

THESES OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION (PhD)

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THE SECRET PROSE IN TURGENEV'S FICTION

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Doctoral Program of Russian Literature and Literary Studies

BUDAPEST

2011

SUBJECT OF DISSERTATION

The dissertation aims at the systematic exploration of the series of short stories in Turgenev's late fiction also commonly referred to as the *enigmatic* or *secret* prose. By analyzing and interpreting those short fiction pieces, the dissertation is primarily intended to unfold what the poetic outcome of Turgenev's renewing prose language is, i.e. how the lyric tendencies in the narrative prose contribute to the author's new way of writing – establishing a new genre.

Turgenev's contemporary reception as well as the 20th century criticism related to the *secret prose* has provided several inspirations on the one hand, and has left spare research areas on the other, as it deployed mainly thematic approaches. Namely: the reception focusing on Turgenev's late prose has left behind a legacy of premises handling the presence of *fantastic* or *enigmatic* elements in the text as *themes*, or interpretations connected to the tradition of *biographic* reading. This is important because it gives a specific relevance to the research subject which concentrates on the poetic establishment of the short stories as well as the interrelations of the reference of *secret* and text generating. Consequently, the dissertation examines the correlations of *narration*, *prose language* and *semantic innovation*, with special regard to its relevance to text and subject theory. Furthermore, the thesis also aims to contribute to the re-interpretation of the genre corpse of these short stories by putting the discursive orders of Turgenev's prose in the foreground.

The dissertation presents why and how the productive author of major novels such as the *Rudin*, *The Nest of the Gentry*, *Fathers and Sons*, *On the Eve* or *Smoke* ultimately turns to small epic forms and short fiction establishing a new poetic way of writing. Therefore the thesis paper identifies the points revealing how Turgenev's writing moves to lyric expression forms. The central problem of the genre typology research is to examine the characteristics and features of this renewed prose language and also to explore the process how the author formulates the genre referred to as the *lyric novella* or *lyric short story*. Consequently, the dissertation monitors the transformations and interactions of lyric and narrative discourses in the rhetoric, stylistic and semantic formations of the texts.

The central subjects of the text interpretations of the *Phantoms*, *The Song of Triumphant Love* as well as *Clara Militch* concentrate on the crisis of discourses, the problem of *narratability*, the 'multi-lingual' status of the short stories, the interrelations of the semiotically divergent communication systems, the metaphor and text generating role of *sound* and *intonation*, the problem of *counterparts*, *alter egos* and *transformations*, the formation of the self-interpreting *interior* dialogue, the *life-dream philosopheme* as well as the thematisation of the quest for the way towards *self-understanding* and the *self-owned* language.

APPROACH, METHODOLOGY AND THE THEORETICAL BASIS

The methodology of the dissertation is built upon a theoretical basis which outlines the problem of *fantastic* and the *secret* by integrating certain *fictionality* theories and *fantastologies*, and analyzes the *dream* texts by mobilizing the concepts of *narratology*, *fictionality*, *semiotics*, *symbol* and *metaphor* theories as well as the considerations of the theory of *personal narration*. In broader dimensions the formations of the unity of lyrical text generating and text subject are presented on the grounds of *discursive poetics* integrating the concepts of narration theory, rhetorics and hermeneutics.

The dissertation is intended to process the relevant reception history systematically, however not to present it in an isolated chapter but to organically connect to the traditions of interpretation in the theoretical and text interpreting parts of the thesis, also considering the proper localization of the *secret prose* in the whole of Turgenev's lifework. Special attention is paid to the contemporary criticism of the author's time, to the Russian reception in the writings of Saltykov-Shchedrin, Herzen, Dostoyevsky, Leonid Polonsky or in journals of the time such as the *Новое время*, *Новости*, *Заря*, *Неделя*, *Санкт-Петербургские Ведомости*, *Эпоха*, *Мир*, *Дело*, *Порядок* or *Страна*, and also to the contemporary international reception including the French criticism by Flaubert, Daudet, Zola, the Goncourt brothers and Maupassant as well as the German reception by Theodor Storm, Paul Heyse or Ludwig Pietsch, and also to the relating epistolary heritage. A separate chapter is devoted to the symbolist reception in the writings of Merezhkovsky, Annensky, Bryusov, Remizov and Balmont as well as in journals and almanacs such as the *Северный вестник*, *Новый путь*, *Весы* and *Аполлон*, or the *Северные цветы*. The reception focusing on the author's late prose and also providing a theoretical and methodological background can be marked by the works of Mikhail Gershenzon, Lev Pumpyansky and Vladimir Toporov in the Russian criticism, and by those of Henry James, Thomas Mann, James Woodward and Richard Peace in the international reception, and furthermore, by the monographs of Zsuzsa Zöldhelyi and István Hetesi in the Hungarian philology, as well as by the works of Katalin Kroó and Árpád Kovács in the history of poetic interpretation.

