

LIZA KALITINA AND OTHER CHARACTERS AS A REFLECTION OF THE SPIRITUAL QUEST OF THE ERA

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Abstract. *The article examines the phenomenon of spiritual searches in Russian society in the middle of the 19th century through the prism of the characters in I.S. Turgenev's novel "A Nest of Nobility". The author departs from the traditional interpretation of the work as an elegy to the departing nobility, focusing on the epistemological fault line of the epoch — the crisis of reflection and the birth of the ethics of action. dreamy Tatyana to an ascetic ascetic. Particular attention is paid to the categories of "duty" and "humility", which turn from patriarchal virtues into an existential program for the survival of the individual in history. The article offers a new interpretation of the novel's ending, considering the heroine's departure to a monastery not as a defeat, but as the acquisition of sovereignty through the renunciation of sovereignty.*

Keywords: *I.S. Turgenev, "A Nest of Nobility", Liza Kalitina, spiritual search, ethics of duty, "Turgenev's girl", Russian literature of the XIX century, tragic.*

Аннотация. *В статье рассматривается феномен духовного поиска в российском обществе середины XIX века через призму персонажей романа И.С. Тургенева «Дворянское гнездо». Автор отходит от традиционной интерпретации произведения как элегии проходящей знати, сосредотачиваясь вместо этого на эпистемологической линии разлома эпохи, кризисе размышлений и рождении этики, основанной на действии. Используя Лизу Калитину, Фёдора Лаврецкого и второстепенных персонажей (Михалевич, Лемм) в качестве примеров, статья анализирует превращение «девушки Тургенев» из мечтательной Татьяны в аскетичную поклонницу. Особое внимание уделяется категориям «долга» и «смирения», которые эволюционируют от патриархальных добродетелей в экзистенциальную программу индивидуального выживания в истории. Статья предлагает новую интерпретацию финала романа, рассматривая уединение героини в монастырь не как поражение, а как достижение суверенитета через отказ от суверенитета.*

Ключевые слова: *И.С. Тургенев, «Дворянское гнездо», Лиза Калитина, духовный поиск, этика долга, «тургеневская девушка», русская литература XIX века, трагедия.*

In the space that is commonly called the Russian cultural time, there is a special bifurcation point — the fifty-ninth year of the nineteenth century. This is the year when Turgenev's novel about the "nest of nobility" became not so much a literary event as a historiosophical one. Contemporaries, who had not yet cooled down from the controversy around Rudin, greedily pounced on the new work, seeing in it not just a love story with a tragic ending, but a diagnosis of an entire class and, more broadly, the entire national soul. And indeed, the critic Pavel Annenkov, one of the most sensitive interpreters of Turgenev's work, immediately noted that we are not looking at another "superfluous person" in the alternation of the Onegin and Pechorins, but something fundamentally different. He wrote that Lavretsky, unlike his predecessors in the literary gallery, was doomed not to reflection, but to self-consciousness.¹ Not to deny society, but to do the hard inner work of correcting oneself. Annenkov, as is known, was not inclined to radical social criticism, preferring aesthetic analysis, but it was in *A Nest of Nobles* that he unexpectedly caught the pulse of the epoch: the epoch when Hegelian dialectics, having passed through the Russian minds, turned from an abstract philosophical scheme into an ethical imperative.

This difference between reflection, which paralyzes the will, and consciousness, which stimulates action, becomes the optics through which alone it is possible to discern the true nature of the spiritual quest unfolding on the pages of the novel. After all, the paradox of the fifties lies in the fact that they became the time when Russian thought finally ceased to be afraid of its own boldness. Take, for example, the figure of Mikhalevich - this eternal student, "enthusiast" and poor man, who bursts into the prosperous regularity of Lavretsky's life like a hurricane reminiscent of the high. Turgenev introduces him into the narrative almost artificially, as it may seem to an inexperienced reader: plot-wise, his appearance is motivated by nothing but the will of the author, who needs to shake up the frozen thought of the protagonist. Mikhalevich is the voice of youth, the voice of faith, and faith that has already managed to burn itself with reality, but has not been extinguished. It is in his mouth that the author puts the famous formula, which he himself disputes with the entire structure of the novel: "... and I remained the same, that is, faithful to the ideals of youth, and found a new meaning in life in faith in God." This phrase contains the whole nerve of the transitional time: the old ideals do not work, the new ones have not yet been formulated, and religion becomes the only refuge, not as a dogma, but as a personal, hard-won choice.

