

I. The subject of the research

Broadly speaking, the treatise aims to research the poetics of Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev's prose. The writer's thinking related to the poetics of the novel is approached through the study of his novel, *On the Eve*. The dissertation provides a monographic description of this work. Turgenev's visual artistic thinking is illuminated as the most prominent approach of the interpretation. The object of investigation is that feature of Turgenev's method of creation through which visual representation assumes a cardinal role in the novel *On the Eve*. A consistent and varying application of very rich visual representation forms can be observed in a text that is at the same time relatively poor in events. Among these the pictorial forming of several scenes can be mentioned. By pictorial forming we mean that in certain scenes works of art and types of picture, well known from the history of painting (and of sculpting), are evoked, and genres of painting can be identified. The portrait, the self-portrait, the "*vanitas* still life" and the "artist in the workshop" types of picture belong to this group. By his descriptions Turgenev forms artistic works belonging to the above mentioned genres almost in front of our eyes; he does so by writing them into the modes of representation materialized in the text of the novel. These cases do not manifest an ekphrasis in the traditional sense of the word, since they do not represent translations or descriptions of images, but embody images created in the narrative, being the intensive coming about of images, not accompanied by thematic denotations. The representations concerning factual and fictive works of art in the novel are dealt with separately. For instance, the "*vanity* still life", which is recognised by the reader but left unacknowledged by the narrator or the heroes (e.g.: Elena's farewell to her life, when she arrives at the thought of the vanity of life by looking around herself and seeing all her objects) should be distinguished from Shubin's sculptures as artefacts represented as objects in the action, or from other pictures or sculptures cited in other works of Turgenev's (e.g. *La Fornarina* by Raffaello Santi, or *Ariadne on the Panther* by Johann Heinrich Dannecker). These examples in themselves reflect how typically and recurrently the art of Turgenev is featured by what can be drawn into the category of "visual way of artistic thinking" or "visual poetics". Hence, when considering and interpreting Turgenev's process of creating a novel, it seems justified to emphasize this poetic method in his work. The approach of this mode of representation is pointed out as the methodological basis in the dissertation by way of presenting the necessity of its identification and description.

Beyond the artistic materialization of visual representations it is similarly important to analyse that "seeing", as the perception of the world, and "making someone see an object", as a way of demonstration, comprise an unavoidable set of questions. We can evaluate the importance of all

this mainly as a result of how the heroes, the narrator and of course the reader himself get involved into the process of looking and seeing (and making someone see an object). As if the heroes' and the narrator's act of looking and seeing were in a prominent position in Turgenev's prose during the processes of understanding the world along with visual contemplation and the passing on of the results of comprehension. The main and supporting characters of *On the Eve*, almost without any exception, all possess the faculty of visual internalisation, interpretation and transmission. On the one hand, the levels (and modes) of seeing are distinguished in separate chapters of the dissertation, and attention is paid to how such a relatively background character like Uvar Ivanovitch can become the substrate of themes, such as contemplation, looking, seeing, and how Turgenev can articulate the question of visibility through him. Simultaneously, it becomes an interesting experience that although the above mentioned examples testify that the poetic and visual way of thinking is present in many of Turgenev's characters, in *On the Eve* this kind of text-forming method seems to result in the creation of a new type of hero. Here we primarily do not mean that Insarov's origins, ambitions or his whole career would determine him to realize some sort of "revolutionary act" – like a huge part of the relevant literature interprets his character –, but that the novelty achieved through Insarov's figure lies in the context of the novel's visual poetics. The novel *On the Eve* draws Insarov's figure into the structure of the emblem of fine arts, which means that the representation of the character is bound to the composition of emblem texts known for centuries from the history of arts – either literature or fine arts. In our opinion such forming of Insarov's character, which is in accordance with the modes of visual representation, results in the novelty of the character which makes him as a figure endowed, with the attribute of the "heroic", emblematic in its poetic sign nature. This coincides with the fact usually left without interpretation in critical literature, that the book's female protagonist, Elena also embodies an emblematic figure. This character becomes defined and elevated to the significance of Insarov's figure due to the novel's visual poetics.

