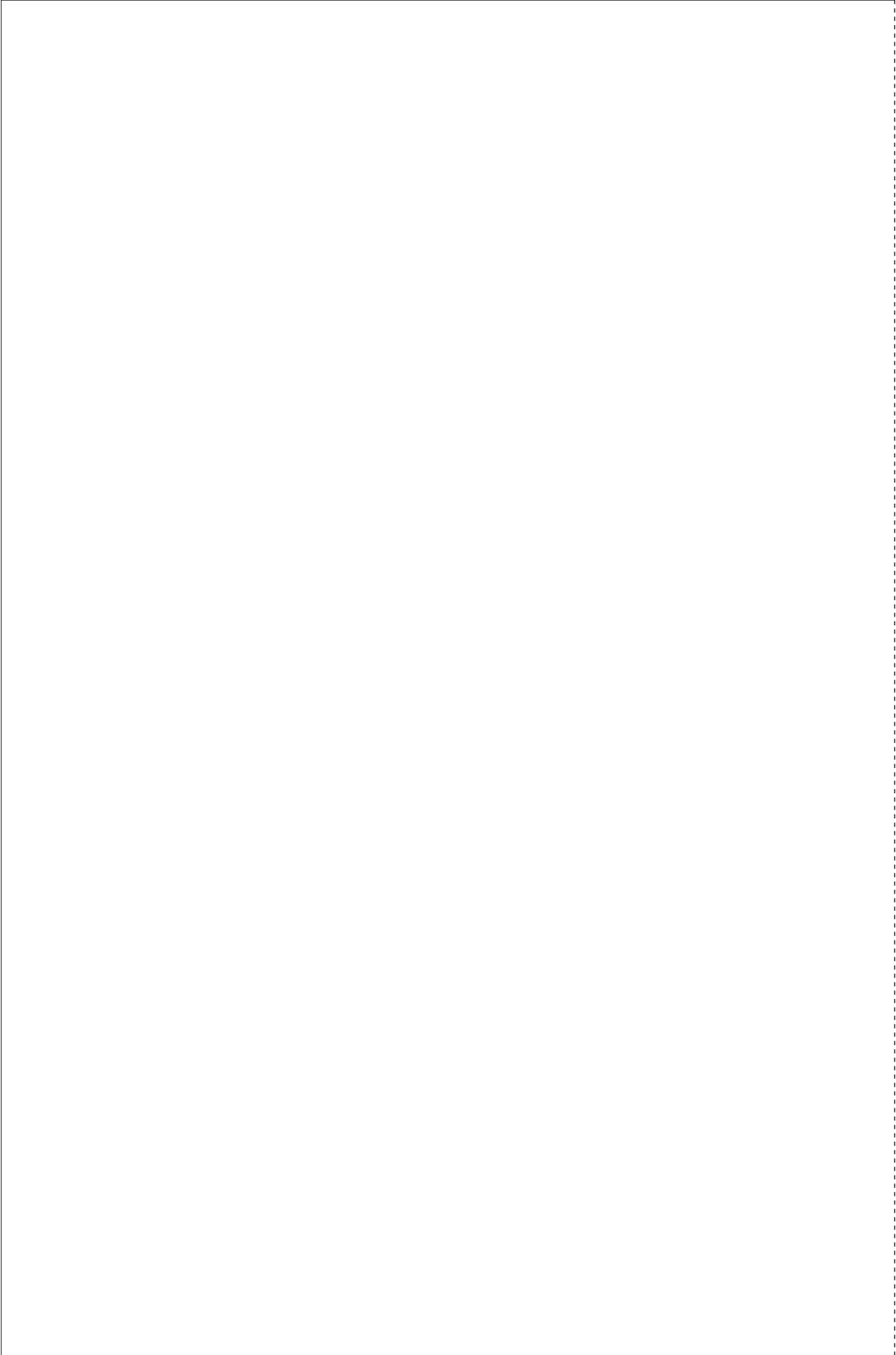


IVAN TURGENEV AND HIS LIBRARY

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IVAN TURGENEV
and His Library

AN EXHIBITION

23 January through 10 June 2019



VASSAR COLLEGE LIBRARIES

2019

COVER IMAGE

Ivan Turgenev, frontispiece for
Memoirs of a Sportsman
(Scribner's, 1922).

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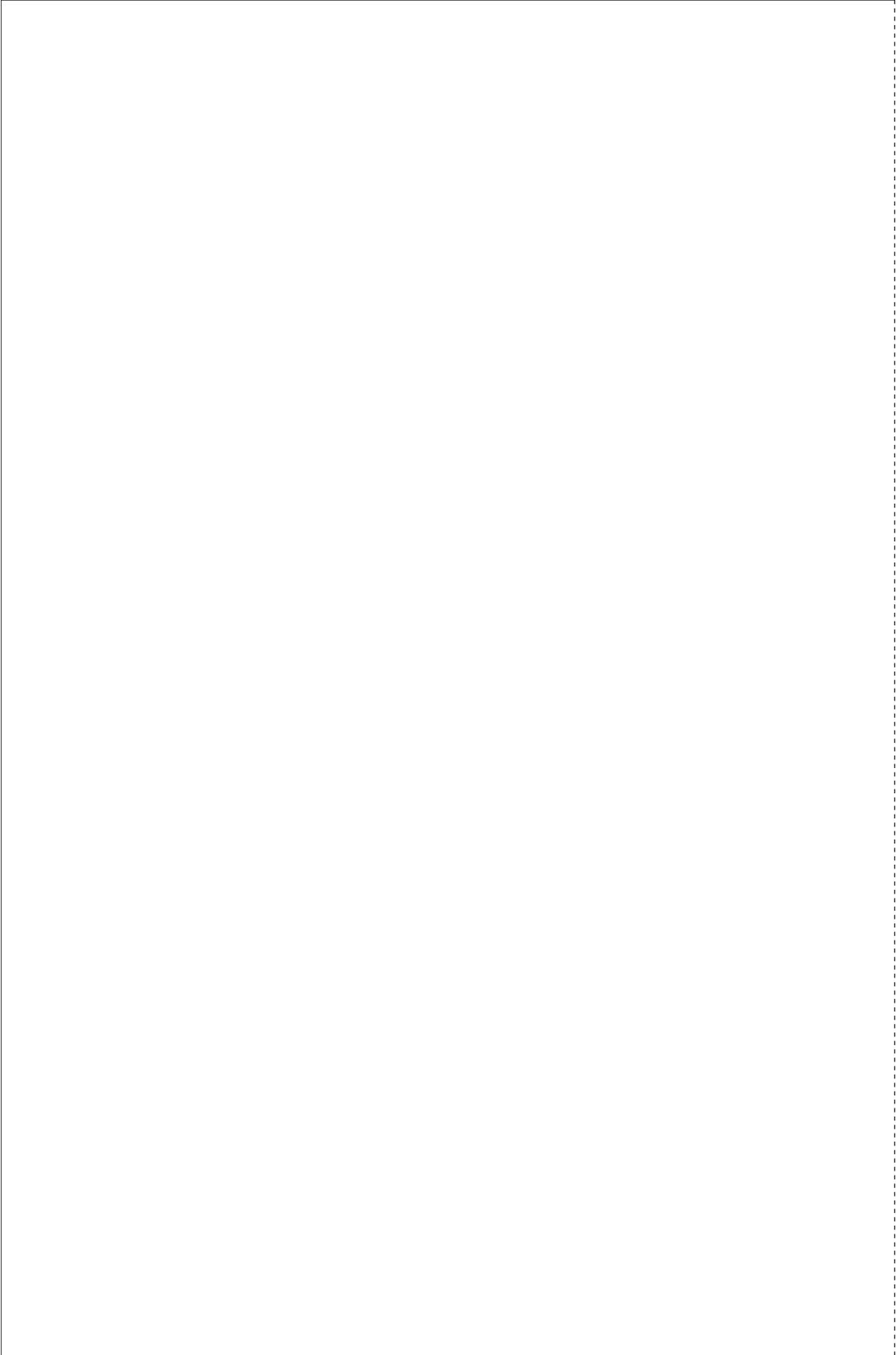
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PREFACE

ANDREW ASHTON

AUTUMN 2018 marked the 200th anniversary of the birth of Russian writer Ivan Turgenev (1818–1883). Vassar College Libraries and the Russian Department were especially interested in this event because of the Archives and Special Collections Library's holdings of a significant number of books once owned by the author. To mark this occasion, an exhibition has been organized drawing from this material. *Ivan Turgenev and His Library* is on view for the spring semester of the 2018–2019 academic year.

This catalogue accompanies and documents the exhibition. Essays by Vassar faculty shed light on the issues at hand and their context. The first, by Dan Ungurianu, offers a biographical study of Turgenev and touches on key issues in his life. Ronald Patkus discusses the Vassar collection in his essay, focusing on its history and components. Finally, Nikolai Firtich looks closely at one aspect of Turgenev's literary output and shows its relation to contemporary trends, particularly in the work of Hans Christian Andersen. Listings of the items in the collection, and in the exhibition, are also provided.

