

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

GÉZA KOCSIS

LIBERATION STORIES IN TURGENEV'S SHORT STORY

ENTITLED *SPRING TORRENTS*

The Forms of the Rewriting of Ancient Heritage
in the Process of Culture

Budapest

2011

I. The liberation story and the rewriting of ancient texts

In the dissertation entitled *Liberation Stories in Turgenev's Short Story Entitled Spring Torrents: the Forms of the Rewriting of Ancient Heritage in the Process of Culture*, what we are looking for in the widest sense is the answer to the following question: 'In what ways can we read *Spring Torrents*'? Character representation, plot development, the evolving meaning of these two in the intertextual network and the poetic projecting of this meaning upon the phenomenon of the literary archetype indicate the starting points for our manner of reading Turgenev's work. From putting a series of these questions results the emphasizing of problems of genre from which the genre-historical, and in a wider sense the culture-historical point of view is inseparable in Turgenev's short story. This is why we analyze the storytelling that can be found in the text from two viewpoints, treating it as a narratological question on the one hand, and aspiring to identify Turgenev's poetically formulating model of the history of culture, on the other hand. Covering all these areas, we search for explanations that can disclose us both the most general description of human fate based on the world view that can be resolved by *Spring Torrents*, and at the same time the identification of how the literary text becomes part of the cultural tradition. According to our interpretation, the fate of the protagonist of Turgenev's work represents the fate of the work itself set and designated in the process of culture.

Thus, the above-mentioned world view that can be unraveled from *Spring Torrents* appears to us as Turgenev's concept of culture.

The elaboration of the *liberation* stories that can be found in *Spring Torrents*, designated as the title of the dissertation, serves as a guiding principle to the interpretation. We think that these stories can be captured along the following points: 1. the intertextually determined literary representation of *the hero escaping from confinement* in the character portrayal of the short story and the development of the story of the such depicted hero in the plot and the intertextual semantic *sjuzhet*; 2. the narratability of the thus created story with the examination of narrative poetics; 3. the coherent cultural (literary, musical) tradition appearing in the texts carried by the characters of the intertexts that puts the relatedness of certain texts in the history of culture and their arrangement into paradigms into semantic focus in Turgenev's work; 4. the interaction of these cultural traditions and their building on each other. As a result, the aim of this interpretation lies in its defining all that Turgenev's *Spring Torrents* tells about the cultural process and the place of the work in this process, taking into consideration the analyses of Turgenev's detailed character typology, intertextuality, narrative poetics and the delineation of the interaction of cultures. The problem of the "rewriting" of the cultural heritage, appearing in the title of the dissertation, expresses the aspiration to clarify the approach of this question.

At the same time, the title refers to the cultural heritage as *ancient* heritage, which needs to be clarified, too. There is actually a concrete, ancient literary text that can be linked to ancient Roman literature and which becomes the centre of the dissertation: Virgil's *Aeneid*. In the dissertation we analyze *Aeneid*'s turning into intertext in three important areas among the several approaches mentioned above: character roles, the story evolving in the intertext and the intertextual character of narrative poetics. The first two poetical aspects recalls the theme of Dido and Aeneas's love (personal fate) in *Spring Torrents*, including the sphere of thought of the *own* and the *foreign* land, associated with that of the *own* and *foreign* customs and cultures. However, these topics not only address problems related to heroes and their story, but in Turgenev's short story they connect with the complexly composed problem of *national identity* that unfolds as *national characterology* in the realm of the plot (cf. Russian, Italian, German character), and as a question of *national culture* on a much more abstract semantic level. The aforementioned narrative poetic aspect is linked to the definition of *national culture*. On the first level, *Aeneid*'s presence in the narrative system of Turgenev's short story can be seen in the parallel emerging from the remembrance process unraveled from the sensing of the visual sign: this is partly linked to Sanin's remembrance process and partly unfolds in an associative way in Aeneas's narration in Books II-III. of *Aeneid*. On another level, the question of the personal fate embedded in the story of Dido and

Aeneas (also related to the question of *own* and *foreign*) is rewritten in *Spring Torrents* in different versions and intertexts. These, as we have already mentioned, reflect the Turgenevian view which suggests that the text of *Spring Torrents* interprets culture as a process. In this context we perceive *Aeneid* itself as a text being rewritten (strictly within Turgenev's work), for instance when the text of *Aeneid* is placed next to the biblical story of Ruth in the narration. At the same time, *Divine Comedy*, which also appears as an intertext, is to be interpreted as a work that is related to *Aeneid*, reinterpreting Virgil's work.

