

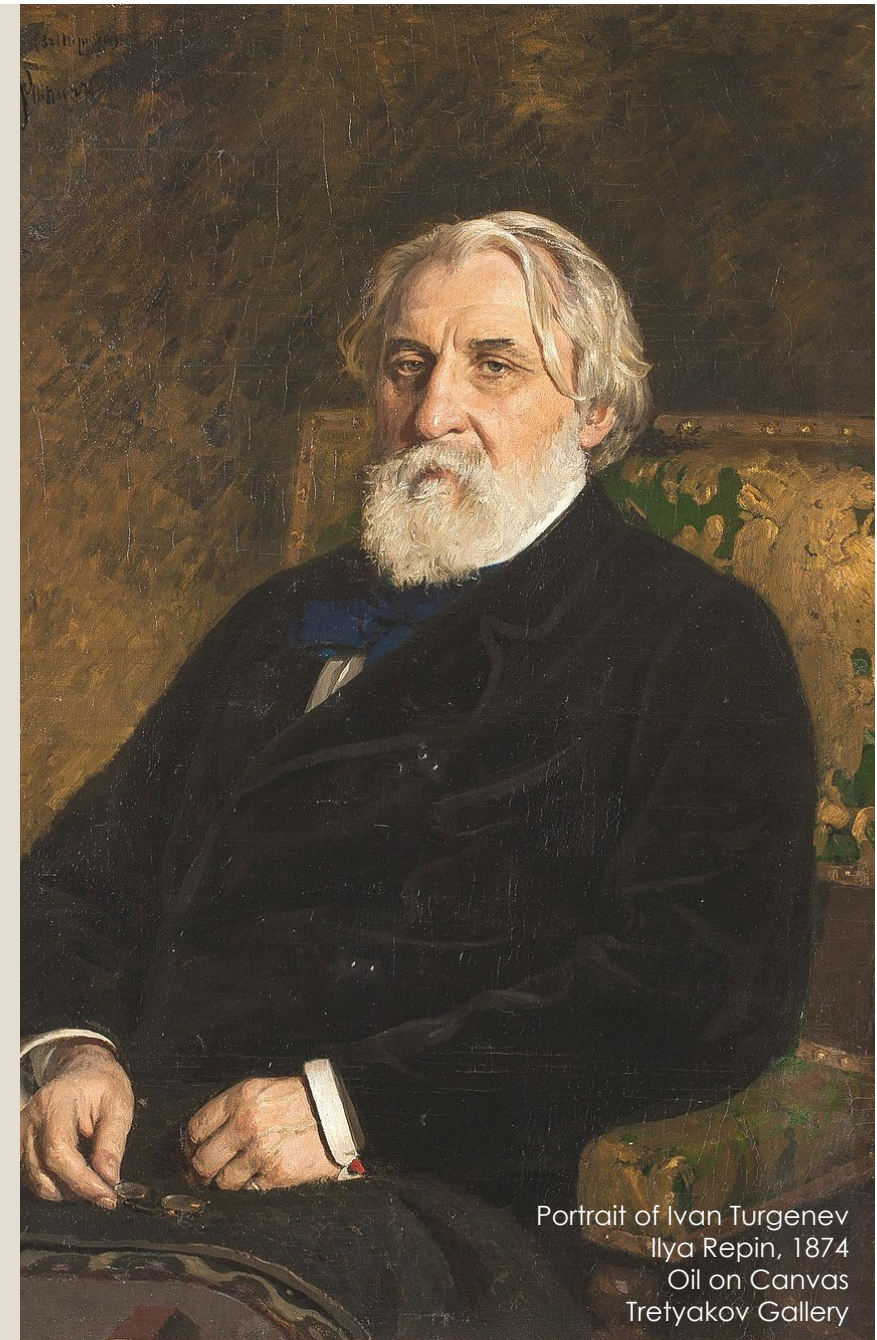


# IVAN SERGEYEVICH TURGENEV

Readings in Russian Literature: The Nineteenth Century  
IIIT Hyderabad  
March 2, 2024

# Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev (1818-1883)

- Born in Oryol in 1818 in an old aristocratic family
- Spent his childhood at his mother's estate in Spasskoye
- His mother was educated and an authoritarian, believed in total discipline
- Observed serfdom in practice, affected him profoundly
- Learnt French, German, and English from governesses; French used within the family
- Father frequently absent, died early too