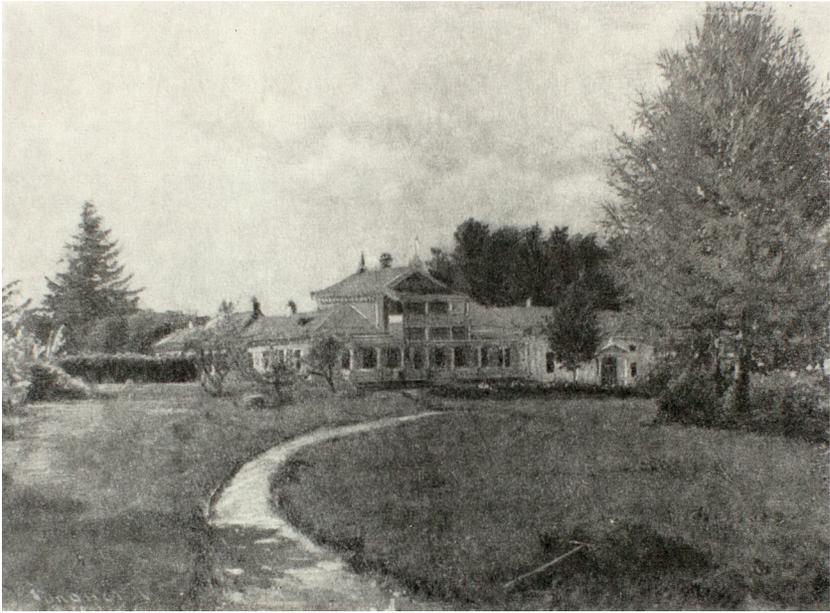
A number of people have been helpful in bringing the exhibition and related programs to fruition. Ronald Patkus conceived of the project and its connection to the anniversary year. Russian Department faculty members Nikolai Firtich and Dan Ungurianu were wonderful partners not only for the exhibition, but also for

collaborating on other related programs. Help in the logistics of creating the exhibition was provided by a number of people, including Sharyn Cadogan in the Library, who produced photographs, and George Laws, who assisted with caption panels. Student assistant Emma Fraizer helped with the production of exhibition checklists. Special thanks to the Hartmann Fund for providing financial support for the exhibition.

I hope this exhibition will bring attention to another of Vassar's amazing resources and its potential use by students, faculty, and groups outside the college.

ANDREW ASHTON is Director of the Libraries.

THE ESSAYS



Spasskoe, the family estate of Ivan Turgenev, from *Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev v portretakh...* (Prosveshchenie [Leningradskoe otd-nie], 1966).

TURGENEV BETWEEN RUSSIA AND EUROPE

DAN UNGURIANU

THE LEGACY of Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev (1818–1883) is twofold. First and foremost, he is one of Russia's greatest novelists of the nineteenth century or, for that matter, given the fact that this was the golden age of the novel, in all of Russian literature and European literature as well. In the West, he was considered the quintessential Russian writer during his lifetime and only gradually moved to the honorary third place, surpassed by Lev Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky, who—one should admit—are in a different “weight category.” As Turgenev himself put it, “Lyovushka [affectionate for Lev] Tolstoy is an elephant.” It is indeed easy to see how the contemplative and reticent Turgenev can be overshadowed by Dostoevsky's existential abysses or Tolstoy's epic grandeur. They are also very different as far as the formal characteristics of their novels are concerned. Dostoevsky and Tolstoy produced what is often described by Henry James's famous dictum as “large, loose, baggy monsters.” In contrast, Turgenev's novels are compact (in terms of length and the number of characters) and carefully crafted, in a way continuing the tradition of Alexander Pushkin's laconic prose.

And yet, Turgenev ascertained himself as a major writer with a loose and “baggy” work of another kind: a collection of sketches

titled *Notes of a Hunter* (1847–1851, also translated as *Sketches from a Hunter's Album*, *Sketches from a Sportsman's Notebook*, or *Hunter's Sketches*). Here Turgenev combined the fashionable trend of the so-called physiological sketch, a quasi-documentary genre of the nascent realist literature, with his own passion for hunting. The collection's narrator, who is wandering in his expeditions (small-game rifle hunting) through Russia's heartland, records his numerous encounters with people from various walks of life, many of them serf peasants. Although it avoids any political or social criticism or overt moralistic messages, *Notes of a Hunter* has been called Russia's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, since it portrays serf characters as diverse and unique individuals and implies that serfdom is equally unacceptable both for peasants and their masters. *Notes* is remarkable for its descriptions of Russian nature, which established Turgenev as one of the finest artists of verbal landscape.

Aside from *Notes*, Turgenev's reputation rests on his six major novels published between 1856 and 1877: *Rudin*, *A Nest of the Gentry*, *On the Eve*, *Fathers and Sons* (also translated as *Fathers and Children*), *Smoke*, and *Virgin Soil*. Two of them—*A Nest of the Gentry* (1859) and *Fathers and Sons* (1862)—are veritable masterpieces, *Fathers and Sons* being a serious candidate for an informal short list of the finest novels of the nineteenth century. In Russia, the publication of each of Turgenev's novels created a resonance that went far beyond the literary scene per se, causing heated public debates, since Turgenev, in his own words, strove to depict “the rapidly changing physiognomy of cultured Russians” against the background of the equally rapid historical transformation of their country. Among other things, the term *nihilist*, which gained popularity owing to *Fathers and Sons*, was used to describe an entire generation of Russian radicals. Turgenev's novellas are

usually less topical; the best of them deal with unhappy or lost love and include *Asya* (1858), *First Love* (1860), and *The Torrents of Spring* (1872).

Prior to his turn to prose, Turgenev wrote poetry, unremarkable and imitative, most of which left no trace in the history of Russian literature, with the exception of “The Misty Morning” (1843) that was set to music and has become one of the most beloved Russian romances. Turgenev also produced several plays, relatively successful in their own day but short-lived. His dramatic masterpiece *A Month in the Country* was written in 1859 but produced only in the 1870s, winning wide acclaim after the 1909 production at Moscow Art Theatre. In retrospect, Turgenev came to be seen as a precursor of Chekhovian dramaturgy.

Turgenev’s most famous short story is “Mumu” (1852), a tear-jerking tale about a serf who has to drown his best and only friend, the dog named Mumu, because of the caprice of his despotic mistress. Being part of the school curriculum in Russia, this story became a meme in Russian mass culture. A similar metamorphosis occurred to another piece by Turgenev included in the school curriculum, the ode to the “great and mighty Russian language” (a poem in prose from his *Senilia* collection, 1882). Nowadays, the “great and mighty” label is usually invoked in connection with the juicier aspects of the Russian idiom. Other works by Turgenev in the school curriculum are *Fathers and Sons* and excerpts from *Notes of a Hunter* (they did not undergo the carnivalesque lowering). Thus Turgenev’s name remains instantly recognizable, and his major works are still part of the cultural baggage of virtually all Russians. At Vassar, where Turgenev’s Library from Baden-Baden found its New World home, his work is likewise present in gateway courses for students of Russian literature. *Fathers and Sons* is taught as part of the Russian

Classics survey, while pieces from *Notes of a Hunter* are regularly included into the freshman writing seminar Russia and the Short Story.

Turgenev's oeuvre contains a number of recurring themes, motifs, and character types. His male heroes, with the exception of the mosaic of *Notes of a Hunter*, usually belong to his own social class (i.e., thoroughly westernized Russian gentry). Many of them fall under the category of the so-called superfluous men who abound in Russian literature of the 19th century and beyond (the term was actually coined by Turgenev in his 1850 novella titled *The Diary of a Superfluous Man*). They may be talented, clever, lofty, and subtle, but they lack resolve and willpower, and fail to realize their potential in social or personal spheres. A number of female heroines (the proverbial "Turgenev girls") are idealistic and gentle but display much greater strength and integrity in comparison to their male counterparts from whom they may seek, usually in vain, guidance in their spiritual search. Ultimately, both remain profoundly unhappy. Occasionally, Turgenev introduces exceptional, strong protagonists, men of action, and potentially great leaders, but even they fail in their encounter with reality. Thus, the Bulgarian patriot Insarov from *On the Eve* dies of illness before he arrives back to his native country to fight against Ottoman rule. Even more anticlimactic is the failure of Bazarov, the towering protagonist of *Fathers and Sons*, an extraordinary person and, in the eyes of his admirers, a leader of the coming revolution. A convinced empiricist and proponent of philosophical materialism, Bazarov succumbs to romantic love, the very existence of which he denies. Frustrated by rejection, he experiences a deep existential crisis and contracts a deadly infection from accidentally cutting himself during a routine autopsy. Such a turn of events is highly ironic, as the "autopsy"

of the world is very much at the core of the “physiological” approach to reality in the new era of scientific and technological progress.

Even more ironic in terms of literary history is the connection of the characters of Turgenev, who is a recognized master of realism, to the earlier romantic literature that was growing decidedly obsolete and out of fashion. Turgenev’s superfluous men have well-established ancestors, including Pushkin’s Onegin and Mikhail Lermontov’s Pechorin. The duo of a superfluous hero and a strong heroine, with the tragic impossibility of a happy ending, can be likewise traced to *Eugene Onegin*. Even Turgenev’s protagonists of the new type, extraordinary individuals rising above the crowd, are reincarnations of the Byronic hero, while the inability to realize their potential puts them into the category of the “superfluous men.” Turgenev must have been aware of this paradox. His Bazarov may deride Pushkin as the epitome of useless art, but Pushkin literally has the last word: the novel ends with the description of nature around Bazarov’s grave and contains a quotation from a philosophical poem by Pushkin.

In terms of style, Turgenev stands out for his melodic, flowing prose considered by some to be the gold standard of the Russian literary language. His overall tone is instantly recognizable and emerges already in *Notes of a Hunter*, whose narrator is a somewhat detached observer, keen and nonjudgmental (unless obvious caricatures are involved), marveling at the enormity of life, bewildered by the complexity of its numerous manifestations, and prone to a pervasive nostalgic intonation underscoring the fleeting nature of human existence.