II. Approach and method

To this day no comprehensive work on the poetics of Turgenev's fiction has been written with the main ambition to reveal the characteristic forms of Turgenev's visual poetics. By opting the novel *On the Eve* as the main sample of this kind of poetics, the dissertation aims to fill this void. The rich visual artistic way of thinking, so typical of Turgenev, will be presented this way. Seemingly we investigate into the theme from different points of view, as the analysis of the structure of the emblem, the examination of topography as landscape painting, the emphasis put on of the vanity

theme including the interpretation of "*vanitas* still lifes", the application of mythological parallels and the observation of verbally constructed sculptures in the novel can all be found among the approaches the argument is based on. These approaches are expanded in detail chapter by chapter in the treatise. When evaluating the different approaches, we conclude the presence of visual poetics every time. Special mention must be made about the chapter of the treatise in which mythological parallels are revealed. The methodological argument of this is, that the two protagonists of the novel, their main characteristic features, attributes, and the development of their fate can be compared to some mythological characters which are general characters in a special type of picture, *The girl with a unicorn*. The Indian myth (the story of Savitri) functions as a *subscriptio*, or explanatory text, in the emblem structure based on the analogy of the hero's fate with the myth shows in Elena the spouse still faithful, even after the death of her lover. Besides the connection established in our analysis between the mythopoetic and the visual description in Turgenev's novel, we bring the mythological figures of Mars and Venus into the novel's interpretation.

Our aim is to reformulate traditional questions in line with new approaches. Regarding topography, for example, scientific literature emphasizes how sensitively, how much in a realistic and visual way Turgenev composes his landscapes as ornaments in the novel, or as accompaniments of the characters' mood. The present treatise examines one of the most emphasized scene of the novel, which includes topography (excursion to Tsaritsino) as a landscape, functioning as a picture enclosed into a frame of action. With the help of this landscape, we shall map out similarities between Turgenev's method of text creation and a prominent romanticist's, Caspar David Friedrich's method of image creation.

We mention the theme of the void and vanity as an illuminating example, which is somehow peculiar to almost all of the novel's characters only except for the main hero and the heroine, whose visual observations made in the plot events involve the world of "*vanitas* still lifes" into the interpretation. The role of this still life type in the history of art was to reveal the objects of human richness, knowledge, wealth before the viewer, which objects, however, also fall victim to transience. Elena's observations of objects emphasize emptiness and transience in this context – "samovar on the table, and Uvar Ivanovitch's short waistcoat, and Zoya's polished finger-nails, and the portrait in oils of the Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovitch on the wall"¹ – or Elena's thought about, "What are they living for?" functions as explanations of vanity.

We consider as the most important achievement of the treatise that we reveal function of the emblem structure constructed in the novel, interpreting it in the context of the history of fine arts,

¹ All of the quotations of the Turgenev's novel, *On the Eve* are given from eBooks@Adelaide, 2010. Translated from the Russian by Constance Garnett. Loaded: 2012. 10. 22.

and we observe the character of the main hero, Insarov, from this angle. Moreover, we attribute compositional function to the fictive artefacts in the novel (Shubin's sculptures), which constitute a visual train of thought by the end of the novel shown in the third chapter of our treatise re-evaluating the role of Elena Stahova, the heroine of *On the Eve*.

We establish the whole visual poetical sphere of thought in the treatise's chapter taking into account the important achievements reflected in scientific literature, on the one hand, by completing the discussion of the main spheres of questions so typical of Turgenev's work (e.g. the character of the hero, metaphorisation, mythopoetics – M. Gershenzon, L. V. Pumpyansky, A. G. Ceytlin, V. M. Markovich, J. M. Lotman, V. N. Toporov, István Hetesi) with the presentation of some of the classical interpretations of the novel, *On the Eve* (see: N. A. Dobroljubov, G. Byaly, J. B. Woodward, István Fried); on the other hand, inseparably from this, the approaches to the question of visuality as given in critical literature are evaluated in a separate chapter. The general aspects of visual theory constitute one part of the latter problematics, to be revealed partly from historical point of view, from the perspective of the cultural history of seeing (from Plato to the theorists of art of the 20th century), partly focusing on the main aspects of the given phenomenon (see e.g. ekphrasis – e.g. G. Boehm, M. Rubins, L. Heller); later we take some examples from literature on Turgenev's works (see e.g.: Zsuzsa Zöldhelyi, N. A. Jermakova, I. I. Velichkina, G. B. Kurlandskaya, K. Pigarev). A separate chapter discusses the philosophy of seeing in the novel, *On the Eve*, from which we arrive at the *Summary* chapter of the Theses.

