Chapter One

RHETORIC AND SINCERITY:
TURGENEV AND THE POETICS OF SILENCE

All of Turgenev's novels are, to a very large extent, novels of polite conversation, where the narrative's progress is marked less by event than by the nuance of verbal exchange and encounter. The Soviet scholar L. V. Pumpiansky, in an article of 1940 whose terminology has been often repeated, defined Turgenev's novels as "personal novels about culture"—in distinction to the "novels of event" associated with Balzac.1

Turgenev's disdain for the complex, melodramatic plotting of authors like Dumas is unequivocal in his 1852 review of Evgeniya Tur's novel, The Niece: "Novels à la Dumas with numbers of volumes ad libitum certainly exist in our country; but the reader will permit us to pass over them in silence. They may well be a fact, but not all facts have significance" (V, 373). Turgenev's own sense of the possibilities open to the Russian novel is evident in this review in his naming of two existing narrative types: those associated with Charles Dickens and with George Sand. Turgenev qualifies his enumeration of possibilities by questioning whether Russia is yet sufficiently "pronounced" as a society to permit four-volume novels; his implication is that the unformed nature of Russian society calls for fragmentary narrative: "Are the elements of our society's life sufficiently pronounced to expect four volumes from the novel that attempts to depict them? The most recent success of various sketches seems to prove the opposite. As yet we are hearing separate sounds from Russian life, which poetry answers with equally rapid echoes" (V, 373).
My intent here is not to address the problem of the narrative precursors and sources of the Turgenev novel—though it does appear to me an interesting problem, and one as yet incompletely answered. The sources of Turgenev’s own novelistic form lie both in existing narrative traditions, and in the drama, a form in which he worked throughout the 1840s and into the early 1850s, until his full-length play, “A Month in the Country,” met with disapproval and critical misperception in the 1850s. 2 What is of interest to me here is the fact that Turgenev elaborates a novelistic form that depends less on the complexities of plot than on the revelations of conversation—and his first novel, Rudin, is in this regard a crucial guide to what conversation in Turgenev is all about. Turgenev’s first exercise in that larger form he both sought and feared is a novel about talk—about rhetoric, truth, sincerity, significance—and as such suggests the aesthetic that will inform all of his work.

The historical and biographical impetus for this novel’s concerns lies in that period of Russia’s intellectual life that Rudin to some extent depicts: the connection of Turgenev’s fictional hero with the anarchist Bakunin, the representation in Pokorsky of N. Stankevich, an intellectual mentor idolized after his early death, the depiction of the atmosphere of Moscow’s philosophical circles of the late 1830s—all of these historical referents have been extensively documented. 3 What is striking about Turgenev’s novel, however, is its translation of the agonies and ideas of his generation into a novel that, in criticizing the rhetoric and philosophizing of its hero, finds other ways of articulating life’s significance. Turgenev’s translation of his generation’s concerns is ultimately a subversion—not merely of Bakunin/Rudin, but of philosophy per se, and of the pretensions of philosophical discourse. Turgenev’s novel is a protracted act of disengagement from an intellectual milieu that had possessed him—and in its movement from philosophy to narrative the novel traces an evolution that was Turgenev’s own. 4

The evolution that I will trace in these pages is one enacted in several works of Turgenev’s early years as a novelist. The passages of Turgenev himself as he moved toward the novel as a genre are complex, and should not be overlooked in considering the forms his later narrative took. The transition from the fragmentary form of The Huntsman’s Sketches to the longer form of the novel was of great moment to Turgenev himself: he struggled with longer narrative, doubted his abilities in his first effort (Two Generations, which he destroyed), and wavered throughout his career in knowing just how to name his longer prose: novellas or novels. 5 The passages I will trace here, however, have less to do with length than with language, and with the author’s efforts to distance himself from the rhetoric and effusions of his youth. Rudin, Turgenev’s first novel; “Journey into the Woodland,” a novella of 1857; and “Diary of a Superfluous Man,” of 1850, all concern themselves with the problematics of revelation, consciousness, and speech. Rudin is most directly linked to the excesses and pretentious rhetoric of German Idealism in Russia, and is hence most specifically grounded in the cultural moment of Turgenev’s youth. “Journey into the Woodland” alludes to another of Turgenev’s youthful enthusiasms, his early lyric poetry; its narrative traces the author’s movement beyond what seemed to him imitative solipsism. 6 All three works, however, articulate an understanding of narrative’s specific possibilities that is crucial in our reading of Turgenev. What he articulates, in these works, is a way of understanding what is “significant,” an understanding that is characteristically grounded in the tension between worlds: of consciousness and simplicity, rhetoric and silence, solipsism and sincerity. The rhetoric—and rhetoricians—of significance fade in Turgenev’s narrative (as in his life) before the nuance of gesture, hiddenness, and the everyday. These narratives hold something of a privileged place in Turgenev’s oeuvre: they establish how he will construe narrative meaning, and point to how we must read it.
Turgenev returns to philosophy and poetry in his novels, but in a form radically understated and oblique, with none of the pretensions of his early selves. He continues to be read as a "novelist of ideas," as an admirer of men who embody ideas and ideals. Such readings are not wrong, but they do need serious qualification, for in many cases the "defeat" of the hero at the hands of reality implies a defeat of ideas as well, and an affirmation of the medial and immediate existence the hero has challenged. What survives Turgenev's heroic ideologues—and both Rudin and Bazarov are his most explicitly ideological figures—is not banality but an everyday existence that holds to a balance which those heroes disdain. Turgenev is in no way blind to the miseries and stupidities of Russian reality—but his narratives evoke a daily simplicity and fullness that breaks with the Gogolian. It is these visions of everyday life—of everyday language and measured labor—that are Turgenev's ideals.