The other significant source of Turgenev's work that builds from the ancient "heritage" is the archaic Roman comedy. However, comedy can not be captured in *Spring Torrents* as a concrete text but as an evoked *tradition*, i.e. we are speaking about a cultural reference that is a characteristic of a specified text corpus. Its borders are marked by Turgenev's text. Thus, the intertextual poetic procedure is entirely different in this case. In the dissertation we analyze the development methods of the thus defined intertext and also how cultural – literary and musical – works that rewrite the corresponding genre tradition become intertexts. It involves actively evoking *commedia dell'arte* within *Spring Torrents* and emphasizing the comic operas that are based on such types of stories. This is why the necessity emerges to carefully observe the phenomenon of musical intertextuality besides literal intertextuality. Turgenev himself "rewrites" the figures and

motifs of *commedia dell'arte* in a very peculiar way but he does so even more extensively in the case of the typical characteristics of the figures of archaic Roman comedy. We present in detail how these characteristics are conveyed to the heroes of the short story and also how all this connects again with the poetic question of character typology that can also be found in the aforementioned national characterological matter (cf. *own* and *foreign* land as *own* and *foreign* culture) via the intertextual elaboration of *Aeneid*.

We identify the dramatic tradition marked out by the tragedies that elaborate the story of Clytemnestra as the third large domain of the ancient heritage represented in *Spring Torrents*. This tradition is related to Virgil's *Aeneid* via the myth that serves as its basis, but on the other hand, its method of evocation is closely connected to the intertextual representation of archaic Roman comedy. The evocation of the dramatic tradition in the field of the comic intertext puts the question of genre in the centre of interpretation; the motif of domestic fate exposed in the story of Clytemnestra leads back to the problem of the *own* and the *foreign*. Consequently, these are the major text corpuses and concrete artistic texts of ancient literature that are presented to us as intertextual rewritings in Turgenev's analyzed short story, emphasizing the problems of interpreting character typology, story type and storytelling, genre and culture. We can talk about intertextual rewriting in these cases. However, it is such a rewriting that at the same time historically refers the ancient intertexts to one

another, moreover, it draws into their orbit earlier and later texts that fall outside of antiquity like The Bible or Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Therefore we can also think of rewritings within the intertextual system.

All of the ancient intertexts mentioned so far and those that are extended in accordance with the methods shown above can be somehow related to the "liberation" stories. However, in relation to antiquity, the problem of the definability of these stories also needs to be explained. What we are talking about is that the *inclusa* (the confined woman waiting to be liberated) can also be interpreted as an archetype, a character that on the authority of Northrop Frye we identify as a figure of *myth* (in the dissertation the term *mythos* is used). We show that the first literary identifiability of the archetype is related to ancient literature (including mythical representations). In this sense, antiquity is always an indirect reference when we analyze the character of the *inclusa* in the different intertexts.

This way the dissertation pays attention to antiquity in two different approaches: on the one hand we are speculating from the direction of the plot conceptualised as a plot existing before any genre construction and determined by the archetype, and here we can think of the mediatory role of antiquity. On the other hand we analyze texts and text corpuses that specifically recall genres and genre traditions. Both sources are essential parts of Turgenev's intertextual "work" regarding antiquity and at the same time they are essential to the expression of

his poetic opinion about the continuity of culture. However, the *inclusa* as an archetype undergoes a major change, the character of the *confined woman* waiting to be liberated is metamorphosed on more levels in *Spring Torrents*, thus can the *inclusa* correspond to the character of the *confined man* (see Sanin, Pantaleone, Klüber), and to more abstract notions as well that are no longer construed at the interpretation level of the plot. The elaboration of the concept of *confined text* belongs here, which is associated with the notions of opening the *confined culture* and continuously liberating the *own* and *foreign* texts (by these meaning culture) from each other. This “*deliberance*” unfolds as a process.

