he has long prepared. It is hardly necessary to point out that both peripety and discovery can be seen even in this, the basic plot.

The basic plot is, however, expanded by the insertion of necessary episode.¹⁰ In the opening scene Shubin, a young sculptor, and Berseniev, the third B.A. at Moscow University, are introduced. Through them, entrance is gained into the Stakhov household where the heroine, the beautiful, precocious Yelena, is found. Her father, Nikolai Artiomevitch, does not

⁹Aristotle, Poetics as printed in Greek Literary Criticism, p. 127.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 647.

understand his brilliant daughter, and maintains his club membership and his mistress. Yelena's mother, Anna Vasilievna, neither understands her daughter nor has the courage, except for ineffective outbursts, to protest actively her husband's infidelity. This is the opening scene--the stage is set.

The story is begun at the last possible moment. The beginning, in the full Aristotelian sense, brings Insarov to share Berseniev's summer quarters, which are near the Stakhov home. Yelena is excited to learn that a patriot, a man of action, is about to enter her life. At first, she is distressed by his scholarly appearance, but gradually she comes to respect the ambition which drives him to work day and night---even to walk forty miles to settle a dispute between his countrymen.

Shubin and Berseniev become aware of the rising attraction developing between the two and realize its import before either of the principals is aware of its presence. A further complication is introduced when Yelena's father selects a pseudo-progressive government official, Kurnatovsky, as her suitor. Turgenev displays excerpts from Yelena's diary, which show that she has absolutely no feeling for Kurnatovsky, and that she has suddenly come to the realization that she loves Insarov. This is a variance from the dramatic technique, yet it is probably the most effective and concise manner in which Yelena's position could be defined. The very form of the novel permits varied technique.

Insarov too realizes that he is in love, and, fearing that his patriotic intent may be compromised by his love, he

resolves to return to Moscow. Berseniev announces that Insarov is leaving the morning after Yelena has admitted to herself that she is in love. Insarov comes to say goodbye, and Yelena asks that he come to see her one more time. When he fails to return, Yelena goes to seek him in his lodgings, but a storm forces her to the cover provided by a roadside chapel. While she is there, Insarov passes, and she calls to him. They declare their love and resolve that they shall marry and go together to fight for Bulgaria's freedom.

Insarov returns to Moscow, and soon thereafter the Stakhovs return to their winter home in that city. Yelena goes to see Insarov in his rooms, and they resolve that, since the Bulgarian revolution is about to become active, they will marry and depart as soon as possible. The next day Insarov journeys across the city in a cold rain to obtain an illegal passport for Yelena. Failing to obtain the document, he returns home and soon becomes ill from his exposure. A short while later Insarov's landlord tells Berseniev that his roomer is suffering from a high fever. Berseniev goes to Insarov and summons a doctor, who reports the illness to be double pneumonia. Yelena comes to visit and finds Berseniev caring for Insarov, who is in a coma. She wants to remain, but Berseniev insists she return home.

After hovering near death for a week, Insarov recovers, but he does not allow himself time to recuperate fully. This is the climax of the novel, for by now it is apparent that

Insarov will bring about his own reversal by reason of his disregard of his health. What exactly the end will be remains to be seen in the unravelling of the plot.

A servant of Yelena's father reports to him that Yelena has visited Insarov's rooms, and a scene results in which Yelena defies her father and announces that she is married to Insarov. Her father is furious and threatens to annul the marriage, but in the end her mother persuades him not to damage her good name. Legal passports are obtained, but since Russia and Turkey are now at war, direct travel is impossible. They journey, therefore, to Venice, where a Bulgarian sailor, Rendich, is to have a boat ready for their passage to Bulgaria.

On their arrival in Venice, Insarov's condition is worse, and Rendich has not yet arrived. They devote the day to pleasure, attending the opera Traviata during the evening. There is skillful foreshadowing in the death scene in the opera and in the scene in which Yelena watches the wounded sea gull from her balcony, and the elements of pity and fear are intensified, as the heroine of the opera dies of consumption. The next day Insarov's condition is much worse, and Rendich has not yet arrived. These delays and waitings effectively increase the pitch of the pity and fear excited by Insarov's condition. That night Insarov starts up in his sleep, calling to Yelena, and dies of collapse of the lungs.

Rendich arrives soon after Insarov's death, and Yelena, resolved that Insarov shall not lie in foreign soil, persuades

the sailor to take them to Bulgaria. With Insarov dead, and Yelena going on, the elements of pity and fear are intensified.¹¹ But Turgenev does not let the novel end like a door closing. He insists that doors do not close on life as he tells the reader that there was a storm while they were on the sea and that the ship was wrecked. It is said by some that a coffin was washed up on the shore, and by others that a lady in black, who afterwards ministered to Bulgarian wounded, brought a coffin to Bulgaria to be buried.

The epilogue carries further the idea that life does not end with this one tragic scene: Yelena's suitor is married to her former companion; her father has a new mistress; Berseniev will soon become a professor; and Shubin is a rising young artist. A tragic chapter in the book of life is closed, yet the book is long, and Turgenev has more chapters to contribute.

In Fathers and Children (1861) Turgenev makes his greatest contribution to the art of the novel. Indeed, from the standpoint of craftsmanship it may well be the finest novel yet written. Its plot would probably have delighted the critic Longinus, for it displays both the power of forming great conceptions and a vehement and inspired passion¹² as Turgenev examines, on both the universal and particular levels, the eternal conflict between the old and the new.

¹¹Aristotle, Poetics as printed in Greek Literary Criticism, p. 129.

¹²J. D. Denniston, Greek Literary Criticism, p. 170.

This is a conflict as old and as real as the history of man.

Since the beginning of time, the old have been displaced by the young, and as inevitable as the rising of the young is the birth of new ideas, whose effect cannot but be felt by both the old and new of the world. Old heads, used to an authority born of their mature position, cannot easily accept the new authority to which they have given birth. Conflict and tragedy result, and this is the theme of Fathers and Children.

The novel begins in medias res, with the entrance of the new into the domain of the old. Nikolai Petrovitch Kirsanov has gone to the posting station to meet his son, Arkady, who is returning from the university. Arkady arrives, bringing with him his friend, Bazarov, who does not respect age or any other authority. The intrusion of the new on the old is the inciting force, and thus Turgenev sets his scene and moves at once into the rising action.

Arkady and his father rejoice as they meet, yet Arkady seems ashamed to display such a sentiment before Bazarov, who remains aloof. It is soon evident that Bazarov, a nihilist, is Arkady's master in all things philosophic. As the group journeys to the Kirsanov estate, antecedent action is so subtly introduced as to be scarcely noticed.

By the description of the characters and by their conversation it is shown that Nikolai Petrovitch has done his best to keep abreast of the times, but his saturation in the

old feudal system is too strong. He has freed his serfs, but he is unable to manage the renting of the land efficiently. Nikolai also reveals that he has taken a peasant girl, Fenitchka, as his mistress, and that she has borne him a son. Arkady, however, makes light of the matter and inwardly revels in his emancipation.

On their arrival at the estate they are greeted by the elderly butler, Prokofitch, and soon thereafter by Arkady's uncle, Pavel Petrovitch, who retains a cosmopolitan, aristocratic bearing, even on his brother's tattered estate. There are now on the scene four representatives of the old and the new: Pavel Petrovitch, the unyielding old aristocrat; Nikolai Petrovitch, the wavering old land holder; Arkady, the youth whose ideas lack conviction; and Bazarov, the new scientific spirit in dynamic form.

They dine together and then retire, the old and the new, to rest and speculate on each other's incongruities. The next morning Bazarov wakes early and goes out to hunt frogs for use in his experiments, an incident carefully chosen by Turgenev to symbolize Bazarov's convictions. Awakening later, Arkady is about to breakfast with his father and uncle when he learns that Fenitchka is ashamed to come before him. He goes to her, meets his half-brother, and returns with Fenitchka's promise to follow him. Around the breakfast table antecedent action is again subtly introduced as Arkady tells of Bazarov's history. Bazarov's parents are small land holders nearby, and

Bazarov is a nihilist in the respect that he accepts nothing on authority, preferring to believe only what he can prove to his own satisfaction.

Bazarov returns from his frog hunt, and the first signs of hostility between him and Pavel Petrovitch appear. This is the first clash between the unyielding old and the unyielding new as each refuses to see merit in the other. After breakfast, Arkady and Bazarov go to their room, and Arkady tells Bazarov of Pavel Petrovitch's early life in an attempt to explain his actions. Pavel was educated from earliest life in a court society of which he was, by early manhood, the idol. He was in demand especially in the society of women of royal birth and finally fell hopelessly in love with the Princess R---. He completely ruined himself in following her about, and after her death came to live with Nikolai. All this knowledge is necessary to the plot and is introduced so subtly as to be scarcely recognized as antecedent action.

While the two young friends discuss them, Nikolai and Pavel try to settle a land dispute. Tiring of the bickering, Pavel wanders away and encounters Fenitchka where he reveals a love of the child and a hint is given of a feeling for Fenitchka. This incident is essential to the plot as it later compares to Bazarov's reaction to Fenitchka. Nikolai joins them, and in describing her physical appearance, Turgenev subtly weaves in the antecedent action of Fenitchka's life. As a minor character, not much space need be devoted to her, and this information is easily included here. She is the

daughter of an inn-keeper, who has impressed Nikolai by her cleanliness so thoroughly that he took her as a housekeeper.

Later in the day Bazarov encounters Fenitchka and her child and is impressed simply with their health and vitality. He is surprised to learn that Arkady thinks his father should marry Fenitchka. He continues his experiments in the days that follow, and the gulf between him and Pavel Petrovitch widens to open animosity.

Becoming bored with country life, Arkady and Bazarov decide to visit X---, where a relative of Arkady's is visiting on government business. The relative turns out to be a pompous official who advises them to visit the governor and invites them to a ball being given in his honor. As they leave the uncle's office, they encounter a school acquaintance who fawns on Bazarov and invites them to meet Mme. Kukshin, a progressive lady of his acquaintance. This progressive lady turns out to be one of the pseudo-intellectuals who have always been repulsive to the old and new alike.

A few days later they attend the ball, where they meet Mme. Odintsov, whose entrance has been prepared for by a remark of Kukshin's about her beauty and dubious reputation. Here Turgenev, with characteristic concision, prepares for the entrance of a major character and introduces antecedent action. She invites the friends to visit her in her town apartment, where Arkady falls in love and Bazarov discovers a woman with a knowledge of science. There is foreshadowing, as a hint is introduced that there may be a weakness in

Bazarov's aggressive manner. Mme. Odintsov is also impressed by Bazarov and invites them to visit her estate, Nikolskoe.

During their visit to the estate they meet Katya, Mme. Odintsov's younger sister. Arkady is disappointed in being relegated to Katya's company, while something approaching love develops between Bazarov and Mme. Odintsov. In a truly great scene, Bazarov admits his love to Mme. Odintsov, and when she seems to return it, he makes an animal rush at her. She is revolted, and he is disgusted to have shown such weakness. Bazarov takes advantage of a summons of his parents, which he has earlier ignored, to leave, and Arkady accompanies him to his parents' home.

Bazarov's admission of love forms a definite foreshadowing of the climax of the novel, though it passes nearly unnoticed. He has trained himself to the point where he is no longer restricted in his search for truth by any of the standards of morality and ethics that have hampered his elders. From this point on he is more and more aware that his position is not impregnable.

As Arkady and Bazarov arrive at Bazarov's home, they are greeted by his father, a former army physician, and his mother, a simple devout old woman. As he greets his parents, there are again traces of feeling in Bazarov which he can deny but cannot hide. The two young men pass a period in this middle-class environment, during which Bazarov's parents are pathetic as they spare nothing to please their son. Soon, however,

they leave to return to Arkady's home. As though of common design they pause to visit Mme. Odintsov, but she receives them coolly, though gracefully, and they resume their journey.

Arriving at the estate, Arkady and Bazarov find Nikolai more unable than ever to manage the peasant problems. Arkady devotes himself to helping his father, while Bazarov remains aloof. Nikolai reveals to Arkady that he possesses a bundle of letters from Mme. Odintsov's mother to his wife. Having read the letters, Arkady uses them as an excuse for making an afternoon's journey to Nikolskoe. On his return there is a further foreshadowing as Bazarov shows signs of jealousy over Arkady's visit. He has now felt both love and jealousy, though he would deny both emotions.

The hostility between Bazarov and Pavel Petrovitch deepens until the two are aggressively silent at each meeting. Bazarov is attracted to Fenitchka, highly approving her cool, natural approach to life. One day Bazarov and Fenitchka find themselves alone in an arbor and Bazarov attempts to kiss her. At this moment, Pavel Petrovitch appears. That evening Pavel challenges Bazarov to a duel in a scene which is great because of the strained courtesy forced on the participants by the very nature of the challenge. Bazarov's acceptance of the challenge provides the climax of the novel, since it is his first admission of respect for the past, as it is personified in all its noble aspects by Pavel Petrovitch. The duel is arranged for the next morning with Nikolai's valet, Piotr, as the only second.

Turgenev follows one great scene with another as Bazarov meets authority on its own ground. Indeed there is an element of pathos present as Bazarov follows through, to the best of his ability, the dueling code. Pavel Petrovitch's first shot misses Bazarov, who fires without aiming. Pavel Petrovitch is wounded in the thigh. In the confusion which follows, they tell Nikolai that the quarrel was over politics. Despite the family's desire to overlook the incident, Bazarov leaves for his home.

Arkady and Bazarov meet soon at Mme. Odintsov's estate. Arkady is beginning to realize Katya's attraction, and a real feeling is present between Bazarov and Mme. Odintsov, though this feeling affects Mme. Odintsov in a way that cannot transcend respect and mental attraction.

Bazarov returns to his home where he continues to study and begins to aid his father in treating the sick of the district. In treating a peasant infected by typhus, he scratches his hand with an infected surgical knife. Here is a prime essential of Greek tragedy brought to an exact pitch. The pitch of the tragedy has been built from the first sign of Bazarov's weakness to its consummation as he, an essentially good and virile hero, is brought to a complete reversal of fortune by a fault in his own character¹³--his too complete confidence in himself.

¹³Aristotle, Poetics as printed in Greek Literary Criticism, p. 127.