Writing of Turgenev's early narrative poem "Parasha," Wacław Lednicki has suggested both its debt to, and distance from, Pushkin's Eugene Onegin, in precisely this realm: the everyday. "Turgenev marries his hero to Parasha and commands them to attain the goal of 'everyday happiness,' which was not reached by Onegin and Tat'yana, nor by Lensky... The bourgeois happiness from which Pushkin saved Lensky became the fate of Turgenev's heroes." To call such happiness a "fate" from which others are "saved" suggests doom and desolation; I will suggest the opposite—that it is this "everyday happiness" that Turgenev evokes as ideal in Rudin, and that such happiness for Turgenev involves breaking with notions of heroism, epiphany, and absolutes.

In a letter of 1860 to Evgeniya Lambert, Turgenev described a departure from St. Petersburg that was also a return to a "well-lived life": "And I'm glad to get rested after a worrisome Petersburg winter—to live for a while a normal life, with a small dose of quiet boredom—that true sign of the proper passing of time" (P, IV, 90). The well-lived life, the life of "quiet boredom," is what remains after satire and heroism in Turgenev's novels; it has its civic counterpart in Turgenev's "English" liberalism, his commitment to evolution, his despair at the increasing alienation of late nineteenth-century politics. The language of Turgenev's novels is the language of that well-lived life, a language of understatement and modesty, a language that avoids confession, gossip, and revelation. There is, of course, lots of gossip in Turgenev's novels—in both Rudin and A Nest of Gentry and in the later Smoke—just as there is much revelation and confession in Rudin. But what is important to note is that these ways of speaking are distanced and displaced by Turgenev, that he is critical of his characters for the ways in which they use words. It is this criticism that is so central to both Rudin and A Nest of Gentry—and in the former novel it is criticism that marks Turgenev's own disdain for the language of philosophy, revelation, and abstraction.

Turgenev's disdain for "philosophizing" is matched by his scorn for the lust for significance; in another letter to his friend Evgeniya Lambert, Turgenev reproaches her for her longing for perpetual "significance." The reproach is articulated in terms that are essential to his own narrative:

You're wrong to say it's better if we don't see one another frequently... What does it matter if occasionally during these meetings, especially when others are there—the conversation takes a light, frivolous turn... As long as there's no vanity in your heart, for that's also a kind of pride. I remember how as a young man I wanted every moment to be significant... an impertinent and far from innocent longing! Let the stream murmur to itself until it reaches the sea. (P, III, 386)

The longing for all of life to be "significant," with which Turgenev here reprimands his pious friend, is a longing he seems to have associated with youth. In Fathers and Children it is the youthful Arkady who longs for significance: "One should structure life so that every moment is signif-
icient—Arkady murmured thoughtfully" (VIII, 324). At novel’s end, this enthusiastic disciple of Turgenev’s nihilist has become the character to whom is given the chance of continuity and “everyday happiness,” the chance to perpetuate the life of his father, a life at peace with nature and himself. There seems little doubt that, for Turgenev, such life was “significant”—but it also seems clear that for the disciple Arkady significance meant something other than domestic life with Katya: it meant, perhaps, struggle and defiance, an articulation in word and gesture of the “principles” of nihilism. Despite the destructive implications of nihilism, Arkady seems to grasp it as a system, an ideology, that will endow his life with meaning. Bazarov is perhaps more consistent in scorning his friend’s longings for “significance.”