Choosing a quintessential illustration of Turgenev’s style and themes, one could cite the following passage from *A Nest of the Gentry*. It describes the protagonist’s painful and yet soothing

homecoming, when he returns to the “womb” of the native land after his scathing experiences in Europe:

“Here am I as though I were at the bottom of the river,” Lavretsky thought again. “And here always, at all times, life is quiet and unhurried.... Whoever enters its charmed circle must submit to it: here there is nothing to worry about, nothing to disturb one.... And what strength there is everywhere, what vigour in this static peace! Just there, beneath the window, a rugged burdock shoves its way through the thick grass; above it lovage stretches its juicy stalk, angels’ tears unfurls its rosy curls higher still; and there, further off, in the fields, the rye gleams brightly burnished, and the oats have formed their little trumpet ears...” And once again he began to listen to the silence.... At that very time, in other places on the earth, life was seething, hurrying, roaring on its way; here the same life flowed by inaudibly, like water through marshy grass.... Anguish for the past was melting in his soul like spring snow and—strangest of all!—never before had he felt so deep and strong a feeling for his country. (Translation by Richard Freeborn)

Turgenev’s other major contribution is related to the fact that he played an important role in introducing Russian literature to the Western reading public. Initially this was achieved through his own popularity, as all of his major works, beginning with *Notes of a Hunter*, were translated into French, German, and English. Thus he became the first Russian author winning acclaim in Western Europe (and also in the U.S.) during his lifetime. Using his status as the pre-eminent Russian man of letters and his connections to the European cultural scene, he encouraged translation and publication of prose and poetry by many of his compatriots, from Pushkin, Lermontov, and Nikolai Gogol to contemporary authors.

Looking back at the overall trajectory of Turgenev's life, the following should be mentioned in our brief introduction. On the one hand, he was—in a very direct sense of the word—deeply rooted in the Russian soil. He was born in the city of Orel in southwestern Russia and grew up on his mother's estate in its vicinity. The Turgenevs, tracing their origins to a Tatar noble who came to Moscow in the fifteenth century, were a rather illustrious family. The Lutovinovs from his mother's side were a less distinguished but wealthy family of local landowners. However, Turgenev's childhood was less than idyllic. For his father, a dashing cavalry officer and a decorated veteran of 1812, the union with an older and somewhat homely yet very rich neighbor was a clear marriage of convenience. Although the couple had three children, the father did not burden himself with the duties of family life and had numerous affairs. The figure of an aloof but infinitely attractive father appears in the autobiographical novella *First Love*, one of Turgenev's best and most "cruel" works, where the father turns out to be the romantic rival of his own son.

Turgenev's relationship with his mother was likewise uneasy. Although loving and, in her own way, caring, she tended to be quite despotic with her children, and much more so with her "subjects," the serfs in the family's expansive estates (she was the owner of some five thousand "souls," i.e., adult male peasants). Her features are easily recognizable in a number of tyrannical noble women who populate Turgenev's work. Thus Turgenev grew up in an ancestral "family nest," surrounded with the beautiful countryside and traditional Russian life, and yet felt a sense of alienation both because of the family circumstances and, especially so, because of his moral aversion to serfdom.

Turgenev's early education was the typical homeschooling of westernized nobility, with an extraordinary emphasis on foreign

languages. Since childhood he had been fluent in French, German, and English. He continued his education at private boarding schools in Moscow and subsequently at the philological department of Moscow University and the philosophical department of St. Petersburg University. Turgenev also pursued graduate studies that would open a way to a teaching career at the university level, and passed the qualifying examinations, but stopped short of writing a dissertation.

Among the lesser known but interesting facts about Turgenev's life are the following. He briefly served at the Ministry of Internal Affairs (1843-1845), then noted for its liberal tendencies. However, in contrast to Gogol's experience, the world of government bureaucracy never became a theme in his writing. Also, Turgenev suffered from political persecution. In April 1852 he was imprisoned for a month for publishing an unauthorized obituary for Gogol and subsequently placed under house arrest in his estate until November 1853. However, unlike Pushkin, Lermontov, or Dostoevsky, he never enjoyed the reputation of an exiled artist.

The prevailing image of Turgenev as a person is that of a "gentle giant," a tall man of strong build but extremely delicate and often indecisive. There is, however, some anecdotal evidence, especially dating back to his younger years, that adds color to this attractive and dignified but somewhat bland image. For example, Turgenev could show outbursts of temper when confronted with ugly manifestations of serfdom. Once when his mother decided, as a form of punishment, to sell a serf girl to a cruel neighbor, Turgenev provided shelter for the victim and threatened the police with a rifle, forcing them to retreat (a criminal case was opened against him in this connection). On another occasion, when Turgenev was coming home for summer vacation, his mother ordered all her numerous servants to line up along the road to loudly greet

the young master. The enraged Turgenev turned his coach and headed back to St. Petersburg without saying hello to his mother. In St. Petersburg, his fellow writers, people of modest means, not knowing that his allowance from home had been severely cut, kept complaining that Turgenev would never treat them to an elegant aristocratic dinner. Turgenev did invite them but then reenacted Gogol's short story "The Carriage": when his guests showed up at the appointed time, Turgenev was not at home. Carried away by his own stories, he could embellish them very much in the spirit of Khlestakov from *The Inspector General*. In another example of stylized behavior, he would appear in high society dressed in the most foppish manner, pretending to be a disenchanted Byronic character in the vein of Onegin (or perhaps this was not mere stylization). As an antidote to the overly lofty and idealistic discourse, Turgenev could employ acts of *épatage*. Thus he claimed that his knees itched and his calves ached from contemplating beautiful works of art. He could discharge a tense intellectual argument by climbing to the windowsill and crowing like a rooster. Or he would bewilder ladies by pretending to be insane and running around with disheveled hair and bulging eyes.

Turgenev had a number of platonic relationships with women of his own circle and also more-carnal affairs with women from lower classes (he had a daughter born by a seamstress employed by his mother). The most important "significant other" in his life was the French opera diva Pauline Viardot, who performed in Russia for extended periods of time. She was of Spanish extraction and, characteristically, Turgenev learned Spanish to be able to converse with her in her native language. The exact nature of their relationship has been the subject of much speculation, especially since he was close friends with Pauline's husband, who was a fellow hunter and Turgenev's collaborator in French translations of

Russian literature. Turgenev's infatuation with Pauline lasted for almost four decades, from their first encounter in 1843 until his death. He spent much time at the Viardots' household and took residence near them; his own illegitimate daughter was brought up together with the two daughters of the Viardots.

Turgenev's relations with his Russian colleagues were not always idyllic. Ivan Goncharov publicly accused him of plagiarism, so a special informal panel of prominent authors convened and cleared Turgenev of all charges, explaining the parallels in the works of the two writers by the similarity of their subject matter. Turgenev's relationship with Dostoevsky was off to an awkward start, as the brilliant young aristocrat would taunt the insecure and clumsy, yet overly ambitious, Dostoevsky. Although they did collaborate later in life, Dostoevsky bore the grudge for a long time. In his *Devils*, Dostoevsky caricatured Turgenev as the fashionable writer Karmazinov, who tiptoes around young radicals in order to flee Russia before the outbreak of a violent revolution. Turgenev befriended Tolstoy at the very beginning of the latter's literary career (Tolstoy even stayed at Turgenev's apartment in St. Petersburg), but subsequently they had a serious quarrel that almost ended in a duel. The absurdity of the situation was translated by Turgenev into the duel scene in *Fathers and Sons*.

But overall Turgenev had a rare gift for establishing connections and maintained an extremely wide social circle. In Russia it included virtually every cultural figure of importance from the 1840s onward. Highly conducive to this was his open-mindedness and readiness to interact with people who held views different from his own. A convinced westernizer, he could be on good terms with Slavophiles; some of his Slavophile admirers claimed that he was a westernizer only intellectually, while all his deeper impulses were Russian. A liberal, he could get along with both conservatives

and revolutionaries: he was a close friend of Mikhail Bakunin and Alexander Herzen, his contacts with Herzen becoming a reason for an official interrogation in Russia. Turgenev admitted to friendship with the purported “state criminal” and added that in general he considered a conversation about his acquaintances impractical, as the mere list of people he knew would not fit into the notebook used for the protocol.

Turgenev was close friends with Gustave Flaubert, Edmond de Goncourt, Émile Zola, and Alphonse Daudet; in the mid 1870s the five would meet for regular monthly dinners in Paris. He also had friends among younger writers, in particular Guy de Maupassant and Henry James, both of whom readily acknowledged their indebtedness to the Russian master. His other European acquaintances and correspondents included Victor Hugo, George Sand, Prosper Mérimée, Anatole France, Théophile Gautier, Hippolyte Taine, Ernest Renan, Jules Massenet, Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Benjamin Disraeli, Florence Nightingale, Thomas Macaulay, Thomas Carlyle (there is a book signed by him in the Vassar collection), and numerous others.

In geographical and also cultural terms, the trajectory of Turgenev’s life followed a zigzagging line between Russia and Europe. Turgenev went to Europe for the first time as a child in 1822, the family voyage lasting for almost a year. Thereafter he traveled frequently, with more than one third of his life spent in Europe. Upon his graduation from St. Petersburg University, he studied philosophy in Berlin for two years. Turgenev undertook another extensive trip from 1847 to 1850, witnessing the bloodshed of the revolution in France. From 1856–1858, he went to Europe again, this time also visiting England. In 1863, the Viardots settled in Baden-Baden, the fashionable resort frequented by the high society of Europe and Russia. Turgenev followed suit, partially presenting

this move as a self-imposed exile in response to the overwhelming hostility of Russian radical critics who saw in *Fathers and Sons* a caricature of the young generation.