There is very real pathos as Bazarov lies dying, and his aged parents refuse to admit the coming of a death which is more than apparent. Mme. Odintsov comes to him, bringing a doctor--a man of science powerless to aid a man who has worshiped science. Here the emotions of pity and fear, which have grown in intensity since the first sign of Bazarov's death, rise to their full torturing peak, and then subside. After death comes peace. The emotions of pity and fear are purged. Catharsis worthy of the most exacting Greek is achieved.¹⁴

A period of release follows, and then life goes on. Turgenev is a master craftsman as he shows his tragic fragment of life ended, and life resuming its natural course only slightly affected by the struggle which has taken place--for that is the way of life. In the unnamed epilogue, Turgenev shows Arkady and Katya happily married; Mme. Odintsov married to a young lawyer, one of the future leaders of Russia; and Bazarov's broken parents going to worship at his grave. Perhaps this is the supreme achievement of craftsmanship--to take a tragic incident, give it universal significance, and yet hold it within the bounds of a greater, eternal struggle.

At any rate, Turgenev has created a plot which again satisfies even Aristotle's requirements for the plot of tragic drama.¹⁵ It is the imitation of a complete action; it has sufficient magnitude; it is a universal complex plot

¹⁴Ibid., p. 641.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 631-646.

expanded in such a manner that none of the episode could be properly omitted; it possesses peripety and discovery; and it effects a catharsis of emotions which are aroused by the structure of the plot itself. True, not all of Turgenev's novels are so exquisitely plotted, but they all approach these standards.

Written after his semi-voluntary exile to Europe, Smoke is a novel not so tightly plotted, yet admirably illustrating Turgenev's use of dramatic technique. It is formed in the manner of a play, by the use of a series of dramatic scenes linked by a minimum of author-omniscient commentary. This is probably the strongest contributing factor to Turgenev's concision, which is, in turn, one of his most lauded achievements.

The novel opens with a scene in which the entirely lost, pseudo-aristocratic society of Baden-Baden is depicted. It is a society, striving after hollow fashion and propounding liberal ideas of which it knows absolutely nothing. In this atmosphere we meet our hero, Litvinov, who stands apart from this society by reason of his simplicity and honesty. The contrast is that of genuine good breeding in an atmosphere of the vulgar rich. Litvinov is awaiting the arrival of his fiancee, Tatyana, and her aunt, who are to join him for a holiday. In this crowd he encounters an over-enthusiastic acquaintance, Bambaev, who is accompanied by a militant, new university graduate, Voushilov. Bambaev informs Litvinov that a great leader, Gubaryov, is in the city, and suggests

that Litvinov buy their dinner at a nearby cafe. Here, as Turgenev simply closes this scene and opens a new scene in the cafe, one might imagine a curtain closing on one set of scenery and opening on another.

In the cafe, Bambaev overflows with enthusiasm about Gubaryov, while Litvinov listens with genuine curiosity, and Voushilov affects a cultivated detachment. Bambaev insists that Litvinov come with him that evening to meet this great progressive leader, and we are next shifted to a scene in that dignitary's apartment.

Again there is the throng and staccato noise of a group of people gathered together solely to impress each other by their wit and fashionable dress. Gubaryov sees fit to address Litvinov and is disgusted that he has no radically progressive views. Litvinov endures the noise until ten o'clock when he goes out into the fresh air. Turgenev simply says that Litvinov decides to pause at a cafe on his way home, and plunges us into the next scene.

As he sits at a table he is approached by a stranger, Potugin, who had noticed him at Gubaryov's apartment. Potugin had been impressed by Litvinov's reserve, a quality they share. They discover a kinship in their views, and Litvinov invites Potugin to visit him.

Litvinov is next seen as he reaches his apartment and learns that a lady has called during his absence. In his apartment he finds a bouquet of heliotrope. This is the

inciting force of the novel, for these incidents recall to Litvinov's mind his first love, Irina. The scent hangs heavy in the apartment preventing Litvinov from sleeping by recalling the events of this romance. By this means antecedent action as to both Litvinov's and Irina's origins is introduced.

While a university student, Litvinov had fallen in love with Irina, the daughter of a penniless general. Irina had already developed remarkably, and her parents, though they had liked Litvinov, had sought for her an advantageous marriage. Irina had ultimately been torn between her desire for the comforts of wealth and her love for Litvinov, and she had reluctantly chosen wealth. As these thoughts pass through Litvinov's mind, it is not impossible to imagine them embodied in a soliloquy. Turgenev allows this meditation to fade out and shows Litvinov as he walks in the country the next morning.

Tired of the ceaseless chatter of the city, Litvinov has sought the quiet of the countryside, and he finally pauses at a roadside cafe situated to attract picnickers and other tourists walking in the country. While he is resting, a group of young Russian generals and their ladies arrive. One of the young ladies is Irina, and the most fashionable of the generals is her husband, Ratmirov. Irina introduces Litvinov to her companions, with whom he has no common ground, and then ignores them and converses solely with him. She touches lightly on their early life and exacts his promise to visit her.

A series of short scenes follow in which Irina enmeshes Litvinov once again. He is shown torn between the glamorous,

seductive Irina and the simple loyal Tatyana. Tatyana and her aunt arrive at this time to complicate further the decision, though Litvinov does not reveal his dilemma. Tatyana is shown in a very tender scene as realizing a change in her lover. He ultimately decides to throw up his entire life if Irina will go away with him.

At first, Irina agrees with his plan, and Litvinov goes to Tatyana, confesses, not without feeling, his deception, and asks to be released from his vows. Tatyana is magnificent as she releases Litvinov, and tells him that she will leave Baden-Baden at once. Irina becomes indecisive and finally refuses to break with her husband but asks that Litvinov remain her lover. This scene becomes magnificent as Litvinov refuses and says that he must leave her at once. She prevails on him to see her one more time, and it is apparent that she yet retains a power over him as he cannot refuse.

The next morning, however, he realizes that he will not be able to make the break if he goes one more time to Irina. He therefore sends Potugin with a note to Irina and leaves on the first train. There is a cynical understanding between the two men as Litvinov tells Potugin of his decision.

As Litvinov boards his train and the train begins its journey, Turgenyev creates one of his finest scenes. Litvinov sees Irina on the platform, not boarding the train but apparently disbelieving that he can leave. The train begins to move and smoke sweeps back past his coach and becomes a symbol. His life, his love, his Russia--all is Smoke.

Again Turgenev provides an epilogue. Litvinov has wandered for a time and has gone to Tatyana to beg forgiveness. She has forgiven him and they are married. Irina has gone on as before--a snare for the cleverest man, yet seemingly marked by her love for Litvinov.

This is not Turgenev's best plot, yet it forms a beautifully tragic love story. Though the political scenes have lost their significance and are probably too long and frequent, perhaps they retain a value as they strengthen the atmosphere of the futile society, in which the novel is set. Then too, it may sensibly be objected that the hero's reversal of fortune is only temporary in that he is seen married to Tatyana in the epilogue. In the plot of the novel itself, however, the hero does undergo a reversal of fortune, and perhaps it is the elasticity of the novel as an art form which allows this glimpse into the future. Or, perhaps Turgenev allows his melancholy hope for the salvation of man to dominate.

What Longinus calls the innate qualities of the author's mind are still powerful in Turgenev, for the conception of the plot is great in its simplicity, and his vehement passion for depicting life seems not to have lessened in this vivid portrayal of an action as universal as old love.¹⁶

In his final novel, Virgin Soil (1876), the innate qualities are still present, for a portrait of the tragedy

¹⁶Longinus, On the Sublime as printed in Greek Literary Criticism, p. 170.

of young Russia is no small conception. Its relaxed composition is described by Mr. Edward Garnett:

Delicate, however, as is the technique of Virgin Soil, there is a large free carelessness in the spirit of its art which reminds one much of the few last plays of Shakespeare, notably of Cymbeline, where the action, so easy-going is it, is almost too natural and effortless to be called art. In reality this large carelessness is a sign that the stage of the artist's maturity has been reached, and a little passed.¹⁷

Mr. Garnett's words are borne out as the novel opens and moves slowly through the first volume. Introduced first are Mashurina, a woman of gentle birth but liberal thought, and Plamen Ostrodumov, a leader in the nihilist party. They discuss the progress made by their underground revolutionary party until the entrance of Paklin, who claims membership in the party but is never fully trusted. The group is gathered in the rooms of Mezhdanov, a young student upon whose brilliant mind and financial support the others rely.

Mezhdanov arrives home, bitter because of the arrest of one of their compatriots. It is learned that he has advertised for a position as a tutor, supposedly to gain money for the party but secretly to gain a vacation from the intrigue. Ostrodumov reveals that he and Mashurina must go to Moscow, and that he must supply the money. Mezhdanov refuses Paklin's offer of help, saying that he will find the funds. At this point the aristocrat Sipyagin enters to retain Mezhdanov as tutor to his son. We learn through antecedent action that

¹⁷Turgenev, p. 140.

they had met at the opera, where Sipyagin was impressed by Nezhdanov's sharp wit. They agree that Nezhdanov accompany Sipyagin to his country estate.

After Sipyagin leaves, Nezhdanov falls to thinking about his past, and we learn the antecedent action of his life. He is the illegitimate son of Prince G., by the terms of whose will his education is assured by a quarterly allowance. He is deeply sensitive about his aristocratic birth and about the fact that he writes verses. He acquires an advance on his salary to provide for his compatriots' needs, and ten days later he leaves with Sipyagin for his new position.

Turgenev next sets the scene of the household into which Nezhdanov is about to arrive. Sipyagin's wife, Valentina Mihalovna, is a lady of fashion fully intent on her own comfort and the domination of all men who cross her path. Her close friend Kallomyetsev is an absolute aristocrat, all the more confirmed in his practices since his grandfather was a market gardener. Sipyagin's niece, Marianna, is the heroine of the novel, detesting Mme. Sipyagin and seeking an outlet for her liberal beliefs.

The novel moves smoothly through a series of scenes in which the aristocratic atmosphere of the household is developed. Nezhdanov begins tutoring Kolya, who is an apt though spoiled student. He is impressed by Marianna, whose views he soon understands, and with whom he is soon in love. This slow floating period in the novel is a luxury Turgenev would probably not have allowed himself in one of his earlier works.

Ten years earlier he might have introduced all the preceding information as antecedent action.

Mme. Sipyagin's brother Markelov, appears as a suitor to Marianna. He is as liberal as his sister is aristocratic. Nezhdanov blunders upon the couple just as Marianna refuses Markelov's offer of marriage. That night Markelov comes to his room and reveals that he too is a member of the nihilist party. Here, halfway through the first of two volumes is introduced the inciting force of the novel. It is at this point that the tragic action of the novel begins.

Nezhdanov goes with Markelov to his home for the night, where they discuss the organization of the neighborhood for the coming revolution. They are full of vehement determination and few really intelligent plans. Ostrodumov and Mashurina are also at Markelov's home and join in the early morning discussion. Nezhdanov returns to Sipyagin's home in time to give Kolya his lessons. A feeling is deepening between him and Marianna.

One evening, Nezhdanov meets Marianna in the garden, and she approaches him, asking about his feelings for Mme. Sipyagin. Nezhdanov reveals that he has no feelings for Mme. Sipyagin. Marianna thoroughly hates her aunt, and the two are on the verge of confessing their love when they sight Mme. Sipyagin's maid, who has been sent to spy on them. They return to the house.

Nezhdanov receives directions that he and Markelov should immediately become acquainted with the manager of a neighboring

mill, Solomin, and with a merchant, Golushkin. At dinner that night, Nezhdanov retorts for the first time to Kallomyetsev's barbed remarks. Sipyagin and his wife take Nezhdanov's part, but he has revealed his position. He goes to his room as soon as possible, and soon after Marianna comes to talk to him. She is now sure of his liberal intentions, and she has come to avow her own. Nezhdanov is impressed by her sincerity and confesses that he must go to see Markolov the next day. Love is openly born between the two, yet they feel no need to discuss it.

Nezhdanov goes the next day to Markelov's home, and the two proceed to Solomin's factory, which seems to function efficiently in spite of its chaotic appearance. Solomin goes back with them to Markelov's home, where they spend the night in discussion.

The next day the three friends go to town to visit the merchant Golushkin, who has prepared a banquet. Golushkin entertains them by singing his own praises. He invites them to come back to dinner, and they set out to pass the afternoon in the public gardens. There they encounter Paklin, who invites them to visit two old relatives of his, who live in the aristocratic manner of their youth. They spend the afternoon in this old house. This sojourn into the past is charming, and serves to point up the contrast between past and present, yet it is probable that Turgenev would not have allowed it to intrude on the plot of one of his earlier novels.

Paklin forces himself on the group as they return to Golushkin's house. There they eat, drink champagne, and give vent to mighty speeches. After all but Solomin are thoroughly drunk, they depart, Paklin to his relatives, Solomin to his factory, and Mezhdanov with Markelov to his estate. Thus the first volume ends, with the tragic incident, the love of Mezhdanov and Marianna as it is blended with the struggles of the nihilist party, scarcely begun. The story has gathered momentum, however, and the second volume moves with greater intensity, straight to the heart of the problem.

On their way home Markelov and Mezhdanov quarrel. Markelov is jealous of Marianna's love of Mezhdanov, who becomes angry and is about to return to Sipyagin's estate, when Markelov begs forgiveness. They are reconciled, and Mezhdanov spends the night with Markelov, returning to the Sipyagin estate the next day, where he tells Marianna of the progress made.

Sipyagin invites Solomin to visit, hoping to lure him into managing his factory. Solomin is polite and offers advice, but will not consent to leave his present job. Kallomyetsev quarrels with him and displays the grotesqueness of his pseudo-aristocratic ideas. Solomin defeats him at every turn, and is finally prevailed upon to spend the night. Mezhdanov has had a discussion with Kallomyetsev, which ended so bitterly that he expects to be expelled at any moment from the house. That night he and Marianna inform Solomin that they are going to run away, and he offers to shelter them in his factory.

The next day a scene occurs between Marianna and Mme. Sipyagin, in which it is revealed that Marianna's visits to Nezhdanov, though innocent, are known to the household. Marianna defies her aunt, but this final happening decides the couple, and the next morning they sneak out of the house and go to Solomin's factory. They are full of joy that they are "going to the people" to work for the revolution. Marianna throws herself fully into becoming one with the peasant women, and Nezhdanov disguises himself and goes about trying to bring the peasants to revolution. The climax of the novel is reached as Nezhdanov reveals that he lacks the conviction to confess a demanding love for Marianna, for it also reveals that his high-flung speeches about his cause have been only speeches, lacking final conviction. He shares the fault of most of Turgenev's heroes--he is brilliant, introspective, and devoid of the power to act decisively.

Nezhdanov continues to travel about the neighborhood, but his efforts to incite the peasants fail as they are born, and he is only made to appear ridiculous. Marianna, however, is becoming effectively simplified. Mashurina appears with a summons for Nezhdanov, but, seeing him with Marianna she destroys it. The climax of Nezhdanov's failure is reached as he gets thoroughly drunk while buying vodka for, and preaching rebellion to, a group of peasants. Marianna is not angry but hurt that this disgrace should have come upon him.