III. The emblem and the series of sculptures

Two layers of meaning of an emblem are known in the history of art: on one hand, the emblem can be a badge, an allegory, a symbol, on the other hand, it can signify the symbolic description of a slogan, a notion, a theoretic approach, with plastic and graphic instruments. Furthermore a relationship was presupposed between symbolic content of its bearer and his character, fate or presumed future (see Pantaleone's ring in the narrative, *Spring Torrents*).

The emblem in its original form represents such a complex system of signs in which the visual element constitutes a unity with the textual one. The emblem – in respect of its genre: a visual allegory – has three constituents: the inscriptio (motto), the pictura (picture), and the *subscriptio* (explanatory text). We analyse (on a theoretical basis – see the studies of L. I. Sazonova, A. R. Hippisley and the book *Emblem* by J. Grigorjeva) in the text of Turgenev's *Spring Torrents* such objects which function as marked sense generative motifs in the narrative, like the rose, the garnet cross, the seal ring / ring.

In the novel, *On the Eve*, we encounter a hero, whose hero-being defines his whole character and is present by embodying an emblem composition. The word "hero" ("игой") is heard as a motto in connection with Insarov, from Shubin's mouth, when he first declares the arrival of a Bulgarian man in the Stahov villa. The picture-part of the emblem is the description of the two Insarov-portraits in the workshop, the first representing the hero's realistic portrait, the second showing him as a ram. These two types of portrait inspire the reader to create two different possibilities of interpretation. When we get to know Insarov as one of the novel's characters, and when the other characters' explanations complete our knowledge about him, we may think that this man is able to accomplish what he has decided, and what others expect from him. The first portrait shows this. That ideal Insarov, who accomplishes what he determines, and saves his homeland. This is an idealized image of the hero, and this is the hero Elena trusts, when she devotes herself to be the companion of his life. The second sculpture mocks at whatever is important for Insarov, and makes the idea of heroism ridiculous. According to the message of the plot, Insarov cannot become a hero, as he dies before he could return home. One of the most important explanatory texts, expressing the essence of Insarov's figure, comes from Bersenyev: "He has a single idea: the liberation of his country". So the novel gravely relativizes the type of the hero, who is imagined differently by every character. According to Shubin, "a hero roar like a bull, but when he butts with his horns, the walls shake. He ought not to know himself why he butts at things". When Elena first meets Insarov, she is a bit disappointed, as "he had not made the impression that she had expected".

In the novel, *On the Eve*, one possible definition of the emblem's role is the demonstration of the main hero's ascetic shape, whose main attribute is his being a hero. The meaning of his emblematic nature is that we cannot see him in action (except for the events of the excursion to Tsaritsino), but he appears as *the* hero, as the immobile sculpture of the hero (see Shubin's statues of Insarov). This new type of hero, that he intends to create, is yet unknown for the writer (just like Shubin echoes his demand for new type of heroes), but he still can't demonstrate such a hero well, as a living one. Although, despite what the scientific literature supposes, we learn a lot about Insarov's feelings and thoughts in the novel, we get information about him filtered through Elena's character. We suppose that the common figure of the male and female character represents the new type of hero, seen only in embryonic form. This is shown by the third sculpture, which demonstrates the twofold caricature-like portrait of Shubin, revealing a vigorous female character, and a dying, inanimate man figure.