Rudin, Turgenev’s first great hero of ideas, enters the salons of the provincial gentry with much the same aspirations as Arkady: to construe life as incessantly significant. In the character Rudin the youthful longing for significance is bound up with German metaphysics—whose Russian adherents were so adept at naming significance and so inept at simply living. Bakunin boasted in a letter of 1836 to have lived not a single moment of life without consciousness. Significance for the Idealists meant consciousness of the Idea, consciousness of oneself as the instrument of Being. To claim life’s significance as Rudin does is to claim that life signifies to the extent that it points to something beyond itself: “Rudin spoke of what gives eternal significance to the momentary life of man” (VI, 269). Rudin’s eloquence is an attempt to render life as metaphor—to see its meaning in eternity, not in time; in poetry, not in prose. It is these attempts to jump out of causality—to escape consequence and temporality—that Turgenev’s text finally condemns. It is a condemnation that has import for Turgenev’s own understanding of “meaning” and the significant in life: meaning for Turgenev that is temporal, linear, “prosaic,” meaning that is derived not from an eternal beyond, but from the movement and enigmas of the present.

Turgenev articulates his commitment to narrative, linear meaning in “Journey into the Woodland,” a story conceived before Turgenev began work on Rudin, but that was completed and published only in 1857, one year after Rudin’s publication. The story traces the narrator’s two-day journey into the depths of a primeval forest. Among other things, the story narrates a transition of genre and voice: the first day—a day of angst and consciousness of alienation from nature—is predominantly descriptive prose, prose that casts the narrator’s subjectivity onto the world. This first section is heavily allusive: Turgenev seems to allude to (and invert) Dante, investing this portion of the text with literary echoes and language that begs allegorical or emblematic reading; thus the story’s extended references to marks (sledy) and how to read them.12

One of the narrator’s first impressions is of a silent, burdened file of diggers (kopachi) who make their way through the forest: “They all walked without speaking, in a kind of consequential silence [Oni vse shli molcha, v kakoi-to voznoi tishine]” (VII, 52). In this work filled with references to silence, the “important” silence of these diggers becomes an enigmatic figure, a symptom of some inexplicit literary meaning. The narrator goes on to “dig into” himself (translating literal digging into metaphor), to descend into regretful reverence and anguish at his wasted life; he is delivered from anguish by his peasant guide, who offers him water—and solace.

The narrator’s peasant guide becomes Turgenev’s Virgil, leading the man of consciousness out of his solipsistic hell. The second day of the story differs from the first most importantly in its change of genre: the second day is dominated by the peasants’ stories—the voices, that is, are predominantly those of the peasants; the narrator functions only in chorus with them. In this evolution “Journey into the Woodland” recapitulates, in condensed form, Turgenev’s own transition as a writer from imitative lyric to the
narrative techniques of *The Huntsman's Sketches*. It also suggests, however, an attitude toward the burden of literary consciousness—for if the first day is laden with allusions, echoes, is indeed structured by the archetypal journey into hell, the second day is seemingly free of such referentiality. The opening metaphor of the first day has to do with digging; the silent diggers become a metaphor for the poet/narrator's own absorbed depths—but also for meaning that is not "on the surface," not apparent. The significant image of the second day replaces vertical movement with horizontal: the story closes with a description of a fire in the forest, which is not restorative because it moves along the surface:

... looks like a surface fire.
—What kind of fire?
—A surface fire; the kind that runs along the ground. Now with an underground fire it's impossible to manage. What can you do when the ground is burning two feet down? Only one escape: dig, ditches—and you think that's easy?
But a surface fire—that's nothing. (VII, 68)

The replacement of digging with lateral movement is what the story itself has achieved: the narrator—and the narration—have moved from self-absorbed reminiscence to shared stories. The implication is that the narrative of the second day takes its (restorative, communal) meaning from movement on the surface, that it is as free of allusion and of literary consciousness as it is of self-absorption. Turgenev's narrator draws at the end of this story a "rule for life," an intimation of balance and measure. But it seems clear that Turgenev as artist has narrated rules for art, as well: the preference is given to story, to surfaces, to the metonymic movements of prose.13

The explicit preferences of this tale go to narrative simplicity, "surface" meaning. Turgenev seemingly throws off both the solipsism and the literary consciousness of the first day of the "Journey." To read Turgenev thus would be to accept a kind of narrative simplicity and explicitness.

The actual qualities of his prose diverge from that ideal, however: the allusiveness and literary consciousness of the first day in the woodland journey always remain in his realistic narrative, as do the aesthetic and philosophical concerns to which it alludes. Turgenev's prose retains its metaphoric dimensions, its tendency to lyric and allegorical meanings that qualify the simple movement of plot. His prose continues to "dig," to allude to oblique, as well as explicit, meanings.