II. The structure of the dissertation

1. Intertextuality and genre poetics

In the first chapter of the dissertation the logical course of development is determined by the fact that we are pointing out two types of literary text connection forms in Turgenev’s short story: 1. the embeddedness of *Spring Torrents* in certain literary-genre traditions (interpreting it in a wider sense we are talking about a genre-poetic question); 2. the intertextual relationship of *Spring Torrents* with concrete literary works. Turgenev’s work ties back both types of textual reference semantically to the story of the *confined* woman, so in

his work he lets us see the *inclusa*-story in the process of culture in a way that he both evokes concrete works of art and the representation and genre traditions belonging to them. We explore the forms of appearance of these evocations in this chapter, showing the poetic methods through which these aforementioned two types of reference forms come into existence, and at the same time we give an interpretation of these methods in the form of poetic analysis that contributes to the exploration of the meaning domain of the short story. We connect the problem of intertextuality and genre poetics with the matter of character roles and story types by also defining the intertextual relations that come into existence between the texts and the traditions. To be more precise, under the term “tradition” we mean such cultural traditions that can be identified as a certain representation paradigm and that can be well circumscribed as its versions. Here belongs the *commedia dell’arte*-type of text that we have already mentioned before and that continues its existence in the Beaumarchaisan comedy (*Spring Torrents* gives reference to this latter version as well when *The Barber of Seville* is mentioned), or the corpus of the tragedies that adapts Clytemnestra’s story.

The *inclusa*-story identified by plot signal offers a possibility to reinterpret Gemma’s abandoning as *the freeing of the confined woman from an unwanted marriage*. Starting from this fact let us explore the different modellings of the motifs of *confinement* in the story of the Gemma-love in the first part of *Spring Torrents*, and let us interpret the

motif in its more abstract sense that we identify as *confinement* in the individual *plot situations*. The dissertation points out that the forms of appearance of the confinement projected upon the characters are remarkably diversified in Turgenev's work; among these versions, apart from the story of the *confined woman*, we will deal with the presentation of the character of the *boastful hero* (aladzon) in detail.

In light of all the above, starting from a poetic procedure in *Spring Torrents* that evokes the European tradition, we elaborate the interpretation of the narration through individual heroes (cf. Pantaleone) or certain narrative poetic means (cf. "theatrical scene"-like episodes) by presenting the comic tradition, and within it, by analyzing the heroes of ancient Roman comedy as types that form the basis of literary tradition. We examine the characteristics of these heroes, and during the exploration of intertextual character representation we point out that identification is polysemantic in every case: the characteristics of a given comic hero type can be found in the representation of more heroes of *Spring Torrents*. And vice versa, the heroes of Turgenev's work assume the characteristics of other comedy types from time to time. After this we approach the tragic intertexts that are being formed on the ground of comic intertexts, and within these, the works that adapt Clytemnestra's story. In the course of pointing out the character parallels we similarly find that alike the comic types, the characters of the Clytemnestra-story cannot be unambiguously identified with the heroes of *Spring Torrents*, either.

In the following part we mention the scale of values that by means of the analyzed dramatic traditions become significant in Turgenev's work as well. We show how the appearance of the Saturnalian scale of values that are closely connected to the archaic Roman comedy, and the polysemantic parallels that develop with the characters of the Clytemnestra-story make the moral judgability of Sanin's actions together with the moral evaluation of the plot of *Spring Torrents* unsure.

In light of the above defined principles we describe the intertextual practice of the short story that results in the transformation of the analyzed texts and traditions into intertexts. Since relying on Northrop Frye we call the story that can be tied to the character of the *inclusa* by which we mean archetype as *myth/mythos*, based on this we describe the presented method of appearance as *mythos-transformation*. We define this concept as the involvement of the plot existing before any type of genre construction and tied to the archetypal character into the intertextual space. Consequently, we designate the representation of the tragic tradition realized in front of a comic background, i.e. the procedure that a text – in the wider sense of the word – becomes an intertext itself based on an already constitutionalized intertext, with the term *secondary intertextuality*.

Then we turn to analyzing the Biblical intertexts in *Spring Torrents*. After identifying the signals originating from the Book of Ruth we point out that the development of the intertext at the same

time gives a possibility to project the two love stories on each other, and within it also the characters of the two female protagonists, Gemma and Polozova. Related to Ruth's story, we undo the Turgenevian representation of the relationships between *own* and *foreign*. In connection with Benediktov's poem *Dance*, the pretext recalling the description of Saint John the Baptist's death, we call the attention to the interpretability of the story initiated in *Spring Torrents* in the context of the tragically ending love; moreover, we emphasize that the intertextual poetic procedure that can be captured here can also be described with the term *secondary intertextuality*.

