

УДК 929:82-3(470.5)+821.161.091

## **Mamin-Sibiryak's "Rudins": Turgenev's Character and Novel Transformation**

**Natalia V. Prashcheruk\***

*Ural Federal University named after the First  
President of Russia B.N. Yeltsin  
51 Lenina, Ekaterinburg, 620083, Russia*

Received 10.01.2017, received in revised form 02.03.2018, accepted 12.03.2018

*This article is an investigation of such forgotten novels by Dmitry Mamin-Sibiryak as "Birthday Boy" (1888) and "The Crowd's Favorite" (1898). The author analyzes the novels' problematics connected with the lives of the intellectuals in the 1880-1890s, describes the types of characters and poetics specificity. Mamin-Sibiryak's views are considered in the context of the Russian classical literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and compared with Saltykov-Shchedrin's, Turgenev's and Dostoevsky's thoughts about the role of the intelligentsia in the modern world and the problematic renewal of Russian life. The main precedent text is the novel "Rudin" by Ivan Turgenev. The change of the protagonist, who traces his genetic and typological origin to Rudin, is described in the article. The author reveals plot-compositional similarities between Mamin-Sibiryak's novels and the precedent text.*

*Keywords: Mamin-Sibiryak, Turgenev, Rudin, novel, type of character, plot, "profile" structure, evolution, context, tradition, precedent text.*

*DOI: 10.17516/1997-1370-0237.*

*Research area: philology.*

The article concerns two forgotten novels by D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak, namely, "Birthday Boy" (1888) and "The Crowd's Favorite" (1898). Both novels have particular depiction of the protagonist and structure, which refers us to Turgenev's novel "Rudin". It is worthwhile tracing what transformations the main literary tradition undergoes in the novel world of the classical author from the Urals.

The novel "Birthday Boy", written in the mid-1880s, bears the "imprint" of a period that was called by contemporaries the era of "small ideas and faded ideals"<sup>1</sup>. However, "Birthday

Boy" is dedicated to the 1870s, when Russian society lived with great aspirations and hopes for transformation (reforms). The very title of the novel, as indicated by I.A. Dergachev, is connected with the fact that the organization of zemstvo self-government was called the "birthday" of Russian liberalism (Dergachev, 1989, VI). Herein there is a kind of paradox, which largely determined the specific pathos of the novel. The time distance, though a short one, was marked by such dramatic transformations of public moods which significantly influenced the author's vision of the events and heroes from the recent past. The

© Siberian Federal University. All rights reserved

\* Corresponding author E-mail address: pnv1108@gmail.com

novel as a whole is characterized by an unstable, very changeable ideological and emotional tone, defined by a strange mixture of different states: hope, inspiration and at the same time anguish, fatality, and impasse. Such complexity of the author's position with the recent era of reforms seen through the prism of the 1880s determined not only the general intonation of the "Birthday Boy", but also proposed by the writer a type of the protagonist and his demise, tragic in many ways.

The novel is based on real events, it tells about the institution and activities of zemstvo in Prikamye (the Kama region). The prototype of the main character Pavel Vasilyevich Sazhin was the chairman of the zemstvo administration in Perm Dmitry Dmitriyevich Smyshlyayev, as Mamin-Sibiryak himself pointed out in one of his notebooks<sup>2</sup>. The action takes place in the Mokhov city, and this is "the usual writer's pseudonym for Perm" (Dergachev, 1989, VIII). I.A. Dergachev revealed and marked, as he himself mentions in his article, "many points of convergence" in the fate of the main character and his prototype<sup>3</sup>. Sazhin's life with its ups and downs in many respects is similar to that of this well-known zemstvo figure. Historically D.D. Smyshlyayev, like the novel's character, at first caused the admiration of his fellow countrymen, his ideas were supported, and their hopes for transformation were associated with him. Administrative activity of D.D. Smyshlyayev received all-Russian recognition. The collection "Perm Krai", published by him, was named by N.A. Dobrolyubov in the Russian literary, social and political magazine "Sovremennik" an exemplary study of the region. However, re-election of D.D. Smyshlyayev for a second term led to a growing dissatisfaction. He was criticized for the high costs of maintaining the Siberian tract and for increasing the salaries of the members of the government; besides, doctors were in conflict with him, outraged by the greater than before control over their activities.

Describing the fate of the Perm zemstvo, I.A. Dergachev concludes: "In the January issue of the magazine "Slovo" of 1879 there was an article 'Zemskaya Smyshlyayevshchina', which tilted all of Smyshlyayev's activities. The author made the name of the chairman of the Perm Governorate board a common name and wrote in a generalized form about "zemstvo's smyshlyais". Like Sazhin, the novel's character, "Smyshlyayev resigned before the end of his term"" (Dergachev, 1989, X).

