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Finding the Way to Bezhin Meadow: Turgenev's Intimations of Mortality

When "Bezhin Meadow" first appeared in *Sovremennik* in 1851, Turgenev's friend Feoktistov wrote to him that while the story had "produced an enormous effect on the public in Moscow," he found it lacked a "general impression," a "general thread," that would unify its fragmentary parts and give the reader a clue to its general significance.[1] Well might Feoktistov have been puzzled, for the censor had omitted the story's ending! The ending was soon available to the reader in the edition of *A Hunter's Notes* published in Moscow in 1852: "With sorrow I must add that Pavel died before the year was out. He was not drowned, but killed by a fall from a horse. A pity, he was a splendid lad!"[2] While indicating a "general thread," the theme of mortality, the lines produce what may at first appear to be a facile irony. A group of village boys has driven the horses out into the meadow to feed through the summer night. They have occupied themselves around their campfire by telling ghost stories. One, more able and intelligent than the rest, expresses skepticism about the peasant superstitions; yet this boy, Pavel, is precisely the one who dies, seemingly in fulfillment of a portent. The phrase "He was not drowned, but killed by a fall from a horse" gives a further twist to the irony, for the portent, Pavel's name being called from the river by the drowned Vasilii, had indicated a watery death.[3] Yet "Bezhin Meadow" resonates with potentialities that evade facile ironies and in attempting to take up its "common thread," we might better point to the tie between Pavel's end and the experience on that darkened plain of Turgenev's hunter-narrator, to whose experiences in nature are consecrated the first four pages of the eighteen-page story.

1. The sequence of correspondence suggests that Feoktistov was conveying the common opinion formulated in intense discussions in Moscow literary circles in the days after the publication of "Bezhin Meadow." On February 21 he had written to Turgenev: "Yesterday the second issue of *Sovremennik* was received here. . . . Your story is a marvelous thing! . . . It is decidedly one of the best things you have written." Three days later he wrote again praising the story, but with the reservations expressed above. Muscovite critical opinion emphasized the "inadequacy" of characterization, the lack of measure in the story's development (Turgenev tried to "put in too much"), and the "excessive" detail of the landscape description. A brief description of the first critical reception is given in the notes to the story in I. S. Turgenev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v dvadtsati vos'mi tomakh: Sochineniia,* vol. 4: *Zapiski okhotnika* (hereafter cited as *Sochineniia*) (Moscow-Leningrad, 1963), pp. 553–54.

2. My reading of the story is based on the text in *Sochineniia,* vol. 4, pp. 92–113. Turgenev rid the 1852 edition of the censor's considerable distortions by the expedient of submitting a fresh manuscript to the publisher rather than copies of the published stories.

3. This ending resembles the ending of the episode "The Fatalist" in Lermontov's *Hero of Our Time* where Maxim Maximich, after scoffing at the notion of fate, reverses himself to allow that there might be something to it.

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The long introductory movement draws the hunter-narrator more deeply into the fabric of the work than any story Turgenev had written for the cycle up to that time. The movement opens with a beautifully drawn landscape worthy of Constable. The scale is large. The atmosphere is of a Godlike benevolence and serenity. Turgenev shows us a world of perfect beauty and order. Man exists as a tiny figure in the vast landscape, but he has his place in the scheme: "This is the weather the husbandsman needs to gather in his crops." Here is nature in her eternal aspect as the great mother of us all, an essentially classical and harmonious view of man and nature. Turgenev permits himself a rhetorical flourish: "No vot opiat' khlynuli igraiushchie luchi,—i veselo, i velichavo, slovno vzletaia, podnimaetsia moguchee svetilo." ("But here again the dancing beams come shooting forth, and gaily and magnificently, as if on wings, the mighty luminary emerges.") The studied measure of the opening passage's sentences punctuated by a bookish and dignified rhetorical heightening of effect serves the evocation of a benevolent nature.

