

“A Tragical Position”: Carlyle, Turgenev, and the Religion of

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In a letter to Pauline Viardot, dated June 6, 1857, Ivan Turgenev described a recent visit to Thomas Carlyle:

He questioned me closely on the present state of Russia and on the late Emperor Nicholas, whom he persisted in seeing as a great man . . . Carlyle is an extremely clever and original person, but he is growing old, and with age he has wrapped himself up in paradox: the vices of freedom that he sees all around him appear intolerable to him, and he has begun to advocate obedience before all things. He likes the Russians very much because, in his view, they possess to a supreme degree the talent of obeying, and it was most disagreeable for him to hear me say that this talent was less universal than he imagined. “You have deprived me of an illusion!” he exclaimed. He is now engaged in writing a history of Frederick the Great, who has been his hero ever since his youth for this capacity of being obeyed. . . . I should like to see Carlyle in a Russian skin for a week—he’d soon change his tune. (Qtd. in Waddington *Turgenev* 32)

Turgenev's exasperation was evidently deeply felt. He again recalled the meeting in an interview with Hjalmar Hjorth in 1873, and with similar vehemence he condemned Carlyle's views:

It is a very easy thing to love despotism—at a distance . . . [Carlyle] was loud in his denunciation of democracy, and was very unreserved in his expressions of sympathy with Russia and her Emperor. "This grand moving of great masses, swayed by one powerful hand—that . . . brings uniformity and purpose into history" . . . I replied that I should only ask him to go to Russia and spend a month or two in one of the interior governments, just long enough to observe with his own eyes the effect of this much-admired despotism. Then, I thought, he would need no word of mine to convince him. In my opinion he who is weary of democracy because it creates disorder, is very much in the state of one who is about to commit suicide. He is tired of the variety of life and longs for the monotony of death. (Qtd. in Waddington *Turgenev* 35)

Yet despite his contempt for Carlyle's authoritarianism, Turgenev was fascinated by this man who had "wrapped himself in paradox," and he continued to seek him out.

Like his countryman Alexander Herzen, he admired Carlyle's eccentric contrariness, his humor, and his elusive and idiosyncratic spirituality.¹ He later admitted, "I never saw anyone with whose originality I was more struck" (qtd. in Lloyd 158). Despite Carlyle's reactionary politics, Turgenev maintained contact with him for the next sixteen years. He sent him copies of his novels and stories, wrote a moving letter of condolence to him on the death of Jane Carlyle in 1866, and renewed their friendship when he returned to London in 1870 (Waddington *Turgenev* 163–70). He recognized that Carlyle's "originality" sprang from his enigmatic outlook. Like many of his generation,

¹Both David R. Sorensen in "A Scotch Proudhon'" and Kenneth Fielding (Introduction xii) comment on the relationship between Herzen and Carlyle.

Carlyle felt divided within himself between faith and skepticism, and in *Sartor Resartus* (1833–34) he had rightly gauged the widespread hunger for a spirituality shorn of doctrinal imperatives in an increasingly mechanistic world. What distinguished him from his contemporaries was his ability to release religious speculation from the confines of dogma and literalism and to dramatize inner conflicts in maddeningly intricate, ironic, and allusive prose. Without sentimentality or regret he openly acknowledged the need for a new creed to replace the obsolete “Mythus of the Christian Religion” (*Sartor* 144). Of what would this new faith consist? Carlyle never pretended to have an exact answer, but he knew from his own example that the “Everlasting Yea” began with a personal revelation of an heroic vocation (137).

It is unclear whether Turgenev had read either *Sartor Resartus* or *The French Revolution* (1837) before he met Carlyle,² but Carlylean themes had been occupying his mind since he had witnessed the bloody aftermath of the 1848 revolution in Paris. Writing to Viardot a year later on July 24, 1849, Turgenev emphasized the importance of the sacred and the supernatural: “[L]a foi immense et vague, est encore peut-être le seul refuge qui reste aux hommes (quand le temps de l’action est passé ou n’est pas encore venu)—maintenant que les droits les plus sacrés sont foulés aux pieds, que le sang coule par torrents, que l’iniquité, la force brutale ou l’hypocrisie triomphent” (*Zviguilsky* 1:30). Turgenev’s “mystical” intuition strengthened as it became clear to him that ideological divisions threatened to destroy the civic life of Russia as well as Europe. In the early 1850s a succession of crises—the Crimean War, the outbreak of cholera in his own province, and the fragmentation of the opinion in the radical journal *Sovremennik* (“The Contemporary”) between aesthetes and Utilitarians—had driven him to explore religious issues in his fiction. Turgenev loathed the materialism and monadic individualism preached by Utilitarians, but he was equally contemptuous of aesthetes who reacted against this heartless philosophy by retreating to “art.” He found himself drawn to revolutionaries who demanded complete

²Patrick Waddington suggests that there is some evidence to show that Turgenev’s “jumping about in time and space in *Phantoms* [1862] owes some-

sacrifice for the sake of a new future, though he abhorred their brutal language and violent methods. In Carlyle he met someone who was similarly moved by extremists yet possessed the ability to step back from the vortex of political debate and judge the world from the vantage point of “le seul refuge.”³