According to the articulation of the emblem in fine arts, we can find all the parts of it in Insarov's characterisation and in the composition of the novel. This leads to the conclusion that the male character may be considered as a new hero not simply in the way scientific literature

interpreted him earlier, according to which, as opposed to the general male characters of noble origin, here the son of a rich merchant is present (see e.g. Dobroljubov, Byaly, Pumpjansky). Its novelty can also be observed in the shaping of his heroic character, following the structure of an emblem. In this sense, the main character's most important attribute, his *heroic* and *patriotic* essence appears visually in the novel (this visuality is represented by Shubin's sculptures), underpinning the content of statements about Insarov elsewhere present in the novel (cf.: about his being a hero in two representations: 1. according to Shubin's evaluation in an ironic phrasing, see the ram; 2. in the representation matching the judgement of Bersenyev and Elena, when the idealistic image of Insarov appears), and emphasizing the fate evolution of the character (by the double portrait anticipating Insarov's death) .

The dissertation compares the poetic concept of the emblem in the narrative of *Spring Torrents* and of the novel, *On the Eve*, but approaches the structures present in the two works from different methodological angles.

In the analysis of *Spring Torrents* some objects belonging to certain events get into the focus of the research (rose, garnet cross, ring). Demonstrating through the example of the rose, the functional partition of the emblem reveals itself as follows: the name Roselli is nothing else than the motto; the rose, appearing as a flower, is an image; the letter of love as a part of the expansion of the story is the inscriptio, the explanation.

In the novel, *On the Eve* – in contrast with – the simple objects in the short story – such objects appear as the picture-parts of the emblem which are interpreted in themselves as components of some sort of relational system. These objects are partly sculptures made by humans, partly artefacts representing humans. So before getting into the structure, they had already possessed a complex mediation of meaning. Shubin's sculptures, mainly the first two, represent the twofold intent of the description of the same personality even if we don't know the story of the described person. The female and male character's trails in the twofold group of sculptures can be interpreted without knowing the represented characters. The three works of art get into the picture-part of the emblem structure through this complex system of correlations, putting on further layers of references. A further curiosity of the emblem (or three emblems, as we should fairly say) found in the novel is that a motto is attached to each of the three images (three sculptures), the word "hero", which is the attribute of the main male character in the novel. The explanatory texts, making up a system, show a more complex result, as the visual representation (Shubin's sculptures) make a coherent chain of sense by the explanatory texts.

According to our finding, the sculptures themselves in the novel, *On the Eve*, as emblems, constitute a poetic line of unfolding. Shubin's three sculptures show a kind of sequence of visual

demonstration in the shaping of the hero's character, and the happenings of his fate. This means, that each sculpture (or "sculptural state") can be matched to a certain phase of the novel's plot, so can we get from Shubin's first sculpture (the showing up of the hero) to Elena's status of the sculpture. We will now outline what the sculptures represent in this process.

The first sculpture, as we could see, shows the idealized Insarov, the mode of how the characters imagine him, and how Elena internally draws his character. This idealized status forms the layer where we can interpret the first sculpture, and in our opinion it lasts until Shubin declares Insarov a hero ("The conquering hero Insarov will be here directly!"), so until Insarov in fact becomes present as a person for the heroine.

From this point we can speak about the second statue's entry phase. The modification of the form of the word hero puts Insarov's whole showing up into an ironic and mocking frame, together with the sculptor's comment, that the Bulgarian man is 144 years old. In this part of the novel a lot of scenes can be found, in which mainly Shubin (by whom the ram sculpture was made) wants the hero to seem ridiculous, (cf.: "Just as well-behaved boys walk out on Sundays", "There's no fascination, no charm about them", "There, isn't he a hero; he can pitch drunken Germans into the river!"). The second statue's relevance in the plot ends with the final scene in the chapel, when Elena and Insarov are standing and hugging each other, and the man welcomes the woman as his wife "before God and men".

Beginning from this part of the novel, Insarov's attitude towards Elena starts to change (as we have foreshadowed it earlier), and the possibility of the third sculpture's interpretation starts to be more and more relevant, so to say the two characters grow together both in a physical and in a spiritual sense, and the male character dies. At the same time, the twofold group of sculptures has also a part which represents a living woman. This shape of the sculpture is represented by Elena, whose character's analysis finishes the transformation of the series of sculptures so far analysed. This transformation (Elena turning into a sculpture) and its final exposition are interpreted in the last chapter of the dissertation, on the basis of the following transformation: first sculpture (a realistic portrait of Insarov) → second sculpture (Insarov as a ram) → third sculpture (the group of sculptures representing a dead man and living woman) → fourth sculpture (the living woman turns into a sculpture). After Insarov's death Elena "turned to stone" ("окаменела"), the semantics of her character will be enriched by the meaning of a metamorphosis of a sculpture. We can see that at a more abstract level of interpretation – which takes form in a motivic and intertextual way – Elena comes to the focus as the „sculptor” substituting Shubin. Her sculpture, being related to Insarov, is interpreted through her spiritual activity. This later gains sense as a self-transformation. We may also add that through Elena's dream (the whiteness of the landscape delineated in the dream, and