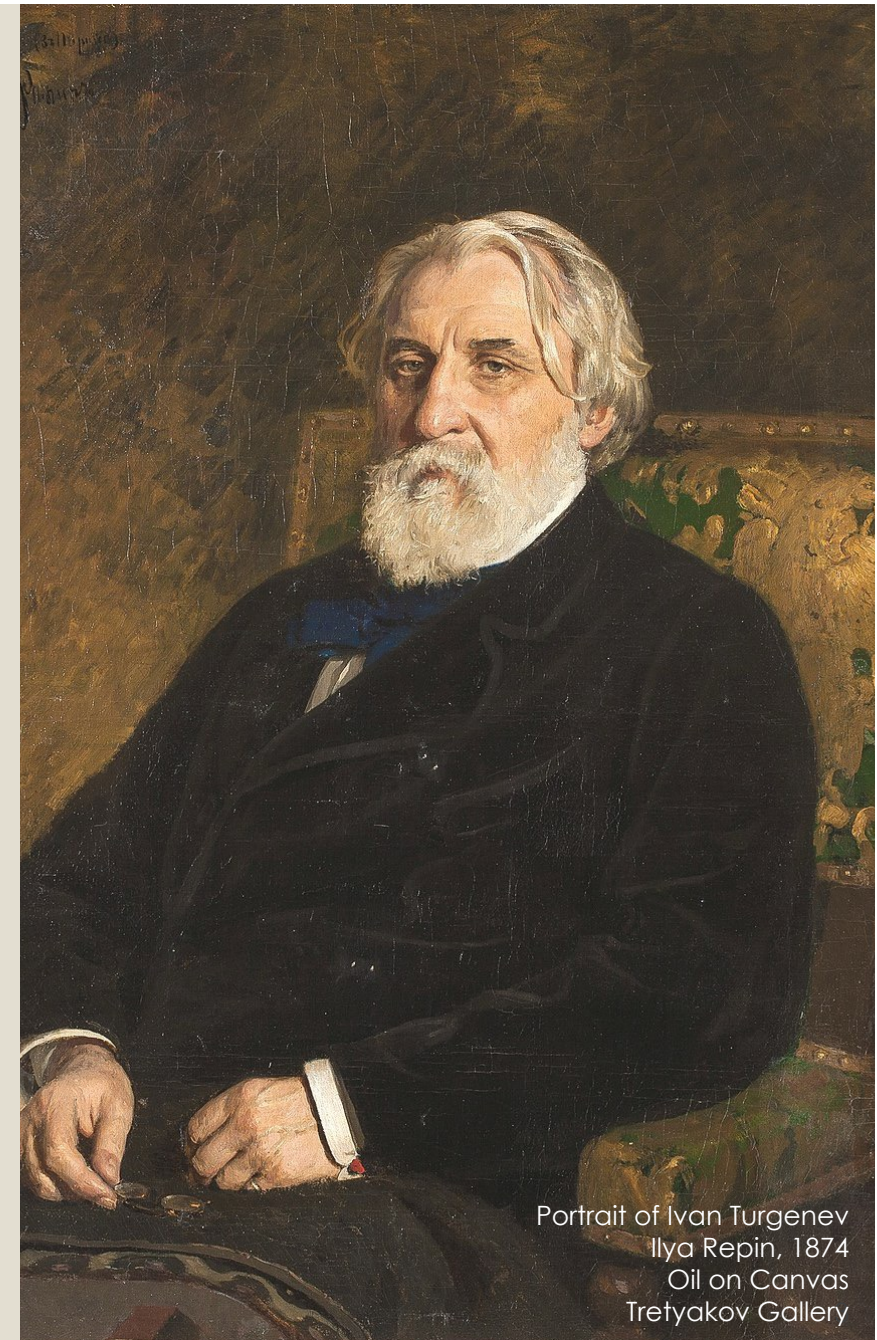


Portrait of Ivan Turgenev  
Ilya Repin, 1874  
Oil on Canvas  
Tretyakov Gallery



# Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev (1818-1883)