Paklin arrives, announcing that Markelov has been arrested while stirring up the peasants in a neighboring province. They all fear that Nezhdanov and Marianna especially will be sought because of their connection with him. Paklin suggests that he go to Sipyagin and ask that the aristocrat protect them because of the family connections involved. Solomin sees little hope, but agrees that such a plan might work. Awaking from his drunken sleep, which is actually more a sickness, Nezhdanov sees his complete failure. Pity and fear have been born of his lack of conviction and by his pathetic failures to arouse the peasants, and the peak of this emotion is reached in the pathos of this moment.

Placing little faith in Paklin's attempt, Solomin resolves that the couple must flee and makes preparations for them to be married and leave. Nezhdanov prepares for the journey and then goes out of the factory and, standing under an apple tree, shoots himself in the heart. He is carried back into the factory, where he dies. This scene is handled carefully by Turgenev, lest it become melodramatic. He avoids this fault by showing it simply as the culminating act of a frustrated existence.

In the meantime, Paklin has gone to Sipyagin, who has not only failed to shelter Markelov, but he has tricked Paklin into disclosing Nezhdanov and Marianna's hiding place. The police go to seek the couple, but find only Nezhdanov's body. Solomin and Marianna have disappeared. In the unnamed

epilogue, it is revealed that Paklin has escaped all harm but is looked on as an informer. Mashurina still works for revolution, traveling about the country in the guise of an Italian countess. Markelov is convicted and sentenced to a period of imprisonment. Solomin and Marianna are married, and Solomin has established a factory of his own. This epilogue is handled artistically, for the information is given as a conversation between Paklin and Mashurina, occurring some years later.

Actually this novel is inferior to Turgenev's five other major novels, but there are probably few men who would not be proud to call it their own. Antecedent action is not worked into the plot as smoothly as in the other works, and the novel begins slowly. Especially in the leisurely movement of the first volume, it is reminiscent of Dickens, whom Henry James says Turgenev greatly admired, especially for his character development.¹⁸ Possibly it was done under that influence. Nevertheless the novel is still dramatic, though less concision is employed in the choice of scenes. Once Turgenev reaches the heart of his problem, pity and fear are excited as Mezhdanov's insufficiency becomes apparent. The discovery of Mezhdanov's inability to demand love or act decisively, arises directly from the incidents of the story as Mezhdanov begins to realize the hollowness of his speeches

¹⁸The Art of Fiction and Other Essays, p. 102.

and to see himself in contrast to Solomin. A purging of the emotions of pity and fear is brought about as Nezhdanov commits suicide, and Solomin, a man of action, takes charge, much as Fortinbras takes charge after the death of Hamlet.¹⁹

Though the novel brings the futility of both the Russian revolutionaries and aristocrats into the spotlight, it is not the novel of a man who throws stones for the love of throwing them. It is rather the work of a man who has been stoned by those he seeks to aid--of a man tired in mind and body, yet still great in conception.

¹⁹William Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act V, scene II, line 397.

CHAPTER III

CHARACTER

Henry James says that a sense of character is the light that artistically guides Ivan Turgenev.¹ He also states that before Turgenev began a novel he wrote a complete biography of each of its characters.² Though this seems a tedious process, once it is completed it lays the groundwork for the qualities that make for great character portrayal. Here again Turgenev measures up to Aristotelian standards, for his characters are appropriate, real, consistent, and they have moral purpose.³

In presenting a character to the reader, Turgenev usually employs a thumb-nail description. For some of the minor characters this is all the biography necessary. His heroes, heroines, and major characters call for further development. First they are presented by means of a thumb-nail description, and then the necessary antecedent action of their lives is revealed usually through the conversation of other characters.

Within the plot itself, Turgenev reveals character by showing the character in action. He is especially adept at displaying the unconscious actions which almost infallibly reveal what the character really is, rather than what he pretends to be.

¹The Art of Fiction and Other Essays, p. 122.

²Ibid., p. 111.

³Aristotle, Poetics as printed in Greek Literary Criticism, p. 131.

As in most of Turgenev's novels, Rudin presents a variety of characters. Because of the dramatic form of Turgenev's work, the characters are usually introduced as they would be presented on a stage. First their physical appearance and any obvious mannerisms are presented. Then they begin to act and be acted upon, and character is revealed.

Thus, Pandalevsky is introduced while talking to Alexandra. Since he is talking, Turgenev begins by describing his speech:

The young man spoke pure and correct Russian, but with a foreign accent, though it was difficult to determine what exactly the accent was. There was an Asiatic quality in the features of his face, the long hooked nose, the large, slanting, immobile eyes, the thick crimson lips, the retreating forehead, hair as black as pitch--everything in his face indicated an Eastern origin, yet the young man was Pandalevsky and said his native town was Odessa, though he had been educated somewhere in Byelorussia, at the expense of a philanthropic and wealthy widow.⁴

From this speech the reader is led into a description, hardly aware of a break in the action. By this description of Pandalevsky's contradictions in appearance, contradictions in character are prepared for. While he is talking to Alexandra Pavlovna, he is extremely polite and well mannered--almost servile. After parting from her, however, he sights a peasant girl at work in the fields nearby. He approaches her:

At first she was silent, flushing and smiling but at last she covered her mouth with her sleeve, turned away and said:

"Go along sir; I really--"⁵

⁴Turgenev, Rudin, as printed in The Borzoi Turgenev, p. 563.

⁵Ibid., p. 566.

This one action, committed when he thinks nobody of consequence is present, presents Pandalevsky's character more graphically than would pages of description. It is obvious from this moment that he is an absolute hypocrite. It comes as no surprise that he fawns on Daria Mikhailovna, on Rudin because he becomes Daria Mikhailovna's favorite, and is intensely jealous of the favor gained by Rudin. Yet he is not an absolutely bad character, for he is an excellent pianist and an agreeable conversationalist--he is simply less good than the other characters.

Nor is Pigasov altogether bad. He is seen stumping about Daria Mikhailovna's drawing room, throwing out biting remarks about women. At this point the reader probably wonders what kind of man this is, who is so impolite as to insult all women in front of his hostess. It remains for Turgenev to supply what the dramatist would leave to the costumer and the qualities of the actor:

A strange man was Mr. Pigasov. He was always in a temper with all and everything, but especially women, and fumed at everything from morn till night, sometimes very much to the point, sometimes quite stupidly, but always to his own satisfaction. He was cantankerous almost to the point of childishness; his laugh, the sound of his voice, all his being seemed soaked in bile. Daria Mikhailovna gave him a ready welcome to her house: he diverted her with his sallies.⁶

Although the necessity of describing these characteristics may seem a limiting factor to which the novelist is subject, there is no real limitation, for it allows the novelist to

⁶Ibid., p. 569.

give the character exactly the attributes he desires, without permitting other agencies to blur the character.

Nevertheless, once these characteristics of Pigasov are presented, it hardly comes as a surprise that he argues with Rudin, becomes hopelessly involved in his own argument, and ends in childish, angry sputterings. And this is Pigasov's character throughout the novel, developed in a few words. This is the case with the rest of the minor characters. The center of the stage belongs rightly to the hero and heroine.

Turgenev's hero, Rudin, appears first in Daria Mikhailovna's drawing room. It is as though he makes his entrance on to a stage, and it remains for Turgenev to make the impression on the reader that an actor would make upon an audience:

The man who entered was about thirty-five, tall, rather stooping, curly-haired, swarthy with a face irregular but expressive and intelligent, a watery gleam in his quick, dark-blue eyes, a straight, broad nose, and finely carved lips. His clothes were not new, and they fitted him tightly as though he had outgrown them.⁷

As Rudin is first introduced, he seems an ordinary person, though there are hints of his intelligence even in his physical bearing. As he argues with Pigasov, however, he evidences an extremely logical mind and an eloquent presentation. His extreme eloquence might be taken as a foreshadowing of weakness.

As his former association with Lezhnev is revealed, in the face of his eloquence, it seems at first that

⁷Ibid., p. 579.

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Lezhnev's remarks might be only jealousy. After he has proposed to Natalia, he is left alone for a moment. His action is very nearly unconscious, and certainly there is no pretense involved:

"I am happy," he uttered in an overtone. "Yes I am happy," he repeated as though trying to convince himself. He drew himself up, shook his curls, and walked briskly into the garden, swinging his arms merrily.⁸

Turgenev chose this one, unguarded moment by which to show Rudin's character simply and clearly. Through this action Rudin's indecision is apparent, and his jaunty, self-confidence is seen as assumed. Quixote would burst forth into the garden, but this is one of Turgenev's Hamlets. By this subtly introduced action, the reader is prepared to discover a flaw in Rudin.

The flaw is discovered as Natalia asks him what they must do, since her mother forbids their marriage. His answer, at best, is weak:

"My intentions? Your mother will probably refuse to have me in her house."

"Possibly. Even yesterday she told me that she will have to break off her acquaintance with you . . . but you are not answering my question."

"What question?"

"What do you think we must do now?"

"What must we do?" Rudin replied. "Naturally submit."

"Submit," Natalia repeated, and the blood fled from her lips.⁹

By his admission that he knows only to submit, Rudin's tragic flaw, his inability to act, is discovered.

⁸Ibid., p. 628.

⁹Ibid., p. 638.

In contrast is seen Turgenev's heroine, Natalia. She has come to Rudin in spite of her mother's opposition, and she is ready to defy her mother if Rudin will but say the word. That she is shocked to disbelief by Rudin's indecision is probably the highest testimony Turgenev could have paid her nobility.

This is the same young girl that, at the beginning of the novel, is seen wearily sitting with her companion, Mme. Zencourt. That there is strength to her character, however, has been forecast by Lezinlev's remark to Alexandra:

"...--do you know that it's that kind of a girl who drowns herself, takes poison, and so on? Don't you believe that she's so quiet; there are strong passions in that girl, and she has character--my goodness, she has!"¹⁰

Though Natalia does not become so violent as to take poison, the analysis of her character is well founded. It is this same quiet Natalia, who disobeys her mother in going to meet Rudin, and who, in answer to Rudin's question as to what she told her mother of their relationship, replies simply, "I did not lie."¹¹ It is no wonder then that she should be shocked to disbelief by Rudin's failure, or that she should soon regain her self-control and become coolly impassive.

Of the moral purpose of Natalia there is little doubt, for she is in all things perfectly honest. Her will and her soul are above reproach as may be seen by her devotion to

¹⁰Ibid., p. 619.
¹¹Ibid., p. 637.

the things in which she believes--love, sacrifice, and self-respect. She is not tragic, for she is without blemish and rises above her disappointment.

Rudin is tragic, for he is of a class of superfluous men. Yet, he is nobler than the rest of his race, for his intentions are genuinely good, and he is brilliant and eloquent. It is his inability to act that makes him tragic. He is consistent, for his weakness is foreshadowed from the first, and his actions are at all times appropriate, for never is he anything but brilliant--and never does he show the ability to act.

It is interesting to note, too, that in this novel, the minor characters are introduced first in concise scenes and then gathered together in a group, so that Rudin can enter and the action can begin. Indeed, this method of introduction is not so badly adapted to stage presentation. It is subtly handled, for it is quite natural that the characters in such a household should gather during the afternoon.

In A Nobleman's Nest the characters begin to gather in the drawing room of Marya Dmitrievna. As the novel begins, Marya Dmitrievna and her aunt, Marfa Timofeevna, are present. Turgenev introduces them as though they were on a stage. For this reason he must supply what would otherwise be the work of costumer, and then he moves easily to a few of her character traits, sufficient since she is a minor character in the novel:

In her youth Marya Dmitrievna had enjoyed the reputation of being a pretty blonde, and at the age of fifty her features were not devoid of attraction, although they had become swollen and indefinite in outline. She was more sentimental than kind, and even in her mature age she had preserved the habits of her school-days; she indulged herself, was easily irritated, and even wept when her ways were interfered with; and on the other hand, she was affectionate and amiable, when her wishes were complied with, and when no one contradicted her.¹²

In view of this opening description, it can hardly come as a surprise that she would tolerate the scholarly Lavretzky, and dote on the dashing Panshin. In all probability, it is inevitable that such a woman should, in a fit of temper, close her house to the public when Liza refuses to marry Panshin, and be fascinated by the ultra-fashionable Varvara Pavlovna.

In contrast, her aunt, Marfa Timofeevna, is shown with a proud, lovable, human character. This is apparent as Turgenev first describes her:

She bore the reputation of being eccentric, had an independent character, told the entire truth to everyone, straight in the face, and, with the most scanty resources, bore herself as though she possessed thousands . . . Black-haired, brisk-eyed Marfa Timofeevna walked quickly, held herself upright, and talked rapidly and intelligibly in a shrill ringing voice.¹³

With these few lines Turgenev creates one of his most intensely human minor characters. Marfa Timofeevna has no great part in the novel, yet by her few actions she seems to live, and live intensely for she detests the deceit of

¹²Turgenev, A Nobleman's Nest, p. 5.

¹³Ibid., pp. 5-6.

Panshin, feels sorry for Lavretzky, and as Liza and Lavretzky meet in her rooms, finds much to do elsewhere so that she will not disturb the lovers.

Just as intense, though more detached in the manner of the disappointed artist, is Christofor Lemm. He is introduced as he arrives to give music lessons to Marya Dmitrievna's children:

. . . outside of the door of the drawing-room, in the ante-room, stood an elderly man, who had just arrived, to whom, judging by the expressions of his downcast face and the movement of his shoulders, Panshin's romance, charming as it was, afforded no pleasure. After waiting a while, and whisking the dust from his boots with a coarse handkerchief, this man suddenly screwed up his eyes, pressed his lips together grimly, bent his back, which was already sufficiently bowed without that, and slowly entered the drawing-room.¹⁴

Thus as Lemm first appears, he is cast in a definite role, yet he is by no means a stock character. With characteristic concision, Turgenev chooses those attributes which will portray the salient points in Lemm's character. There is no verbose description, but only a choosing of descriptive material as out of the chaos of life Turgenev picks details that make a definite character pattern. It is not too difficult, then, to understand Lemm's distaste for Panshin, his interest in Liza, and his kinship with Lavretzky.