We analyse the "Virgilian" character roles of Turgenev's heroes in the course of the interpretation of Virgil's *Aeneid* as an intertext of *Spring Torrents* by using the method already applied in the case of the identification of intertextual character types. We particularly touch upon the intertextual processes that create meaning and give special content to Sanin's remembrance and this way to the establishment of the entire narrative text. Based on this we declare that polysemantic character identifications of more aspects can be observed in *Spring Torrents* in this case as well. Once more it proves that Turgenev ties intertextual semantics not primarily to character roles but much rather to stories, moreover, to methods of storytelling. If we take the *inclusa*-motifs and *sjuzhet development* in the *Aeneid*-intertext we can emphasize the following: by forcing Sanin into Aeneas's role with the help of her magic power, Polozova *confines* the hero into a certain

character role or plot situation, by this determinating the story of their love. The love story of Dido and Aeneas, a story that is tied to a character role like this encourages the interpretation of the intertext in the context of the intervention of ethereal powers. We point to the representation of the relationship between *own* and *foreign* (already approached via Ruth's story) in *Spring Torrents* as a Turgenevian reconsideration of the conflict between *earthly* and *unearthly*.

2. Narrative modes in the mirror of intertextuality

A special aspect of the poetics of the short story, the artistic relations of intertextuality and narration form the subject matter of the second chapter of the dissertation. First we return to the characteristics of the frame story of *Spring Torrents*, further analyzing the narrative situation already defined in relation to the *inclusa*-story that we connect with the process of the birth of the text. We understand the establishment of the narrative text as the liberation of the past from the captivity of memory, assuming harmony between the inner, depicted liberation stories and the poetic self-reflexion of Turgenev's short story. It is within the frame of this where the work of art speaks about the process of its birth and the characteristics of its textuality. Aeneas's narration also emerges in this sphere of, thought so the problem of the birth of the narration and the text is indeed an intertextual matter. According to our viewpoint, the act of remembrance – which pertains to the plot and the text itself – simultaneously becomes the plotlike

signal of *freeing* and *text creation*, and the remembrance represented in the frame story at the same time gives information about text creation as a cultural process. The story of the *travelling hero* and the identification of the signs referring to Goethe's art offer a possibility for the interpretation of how the Turgenevian rewriting of the tradition of the *Bildungsroman* takes place. Beyond analysing the *Aeneid*-intertext we pay attention to the phenomena of first and third person narration in this relation as well. We point out that with the involvement of biographical elements a genre intertext arises that can be captured on the level of narration. The evoked texts, *Aeneid* and *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* are suitable for creating and preserving the ambivalence that refers to the character of the hero and the narrator and their competence in storytelling and story creation. Genre intertextuality forms a relation with the modality of the narration which is also supported by the ironic reinterpretation of the genre and the comic narrative manner.

3. National culture as a tradition

In the third chapter of the dissertation we explore Turgenev's poetic procedure during which the cultural tradition is outlined in the intertextual network of *Spring Torrents* from the individual intertexts. In the course of the interpretation we present how through the representation of Italian opera excerpts (Rossini's *Otello* and Cimarosa's comic opera entitled *Il matrimonio segreto*) the receptive

reactions from the 19th century that pertain to these works become part of Turgenev's text. We explore that by actualizing these aspects of the history of reception, in Turgenev's work the separate works of art become arranged in a row that can be interpreted both in a genre- and culture-historical context. The indicative sign that appears in the context of the evocation of the genre tied to the nation (Italian opera) – this involves Dante's art into *Spring Torrents* – gives a possibility to understand the opera as part of a national cultural tradition which is determined by language in the field of literary intertextuality. Besides this we interpret the transformation of *Divine Comedy* into an intertext in a way that we explore the personal fate of the hero in the connections of the evolution of the literary text by projecting it upon *Aeneid*, a work that can be defined as the pretext of the intertext.

Taking into consideration this evocation manner of the Italian cultural tradition, we turn to the German cultural tradition that can be explored in *Spring Torrents*. We contemplate about the involvement of Weber's opera entitled *Der Freischütz* into the intertextual network also in light of the 19th century cultural reception (the writings of Richard Wagner and Heinrich Heine). We point out that the authenticity of *understanding* that becomes ambiguous on the level of the heroes' competence in Turgenev's short story determines the interpretation of this work in a way that it emphasizes the problem whether the literary work can be finished or closed.

Above all this, we explore the similarities that can be found in the representation of the individual national traditions: in this sense we identify the evocation manner of the Russian romance as a *metatextual mise en abyme*. By this we mean that in the complex system of intertextual relations a particular metatext is established that represents high abstraction considerably relying on the preliminary knowledge of the recipient, providing information about the operation of the intertextual network itself in a concentrated way.