The eight years he spent in Baden-Baden, from 1863 to 1870, are usually described as a happy period. Turgenev built an elegant villa where he hosted numerous visitors. He spent much of his time at the Viardots', enjoying the atmosphere of their salon. Turgenev took advantage both of the excellent hunting grounds of the Black Forest and of Baden-Baden's rich and cosmopolitan cultural scene. Turgenev himself, with his international reputation, imposing physique, and manners of a Russian aristocrat, was its important fixture. As one exalted Russian lady recalls, because of Turgenev's talent and handsomeness, a group of his compatriots visiting Baden-Baden nicknamed him "God of Gods," "Jupiter," "the Olympian," or simply "the God." The most important literary works written by Turgenev during this time include "The Ghosts" (1863) and "The Dog" (1866), two mystical tales, a genre not at all characteristic for Turgenev, and *Smoke* (1867), one of his major novels, the action of which is set primarily in Baden-Baden.

The Baden-Baden idyll ended in 1870 when the Viardots moved out because of anti-French sentiments in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War, which was highly ironic, since they were staunch opponents of the Second Empire. Eventually they ended up in Bougival, a fashionable suburb of Paris, where Turgenev also built a chalet that was to become his last abode. The 1870s were for Turgenev a period of declining health, but also brought him universal recognition. In Europe, he was hailed as one of the greatest living authors. In Russia, the feud with the younger generation became a thing of the past, and Turgenev received an enthusiastic welcome during his visits to his native land. According to Turgenev's will, his body was to be brought for burial to St. Petersburg. His final

homecoming became a major public event and a posthumous triumph. Classes were cancelled at institutions of higher learning, and thousands of people bid farewell to Turgenev on his way to his final resting place at St. Petersburg's Volkovo Cemetery.

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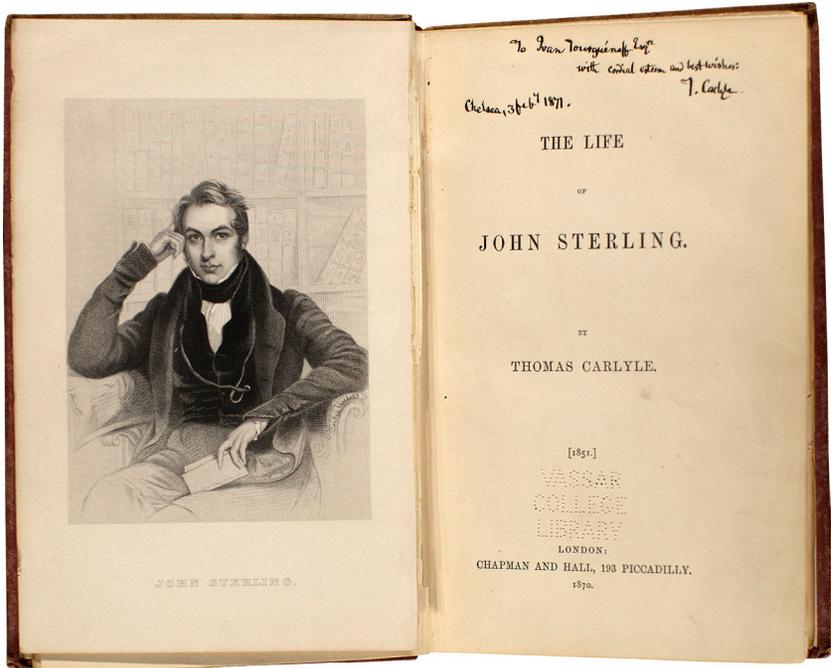
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Vassar's copy of *The Life of John Sterling*, inscribed by the author (Thomas Carlyle) to Turgenev.

THE TURGENEV LIBRARY

AT VASSAR

RONALD PATKUS

VASSAR's Archives and Special Collections Library holds a range of literary and historical treasures, many of them relating to authors, figures, and works produced in England and the United States. Yet there are also highlights relating to other areas of the world. The Library includes, for instance, a number of collections touching on Russian history and literature. Among them are a charter of Tsar Alexis of Russia (1629-1676); documents signed by Catherine the Great (1729-1796); letters of Tolstoy (1828-1910); and rare publications from the early Soviet era. Also of special note are books that formed part of the library of the writer Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883).

Along with Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, Turgenev still ranks as one of the great Russian literary figures of the nineteenth century.¹ His family was part of the minor nobility, and as a young boy he lived at Spasskoe, the family estate (on his mother's side) south of Moscow. He attended university in Moscow and St. Petersburg, then lived for a time in Berlin. He returned to Russia and briefly served in the government. During the 1840s he belonged to a literary circle and began publishing his own works. In the years following, he produced a variety of essays, short stories, plays, and novels; among the best known are *Notes of a Hunter*,

A Month in the Country, *A Nest of the Gentry*, and *Fathers and Sons*. Throughout his life Turgenev spent long periods of time living outside of Russia, often to be closer to the singer Pauline Viardot (1821–1910) and her family. Having spent so much time in places like France, Germany, and England, his outlook was greatly influenced by the West.²

Being a person of means with intellectual interests, Turgenev collected many books. During his lifetime they were scattered in several places, in part due to his travels. The library at Spasskoe reflected his life to about the age of forty; it includes works in the classics, German Romanticism, French history, and Spanish literature.³ Later in life Turgenev helped found a library for the Russian community in Paris; he donated books to the institution, which now bears his name.⁴ Together these two collections form substantial holdings, but they don't seem to have accounted for everything. The titles that are part of the Turgenev Library at Vassar are thought to have derived primarily from his years in Germany.

What are the contents of the Turgenev Library at Vassar? Altogether there are nearly five hundred volumes by various authors and dealing with a range of subjects, especially literature and history (see the exhibition checklist for examples). Some are multi-volume sets. A close look at the titles reveals that they are all in either English, German, or French; none are in Russian. They seem to represent, therefore, just one portion of the author's books. Many of these works do, however, deal in some way with Russia. A small number are presentation volumes for Turgenev from their authors. Of special note is an 1870 edition of Thomas Carlyle's (1795–1881) *The Life of John Sterling*, inscribed to Turgenev on the title page. One would hope to find evidence of Turgenev's reading in the collection, but unfortunately, few books are annotated in any significant way. There are some English first editions, including

works by Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809–1892) and Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882). Most of the books have a special ex libris, or bookplate, indicating that they belonged to Turgenev (see picture at beginning of this essay). Many of the books are in their original bindings, thereby offering a view of a nineteenth-century library.

Williston S. Hough (1860–1912), an American academic, was the first owner of these books after Turgenev. For many years he was attached to the George Washington University in Washington, DC. Hough translated and wrote a number of books in the field of philosophy, including the three-volume *A History of Philosophy* and *The Problem of Human Life as Viewed by the Great Thinkers from Plato to the Present Time*. From 1905 he was Professor of Philosophy in the university's Columbia College. He also served as Dean of the Division of Education, later called the Teachers College, from 1907 until his untimely death in 1912.

Hough treasured and maintained his collection of books from Turgenev's Library in his home for many years. How did he come into possession of them? In a letter to Vassar History Professor Lucy Maynard Salmon (1853–1927) in February 1910, he wrote:

I acquired the collection in Berlin directly from the heirs of Tourgueneff, as nearly as I can remember in the Autumn of 1886, or the Winter or Spring of 1887. They were represented to me as constituting the English, French, and German part of his library. But of course he must have owned many books in these languages not included in the collection. My own conjecture has been that these books were a portion of his library left behind at Baden-Baden when, late in his life, he went to Paris...⁵

During the nineteenth century many Russians visited Baden-Baden, a spa town near the Black Forest. Turgenev moved there

in 1863 to be closer to the Viardots, and stayed there until 1870, when the Franco-Prussian War broke out. Several biographers have noted how much Turgenev loved this place, one going so far as to say that his years there were perhaps the happiest in his life.⁶ Some indication of this is given by the fact that he decided to build a house there. Due to financial difficulties he later sold the house to Pauline Viardot's husband, Louis (1800–1883), and rented it back from him. Given this situation, it seems plausible that books not only were gathered there, but they may have stayed there after Turgenev left. In fact, some books in the Vassar collection date later than 1870. There are bills of sale for a number of works, showing they were purchased in Paris in 1879.

But how did these books come to Vassar? To answer this question, one must look to Hough's earliest ties to the college. We know that as early as 1897 he corresponded with Lucy Maynard Salmon, the famous professor of history who actively promoted the use of primary sources in her teaching. In that year, Salmon was visiting Europe and she wrote to Hough, a frequent traveler there, seeking advice. Hough responded and made suggestions about people and places she could see in Germany. The two continued to be in touch in succeeding years, including in 1901, when Hough was getting married and moving to a new home. He wrote to Salmon several times over the course of the summer. She had agreed to take possession of the Turgenev Library, and even to look for a possible donor. It appears, however, that no donor was then found, and at some point the books were returned to Hough.⁷

The discussion, however, became serious again in early 1910. Apparently Hough and Salmon had talked about the books at the University Club in New York, and Hough followed up with a letter on February 12. Here he brought up the issue of price. Although someone he knew at the Library of Congress thought the collection

was worth \$1,000, Hough was willing to sell it to Vassar for \$500, especially in light of Salmon's "long, self-sacrificing efforts." He mentioned, too, that it was a great satisfaction "to have the original plan and hope consummated"; perhaps this referred to the original attempt to transfer the collection in the early years of the century. In any case, at the end of the month he sent another letter, with an overview of the contents of the collection. Finally, at the end of March, he wrote again to say that he had packed and shipped the books, and they were on their way to Poughkeepsie. Hough admitted that he "found it a little hard to part" with the books; to him they seemed "like old friends." Nevertheless, he was happy they would be "in the possession of friends who appreciate them."⁸