Insarov dying in the plot as related to one another), as if it were the light drawn upon her soul which whitens the Insarov-portrait in her heart. The parallel shows Elena at the same time as a "sculptor" and a painter drawing a dream, embedding both visual acts of creation into the process of her spiritual activity. Doing so, the text, at the level of its visual poetics, motivates the very simple motif of action in a complex and rich way, according to which the forever faithful companion in love endorses herself to her husband's cause. Insarov's white image transforms into the sculpture, and his initiative and Elena's effort, to be creative lead to the meaning of the *final sculpture*, which closes the work of Turgenev at the level of visual poetics.

At the end of the work, Elena's shape seems to be completely black: "they even described her dress, black from head to foot". We know that her shininess and brightness were emphasized throughout the novel, while in Insarov's case darkness was the typical motif. The white colour of snow, however, attaches to the moment of Insarov's death. One very important conclusion can be drawn from this, namely that the peculiarities of the two persons are exchanged in the figures. Elena not only "turned to stone", but also gets dark, so in some sense turns into Insarov, into the sculpture embodiment of his character. On this layer of interpretation she creates her own shape of sculpture, which couldn't be created by Shubin, the real sculptor, then creates the sculpture of Insarov from herself, and according to this meaning: faithful to his spiritual being she returns back to Bulgaria. So the fourth sculpture represents transformation in itself, and after the forming of the twofold group of sculptures (third sculpture), the two shapes unify, they are completely entwined, and not only grow together, but they become identical.

From all this we can conclude that Elena can be considered as the real protagonist of the novel. The novel begins when she draws the image of the hero in herself. More precisely, she accepts the idealized portrayal inspired by Bersenyevev, painted through his narrative. (Bersenyevev considers his own interpretation of the character realistic, the further evolution of the plot and Insarov's characterizations testify, however, that this portrait was idealized.) The Bersenyevev–Elena kind of portrayal can correspond functionally to the first sculpture. Indeed, as Bersenyevev emphasizes Insarov's human greatness to Elena, and the theme of forming and erecting a statue is connected to the idea of the possibility of identifying the great man in Turgenev's work. So it has interpretative legitimacy that Insarov's first portrayal should be unravelled through the sculpture made of him. This idealized image will be nuanced by Elena as the plot develops, when she questions Insarov's imperfect features when becoming aware of the emergence of her love. Shubin's second statue (the ram) corresponds to this reinterpreted character of the hero. Although Bersenyevev regards the ram without doubt a parody of the hero, the mythological parallel with the unicorn expanded in the novel takes the interpretation to other directions, too. Insarov's ram shape then

makes such an approach available, which calls attention to the necessity of a female character to be connected to the man – this will be Elena, whose mission is explained through the third sculpture, where we can see a woman and a man inseparable from each other. After the death of her husband the woman finally assumes his form, putting on the attributes of Insarov's incarnation as a sculpture, and completes his work (fourth sculpture). This train of thought gives real meaning to the Elena's declaration: "I sought happiness, and I shall find – perhaps death", which is highlighted in the dissertation from different angles. It should be added also, that the forming of Insarov's sculpture through Elena, as the forming of its final shape, means at the same time that the statue cannot be identical with any of its previous variants. In the last chapter of the novel, describing the scene in Venice, which is a separate section in the plot, many motifs meet, and get interpretation through the theme of the sculpture. The problem of correspondence between love and death, which is mapped in Shubin's third sculpture, returns in the external and modified traits of the Insarov couple. Insarov explains the question of greatness and heroism through the deed of the Dalmatian fishermen: he also desires such self-sacrifice. Elena, devoting her life to the cause of her husband, stands by him even after his death, and by solidifying into stone, according to our interpretation, takes the shape of a statue, proving that a statue is worth being erected for the ideal of the cause her husband stood for, and what Shubin tried to create, even if he could not. Shubin hence is not only unable to create Elena's sculpture, but also fails to understand Insarov's idea, what the Bulgarian intends to materialize even at the cost of his life. He makes Insarov's realistic and ironic portrait, and lends his own face to the third sculpture's male figure, trying to grasp the essence of female and male existence – as imagined by him – and the complication of love and death. But nevertheless, the idea of heroism can be mapped by Elena's stance. Thus becomes Bersenyev's "pseudo-classical" stance a real classical one, hiding in itself all the meaning revealed by the mythological parallels in the novel (see Venus and Mars, The Virgin with the Unicorn) and, fitting into the emblem composition of the two main characters.

