

UDC 821.161.1

About the universal plan of Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*

Marina A. Kurbakova

PhD in Philology,
Associate professor at the Theory of translation Department,
Moscow State University of Mechanical Engineering,
107023, 38 Bolshaya Semenovskaya str., Moscow, Russian Federation;
e-mail: mkurbakova@inbox.ru

Abstract

Turgenev opened the theme of the relationship of generations in a poem 'Conversation' (1845). In the works of Turgenev a free person is consistently embodied in the image of a traveler, a wanderer with no family. 'Conversation' can be considered as a kind of a preamble to *Fathers and Sons* also because this work was the first in which so crucial for Turgenev topic – the God – Universe – Man – was touched upon. The novel *Fathers and Sons* (1861) is the summit of the writer's artistic research writer on the issues of family relationships. The uniqueness of this novel is firstly determined by the fact that it presents all kinds of relationships between men and women. The author refers to the relations between generations in the family aspect of the problem as the relationship of two types of people: 'mundane' (family) and 'strangers'. The complexity of these relationships is associated with one more conflicting versions of relationships: Bazarov and his heavenly Father. Bazarov dies because openly denies the heavenly Parent and neglect his earthy parents, making fun of them. *Fathers and Sons* is a harmonious system, which is based on the most important of all conflict ideologies. But this novel can be seen in any of the aspects, in all its semantic ambiguity: its content is universal.

For citation

Kurbakova M.A. (2015) About the universal plan of Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*. *Yazyk. Slovesnost'. Kul'tura* [Language. Philology. Culture], 1, pp. 71-78.

Keywords

Turgenev, Fathers and Sons, Russian literature, Tiutchev, Bazarov, relationship of generations.

Introduction

Turgenev opened the theme of the relationship of generations in a big poem 'Conversation' (1845). The theme was not new in the Russian literature. Back in the 1830s, Lermontov wrote about a young 'wingless' tribe in 'Borodino', 'Duma' and in his novel *A Hero of Our Time* imbued with his sorrow for the society. The same thoughts of Turgenev evolved from the Lermontov's exalted ideas of a perfect, free and strong personality, of the 'sacred truth' about the purifying power of social strives and storms [Turgenev, 1978, 471].

Some features of plan of Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*

In the works of Turgenev a free person is consistently embodied in the image of a traveler, a wanderer with no family [cf. Dubnov, 2015]. In the 'Conversation' the figures of protagonists – the elderly devotee to ideas, a figure, whose strength lies in his faith, and the young wanderer, a seeker of truth, unable to find any satisfaction neither in the conclusions of reasons, nor feeling the necessity of any activity – are still sketchy but the characters have been in generally defined. Their difference is particularly evident when comparing the old and loving memories of a young man; and it's an essential difference between generations. An old man once prematurely lost his beloved; the young man parted with his beloved on his own. The old man is not just an embodiment of the older generation: over the years he has become wise, and love is not his sole reason to live; the young man is impulsive and short-sighted

like a child, a slave to his whims, he does not 'grow' spiritually, remaining immature. In this work the author clearly held the antithesis between the people of the debt, which are aware of its higher destiny, and people who believe that love is the highest virtue. (In the future, the work of Turgenev continued to deepen the antithesis of the characters – 'mundane' and 'seeking the absolute.') In the 'Conversation' this distinction is already evident in the words of the old man. He speaks about the love of the 'unthinking child,' and a man who works in the 'field of Good':

In love you couldn't
 Find a peace... but love
 Is not man's greatest treasure;
 And blood can only do but seethe
 In children's hearts which seek for pleasure
 Enjoyment is what they live for
 How long until they all mature?
 A decent man has to labor
 In fields of Good and to endure.

And the old man cries out to heaven, asking God to enlighten people who have forgotten their duty, their mission on the Earth:

Then – God of my fathers!
 Almighty! Visit these ones
 Forgetful of your commemoration...
 You see, in vain your gentle love,
 So you are to dwell in their hearts
 Great fear....trepidation ... [Turgenev, 1978, 107,110].

Only in his early works the writer so clearly speaks about these two types of people; in the future the author's voice is muted, but the trend does not change. It can be found in almost all the works. 'Conversation' can be considered as a kind of a preamble to *Fathers and Sons* also because this work was the first in which so crucial for Turgenev topic – the God – Universe – Man – was touched upon.

The novel *Fathers and Sons* (1861) is the summit of the writer's artistic research writer on the issues of family relationships. Turgenev wrote the novel, not yet 'moving away' from the same topic raised in *Rudin*, *Noble Nest* and continued in *On the*

eve – contrasting the older and younger generations. The age is the main constant, as the author shows, in all the disputes of the characters.

In the aspect of family theme *Fathers and Sons* – the result of life reflection of the writer, the relationship of 'fathers' and 'children' are complex, the novel has many meanings. Even the name of the novel raises the questions: who are the fathers and who are the children? what sense encompasses the concept of the 'fathers', and what – the notion of 'children'? The name of the novel has a tinge of symbolism.