It should come as no surprise that Salmon was interested in seeing the collection come to the college. During her tenure at Vassar, she not only taught from primary sources, but also helped acquire a number of collections. Today in the Archives and Special Collections Library, for instance, there exists a collection of historical materials gathered by Salmon.⁹ Moreover, original materials were sometimes donated to the college in her honor by alumnae. They were taking part in her project to build a useful collection for undergraduate teaching and learning. In the case of the Turgenev Library, Vassar's class of 1882 was the key underwriter of the project. The class representative was Elizabeth Howe (1860-1942), who lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and was a regular donor to the Library; among other things, she gave Vassar one of its editions of the works of Geoffrey Chaucer, printed by William Morris's (1834-1896) Kelmscott Press. Howe consulted with her classmates and discussed details of the Turgenev acquisition with Adelaide Underhill (1860-1936), the Vassar reference librarian.¹⁰ Underhill had a close relationship with Salmon, and often collaborated with her on adding collections to the Library.¹¹

The gift of the Turgenev Library was made in honor of Frances A. Wood (1840–1914), who had a long career at Vassar. From 1866 to 1870 she taught music, and then for the next decade she taught English. Her longest assignment, though, was from 1880–1910, when she served as librarian. During this time period the Thompson Library was constructed (previously, the Library was housed in the Main Building), and collections grew significantly. This growth and development is described in a 1908 article Wood wrote for the *Vassar Miscellany*.¹² She also wrote another piece for the same periodical, published the next year, titled “Earliest Years at Vassar.”¹³ In 1910 Wood decided to retire from the college, and because of this the graduates of the class of 1882 thought of her at this time. It would be difficult to think of a more appropriate way to honor the numerous contributions of this librarian.

A number of things happened once the books arrived in the Library. From documents that survive in Special Collections, we know that Vassar was determined early on to have certain of Turgenev’s books bound.¹⁴ There were about one hundred of these. The Library contracted this work to the library agent and export bookseller Émile Terquem of Paris, France, with whom the Library had worked in the past. The work went fairly quickly and was completed by the end of the calendar year. Today some books in the collection are not in their original bindings; they were likely rebound by the Library at some point due to excessive wear. Apart from binding, the Library also catalogued the books. In the early twentieth century this would have meant creating cards for the card catalogue. Call numbers for books were devised according to the Dewey Decimal System; the Library of Congress classification system was adopted toward the end of the century. The Library also provided markings for its books. In other words, steps were taken to identify these books as belonging to the col-

lege. They were perforated on the title page by a stamp that read “Vassar College Library”; the call number and name of the collection was written in pencil, usually on the next page; and the accession number was stamped in ink at the bottom of this same page. Although the books already had a bookplate in the upper left corner of the front pastedown indicating Turgenev as the owner, Vassar in addition applied two others to the center of the pastedown. One was a general Library bookplate (sometimes with the school seal at its center), and one read “Turgenev Collection | Gift of | Class of 1882.” Finally, as was typical for any new acquisition at that time, all of the books were listed by a staff member in the Library Accessions Register. Here the staff recorded the bibliographic information of each item, as well as notes about size and binding. This took a couple of weeks, as all of the entries were handwritten, and there were hundreds of them. The books for the Turgenev Library were not entered until December 1917. Each volume has its own line; together they represent accession numbers 100001–100465.¹⁵

An important question for the Library from the beginning was whether the collection should be kept together. Hough of course felt that the books should remain as a unit, and he mentioned this in his correspondence. We know that in 1915 the Library handbook noted the books were housed as a unit in the Treasure Room (no Special Collections Department existed until many years later).¹⁶ This arrangement must have persisted for some time. Yet over the years, likely in the mid-to-late twentieth century, something changed. Although the exact timing of the moves is unclear, it turned out that at some point the collection was indeed divided, with some titles in the Turgenev Library going to the Main Library and others to Special Collections. Eventually some were even transferred to the Library Annex. What is more, a few items were

actually withdrawn from the Library; this is noted in the Library Accessions Register. It's difficult to know what guided these various decisions, but in any case it appears that the connection to Turgenev was not a determining factor.

In recent years, given the important provenance of these books, an effort was made to recover all titles that had been moved to either the Main Library or its Annex. This was a laborious process, requiring consulting of original records, examining catalogue records, comparing editions, keeping records, and moving documents, etc. Yet over time much was done, and the entirety of Vassar's Turgenev Library is now housed in Special Collections. According to a current search in the catalogue, there are 252 titles that once belonged to Turgenev. The number of actual volumes is greater than this, since some titles are multivolume works.¹⁷ All volumes are now protected in a secure environment, similar to the way they were handled in the Treasure Room about one hundred years ago. Of course they are also available to students and other researchers.

Even this quick review of a portion of the books once belonging to Ivan Turgenev shows us that they have had a long history. Since their first resting in the library of an important literary figure, they have traveled to several places and, in some cases, have been physically altered. Yet for the most part they have remained intact, and now they form a treasured part of the Special Collections Library at an elite American institution of higher learning. Their value is clear. These books are useful texts that reveal the knowledge of a previous age. One may consult them, for instance, without regard or interest in Turgenev or his career, in order to learn about any number of subjects. At the same time, they do in some way provide a view of the writer's reading, and though there are few annotations, ultimately his thoughts. As physical artifacts,

they both represent and document the past. We hope the 200th anniversary of the author's birth will inspire a closer look at these objects and perhaps a better understanding of Turgenev's world.

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NOTES

1. Biographer A. V. Knowles wrote, "For a decade or so in the middle of the nineteenth century Turgenev was the best known, most widely read, and most controversial writer in Russia, and later he became the first Russian novelist to achieve international recognition." See Knowles's *Ivan Turgenev* (1988), p. 129.
2. For an overview of Turgenev's life, see Leonard Schapiro, *Turgenev: His Life and Times* (1982).
3. Schapiro, *Turgenev*, p. 99.
4. See website of the Turgenev Library: <http://tourguenev.fr/>. For an interesting article on the later history of the Library, see Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, *The Odyssey of the Turgenev Library from Paris, 1940-2002: Books as Victims and Trophies of War*, IISH Research Papers, Vol. 42 (2002).
5. Letter of Williston S. Hough to Lucy Maynard Salmon, February 10, 1910, in the Collection File on the Turgenev Library in the Archives and Special Collections Library.

6. Schapiro, *Turgenev*, p. 193. See also V. S. Pritchett, "Turgenev in Baden," *New York Review of Books*, February 17, 1977.
7. See the Collection File on the Turgenev Library.
8. All of these letters are located in the same Collection File.
9. For a listing, see http://specialcollections.vassar.edu/collections/manuscripts/findingaids/salmon_historical.html.
10. Several letters between Howe and Underhill survive in the Collection File on the Turgenev Library.
11. Chara Haeussler Bohan, *Go to the Sources: Lucy Maynard Salmon and the Teaching of History* (2004), p. 53. See also Lucy Maynard Salmon and Adelaide Underhill, <https://digitallibrary.vassar.edu/collections/salmon-underhill>.
12. "The Evolution of the Library," *Vassar Miscellany*, Vol. XXXVII, Number 6, 1 March 1908.
13. *Vassar Miscellany*, Vol. XXXVIII, Number 4, 1 January 1909.
14. See the Collection File on the Turgenev Library.
15. The Accessions Register is located in the College Archives.
16. *Handbook* (1915), p. 25.
17. A full list is included in this catalogue.

ART VERSUS ARTIFICIALITY

The Nightingales of Ivan Turgenev and Hans Christian Andersen

NIKOLAI FIRTICH

Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day,
First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill...

JOHN MILTON, Sonnet I (To Nightingale)

THE BOOKS from Ivan Turgenev's Library in the Special Collections of Vassar College Library testify to the versatility of the writer's interests and to his awareness of the world's cultures. They also illuminate Turgenev's legendary command of a number of European languages, including English, German, French, and Italian, in which he freely corresponded with his contemporaries. The range of Turgenev's epistolary addressees is very impressive indeed. It includes such literary luminaries as Thomas Carlyle, Henry James, George Eliot (Mary Anne Evans), Victor Hugo, Gustave Flaubert, George Sand (Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin), Émile Zola, and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, to name just a few. The exhibition organized by the Special Collections Library encourages us to further investigate Turgenev's creations vis-à-vis various literary traditions of the period as well as individual authors.

The present essay will address Turgenev's artful engagement of the nightingale as a symbol of true, natural art in his major

novel *A Nest of the Gentry* (1859), in order to illuminate not only the conflict of art with artificiality, but also the tragic fate of the main protagonists' love for each other. In the course of this discussion I will compare Turgenev's imagery with the similar role of the nightingale as a metaphor for nature's authenticity crafted by Turgenev's contemporary, the great Danish storyteller Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875), in his famous fairy tale "The Nightingale" (1844). Andersen was well known and respected in Russia, receiving positive evaluations from such influential literary critics as Vissarion Belinsky (1811-1848) and Vladimir Stasov (1824-1906), whose sister, Nadezhda Stasova (1822-1895), translated Andersen's fairy tales in the early 1850s. Considering Turgenev's attention to world literature, we can assume that Turgenev was familiar with Andersen's tales, while Andersen had the Russian writer's works in his library.

The central intrigue of Turgenev's novel involves Fyodor Ivanovich Lavretsky, a nobleman who, after the bitter separation from his unfaithful wife, returns to his Russian country estate and to Liza, daughter of his distant cousin Marya Dmitrievna Kalitina. In fact most of the novel's action takes place at the Kalitinas' manor, which is also frequented by Vladimir Nikolaich Panshin, a dashing young civil servant from St. Petersburg who is trying to win Liza's favor. It is during one of the evenings at the Kalitinas' house that the principal confrontation between Lavretsky and Panshin occurs.