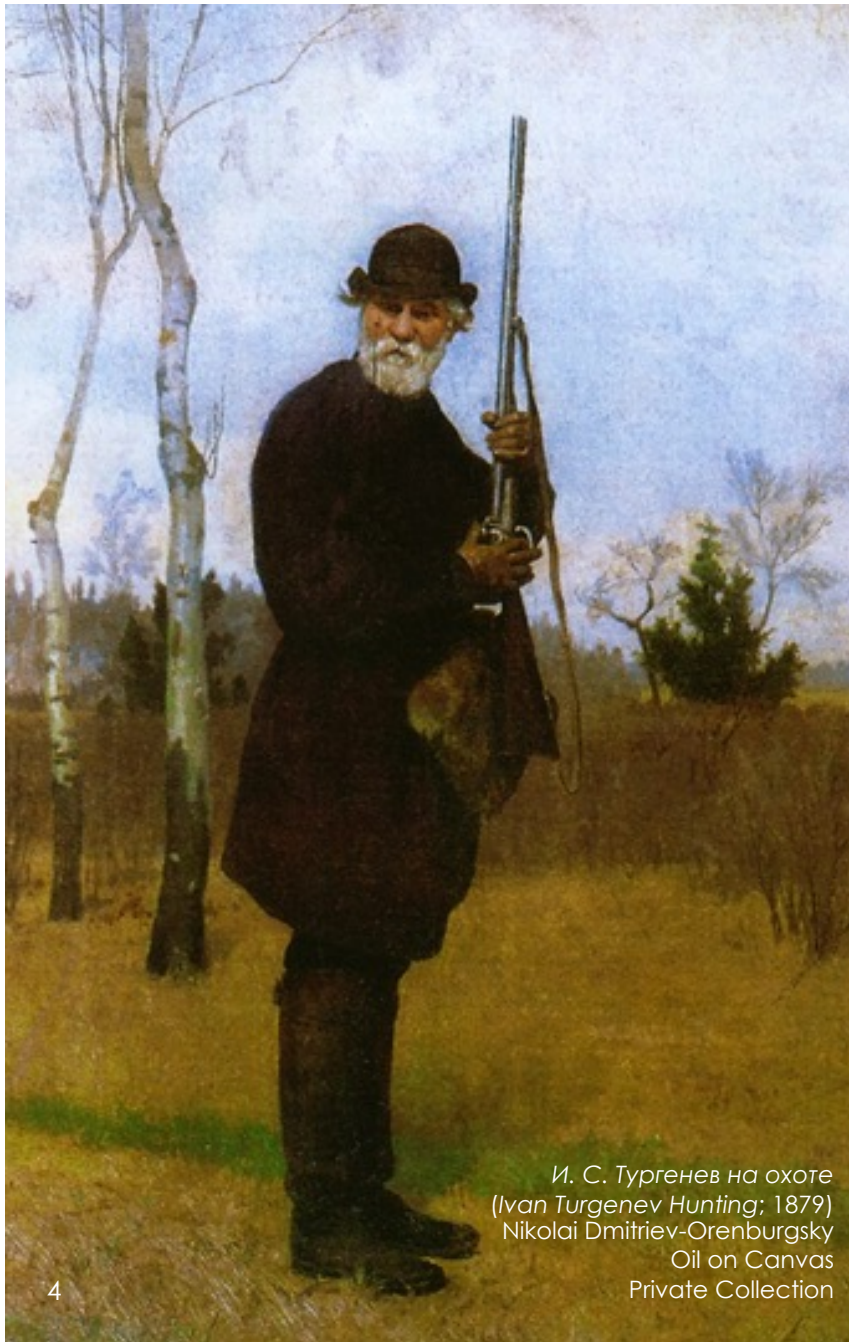
- Patchy childhood education, later went to universities of Moscow and St. Petersburg, followed by Berlin
- In the Slavophiles vs. Westernizers debate, he was the westernizer
  - Westernizers believed in the vision of Peter I as a western nation
  - Slavophiles believed in the superiority of Russian social and spiritual life as well as that of the Orthodox Church
- Not interested in religion, and neither right-wing nor left-wing, politically speaking
- Instead, preoccupied with social questions



Portrait of Ivan Turgenev  
Ilya Repin, 1874  
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# Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev (1818-1883)

- Began writing poems in the 1830s, recognized only in 1843, received praise from Vissarion Belinsky
- Turned to prose, which is where he began to demonstrate his talent
- *A Hunter's Notebook* (1847-1851; *Sovremennik*)
  - Published as a whole in 1852; arrested and sent to live in exile/house arrest on his state at Spasskoye
- Rural life before the Emancipation of the Serfs in 1861
- Never married, although had many affairs with serfs as well as a lifelong affair with opera singer Pauline Viardot, whom he met in 1843-4
- A close friend of Pauline's husband Louis, who loved hunting too, and had published a memoir on the subject