Turgenev’s initial disappointment with the Chelsea philosopher may have been exacerbated by a feeling of artistic betrayal. As Richard Freeborn suggests, the central figure in Turgenev’s first full-length novel *Rudin* (1856) was endowed with “some of those heroic qualities which Carlyle attempted to define” (Introduction 12) in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841). Turgenev’s friend Vassili Botkine had been translating portions of *Heroes* in the same period that the novelist was writing *Rudin*. The publication of the first part of *Rudin* in the January 1856 issue of *Sovremennik* coincided with the appearance of the second installment of Botkine’s translation of *Heroes* in the same issue. Turgenev’s novel reveals the precariousness of his own political position. He was loyal to the ideals of Westernizers and the liberal intelligentsia of the 1840s, but he was also inspired as an artist by those who demanded revolutionary action. In his novel *The Possessed* (1871), Dostoevsky caricatured Turgenev as Karmazinov, the tremulous author who groveled at the feet of revolutionary youth, “imagining out of ignorance that the key to Russia’s future was in their hands . . . chiefly because they paid him no attention whatever” (qtd. in Freeborn “Turgenev” 246). Yet Turgenev had first-hand experience with revolution as a witness of events in Paris in 1848, and he knew both the prophetic appeal and the cruel reality of the call for self-immolation on the pyre of history. Like Carlyle, he sought to use his art to explore the world from the vantage point of those who wanted to transform it violently and completely.

³Robert Dessaux’s analysis of Turgenev’s faith is pertinent to his meeting with Carlyle: “At the very centre of Turgenev’s concerns as a writer lies the problem of faith. He searched all his life for a faith in something beyond the phenomenal self which would lead to action. The kind of action he yearned for was the *podvig*, the act in which the ego might be swallowed up in surrender to the wider good” (ix).

By 1850, Turgenev had become impatient with the conventional hero of the Russian liberal intelligentsia, whom he portrayed in his story, "The Diary of a Superfluous Man." His narrator Stocking is a frustrated narcissist incapable of initiating constructive reform in the stultifying and oppressive society of Nicholas I's Russia. As he acknowledges,

I was highly strung . . . [and] . . . perhaps through excessive self-regard or generally through the unsuccessful structure of my personality, there existed between my feelings and my thoughts . . . some senseless, incomprehensible and impregnable obstacle. And when I tried to overcome this obstacle by force, to smash this barrier . . . I'd give way to sadness, fall into ludicrous despondency and once again start the whole process all over again. (33).

Stocking belongs to the Hamlet class of reformers, which Turgenev later defined in his famous lecture "Hamlet and Don Quixote" (1860): "He is a skeptic—and he eternally struggles with himself. He is incessantly occupied with his own condition, not with his obligations" (550). Hamlet epitomizes the "contemporary condition of our society, its striving for self-awareness and self-comprehension, its doubts about itself and its youth" (558). Stocking is Teufelsdröckh prior to his conversion to duty and activism.⁴ He is the antithesis of Don Quixote, who "is utterly imbued with a commitment to ideals for which he is ready to go to all possible extremes, even to sacrifice his life. He only values this life to the extent that it can serve as a means of . . . securing truth and justice on earth" (549).

In *Rudin* Turgenev envisages an escape from Hamlet-like solipsism and paralysis in Carlylean terms. Writing to Botkine in June 1855 from his estate at Spasskoye, Turgenev remarked on the need to invest art with a broader social significance: "There are eras when literature cannot be just art, when there are interests higher than poetic interests. The moment of self-knowledge and criticism is *just* as essential for the devel-

⁴Both Sorensen in "The Invention of Reality" and Kenneth J. Fielding in

opment of a nation's life as for the life of an individual" (Lowe 2:90). In *Rudin* his protagonist shares affinities with the "Superfluous Man," confined as he is by his own self-consciousness and materialism, but by the conclusion of the novel he acknowledges the need to act and to submit to his duty. Though his life is a failure, it is an heroic failure, which is both emblematic and spiritually inspiring. Through the character of Rudin, Turgenev identifies the personal qualities vital to the creation of a new generation of Russian heroes and activists. Herzen drolly suggested that Turgenev created Rudin "in biblical fashion—after his own image and likeness" while adding the "philosophical jargon" of the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin (qtd. in Berlin 272).⁵ Curiously, Herzen did not notice the pervasive influence of Carlyle—the man whom he called the "Scotch Proudhon"—in the novel (Stelling-Michaud 326). In *Heroes* Carlyle had pondered the fate of heroism in the modern world, amidst what he called the "confused wreck of things crumbling and even crashing and tumbling all round us in these revolutionary ages" (15). From him, Turgenev derived a new prototype for political activism and refashioned the "Superfluous Man" in the clothes of a Carlylean hero, whose purpose in life is bound up with a transcendent "[f]orce which is *not we*" (Carlyle *Heroes* 9).

In 1858, Botkine told Jane Carlyle that her husband was "the man for Russia" and that his book on Hero-Worship was hugely popular, particularly among students (Fielding and Sorensen 233). Though he could not include the passage in his *Sovremennik* translations, Botkine probably alerted Turgenev to Carlyle's description of Nicholas I: "The Czar of all the Russias, he is strong, with so many bayonets, Cossacks and cannons . . . but he cannot yet speak. Something great in him, but it is a dumb greatness. He had no voice of genius, to be heard of all men and times" (*Heroes* 97). In the wake of the catastrophe of the Crimean War, Turgenev did not need to be reminded of the futility of heroism defined by military might and despotic power. What Carlyle offered, on the contrary, was a vision of the heroic that predicated greatness on the basis of internal spiritual harmony rather than brute force.

⁵Henri Granjard pertinently remarks of Bakunin that "[i]l va chercher son

He conceives the hero as a “living light-fountain . . . a natural luminary shining by the gift of Heaven; a flowing light-fountain . . . of native original insight, of manhood and heroic nobleness—in whose radiance all souls feel that it is well with them” (4). Moreover, these qualities are not merely individual, but they become identified with the life of a nation. As Carlyle remarks, “The Nation that has a Dante is bound together as no dumb Russia can be” (96).