At first glance, the sound of the nightingale's song during the argument between Panshin and Lavretsky, in the middle of chapter thirty-three of Turgenev's novel, appears to have only a secondary, background function. However, given the philosophical significance of the Lavretsky-Panshin debate, which revolves around the conflict of nature with artificiality, and the importance



“Lavretsky gazed...”, frontispiece for *A Nobleman's Nest* (Scribner's, 1922).

of the events that immediately follow their argument (Liza's and Lavretsky's mutual declaration of love), the nightingale's song acquires a symbolic semantic coloring.

The chapter starts with the hostess, Marya Dmitrievna Kalitina, ordering all doors and windows into the garden to be opened and announcing that in such wonderful weather one should not play cards but enjoy nature, addressing Lavretsky and Panshin as guests of the house. Turgenev immediately alerts us to Panshin's state of mind with the following comment: "Stimulated by the beauty of the evening and conscious of a flow of artistic sensations, but not caring to sing before Lavretsky, he chose to read some poetry...."¹ Thus, by means of a few opening sentences, Turgenev outlines the significance of nature and art in the chapter and also makes an ironic comment about Panshin's character. For though he is unwilling to sing, he nevertheless cannot resist the desire to "sound off" and proceeds with reciting poetry that turns into a speech critical of Russia's backwardness. In effect he begins to sing his own favorite tune.

In the middle of Panshin's tirade, which, as Turgenev comments, was eloquent but tinted with hidden spite, we learn of a nightingale that lives in the Kalitinas' garden:

The first evening notes of a nightingale that had made its nest in a large lilac bush of the Kalitinas' garden filled the pauses of his oration; the first stars lit up in the rose-tinted sky over the motionless tops of the limes. Lavretsky rose up and began to remonstrate with Panshin: a dispute sprang up. (327)

The sequence of events is of utmost importance. Throughout the first page of the chapter, Panshin's voice is interrupted only by the author's comments and Marya Dmitrievna's approving

nods. When Panshin reaches the peak in his speech, stating that government institutions could change the Russian people's very way of life if necessary, the first sounds of the nightingale can be heard in the intervals of his speech, as if nature herself could not tolerate the speaker's tirade any longer and decided to contradict him with its song. At this point Lavretsky enters the conversation. Therefore Panshin's speech is interrupted by the nightingale's song, and Lavretsky, as if on cue from the nightingale, confronts Panshin with his arguments.

We already know from the previous chapters that Lavretsky was especially sensitive to the voices of nature. Upon his return home to Vasil'Evscoe, he listened to the quiet sounds of village life:

He sat at the window without stirring, listening, as it were, to the current of peaceful life flowing around him, to the rare sounds of country quietude. From somewhere under the nettles came a faint high note; a gnat took up the tune. The note died away, but the gnat went on humming; through the measured, persistent and plaintive buzzing of the flies came the loud drone of the bumblebee hitting its head incessantly against the ceiling; outside the cock crowed, hanging hoarsely on the last note; a cart lumbered by; a gate creaked somewhere in the village. (285)

The smallest sounds did not escape Lavretsky's ear. The quiet stream of nature's life had a healing effect on his soul and awakened in him a particularly deep sense of his homeland. We also know that his heart was open to the mysterious magic of nature, emphasized by Turgenev in the following passage:

The loveliness of the summer night entered his soul; everything around him seemed so suddenly strange, and yet so long and so

sweetly familiar...Lavretsky's horse stepped out briskly, swaying gently from side to side; its long dark shadow moved along beside it; there was something strangely fascinating in the tramp of its hoofs, something elating and alluring in the ringing cry of the quails.

Therefore we can assume that the very poetic sensitivity of Lavretsky's soul would have allowed him to hear nature's message, conveyed by the nightingale's song, and tune in.

Panshin, instead of contemplating the peaceful evening, brings the reader into the stale, stifling atmosphere of bureaucratic institutions, exposing his complete detachment from the essence of the Russian way of life, which in the view of Lavretsky, and undoubtedly of the author himself, lies in profound attachment to the land. The sound of the nightingale's song, heard through the open window, creates a counterpoint to Panshin's speech and brings us back into the realm of nature. So in effect two melodies can be heard in the chapter: Panshin's tune of bureaucratic mediocrity and the song of a real nightingale, which Lavretsky shares. Lavretsky succeeds in defeating Panshin in the argument, by proving to him the fruitlessness of changes administered from the heights of bureaucratic self-indulgence. Significantly the chapter concludes with the song of a nightingale.

Now let us turn to Andersen's "The Nightingale," which I will summarize here in order to draw a parallel between these two stories based on the authors' similar approaches to the nature-versus-artificiality theme. In Andersen's tale, which takes place in China, a nightingale, whose beautiful voice was admired far beyond China's borders, is finally discovered by the emperor and invited to sing in court. The courtiers sent to find the bird (whose ignorance of the natural world was such that they mistook the

cow's moos and the frog's croaks for the sounds of the nightingale) are only able to fulfill their mission with the help of a little kitchen maid, who leads them into the woods where the nightingale lives. The nightingale then becomes the favorite of the emperor and is considered China's greatest treasure.

One day the emperor receives a gift from abroad—an artificial nightingale all covered with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires. When wound up, the bird is able to sing one of the tunes of the authentic nightingale. The two birds are then made to sing a duet, and of course it is not successful because the mechanical bird can only sing one song over and over again. Despite this, the artificial nightingale becomes an instant sensation at the court, as the music master decides that it keeps perfect time and is very much in his style. No one notices that the real nightingale has slipped away through an open window. It is banished from the country for its ingratitude, and the artificial nightingale becomes the High Imperial Night-Table Singer. Everybody in the country loves it, for it sings only one tune that everyone can learn by heart. A poor fisherman, who had heard the real nightingale, says: "It sounds pretty enough, and it sounds like the other, but there is something missing; I don't know what it is."

Soon afterward, however, the mechanical bird breaks down and the emperor becomes ill. Death sits on the dying emperor's chest, and visions of his good and bad deeds surround him. The emperor longs for music to drown out the persisting echoes of his past deeds, pleading with the artificial bird on his night table to sing. But, of course, the bird cannot make a sound. At this moment the beautiful sound of the real nightingale's song starts to flow into the room through an open window. As the bird sings, the emperor's visions grow paler and paler, and even Death listens to the nightingale's magnificent song and feels a longing for

his own garden, and finally “float[s] like a cold mist out of the window.”

The emperor is revived and asks the bird to stay and live with him at the palace. The nightingale declines but promises to come and sing to the emperor from the branch outside his window about everything that goes on in his land. In exchange he makes the emperor promise to tell no one that he has a little bird that comes and sings for him.

“The Nightingale” is a marvelous fable of nature versus artificiality, and this conflict is illustrated not only by the contrast between the real nightingale and the mechanical bird, but also by the contrast between the ordinary Chinese people (represented by the fisherman and the poor kitchen maid) on one hand, and by the Chinese imperial palace, with its courtiers and civil servants, on the other. The difference is to be found even in the palace gardens: in the remote parts, where the inhabitants of the palace never go, there are deep lakes and glorious woods going right down to the sea; in the garden immediately outside the palace, there are only rare and precious flowers, with silver bells attached in order to draw attention to them. Above these differences sits the Chinese emperor himself, almost a prisoner of his surroundings, but with appreciation of real values when he has a chance to see or hear them. The story manifests the author’s strong conviction that art and nature are inseparable. Behind the mystical appearance of the nightingale’s ability to dispel Death lies Andersen’s own faith in art’s defiance of Death, and in true art’s immortality.

Let us now consider the events of the episode in *A Nest of the Gentry*, where the nightingale makes an appearance, in light of Andersen’s tale. As I have suggested earlier, two voices can be heard in the chapter: Panshin’s, and the nightingale’s joined by Lavretsky. What do we learn of Panshin and his talents prior to

this episode? We learn that he was an attractive “excellent fellow,” or “*un charmant garçon*,” who possessed admirable social skills that assisted him in climbing up the bureaucratic ranks. We also learn that he was not without artistic gifts; in Turgenev’s words: “He could turn his hand to anything: he sang charmingly, sketched dexterously, wrote verses and was not at all bad at theatricals” (229). We suspect that before us is someone who was good at many things, but great at nothing in particular.

Turgenev skillfully draws a portrait of an attractive mediocrity with a brilliant future and shallow content, without any particularly strong beliefs or creative ideas of his own. He is not unlike Andersen’s artificial bird covered with beautiful stones on the outside, but endowed with extremely limited creative potential. A significant detail that brings Panshin even closer to the mechanical bird that repeats the same song is his fine ability to draw the *same landscape* over and over:

Liza came back; Panshin took a seat near the window and opened the album. “Ah!” said he. “So you’ve begun to copy my landscape—fine! Very good indeed! Only just here—pass me a pencil—the shadows are not quite heavy enough. Look here.” And Panshin dashed off several long strokes. He was *forever drawing the same landscapes*: large straggling trees in the foreground, a bit of meadow in the background and jagged mountains on the skyline. (238) (*Italics mine—N.F.*)

Instead of advising Liza to draw her own landscape, Panshin praises her copy of his drawing. Therefore we may say that imitation, along with the repetition, form substantial parts of Panshin’s character. In Andersen’s tale the artificial bird’s repertoire consists of just one melody, which was the imitation of one of

the real nightingale's songs. For Turgenev, the great master of poetic landscape, sensitive to every change of color and tone, every line and shape in nature, Panshin's kind of repetitiousness in his interpretation of a landscape would have been an indication of the total lack of understanding of the life of nature.