The opening chapter entitled *The Fantastic and the Fictive* includes the methodological fundamentals of the dissertation and contains theoretical reasoning on genre typology and reception history. The chapter localizes Turgenev's *secret prose* in the fantastic literature with special regard to the heritage of romanticism, the traditions established by Hoffmann, Tieck or Odoyevsky as well as the fantastic literary heritage recreated by Edgar Allan Poe. Following the presentation of Pumpyansky's concept of Turgenev's fantastic, a broader theoretical basis is explored on the grounds of Algernon Blackwood's and Peter Penzoldt's functional standpoints, Vladimir Solovyov's and Tzvetan Todorov's decisive theories on the literary fantastic as well as Igor Smirnov's and Eric Rabkin's *fantastologies*. The outlined theoretical problems make it necessary to clarify the notions and concepts of narratology and fictionality, as a result of which the narrative modality of the *fantastic* and the *fictive* can be determined. Moreover, this brings along the question why dreams and the acts of visions play such an important role in Turgenev's late prose. The fictionality concepts of

the *dream research* are supported by Wolfgang Iser's theories, while the semiotic aspects are based on Yury Lotman's and Boris Uspensky's considerations. The theory of personal narration of Árpád Kovács is deployed for the interpretation of *dream-narration* as the *medium* of prose language *subjectivity*.

In light of this reasoning the thesis may be articulated that the *dream-narration* is not a recalling act but it transforms the way of quest, i.e. the search for a form of expression for self-interpretation into a discourse generating story. This is achieved by the prose language manifestation of the *dream*, the *new language* for the purpose of recreating reality.

Based on the results of the research an answer can be given to the question what the *reference* of the *secret* is, how it can be defined. In light of today's challenges of literary science the *secret* should not be handled as a *theme*, but its *sense* can be seized from the way of text generating. As a consequence, the meaning codes are not approached at the imaginary levels the secret, the fantastic or the dream, but as a question of *transition* from one language semantics into the other, i.e. at a discursive level. Therefore the thesis articulates that the *secret*, in a poetic approach, can be revealed not in the *enigma*, not in the fantastic or mystic *theme*, but in the poetic prose model of the *search* for the way of *expression* outlined above. In this quest Turgenev's idea is thematised that the interpretation of a personality is *inexhaustible*: the *secret* is but the inexpressible *subject*.

INTERPRETATIONS: ANALYSES AND RESULTS

The analysis of Turgenev's *Phantoms* is included in the chapter called *The Thousand Faces of Sound* presenting the model of lyric prose. Following Dostoyevsky's interpretation the dissertation compares the text of the short story to *music* and identifies it as a specific *language*. The units of this language are correlated with the *intention* which the contemporary novelist calls «rocka», i. e. the *anguish* or *longing desire*. As a result, the *sound* becomes the text constituting starting point in Turgenev's prose: the disposition of the subject of the inner speech as well as the *sounding index* revealing its specific rhythm and tonality. The analysis identifies the points where the special *semiosis* can be observed, where the new sign is generated with *sound*, that is, the meaning is organized not from the theme but from the language, i.e. taking place in the *medium* of the arising *word*. The analysis also presents the sign generating, the poetic language constitution consisting of homophonies and specific sound sequences, in the course of which the predicative organization is modified or overridden by a *phonic coherence*. By unfolding the stories comprised and hidden in the particular sound indices, the dissertation explores how the perception of the *sounding modality* of the present life launches the generating of fictive stories, i. e. how a new story emerges from an entity present by its sounding. The characteristics, features, pitch, cadence, intonation, emotional content of the sound heard, and based on all of those, the *verbal transcription* of the acquired sound unfolds a detailed narrative. Consequently, the dissertation has identified the *metanarrative* procedure, which supplements the "story telling"

(“epic”) narration with the story of *becoming* an author: it demonstrates how the narrator acquires the language overtaking the earlier discourse.

By analyzing the Paris and Rome episodes the dissertation presents the theory of Bakhtin’s *intonational metaphor* in light of Turgenev’s text and directs the attention to the significance of the intonational semantics of a discourse. As a result, the analysis also reveals how this provokes the generating of metaphors and thus triggers the creation of fiction. Consequently, in the lyric prose the *intonation*, the auditive model of the longing desire becomes a *prose language code*.