The central and most obvious idea of the work is the complexity of the generation relationships in a particular socio-political situation, in the era of the 'new people'. His literature contemporaries had analyzed this aspect of the artistic content of the novel too, primarily in the light of emerging social revolutionary ideas; as you know, many of them had focused only on ideological issues. Numerous articles had been bios, Pisarev and Herzen, for example, clearly understood the conceptual design of the work but Antonovich, a critic of *Sovremennik*, praised the novel extremely as one-sided. The author of the novel is known to be trying to explain his idea of the 'big story', but in some tome he refused to do this: "If the case does not speak for itself, all possible explanations of the author will not help." [Turgenev, 1978, 435]. So Turgenev left without comments the majority of the critical reviews of his novel, giving it to the court to the next generation. The Soviet literature criticism, the practice of teaching of the Russian literature of the XIX century had accumulated the great experience studying the writer's work, especially the novel *Fathers and Sons*, in which, however, more attention was paid to the problem of ideological work. However, studies of V.Mann, A.I.Batyuto [Batyuto, 1990] and V.M. Markovich [Markovich, 1982] addressed to the philosophical and aesthetic aspect of the work.

The term of 'artistic perfectness' has firmly settled while speaking about the Turgenev's novels heritage. Tiutchev was known to be reading *Fathers and Sons* and being in awe of the outstanding artistry of the author at the time when the assessment of this work aspect was not so urgent. Leo Tolstoy at the general negative assessment of novel marked its touching, edification, and stressed that "all smart, all fine, everything is art." [Tolstoy, 1850-1860, 25-27]. On the same occasion, P.A. Pletnev wrote to Leo Tolstoy: "His talent (Turgenev's. – MK), so to say, has properly shaped. Nothing is neither exaggerated nor refined. Life is taken in all its truth."

The uniqueness of this novel is firstly determined by the fact that it presents all kinds of relationships between men and women. The kind of passionate love of Bazarov to educated Odintsova, the kind of married love of Nikolai Petrovich and his first wife, of Katie and Arkadiy, of old Bazarov's couple the kind of fatal love of Paul Petrovich to Princess R., the kind of extramarital love of Nikolai Petrovich to Fenichka, the kind of unrequited love of the aristocrat Pavel Petrovich to Fenichka, who according to himself was nothing but an empty human-being, flirting of Bazarov with Fenichka.

The author refers to the relations between generations in the family aspect of the problem as the relationship of two types of people: 'mundane' (family) and 'strangers'. It suffices to consider participating in the ideological sense of the key dialogues: Bazarov – Odintsova, Pavel Petrovich – Bazarov, Bazarov – Arkadiy, to determine what Bazarov in the novel is the only incarnation of the idea of pilgrimage, which is in visible and invisible fight with the group of 'mundane' people. At the same time fathers and children of these fathers are friendly and in the end even live together under the same roof. People of similar type – Nikolai Petrovich Fenichka, Arkadiy and Katie are enjoying family happiness. It would be absurd to assume that generational conflict breaks out selectively. The Turgenev's gradation of people clears up everything: the conflict occurs not strictly between two generations of people (such as an 'eve'), but, above all, between individuals of two types: married and unmarried. If in this case the representatives of two different types have significant age difference, the conflict considerably speeds up.' For example, the conflict between Bazarov and Arkadiy is not so noticeable, and is solved with a single conversation; while the conflict between Bazarov and Pavel Petrovich puts the basis for the whole novel, it is the insurmountable contradiction. Their verbal duel turns into the real duel.

Even the contemporaries pointed out Turgenev with some kind of hidden meaning of the work. Following the words of Strakhov, it must be noted that, as all the works of Turgenev and his 'Fathers and Sons' touch the problem of the relationship between man and nature, the question of the correlation of natural and human incomprehensible essence, the most important concept in the philosophical view of the writer. Following it in the image of Bazarov the author relentlessly emphasizes that even such a powerful, strong-willed person like Bazarov, who challenged the forces of existence itself and was in the destroyed by them, seemingly on insignificant

occasion. Turgenev shows that in the conflict between a man and the nature a man cannot possibly win.

This topic naturally correlates to the theme of the relationship between new people and their homeland – Russia. Bazarov in that Russia is like a baby near her mother, is not like others, somehow special. Mother Russia is not yet able to accept him like a son of her. ("Russia needs me ...no... Russia apparently, does not need ..." – this is the result of bitter dying thoughts of Bazarov) prepared the basis on which he could realize as a person, a man, a professional, a naturalist and a representative of the nascent the new society has not been prepared yet. That's why he is cut off. Like a smart, active chick Bazarov falls off the 'nest' before the time; it was too close for him, and, not getting even quite stronger, dies.

Conclusion

The complexity of these relationships is associated with one more conflicting versions of relationships: Bazarov and his heavenly Father. Bazarov dies because openly denies the heavenly Parent and neglect his earthy parents, making fun of them. The return of the prodigal son in this case becomes impossible. Everything could be forgiven to the son but blasphemy against the heavenly Parent; Bazarov rejects the very foundation of the laws of life, avoiding the fact that he was born by his mother and by the will of God... In this insightful idea of Turgenev did not retreat one iota from the truth. It could be said that, not having true faith from a theological point of view, he instinctively catches it by his brilliant intuition, thereby advancing this novel into the classic category. *Fathers and Sons* is a harmonious system, which is based on the most important of all conflict ideologies. But this novel can be seen in any of the aspects, in all its semantic ambiguity: its content is universal.