On the other hand, Lavretsky, who does not draw, sing, play, or act, is much closer to nature and art, for he is able to listen, see, and contemplate creatively. His reaction to the newly composed piano cantata of the local piano teacher, Christopher Lemm, is a good example of his ability to appreciate the power of true art:

It was long since Lavretsky had heard anything of the kind: the tender passionate melody gripped the heart from the very first note; it was all aglow, languishing with the fire of inspiration, joy and beauty; it rose and melted on the air; it spoke of everything that is precious, unutterable and hallowed on earth; it breathed of immortal sadness, and ascended dying to the heavenly spheres.
(332-333)

While Lavretsky's response to Lemm's music is poetic and spiritual, Panshin's reaction to the same cantata is almost philistine. Trying to please Lemm, he calls the composition a "wonderful piece" and pompously comments on the "usefulness" of serious music.

During their argument Lavretsky confronts Panshin's arrogant assertion, that governmental institutions are capable of changing and molding the Russian people's way of life as they see fit, with this defense:

Lavretsky championed the youth and independence of Russia; he was ready to immolate himself and his generation, but he stood

up for the new men, their convictions and their aspirations... he coolly defeated Panshin on all points. He proved to him the impracticability of changing things at a bound, of changes from above born in the overweening minds of officialdom, justified neither by a knowledge of the mother country nor a genuine faith in an ideal, even a negative one...demanded first and foremost a recognition of the popular wisdom in a spirit of abasement...(327)

Furthermore, when asked by Panshin what he personally intends to do now that he has returned to Russia, Lavretsky responds: "Plough the land...and try to plough it as well as possible."

Strong undercurrents of Russia's then ongoing debate between "Westernizers" and "Slavophiles" are clearly present in the argument. However, Panshin's "westernizing" appears to be of the most superficial kind. He is full of sweeping cliché statements like: "[A]ll nations are essentially alike; simply introduce good institutions and the deed is done" (326). However, the hostess, Marya Dmitrievna Kalitina, not unlike the courtier in Andersen's tale, who takes the loud moo of a cow for the nightingale's song, praises Panshin's speech: "*Une nature poétique*... certainly cannot plough the land...*et puis* it is your vocation Vladimir Nikolaich, to do everything *en grand*" (328). Marya Dmitrievna's choice of French words when praising Panshin further emphasizes his detachment from native soil.

Turgenev's firm conviction that knowledge of the natural surroundings of one's land is essential for understanding the people who work that land comes through strongly in his work. Hans Christian Andersen shared a similar conviction. Significantly, the beautiful mechanical bird that temporarily overshadowed the real nightingale in his tale was a gift from abroad. When the native bird came back, this is what it told the emperor:

I will sit in the evening on the branch there by the window, and sing you something, so that you may be glad and thoughtful at once. I will sing of those who are happy and of those who suffer. I will sing of the good and the evil that people hide around you. The little singing bird flies far around, to the poor fishermen, to the peasant's roof, to everyone who dwells far away from you and your court.³

In other words, the nightingale would deliver the truth about the land and its people to the emperor.

In Andersen's tales it is usually the simple people who can see and admire natural beauty in the most unpretentious way, although sometimes they cannot express it in words. A good example is the poor fisherman in "The Nightingale," who noticed that something was missing in the artificial bird's singing but could not explain exactly what it was. This intuitive understanding and appreciation of nature's beauty and art was precisely what Turgenev valued the most in the Russian people. In his essay "On Nightingales," Turgenev recounts the story told by the old hunter, who expresses his admiration for the nightingale's singing in simple but powerful words:

It rings out so pleasantly, like tiny pieces of glass, it turns your soul inside out. Every time I hear it—it always touches me, my heart trembles, even the hair on my head moves! And tears come to my eyes right away, so I have to step out and cry for a bit on my own. (*Translation mine—N.F.*)³

Andersen's nightingale considered the quiet tears in the emperor's eyes to be the highest reward for his singing.

As in Andersen's tale, Turgenev's final chapter from the edition

of *A Nest of the Gentry* discussed in this essay concludes with the powerful song of the nightingale:

A hush descended on the room; the only sound was the faint crackling of the wax candles and the occasional tap of a hand on the table, an exclamation or a count of score—and the song of the nightingale, audaciously loud and sweet, pouring in a cascade through the open casement together with the dewy coolness of the night. (328)

While the cited episode provides a beautiful illustration for the conflict of nature with artificiality, on the more intimate level it constitutes an observation about the tension between the poetic feeling and the prose of life. When we learn that Lavretsky spoke only for Liza, motivated by his feelings for her, his argument with Panshin acquires a prosaic quality in contrast to Lavretsky's love. However, this argument brought Liza and Lavretsky even closer together, and while others proceeded to play cards (which was exactly what they did not intend to do when the evening started), Liza and Lavretsky were carried deeper into the realm of their love by the waves of the nightingale's song:

[M]eanwhile their hearts beat high within them, and nothing was lost on them: for them it was that the nightingale sang and the stars shone and the trees whispered softly as if lulled by the summer's languor and warmth. Lavretsky gave himself up entirely to the feeling that flooded his soul—and rejoiced in it; but no word can convey what was passing in the pure heart of the maiden: it was a mystery to herself; let it then remain a mystery for all. (329)

So while Lavretsky was overwhelmed by the sensation of love and filled with joy, the intricate workings of Liza's soul remained

a mystery, and it is possible that in the nightingale's song she also sensed the warning notes of sorrow that their love could bring.

Turgenev's image of a nightingale as a poet of nature that sings in the silence of the night brings to mind this passage from Book IV of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*:

Now came still Evening on, and Twilight gray
Had in her sober livery all things clad;
Silence accompanied, for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;
She all night long her amorous descant sung;
Silence was pleased....⁴

The tranquility of nature is reflected in this passage, but we also know from the text that Satan had made his entrance into Paradise, and the sense of anxiety is clearly present. Following the appearance of the nightingale, Adam and Eve contemplate nature, pray, and go to their rest. While asleep, Eve is visited by Satan, who whispers in her ear of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge.

The events of the magical evening in *A Nest of the Gentry*, which begin with the nightingale's song, culminate in Liza's and Lavretsky's meeting in the same garden where the nightingale sang. After Lavretsky declares his love for Liza, her tears indicate that the love is mutual, but her responses betray fear and anxiety:

"I am frightened; what are we doing?" she faltered.

"I love you," he murmured once more; "I am prepared to give all my life to you."

She shuddered again as if she had been stung, and lifted her eyes to the heavens.

“It’s all in God’s hands,” she said.

“But you love me, Liza? We shall be happy?”

She dropped her eyes... (332)

Liza’s anxiety foretells the coming of the personal tragedy that awaits her and Lavretsky. Therefore the mood set by the nightingale’s song contains not just the anticipation of love, but also the undertones of sorrow and pain as well.

The complexity of the symbolic function of the nightingale has been reflected in the wide range of world literature, art, and folklore, including Greek mythology⁵ and the famous “Ode to a Nightingale” (1819) by John Keats. Universally known as a symbol of love, the nightingale could also signify and unite such opposing concepts as pleasure and pain, happiness and suffering, immortality and death. In folklore the nightingale’s beautiful singing often lures young lovers deeper into the woods toward their ruin.⁶ The duality of a nightingale stems from its habit of singing at night, just before dawn, when it can be heard but not seen. This quality contributes to its function as a signifier of forbidden or unfulfilled love. Therefore the fact that Liza and Lavretsky were carried deeper into the realms of love on the waves of the nightingale’s song may already constitute a warning that their love will not be a happy one.

This complex nature of the nightingale is reflected by Turgenev in the already mentioned essay “On Nightingales,” where a number of the nightingale’s qualities are illustrated, including the bird’s mystical ability to instill fear. The nightingale hunter relates one of his experiences in the following words:

Once I really succumbed to fear. I was sitting in the woods, listening out for nightingales, and the night happened to be really

dark... And suddenly it seemed to me that the nightingale's song changed into loud thunder coming right at me... Terrible terror came over me, I jumped up and ran away with all my strength.

A similar example of the mysterious nature of the nightingale is also found in Turgenev's story "A Living Relic" (1874), in which the dying peasant woman Lukerya recounts the story of how her crippling illness began. It was springtime, Lukerya was in love with her fiancé, Vassya, and could not sleep at night, when she heard a nightingale:

Well, one night—not long before sunrise, it was—I couldn't sleep: a nightingale in the garden was singing so wonderfully sweet! I could not help getting up and going out on to the steps to listen. It trilled and trilled; and all at once I fancied someone called me—it seemed like Vassya's voice—so softly: "Lushal!" I looked round; and being half asleep, I suppose, I missed my footing and fell straight down from the top step, and flopped on to the ground!

So Lukerya is lured outside by a nightingale's song to meet her destiny. The nightingale, at this instance, appears as a messenger between this world and the powers beyond. As Lukerya hears the voice of her lover, Liza hears Lavretsky's voice softly calling her and steps out into the garden to meet her love and her fate.

In his *Literary Memoirs*, Turgenev's contemporary and friend Pavel Annenkov honored the by-then deceased author with the title of a "fairy-tale teller."⁷ To many this definition might seem strange, as Turgenev had not written a single fairy tale, and is considered to be a master of socio-psychological prose. However, upon closer examination, his work reveals a poetic magic that more than justifies the attribution of this title. With superb skill

and delicacy, Turgenev incorporates seemingly fleeting poetic images into the texture of his prose, the images that reflect the inner workings of his novels. The sound of the nightingale may appear just as a brief illustration; however, the symbol of the bird that John Keats called “immortal”⁸ and Matthew Arnold described as a “messenger of eternal passion and pain”⁹ illuminates poetically the complex issues addressed by Turgenev in *A Nest of the Gentry*. The conflict of nature with artificiality, poetic love with the prose of life, art with life—all are expressed in the song of the nightingale, as well as in Liza’s and Lavretsky’s aspirations for happiness; as this becomes just a memory, the art of their love triumphs, immortalized by Turgenev.