At the same time, researchers rightly and unanimously note that "it is impossible to draw a complete analogy between the novel's character – a gifted, but irresolute man with weak spirit and his life prototype" (Shchennikov, 2002: 32).<sup>4</sup> We see a work of art, which, despite historical and factual parallels, is created according to its own laws, is subjected to its own internal logic of the plot development and depicting characters.

G.K. Shchennikov attributes the "Birthday Boy" to Mamin-Sibiryak's "second-row" novels, explaining that "inattention to them is caused, apparently, not so much by the fact that they are weaker from literature point of view than his most famous masterpieces... but a refusal from special for the Urals problematics: the author turns to the traditional subject – the ideological quest of the intelligentsia... moral education of youth, etc." (Shchennikov, 2002: 30). In these novels, the researcher rightly points out, "the author follows the general principle of his creativity – portraying people in their daily life. And the social reality itself, certainly, was something new at the time: the activity of the Governorate zemstvo ("Birthday Boy"), experiments on the creation of artels of equal shareholders ("Untitled") (Shchennikov, 2002: 31). It is a different matter that despite the initial sanguine expectations and honesty of aspirations, Sazhin failed to do anything significant.

Author's vision of the character in many regards formed a comparison with Rudin: it

is no accident that at first the writer intended to name his novel "The Man of the Word". However, this title was changed. D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak apparently did not want the reader to be trammelled by involuntary comparisons with Turgenev's character and, by removing such an obvious clue to understand his character and the novel as a whole, he believed that if his Sazhin was the "second" Rudin, he was quite a different Rudin, Rudin of the 1880s.

Indeed, if you compare characters and novels, it becomes understandable that Mamin-Sibiryak, creating "Birthday Boy", originally "shifts" the problematics, highlighting other points. But Turgenev getting the idea of Rudin's social unrealized ambitions across, does not actually depict his activity directly, we learn about it only in an indirect manner: through the character's stories about his failures (conversation with Lezhnev) or through the interpretation of other actors. Moreover, the reader first sees Rudin, as we remember, in the salon of M.D. Lasunskaya, then he is staying at her house, with her family, being, so to speak, "on vacation", in a state that precedes his attempts to find some purpose he would serve to. So there comes to the forefront the situation indicated by N.G. Chernyshevsky, when a person acts not in the civil field, but "in the rendezvous". D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak, on the contrary, from the very first page includes the reader directly into the atmosphere of social life. The novel begins with a dynamic and at the same time informative-concrete phrase that indicates the time and place of action precisely: "*In the late sixties, the first zemstvo meeting was opened in the lively provincial city of Mokhov*" (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1989: 38). Next, the novel tells us about the rise of public sentiments, about the hopes of residents associated with the newly formed zemstvo. D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak has an interesting turn as he acts a social psychologist here: his characters represent various social groups and

through their relationship with the zemstvo the whole spectrum of public expectations is revealed. One of the main characters, who treat the changes enthusiastically, is a petty bourgeois, a small servant, an old man with a charactonym – Pruzhinkin (from the Russian word "pruzhinka" meaning "a small spring"). He is a kind, naive, maybe even limited, but sincere, pure-hearted person, eager to participate in life transformations. He helps to organize a school in Terebilovka, a poor and socially disadvantaged region. And it is his perception of zemstvo meetings that is most likely to determine the reader's evaluation of what is told in the novel: "*...All this was so new and gladdened Pruzhinkin's bourgeois heart so much. 'No, now that's a wrap... The end for the darkness!..' he whispered, seized by yet inexperienced feelings. 'No, not the old days ... it's over!.. Hold on, brother...'*" (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1989: 35). It is obvious that his feelings express state of mind of many honest people of that time, those who sincerely believed in the possibility of reforms. The narrator is close enough to his character. Largely the narrator is in the field of character's attitude to his own experience. It is therefore not by chance that direct speech, which describes thoughts of Egor Andreevich, is often interchanged with inner monologues, which demonstrate the sophisticated character's point of view and which are dramatized with author's observations visible in narrator's judgments. "*Apart from the great solemnity, most of all he was impressed by councilors, is it acceptable? Simple peasants and petty bourgeois sitting with officials and nobles. And any of them could vote. Of course, the bourgeois Pruzhinkin carried away by a common wave was happy, because here, now, behind the railings it had already started something good, new, to which he clung with all his bourgeois heart*" (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1989: 35-36). The mentioned bourgeois heart is very remarkable (there are also "bourgeois