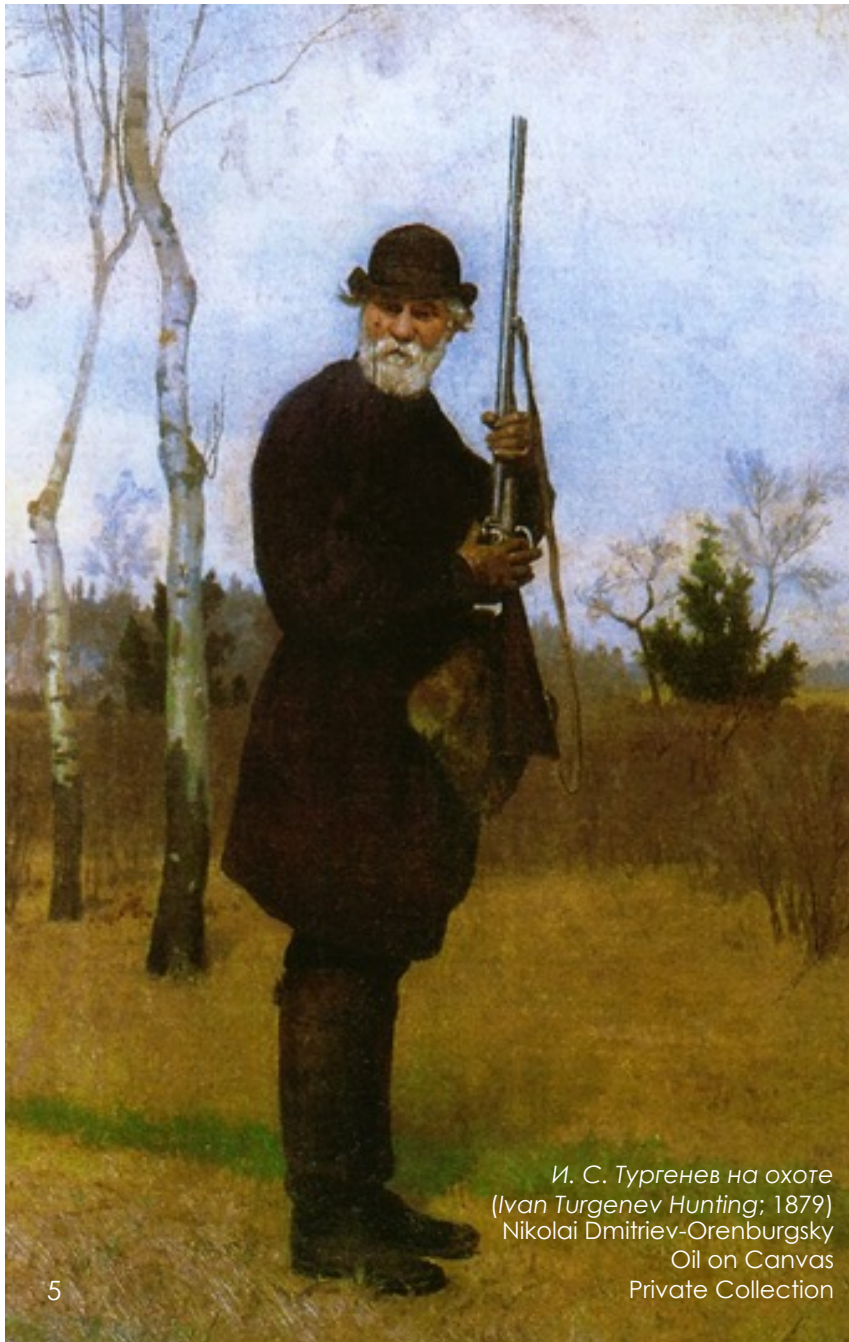


И. С. Тургенев на охоте  
(Ivan Turgenev Hunting; 1879)  
Nikolai Dmitriev-Orenburgsky  
Oil on Canvas  
Private Collection



# Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev (1818-1883)