The presentation of the genre typology of the *fantasy* refers back to the outcome of the theoretical chapters, then contrasts the fantasy concepts on the *Phantoms* (Piksanov, Vinogradov) against the allegorical interpretations (Andreyevsky, Vetrinsky), and then complements it with James Woodward’s (re-)integration theory. The analyses comes to the consequence that the relationship between Alice and the narrator is not the compositional framework element of the fantasy but the metaphor of an *inner speech act* directed to the search for the way of *self-identification*. The narrator’s flight with Alice, their travels through time and space explore not primarily the geographic or social space continuum, nor merely historical places and venues, events or landscapes; rather, they reveal the interior dialogue, the inner speech construing life: the figure of the travelling-flying narrator in Alice’s hands listening to her is but a metaphor for the inner subject listening to the inner dialogue. Consequently, this interior dialogue unfolds in the compositional system of *Phantoms*, as well as in the activated metaphorical process therein: in the formation of the (auto-) reflexive and self-interpreting human presence.

By examining the complex symbolic systems of the *moon* and the *fog* in the *Phantoms*, the analysis presents the metaphorical diversions triggering those *autopoetic* discourses which reveal a specific transgression: the transition from the level of storytelling and narration to the level of creative language acts of sign producing. Such acts of creativity shift the prose epic short story into the status a lyrical prose *poema*.

The chapter called *A Twofold Reading: Song and Text* contains the interpretation of *The Song of Triumphant Love* and presents the characteristics of the stylization of the renaissance novella, the Italian renaissance *chronicle* in light of Turgenev’s text. From an intertextual perspective the Saint Cecilia legend embedded in the text as well as Leonardo’s Cecilia portrait are given high importance as they constitute a preliminary code system in a twofold, verbal and visual modality blocking Fabio’s artistic discourses in creating the Valeria-Cecilia portrait. Fabio, the painter and Muzio, the musician approach the heroine in different communication channels: therefore one of the central subjects of the novella is what common domain of discourse the heroes can share. To put it differently at another level: the analysis reveals that, in case of the verbal crisis of the heroes, how the “writing”, i. e. Turgenev’s *text* enters the discursive space establishing new semantics. The decisive point in the novella is Valeria’s dream and the self-understanding achieved in it, in the course of which the heroine deviates herself from the sacred legend and creates her *own* story. The analysis unfolds the symbolic system and the ‘multi-lingual’ medium of Valeria’s dream, inasmuch as the dream is interpreted as a turning point: when Valeria enters the world of the

dream, she is not only immersed in the partially experienced verbal, acoustic, visual or other spheres but in the simultaneous presence of all of them: thus her dream can become a space for her perfectly analogue to reality.

As the metatext of the novella the criticism of the Apollonian and Dionysian arts ideal is introduced, i.e. the duality of Fabio's and Muzio's art, that is, the dichotomy of the *visual/imaging/plastic* and the *non-visual/non-illustrative* arts. As a consequence, the mythological codes and symbolic systems interpreting the text establish the meta-language of the renewing expression forms, inspired writing and creation. Fabio-Apollo paints the Cecilia portrait, while Muzio-Dionysos plays music in creative ecstasy inspired by the muses and wines: the artist, the *melpomenos* plays the 'song of triumphant love' on the violin in a Dionysian sacred frenzy, i. e. "mania" indispensable for artistic creation.

The description of Muzio's violin *in nuce* carries in itself the project of the story included in the novella. The musical texture sounded by the musical instrument, the "song of triumphant love" is the musical equivalent of the written literary text. The dissertation reveals the duplication of the concept of the 'song' – the novella is finished with a double *conception*: under Valeria's hands on the organ keyboard the melody, the song is 'born', and simultaneously to that, she feels in herself the conception of a child. The painting is finalized, the song is sounded, the child is conceived – just as the text on creation, conception and birth is created. The interrelation between the musical and narrative models reveals a twofold reading of the *song*: on the one hand the musical piece played by the hero; and on the other hand, as the equivalent of the song, Turgenev's *written* text work.

The interpretation of Turgenev's *Clara Militch* is presented in the chapter entitled *The Language of Dying: Representation and Transformation*. Turgenev's epistolary heritage shows that one of the inspirational resources for this short story was Edgar Allan Poe's writing. The analysis proves that the influence of Poe's novellas, particularly the *Morella*, *Ligeia* and *Eleonora*, the problem of reincarnating counterparts and alter egos, the phenomenon of love after death and the mutual relation between love and death can be tracked in Turgenev's *Clara Militch*. The analysis explores the essential roles played by *reflection* and *memory*, and also demonstrates the problem of *inexpressibility*, the contrast of the *own* and *other* discourses. Examining the hero's reflections and discourses and deploying Bakhtin's doubly-orientated speech theory the thesis presents that only the separation from the *other* speech can result in creating the *own* speech. This is also connected to the problem of *memory* as a *delayed reflection*: by applying Smirnov's differentiation between *episodic* and *semantic* memory, the dissertation outlines the recalling process supplemented by *intertexts* as it is modeled in the hero's (Aratov's) reflections and memories. In the course of this act the deficit in the continuity of the episodic memory is compensated by the semantic memory, that is, the introduction of *intertexts* into the *own* text. The hero is in need of a *discourse* by which he can understand the reproduced action. Aratov's dream is the turning point where the demand for a *new language* arises, through which the story can be re-articulated, and based on this the hero can construct his *own* text. This is the prerequisite of the act of self-understanding: the analysis explores how the *story generating* through the language of dream becomes a symbolic self-identification, inasmuch as the hero's dreams are