tears", "modest bourgeois figure" and "bourgeois services). From my point of view, this repetition shows the ambiguity of author's attitude to his character because the combination of the social attributes and the character's universal traits is a sign of his though not quite obvious personal limitations. The second chapter shows Pruzhinkin as a "public esteem" and this fact is significant enough. He actually seeks to take part in social transformation and creates projects to improve life. Obviously, these projects will never be realized, although the school in Terebilovka has been built mostly thanks to Pruzhinkin's efforts and his active participation. At the same time almost all force of his soul is exerted in admiration of Sazhin. He lives by this admiration and looks forward to the moment when his idol realizes all his daring ideas. After the catastrophe, when Sazhin lost the election and was really ostracized by Mokhov's society, Pruzhinkin was one of the few who remained faithful to him, patiently hoping to restart the public career of his hero and sympathizing with him. D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak created a rather curious character. If we reconsider a famous metaphor taken from Dostoyevsky's novel "The Double", this character is just a "rag not possessed of dignity". We see here a special descendant of the "little man". His self-effacement and self-debasement present him as though he is absolutely lost in the background dissolving into others, forgetting himself. This idea is displayed very well throughout the novel, including his speech too. In Pruzhinkin's behavior and nature there is something that makes him verge on losing his identity: he is like a "rag not possessed of dignity" and a "helpless pawn" in one, it is, by the way, underlined by his surname Pruzhinkin (from the Russian word "pruzhinka" meaning "a small spring"). Let us read, for example, about his feelings, which are expressed in an inner monologue: *"Delighted with his slavery, Pruzhinkin didn't notice anything.*

*Who is he, indeed? A worm, a shrimp, dust. But what people he has connections with!.. He even accompanied the general's wife to the theatre twice and was sledding with her"* (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1989: 133). But at the same time does not this character have the real humility which differs him from other novel's characters as showing the treasure of his soul and peculiarity of his nature? I think, the author has not found an answer to this question and therefore Pruzhinkin with his meekness (rare for the novel characters in the 1880s) leaves a confusing impression.

The main character, a birthday boy Sazhin, is described as an active member of the zemstvo. In this case, the author moves in line with M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin's idea about exhaustiveness of romance novel and necessity to deepen social novel genre as he thought a reader could be interested in such character as, first of all, a civil servant, "at the workplace, in a library, public place", etc. Creating his Pruzhinkin, the author did not particularly emphasize his psychological complexity, on the contrary, Sazhin was initially shown as a character with the dual nature. The very full name expresses contradictory internal semantics: Pavel means "small", Vasilyevich comes from Vasily, meaning "royal" and his surname is interpreted as a sign of a burned-out soul, something that has already burned to ashes. During the whole novel the author successively discusses the topic of duality and inner tensions. On the one hand, for example, let me cite: *"Sazhin believed in his mission (...) His authority in zemstvo force was getting stronger and he embodied hopes about the future"* (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1989: 72,73). And, on the other hand, the author, as if leaving no chance for the character to realize his hopes, equips him with a "lifeless face and sluggish movements": *"He was a thin tall gentleman with a long lifeless face and sluggish movements..."* (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1989: 36); *"His lifeless face*

*brightened, greenish eyes shone, and he liked to reason, walking around the room and burying his hands into the trousers' pockets*" (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1989: 72). Even in the final scenes of the novel, when there is a real hope for a successful outcome, the possibility of a revival, the author abides by his vision of the character and gives a lengthy description of his internal state: *"Every step forward was paved with internal discord and various side suggestions. There was no any integrity and strength of feeling. And now, when the noise of her footsteps languished, Sazhin suddenly felt a familiar feeling rising in the depths of his soul, and his soul was seized with fear..."* (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1989: 248). And when he left to make the final decision *"with his head down, and somewhat relaxed, vacillating gait"*, it is quite obvious that in the burned-out heart of Sazhin (characteronym from the Russian "sazha" meaning "soot") there are no more sources for living life. The end is a foregone conclusion.