Turgenev's first novel, *Rudin*, shares with "Journey into the Woodland" its combination of existential, ethical, and aesthetic concerns, and traces in its own way the triumph of simple speech and "surface" meaning. Turgenev had Russian precursors and models in his depiction of an idealist who fails to demonstrate ethically what he claims rhetorically: other writers of the 1850s—I. I. Panaev and Apollon Grigor'ev among them—made contributions to the genre that have been suggested as models for Turgenev's work.14 What Turgenev did with such plots, however, is significant, for his novel has an aesthetic and philosophical fullness that the other works do not. *Rudin* plays with the very notion of language and meaning—primarily in the character of Pigasov—but it also offers a critique of eloquence, of the attempt to "pin down" life with words, that is central to Turgenev's poetics, and to his understanding of human well-being. Turgenev's own aesthetics of restraint, of understatement, grow out of his youthful struggle with the seductions of rhetoric and revelation, a struggle that *Rudin* narrates.15

Turgenev's first novel is a study in rhetoric, a depiction of a Russian *rhetor*—but it is also a study in the reception of rhetoric—the ways in which provincial society greets the eloquent hero. Rudin enters this novel of manners as an alien—accepted by society in the degree to which he can fulfill a role it recognizes: Rudin is entertainer, gossip, momentary lover, ultimate inspiration. Turgenev's hero is ambiguous and chameleonlike, both in authorial presentation and in the evaluations of characters within the
novel, Rudin appears to us in flux, an aspect of his presentation that has led to widely different "readings" of his fate, and to charges of Turgenev's own inconsistency. Rudin changes, as do Lezhnev's views of him, those narratives within the novel that first "explain" Rudin and then defend him. What such flux demonstrates, however, is that Rudin belongs not to the eternal but to the temporal, and that Lezhnev's final defense of Rudin articulates the aging speaker's need for a point of perfection, absolute because remembered. If we remember that Rudin's presumption, in his first night of eloquence at Lasunskaya's, is to articulate the "eternal significance of man's temporal life," then the flux of Rudin's own story—and the inconsistency of perception of the hero—represent a defiance of the hero’s own project. Rudin remains for us, as for Lezhnev, an enigma: "Even for me you've always been an enigma [zagadka]" (VI, 364).

The point here is not that life lacks significance, but that its significance is temporal, and perhaps inaccessible to articulation. "Try to tell young people you can't give them the full truth because you yourself don't possess it... They won't even listen to you" (VI, 297). Lezhnev's words convey the refusal of absolutes and revelation implicit in Turgenev's own aesthetic: truth can be read only as a succession of statements, not as an unchanging word. The presumption of Turgenev's hero, on the other hand, is to give voice to truth, to "pin down" meaning: Lezhnev uses the metaphor of a pierced butterfly—suggesting both destruction and analytic intent—in describing Rudin's disruption of his friend's love affair:

But as a result of his damned habit of pinning down every movement of life, his own and others', with language, like a butterfly with a pin, he started explaining to both of us: ourselves, our relationship, how we should behave, he despotically forced us to account for our feelings and thoughts. (VI, 302)

Rudin's predilection for turning experience into language—an ability that entertains and charms in the Lasunskaya salon—is here judged as despotic; the reader is persuaded to agree when Rudin repeats his callousness in relations with Natalya and Volyntsev. Rudin's tyranny of analysis, of naming, is suggested again in Lezhnev's narrative of the Pokorsky circle: "Harmonious order was established in everything that we knew... Nothing remained senseless or accidental... everything took on a clear, and at the same time mysterious, significance" (VI, 298).

The rhetorician's more intimate discourse is another species of analysis and dissection: Lasunskaya enjoys Rudin's talent at "definition," his ability to sum up character in a few words. "Voilà m-r Pigassof enterré [You've buried M. Pigassof]—what a master you are at defining a man" (VI, 273). She will later liken Rudin's talent to the work of a chiseler: "When you talk, vous gravez comme un burin" (VI, 275). Similar to Lezhnev's metaphor of the butterfly and the pin, Lasunskaya's analogy suggests chill analysis, the violation of a placid surface. Rudin's gossip—like his dialectic—aims at definitive statement, at finality: a strategy implicitly at odds with a narrative that leaves its central figure open to reevaluation, whose final summation is enigmatic.