But the tone modulates, the focus narrows. The scale is readjusted to bring the hunter-narrator into the forefront of the picture. "On just such a day as this I was out shooting blackcock. . . ." The tone is innocent enough, but the story has taken a turning. The radiant day of the first movement, sounding in a majestic major key, gives way to the ominous minor key of the approaching dark. The story now reveals nature in another of her aspects, as the alien and threatening abode of the savage god. The hunter, a man who knows the terrain well, sets out for home, mysteriously loses his way, backtracks, crosses back and forth, and finally gives up in desperation. He is subjected to the raw power of the unknown. Like the small beings who brush against him in the night, he is a vulnerable, living thing in the harsh presence of the world—reduced gradually from his cheerful rational human self to the primitive fear and biological awareness of being without shelter in the night.

As he shuttles about the fields in the dark, he tries again and again to impose upon his surroundings a daylight order, calling upon the resources of his mind in discourse with himself.

> "Chto za pritcha? . . . Da gde zhe ia?" Ia stal pripominat', kak i kuda khodil v techenie dnia . . . "E! da eto Parakhinskie kusty!—voskliknul ia nakonets,—tochno! von eto, dolzhno byt', Sindeevskaia roshcha . . . Da kak zhe eto ia siuda zashel? Tak daleko? . . . Stranno! Teper' opiat' nuzhno vpravo vziat'."

> "What a strange thing? . . . Where am I?" I began to recall how and where I had been in the course of the day . . . "Aha! That must be Parakhin Spinney," I exclaimed at last. "Exactly! And that must be Sindeev Woods. But how did I come out here? So far away? . . . Strange! Now I have to bear to the right again."

The abundance of intonational "gestures" (in Tynianov's word) emphasizes the futility of the narrator's mental exercise as well as his anxiety, for he has not recognized where he is and will only blunder into deeper oblivion.

Each new topographical context as it looms up before the hunter is described with careful specificity and yet that specificity is undercut by the failure of the features to compose a recognizable and namable place.

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> With quick steps I passed a long square of bushes, came out on a hill and, instead of the expected familiar plain with an oak wood on the right and a low white church in the distance, saw completely different places unknown to me. At my feet there stretched a narrow valley. Directly across, a dense aspen wood rose in a steep wall. I stopped in puzzlement and looked around.

The mere anonymity of this scene becomes transformed in later scenes into an unconcealed malevolence:

> I found myself in a shallow hollow surrounded by ploughed land. A strange feeling immediately overcame me. The hollow had the look of an almost perfect cauldron with gently sloping sides. On its bottom stood several large white stones—it seemed they had crawled there for a secret meeting—and it was so deaf and dumb there, so flat, the sky hung so gloomily over it that my heart shrank. Some small animal squeaked weakly and pitifully among the stones. I hastened to climb back onto the hummock.

The fairy ring, the bats that wheel about the darkening sky, the night birds that touch the narrator in their flight, are familiar appurtenances of the Gothic mood and we could see in them nothing more than a playful anticipation of the boys' superstitions, were not there a greater urgency in the narrator's anxiety than could be justified by playfulness and did not the story's ending turn us so forcefully back to the theme of mortality. The ordering of the characters' experiences around a carefully described topography turns us back to the landscape for clues about the meaning of the experiences.

Here is not a "setting" in any usual sense of the term—not a stage on which an event will take place, not a context to provide us with clues to who the actors are or to tie them to the social fabric. This landscape, existing apart from man in both its serene and threatening aspects, is itself the event of the passage. The rhythms of ease and tension order it into an imaginative topography that would suggest a landscape of the mind, were it not at the same time so clearly actual. That the narrator's walk has hidden in it the potentialities of a spiritual journey is revealed by the triumphant assertion with which it comes to an end: "I recognized at last where I had come to. This meadow is famed in our regions under the name of Bezhin Meadow."