Lavretzky's butler epitomizes the old family retainer. Nimble and loyal, though grey-headed and long a servant without a master, he spares no pains to make Lavretzky feel

¹⁴Ibid., p. 23.

at home. In the long empty house, Lavretzky becomes hungry, and Anton catches an old hen and cuts its throat. Then, setting the table, he announces:

. . . in a chanting voice, that the meal was ready,--and took up his post behind (Lavretzky's) chair, having wound a napkin around his right fist, and disseminating some strong, ancient odour, which resembled the odour of cypress wood. Lavretzky tasted the soup, and came upon the hen; its skin was all covered with big pimples, a thick tendon ran down each leg, its flesh had the flavor of charcoal and lye.¹⁵

He is no stock character, this ancient butler, who stands in waiting behind the chair of a broken master, in a battered, second class estate, as though he were in waiting on the Czar himself. He is the symbol of all the glory of a feudal system which has outlived its usefulness.

Introduced early in the novel by the conversation of the other characters, yet not appearing until late in the action, is Varvara Pavlovna. Her influence is felt throughout the novel as the characters speak of her, and as Lavretzky recalls her deception. In this manner, her character as a fashionable, beautiful wrecker of men, is known to the reader before she ever enters the story. As she appears, throwing herself at Lavretzky's feet, charming Marya Dmitrievna, and ultimately deceiving her husband once more, she does not fail to fulfill the expectations of the reader. She is typical of women who lust for excitement and power over men.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 117-118.

It might seem that such powerful minor characters would tend to detract from the central theme of the novel or to steal the center of the stage. It is a tribute to Turgenev's sense of form that they add to the power of the novel. He accomplishes this by creating them as intensely vital characters and then relegating them to a minor portion of the action. This might be illustrated by two actors performing the same play. The first selects secondary actors for all supporting roles, that he may appear more accomplished by comparison. The second obtains the best supporting actors available and then dominates the stage by his own genius. Turgenev chooses the second course, preferring that his hero be vital against a vital background.

The entrance of the hero, Lavretzky, is prepared for by remarks of the other characters, which eliminate the necessity for an introductory action. Thus his character is shown by the highest means possible, his conscious and unconscious actions. By his return to a minor estate, rather than his ancestral home, and by his avoidance of old acquaintances is apparent his sense of loss. Yet there are seen strength and moral purpose in the man as he is attracted to Liza and Lemm, and seeks first to prevent Liza's acceptance of Fanshin and then to find happiness for himself and Liza.

Liza is a heroine typical of Turgenev, in that she is completely good and completely devoted. She is developed carefully and tenderly so that it is difficult to remember

at exactly which point she actually enters the story. As she tries to reconcile Lavretzky to his wife and as she is amazed by his lack of feeling at her supposed death, her complete goodness is developed. But it is in her minor actions that she is best seen: she is hurt as Fanshin derides Lena; she never fails to attend devoutly in church; and though she recognizes the evil of Varvara Pavlovna, she pities the older woman. In all things she is consistently devout, pure, and real.

Just as powerful, though more active, is Yelena, heroine of On the Eve. She is first introduced through the conversation of Berseniev and Shubin, as she is described by the artist, Shubin:

"But how about the bust of Yelena Nikolaevna?" Berseniev asked. "Are you coming along with it?"

"No brother, I'm not. That face is enough to reduce you to despair. You look at it, and the lines are clean, severe, straight-forward; it wouldn't seem difficult to catch the likeness. But it doesn't come . . . It no more yields to you than treasure falls into the hand. Have you noticed the way she sits when listening? Not a single feature stirs, only the expression of her gaze changes incessantly, and all her figure changes because of it. What do you advise a sculptor, and a bad one at that, to do in such a case?"¹⁶

This description, the more artistic because it is introduced through another character, catches concisely Yelena's foremost features, outward composure, determination, beauty, and a brilliant vital mind. It is the firm foundation upon which character is built and expanded.

¹⁶Turgenev, On the Eve, as printed in The Borzoi Turgenev, p. 416.

In view of this description it is not strange that she should be attracted to Insarov, a patriot, or that in the moment of crisis in their love, she should go to him. In going to Insarov's rooms in Moscow and by defying her parents, she does not break convention--she is above it.

Insarov is the only mate such a woman could seek, yet beside her he is pale. He is well introduced, by the conversation of Berseniev and Shubin and by his first appearance in his squalid Moscow room. He gains strength of character by his insistence on being financially independent and by his insistence on being financially independent and by his constant study and self-discipline. These points are conveyed by his actions in refusing to take his meals with Berseniev, by the sight of his light burning past midnight, and by his walking forty miles to settle a dispute between his country-men.

There are moments when the reader feels that Insarov is not, perhaps, fully convincing, possibly because he is depicted as a man of action, yet is shown physically active only as he throws the drunken German in the lake, and as he dashes about Moscow seeking an illegal passport. If he were allowed more dynamic action, or if Yelena were not so very active, he would probably be more convincing. This is a point at which Turgenev allows his character to be slightly out of balance. Though this is not a glaring failure in character portrayal, it is not in keeping with the symmetry of the rest of the work.

In Shubin, Turgenev creates a beautiful picture of the more erratic young artistic temperament. As he sits in the garden, after dinner, with Yelena and Berseniev, Yelena suggests that he go and talk with Zoya. He speaks derisively of Zoya, and Yelena chides him. He lashes back suddenly:

"Ah! A reproach! A reproach now!" Shubin exclaimed. "All right, I don't conceal the fact that there was a minute, exactly one minute, when those fresh, vulgar little cheeks-- But suppose I felt like repaying you with reproaches and reminding you--Goodby" he suddenly added; "I am ready to talk nonsense."

And, bringing his hand down heavily on the head he had moulded from the clay, he ran out of the arbor and went to his own room.¹⁷

In these few lines Turgenev catches the contradictions in the artistic temperament. He develops them as Shubin is alternately jealous of Yelena's affections, spiteful, and confiding with Berseniev, with whom he believes Yelena to be in love. As he goes on to react in the same way to Insarov, he is consistently inconsistent. He is sensitive and vindictive, joyous and utterly depressed, childish and mature by turns. By his intensely real and vital character, he adds powerfully to the reality of the novel.

For his failure to create a really vital hero in Insarov, Turgenev compensates immeasurably in his creation of Bazarov, the nihilist hero of Fathers and Children. Where Insarov is introspective and limited, Bazarov is strong, emancipated, and ruthless. He has applied his belief in science with a

¹⁷Ibid., p. 429.

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felicity which admits no authority other than the logical mind. As a result he is unfettered by tradition and is ready to follow the truth to its source, regardless of the results.

As the novel begins, and Arkady and Nikolai are absorbed in their greetings, he stands aloof. The greeting completed, however, Arkady introduces Bazarov to his father, and Bazarov is described:

. . . turning back the collar of his rough coat, he showed Nikolai Petrovitch his whole face. It was long and lean, with a broad forehead, a nose flat at the base and sharper at the end, large greenish eyes, and drooping whiskers of a sandy colour; it was lighted up by a tranquil smile, and showed self-confidence and intelligence.¹⁸

This, then, is the man Edward Garnett refers to as, "The bare mind of Science first applied to Politics," and "The skeptical conscience of modern science."¹⁹ Bazarov is a man, blunt and to the point, as Turgenev shows him the next morning:

"What have you there--leeches?" asked Pavel Petrovitch.

"No, frogs."

"Do you eat them--or keep them?"

"For experiment," said Bazarov indifferently, and he went off into the house.²⁰

These answers, brief and to the point, are the answers of the hero of the novel. The brevity and the force of these answers reflect the strength and decision of the speaker. His reaction to Pavel Petrovitch is a natural one, his mission in

¹⁸Turgenev, Fathers and Children, p. 8.

¹⁹Turgenev, p. 117.

²⁰Turgenev, Fathers and Children, p. 38.

life is to destroy the same social order of which Pavel Petrovitch is the epitome. Bazarov is revolution in walking, breathing form, and his goal is similar to that of the wrecking crew which must tear down an old and beautiful building, that a new one may be erected on the site. And as he begins his destruction, he is completely dispassionate, conscious only of the job at hand and of his power to accomplish it.

He is as contemptuous of the hangers-on of the new as he is of the old, as is shown at Mme. Kukshin's:

Bazarov, who had at rare intervals put in an ironical word in the conversation--he had paid more attention to the champagne--gave a loud yawn, got up, and, without taking leave of their hostess, he walked off with Arkady.²¹

What more utter contempt could a man show than to get up and walk out without even paying his respects to his hostess? With serfs, Bazarov is friendly, with strangers withdrawn yet polite, with Pavel Petrovitch actively hostile, but of Kukshina he is contemptuous.

Bazarov is not the sword of war. He is the tiny pin-prick of logic which tests all things, finding those which are solid, and deflating those which are hollow. That is his mission in life until he exposes what is hollow in himself. His mockery of emotions is hollow, for he discovers that even he can experience love. As his feeling for Mme. Odintsov grows, he denies--until he can no longer deny.

²¹Ibid., p. 120.

"And would you like to know the reason of this reticence? Would you like to know what is passing within me?"

"Yes," repeated Madame Odintsov, with a sort of dread she did not at the time understand.

"And you will not be angry?"

"No."

"No?" Bazarov was standing with his back to her: "Let me tell you that I love you like a fool, like a madman . . . there, you've forced it out of me."

Madame Odintsov held both her hands out before her; but Bazarov was leaning with his forehead pressed against the windowpane. He breathed hard; his whole body was visibly trembling. But it was not the tremor of youthful timidity, not the sweet charm of the first declaration that possessed him; it was passion struggling in him, strong and painful--passion not unlike hatred, and perhaps akin to it . . . Madame Odintsov felt both afraid and sorry for him.²²

Bazarov is now conscious of a weakness in his character and he becomes even more conscious of his weakness, when, despite his distaste for Pavel Petrovitch, he cannot but be drawn into a duel, though by his own standards he acts the fool. But he is consistent, for he condemns himself for his actions, though he is powerless to stop them.

He comes to his tragic end, infected by the surgical knife, which is his daily tool and the symbol of his belief. Yet, as he lies dying, he realizes that he has shaped his own end, and he feels only bitterness that he cannot accomplish his goal:

. . . suddenly snatching the leg of a heavy table that stood near his sofa, he swung it round, and pushed it away.

"There's strength, there's strength," he murmured.

"Everything's here still, and I must die! . . . An old man at least has time to be weaned from life, but I . . . Well, go and try to disprove death. Death will disprove you, and that's all! Who's crying there? Mother? Poor thing! Whom will she feed with her exquisite beetroot-soup? You, Vassily

²²Ibid., pp. 179-180.

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Ivanovitch, whispering too, I believe! Why, if christianity's no help to you, be a philosopher, a stoic, or what not! Why, didn't you boast you were a philosopher?"²³

At his death Bazarov knows emotion but not self-pity. In this form Turgenev creates a hero who can probably stand beside any other in literature. To support this hero he has created a cast of vivid characters.

The immaculate Pavel Petrovitch, with his gleaming white cuffs and beautiful hands, is a charming symbol of the old aristocratic order. He is Turgenev's finest picture of all that is noble in a dying feudal system. His attachment to his brother and his abiding loyalty to a dead woman are symbols of his romantic turn of mind. It comes as no surprise that Pavel Petrovitch should be revolted by Bazarov. His brother is quite another matter.

Nikolai Petrovitch represents an age left behind and trying to catch up with the times, though he cannot understand many of the acts of the younger generation and is revolted by others. He desires with all his heart to be close to his son, regardless of the cost. While riding in the coach with him, Arkady lights a cigar, and "Nikolai Petrovitch who had never been a smoker from his youth up, was forced to turn away his face as imperceptibly as he could for fear of wounding his son."²⁴ This is but a hint of Nikolai's deference to his son, yet it is by such hints that Turgenev makes his characters so convincingly real.

²³Ibid., p. 340.

²⁴Ibid., p. 20.

Mme. Odintsov, too, is made convincingly real by the few words which describe her feelings as she sees Bazarov dying:

She looked at Bazarov . . . and stood still in the doorway, so greatly was she impressed by the inflamed, and at the same time deathly face, with its dim eyes fastened upon her. She felt simply dismayed, with a sort of cold and suffocating dismay; the thought that she could not have felt like that if she had really loved him flashed instantaneously through her brain.²⁵

These last lines lay bare her feeling for Bazarov and her character. In spite of all she has thought and felt about Bazarov, as she sees him dying, she does not feel a passionate remorse for a man she loves, but only a cold and suffocating dismay for the failure of a movement.

To depict another sort of dismay at the failure of a movement, Turgenev creates Litvinov, hero of Smoke. He is first presented as he sits in the public square in Baden-Baden:

A few paces from the "Russian Tree", at a little table in front of Weber's Coffee House, there was sitting a good-looking man, about thirty, of medium height, thin and dark, with a manly and pleasant face. He sat bending forward with both arms leaning on his stick with the calm and simple air of a man to whom the idea had not occurred that anyone would notice him or pay any attention to him.²⁶

Here is Turgenev's ability to use the thumb-nail sketch shown graphically. How could any author describe the modesty, introspection, and preoccupation of Litvinov in any more

²⁵ Ibid., p. 346.
²⁶ Turgenev, Smoke, p. 6.

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concise and vivid manner? It is indeed an apt description as Litvinov is torn between the devotion of Tatyana and the passionate beauty of Irina, only to find that, after the decision is made, Irina cannot love him undividedly. His reactions to his entire life and to Russia as all smoke, seemingly tangible yet ever elusive, are a symbol of Turgenev's disillusionment with Russia. They are also a powerful reflection of the character himself.

Surrounding Litvinov in this extremely short novel are characters which live and breathe, yet must be captured and set down on paper in the most concise manner possible. Bambaev is, therefore, shown as fat, greasy, and disheveled, and then described:

Everlastingly short of cash, and everlastingly in rapture over something, Rostislav Bambaev wandered aimless but exclamatory over the face of the long suffering mother earth.²⁷

Voroshilov is seen through the eyes of a fashionable flower girl, who ignores him because she detects "in his get-up and in his bearing, in his very walk, which showed signs of premature military drill, the absence of genuine pureblooded 'chic'."²⁸

But also in this novel is born Irina, the consummate symbol of man's seduction. Here is the force of beauty, passion, breeding, and no absolute standard of goodness, operating on man. Turgenev shows her in her youth as she

²⁷Ibid., p. 11.

²⁸Ibid., p. 14.

is learning her power:

. . . her smile--half-indifferent, half-weary--betrayed the nervous temperament of a delicate girl; but in the lines of those fine, faintly-smiling lips, of that small falcon, slightly narrow nose, there was something wilful and passionate, something dangerous for herself and others.²⁹

As Litvinov meets her in this novel, she has matured, and is sure of her power. Yet she is hardly a courtesan, for her power over men is both a weapon and a force beyond herself. She is, as Edward Garnett has said, "born to corrupt, yet never to be corrupted."³⁰ She is certainly not another Cleopatra, but she is of the same breed.