The eloquence of the Mamin-Sibiryak's character, which he mainly used to fascinate others, has seemingly a direct parallel with Rudin's manner. Like the Turgenev's character, who spoke "cleverly, efficiently, passionately", Sazhin spoke "simply, clearly, convincingly". Unlike Rudin, Sazhin is shown "performing" his public duties, rather than in a fashionable salon, as noted earlier. But the very scene of the zemstvo meeting is construed in such a way that it all adds up to a direct analogy with "Rudin". In this scene, as in the Turgenev's novel, almost all the characters are present, and they are represented in relation to Sazhin (they all have fallen under his spell). Adoration goes to idolatry, which is straightly stated by the text: *"When Sazhin appeared in the salon of the general's wife, it was a real triumph. Everyone took care of him, and the ladies paid to him the attention that can mesmerise even the most intelligent people. This idolatry always affected Anna Ivanovna in the*

*most unpleasant way..."* (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1989: 118). Here the Rudin's "characteristic" situation is projected, and the novel further develops this situation. The peculiarity of the characters is, on the one hand, one of the main means of showing him, e.g. Sazhin, as estimated by others. But on the other hand, it is a kind of key to understanding those who estimate because the very evaluation of Sazhin and the attitude towards him is an excellent way of representing one or another character. So, Pruzhinkin served Sazhin selflessly and dissolved in his idol. Opposite to him, Anna Ivanovna was repelled by the "idolatry". The old believer Marfa Petrovna as if the most accurately characterizes the phenomenon of the Mamin-Sibiryak's character, calling him a birthday boy: *"Why does he run his mouth off? Were he of any the rank or had he a deserved medal around the neck, well, at least the bright buttons, but he is just slouching around. And you have it very simply: he talked, chatted, and everything goes smooth without a hitch ...And they go to visit him as if he was a birthday boy! – Who is the birthday boy? This very one, your Pavel Vasilyevich..."* (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1989: 56-57). The fidelity of this judgment is indeed confirmed in the novel by many references to this characteristic, including the Sazhin's self-assessment, for example, in a dialogue with Anna Ivanovna: *"Look at how many people in Russia are absolutely useless, and yet they are not some kind of scraps, but the most capable and talented... – Tragic people, as Praskovya Lvovna calls them... Exactly... although it would be more correct to call them birthday boys. This very shrewd remark for me personally had a fateful meaning... In each situation we had a party first, and then a heavy hangover"* (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1989: 236). However, it is also evident how different these statements are in their content.

With all the sagacity of Marfa Petrovna and the aptitude of the word she found, her



own opinion about Sazhin reveals to a greater extent her own nature, which is imperious and rigid. And it is somewhat fair, no doubt, but rather primitive, hardline view of the world. The closest to the understanding of Sazhin's character is a person who loves him, who is able to value and forgive him. This is Anna Zlobina, whose nature is shown through her attitude to Sazhin. Consequently, creating "Birthday Boy", D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak focused not only on the Rudin type of personality, but also on the "profile" arrangement of characters, following a monocentric novel structure (Markovich, 1984, 49-50).

Also the peculiarity of "Birthday Boy" is connected not only with the tradition set by I.S. Turgenev. The novel bears the tragic stamp of the 1880s. Moreover, the structural organization of the text, the conversations about the nihilists, the depiction of "circle" activities with such games as the publication of their own newspaper, and the discussion of pressing social problems, i.e. this image of social activity that leads to nothing but frustration and empty soul, directly remind us of Dostoevsky's "Demons". D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak in sufficient detail describes two circles, which are as if in opposition with each other after the romantic conflict. This is the Sazhin's circle of the "young Mokhov citizens" and the circle-salon of the general's wife Sophia Meshkova with the head as though painted by J.B. Greuze. Their activity is a "boiling of unavailing efforts". The satirical attitude of the author to the Mokhov's public figures is emphasized by the figure of the governor, who favored the "protesting elements", "condescendingly pampering" them. There are analogies with the family von Lembke from "Demons", "short-sightedness" of the governor and criminal naivety of Julia Mikhailovna. Certainly, in Mamin-Sibiryak's novel there is no such tragic bloody development of events as in "Demons", but in relation to the liberal movement

in terms of content and intonation this novel is close to its predecessor. It is no accident that the collapse of Sazhin's career is accompanied by an intensification of the struggle of political parties, which turns out tough and revealing human vices and mercantile interests. These parties are shown in a satirical way, they are called "old-dung" and "new-dung" in the Saltykov-Shchedrin style. The tone of the narrative becomes ascertaining and neutral, which intensifies the satirical effect and at the same time gives an implicit dramatic effect to the action. In this case, we can remember the lessons of M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin; about his reflections on the "buffoon tragedies" that are abound in Russian life (Saltykov-Shchedrin, 1988: 155), and about similar position of F.M. Dostoevsky in relation to satire, which he brilliantly realized in "Demons".