Turgenev was too well aware that provincial Russian society was fallow ground for heroes. In *Rudin* he represents its mediocrity and complacency through Pigasov, whose “ideas never rose above the commonplace; yet he talked in such a way that he could seem not only clever, but even a very clever man” (41). Pigasov despises generalizations and convictions and, like Dickens’s Utilitarian reformer Gradgrind, grounds his opinions solely in “facts”: “‘Give us facts, gentlemen, that’s all we want from you. . . . Facts are a known quantity, everyone knows what facts are. . . . I can tell what they are from experience, from my own feelings’” (55). In their first meeting Rudin exposes Pigasov’s shallow skepticism, using arguments that echo Carlyle’s own in *Heroes*. Pigasov relies on facts because he fears those who possess deeply felt principles. Asserts Rudin, “if a man has no firm principle in which he believes, if he has no ground on which he stands firmly, how can he assess the needs, the significance, and the future of his people?” (57). Rudin is a materialist, a rationalist, and a defender of systems, but he also believes in transcendent forces and “enthusiasm.” Like Carlyle, he links the internal spiritual development of the individual to the progress of his nation.

The synthesizing power—what Rudin refers to as “‘striving to seek out the common element in particular phenomena’” (56)—is what distinguishes the hero in Carlyle’s view. For him, the intellectual process can never be severed from the moral process:

[W]e hear of a man’s “intellectual nature,” and of his “moral nature,” as if these again were divisible, and existed apart . . . these divisions are at bottom but names; that man’s spiritual nature, the vital Force which dwells in him, is essentially one and indivisible;

that what we call imagination, fancy, understanding, and so forth, are but different figures of the same Power of Insight, all indissolubly connected. (*Heroes* 90)

Pigasov belongs to the class of what Carlyle calls “Dilettantism, Scepticism, Triviality, and all that sorrowful brood” (*Heroes* 73), and, inevitably, he proves no match for Rudin. Yet their debate extends beyond the personal and centers on characteristics that will define the future of Russian civilization. What kind of leader will emerge to give “dumb Russia” a voice? Rudin’s ideal leader “is he who knows how to control his egoistical ambition, as a rider controls a horse, who can sacrifice self-interest to the general good. . . . A man must destroy the stubborn egoism in his own personality, in order to give it the right to express itself!” (61).

The struggle that Rudin describes—one familiar to readers of *Sartor Resartus*—equates self-revelation with renunciation. For Carlyle, the hero discovers the “vital Force” within himself by discovering his possibilities and limitations in relation to God. This marks the beginning of his heroic vocation. “Egoism” confuses God’s ends with human ambitions. The hero resolves this confusion because he accepts the boundaries of his own knowledge. His grasp of life’s mysteries increases and his freedom to act expands, as he yields to a “Force” that lies deep within yet far beyond himself. His faith is what covers the abyss between his knowledge and “the great deep sacred infinitude of Nescience” (*Heroes* 9). Faith in himself and faith in a “Force” that lies beyond himself form the foundation of heroic integrity. As Carlyle observes, “[T]he thing a man does practically lay to heart, and know for certain, concerning his vital relations to this mysterious Universe, and his duty and destiny there, that is in all cases the primary thing for him, and creatively determines all the rest” (4). Rudin’s predicament—the predicament of the Russian “Superfluous Man”—is to realize this revelation through practical means. He must act, and in finding a cause worthy of his energies he will become an activist.

In manner and character Rudin possesses important attributes of a Carlylean hero. He is a natural leader, who inspires heroic thoughts by the vigor of his beliefs. In “The Hero as Poet,” Carlyle remarks

how all passionate language does of itself become musical,—with a finer music than the mere accent; the speech of a man even in zealous anger becomes a chaunt, a song. All deep things are Song. It seems somehow the very essence of us, Song; as if all the rest were but wrappages and hulls! The primal element of us; of us, and all things. (*Heroes* 71)

Turgenev notes that Rudin speaks with “the music of eloquence”:

It was not with the complacent expertise of an experienced chatter-box, but with inspiration that his rushing impromptu speech was filled. He did not seek after words: they came obediently and freely to his lips and each word, it seemed, literally flowed straight from his soul and burned with the heat of conviction. (63)

The impression on his listeners is immediate: “A listener might not understand precisely what was being talked about; but he would catch his breath, curtains would open wide before his eyes, something resplendent would burn dazzlingly ahead of him” (63). Rudin’s “music” suggests the harmony in his soul between his beliefs and his spirit. In Carlyle’s words, “He is *one*” (*Heroes* 91).

Rudin is a “light-fountain” who draws out the heroic sentiments of his audience, particularly the younger members, Basitov and Natalya. They instinctively embrace his view that for man “the awareness of being the instrument of . . . higher powers must take the place of all other joys” (65). Like Carlyle’s heroes, Rudin ignites an internal revolution in his listeners’ souls and invests their cause with religious meaning. Turgenev describes the process using imagery and allusions from *Heroes*. Rudin cites a “Scandinavian legend” about the flight of a bird (64), which recalls Carlyle’s “Phoenix fire-death, and new-birth into the Greater and Better” (*Heroes* 35). Rudin’s own example serves to demonstrate that “everything great on earth is accomplished only by men” (64). Recalling Carlyle’s description of Odin’s impact on the Norse mind—“This light, kindled in the great dark vortex . . . dark but living,

waiting only for light" (*Heroes* 23)—Turgenev describes Natalya experiencing "a sacred spark of exultation . . . gently kindled and caught alight" (87). Significantly, the imagery of ignition and conflagration is identified with creation rather than destruction. Yet Rudin's quandary is that in the Russia of Nicholas I his talk of building a "future" is irrelevant to the circumstances. Before there can be a new order, a "Phoenix fire-death" must annihilate the old one.