References

1. Batyuto A.I. (1990) *Tvorchestvo I.S.Turgeneva i kritiko-ehsteticheskaya mysl' ego vremeni* [Creativity of Ivan Turgenev and critical-aesthetic thought of his time]. Moscow: Nauka Publ.

2. Dubnov A.M. (2015) 'Those new men of the sixties': nihilism in the liberal imagination. *Rethinking History*, 19 (1), pp. 18-40.
3. Gottlieb N., Chapman R. (1973) *Letters to an Actress: The Story of Ivan Turgenev and Maria Savina*. London: Allison and Busby.
4. Hodge T.T. (2007) The "Hunter in terror of hunters": a cynegetic rading of Turge-
nev's Fathers and Children. *Slavic & East European Journal*, 51 (3), pp. 453-473.
5. Kuznetsova I. (2005) Inexhaustible Turgenev (The sources of Russian existencial-
ism in Ivan Turgenev's unpopular works). *Social Sciences*, 36 (1), pp. 88-99.
6. Livak L. (2009) Ivan Turgenev's Crime and Punishment: "The jews" and the
Furtive Pleasures of Liberalism. *Russian Review*, 68 (1), pp. 49-69.
7. Lloyd, J.A.T. (1943) *Ivan Turgenev. A Biography*. London.
8. Markovich V.M. (1982) *I.S. Turgenev i russkii realisticheskii roman XIX veka*
[I.S.Turgenev and Russian realistic novel of the 19th century]. Leningrad: Len-
ingrad university.
9. Masing-Delic I. (1991) Philosophy, myth, and art in Turgenev's 'Notes of a
Hunter.' *Russian Review*, 50 (4), pp. 437-450.
10. Roche D. (1922) *Theatre de Ivan Tourguéniev Introduccion*. Paris.
11. Sreznevsky V.I. (ed.) (1927) *Tolstoy. 1850 – 1860. Materials, articles*. Lenin-
grad: USSR Academy of Sciences, pp. 25-27.
12. Turgenev I.S. (1978) Complete collection of works: in 12 vols. Moscow. Vol. 1.
13. Waddington P. (1998) *New light on the origins and composition of Turgenev's
novel Dym, based on unpublished materials*. Pinehaven (New Zealand).
14. Waddington P. (1998) *Turgenev and Julian Schmidt: new or neglected material*.
Pinehaven (New Zealand).
15. Waddington P. (1998) *Turgenev and Pavlovsky: a friendship and a correspon-
dence*. Pinehaven (New Zealand).
16. Yarmolinski A. (1961) *Turgenev: The Man, His Art and His Age*. New York.
17. Žekulin N.G. (2013) Turgenev's Pesn' torzhestvuiushchei liubvi [The Song of Tri-
umphant Love]: The Flaubert Connection. *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 55 (1/2),
pp. 215-236.
18. Zorin A. (2009) The Perception of Emotional Coldness in Andrei Turgenev's
Diaries. *Slavic Review*, 68 (2), pp. 238-258.

19. Zviguilski A. (1971) *Ivan Tourguenev, Nouvelle Correspondance inedite*. 2 vols. Paris.
20. Zviguilsky A. (1992) Ernest Renan, Tourguenev et Pauline Viardot. In: Zviguilsky A. (1992) *Cahiers Ivan Tourguenev, Pauline Viardot, Maria Malibran*. Paris, pp. 7-36.

Об общей структуре романа И.С. Тургенева

«Отцы и дети»

Курбакова Марина Андреевна

Кандидат филологических наук, доцент кафедры переводоведения,
Московский государственный машиностроительный университет (МАМИ),
107023, Российская Федерация, Москва, ул. Б. Семёновская, д. 38;
e-mail: mkurbakova@inbox.ru

Аннотация

Тургенев обратился к теме взаимоотношений поколений в стихотворении «Разговор» (1845). В творчестве Тургенева образ свободного человека последовательно воплощается в образе путешественника, странника-одиночки. Стихотворение «Разговор» – своего рода преамбула к роману «Отцы и дети», поскольку это первое произведение, в котором Тургенев затрагивает важнейшую тему: Бог-Вселенная-Человек. Роман «Отцы и дети» (1861) является итогом художественного исследования вопросов семейных отношений у Тургенева. Сложность людских взаимоотношений в романе связана в том числе с отношениями Базарова и его небесного Отца. «Отцы и дети» – стройная система, которая основана на столкновении конфликтных идеологий.

Для цитирования в научных исследованиях

Курбакова М.А. Об общей структуре романа И.С. Тургенева «Отцы и дети» // Язык. Словесность. Культура. 2015. № 1. С. 71-78.

Ключевые слова

Тургенев, «Отцы и дети», русская литература, Тютчев, Базаров, отношения поколений.