A particular attention should be paid to the unexpected in the context image of the priest-philosopher, as he is called in the novel. Father Evgraf expresses his judgments in a conversation with Anna. It seems to me that these judgments demonstrate a thought that is very close to the pathos of "Demons" and which shows that in his predictions and expectations D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak stayed in line with the searches of Russian classical writers. This is an idea that external changes cannot improve a person, cannot make a man more wholesome and kind, and, hence, the world will not become better if we multiply only "essential earthly goods". Turning to the heroine, Father Evgraf talked about how peacefully the poor woman died, and then he continued: *"Now, for example you believe that you will have bread, will be sheltered, will have the necessary apparel, in a word, essential earthly goods, and everyone will become happy at once? Am I wrong, madam? The scientific searches are progressing, but morality has been the same from olden times, and nothing has been added to its code. The external does not yield the internal, and perhaps we are*

*going to help people who we ourselves should ask for help...*" (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1989: 149). We cannot but recall the tale of M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin "Conscience Has Disappeared" or the well-known proposition of F.M. Dostoevsky: "It is clear and understandable that evil lurks in a person deeper than doctors-socialists can suggest, that in no society you can escape from evil, that the human soul remains the same, that the abnormality and sin proceed from it and that the laws of the human spirit are so far unknown to science, so indefinable and mysterious that there are still no doctors or even last judges..." (Dostoevsky, 1972-1990: 140). It makes perfect sense that the outcome of everything that was told in the novel is brought down by Father Evgraf with his succinct final phrase: *"F. Evgraf, visiting the 'mistress', thoughtfully remarked: 'What then? Whoever can receive it let him receive it!..'"* (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1989, 256).

Similarity with "Demons" can be found not only in Mamin-Sibiryak's image of the social and political struggle but also in his attitude to materialistic ideas. Despite all the differences between the two novels, the final scene of "Birthday Boy", specifically the end of life of its main character refers the reader to the work of F.M. Dostoevsky. Mamin-Sibiryak's novel ends with suicide of Sazhin, who as well as Stavrogin refused an attempt to get back to life because he understood the truth about himself, as there is nothing to live for, his soul is burned out and recovery is impossible. In this context author's "hints" get special meaning, especially as regards the theme of "lifelessness" which acts as a leitmotif in the descriptions of character's appearance throughout the novel. This theme is directly connected with Stavrogin's description – his comparison with a wax figure and so on. Sazhin's loveless relationship with the general's wife clearly reminds of moral experiments of "Demons" protagonist. D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak

probably penetrated into the attitude of other key characters of the novel to Stavrogin. The essence might be named as "idolatry". "There is no such thing as an idol in the world" (1Cor. 8:4), says Paul the Apostle. The result of Shazhin's life is the confirmation of the truth proclaimed by the Apostle. It is a different story that the writer is far from religious metaphysics unlike his predecessor. His search is limited by rather ethical issues connected with suggested necessity of reorganization in public and private life of a Russian man. That is why he put his characters in social-psychological sphere primarily. Meanwhile D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak as well as all Russian classic writers unmistakably understands how a Russian person could suffer from life's pointlessness, understanding that one needs something to live for.

Weaned from work and closed up in himself Sazhin for a few years became attractive for "other people on the sideline". He made a circle, roughly named in the novel as a circle of "people nobody needs", together with educated sailor Okunev, who had had to resign and "stayed forever in Mokhov", and a polyglot and talented mathematician Korolkov, who "gradually became a real archival rat". Getting together at Sazhin's and talking about music, science and other abstract subjects, these people tried not only to "completely abjure from the reality but to abjure from the life at all". That is why Okunev was so much annoyed by Anna, who suddenly appeared in Sazhin's world, the latter having recovered from illness felt some movement inside connected with memories about his past love with her. Yet, this sentiment was too weak to fight those irreversible changes, which happened to the character and of which he was aware. "It turned out that shrinking in himself, in a narrow space, being isolated from the world of interests, passions, needs, aspirations, expectations of other people means to lose himself as a personality

in everything that it contains, even with the possibility to love. Honesty cannot let him share his life with Anna's" (Dergachev, 1989, XVIII). I.A. Dergachev's phrase definitely explains the key point of the last Sazhin's choice – not to live.

To talented people, who did not manage to fulfill their potential in any sphere, those people typical of the 1880s, D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak opposes a different type of a person, a well-doer, who has a main trait, from the writer's point of view, namely, an ability to suffer and be loyal to oneself. This type of person, who was probably the ideal for the author, is represented in the female character – Anna Zlobina.

D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak continues the gallery of great female characters. His idea about women's role is put into Shazhin's speech, one phrase in which was mainly the clue to understand Anna's personality and fate: *"I'm rejoiced by our Russian women mostly. Our future is in them, they will be the teachers for future generations. You may think what you want but first child's impressions are the holy of holies of people's souls"* (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1989: 155).