Irina achieves this character as much on the basis of what is not said as of what is said. The mystery, never fully unraveled, of her relationship to Potugin; Potugin's enslavement despite all he knows of her; and the mystery of her life from the time when she left Litvinov until she married General Ratrirov enhance her fascination. None of these factors jars upon the reader. They are subtly omitted so that the reader is unconsciously fascinated by the mystery, and is free to imagine what he will.

Though Virgin Soil is in many respects inferior to his other novels, Turgenev still retains his ability to create convincing characters. True, there are many more characters introduced, but it must be remembered that this novel is nearly twice as long as Turgenev's average novel.

²⁹Ibid., p. 49.

³⁰Turgenev, p. 133.

The hero, Nezhdanov, is well developed as his moments of greatest trial are marked by an urge to write poetry, a tendency altogether in contradiction to the materialistic doctrine he professes. This is but a subtle detail added by Turgenev to enhance the greater contradictions of the character's entire life, yet is carefully chosen to stand in opposition to the pamphlets he seeks to write for the nihilist "cause". Turgenev also introduces the letters of Nezhdanov to a childhood friend to show these contradictions more fully. In these letters to a friend he has not seen for many years, Nezhdanov is intensely personal, revealing a side of his character which he carefully shields from his nihilist friends. Unconsciously he depicts his entire confusion, and the ultimate contradictions which cause his failure are prepared for. Soon after his arrival at Sipyagin's estate he writes:

. . . I have escaped for a time from the care of my Petersburg friends; and though at first I was devoured by the most savage ennui, now I feel somewhat better. Soon I must set to the work you know (as the proverb has it: If you call yourself a mushroom you must go into the basket), and that's just what they let me come here for; but meanwhile I can lead a delicious animal existence, grow fat, and perhaps write verses, if the fit takes me.³¹

With Nezhdanov it is always soon that he must set to work, and he seems always to enjoy his more idealistic occupations too thoroughly. This becomes more and more apparent, so that a tragic anticipation of his fate is felt by the reader.

³¹Turgenev, Virgin Soil, Vol. I, p. 96.

Indeed, Nezhdanov is pathetic as Pavel carries him back to the mill after his final attempt at "going to the people." Thoroughly drunk of vodka, he lies across a couch in his room. Marianna speaks to him:

"Alexy!" broke from her lips.

He raised his heavy eyelids with an effort and tried to smile.

"Ah! Marianna!" he stammered, "You always talked of sin-sin-plication; see now I am really simplified. For the people's always drunk, so-----"

He broke off; then muttered something indistinct, closed his eyes and fell asleep. Pavel laid him carefully on the sofa.³²

This is the picture of a good man gone to a tragic end because of the conflicts in his character. Surely, Nezhdanov is both tragic and pathetic in relationship to the promise he showed as a student.

Perhaps more beautifully drawn is the character of Marianna, the heroine of Virgin Soil. A sketch introduces her:

In comparison with her aunt, Marianna might have been called "a plain little thing." She had a round face, a large hawk nose, grey eyes, also very large and very clear. Thin eyebrows and thin lips. She had dropped her thick dark-brown hair, and she looked unsociable. But about her whole personality there was something vigorous and bold, something stirring and passionate. Her feet and hands were tiny; her strongly knit, supple little body recalled the Florentine statistics of the sixteenth century; she moved lightly and gracefully.³³

This young girl displays signs of an independent character as she argues with Kallomyetaev and refuses Markelov's proposal of marriage, saying to Nezhdanov, "He's a good man.

³²Ibid., Vol. II, p. 162.

³³Ibid., Vol. I, p. 62.

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But it's not my fault; I don't love him."³⁴ This is, in itself, a key to her character, for a less determined girl would marry this wealthy young government official--especially in this society where marriage is largely a business contract. Indeed, at the end of her conversation with Nezhdanov there passes over her face "an expression almost childish, charming, a little embarrassed."³⁵ By this unconscious action Marianna reveals her complete honesty, for she is aware that she has discussed a very personal matter, and she is not all at ease in her new situation. The use of such incidents, so subtle as to be scarcely noticed, is an example of the supreme craftsmanship of Turgenev.

Marianna reveals her inner self, her urge to devote herself completely to a strong man and a strong cause, as Nezhdanov tells her of his mission and his love for her:

Gratitude, pride, devotion, resolution, that was what her soul was overflowing with. Her face, her eyes were bright; she laid her other hand on Nezhdanov's hand her lips were parted in rapture . . . She had grown suddenly marvelously beautiful!³⁶

By this reaction, completely unconscious, character is revealed in a concise, accurate manner. And as Nezhdanov reveals his fatal weakness, Marianna reveals her strength, for, as they prepare to live in the mill, she says:

"Alyosha, you know that when you tell me as an honest man--and I shall believe you, for you really are an honest man--when you tell me that you love me with that love . . .

³⁴Ibid., Vol. I, p. 148.
³⁵Ibid., Vol. I, p. 154.
³⁶Ibid., Vol. I, p. 169.

well, that love that gives one a right to another person's life,--when you tell me that, I am yours."³⁷

Thus Turgenev shows the power of his noble heroine both to demand and to give freely. This is a quality shown fully, which has carefully been prepared for. And this is a key quality in the craftsmanship of Turgenev--careful preparation for any development in plot or character. It is at least partially the result of this preparation that incidents, be they character or plot, never jar upon the reader.

Though necessarily not as deep a study, the character of Sipyagin is charming as it reveals that proud young Kammerhers with his boasting of liberal ideals because they are the fashion of the day. He pretends to a middle course as actually he wavers from Nezhdanov to Kallomyetsev to Solomin, agreeing with each as it suits his purpose. Indeed his orations, which tend toward bombast, show the hollow character of his professions. In the end, however, his true character is revealed fully as he hastens to give evidence to the governor, tricking and betraying Paklin's trust in the process.

As fully vital a minor character is Kallomyetsev, who cannot but represent all that is repulsive in any pseudo-aristocrat. His hypocrisy is revealed by a number of well-chosen details: he has added the y to his name in an attempt to conceal his common origin; his dress and speech are too

³⁷Ibid., Vol. II, p. 110.

correct; and he richly condemns without mercy the vulgar business world, while he is but two generations removed from simple market-gardeners. His every action is shown by Turgenev to be half-affected or effusive. He is thoroughly convincing and thoroughly disgusting.

The quiet, efficient factory manager, Solomin, is probably agreed to be Turgenev's least convincing character. His entrance is carefully prepared by Sipyagin's comments on his efficient management of his factory, and by Markolov's comments on his worth to the party. Yet, even after his entrance, little more is added to his personal life. For this reason he lacks depth of character. Then, too, he acts of his own volition very seldom, being shown as he aids Marianna and Nezhdanov, and as he simply goes along with Markolov in his work for the party. For this reason he lacks the vitality usually found in Turgenev's characters, as they are depicted in unconscious or impulsive action. Solomin is never impulsive.

However, as he refuses to manage Sipyagin's factory, he is vital in condemning the gentry in general for mismanagement of business. That he agrees to stay the night in the Sipyagin home because of Nezhdanov's plea for help casts a warmth over his character. As he agrees to help Nezhdanov and Marianna by sheltering them in his factory, there is a warm human quality about him. After the couple arrives at his factory, he provides for them, aids them in their plans, and goes on about the efficient management of

his factory. He very nearly becomes a living creature as he is drawn to Marianna, and yet remains loyal to Nezhdanov. Yet he remains a little too aloof--a little too universal--to be entirely convincing. He is not as beautifully portrayed as Turgenev's other characters, but neither is he unconvincing nor do his faults jar upon the reader.

Valentina Mihalovna is Turgenev's portrait of a petty, though beautiful, woman. Because Nezhdanov is a man in her household, she sets out to dominate him. She feels no real desire for him, and if he had returned her affection, no affair would have resulted. She simply desires to dominate all men who enter her life. In this respect, she is one with Irina and Varvara Pavlovna, Turgenev's wreckers of men, yet she is particularized. Finding her attraction for Nezhdanov to be a fleeting thing, she becomes petty and sends her maid to spy on him as he walks with Marianna. Out of spite she writes to Markelov, slyly remarking on Marianna's attraction to Nezhdanov, hoping thereby to wound Nezhdanov by breaking off his friendship with Markelov. She is even more petty as she pretends to a mother's love as she reprimands Marianna for walking privately with Nezhdanov and for visiting his room:

"Good heavens, Marianna! Why, he's a student, of no birth, no family--why he's younger than you are!" (There was a certain spiteful pleasure in her utterance of those words.) "What can come of it? and what can you, with your intellect, find in him? He's simply a shallow boy."³⁰

³⁰Ibid., Vol. II, p. 80.

But this "shallow boy" has resisted Valentina's dominance, and her sole intent is to revenge herself on him. Her spiteful pleasure in her remark about Nekhlyudov's age is a carefully chosen key to her character, for it reflects all that is base in her. Such details are a part of Turgenev's conclusion, revealing more than would tiresome pages of description.

It is by such characterization that Turgenev achieves a high standard of character portrayal. There are no stock characters in his novels. Every character is a particularized universal, more often than not depicting a type, yet always vital and living. His standard of craftsmanship in character is high, depicted best by Joseph Conrad:

All his creations, fortunate and unfortunate, oppressed and oppressors are human beings, not strange beasts in a menagerie or damned souls knocking themselves about in the stuffy darkness of mystical contradictions. They are human beings, fit to live, fit to suffer, fit to struggle, fit to win, fit to lose, in the endless and inspiring game of pursuing from day to day the ever-receding future.³⁹

³⁹Garnett, Turgenev, p. viii.

CHAPTER IV

ATMOSPHERE AND SETTING

Whether he wrote of country life or highly sophisticated city life, Turgenev was both familiar with his subject and apt at depicting it.

It is usual for him to introduce his setting in conjunction with the introduction of his characters. Sometimes it is through the characters that setting is provided, but more often it is provided by Turgenev, from the author-omniscient viewpoint. As the setting acts on the characters, it produces atmosphere. Atmosphere is closely associated with Turgenev's tone or attitude as he speaks of aspects of setting.

In Rudin, the setting is that of the vast, seemingly endless Russian steppes, upon the face of which life flows from one incident to another as smoothly as one rolling hill flows into another.

In the opening scene of the novel, Alexandra is shown as she travels on foot to visit a sick peasant. As she leaves the peasant's cottage, she meets Lezhniov, who is driving along the dusty roads in a racing sulky. About their conversation there is a leisurely tone in keeping with the atmosphere of interminable space and time, created by the steppes. Here setting and atmosphere in turn are fused with the actions of the characters. "Alexandra Pavlovna quietly made her way back home. She walked with downcast

eyes. The clatter of horses' hooves close at hand caused her to stop and raise her head . . ."¹ Even in the street of a small village the sound of horses' hooves might pass unnoticed, but in the quiet, melancholy atmosphere of this novel it is an intrusive sound.

Again, as Pandalevsky walks with Alexandra, casually discussing the invitation he has brought to her from Daria Mikhailovna, the atmosphere is heightened. The couple seems to move along casually, both in their walk and in their conversation. Parting from Alexandra, Pandalevsky walks along "a mile or so, jauntily swinging his cane."² It is by means of such details that Turgenev creates the illusion of time passing slowly, without going into long descriptions that would make the reader feel that it actually is passing slowly. This is the atmosphere of melancholy leisure into which Rudin enters. It prevails until the climax of the novel is reached.

As Rudin meets Natalia by the pond, the atmosphere deepens to a dark, brooding melancholy. This is largely accomplished by means of the description of the pond and its surroundings:

It had burst its banks some thirty years before, and so it had fallen into neglect. Only by the flat and shallow bottom of the ravine, once covered by oily slime, and by the remnants of the dam, could one have guessed that a

¹Turgenev, Rudin, as printed in The Borzoi Turgenev, p. 562.

²Ibid., p. 566.

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pond had once been here. And here, too, a farm had existed. It had disappeared long since. Two great pines stood as a reminder of the farmstead; the wind everlastingly roared and howled gloomily among their lofty meagre green . . . Among the people of the district mysterious rumors circulated of a terrible crime that was said to have been committed at the feet of one of the pines; it was also said that neither of them would fall without causing someone's death; that formerly a third pine had stood here, but it had been overthrown by a storm and had crushed a girl beneath it. All the area around the former pond was regarded as an unclean spot; empty and bare, but lonely and gloomy even on a sunny day, it seemed even more gloomy and lonely because of the proximity of a senile oak wood that had long since withered and died. The scanty gray shells of the enormous trees hovered like despondent phantoms over the low, bushy undergrowth.³

It is hardly necessary to point out the atmosphere of gloomy, despondent melancholy which is evoked by such a setting.

The skill with which successive details build the intensity of the mood is worth noting. First, actual physical details are described. Physical details give way to legend, and legend in turn gives way to an atmosphere as of the habitat of "despondent phantoms." Thus, atmosphere is created vividly through setting.

Turgenev shifts to the home of a noble urban family for the setting of A Nobleman's Nest. The opening paragraphs of the novel provide the physical setting of the novel:

The brilliant, spring day was inclining toward the evening, tiny rose-tinted cloudlets hung high in the heavens, and seemed not to be floating past, but retreating into the very depths of the azure.

In front of the open window of a handsome house, in one of the outlying streets of ~~Oxxx~~ the capital of a Government, sat two women; one fifty years of age, the other seventy years old, and already aged.⁴

³Ibid., p. 635.

⁴Turgenev, A Nobleman's Nest, p. 3.

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This is the physical setting, markedly lacking in extremes, which gives rise to the Indian-summer atmosphere in which the life of this noble family revolves. In this household any interruption is discouraged, and the events of the day flow along with a regularity conducive to languor.

Also by the mastery of a technique known as superfluous detail Turgenev makes the scenes vividly realistic. In any scene or incident from life there is a central sensation or group of sensations which occupy the conscious mind. On the fringe of consciousness, however, is a myriad of detail. An attempt to represent exactly this detail on the fringe of consciousness would probably result in such a mass of detail as to bury the central theme of the scene. For this reason Turgenev chooses a representative sound or sensation to represent reality. For instance, as Panshin and Liza seat themselves at the piano to rehearse a sonata, "--From above, the faint sounds of scales, played by Lyenotchka's uncertain little fingers, were wafted to them."⁵ Thus the strained silence of the moment in which the two young people are left alone, each uneasy in the other's presence, is conveyed with more reality than could be conveyed by pages of description.