In *Heroes* Carlyle reflects on the plight of revolutionary heroes whose mission is to abolish an old and corrupt order:

It is a tragical position for a true man to work in revolutions. He seems an anarchist, and indeed a painful element of anarchy does encumber him at every step,—him to whose whole soul anarchy is hostile, hateful . . . it is tragical for us all to be concerned in image-breaking and down-pulling; for the Great Man, more a man than we, it is doubly tragical. (175)

He regards the "Puritan" impulse that inspires every revolution as vital but flawed: "The naked formlessness of Puritanism is not the thing I praise in the Puritans: it is the thing I pity,—praising only the spirit which had rendered that inevitable!" (177). Puritanism demanded self-control, discipline, and rectitude, but in its fierce pursuit of these ends it undermined the very qualities that inspired heroes to challenge the existing order. Michael Walzer observes that the

first triumph of Bolshevism, as of Puritanism, was over the impulse toward "disorganization" in its own midst . . . It should not be forgotten, however, that this was a triumph also over the impulse toward free thought and spontaneous expression that manifests itself with especial vigor in the period of masterlessness. (314)

In *The French Revolution* "unruly" men of character such as Danton and Mirabeau are destroyed by ideological ascetics such as Robespierre and Marat. Cromwell too, a "kind of chaotic man" (*Heroes* 196), suffers a similar fate at the hands of the various factions who unite behind him

and mistake “Formulas” for “Fact.”

Carlyle’s attitude to revolutionary violence—a mixture of revulsion and “pity”—reveals his profound ambivalence toward the Puritan “Spirit.” In *The French Revolution*, which Herzen revered because of its attacks on utopian schemes of history and its emotional solidarity with ordinary people, Carlyle conveys both the spiritual appeal and the “naked formlessness” of “the Gospel according to Jean-Jacques” (54). In creating a civic religion based on Rousseau’s creed, the Jacobins repeat the error of the “poor Puritans,” those “haters of *untrue* Forms” (*Heroes* 177, 176). Preoccupied with cleansing human nature, they demand that the inner self be shaped in harmony with their new “Formulas.” They brutally refuse to accept the idea that religion is a necessary restraint on pretensions to omnipotence and willfully assume that they can purge the world of original sin. Carlyle neither denigrates nor glorifies Jacobinism, but he does understand it. Personal transformation has suddenly become the responsibility of the body politic, and “Everlasting Yea” is identified with the attainment of republican “virtu.”⁶ Morality is reduced to a test of political righteousness, and terror becomes the chief means of preserving ideological purity.

It is a horrifying spectacle, worthy of both “pity” and respect. As Carlyle points out in *Heroes*,

We will hail *The French Revolution*, as shipwrecked mariners might the sternest rock, in a world otherwise all of baseless sea and waves. A true Apocalypse, though a terrible one, to this false withered artificial time . . . that Semblance is not Reality; that it has to become Reality, or the world will take fire under it,—burn it into what it is, namely Nothing! (173–74)

Though he admires the Jacobins’ Puritanical quest to destroy “Shams,” he also anticipates the consequences of their attempt to obliterate private conscience in favor of Rousseau’s public “Gospel.” In *The French Revolution* he asks, “Thou wouldst not *replace* such extinct Lie by a new Lie, which a new Injustice of thy own were; the parent of still other

Lies?” (39). A Revolution that begins by espousing a new creed, based on the rational goals of liberty, equality, and fraternity concludes with a brutal display of the “Naked Animal” on the stage of history (*Sartor* 4). For Carlyle the Revolution serves as a prototype of the upheavals that followed in 1830 and 1848. Rousseau’s religion of revolution is a genuine “Mythus” (144), authentically “Transcendental” in its origins, yet it fatally contains the elements of its own destruction.

Whereas Herzen admired Carlyle’s ironic ridicule of the “Formulas” of revolutionary Don Quixotes, Turgenev initially welcomed the Scotsman’s emphasis on the integrity of the revolutionary “spirit” and of the “struggle of men intent on the real essence of things, against men intent on the semblances and forms of things” (Carlyle *Heroes* 176).⁷ In *Rudin* he writes what he later called an “étude psychologique” (qtd. in *Dessaix* 1), in which the protagonist denounces Hamlet-like skepticism and gradually assumes the “tragical position” of Carlyle’s revolutionary hero. Rudin wishes to devote himself to the salvation of his country and agrees with Natalya when she urges him to act: “I mustn’t hide my talent, if I have any; I mustn’t waste my powers on talk, empty-useless talk, on mere words” (78). But when she pledges to abandon her family and join him in shaping a new future, he balks and urges her to “[s]ubmit” to the will of her mother (127). Turgenev links Rudin’s failure to love her with his inability to realize his ideals in practice. Rudin’s faith is weakened somewhat by his “Sceptical Dilletantism,” which has made him a theorist of “the tragic in life and art” rather than a living example of it (89). Still, Turgenev appeals to Carlylean ideals of heroism in an attempt to vindicate this doomed dreamer. Just

⁷Freeborn notes the significant difference in the respective viewpoints of Turgenev and Herzen at this stage: “The ‘revolutionary’ impulse motivating the Don Quixotes . . . is centred in their readiness to die for an ideal and to regard their lives as having value only to the extent that they embodied an ideal of creating truth and justice on earth. Herzen, whose disillusionment as a result of 1848 was far greater than Turgenev’s, spoke of Don Quixote in a different sense, as the embodiment of the crisis that had overtaken utopian idealism, as the failed idealist who went on repeating the old revolutionary slogans” (“Turgenev” 248). Curiously, both men felt that their attitudes had

as Carlyle focuses on the human qualities of his heroes, so, too, does Turgenev stress Rudin's strengths and fallibilities as a lover, friend, and patriot.