This moment of illumination, recognition, and naming at the end of the narrator's journey represents his reassertion of control over whatever dark forces had been implied in his earlier failures of recognition. The moment has been preceded by his moment of greatest submission and greatest danger when, giving up his attempt to find his way, he wanders aimlessly and suddenly finds himself on a precipice. The image of the hunter standing unknowing upon the edge of a precipice is an emblematic representation of the theme of thanatopsis. It is the logical conclusion to the meditative process hidden in the narrator's journey whose structure follows the course to revelation characteristic of the spiritual exercise or meditation. The narrator does not seek, but comes by chance into the way of that discipline of the self that will disconnect the ego from the comfort of its daylight certainties. What the hunter undergoes in the night is an experience of nature itself in one of the most powerful forms of its impingement upon consciousness—the uncanny. The walk becomes a meditation upon our

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biological tie to the external world, particularly as we sense it when made conscious of our mortality. Nature thus provides both the symbolic mode of the meditation (the topography of a given landscape) and the object of contemplation, a duality that accounts for the rich suggestiveness of this extended description. The conveying to us at the end of the story of a further knowledge, that of Pavel's death, completes the recognitions implied in the narrator's journey. To see how this is so we have to look further.

It is characteristic of Turgenev that when the narrator comes out of the dark his vision turns out to be of the real world, newly illumined. Throughout the opening movement we have been held back from the fullest solemnity implicit in the theme by a suggestion of self-deprecating humor in the narrator's description of his experience, a humor that breaks through to the surface in the hunter's confrontation with his dog:

> "Where am I?" I repeated again aloud, stopped for a third time and looked questioningly at my yellow-spotted English dog Dianka, decidedly the cleverest of all four-footed creatures. But the cleverest of all four-footed creatures only wagged its tail, sadly blinked its tired eyes and gave me no useful advice.

The susceptibility in this story for the solemn to turn into the humorous, the awesome into the comic, the uncanny into the everyday, constitutes its particular charm. The transformation is best represented by Pavel's story in which Trishka, the Antichrist, turns out to be the barrelmaker Vavila with a bucket over his head. Indeed, Pavel is the very center of that humanizing movement and if in the end he is singled out to be the center of the opposite pull of the uncanny, the choice cannot but have significance.

As the narrator comes into the fixed and stable space of Bezhin Meadow, the story opens away from his consciousness to that of the peasant boys at their campfire. From here to dawn the night will be perceived through the shared consciousness of the group. Each participant has his own differentiated role, but the voices sound together in a choral effect. Turgenev's Moscow critics who found the boys too slightly characterized and the pace of the stories they tell uneconomical failed to grasp the true economy of his form. The boys are in fact characterized by their stories, a point brilliantly made by the Soviet scholar Shatalov.[4] We can extend Shatalov's insight further to say that each boy is shown in relationship to a fixed point on which the story turns, the apprehension of the uncanny.

Iliusha, the factory lad of whom Turgenev wrote in a conspectus of characters, "stupid and gloomy," is a veritable connoisseur of the superstitions of the village:

4. S. E. Shatalov, in *Zapiski okhotnika I. S. Turgeneva* (Stalinabad, 1960), p. 62, suggests that Russian nature is one of the "characters" of the cycle. Though an extensive literature exists on *A Hunter's Notes* as a cycle, the literature on individual stories is confined for the most part to reviews at the time of the original separate publication of each story or to reports by Turgenev's contemporaries on possible prototypes. This makes Shatalov's careful readings all the more valuable.

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> "I thought that you could see the dead only on All Hallows Eve," [says Kostia].
>
> "You can see the dead at any hour," Iliusha took it up with certitude. . . . "but on All Hallows Eve, you can see the living who are going to die that year. You just have to sit on the church porch at night and keep looking at the road. The ones who are going to die that year will pass you on the road. . . ."[5]

The story that Iliusha tells about the footsteps of the ghost heard by the child laborers who have been locked in the mill overnight reveals the diseased consciousness of the child torn away from nature. The frightened children seize upon superstition as a way of making sense of the unknown terrors of their unnatural world. For Iliusha the world is a threatening place where every pond conceals the unclean soul of a drowned man waiting to waylay the unwary living. His stories lack poetry and wonder.