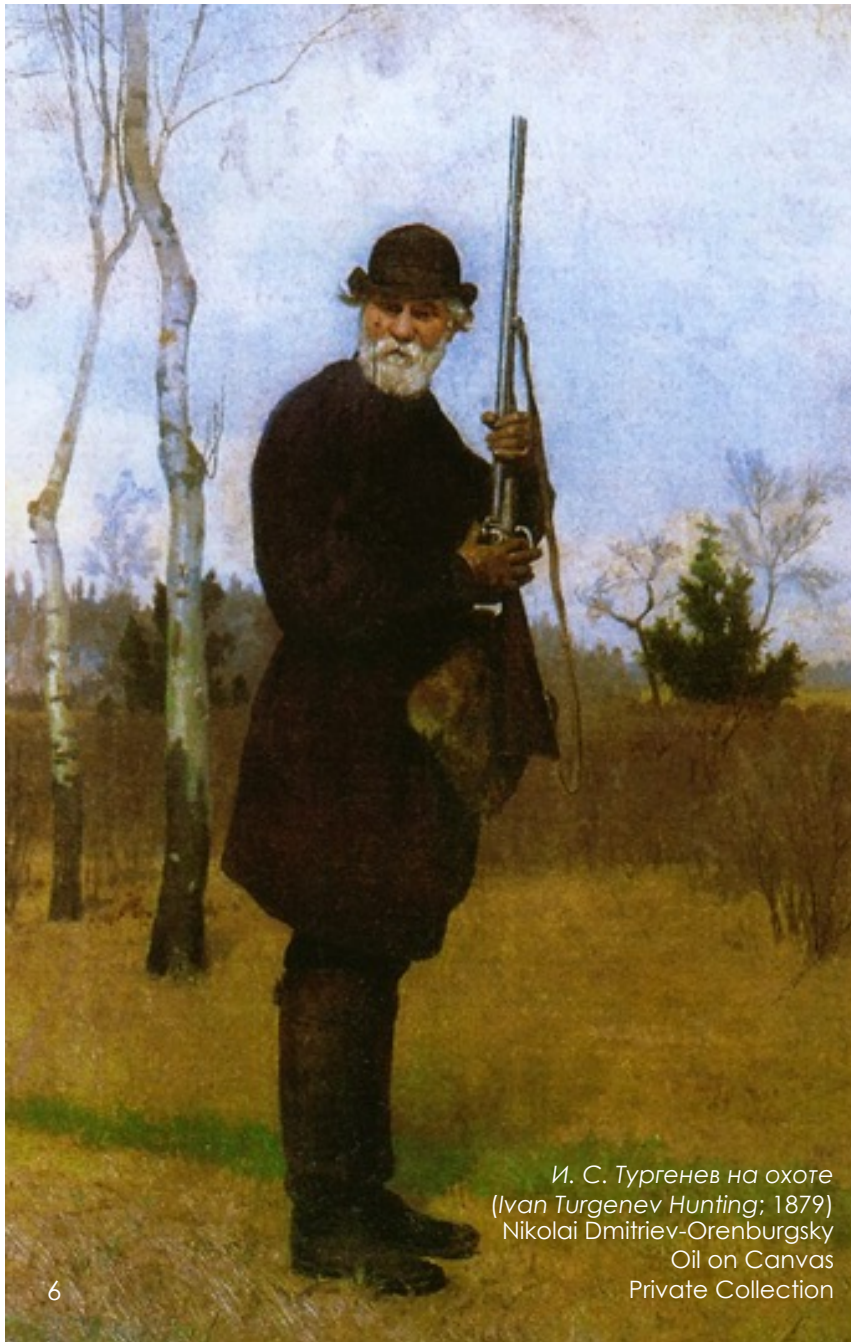
*“In some respects they are occasional pieces, experiments in a particular kind of portraiture, tracts for the times cast in the mould of literature, trial sketches for his future work as a novelist. The order that he finally chose for them (the order followed in this translation) does not observe a strict chronology and can be considered evidence for supposing that he never regarded them as truly completed. Despite this, they have a certain stylistic cohesion as well as common ground for their content and they acquired soon after their first appearance their reputation as masterpieces which occupy a very special place in Russian literature.”*



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# Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev (1818-1883)

- Speculations exist about the literary models for *A Hunter's Notebook*: Radishchev, Gogol, Pushkin, George Sand etc.
- Draws from experience and possibly memory, wrote them during his travels in Europe and a stay on the Viardots' estate
- Wrote these sketches to provide himself with an income
- Wrote several novels, plays, short stories, and novellas; *Fathers and Children* (1862) most acclaimed work