Rudin's legacy in the original version of the novel is the heroic example he sets for future generations. His fate closely resembles Dante's, as Carlyle summarizes it in his essay on the hero as poet: "By degrees, it came to be evident to him that he had no longer any resting place, or hope of benefit, in this earth. The earthly world had cast him forth, to wander, wander; no living heart to love him now; for his sore miseries there was no solace here" (*Heroes* 76). Rudin, too, drifts aimlessly, and Turgenev's final vision of him stranded in an outpost of Russia, "helplessly and forlornly submissive" (162), seems to mock his heroic destiny and vindicate Pigasov's estimate of him: "'gentlemen like him are always in a state of development'" (155). In his essay on "The Hero as Divinity," Carlyle refers contemptuously to "critics of small vision" and regrets that "no sadder proof can be given by a man of his own littleness than disbelief in great men. . . . It is the last consummation of unbelief" (*Heroes* 13). Turgenev does not allow the "little man" the final word in the novel. On the contrary, it is Lezhnev, Rudin's rival and fiercest critic, who gives the most complete assessment of him. According to Lezhnev, Rudin's unhappiness stems from his ignorance of Russia and his "cosmopolitanism." "Without a physiognomy," Lezhnev declares, "'there is not even an ideal face; only a commonplace face is possible in such circumstances'" (158).

Frequently accused of being a "cosmopolitan" himself, Turgenev juxtaposes the Slavophile argument against Rudin with a broader Carlylean judgment. In *Heroes* Carlyle insists that a man's heroism is visible in his appearance, thoughts, and actions: "All that a man does is physiognomical of him. You may see how a man would fight, by the way in which he sings; his courage, or want of courage, is visible in the word he utters, in the opinion he has formed, no less than in the stroke he strikes" (91). Carlyle's interest in heroes is personal and human rather than ideological or political. He seeks to know how they live, move, and interact with their surroundings. They derive their spiritual nourishment from their local circumstances—Shakespeare the peasant, Dante the Flo-

rentine itinerant, Cromwell the St. Ives and Ely farmer, and Johnson the Grub-Street journalist—they are real people who are loyal to their origins. Though Shakespeare, for example, becomes “the melodious Priest of a true Catholicism, the ‘Universal Church’ of the Future and of all times,” a vital part of him remains a “Warwickshire Peasant” (94). Similarly, Rudin remains passionately attached to Russian life and culture. Lezhnev concedes that his friend “has enthusiasm; and that . . . is a most precious quality in our time. We have all become intolerably rational, indifferent, and effete; we have gone to sleep, we have grown cold, and we should be grateful to anyone who rouses us and warms us, if only for a moment! It’s time to wake up!” (157). The “warmth” is apparent in Rudin’s greatest disciple, Basistov, who declares, “‘he never let you grow settled in your ways, he turned the very foundation of things upside down, he set light to you!’” (158). For Turgenev, Rudin’s contribution is not only crucial to Russia’s future but to the future of Europe as well. Seen in the context of *Rudin*, Turgenev’s disappointment with Carlyle in 1857 is inevitable. It must have seemed peculiarly perverse to Turgenev that the writer who had partly inspired his portrait of doomed heroic passion and defiance was now lauding Russia’s natural talent for submissiveness and despotism.

Turgenev was probably familiar with Carlyle’s *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (1850) and may have known about the controversy surrounding Carlyle as a result of “The Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question” in 1849 and its subsequent republication as *Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question* in 1853. Nonetheless, the advocate of “obedience” remained important to him. He inquired of Viardot on June 18, 1862, “Avez-vous lu les *Héros* de Carlyle?” (Zviguilsky 101). Significantly, in the same letter he referred to the hero of his most recent novel, *Fathers and Sons* (1862): “Le héros principal est un jeune homme d’opinions avancées; j’ai essayé de représenter le conflit de deux générations et l’on se bat à outrance sur mon corps. Les injures et, il faut le dire, les adhésions pleuvent; quelquefois je ne sais plus qui entendre” (101). Turgenev’s new revolutionary hero Bazarov was made of sterner materials than Rudin. He combines Hamlet’s “egoism” and “unwavering sense of absolute superiority over others” with Don Quixote’s “unbending will”

and fearless sense of “self-sacrifice” (Turgenev “Hamlet” 551, 549). More unequivocally than Rudin, Bazarov exemplifies the “tragic position” of Carlyle’s revolutionary hero. He is a self-proclaimed nihilist, dedicated to the annihilation of feudal Russia and to the cause of “image-breaking and down-pulling” (*Heroes* 175).

In the period prior to the emancipation of the serfs in Russia in 1861, Turgenev was gripped by debates being conducted among Russian Westernizers, Slavophiles, and Populists. Edmund Wilson argues that he remained firmly in the camp of Westernizers and “never ceased to compare Russia with Europe . . . to estimate Russian possibilities in terms of the preliminary conditions that had made Western institutions possible” (27). Though he was a liberal, Turgenev was also an artist who viscerally felt the anger of youth and the frustration of the dispossessed and who recognized the difference between comfortable radicals mouthing fashionable slogans and committed revolutionaries acting on fierce convictions. Turgenev may have recognized that *Heroes* was as much a manual of defiance as it was a counsel of submission. Carlyle’s notion of authority accommodated both eventualities: “There is no act more moral between men than that of rule and obedience. Wo to him that claims obedience when it is not due; wo to him that refuses it when it is!” (*Heroes* 171). Like Carlyle, Turgenev respected the “spirit” of Puritanism and shared the Scotsman’s contempt for bourgeois self-interest, materialism, and the omniscient “Dilettantism, Scepticism, [and] Triviality” of life in the West. The revolutionary “Mythus” was a spiritual as well as a political “Fact,” and liberals ignored it at their peril.