How different is Kostia's story of the man seduced by the *rusalka*, told in a childish rush of enthusiasm. It reveals not only the terror, but the peasant's lyrical responsiveness to nature. Hidden in the story is a parable about the conflict between a pagan or accepting attitude toward the natural world and a Christian renunciatory attitude. When Gavrila makes the sign of the cross and drives the *rusalka* away, he condemns himself to eternal separation and eternal unhappiness.

We can see that Turgenev's vision, though luminously humanitarian, is still an aristocratic one. He praises the village boys at the expense of Iliusha, the factory boy. We could imagine a different version in which the village boys would appear as dull rustics and outsiders and Iliusha would appear as a canny, smart insider. That this version is hardest for us to imagine shows how powerful a hold the pastoral still has upon our sensibilities and our ethical ideals, if perhaps not upon our ethical life. Were Iliusha to appear as smart, knowing in the good sense, a different value would be emphasized, the value of a social fabric essentially divorced from nature in which man's acts and works figure as the greatest good and the shaping element in life. But "Bezhin Meadow" does not exalt the social fabric. It calls insistently to our attention the world at the margin of our social vision, what we catch out of the corner of our eye beyond the fringes of our human conversation. The narrator and the boys have been passed out of the tight-knit social fabric into the surrounding, animate and shimmering, but nonhuman world. They draw together for comfort around their fire which creates a feeble hearth or human center. But out there, containing them, extending infinitely, is nature.

Its presence is evoked by the constant intrusion of the nonhuman at the boundaries of the human circle.

> Suddenly, somewhere far away resounded a drawn-out, resonant, almost moaning sound, one of those incomprehensible night sounds that arise sometimes in the deep silence, lift, stand in the air and slowly fade at last, as though dying away. You harken and it seems there is nothing there and

5. *Sochineniia,* vol. 4, p. 552. Turgenev later reshuffled the names among the boys, but the identifying characteristics of the types remain the same in the final story.

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> yet it resonates. It seemed that someone at the very horizon was calling out for a long, long time and someone else in the forest answered him in a thin sharp guffaw while a weak, lisping whistle flashed along the river.

From out of the night comes the cry of a heron; the sandpipers whistle in their southern flight; a noise in the herd may be a wolf; the narrator lying on his back at the edge of the circle is moved to wonder at the stars—"The numberless golden stars, it seemed, twinkling intermittently, quietly flowed towards the Milky Way and, truly, looking at them, it was as if you dimly felt the headlong, unceasing flight of the earth."—a wonder echoed in the words of little Vania—"Look, look, boys, look at God's stars all swarming like bees." The most affecting expression of the night's strangeness is conveyed by a mysterious visitation. "Suddenly from somewhere a white dove flew into the reflected light of the fire, frightenedly spun about in one place all bathed in the warm radiance and disappeared, beating its wings."[6]

Only Pavel moves with complete confidence outside the human circle. He is the "namer" whose knowledge controls the mysteries of the dark and makes them accessible to the human world of social realities. Each of the night's mysteries surrenders in turn to the explanatory power of his wide-ranging lore. Of the noise that frightens the herd he says, "I thought it was a wolf. . . . There are always a lot of them here, but they are restless only in winter." The mystery of the white dove is accommodated by an exposition that makes fact more lovely than fantasy: "I guess it strayed from its home," Pavel observed. "Now it will fly until it runs against something and where it hits, it will rest until dawn." He resists Kostia's attempt to give the visitation a mystery that is not inherent in the thing itself: " 'Tell me, Pavlusha . . . wasn't it a righteous soul flying to heaven?' Pavel threw another handful of twigs on the flame. 'Perhaps,' he said at last." In the *Sovremennik* version of the first sketch of the series, Turgenev playfully compared Khor to Goethe and Kalinich to Schiller.[7] Pavel is in the Goethesque mold of Khor. The other boys lounge about the fire, but Pavel is active and inquisitive, always moving about, taking charge. The narrator exclaims, "I involuntarily admired Pavel. His plain face, enlivened by his brisk ride, burned with boldness and firm decisiveness. Without so much as a stick in his hand, not hesitating in the slightest, he had galloped off alone at night after a wolf. 'What a fine boy!' I thought, looking at him." Pavel's firm decisiveness, intellectual curiosity, and skepticism drew the fire of Apollon Grigoriev, who complained about that "Byronic boy."[8] In fact, Pavel is far from the mind-crippled Hamlet types that Turgenev created elsewhere. His is a luminous intellect that knows and is in harmony with the secrets of nature.