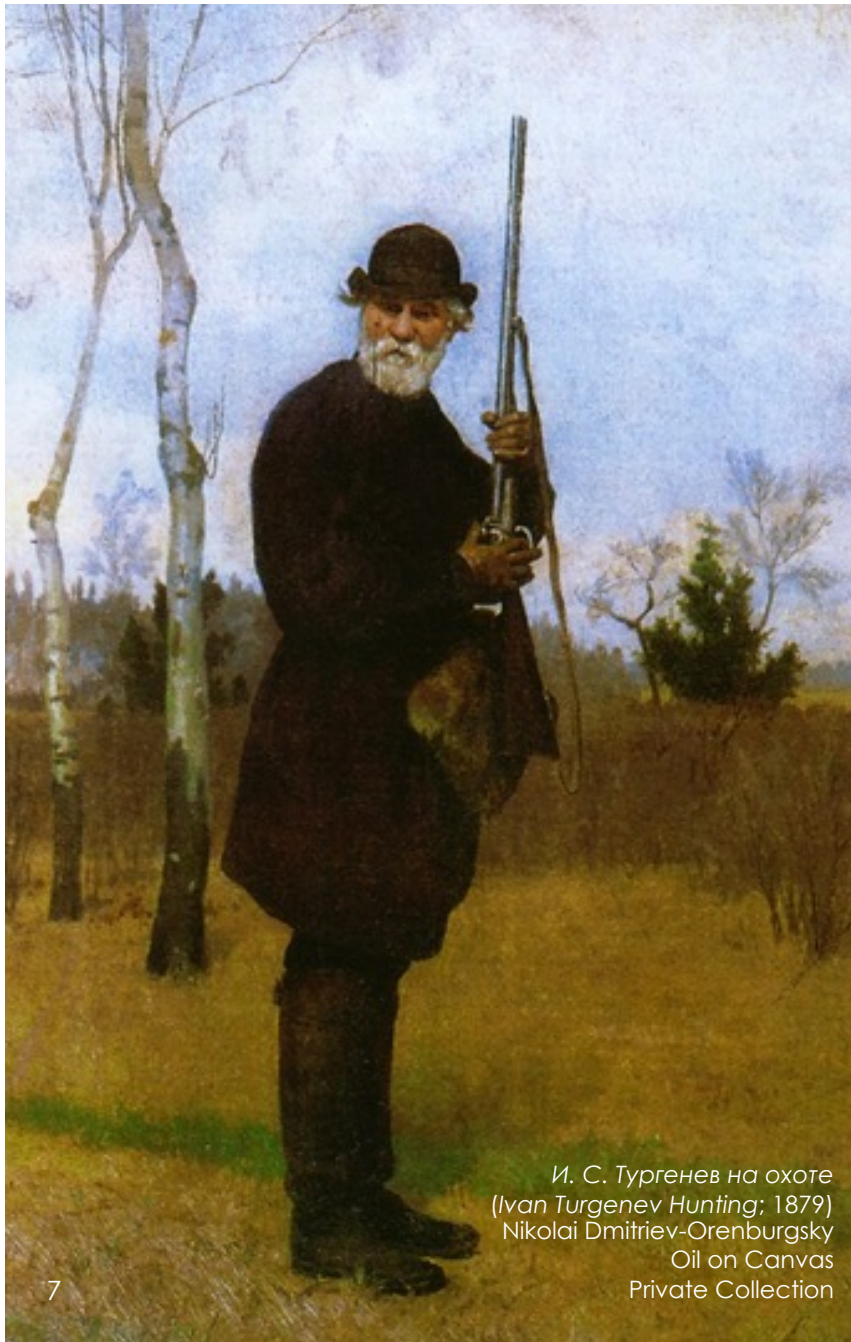


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# Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev (1818-1883)

“The Office”



И. С. Тургенев на охоте  
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# Features of Realism in Writing

- Repetition in conversation with the old man
- Aspects of orality and the workings of memory
- Different registers of language to realistically represent class, regional, and locational (urban-rural) differences



# Repetition

-- Деревня. да тебе что надо?

-- А вот от дождя укрыться.

-- Чего?

-- От дождя укрыться.

\*

-- Да ты откуда?

-- спросил я его.

-- Чего?

-- Откуда ты?

-- Из Ананьева.

-- Что ж ты тут делаешь?

-- Чего?

-- Что ты делаешь тут?

-- А сторожем сижу.

'A village. What do you need?'

'Just to shelter from the rain.'