He would have also noticed the emphasis Carlyle placed on heroes such as Knox and Cromwell—and later Frederick the Great—who defied the deadening grip of tradition and deference and exploded hypocrisy by the zeal and integrity of their character and convictions. While the experience of the Irish famine and his visit to Ireland in 1849 increased Carlyle’s hostility to “Democracy” and its economic vehicle, “laissez-faire” capitalism, he never lost his belief in the primacy of individual heroism. John Stuart Mill speaks for most liberal opponents of Carlyle in *On Liberty* (1859)—a work much admired by the Russian Westernizers—when he insists that he is “not countenancing the sort of ‘hero-wor-

ship' which applauds the strong man of genius for forcibly seizing on the government of the world and making it do his bidding in spite of itself" (74). Nevertheless, his qualification was an implicit acknowledgment of Carlyle's relevance:

It does seem, however, that when the opinions of masses of merely average men are everywhere become or becoming the dominant power, the counterpoise and corrective to that tendency would be, the more and more pronounced individuality of those who stand on the higher eminences of thought. (74)

By 1860, Turgenev was intrigued and frightened by the notion that "strong men of genius" could "forcibly seize" government in Russia. In a revised version of *Rudin* and in *Fathers and Sons* he returned to a theme that Carlyle had explored in *Heroes*: the "tragic position" of the nineteenth-century revolutionary, fated to destroy rather than to create. Carlyle was adamant that destruction, however violent, contained within itself the seeds of regeneration:

Thus too all human things, maddest French Sansculottisms, do and must work towards Order. I say, there is not a *man* in them, raging in the thickest of the madness, but is impelled withal, at all moments, towards Order. His very life means that; Disorder is dissolution, death. No chaos but it seeks a *centre* to revolve round. (175)

Faced with harsh attacks from radicals such as Nikolai A. Dobroliubov and Nikolai G. Chernyshevsky, who demanded that the "Superfluous Men" of the 1840s yield to the more radical and ruthless revolutionaries of the 1860s, Turgenev used his fiction to explore the tragedy of the self-destructive hero and his connection to the fate of Russia.

In his revised version of *Rudin* Turgenev added a second "Epi-logue," in which the hero is shot dead on the Paris barricades during the June days of 1848. In this final scene Rudin becomes the incarnation of the revolutionary tragedy, a doomed figure holding a "red flag" in one hand and "a blunt, curved sword" in the other. He is seen "shouting some-

thing in a strained, high-pitched voice, scrambling up the barricade and waving both the flag and the sword." The futility of his position is underscored by the final words of the sharpshooters who kill him: "on vient de tuer le Polonais!" However awkward the scene is artistically, philosophically it links Rudin's death to the Carlylean resolution he undertook in Natalya's presence: "Yes, I must act. I mustn't hide my talent, if I have any; I mustn't waste my powers on talk, empty, useless talk, on mere words" (180-81, 78). Yet from Turgenev's perspective in the 1860s Rudin's death is not part of a lost cause. Carlyle remarks in *Heroes* that the Puritans had discovered "the one reason which could justify revolting . . . [and] . . . has been the soul of all just revolts among men." As he explains, "Not *Hunger* alone produced even the French Revolution; no, but the feeling of the insupportable all-pervading *Falsehood* which had now embodied itself in Hunger, in universal material Scarcity and Nonentity, and thereby become indisputably false in the eyes of all!" (181). Turgenev himself sensed "*Falsehood*" in the very texture of Russian life and understood the dangerous power of this "feeling" that Carlyle describes. In *Fathers and Sons*, he reveals the full extent of its threat to civilization in his native country.

Whereas Rudin believes that "there's nothing much to be gained from . . . complete and universal negation" (68), Bazarov, the hero of *Fathers and Sons*, "approaches everything from a critical point of view" (27). He is a new kind of hero, brazenly self-contained, contemptuous of civilization, suspicious of natural ties, dismissive of "feelings" and romance, supremely self-confident, and reliant on no one other than himself. Bazarov is puritanical and "intolerant" in the manner of Carlyle's John Knox:

Tolerance has to be noble, measured, just in its very wrath, when it can tolerate no longer. But, on the whole, we are not altogether here to tolerate! We are here to resist, to control and vanquish withal. We do not "tolerate" Falsehoods, Thieveryies, Iniquities, when they fasten on us; we say to them, Thou art false, thou art not tolerable! (*Heroes* 128)

Yet for all of his ferocious and heroic defiance, Bazarov's tragedy lies in

the hollowness of his beliefs. Turgenev's curiously ambivalent attitude towards his hero seems shaped by his Carlylean assumptions. In a letter to a young student on April 16, 1862, Turgenev described his first impression of Bazarov: "I conceived him as a sombre figure, wild, huge, half-grown out of the soil, powerful, nasty, honest, but doomed to destruction because he still stands only in the gateway to the future" (qtd. in Berlin 280).