Although Turgenev and the most famous “fairy-tale teller” of our times, Hans Christian Andersen, had never met, there are some biographical correspondences worth mentioning in the conclusion. Both started their careers as poets, but achieved worldwide fame as writers of prose. They also shared a profound knowledge and understanding of music, especially opera. Andersen’s love of his life was Jenny Lind, one of the most famous sopranos of the nineteenth century, known as “The Swedish Nightingale.” Turgenev’s lifelong love for Pauline Viardot, also an opera diva, is well known. It is possible that the “musical ear” that both writers possessed made them particularly sensitive to false notes in life, and to the conflict of true art with artificiality—an awareness they artfully expressed in their work.

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NOTES

1. Ivan Turgenev, *A Nest of the Gentry* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), 326. All following quotations are from this edition of the novel and will be marked by page number.
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3. I. S. Turgenev, "O soloviiakh," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v tridtsati tomakh* (*The Complete Works in Thirty Volumes*), v. 11 (Moscow: Nauka, 1968), 330.
4. John Milton, *The Poems of John Milton* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1936), 271.
5. For instance, in the myth of the two sisters Philomela and Procne, Philomela is turned into a nightingale by the gods as a punishment for the murder of Itylus. For this myth's various artistic renderings and interpretations, see Charles Mills Gayley, *Classic Myths in English Literature and in Art* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1939), 249-50.
6. For interpretations of the nightingale in various folkloric traditions, see Wladyslaw Kopalinski, *Slownik Symboli* (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1990), 390-91.
7. P. V. Annenkov, *Literaturnye vospominaniia* (Moscow: Gosudartstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1960), 377.
8. John Keats, *The Poems of John Keats* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978).
9. Matthew Arnold, "Philomela," *Classic Myths in English Literature and in Art* (250).

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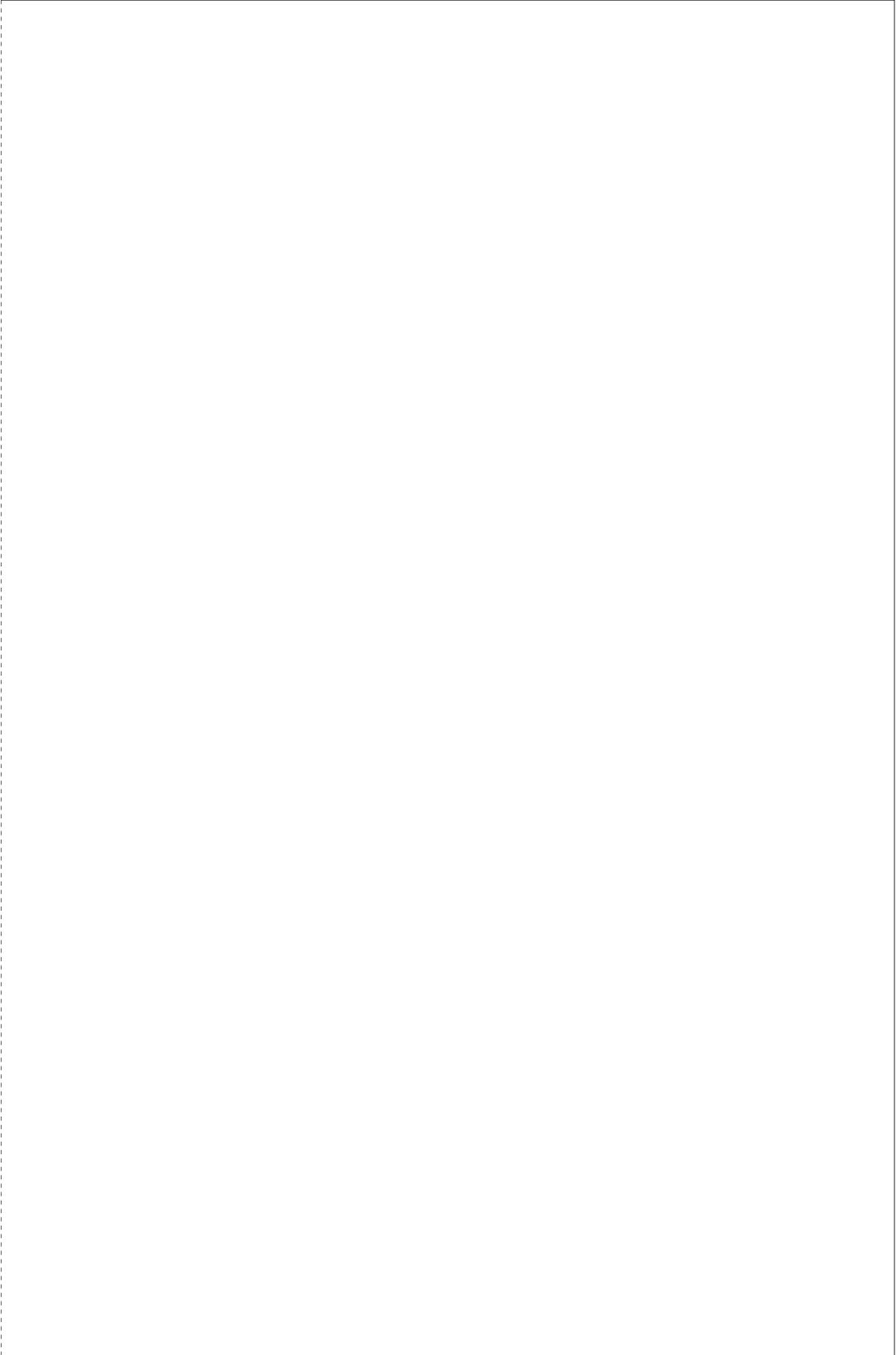
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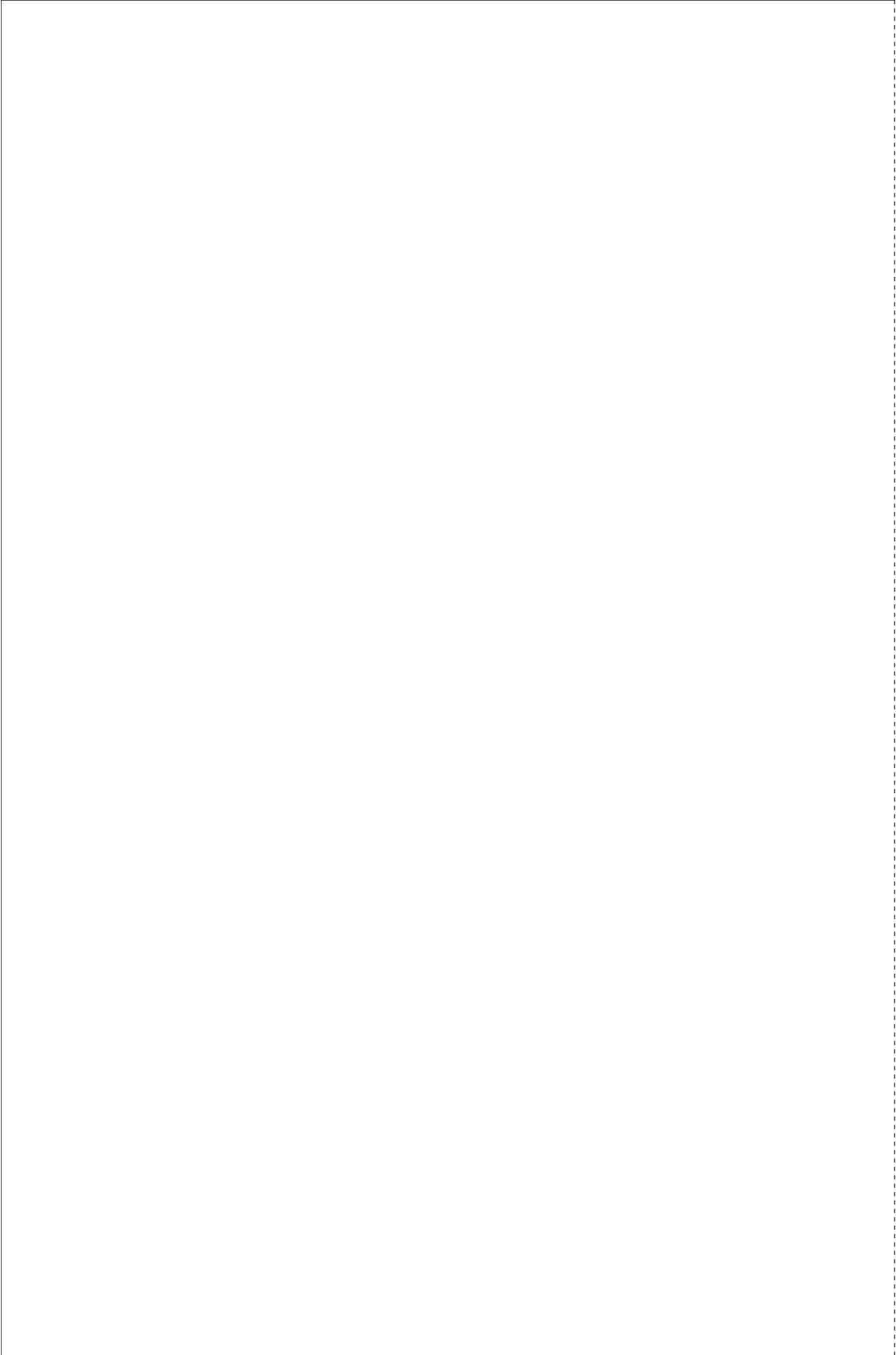
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