However, the real epicenter of this earthquake is not a male character, but a female one. Liza Kalitina is a unique figure in Russian literature, standing on a par with Pushkin's Tatiana, but in her own way even more tragic and integral. If Tatiana in the finale of *Onegin* acquires status definiteness ("I am given to someone else"), then Liza refuses any definiteness, retreating into a foggy, almost ethereal monastic world. Annenkov, comparing the two heroines, gave preference to Liza, seeing in her a great moral height,

¹ Annenkov P.V. *Nashe obshchestvo v "Gvoryanskom gnezde" Turgeneva* [Our society in Turgenev's "Noble Nest"]. — 1859. — № 8.

since her sacrifice is not following her duty to her husband, whom she respects, but does not love, but following the absolute law, which does not tolerate compromise. This law is not external, ecclesiastical, but deeply internal, suffered by the heroine herself. Where does this incredible seriousness, this willingness to pay for happiness as for a sin come from in a young girl who grew up in an environment quite far from hypocrisy?

The answer lies in those layers of the novel that are usually called "family chronicles". It is no coincidence that Turgenev, a master of hidden psychologism, prefaces the love story with a lengthy excursion into the past of the Lavretsky family² and the Kalitin family. These "nests" are not just a place of action, they are a way of national well-being. Yuri Lebedev, a researcher of Turgenev's work, emphasized that in these old houses, with their centuries-old ways, hangers-on and card losses, dwells the spirit of the motherland, the "smoke of the fatherland", which nourishes the lyrical theme of Russia.³ But the same spirit turns out to be a heavy burden. The story of a despotic great-grandfather, a weak-willed Anglomaniac father, Aunt Glafira, who embodies the old, skeletal Russia — all this forms the background against which the hero's personal choice acquires epic proportions. Lavretsky returns to his homeland not just as a disappointed husband, but as a man looking for business. And this is his difference from Rudin, who remained a "wanderer": Lavretsky wants to "plow the land". But the drama is that the ground under it turns out to be shaky. Turgenev's traditional understanding of the "deed" is complex and ambiguous: his contemporaries, the democrats, demanded revolutionary action, while the writer himself was inclined to gradual, organic transformations.

The love of Lisa and Lavretsky is an attempt to connect these two shores: personal happiness and service to a higher meaning. When it seems that there is no obstacle (the imaginary death of his wife), happiness is possible, and then history strikes the most cruel blow: Varvara Pavlovna returns. And here it is not the weakness of the heroes that is manifested, but their monstrous, almost antique strength. They cannot step over someone else's suffering for the sake of their own happiness. For Liza, this is absolutely impossible: she perceives love for Lavretsky as a temptation, as an obsession for which one must pay. Researchers have repeatedly noted that Turgenev's letter to Countess Lambert contains the key to this ethics: The writer speaks of the need for "real self-sacrifice", which gives the personality nothing but a dry and cold feeling of duty fulfilled,⁴ devoid of enthusiasm. This formula is striking in its asceticism. It abolishes the romantic pathos of love as service (this is how George Sand's heroines loved). Here love and duty are not just in conflict, they are at different poles of existence.

In the scene of the last meeting in the monastery, which is one of the most piercing in world literature, Turgenev reaches the heights of his "secret psychologism". He does not

² Batyuto A.I. Turgenev-romanist. Leningrad, Nauka Publ., 1972.

³ Lebedev Y.V. Russia and the Russians in the novel by I.S. Turgenev "The Nest of the Nobility" // Literature in school. — 2008. — P. 12-19.