As Liza and her mother visit Lavretzky's estate, the carefree atmosphere of a summer outing is caught simply and concisely. Old Anton becomes positively gay as he "assiduously

⁵Ibid., p. 25.

spitted worms on the hook, slapped them down with his hand, spat on them, and even himself flung the line and hook. . . .⁶

Merely the mention of this staid old retainer's joy in the outing is suggestive of the carefree atmosphere, but the description of the caught fish, "constantly flashing their sides, now gold, now silver, in the air,"⁷ enhances the atmosphere of a sparkling summer day. Indeed the atmosphere, set by the sparkling pond, is conducive to the intimate conversation of Liza and Lavretzky.

At that moment, too, at which Lavretzky and Liza realize that they are free to love, atmosphere is conveyed powerfully and subtly. Lavretzky has gone to inform Liza of the notice of his wife's death. At her home he discovers a fashionable afternoon party in progress. In this physical setting of hollow pleasantries and witticisms, he is unable to talk to Liza privately and, therefore, simply hands her the paper in which he has underlined the article about his wife:

Liza gave him a superficial answer, left the hall and went up-stairs. Lavretzky returned to the drawing-room, and approached the cardtable. Marfa Timofeevna, with her cap-ribbons untied, and red in the face, began to complain to him about her partner . . .

Her partner continued to blink and mop his face. Liza entered the drawing-room, and seated herself in a corner; Lavretzky looked at her, she looked at him,--and something like dread fell upon them both . . .⁸

⁶Ibid., p. 154.
⁷Ibid., p. 154.
⁸Ibid., p. 171.

The tension of the moment is powerfully conveyed as Lavretzky, undoubtedly torn by thoughts of how Liza will receive the news, is conscious of Marfa Timofeevna's incongruous appearance, and of her partner blinking and mopping his face--superfluous details, yet details which recall the central tension all the more vividly.

By contrast, the atmosphere of Panshin's courtship of Liza is conveyed in a very short scene typical of Turgenev's concision. Liza and Lavretzky are discussing Panshin's letter of proposal:

"It seems to me,"--said Liza, a few moments later:-- "That if he really loved me, he would not have written that letter; he ought to have felt that I could not answer him now."

"That is of no importance,"--said Lavretzky:--"the important point is, that you do not love him."

"Stop--what sort of conversation is this! I keep having visions of your dead wife, and you are terrible to me!"

"My Lizeta plays charmingly, does she not, Valdemar?"-- Marya Dmitrievna was saying to Panshin at that same moment.

"Yes,"--replied Panshin;--"very charmingly."

Marya Dmitrievna gazed tenderly at her young partner; but the latter assumed a still more important and careworn aspect, and announced fourteen kings.⁹

In Panshin's careless reply, and in his callous announcement of "fourteen kings," in the midst of a conversation about the girl he seeks to marry, is reflected the fashionable but superficial manner in which his courtship is carried on. In this atmosphere, the love of Liza and Lavretzky flourishes. All this is conveyed in a few short concise lines.

⁹Ibid., p. 186.

The whole atmosphere is shattered and a new one invoked as Varvara Pavlovna returns--very much alive. As Lavretzky enters his rooms, he becomes aware of "the scent of Patchouli, which was very repulsive to him."¹⁰ This is a superfluous detail, yet it is a detail which Lavretzky will probably remember always in conjunction with the discovery that his wife is still alive. As she throws herself at his feet, he is conscious of the deceit in her entreaties, and he is aware that he is once again frustrated in seeking happiness. The sense of frustration mounts as he is unable to see Liza and must ultimately send Lemm to inform her of his wife's return. The setting of the novel is largely material rather than immaterial as it shifts from the Indian-summer atmosphere of the beginning to the atmosphere of frustration at the end.

For the setting of his third novel, On the Eve, Turgenev shifts again to a rural upper-class household. It is a setting he knew well, and from the opening scene of the novel, it is apparent that he was very close to the Russian soil, if not to those who governed it:

Beneath the lime it was cool and still; the flies and bees that flew into the circle of its shadow seemed to hum more softly; the clean fine grass of emerald color, without any golden tinge, did not stir; the long stalks stood motionless as though enchanted; the tiny clusters of yellow flowers hung as though dead on the lower branches of the lime. With every breath the delicate perfume penetrated into the very depths of the lungs, but the lungs gladly drew in that scent. In the distance, beyond the river, away to the horizon everything was sparkling, everything was burning; occasionally a breeze sped over the land and disintegrated

¹⁰Ibid., p. 221.

and intensified the sparkle; a radiant haze quivered above the earth. No birds were to be heard; they do not sing in the hours of heat; but the crickets were chirruping everywhere and for anyone sitting in the cool, in the stillness, it was pleasant to hear this fiery sound of life; it made one feel drowsy and dreamy.¹¹

Proceeding from the physical details of the setting, Turgenev arrives at the atmosphere of the novel. In it Russia is a vast, dreamy land in which a melancholy pre-occupation with comfort prevails. There is an interest in art and in the consideration of action through an artistic medium, but only occasionally does a breeze of action, an Yelena, disturb its inhabitants' composed, tranquil observation of the Insarovs as they go about their active lives-- out in the sunlight.

Against this setting and in this atmosphere, the struggles of Insarov and Yelena are not incongruous but vital. The very atmosphere seems to oppose their struggle, until at the end, after Yelena and Insarov are married and on their way to Bulgaria, Turgenev catches the sense of doom everyone must have felt at one time or another. Insarov's illness has shown signs of increasing. Already the couple have been seen in the setting of the opera house in which the hero dies of consumption. They have been caught by the mood of the opera, even as they are surrounded by beautiful Venice. From this setting has risen an atmosphere which foreshadows doom. Now, they have returned to their room. Insarov sleeps fitfully but Yelena cannot sleep:

¹¹Turgenev, On the Eve as printed in The Borzoi Turgenev, p. 417.

She went again to the window, and again her thoughts took possession of her. She began to argue with herself and to assure herself that there was no reason to be afraid. She even felt ashamed of her weakness. "Is there really any danger, isn't it better?" she whispered. "After all, if we hadn't been at the theater today, none of this would have come into my head." At that moment she saw a white gull high above the water; probably it had been started up by a fisherman; and it flew silently, with an uneven flight, as though surveying a place where it could settle. "If it flies this way," Yelena thought, "that will be a good sign." The gull circled in one spot, folded its wings--and, as though shot, with a mournful cry it dropped somewhere far beyond the dark outline of a ship. Yelena shuddered, but then she felt ashamed that she had shuddered and, without undressing, she lay down on the bed beside Insarov, who was breathing heavily and rapidly.¹²

What man has not, in some time of stress, reached out to a symbol whereby to know the future as Yelena reaches out to the flight of the gull. Probably everyone has felt this sensation to at least some extent, and it is by means of such a universal tendency in man that Turgenev introduces the atmosphere which accompanies it. In what better or more concise manner could such an atmosphere be captured by the craftsman?

It is out of action and setting that the atmosphere of Fathers and Children arises. For generations fathers have gone to meet sons who have been for a time away from home, and conflicts between the old and the new have arisen. The new now intrudes into the setting which was built by the old. Arkady, Bazarov, and Nikolai are traveling from the posting station to Nikolai's estate. Turgenev takes this opportunity

¹²Ibid., p. 550.

of describing the country. From his tone or manner of description is apparent the demand for reform in a state neither old nor new but tortured by slow transition:

The country through which they were driving could not be called picturesque. Fields upon fields stretched all along to the very horizon, now sloping gently upwards, then dropping down again; in some places woods were to be seen, and winding ravines, planted with low, scanty bushes, recalling vividly the representation of them on the old-fashioned maps of the times of Catherine. They came upon little streams too with hollow banks; and tiny lakes with narrow dykes; and little villages, with low hovels under dark and often tumble-down roofs, and slanting barns with walls woven of brushwood and gaping doorways beside neglected threshing-floors; and churches, some brick-built, with stucco peeling off in patches, others wooden, with crosses fallen askew and overgrown grave-yards.¹³

From the details Turgenev chooses to include in his setting there is derived an atmosphere of boundless, ruined, poorly-managed property. Here there is the feeling of nature, the great giver and taker of all that is mortal. Here, too, is seen the paltry effect of man's struggles which quickly lose strength when confronted by the forces of nature.

There is also present in the novel the atmosphere of the limitless sweep of the Russian steppes, with the peasants an inarticulate, ever-present force on their surface. Even as the three men first journey to the estate, the vast sweep of the country is felt, and as the novel goes on every visit to a neighbor is a journey, carrying with it the sense of an ever-receding horizon.

¹³Turgenev, Fathers and Children, p. 17.

But the dominating element of setting is the new in opposition to the old. This is seen in the opening lines as Nikolai waits for Arkady. He calls, in a voice used to command, to the servant Piotr to ask if the coach is in sight. Piotr, "the turquoise ring in his ear, the streaky hair plastered down with grease, and the civility of his movements--¹⁴ is an example of the freed serf. His independence of reply, combined with a touch of servility, hints that the process of reform is making more pronounced the age-old struggle between the old and the new. The scene of the struggle shifts to the ancient estate which is in the throes of change:

When Nikolai Petrovitch had divided the land with his peasants, he had had to build his new manor-house on four acres of perfectly flat and barren land. He had built a house, offices, and farm buildings, laid out a garden, dug a pond, and sunk two wells; but the young trees had not done well, very little water had collected in the pond, and that in the wells tasted brackish. Only the arbour of lilac and acacia had grown fairly well; they sometimes had tea and dinner in it.¹⁵

In this setting there is the atmosphere of the withering effect of the old on the new, a hint that new elements make their changes and then die in their victory. Thus by means of setting and atmosphere does Turgenev create another foreshadowing of the end of the novel, and it is seen again that every factor is a part of an artistic unity.

The atmosphere of change, reform, and revolution becomes increasingly stronger as Bazarov is seen acting and being

¹⁴Ibid., p. 1.
¹⁵Ibid., p. 29.

acted upon. As his brilliant mind reaches out, intent on the destruction of any obstacle, there is an atmosphere of brilliant new color splashed on an old canvas. From Turgenev's tone there results the feeling that, though this obliteration of the old is often painful in the loss of cherished ideals, it is a process as inevitable as the passing of time itself. From this point on the setting is immaterial, lying principally in ideas which are as much a part of the environment as the land and people.

The setting becomes one of conflicting ideologies. In Nikolai's pathetic efforts to cater to Arkady's wishes there is felt the inevitable separation of the old from the new. Any effort to put the two eras on common ground only results in pathos, for the two must accept their differences and go on their appointed way. Turgenev makes this apparent as neither Arkady nor Nikolai can embrace the other's views, but both are eventually happy as they begin to work each in his own way, toward a common goal.

Bazarov's conflict with both the old and the corruption of the new places the hero's ideals in a merciless light which is neither sympathy nor antipathy. Indeed, Turgenev's tone indicates that he would not be entirely comfortable in Bazarov's presence, but that the movement he represents is necessary and that such strong ideology is the culmination of it. The atmosphere of Bazarov's unyielding destruction is not pleasant as respected institutions fall before him,

but the very strength of the movement inspires confidence in its consummation.

Yet, the function of the Bazarovs is like that of the bees which protect the hive: as the soldier-bees die in destroying an enemy so does the very strength of the Bazarovs turn back upon itself as its function is completed. This is the setting of the final phase of the novel. As Bazarov lies dying, the end of a movement is seen. As a strong man or strong movement is seen humbled, an atmosphere of pity and fear is present, and Turgenev achieves this setting through his depiction of the speech and actions of those who surround Bazarov at his death.

As Bazarov's father bustles about, refusing to admit the inevitable and his mother is unable to comprehend what is taking place, Turgenev concisely describes the setting:

The whole house seemed suddenly darkened; every one looked gloomy; there was a strange hush; a shrill cock was carried away from the yard to the village, unable to comprehend why he should be treated so. Bazarov still lay, turned to the wall. Vassily Ivanovitch tried to address him with various questions, but they fatigued Bazarov, and the old man sank into his arm-chair, motionless, only cracking his finger-joints now and then. He went for a few minutes into the garden, stood there like a statue, as though overwhelmed with unutterable bewilderment (the expression of amazement never left his face all through), and went back again to his son, trying to avoid his wife's questions.¹⁶

While all the other characters are stunned and frightened at his coming death, Bazarov does not yield to any mean emotion such as self-pity. This factor maintains the noble

¹⁶Ibid., p. 336.

level of the tragic atmosphere, which in turn gives these final pages of the novel a sort of majesty.

Though not so significant in its implications, there is about the setting of Smoke an undeniable charm. Beside the masterly portraiture of Fathers and Children the setting of Smoke seems but an etching, yet its strokes are masterfully chosen. The opening description is not lacking in power:

On the tenth of August, 1862, at four o'clock in the afternoon, a great number of people were thronging before the well-known Konversation in Baden-Baden. The weather was lovely; everything around--the green trees, the bright houses of the gay city, and the undulating outline of the mountains--everything seemed smiling with a sort of blind confiding delight; and the same glad, vague smile strayed over the human faces too, old and ugly and beautiful alike. Even the blackened and whitened visages of the Parisian demi-mode could not destroy the general impression of bright content and elation, while their many-colored ribbons and feathers and the sparks of gold and steel on their hats and veils involuntarily recalled the intensified brilliance and light fluttering of birds in spring, with their rainbow tinted wings. But the guttural snapping of the French jargon, heard on all sides could not equal the song of the birds or be compared with it.¹⁷

In this first description of the setting is captured the fluttering, festive beauty of the resort city, while at the same time there is a hint that the holiday atmosphere is shallow. In his next description, of the gambling salon, Turgenev probes deeper into the real nature of the setting:

The same wellfed and ultra-fashionably dressed Russian landholder from near Tambov with wide staring eyes leaned over the table, and with uncompromising haste, heedless of the cold smiles of the croupiers themselves, at the same instant

¹⁷Turgenev, Smoke, p. 1.

of the cry, "rien ne va plus," laid with perspiring hand golden rings louis d'or on all four corners of the roulette, depriving himself in so doing of every chance of gaining anything, even in the case of success.¹⁸

By moving from the general appearance of the setting to the more particular description of a carefully chosen example, Turgenev shows something of the atmosphere of futility which underlies the greater picture. As he moves to a description of the persons gathered under the "Russian Tree,"

Turgenev progresses to a more exact depiction of the setting:

. . . the Princess Babette, she in whose arms Chopin died (the ladies in Europe in whose arms he expired are to be reckoned by the thousands); and the Princess Annett, who would have been perfectly captivating, if the simple village washerwoman had not suddenly peeped out in her at times, like a smell of cabbage wafted across the most delicate perfume . . . They all left their compatriots on one side, and were merciless in their treatment of them. Let us then, too, leave them on the side, these charming ladies, and walk away from the renowned tree near which they sit in such costly but somewhat tasteless costumes, and God grant them relief from the boredom consuming them.¹⁹

Here the whole atmosphere of false sophistication is caught and laid open. Turgenev's technique in this case is worthy of note because of its very simplicity. With three strokes, he etches in the pattern of life in this resort city. This is the setting in which the love of Litvinov and Irina is revitalized and finally extinguished.