The inexplicable death of one best suited to live in the full potentialities of the world completes the meditative arc begun by the narrator's journey in the dark. The hunter and the boys come safely through the night to part in the triumphant awakening of dawn.

6. Hugh McLean has called my attention to the parallel between these night sounds and the cry of the bittern in Chekhov's *V ovrage* which also evokes the mystery of a nature in disharmony with "industrial man."

7. *Sochineniia,* vol. 4, p. 534. Turgenev removed the comparison from the first book edition, probably in response to his friends' observation that it was inappropriate.

8. Ibid., p. 554.

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> The world began to rustle, awoke, began to sing, to murmur, to speak. On all sides the heavy dewdrops flashed into blazing diamonds; to meet me, pure and clear, as if they too had been washed in the coolness of morning, came the sounds of a church bell, and suddenly, driven by my friends the boys, the herd of horses, fresh from sleep, galloped past me.

A falsely triumphant conclusion to be shattered in a second closure more apposite to the story's contemplation of mortality: "With sorrow I must add that Pavel died before the year was out. . . ." The unresolved juxtaposition of two alternative endings is characteristic of the meditative form whose purpose is oftener to delineate the full range of potentialities of a question than to arrive at a resolution.[9] The employment of this form in *A Hunter's Notes* will be taken up presently, but first we need to consider the context in which the idea for the stories arose.

The immediate source of both the subject and the form of "Bezhin Meadow" can be found in the intense intellectual life of the decades that preceded its writing. Lydia Ginzburg has written about the tradition of conscious self-formation so prevalent in Russian intellectual circles of the 1830s and 1840s and of the ways in which the rigorous self-examination required in the process of forming an ideal self led to the novels of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky with their full unfoldings of the inner life.[10] Out of that era of self-conscious spiritual striving came many things, including the rhetoric both of the revolution and of contemporary political dissidence. One of the most interesting and little examined fruits of the Russian tradition of self-consciousness has been the Russian modern short story beginning with Turgenev's *A Hunter's Notes* and continuing through Chekhov into the twentieth century. *A Hunter's Notes* is a direct product of the very decade of the 1840s (Annenkov's "Marvelous Decade") in which the ideal of self-formation or *zhiznetvorchestvo* began to bear artistic fruit. Though Ginzburg does not concern herself with *A Hunter's Notes* directly, its form is as indicative of the process as those works—diaries, letters, novels—which do contain extended analyses of self and therefore engage Ginzburg's attention. The special contribution of *A Hunter's Notes*, considered in the particular context delineated by Ginzburg, is that it provides a way of objectifying the consideration of the spiritual life, where the analysis is shaped not by internal process (the diary or diarylike depiction of a character's inner life) but by observation from outside. The chief *social* significance of *A Hunter's Notes* for its contemporary readers was that it showed peasants to be capable of rich inner lives and therefore definable fully as men by the new standards of selfhood evolved in the preceding decades. Turgenev's method was to station in the midst of peasant life an observer who was able through dialogue, histories, and the acute observation of expression, gesture and behavior to re-create the inner man from outside.

A Hunter's Notes with its sad picture of the peasant's situation is nevertheless governed by an air of serenity for it is mercifully free of the tortured

9. The question is a familiar form of closure in the meditative lyric. See Yeats's "Leda and the Swan": "Did she put on his knowledge with his power / Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?" or "Among Schoolchildren": "O body swayed to music, O brightening glance, / How can we know the dancer from the dance?"

