THE CHEVALIER DES GRIEUX
OF THE RUSSIAN PROVINCE*

The few existing critical comments on Turgenev's "Petushkov" (1847) are unanimous in linking the story to the Russian literary tradition. Druzhinin had pointed to the influence of Gogol', and Appolon Grigor'ev wrote about the ties of "Petushkov" to Gogol' and the "Natural School," calling the story one of the most successful of a number of attempts at "sentimental naturalism." At the end of the last century Briusov perceived the most essential feature of "Petushkov" to lie in the fact that the author "depicts a man who lives almost as a vegetable, and shows how such a man experiences love, jealousy, the feeling of injured pride, and other such 'elevated' emotions ...." He notes that "we cannot help sympathizing with him; and if the author has made us love his main character, then he has already accomplished much." Furthermore, he points out that Gogol'’s influence—especially that of The Marriage and "The Overcoat"—is often felt in the story.

In 1959, exactly one hundred years after the appearance of Grigorev's article, V. V. Vinogradov, in his study "Turgenev and the School of the Young Dostoevskii (the end of the 1840s)," summed up the results of a stylistic study of "Petushkov" in the following manner:

The style of "Petushkov" is complicated. In it are brought together specific traits of Turgenev's style (individual shoots breaking through the layer of the general system of "natural" portrayal, which had established itself by the middle of the 1840s), an interesting selection of stylistic devices from Gogol', as well as new principles of characterization through the characters' speech in general, first used by Dostoevskii. The style of

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Dostoevskii, naturally, is most noticeable in the way Petushkov is portrayed. Gogol's stylistic system can be seen in the devices used to delineate the servant Onisim and in the general structure of the narrative style. Individual features of Turgenev's style are evident in the characterization of Vasilisa and partly in that of her aunt, and in the ways the various elements or parts of the plot are joined together.\footnote{4. V. V. Vinogradov, "Turgenev i shkola molodogo Dostoevskogo," \textit{Russkaia literatura}, No. 2 (1959), p. 49.}


Both the characters and the setting of "Petushkov" are so typical of the Russian province that at first glance it is difficult to imagine comparing this story with any West European work. But such an opinion will change if we recall those works by Turgenev whose titles indicate that the author had adapted foreign characters and situations in them. Here I have in mind characters and situations from Shakespeare, and in particular the story "Prince Hamlet of Shchigrovo," written in 1848, somewhat later than "Petushkov," and the tale \textit{King Lear of the Steppes}, written much later. These works, of course, are quite different in their adaptation of certain aspects of Shakespeare's works. In "Prince Hamlet of Shchigrovo" there is not even a trace of a motif from the plot of Shakespeare's \textit{Hamlet}, but the hero of the story, a Russian Hegelian of the 1840s, possesses all the character traits of Hamlet as Turgenev was to define them later in his "Hamlet and Don Quixote"—egotism, scepticism, all-absorbing reflexion, and inability to express one's emotion directly.\footnote{6. Iu. D. Levin, "Shestidetsiatye gody," in \textit{Shekspir i russkaia kul'tura}, ed. M. P. Alekseev (Moscow-Leningrad: Nauka, 1965), p. 464.} \textit{King Lear of the Steppes}, written at the turn of the decades 1860 and 1870, received its title mainly because of the similarity of its plot with that of Shakespeare's tragedy.\footnote{7. Ibid., p. 468. On the story \textit{King Lear of the Steppes}, see also A. B. Muratov, \textit{Povesti i rasskazy I. S. Turgeneva 1867-1871 godov} (Leningrad: izd. Leningradskogo universiteta, 1980), pp. 58-97.} Nevertheless, there is one important characteristic that both of Turgenev's works share. As the title of each indicates ("Prince Hamlet of Shchigrovo" and \textit{King Lear of the Steppes}), the Shakespearian characters and situations are transferred to a very prosaic Russian provincial