Anna is from schismatic sphere but her personality forms rather despite her origin and upbringing. Her religiosity is not really seen, the main things in her are the proper pride and independence in choosing her way in life. She is naturally alien to lie, hypocrisy, bigotry, despotism, which were core in her home, as shown by D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak. There is no love, warmth and respect to each other. Loveless, cold relations with her mother reveal the problem of destroying family values. Anna fell in love with Sazhin seeing him as a significant and estimable person but her honest and uncompromising feeling undergoes hard challenge: her loved one could apparently have a love game with another woman without loving her. This did not destroy her, did not turn her into a slave of circumstances. One day Anna told Sazhin, when they were

having a conversation, about the need to obtain "little home truth": *"In my opinion, we must first of all establish our own little home truth ... external forms will come by themselves"* (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1989: 121). These words resemble the arguments of Father Evgraf about the priority of inner world, internal principles, conscience and self-sufficiency, because only these things can save a person from self-destruction and help him to overcome even the most difficult tests of life. Unlike Sazhin, she managed to cope with grief. Although she was unhappy in her marriage and lost her child, she was able to begin to revive. To bring real benefits to others Anna left her mother and husband and became a teacher. The novel ends with a description of an epic intonation, which narrates the personal drama of the heroine: *"A year later the log-cabin of Pruzhinkin on Drekolnaya Street was demolished, and in its place grew a small half-stone wing of three windows. On the lower floor, he settled himself with deaf Antonovna and aged Orlik, and the upper floor began to belong to Anna Ivanovna with Volodina. – They both were teachers in the Terebilovka school..."* (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1989: 256). It seems that these characters, who found their "little truth" and who are naturally gathered by the author in the final scene, are themselves the embodiment of his life and literary philosophy.

It is obvious that in the image of Anna Zlobina one can see an association with the Turgenev's heroines, who also raised topics such as leaving their native nest, a break with family traditions. However, in contrast to I.S. Turgenev, who deliberately created in his works a high-souled tragic and maximalist character, D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak tries to connect this character with everyday life, the life practice of many Russian people.

The penultimate novel "The Crowd's Favorite" (1898), which has never been reprinted, can be called "Rudin" of the 1890s by analogy



with "Birthday Boy". Typological similarity is apparent in the similarity of titles. This novel, like the previous one, followed the structural school of "Rudin". There is also a protagonist here, who is no longer a birthday boy, but a "crowd's favorite", all other characters are revealed mostly "in profile", not in full face, but only in their attitude to the "center" (protagonist).

The evolution of the Rudin type in Mamin-Sibiryak's novels is curious and cautionary. In "Birthday Boy" this "Rudin" type is a representative of local self-government who was disappointed in public service and realizing his human failure committed suicide. In "The Crowd's Favourite" one person combines a player and a lawyer, fecklessly entangled in frauds with bills, the character who found himself under investigation and trial and who was finally sentenced to deportation to Siberia.

At the very beginning of the novel, the author emphasizes the protagonist's eloquence similar to Rudin's one. Surrounding people are taken by him. As the reader learns further, he was even given the unconditional "status" of the "common favorite of the public": *"Goushchin even closed his eyes with emotion. Oh God, how well Matov was able to speak – he pours forth, and pours... Vera Vasilyevna sat with her eyes down... Matov's oratorical talent hypnotized her, like enchanting music..."*; *"He is our crowd's favorite and is in some way public property"* (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1917: 10), two other characters are echoed by Annenka, who later sincerely fell in love with Matov and supported him in those times when that same public turned away from its pet.

In fact, unlike Turgenev's Rudin, who spoke about the high destiny of man, Mamin-Sibiryak's character speaks of forgery, interpreting it metaphorically and extending it to the most diverse spheres of human life: *"The law pursues only formal truth... or rather, the paper truth... And I'm talking about forgery in fact... We make*

*forgery by the very act of our birth... Every day is a whole series of small forgeries, and that's why every person dies a malicious bankrupt"* (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1917: 9).

This monologue can be considered the key one for understanding the character and the work as a whole, because, firstly, it predicts the further destiny of the speaker in a peculiar way (and this also demonstrates direct similarities with the Turgenev's novel and with the Rudin's monologue about the bird that will find its nest in death), secondly, this dialogue reflects the specifics of character's personality. Undoubtedly, we can see a bright and talented person but this person has not found himself in real work and has not met any really close person. Here the irony acts as an expression of dissatisfaction with his own life and as impossibility to defeat the inertia of habitual behavior without the intervention of outsiders or circumstances. The state of the character is complicated by intricate personal relationships such as his marriage of convenience and passion for Vera Vasilyevna Voyvoda, the girl, who he has left earlier and who now is a wife of a well-known in the city player (note the full coincidence of her name with that of a Goncharov's heroine, which is not accidental)...