In this highly artificial setting it is no wonder that Litvinov is again ensnared by Irina. Indeed, this moment in the novel is made vital by its setting:

¹⁸Ibid., p. 2.
¹⁹Ibid., p. 5.

. . . a rich scarf slipped from the table and fell on the floor at Irina's feet. She trampled contemptuously on it. "Or don't you like me today? Have I grown ugly since yesterday? Tell me, have you often seen a prettier hand? And this hair? Tell me, do you love me?"

She clasped him in both arms, held his head close to her bosom, her comb fell out with a ringing sound, and her falling hair wrapped him in a soft flood of fragrance.²⁰

Here the superfluous details--the scarf slipping to the floor and the ringing sound of the falling comb--give the scene a reality which would otherwise be lacking. Through them the atmosphere of seduction becomes a real and integral part of the setting.

This atmosphere of seductive love, within the greater framework of the setting of the society of the resort city, is maintained carefully until, having broken with Tatyana, Litvinov realizes that Irina seeks only to dominate him. As he resolves to break with Irina, he is forced to a realization of his own failure. To demonstrate this sense of failure, Turgenev uses the device known as "making it strange." Though he used the technique often, it is best illustrated at this point:

The wind blew facing the train; whitish clouds of steam, some singly, others mingled with other darker clouds of smoke, whirled in endless file past the window at which Litvinov was sitting. He began to watch this steam, this smoke. Incessantly mounting, rising and falling, twisting and looking onto the grass, to the bushes as if in sportive antics, lengthening out, and hiding away, clouds upon clouds flew by. They were forever changing and stayed still the same in their monotonous, hurrying wearisome sport! . . . "Smoke, smoke," he repeated several times; and suddenly it all seemed like smoke to him, everything, his own life, Russian life--everything human, especially everything

²⁰Ibid., p. 204.

Russian. All smoke and steam, he thought; all seems forever changing, on all sides new forms, phantoms flying after phantoms, while in reality it is all the same and the same again; everything hurrying, flying toward something, and everything vanishing without a trace attaining to nothing; another wind blows, and all is dashing in the opposite direction, and there is the same untiring, restless--and useless gambole! He remembered much that had taken place with clamor and flourish before his eyes in the last few years . . . "Smoke," he whispered, "Smoke"; he remembered the hot disputes, the wrangling, the clamor of Gubaryov's and in other sets of men, of high and low degree, advanced and reactionist, old and young . . . "Smoke," he repeated, "smoke and steam"; he remembered, too, the fashionable picnic, and he remembered various opinions and speeches of other political personages--even all Potugin's sermonizing . . . "Smoke, smoke, nothing but smoke." And what of his own passions and agonies and dreams? He could only reply with a gesture of despair.²¹

The word, failure, might mean many things, but Turgenev breaks Litvinov's failure down, makes it strange, and makes it seem real and vital by this means. The atmosphere of Litvinov's failure contained in the setting of clouds of smoke and steam being swept past the train window is a sensation not easily forgotten. In it the novel reaches its culmination.

Virgin Soil, with its slow-moving plot and great variety of character, presents also a variety of settings, nonetheless real. The novel opens in the Petersburg rooms of the hero, Nezhdanov. Five stories up by shabby back stairs he lives in dark time-worn rooms. Here the leaders in a subversive party come to the half-aristocrat student for help and monetary assistance. This is the setting in which, proscribed

²¹Ibid., pp. 219-220.

by the government, the nihilist party germinates. From the first, there is the feeling that this is but one of many such gathering places where in a furtive and subversive atmosphere thinking men plan the overthrow of a government which proscribes thought.

Through the speech of the hero, Nezhdanov, Turgenev describes this setting:

"What more would you have going wrong?" he shouted, his voice suddenly growing loud. "Half Russia's dying of hunger. The Moscow Gazette's triumphant; they're going to introduce classicism; the student's benefit clubs are prohibited; everywhere there's spying, persecution, betrayal, lying and treachery--we can't advance a step in any direction . . . and all that's not enough for him--he looks for something fresh to go wrong, he thinks I'm joking . . . Basanov's arrested," he added, dropping his voice a little; "they told me at the library."²²

From this setting Turgenev shifts to that of the Sipyagin household as Nezhdanov goes there to act as a tutor. It is characteristic of Turgenev's artistry that he chooses to show the faults, not of extreme examples of the aristocracy, but of a young aristocrat who professes quite liberal views. He describes the drawing room of Sipyagin's immense stone house:

The decoration of the drawing-room bore the stamp of a modern and refined taste; everything in it was charming and attractive--everything, from the agreeably varied tints of the cretonne upholstery and draperies to the different lines of the china, bronze, and glass knick-knacks, scattered about on the tables and stageres,--all fell into a subdued harmony and blended together in the bright May sunshine which streamed freely in at the high, wide-open windows.²³

²²Turgenev, Virgin Soil, Vol. I, p. 16.

²³Ibid., Vol. I, p. 50.

Such a setting, with all its atmosphere of wealth, taste, and comfortable living, could easily be imagined to be on a stage, demonstrating again the dramatic technique of Turgenev's novels. In this setting Nezhdanov's indecision seems all the more plausible, and Marianna's decision becomes all the more noble. As the setting shifts the mood or atmosphere of rebellion develops, for, both ways of life being seen, it is inevitable that the one will attempt to overthrow the other.

The atmosphere of conspiracy deepens as both Markelov and Solomin are seen as members of the nihilist party, though each seems busy managing his estate and mill respectively. The mood culminates in the setting of the mill as it continues to hum with its daily activity while Nezhdanov, Marianna, and Solomin carry on their secret plotting. The atmosphere of rebellion, conspiracy, and ultimate futility reaches its consummation. As Nezhdanov goes in disguise to arouse the peasants, he is frustrated as they only draw him into a drinking bout:

"Drink!" rose a noisy chorus around. Nezhdanov grasped the pot (he was in a sort of nightmare), shouted, "To your health, lads!" and emptied it at a gulp. Ugh! He drank it off with the same desperate heroism with which he would have flung himself on a storm of battery or a row of bayonets. . . . But what was happening to him?²⁴

This is the frustrating atmosphere, set in a dark tavern room in which he must go on, "shaking broad, horny hands,

²⁴Ibid., Vol. II, p. 167.

hissing slobbery beards,"²⁵ while the peasants are interested only in the sound and not the meaning of the words.

Total frustration is reached in the final pages of the novel as Markelov is a prisoner, Nezhdanov has committed suicide, and the other characters fear their immediate capture. Perhaps the key to this final feeling lies in Markelov's recalling of his betrayal by the peasants:

First the silence, the leers, the shouts at the back of the crowd. Then one fellow comes up sideways as if to salute him. Then that sudden rush! And how they had flung him down! . . . "Lads . . . lads! . . . what are you about?" And they, "Give us a belt here! Tie him!" . . . The shaking of his bones . . . and helpless wrath . . . and the stinking dust in his mouth, in his nostrils . . . "Toss him . . . toss him into the cart" someone guffawing thickly . . . ugh!²⁶

Here by a use of the stream of consciousness technique, supposedly quite modern,²⁷ Turgenev captures the complete feeling of frustrated purpose which is the note on which the novel ends.

It may be seen, then, that Turgenev creates settings cleverly, by means of the least possible detail and usually in close coordination with the introduction of his characters. These settings are always in keeping with the type of actions which are to transpire within their bounds. Sometimes the setting seems a force which provides motivation for the actions of the characters. In either case, an atmosphere which is

²⁵Ibid., Vol. II, p. 168.

²⁶Ibid., Vol. II, p. 213.

²⁷It may be worth noting that this is a use of the technique acclaimed as revolutionary in such moderns as Faulkner and Steinbeck.

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also in keeping with the actions of the characters is a part of the setting. Usually this atmosphere results from the immaterial setting in the form of the thoughts and attitudes of the characters. Turgenev also produces atmosphere as a result of those objects described in the material setting. But in material setting, immaterial setting, and atmosphere, all details contribute to a common end--the thorough motivation of the actions of the characters in the working out of the plot.

CHAPTER V

STYLE

Though it is necessary, here, to study the style of Turgenev through translation, the time will not be entirely ill-spent. It seems a reasonable assumption that nearly all the influence of Turgenev on English-speaking (and writing) people is through translation. It is also worthy of note that in his History of Russian Literature, Prince D. S. Mirsky says that, though he had previously thought it impossible to master Turgenev's style through translation, Henry James' complete understanding of Turgenev's intent and method convinced him that such an understanding is possible.¹ Even without Henry James' astute powers, it is possible to arrive at a creditable understanding of Turgenev's selection and ordering of his language.

At the beginning of Rudin, as Alexandra is on her way to visit a sick, old peasant woman, the long, flowing sentences are in keeping with her leisurely pace, as in the description: "All around her, over the tall supple rye, long waves ran with a gentle rustle, speckling it with successive silvery-green and reddish patches . . ." ² The choice of detail in this passage is also worth mention, for the rustling of ripe grain is suggestive of the lazy heat of late summer. As Alexandra arrives at the ramshackle hut, she does her best,

¹Vol. II, p. 243.

²Turgenev, as printed in The Borzoi Turgenev, p. 559.

in a strained atmosphere, to comfort the old woman. Much of the tension of this moment is conveyed by the short, terse sentences: "Alexandra Pavlovna entered the hut. It was close and stuffy and smoky inside . . . Someone began to stir and groan on the stove sleeping-place."³ By making the pace of his prose match the pace of the situation, Turgenev makes both more vital.

Turgenev also uses powerful figures, especially as he describes the meeting of Natalia and Rudin by the desolate pond. He speaks of the old, dead trees hovering "like despondent phantoms over the low, bushy undergrowth."⁴ Through this simile there is conveyed in no small measure, the awesome atmosphere. As Natalia approaches the meeting place, her studied determination is described: "Her brows were knitted, her lips pressed together; her eyes had a firm and stern gaze."⁵ Through such concise, accurate description Turgenev depicts an aspect so exactly that the reader need not sift details as he would have to do in a long, muddled description. Indeed, the descriptive details are so well chosen that the reader is not conscious of its brevity. Great craftsmanship passes unnoticed, for that is one of the qualities that make it great.

The epilogue ends with the description of Rudin's death, a passage which contains two beautifully executed similes:

³Ibid., p. 560.
⁴Ibid., p. 635.
⁵Ibid., p. 636.

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A Vincennes sharpshooter took aim at him--fired . . . the tall man dropped the flag and, like a sack, tumbled headlong, face-downward, as though bowing down at someone's feet . . .

The term "like a sack" describes graphically the suddenly relaxed fall, while the second simile, "as though bowing down at someone's feet," creates the image of outflung arms, bowed head, and complete prostration. The use of such images, subtly woven into the description, is one of the keys to Turgenev's description.

Just as exact is the craftsmanship of A Nobleman's Nest. It opens again with the long, complex sentences that imply an intellectual sifting of descriptive material. At this point the metaphor, less direct in its approach than the simile, is appropriate, and Turgenev therefore describes the society through Gedeonovsky, saying "nowadays, a hen approaches a grain of corn craftily--she keeps watching her chance to get to it from one side."⁷ As the characters begin to act, the sentences shorten as the motion becomes more rapid. Turgenev even withholds the description of Lavretzky's discovery of his wife's deceit until the tension of the plot is such that it will sustain such highly dramatic antecedent action. All of Lavretzky's disillusionment is captured by a series of short sentences and similes, which, by their staccato effect, convey the panicked, futile search for some detail which will

⁶Ibid., p. 636.

⁷Turgenev, A Nobleman's Nest, p. 11.

prove his wife innocent. Then as he realizes his hope is futile, his lapse into total grief is described: "As the hawk buries his claws in the bird he has captured, anguish pierced more and more deeply into his heart."⁸--a horrible image to describe a horrible realization.

At the end of the novel Turgenev's deeply poetic nature, ever present in his work, is especially evident as he describes Lavretzky's last sight of Liza:

In going from one choir to another, she passed close to him--passed with the even, hurriedly submissive gait of a nun--and did not cast a glance at him; only the lashes of the eye which was turned toward him trembled almost imperceptibly, and her haggard face was bowed a little lower than usual--and the fingers of her clasped hands, interlaced with her rosary, were pressed more tightly to one another. What did they both think,--what did they both feel? Who knows? Who shall say? There are moments in life, there are feelings . . . we can only indicate them,--and pass by.⁹

Perhaps the finest tribute to Turgenev's genius is that not even translation from a highly complex to a simple language has removed the melodious, sympathetic quality of these lines. If the usual loss through translation has resulted, they must be even nobler in their original.

On the Eve begins as the students, Berseniev and Shubin, converse, and Turgenev allows Shubin to pose an interesting dilemma:

"What amazes me most of all in ants, beetles, and other respectable insects is their amazing seriousness; they run about with such an important air, just as though their life had some meaning! You just think there is a man, the lord of

⁸Ibid., p. 97.
⁹Ibid., p. 306.

creation, a higher creature, looking at them, but they're not in the least interested in him. And not only that, but some mosquito will even sit on the lord of creation's nose and begin to use it for food. That's downright insulting. And yet, on the other hand, in what respect is their life any worse than ours? And why shouldn't they behave as though they were important, if we allow ourselves to behave as though we were?"¹⁰

This illustration is similar to the animalistic comparisons employed by the French naturalists. Turgenev, however, does not believe that all mankind is animalistic. He uses animalistic images in connection with unsympathetic characters or with man in general, but when he speaks of his sympathetic characters his images are noble. This technique is that suggested by Horace in his Epistle On the Art of Poetry:

This will be the excellence and charm of order, or I am mistaken; that he say at this moment what needs at this moment to be said: that he defer much and then for the present time. Let the author of the projected poem embrace one word, reject another word.¹¹

Though Horace was writing to poets, his advice seems applicable also to novelists. Certainly it is a principle which Turgenev practices with great care. In describing the party of a noble family to which Shubin is invited, Turgenev compares man with his fellow man, as he says:

The Maecenas of the Kazan Tartars roared with laughter, the Maecenas's guests smiled, but no one felt happy, and when they went their ways they were all in a bad temper. Thus a couple of gentlemen, casual acquaintances, who happen to meet in the Nevsky Prospekt, will suddenly bare their teeth at each other, honeydly grimace with their eyes, their noses

¹⁰Turgenev, On the Eve as printed in The Borzoi Turgenev, p. 414.