10. Lydia Ginzburg, *O psikhologicheskoi proze* (Leningrad, 1971).

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self-examination and internal division experienced by the heroes of Turgenev's novels as well as by those of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.[11] In *A Hunter's Notes,* Turgenev has added to two styles that came out of the spiritual crisis of the forties (the rhetoric of high social purpose and the process of intense self-analysis), a style that forgoes both rhetoric and self-analysis and yet still takes the inner life as its sphere. It is a response to the two flaws in the process of self-examination and self-creation which, as Ginzburg points out, were becoming apparent in the forties: the love of high-sounding, but empty rhetoric (*frazerstvo*) and self-preoccupation. These two vices of the spiritual life will come under Dostoevsky's attack at the beginning of the sixties in *The Notes from Underground.* Later Chekhov after Tolstoy's and Dostoevsky's exhaustive depictions of the self-reflective process moves back toward Turgenev's form. Thus the short story in Turgenev's and Chekhov's mold historically has come to have a particular significance for Russian literature, precisely stated by Pasternak in his words about Chekhov where he rejects "the spirit of high-flown phrases reigning everywhere. . . . When you first hear such talk you think: 'What breadth of imagination, what richness!' But in fact its pretensions are a sign of insufficient talent. The truly wondrous is the everyday when it has been touched by the hand of genius."[12] Pasternak rejects here the *frazerstvo* ("the dawn of the future," "the building of a new world") so corrupting to Soviet intellectual life and already present in the rhetoric of the 1840s successfully evaded by Turgenev.

Yet few works have evolved so directly under social pressures as *A Hunter's Notes.* Turgenev had taken as his theme the great issue of Russian society, serfdom. The social impact of their publication has become legendary (it is said that reading the work in the fifties influenced Alexander II to emancipate the serfs). The very process of the work's formation took place in the context of the conflict between Slavophiles and Westernizers with the radical critic Belinskii shooting off crisp evaluations in his letters from abroad as soon as each story appeared in *Sovremennik* and Apollon Grigoriev setting up the cross-fire in the pages of *Moskvitianin.* Belinskii's pressure was unremittingly for a work that would hold closely to the themes of social injustice expressed in clearly delineated portraits. Among the stories published before his death in 1848 he disliked most "The Country Doctor" and "Raspberry Water."[13] His signal of rejection was "I don't understand it," a pronouncement called forth by Turgenev's excursion in "The Country Doctor" into the new psychological mode introduced by Dostoevsky's first works which had just appeared.[14] In "Raspberry Water" he objected to the enigmatic figure of Stepushka, the peasant who has been reduced to an animal-like incoherence by the hardships of his life. Belinskii's choice of the "best" stories ("Khor and Kalinich," "The Steward,"

11. This statement must be limited to those sketches that depict peasants, for when Turgenev makes a landowner the central figure, as in "Prince Hamlet of Shchigry," he returns to the mode of self-examination.

12. *Doktor Zhivago* (Paris: Societé d'édition et d'impression Mondiale, 1959), p. 334.

13. Belinskii to Pavel Annenkov, February 15, 1848, in V. G. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* vol. 12 (Moscow, 1959), p. 466.

14. See V. V. Vinogradov, "Turgenev i shkola molodogo Dostoevskogo," *Russkaia literatura,* 1959, no. 2, pp. 54–63.

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"The Office," and "My Neighbor Radilov") reveals his bias toward a story with a clear social message.[15] Apollon Grigoriev's bias is equally apparent from the praise he lavished on "Kas'ian from Fair Springs," where the concealed portrait of a member of the religious sect of "*beguny*" gratified the Slavophile desire to see the folk as "god bearers."[16] Turgenev managed to hold to his own conception of the work through all this, though it is perhaps significant that he added the great meditative stories to the cycle only after Belinskii's death, for their poetic complexity is something Belinskii would not have "understood."