⁴ Markovich V.M. Chelovek v romanakh Turgeneva [Man in Turgenev's novels]. — Leningrad: Leningrad University Publishing House, 1975.

tell us directly about the feelings of the characters. He shows the details: his eyelashes fluttered, his fingers pressed tighter to his rosary, his emaciated face bent even lower. It's body language that says more than any monologues. Lisa passed by - and this is her conscious choice, her "business". She rejects not only Lavretsky, but also her former self, a person thirsting for happiness. This is her spiritual feat, which for a person of the middle of the XIX century was akin to a civil feat. It becomes "invisible" to the world, but this invisibility is the highest form of presence.

Traditional criticism, especially represented by the democratic camp, often saw in such an ending the weakness and dubiousness of "Turgenev's truth". Dobrolyubov, analyzing "On the Eve", will already be looking for a hero of action, and not humility. Elena Stakhova goes to Bulgaria to die for freedom, Lisa goes to a monastery to die for the world. From the point of view of "real criticism", the second way is a reactionary escape from problems. But a modern view allows us to see a different logic here. In a situation where the historical perspective is obscured by fog, and social reforms are only promised and look half-hearted, the only territory of freedom is the inner world of man. Liza Kalitina, refusing personal happiness, acquires absolute power over her own fate. It cannot be forced, it cannot be seduced, it cannot be broken. She is not subject to Panshin with his state gloss, nor even love. This is the victory of the spirit, won at the cost of leaving the world.

Turgenev, unlike many of his contemporaries, does not give an unequivocal assessment of this choice. In the epilogue, he shows the aged, lonely Lavretsky, who comes to the empty house of the Kalitins. A new, young life plays in the garden, not knowing the tragedies of its fathers. And this contrast, the withering of the old nest and the green growth of new shoots, removes the absoluteness of the tragedy. Life goes on, even if its best representatives go into the shadows. Moreover, modern researcher Irina Belyaeva suggests looking at the novel not as an elegy of the death of the nobility, but as a search for a program of rehabilitation and reconciliation. Turgenev, in her opinion, does not show hopelessness, but the possibility of getting out of tragic dead ends through a change of identity without losing essence. Lavretsky learns to "plow the land", acquiring a modest, but real business. Lisa goes into prayer, gaining absolute, albeit invisible, authority.

This turn from external to internal action is the main spiritual search of the epoch, captured in the novel. While Russia was on the verge of great reforms, the abolition of serfdom and the breakdown of all foundations, the best minds understood: first you need to change yourself. It is impossible to build a just society from unjust souls. Liza Kalitina is an incarnate conscience that does not lend itself to political instrumentalization. It cannot be put into the ranks of revolutionaries, but its silent reproach is stronger than any proclamations. Comparing her with Elena from "On the Eve", it is easy to notice: both heroines are obsessed with a thirst for self-sacrifice. But for Elena, sacrifice is a leap forward into history (the war for the independence of Bulgaria), and for Lisa it is a departure into eternity, into silence. The paths are different, but the nature of feeling is the same: absolute intolerance of untruth, whether social or personal.

Thus, "A Nest of Nobility" turns out to be a work not about the past, but about the present and the future. Turgenev, who is often blamed for "indecisiveness" and liberal half-heartedness, is strikingly bold in this novel. He shows that in a situation of historical timelessness, the only worthy path is the path of moral absolutism. Liza Kalitina, this quiet girl with a rosary in her hands, turns out to be a much more radical character than any nihilist who would appear on the pages of Fathers and Sons a few years later. The nihilist Bazarov denies in the name of affirming the new. Lisa does not deny anything - she leaves everything that is not eternal. And this departure is the strongest indictment of the world, which could not give place to pure love and truth. In the empty rooms of the Kalitin House, in the abandoned alleys of the park, in a distant monastery, where the noise of the city does not reach, there, in silence, that new spiritual force is maturing, which will one day be destined to transform Russia. The paradox of A Nest of Nobles lies in the fact that, telling about the death of one estate, Turgenev writes a hymn to the immortality of the human soul, which, even being locked in the cage of history, retains the ability to fly.

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