¹¹Horace, The Complete Works of Horace (literal inter-linear translation), p. 472.

and their cheeks, and then, the moment they have passed each other, will return to their former unconcerned or morose and almost always hemorrhoidal expressions.¹²

It is a base form of man of which Turgenev speaks, yet it is a form above the animal level. In contrast, when he speaks of the beautiful, his images may have a mystic connotation, as when he says of Zoya's song: "In the distant forests every word was echoed; it was as though there, too, someone were singing in a distinct and mysterious, but not a human, not a worldly voice."¹³ There is, indeed, a poetic quality in these lines, as there is a nobility in their description. It is an image appropriate to the occasion.

Turgenev's introduction of Yelena's diary is also appropriate, for it takes the reader into the inner-most thoughts of a young girl as she discovers herself to be in love. It is appropriate, too, since Yelena is a pure, simple, and direct girl, who would pen only genuine feeling. The writing of a work of this type is not easy, but Turgenev accomplishes it by a tasteful presentation of the broken sentences, half expressed thoughts, and but a dash of the naturally rambling logic which would be found in such a private writing. In the final lines, as Yelena realizes she is in love with Insarov, she writes, ". . . the word is found, light has flooded over me! God have mercy on me! . . . I am

¹²Turgenev, On the Eve as printed in The Borzoi Turgenev, p. 450.

¹³Ibid., p. 472.

in love!¹⁴ Though this passage is perhaps a fault in Turgenev's work, in that it breaks with the otherwise intensely dramatic form of his novels, it is probably the truest guide he could give to Yelena's character, and it is handled with a skill that does not demean the quality of the work as a whole.

Turgenev's poetic training may account for the ability he has in common with the great poets--his ability to carry an image successfully through an extended work of art. This quality may be seen in On the Eve, in his image of sunlight and shade. As the novel begins, the picture of Shubin and Berseniev sitting in the shade and watching the actions which go on out in the sunlight introduces the image. In this scene there is a feeling that most of Russia is content to sit in the shade and watch action which takes place in the sun. The image is carried forward as Insarov is not afraid to move about in the sunlight, while Berseniev and Shubin seek the cool shade. It is seen, too, during the family picnic when Insarov throws the drunken German in the lake. It reaches its culmination after Berseniev has nursed Insarov back to health. Berseniev realizes he no longer has a place in the lives of Insarov and Yelena as he remembers the words of his father:

"--we are toilers, toilers, and ever more toilers. Put on your leather apron, toiler, and stand to your work-bench, in your dark work-shop! But let the sun shine on others! Our dull life, too, has its pride and its happiness!"¹⁵

¹⁴Ibid., p. 483.
¹⁵Ibid., p. 521.

And the image has run throughout the entire novel, influencing the reader's reaction though it probably passes unnoticed, a testimony to the skill with which it is employed.

This imagery of sunlight and shadow is also seen in Fathers and Children. As Nikolai awaits Arkady at the posting station, he is conscious of the bright sunlight in the yard, while the odor of hot rye bread emerges from the darkness of the house. Though the image is scarcely formed at this time, the odor of rye bread, a customary part of the serf's diet, emerges from darkness, which may be taken as a symbol of the old way of life. At the estate, Bazarov moves about in the early sunlight, hunting his frogs, while the rest of the family seek the shade of the only arbour which has survived the process of change. As Bazarov and Pavel Petrovitch prepare for their duel, there is a curious pattern of sunlight and shade formed by the leaves overhead, as there is a curious mixture of the old and the new in the duel. Even as Bazarov dies, he lies in the cool darkness of his parents' home. He dies at night. His tour in the sun completed, he is relegated to his place in the shade, and Turgenev hails his death with the words:

But the heat of the noonday passes, and evening comes and night, and then, too, the return of the kindly refuge, where sleep is sweet for the weary and heavy laden . . . 16

This metaphor, in which the course of life is compared to the passing of a day, brings the imagery to an end. That the

¹⁶Ibid., p. 350.

imagery in Fathers and Children is more subtle than in any of Turgenev's other novels might well account for part of the great power of this novel.

But this is not the only point of style in which Fathers and Children excels. Because the novel is intensely dramatic, seeming, in fact, to be in the form of an extended closet-drama, Turgenev does not describe the actions of his characters by means of similes. He chooses, rather than to tell the reader what kind of actions the characters perform, to describe the action in such a manner that the reader arrives at his own classification of the action. The actions of Sitnikov could be described as parasitic, fawning, or like those of a jackal following a lion. Turgenev does not use such a description. He prefers to show Sitnikov hopping across the gutter, hurriedly pulling off his over-elegant gloves--smirking and fawning about Bazarov.¹⁷ In short, he does not plant a preconceived judgement of an action or character in the reader's mind. He leaves the reader to judge the thing on its own merits. As a result of this subtle method, the reader is probably never aware of being guided in his judgements. That this technique goes unnoticed is another application of the principle that the greatest art is the art that conceals art.

But Fathers and Children is not lacking in figures. More than once Bazarov drops easily quoted metaphors. As he defines his position in regard to nature he says, "Nature's not a

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 108-110.

temple, but a workshop, and man's the workman in it."¹⁸ This definition might be taken as apt for the scientific spirit. At any rate, it is a beautifully turned definition of Bazarov's position. Also quotable is Bazarov's remark to Mme. Odintsov, "Death's an old joke, but it comes fresh to everyone."¹⁹ Such a remark seems especially well turned as it comes from the mouth of the still cynical, dying Bazarov.

If it is possible to judge poetic qualities through translation, then Smoke will not be found lacking in these qualities. In the opening scene there seems even to be a coordination of sound and sense. The objects of nature are described by words which have a smooth restful sound. The mountains are described as having an "undulating outline," the city is "basking in the rays of the kindly sunshine," and birds move in spring with "light fluttering," on "rainbow tinted wings." In contrast, the sounds which describe the people thronging about are hard and crisp. Even here, there is a progression as the description moves from "the sparks of gold and steel," to the "guttural snapping of French jargon."²⁰ Here again, though much may have been lost in translation, there is unmistakable style in what remains.

In this novel, Turgenev returns to the similes for which he felt no need in Fathers and Children. These figures are appropriate, however, and sometimes exceedingly vivid, as

¹⁸Ibid., p. 72.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 347.

²⁰Turgenev, Smoke, p. 1.

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when he describes the Princess Annette, who, "would have been perfectly captivating, if the simple village washer-woman had not suddenly peeped out in her at times, like a smell of cabbage wafted across the most delicate perfume . . ."21

Another example of his graphic use of similes is his reference to Metrona Semyonova as "a lady of about fifty, . . . with an excessively mobile face almost as yellow as a lemon . . ."22

The yellow of the lemon is appropriate, for every reader is familiar with lemons, and their deep pores and glossy surfaces are connotations which almost invariably follow. Turgenev's satire is only slightly more open as it applies to the disgusting Gubaryov, of whom Turgenev speaks as walking "as though he were trying to slink along unseen."23

In all of his novels, Turgenev seldom resorts to heavy satire or, more properly, open ridicule. He says of General Ratmirov: "His father was the natural . . . what do you suppose? You are not wrong--but we didn't mean to say that . . . the natural son of an illustrious personage . . ."24

This is the only point at which Turgenev employs any form of low or heavy handed humor. Otherwise his touch is light and much more penetrating, as when he describes the Princess Babette as the woman in whose arms Chopin died, following immediately

21 Ibid., p. 5.
22 Ibid., p. 17.
23 Ibid., p. 17.
24 Ibid., p. 97.

with the parenthetical remark: "(the women in Europe in whose arms he expired are to be reckoned in the thousands)." This lighter touch is characteristic of the man who hates extremes.

Rivaling even Bazarov's death scene, the scene from Smoke, as Litvinov leaves Baden-Baden, shows the hand of the master whose style is sure. The entire scene is depicted by "stream-of-consciousness" technique so much employed by present-day writers. The image of the smoke, as it becomes a symbol of Litvinov's frustration, is so appropriate that it would probably not disappoint the exacting Horace. Then too, if the poetic effect may be judged through translation, the sentences seem to flow and pause in an irregular undulating rhythm not unlike the movement of the smoke itself.

The wind blew facing the train; whitish clouds of steam, some singly, others mingled with other darker clouds of smoke, whirled in endless file past the window at which Litvinov was sitting. He began to watch this steam, this smoke. Incessantly mounting, rising, and falling, twisting and hooking onto the grass, to the bushes as though in sportive antics, lengthening out, and hiding away, clouds upon clouds flow by . . .²⁵

In this fragment the varied length of the phrases and the clauses gives one the sensation of the varied degrees of movement in the smoke while the varied weights of the pauses seem to indicate the shifting of the smoke. Though in this novel Turgenev has, perhaps, passed his greatest power, yet there is no diminution on the quality of the styles.

The first volume of Virgin Soil evidences the strange mixture of Turgenev's beginning decline and his otherwise

²⁵Ibid., pp. 19-20.

masterful style. Perhaps he is beginning to feel the influence of the young French naturalists, for he uses more animalistic figures in this novel than in his other novels. Ostrodanov wondering about Paklin's loyalty thinks, "He's such a slippery eel!"²⁶ Golushkin's new convert to the cause, shown always as thoroughly repulsive, is described as having a "fozy face and consumptive appearance"²⁷; and Paklin, as he is questioned by Sipyagin, feels "himself a wretched trapped little creature."²⁸ Yet Turgenev does not give his characters traits belonging to animals but traits similar to those of animals. The distinction is fine, yet this point of style is important as it develops his hope for man.

Yet Turgenev is more adept in the use of figures drawn from the life of man. Paklin describes Skoropihin, an aristocratic critic applauded by the censors:

"He's forever boiling over and frothing, for all the world like a bottle of bad sour kvas . . . The waiter, as he runs, holds it down with his finger instead of a cork, a fat raisin sticks in the neck--it goes on bubbling and hissing--and when once all the foam's flown out of it, all that's left at the bottom is a few drops of villainous sour stuff, which quenches no one's thirst, but only gives one a stomach-ache!"²⁹

The vituperative spewing of a false critic could hardly be expressed more aptly, for, skimming off the false knowledge, what remains of the works of such a man but a small residue of caustic wit?

²⁶Turgenev, Virgin Soil, Vol. I, p. 13.

²⁷Ibid., Vol. I, p. 13.

²⁸Ibid., Vol. II, p. 202.

²⁹Ibid., Vol. I, p. 22.

Poetic feeling is also present in Virgin Soil. As Heshdanov and Marianna walk back to the house, the evening is beautiful, and "the young grass caressed their feet."³⁰ The initial description of the Sipyagin estate also shows this poetic quality:

The whole garden was in the tender green of its first spring foliage; there was no sound yet of the loud summer buzz of insects; the young leaves twittered, and chaffinches were singing somewhere, and two doves cooed continually in the same tree, and a solitary cuckoo called, shifting her place at each note; and from the distance beyond the mill-pond came the caw in chorus of the rocks, like the creaking of innumerable cart wheels. And over all this fresh, secluded, peaceful life the white clouds floated softly, with swelling bosoms like great lazy birds.³¹

There are beautifully chosen similes in this passage, but more important is the manner in which both the objects described and the movement of the sentences contribute to the lazy, peaceful feeling of the passage. The sentences are long and graceful of movement, showing both sifting of detail and a feeling of slow movement. Each object described is an object whose connotation is quietly restful. Thus three poetic devices are combined subtly to produce one effect.

The subtlety of Turgenev's style causes it to pass largely unnoticed. For this reason it does not detract from the power of the novel by drawing away attention from the central theme. Stylistic beauty for its own sake is not Turgenev's goal. His style is important only as it contributes to the power of the novel as a whole.

³⁰Ibid.; Vol. II, p. 29.

³¹Ibid.; Vol. I, p. 73.

CHAPTER VI

THE TOTAL EFFECT

Joseph Conrad's preface to The Higger of the Narcissus is probably the best comment on craftsmanship in the novel. Conrad begins his preface with the statement:

A work that aspires, however humbly, to the condition of art should carry its justification in every line. And art itself may be defined as a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect.¹

The mature work of Ivan Turgenev carries "its justification in every line," for every branch of his craftsmanship contributes to the total effect he seeks to produce. The novels of Turgenev are intensely dramatic studies done, not in black and white, but in varied shades of grey.

Turgenev's style is the root out of which all the branches of his craftsmanship grow. It is a style always suited to the occasion. If an ugly scene or character is to be described, short, terse sentences and words of ugly connotations are used. If a beautiful scene is to be described, his richly poetic nature flows forth to meet the occasion. Turgenev's poetic nature, however, never overflows. He would rather emphasize by understatement than drown his logic in the profusion of his words. In like manner, his entire style comes into play only as it contributes to the shapely growth of the other branches of craftsmanship.

¹p. xi.

The great central trunk of Turgenev's craftsmanship, upon which all the other branches depend for support, is plot. His plots are tightly knit, intensely dramatic units composed of incidents in causal relationship to each other so that the final incident seems to result necessarily from the first. Within this structure the prime consideration is given to the actions of the characters as they contribute to the working out of plot. For this reason, plot and character are closely knit in the total growth.

Turgenev's characters are intensely vivid particularized universals. The minor characters seem as real as the major characters but are held in check as they perform greater or lesser portions of the total action. Bazarov, probably Turgenev's greatest creation, dominates an entire action by the force of his character, yet he is no more vital than Lavretzky's ancient butler, Anton, whose actions are related in but a few short paragraphs of A Nobleman's Nest. The characters, weak and strong, are all vital, beautifully formed, and amply motivated. They contribute to the beauty of the organism, but they are never present for the sake of beauty alone. They are both useful and beautiful.

Turgenev's setting lends credibility and reality to the total organism as it is always in keeping with the characters and their action. Just as appropriate is the atmosphere, which grows out of the setting. Powerful factors in Turgenev's use of atmosphere are his use of superfluous detail and the technique known as "making-it-strange."

But the branches of Turgenev's craftsmanship do not grow in all directions in the manner of the scraggly oak. Like the cedar, they grow from their firm footing, closely knit, achieving symmetry. Because of this nearly perfect craftsmanship, it is but natural to wonder why Turgenev's works have not enjoyed greater popularity. Writing to Edward Garnett, Conrad answers:

For you know very well, my dear Edward, that if you had Antinous himself in a booth of the world's-fair, and killed yourself in protesting that his soul was as perfect as his body, you wouldn't get one per cent of the crowd struggling next door for a sight of the Double-headed nightingale or of some weak-kneed giant grinning through a horse collar.²

²Conrad, Turgenev, p. x.

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