We open different layers of the text through the examination of visual forms: both the emblem structures and the analysis of sculptures lead to the figure of Elena, and may be analysed through her poetic delineation. From a functional point of view the new type of hero can be defined as interpreted in this way.

IV. Summary

The aim of the dissertation was to reveal the presence of the rich visual thinking in the poetics of Turgenev's fiction, primarily in the novel *On the Eve*. This kind of poetic thinking proves to be

fundamental both at the level of the composition and in the development of details. This was achieved by making a comprehensive inventory of the possible layers of interpretation in which the approach to the verbal-visual modelling somehow manifests itself. It was taken into consideration, that visibility in the literal sense of "making someone to see an object", and "being apparent" means the visual presentation of objects, events and concepts. Its basic notions are: on one hand, *looking*, which relates to sensation, on the other hand, *seeing*, relating to the interpretative perception of the onlooker. These basic notions of sensation and perception are essential in the text of Turgenev's novel, and a whole chapter is devoted to their clarification in the dissertation. The visual artistic way of thinking, typical of Turgenev, can be approached from this problem of seeing and having something to be seen. This includes the possibility to distinguish between looking and seeing in Turgenev's model, furthermore, for the poetic investigation of seeing, one must be able to separate instances of seeing that represent a point of view in the straightforward moderation of the narrator, from those that represent visibility in actual manifestations of the poetics of vision. According to this model, we divide the layers of seeing to be found in the novel *On the Eve* into three parts, but at the same time the simple viewpoint of the narrator is also drawn into the interpretation of visibility.

As all the visual forms and artistic modes of creation (such as emblem, landscape, still-life, portrait sculpture) studied in the dissertation are closely connected to the interpretative perception and the act of seeing, and also the state of making someone see an object, the visual poetic reading of Turgenev's prose fiction proves to be an important and relevant approach.

The articles of the author of the dissertation in the given research field

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- 2) Искусствоведческое толкование двух историй. *Пигмалион и Ла Форнарина* Рафаэля в повести И. С. Тургенева *Вешние воды*. In: *Studia Russica XXI*. Budapest, 292–300.

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- 3) „Füst, füst és semmi más...”. Vanitas-szimbólumok Turgenyev műveinek jelentésterében. In: Balázs Géza – H. Varga Gyula (ed.): *Társadalom és jelek*. Eger, Líceum Kiadó, 229–235.
- 4) „Boldogságot kerestem – s lehet, hogy halált találok”. A *Lány egyszarvúval* mitológéma Turgenyev *A küszöbön* című regényében. In: Kovács Árpád (ed.): *Puskintól Tolsztojig és tovább...* Budapest, Argumentum Kiadó, 353–369.
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- 7) Искусствоведческое толкование историй «Пигмалион» и «Ла Форнарина» Рафаэля в повести И. С. Тургенева «Вешние воды». In: Kroó Katalin és Peeter Torop (ed.): *Russian Text (19th Century) and Antiquity*. Budapest–Tartu, L'Harmattan, 264–276.

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- 8) „Megtaláltam a szót, fény hullt reám!”. Jelena Sztahova naplója Turgenyev *A küszöbön* című regényében. In: Kocsis Géza (ed.): *In Honorem Hetesi István 70*. Budapest, Orosz

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