'What?'

'To shelter from the rain.'

\*

'Where are you from?' I asked him.

'What?'

'Where are you from?'

'From Ananyevo.'

'What are you doing here?'

'What?'

'What are you doing here?'

'I'm keeping guard.'

# Orality and Memory

*“Ah!’ (He scratched the sunburnt nape of his neck.) ‘Well, you go, see,’ he started saying suddenly, waving his arms about disconnectedly, ‘see over there ... see, you go by that wood, see it – you go by that – and there’s a road. Don’t pay no attention to it, that road, see, but keep right, keep right, keep right ... Well, you’ll come to Ananyevo. The other way’ll be Sitovka.”*



# The Office

- Scope
- Facilities
- Personnel
- (Manner of) Functioning

# The Office

- Size of the estate and yardstick to measure that: Yelena Nikolaevna Losnyakova has approximately a hundred and fifty servants.
- The office itself: state of the people who work there, how many, and in what condition of professionalism and dynamism.
- They turn hospitable as soon as he says he will pay.
- Everyone is related:

***“This is who they are. First there’ll be Vasily Nikolaevich, he’s chief cashier. Then there’s Pyotr the clerk, and his brother Ivan who’s a clerk, and another Ivan who’s a clerk. Koskenkin Narkizov, he’s also a clerk, and then there’s me. Oh, I can’t remember how many there are.”***



# The Absurdity of It All

***“It is hereby demanded of you that immediately on receipt of this you ascertain who did last night, being pissed and singing indecent songs, pass near the English garden and did awaken and disturb the governess, the French lady, Madame Eugenie? And what were the nightwatchmen up to and who was on duty in the garden and who permitted such disorders to occur? It is hereby demanded that you inquire in detail into all the above and report immediately to the office.”***

# Rhetorical Strategies of Negotiation

- **Invoking God**

- “I can’t do it otherwise, Gavril Antonych. In God’s name I tell you I can’t.”

- **Invoking Threats, Calling Bluffs**

- “What a difficult one you are!’ muttered the merchant. ‘It’d be better if I completed the deal with the mistress.”
  - “Suit yourself,’ answered the Fatso. ‘You should’ve done so long ago. What in fact worries you about that? Far better if you did!”

- **Flattery**

- “Who better than you, Nikolay Yeremeich. Yessir, one might say you’re the real boss round here. Well, then, how’ll it be?’ the unfamiliar voice went on. ‘How’ll we decide it, Nikolay Yeremeich? I’m bound to ask that.”

- **Feigned sense of injury about being short-changed**

- “I should’ve got four, but I’m a fool, I was in a hurry,’ muttered the Fatso.”



# Intertextuality, Ekphrasis, Allusion

*“I approached the shack, peered under the straw roof and saw an old man of such decrepitude that I immediately thought of the dying goat that Robinson Crusoe’d found in one of the caves on his island.”*

# Intertextuality, Ekphrasis, Allusion

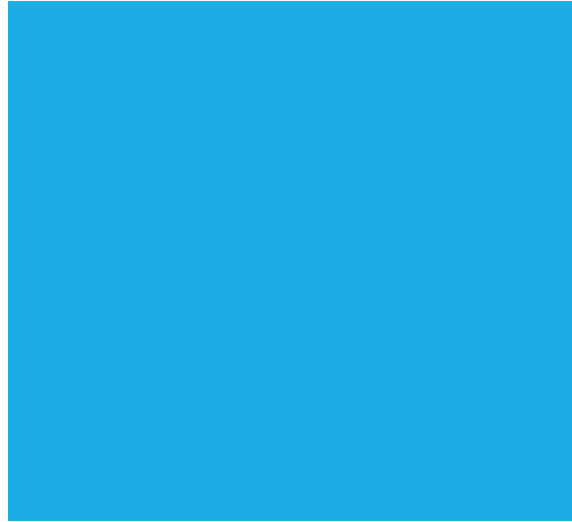
*“On the walls hung with green wallpaper decorated in rose-coloured patterns were three enormous oil paintings. One depicting a setter in a blue collar bore the title: ‘Such is my Pleasure’. At the dog’s feet there flowed a river, and on the opposite bank of the river under a fir tree sat a hare of unbelievably large proportions with one ear raised. Another painting depicted two old men eating a melon. In the background behind the melon could be seen a Greek portico bearing the device: ‘The Temple of Contentment’. The third picture represented a half-naked woman in a recumbent position en raccourci or so foreshortened that her knees were red and her heels exceedingly fat.”*





# Intertextuality, Ekphrasis, Allusion

***“Oy be offter deestant deeserts gone  
Far away from thizere beauteous spots... (and so on)”***



## Teatime with Turgenev

***“The fellow in the grey caftan, the duty clerk, set out on an old card-table a samovar, teapot, a glass on a cracked saucer, a jug of cream and a string of local pretzels which were as hard as flint.”***

# Different Narrative/Lyrical Levels

- Main Narration
  - Song
  - The official order
- 
- What do these different levels add to the text?