As well as in "Birthday Boy" (1888), the character of this work has the telling name – Matov (which refers the reader to the Russian word "mat" meaning "checkmate"), which is interpreted in two ways: as a fiasco of the character's lifestyle ("the king who is a common favorite of the public died"), and as a sentence to this very public, to its moral and human ineptitude.

The novel that is aimed at reflecting on the fate of the hero of the time can logically be considered as moralizing. The experienced writer gives abundant precise characteristics, which refer to the life of the provincial Ural city Sosnogorsk as a whole and to the people

who inhabit it, defining the city's "face" as such: *"There was no Kremlin, no old churches, no historical memories of enemies and enemy battles. There is everything so new, as clean as a new pin. Sosnogorsk was younger than two hundred years old, which, according to the city history, is almost infancy"* (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1917: 24). Flamboyant representatives of several social groups are vividly depicted in the novel. These are merchants, officials-lawyers, gold industry entrepreneurs, who periodically go to the places of gold mining. Here are examples of striking and definitive characteristics: *"...A whole crowd with the famous gold entrepreneur Samgin ambled into the living room. He was a squat, fat old man, resembling a baggage coachman. His pulpy, ugly face was always covered with greasy coating, and a gray goatee was definitely moth-eaten. He was dressed like a coachman in a jerkin, a Russian skewed-collared shirt, and boots with hard tops"* (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1917: 16); *"...There was a low, plump, pink, toothless and bald, like a billiard ball, old man. It was the last descendant of the rich Rudometovs, whose fame resounded once throughout Siberia..."* (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1917: 17), and etc.

It is amazing that all these different in nature and social status people were united by a card game, which as an epidemic spread throughout Sosnogorsk. Here is how residents of Sosnogorsk spent their leisure in Christmastide week: *"The game was played in the club where all the gaming rooms were choke full. Doctors, teachers, engineers, gold-miners, officials and those special people who inhabit only in Sosnogorsk*

*and about whom they say that they live within their own means played a game. These were the sinister characters who traded in stolen gold"* (Mamin-Sibiryak, 1917: 49).

An impressive image of Sosnogorsk as a kind of Mamin-Sibiryak's Roulettenburg puts a novel in the tradition of describing gambling passion, started with A.S. Pushkin and M.Yu. Lermontov and continued by F.M. Dostoevsky. As for the main character, the player and the lawyer Matov, he passed the hardships of the judicial system and a changeable attitude of his slight acquaintances and close relatives, eventually finding internal strengths for revival. The novel ends with the farewell, when the protagonist goes to Siberia with the hope to discover there the real active life and veritable meanings.

So, two forgotten novels of D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak united by similar problem are considered in this article in correlation with each other and as relying on precedent texts. This significantly clarifies the logic of the writer's reflections on the hero of his time and about the meaning of human life in general. On the one hand, the evolution of Mamin-Sibiryak's "Rudin" seems to indicate the degeneration of public aspirations for public service, even the rejection from this idea, but, on the other hand, the experienced and wise writer with great trust perceives the human person as a whole, appealing to its concealed up to then sources of renewal. Therefore it is natural that the hero of the D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak's next and last novel ("Falling Stars"), like Egor Matov, finds a way how to change his life radically, enjoys happiness and understanding of his family.

<sup>1</sup> In the chapter concerning this novel I.A. Dergachev cites such an assessment of the era of the 1880s, given by B. Lensky (B. Ongirsky), the critic from the democratic journal "Delo": "A man does not hear the encouraging appeal from anywhere and feels depressed and dejected by doubts about their social vocation and historical role" (Dergachev, I.A. (1989). Zveno v tsepi [A link in the chain], In *Mamin-Sibiryak, D.N. Imeninnik [Birthday Boy]*, Perm, V).

<sup>2</sup> This fact with reference to the archives of V.A. Gol'tsev (M., 1914: 304) is given by I.A. Dergachev in the cited opus, VI.

<sup>3</sup> "Mokhov is a pseudonym for Perm. The zemstvo was established and the Governorate assembly of councilors took place, at which Pavel Vasilyevich Sazhin, the novel's character, was elected chairman of the board. In Perm D.D. Smyshlyayev, indicated by the author as a prototype of Sazhin, became chairman of the board on August 11, 1870. In the biography of the character and his prototype there are many convergence points. Obviously, one can not regard the novel as a fictional biography of a famous Perm figure... However, both historical D.D. Smyshlyayev and the novel's character Sazhin were

from merchant families. Both of them broke with the commercial and factory affairs of their fathers. Both were abroad. In the drafts of the novel the writer attached a special meaning to the character's stay abroad, which speaks of his interest in advanced ideas. The final text does not state this. Smyshlyayev was abroad twice... The events of social life in which the literary character and his prototype participated are in many respects very close. Sazhin's speeches, as well as the speeches of D.D. Smyshlyayev... aroused the admiration of the public, and his ideas were supported... He was praised for changing the order of the zemstvo collections... He did much for the development of medical and veterinary care in the village. He was reelected, like Sazhin, for the second triennium, and it was at that time that he had the biggest hardships... Like the novel's character Sazhin, Smyshlyayev resigned untimely..." (Dergachev, 1989, IX-X).