This is a revealing statement which suggests that Turgenev recalled Carlyle's description of tragic revolutionary heroes who could never fulfill their promise in circumstances that demanded the annihilation of the old rather than the creation of the new. Turgenev's hero may be Carlylean in his personal character—unaccommodating, direct, intolerant, and fearless—but his character is corrupted by his "Sceptical" beliefs. Bazarov lacks any sense of the spiritual and recognizes no divine limits to his mechanistic and materialistic doctrine of power. In Carlyle's estimate he would be a "Benthamite"—in the twentieth century he might be a Leninist. As Carlyle notes,

Benthamism has something complete, manful, in such fearless committal of itself to what it finds true; you may call it Heroic, though a Heroism with its eyes put out! . . . It seems to me, all deniers of Godhead, and all lip-believers of it, are bound to be Benthamites, if they have courage and honesty. (*Heroes* 148–49)

Bazarov does not believe in anything other than power and the negation that power can bring. In his final words to his friend Arkady he speaks of the havoc that he hopes to wreak in the worn-out world of feudal Russia:

"You're not made for the bitter, sour-tasting, rootless life of people like me. You haven't got the daring, you haven't got the anger . . . You . . . won't fight . . . but people like us, we want to fight. And we will! The dust we kick up'll eat out your eyes, our mud'll get all over you. . . . Give us other people! I say. We've got others to destroy!" (219)

Nonetheless, Bazarov's specific beliefs are far less important to Turgenev than his human circumstances. Following Carlyle's example, Turgenev explores his revolutionary hero's "tragic position" in personal and spiritual terms.⁸ In the conclusion of *Fathers and Sons* the prayers of Bazarov's loving parents eclipse the memory of their son's "all-powerful" doctrines. Turgenev's final words refer to the vision of "eternal reconciliation and of life everlasting" (245).

Had he known of Carlyle's response to his visit in 1857, Turgenev might have speculated further about the paradoxical nature of his friend's fondness for "obedience." In July 1858, Jane wrote to Carlyle in Scotland, enthusiastically advising him to read a story from Turgenev's recently published *Scènes de la Vie Russe* (1858), entitled "Mumu," which had first been published in 1854. She was well aware of his hostility to fiction, and she must have been surprised to read his response of July 19: "I read Moumou, at your repeated recommendations. Truly it is an exquisite thing; pathetic in a high degree, tho' not over true; what we may reckon T.'s masterpiece in the Poetic line."⁹ By August 4, Carlyle had read both volumes of *Scènes* as well as the authorized translation of *Sportman's Sketches* (1852) by Henri Delaveau, entitled *Récits d'un Chasseur* (1858). He informed Lady Sandwich: "Some tolerable Books I had;—of which let me recommend two if you don't know them otherwise . . . both full of Russian novelties, and both by a man of real faculty and worth." Typically, Carlyle is elusive about the appeal of Turgenev, yet it would have been almost impossible for him to ignore the Russian's treatment of revolutionary heroes in these works.

In "Mumu" the hero of the story is Gerasim, a peasant of prodi-

⁸As Leonard Schapiro rightly argues, "Turgenev is really absorbed with the human predicament of Bazarov--his views are only incidental. For if one thing emerges clearly from the novel it is that politics and political views are transient--only life and its true values persist for all time. . . . Turgenev loved and admired Bazarov for his Don Quixote-like qualities--his integrity, his will, his courage, his relentless pursuit of truth. Compared with these, errors of view were to Turgenev of minor concern" (187).

⁹MS 615.843, used by permission of the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, as is Carlyle's letter to Lady Sandwich (MS 19.3.52.5 #2786), quoted in the same paragraph above.

gious strength “who [is] more than six feet in height, built like one of the legendary heroes of old and deaf and dumb from birth” (73). He is defined by work into which he pours himself with unconscious devotion and veneration:

Endowed with extraordinary strength, he could do the work of four men—everything went well as soon as he touched it, and it was a joy to watch him whether he was ploughing . . . or . . . wielding his scythe so devastatingly that he could as well have mown a small birch wood right down to the roots. (73)

Gerasim’s work is an expression of his inner nobility. He belongs among Carlyle’s “great silent men . . . scattered here and there, each in his department; silently thinking, silently working; whom no Morning Newspaper makes mention of!” (*Heroes* 192). Like Cromwell, Turgenev’s Gerasim is a type of “inarticulate Prophet who could not speak. Rude, confused, struggling to utter himself, with his savage depth, with his wild sincerity” (*Heroes* 186). Like Carlyle’s Burns, he possesses a “noble rough genuineness; homely, rustic, honest; true simplicity of strength; with its lightning-fire, with its soft-dewy pity; —like the old Norse Thor, the Peasant-God!” (*Heroes* 163). Among the peasants he is a figure of respect and authority. Transported to the city to work for a capricious and tyrannical noblewoman, he still exudes a natural sense of authority:

[E]veryone in the neighbourhood became very respectful towards him: strangers . . . waved at the sight of the awesome yardman . . . [servants] communicated with him by signs and he understood them, doing everything he was ordered, but he also knew his own rights and no one dared sit in his place at the servants’ table. In general Gerasim was a man of stern and serious disposition and liked things kept in order. (74–75)

His fate in the story directly challenges Carlyle’s assumption that the Russian people “possess to a supreme degree the talent of obeying.”