4. Character typology and culture representation

The character typology of *Spring Torrents* and the culture representation that is based on it give the subject-matter of the fourth chapter. In the field of the character representation of the short story we deal prominently with the representations of the relationship between *own* and *foreign* that are based on nation characterology. We present how the intertextual network that is developed in Turgenev's work gives way to the interpretation of this relationship by representing the opposition *earthly* vs. *unearthly*. We throw light on the fact that Sanin's meeting with the female figures who are in contact with unearthly powers (in the plot of the narrated story), which can be interpreted in the time scale of the protagonist's remembrance process as a reunion that occurs during the visit to the inferno, takes on the characteristics of a kind of initiation ceremony. Sanin becomes capable

of becoming a creative artist due to his relationship with the supernatural after he himself had also received the unearthly knowledge.

Projecting the motif of confinement upon culture representation we state that Pantaleone's "confinement" into the Italian language is reinterpreted as the confinement of Italian culture into the character of the hero; the depiction of the short story's German heroes and the representation of the German works of art in a medium with a seemingly low status can be seen as the "capturing" of this tradition on the axiological level. From this viewpoint, *Spring Torrents* liberates these traditions from confinement by creating the narrated story and wide-rangingly involving the different cultural traditions (the procedure that we call secondary intertextuality plays a significant role in this). In this context we identify Sanin as a literary character constituted in *Spring Torrents*, who – via his life story and its evocation – appears to us as a key character of both the liberation of national traditions that are confined in themselves and the creative further writing and rewriting of these traditions. In this sense he is the *liberating hero* who is no longer interpreted in his role of action but as a literary construction through which the text interprets the concepts of confinement and liberation that belong to the *process of culture*.

III. Conclusions and summary

The intertextual network of *Spring Torrents* examined in the dissertation gives a possibility for us to explore the semantic sjuzhet of “*crime – purification – salvation*” in the short story, thus Gemma’s abandonment and seeing her again makes sense as *the liberation from sin*, and in the context of the Bible, redemption from the original sin. In this connection, the act of remembrance can be interpreted as *remorse* and *purification*, while the creation of the story of the past as *penitance*. The *absolution* achieved owing to this is followed by *salvation* – thus Sanin’s American journey placed in the future beyond the plot becomes *the entrance into eternal life*. In the context of the liberation of cultural traditions and their creative reinterpretation, starting the hero of the short story on such a journey into the *new life* that can be interpreted as the realm of eternal life means at the same time that it is via this that *Spring Torrents* takes its place in *eternal life* (understood in the realm of cultural traditions). In this connection we have the possibility to define the *inclusa* as a *culture interpreting metaphor*. In *Spring Torrents*, the appearance of the character of the *confined woman*, the recollection of the stories belonging to her are reinterpreted due to the intertextual network in a way that the *confinement*, the motif carried by the character also pertains to the cultural traditions represented in Turgenev’s work. According to this, the text conveys information about the mode of culture representation

as well. At the same time it means that the motif is metaphorized on the level of the metatext. The confinement and the liberation will hold true for *Spring Torrents* itself as a work of art and a text of culture (and for the culture representation realized in this text) in a way that the work reveals the poetic sense of its intertextual practice at the same time. It reveals that the intertextual practice is equivalent to the liberation of the confined cultural traditions. On the other hand, it also results from all this that it is Turgenev’s culture-historical conception that develops in *Spring Torrents* since in the course of culture representation it points to the historicity of culture.

What Turgenev evokes from culture (literature, music, fine arts) and interprets in its culture-historical dimension (text variations, genre variations, style register variations, variations of writing, performance and reception) is connected with the national cultural tradition that is *determined by language* through Pantalone’s character. In *Spring Torrents*, the character of the hero who is confined into culture interpreted through language is what sets into play the problem of adequate language use that fits into the content of the message. In the short story it enters a literature- and culture-historical context by the evocation of Dante’s work entitled *The New Life*.

In the sense of all this, from the *inclusa*-character and the corresponding “liberation” stories (which appear in the widest possible context of culture understanding, in newer and newer sjuzhet variations in *Spring Torrents*) we have arrived at such a metaphorization of

character and story that really reflects Turgenev's cultural view. The archetypal being of the "liberation" story, which is presented in the short story, makes it possible for the texts that can be understood as different forms of representation of this story to enter *Spring Torrents* as intertexts; and also it makes possible that the texts representing the variations of the archetypal sjuzhet give a model of the functioning of culture by again being arranged on the level of metaphorization.