The tradition of contemplative self-examination of the 1830s and 1840s contained possibilities that went far beyond Belinskii's primary concern with the purposes of social justice. In it the political, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and aesthetic lives were joined, creating a web of the whole life of thought and feeling where it was possible to move freely from one area of concern to another. Nature and art were the external expressions in which the self could contemplate an ideal unity. Turgenev began very soon in the composition of *A Hunter's Notes* to extend the design of the work to the full dimensions of the web, passing beyond the social theme to the larger humanitarian theme implied by the ideal of *zhiznetvorchestvo* or self-formation. In his portrait of the "Schilleresque" Kalinich he created the ideal type of the poet-naturalist. In "Raspberry Water" he moved farther toward the poeticization of his prose form, using landscape as a transparent medium for the expression of a philosophical theme. And he contrived in every conspectus for the work to end with the lyrical essay "Forest and Steppe" with its epigraph taken from one of his own landscape poems. Thus *A Hunter's Notes* as it existed in 1849 when Turgenev resolved to add no further sketches was already a work of considerable breadth.[17]

Turgenev's unexpected return to the cycle in 1850 resulted in the addition of three stories, "The Singers," "Bezhin Meadow," and "Kas'ian from Fair Springs," that decisively tipped the structure of the cycle toward the humanitarian theme.[18] In their interlocking subthemes of art, nature, and free, non-establishmentarian religious faith, these stories create a unified expression within the work of the ideal of the elevated spiritual life in a secular context. Each story spies out the hidden nobility beneath the outer coarseness of the people's daily life. A motley group of ne'er-do-wells and hangers-on gathered in a country tavern are moved to deepest feeling by Iashka's song. A group of peasant boys around a campfire reveal in their stories a deep intuition of man's relation to nature. A comical dwarf turns out to be a religious sectarian with his own original and profound view of the moral constitution of the universe.[19]

15. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* vol. 10, p. 346.

16. *Sochineniia,* vol. 4, p. 553.

17. Turgenev announced with the publication of "Forest and Steppe" in the second issue of *Sovremennik* in 1849 that he would "confine myself to the published excerpts." In fact he added seven more stories to the cycle over a period of twenty-five years. The titles or notes for a number of unfinished sketches exist among Turgenev's papers (see "Prilozheniia" and "Primechaniia," *Sochineniia,* vol. 4).

18. Turgenev also added "The Rendezvous" at the same time, but this peculiar little story had best be examined on its own at another time. In 1872–74 Turgenev added three more stories "The End of Chertopkhanov," "Living Relic," and "The Knocking," that extend the humanitarian aspect of the work.

19. For reasons of censorship Turgenev could only hint at Kas'ian's membership in the

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The close tie between "The Singers" and "Bezhin Meadow" is indicated by the circumstances of their composition. As he finished the last page of "The Singers" Turgenev noted on the page, "Describe how the boys drive the horses into the steppe for the night. The fires" and in the margin opposite, "Bezhin Meadow."[20] That page also contained the remarkable ending of "The Singers" where the hunter making his way home through the darkening fields hears the cruel voice of a child summoning his brother to be beaten by their father. "The Singers" and "Bezhin Meadow" are related to each other as a series of powerful oppositions: the closed space of the tavern (Turgenev's preferred title was "A Cozy Tavern")[21] and the expansive *prostor* of the field; a darkening closure: "the sound still hung in the air which was filled with the shadows of night" and a wakening into a fresh dawn; a harsh dry nature where only the song provides a lifegiving drop and a rich nature which holds all gifts in her power to bestow or take away. If in "The Singers" Turgenev shows the capacity of even the most ragged social fabric to sustain a spiritual life, in "Bezhin Meadow" he moves on to the very conditions of biological being that require and make possible a spiritual life. "Bezhin Meadow" takes the meditative act to the conclusion toward which spiritual contemplation by its very nature tends, knowledge of mortality. That intimation of mortality is most effective which catches us unawares in the wit of a metaphysical metaphor or, as Turgenev has it, in the tales of a few peasant boys.

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illegal sect of "*beguny*" (see *Sochineniia,* vol. 4, p. 556).

20. Ibid., p. 553. Turgenev did not follow the chronological order of composition in arranging the cycle. Though written earlier "The Singers" follows both "Bezhin Meadow" and "Kas'ian."

21. The title was changed by his editor, Nekrasov, very likely for reasons of censorship (see *Sochineniia,* vol. 4, p. 577).

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