Gerasim silently endures the humiliation of seeing the woman he loves being married at his ladyship's orders to a drunken wretch. Temporarily, he finds an outlet for his affections in "Mumu," the puppy that he rescues. But when he is ordered by the tyrannical lady of the house to get rid of the dog, he executes his instructions with brutal efficiency. As Edgar L. Frost rightly observes, Gerasim's drowning of Mumu "demonstrates the blind, mute fury of a downtrodden people, the unthinking savagery of which they were capable. Yet, at the same time, it demonstrates their sometimes unbending honesty and straightforwardness" (49). Gerasim soon after leaves the city and returns to his peasant village. Turgenev's closing description of him symbolically suggests a peasantry filled with smoldering rage and the potential for violence. Gerasim "lives by himself in his solitary hut, as healthy and strong as ever . . . and as ever he is solemn and staid." What his neighbors know about him is "the dumb man's reputation for fabulous strength" (99), which contains the promise of terrible vengeance against a cruel and corrupt despotism. Unusually, this piece of fiction moved Carlyle deeply. He told W. R. S. Ralton, "I think it is the most beautiful and most touching story I ever read" (qtd. in Waddington *Ivan* 91). His adjectives—"beautiful" and "touching"—indicate that he may have refused to be "deprived" any further of his illusions about Russian obedience. Perhaps he preferred to contemplate Gerasim's "soft-dewy pity" rather than his "lightning-fire," though he could not have ignored the latter entirely.

Carlyle was equally enthusiastic about Turgenev's *Récits d'un Chasseur*, but he did not mention specific stories in the collection. Again, he could not have overlooked the author's admiration of the strong, silent resilience of the Russian peasantry. Unlike Herzen, Turgenev did not idealize them in an effort to contrast their pure socialistic values with the decadent habits of Western Europeans. As Turgenev's French translator Delaveau observes in his preface,

On est surpris d'apprendre, en lisant les deux autres études, à quel point sont souvent poussées en Russie, d'une part la tyrannie des seigneurs, et de l'autre la bassesse que la servitude impose aux

hommes qui les approchent. Mais il ne faut point croire que tous les paysans russes soient dans cet état de dégradation; ils se relèvent au plus léger souffle de liberté, comme l'herbe flétrie que frappe un rayon de soleil. (xii-xiii)

Typical of Turgenev's unflinching approach is "Khor and Kal-inych," where Carlyle would have found a sharp contrast between the practical, silent, and independently minded peasant Khor, and the dreamy, deferential, and "obedient" Kalinych. The narrator's own preferences are clear from his summary of his conversation with Khor:

I derived one conviction which my readers probably cannot have expected—the conviction that Peter the Great was predominantly Russian in his national characteristics and Russian specifically in his reforms. A Russian is so sure of his strength and robustness that he is not averse to overtaxing himself: he is little concerned with his past and looks boldly towards the future. (25)

Whether by coincidence or not, many of Turgenev's heroes resembled the rude, quiet, noble, and tenacious rustics whom Carlyle paid tribute to in *Heroes*, such as Luther, Knox, Burns, and Cromwell.

Conversely, Carlyle's own attitudes to Russia may have changed as a consequence of his exposure to Turgenev. In the later volumes of *Frederick the Great* (1858-65), he shows how Frederick's eventual fate depends on Russian internal politics. The King's reassessment of "Russian Soldierly" enables Carlyle himself to reflect on the destiny of the nation itself:

A perfectly steady obedience is in these men; at any and all times obedient, to the death if needful, and with a silence, with a steadfastness as of rocks and gravitation. Which is a superlative quality in soldiers. Good in Nations, too, within limits; and much a distinction in the Russian Nation: rare, or almost unique, in these unruly Times. (18:451).

What is distinctive here is the phrase "within limits," which suggests

that Carlyle has momentarily inhabited, through the writings of Turgenev, “the skin of a Russian peasant.” His own Frederick emerges less a despot and more a rebel against the combined forces of European hypocrisy, injustice, and duplicity. Turgenev himself seemed to understand that Carlyle’s views had evolved. When he visited him in November 1870, he did not hesitate to tell him the tale of “two men who planned to murder a landowner whose tyranny and cruelty had become insupportable” (Wilson and MacArthur 233). An old man dissuaded them and performed the deed himself. When the two came forward to defend him at his trial, the prisoner merely replied, “I did it. They are young, with wives and children depending on them, while I am old, and ready to die” (233).

In its obituary of Turgenev in 1883, the conservative *Saturday Review* speculated that

If TOURGUENIEFF had ever laid aside his deliberately chosen artistic method, and given direct expression to his theories of life, they would probably have not differed essentially from CARLYLE’S, as they are shown in his essay “Characteristics.” Though he never moralises, he indirectly shows that all genuine worth is unconscious, and that all strong natures are simple and practical. He hated people who think about thinking, and despised their nostrums. (“Ivan” 491)

This is a half-truth, but a valuable half-truth. From Carlyle, Turgenev derived a deep respect for the virtues of the silent, unconscious hero. He understood, as Carlyle did, that neither ideology nor physical force was the distinguishing trait of a true hero. Heroic integrity began with the embrace of human potential and the acceptance of God’s omnipotence and ineffability. In an otherwise enthusiastic review of *Past and Present* (1843) in 1844, Frederick Engels, who introduced Karl Marx to Carlyle’s writings, blamed Carlyle for misunderstanding the aims of revolutionaries. Their goal was constructive, and their aim was to build “a new world based on purely human and moral social relationships [where] we have no need first to summon up the abstraction

of a 'God' and to attribute to it everything beautiful, great, sublime and truly human" (464). Until he discerned the true pattern of history, Carlyle would remain ignorant of its larger purpose: "To surmount the contradiction in which he is working, Carlyle has only one more step to take, but . . . it is a difficult one" (466-67). Turgenev was also urged by revolutionaries to take this "step," but he too resisted. The religion of revolution was an anathema to him. Like Carlyle, he recognized the paradox of "image-breaking," which accepts no limits to its own authority and cannot clothe its "naked formlessness" in any genuine constructive "Mythus."

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