- <sup>4</sup> This is also written by I.A. Dergachev: "Of course, you can not consider the novel a fictional biography of a famous Perm figure..." (Dergachev, 1989, VIII).

## References

Dergachev, I.A. (1989). Zveno v tsepi [A link in the chain], In *Mamin-Sibiryak. Imeninnik: sb. / podg. teksta i komm. I.A. Dergacheva [Birthday Boy, text processing and commentary by I.A. Dergachev]*. Perm: Book Publishing House, III–XXVII.

Dergachev, I.A. (2005). *D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak v literaturnom protsesse 1870-1890 gg. [D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak in the literary process of 1870-1890s]*. Novosibirsk, SB RAS. 283 p.

Dostoevsky, F.M. (1972-1990). *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii: v 30 tomakh [Complete Works in 30 Volumes]*, 21. Leningrad, "Nauka".

Mamin-Sibiryak, D.N. (1989). *Imeninnik: sb. / podg. teksta i komm. I.A. Dergacheva [Birthday Boy, text processing and commentary by I.A. Dergachev]*. Perm: Book Publishing House, 311 p.

Mamin-Sibiryak, D.N. (1917). *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii: v 12 tomakh [Complete Works in 12 Volumes]*, 8. Saint-Petersburg, A.F. Marx Publishing House, 215 p.

Markovich, V.M. (1984). Mezhdueposom i tragediei (O khudozhestvennoi strukture romana I.S. Turgeneva "Dvorianskoe gnezdo" [Between the epic and the tragedy (On the literary structure of the I.S. Turgenev's novel "The Noble Nest")], In *Problemy poetiki russkogo realizma 19 veka. Sb. statei uchenykh Leningradskogo i Budapeshtskogo universitetov [Problems of the Russian realism poetics in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Collection of articles by scientists from the Leningrad and Budapest universities]*, 49-76. Leningrad, Leningrad University Publishing.

Saltykov –Shchedrin, M.E. (1988). *Sovremennaya idilliia. Sobranie sochinenii v 10 tomakh [A modern idyll. Collection of Works in 10 Volumes]*, 8, 5-316. Moscow, "Pravda".

Shchennikov, G.K. (2002). "Vtoroi riad" romanov D.N. Mamina-Sibiryaka [The "second series" of novels by D.N. Mamin-Sibiryak], In *Izv. Ural. gos. un-ta. No. 24. (Ser.) Gumanitar. Nauki [Proceedings of the Ural State University, 24, Humanities (Series)]*, 5, 29-39.

## **«Рудины» Д.Н. Мамина-Сибиряка: трансформации тургеневского героя и романа**

**Н.В. Пращерук**

Уральский федеральный университет  
им. первого Президента России Б.Н. Ельцина  
Россия, 620083, Екатеринбург, пр. Ленина, 51

---

*В статье исследуются забытые романы Д.Н. Мамина-Сибиряка «Именинник» (1888) и «Общий любимец публики» (1898). Анализируется проблематика романов, связанная с судьбами интеллигенции в эпоху 1880-х и 1890-х, выявляются типы героев, представленных писателем, основные черты поэтики. Позиция Мамин рассматривается в контексте русской литературной классики XIX века, в соотношении с тем, как понимали роль интеллигенции в современном мире и проблемы обновления русской жизни И.С. Тургенев, М.Е. Салтыков-Щедрин, Ф.М. Достоевский. В качестве основного прецедентного текста рассматривается роман И.С. Тургенева «Рудин». Показано, какую эволюцию претерпел герой уральского писателя, генетически и типологически связанный с Рудиным Тургенева. Выявляется также сюжетно-композиционное сходство прецедентного текста и романов Мамина-Сибиряка, которые по аналогии с «Рудиным» имеют «профильную» структуру.*

*Ключевые слова:* Мамин-Сибиряк, Тургенев, Рудин, роман, тип героя, сюжет, «профильная» структура, эволюция, контекст, традиция, прецедентный текст.

*Научная специальность:* 10.00.00 – филологические науки.

---