# Different Narrative/Lyrical Levels

- Main Narration
  - Song
  - The official order
- 
- What do these levels add to the text?
    - Linguistic and artistic complexity, reflection of social and cultural complexities, hierarchies, conventions.

# The Narrator

- **Two Aspects:**
  - Narrator while narrating
  - Narrator amidst other people/in the world
- **Insider-Outsider:**
  - Both belongs and does not belong to this world
  - We know this world through him.
- Seems more of a **reporter** or **interviewer** at times than someone who is a part of the story: aloof, quietly in the background, observing the theatre of life unfold. We do not know much about him.

# The Narrator

- The narrator as interpreter of customs, rituals, manners, and mannnerisms:
  - Nikolai Yeremeich using his third finger to move the beads on the abacus because **“it was more respectable.”**
  - **“(Manorial servants frequently, when speaking about a man, use a feminine form out of greater fondness.)”**
- The narrator as witness, the narrator as an unwanted presence for the people in the story, and thus occupying the place of a moral compass for the reader.
  - Pretends to be asleep and hears everything
  - Tries to peep and see what is going on

***“I will not take it upon myself to describe the end of this scene because I’m already afraid I’ve insulted the reader’s feelings.”***



# Realism

- Very little is explained to us in this story, which exemplifies show, not tell.
- The reader is left to make connections and interpret, while leaving enough that circumscribes our reading within precise boundaries.
  - ***“Facing him sat the merchant, about forty years old, lean and pale, looking literally as if he’d been smeared with grease. He ceaselessly fussed with his beard and blinked his eyes rapidly and his lips worked.”***
  - Why is Nikolai Yeremeich so anxious about whether the narrator, “who’s not from around here,” is asleep or awake?
  - Why does Nikolai Yeremeich send Sidor to his wife?
- At the same time, the narrator’s matter-of-fact depiction and expression of pity:
  - ***“The old man was squatting on his haunches, squeezing up his small darkened eyes and rapidly but carefully chewing like a hare (the poor fellow didn’t have a single tooth) a hard, dried pea, rolling it ceaselessly from one side to the other.”***

# Precise Observation

- “The merchant handed the chief clerk a small wad of notes, bowed, gave a shake of the head, picked his hat up between two fingers, shrugged his shoulders, gave a wavy movement to his waist and went out with a polite squeaking of his boots. Nikolay Yeremeich went to the hall and, so far as I could see, began counting through the notes handed him by the merchant. A red head with thick sideburns was poked in through the door.”
- “The duty clerk dashed out. I finished my glass of tea, lay down on the divan and went to sleep. I slept for about two hours.”

# Social Hierarchy

- *“One laughed louder than all the rest, a boy of about fifteen, apparently the son of an aristocrat from among the manorial staff because he was wearing a waistcoat with brass buttons and a lilac-coloured tie and had already developed a little pot-belly.”*
- Bureaucratic power and hierarchy:
  - Nikolai Yeremeich gets offended when Kuprian reminds him that he was just another peasant serf like them before he became a clerk.



# Emancipation of Serfs, 1861



Чтение манифеста (Освобождение крестьян)  
Reading of the Manifest (Liberation of peasants), 1907  
Boris Kustodiev  
Pastel on Paper  
For I.N. Knebel's *Russian History in Paintings*

- Kuprian raises the question of what the rest of his friends, who are making fun of him, will do if they are freed from serfdom.
- He says he has a trade and is skilled at it, but they are “layabouts,” so they will not be able to get by and pay “quit-rent” as he will be able to.
- The passport he mentions is a citizenship card which will allow him to travel from one place to another within the empire.

# Works Cited

Turgenev, Ivan. *Sketches from a Hunter's Album*. Translated and introduced by Richard Freeborn. Penguin, 1990.