his *own narrative* discourses. This means that besides the *real* story he constructs a *fictive* story, and this is what takes place after death. Creating this story is the act of understanding: hence the condition of *self-understanding* is the discourse that generates the *own* story, that is, the *personal narration*. The narrator of the 'real' story is not Aratov but a fictive narrator. As a result, two stories are formulated: the 'real' story segmented in the action plot as well as the 'fictive' story, which is but the story of writing, the act of writing linked to 'real' plot as an action. The subject of Aratov's personal story is he *himself*. That is how the *narrative identity* is established.

The analysis presents that the hero's reflections are always faced with Clara Militch's new *representations*: Clara's physical being, her sight, picture, photograph, her music, her song, her breath, then her transformations into air and wind. This means that the hero's consciousness always mobilizes a new semiotic model. The interpretation articulates the thesis that the hero's awakening process at the level of action plot is accompanied at the level of *narration* by the *transition* from one language semantics into another: every new semiotic model provokes the generating of new meanings inasmuch as every new sign usage creates new semantics aimed at the description of Clara Militch.

The dissertation explores the interrelations between *death* and *love* on the grounds of Max Black's and Paul Ricoeur's metaphor theories by demonstrating how the two entities are described with each other's categories and attributes, how they formulate a mutual interaction. Furthermore, Turgenev's most characteristic complex metaphors such as the *eyes*, the *mirror*, the *wind*, the *cloud* or the *rose* are analyzed in details as they all connect the worlds of meanings of both love and death. And finally, the dissertation unfolds the change of the ontological status in which Turgenev demystifies the concept of *death* by writing the story of death, that is, by becoming the *active subject* of the relevant *discourse* of death. Consequently, the agonizing self becomes a narrating one: the *patient* of death becomes the *agent* of the text.

OUTLOOK

Besides summarizing the results of the dissertation I intend to indicate the potential future directions of the continuation of the research as well as to localize the *secret prose* with its characteristic prose language shifting to lyric expression forms in that specific process of literary history which links Turgenev's text corps to the *modernism* emerging in the last decades of the 19th century. In order to achieve this, the dissertation examines the reception of Turgenev's late prose at the turning of the 19th and 20th century, particularly in the symbolist paradigm. It can be pointed out that Turgenev's way of writing in his late fiction, his 'impressionism' as the symbolists would call it paved the way for modernism or symbolism, however considering the symbolist criticism itself Turgenev's reception was far more controversial. It is important to underline that the symbolism inherits an image of the author's lifework already several times interpreted in the contemporary reception of his time, that is, Turgenev's texts and the already established interpreting tradition simultaneously come to the

attention of the symbolists. The partial or selective receptions and controversies of the 19th century are transmitted into the 20th, especially with regards to the author's late fiction. As a consequence, in this paradigm Turgenev is regarded as the forerunner of the "new art" with his symbolic-fantastic-impressionistic short fiction on the one hand, while he is considered to be the old-fashioned author of social or political novels on the other. In the course of exploring Turgenev's symbolist reception the dissertation differentiates between the published critical writings in essays, articles, literary portraits (Merezhkovsky, Bryusov, Annensky, Tchulkov, Gershenzon, Rozanov, Remizov, Balmont, Andrei Bely, Leonid Andreyev), the unpublished reflections and reminiscences in letters, notes and diaries (Bryusov and Blok) as well as the *intertextual* influence and reception in literature (Sologub, Bryusov, Gippius, Kuzmin, Blok).

To summarize: the continuation of the research is proposed on the basis of the experiences and results accumulated in the course of the research of the *secret prose*, and also considering the evolution of Turgenev's writing from the perspective of the whole of his lifework. As a result I consider the poetic re-interpretation of the series of Turgenev's *Prose Poems* to be the next step of the research. Moreover, I also consider it justified to examine the comparative aspects of the series of *lyrical short stories* and *prose poems*, i. e. the parallels and influences of Turgenev's lyrical prose in the French, German, English and American literature (Théophile Gautier, Charles Baudelaire, Gustave Flaubert, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Guy de Maupassant, Theodor Storm, George Eliot, Henry James, Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad, Somerset Maugham).

**THE AUTHOR'S STUDIES, TRANSLATIONS AND REVIEWS
PUBLISHED ON THE SUBJECT OF RESEARCH**

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