The reproach to which Rudin is most open, and from which Lezhnev ultimately tries to save him, is of insincerity. Rudin himself seems conscious of this in conversation with Volyntsev: "I hope that you can no longer doubt my sincerity." Rudin's pleas for good faith draw the customarily silent Volyntsev into indignant response: "What seems sincere to you seems obtrusive and immodest to us" (VI, 316). Despite the reader's possible reluctance to grant Rudin sympathy, it seems that Turgenev's implication is that the fault is indeed more the words' than the man's: that it is the eloquence and rhetorical facility that has carried Rudin beyond responsibility, that he is himself to a certain degree a victim of language.
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Turgeniev's implication is that, once initiated, a stream of eloquence has its own momentum—for both speaker and listener; the insight is one he directed at himself as well. In a letter of 1853 to the literary critic Pavel Annenkov, Turgeniev started to describe his delighted affection for Marya Nikolaevna Tolstaya, a sister of Leo Tolstoy, whom he had just met. He enumerates her virtues, and concludes: "I haven't encountered in a long time such grace, such touching charm. . . . I'll stop now so I won't start lying" (P, II, 240). This interruption of eloquence in midflow, this circumspection, is jestful but principled: Turgeniev connects being "carried away," facility of speech, with lying. It is a vice with which he himself was reproached as a young man, and accounts for the radically divergent impressions of him recorded in memoirs. Turgeniev was, apparently, incredibly adept at eloquent disimulation.17

Rudin's eloquence combines the pretensions of German philosophy with the dubious sincerity of the man of the world: that Rudin initially charms both Basistov and Lasunskaya only affirms that he combines, for awhile, wit and wisdom (вум in both its meanings).18 Both forms of eloquence seem for Turgeniev to represent sounds spun in a vacuum: what he offers as a challenge to eloquence are, paradoxically, various forms of silence—and speech that is elementally sincere.

Turgeniev's novel of drawing rooms and eloquence opens with a room of a very different sort, and with language that is minimal in its unselfconsciousness. The novel's first scene takes Alexandra Lipina to the hovel of a dying peasant; the language of suffering is a language of sincerity drawn into the novel in its opening scene. It is, as it were, the minimal language against which later pretensions might be heard. It is also an articulation of that "voice of nature" that will subsequently be the object of Pegasov's salon wit. One of Pegasov's first anecdotes in chapter 2 describes his claim to have elicited from an artificial young lady the "voice of nature," a "true, unfeigned expression of feeling," (VI, 251). What Pegasov alludes to parodically, and what Turgeniev renders dramatically, is the disparity between genuine expression and the artifice and feigning of society—terms that were central to eighteenth-century thinking about language.19 What Turgeniev's novel implicitly sketches is a spectrum of sincerity in language—where sincerity is grounded in silence and elemental gesture, and abandoned in forms of rhetoric that exist only for themselves, liberated from referentiality. Both Pegasov and Rudin—the first in his cynical disdain for common truth, the second in his pretensions to occult significance—abandon silence and beneficent gesture, which are for Turgeniev the warrants of sincerity and truth. The reproach of untruth falls even on Lezhnev, whose final, eloquent praise of Rudin refers to the past, and not to the present. The novel's ending thus further complicates the relationship between sincerity and truth, for both Rudin and Lezhnev are caught in gestures of sincerity (a toast, a raised banner) whose truth is dubious. Turgeniev's ending, with its ambiguous gesture—of heroism or defeat?—serves only to confirm what Lezhnev had earlier proclaimed: we never possess the "whole truth."

The characters who are finally granted happiness in Turgeniev's novel are those who have the gift of silence—who, in the words of the narrator of "Journey into the Woodland," "know how to be silent [умеют молчать]." Turgeniev's story ends with a benediction of men who even in their sufferings keep silent: "This one knows how not to complain" (VII, 70). Turgeniev's implication in this tale is that the peasant's silence is the obverse of the narrator's own morbid, verbose regrets; it is a silence and measure that the man of wordy consciousness may envy.

Turgeniev ends Rudin with weddings that join the novel's "silent ones": Lipina and Lezhnev, Natalya and Volyn'tsev. Lipina, in Lezhnev's words, is a woman in whose presence it is both easier to speak and to be silent: "With her you talk better, and it's easier to be silent" (VI, 318). Volyn'tsev is a good man, with no facility in speech. What
these characters possess—as does the peasant guide of "Journey into the Woodland"—is a capacity for silence that Turgenev clearly admired, which fascinated him as evidence of unselfconsciousness, as a pledge of that immediacy and wholeness from which his Hamlets have been forever excluded. Professions of ineffability become a *topos* of Turgenev's prose; in *A Nest of Gentry* Turgenev's narrator refuses to name what occurs in the "pure soul of a young girl": "Words cannot express what took place in the girl's pure soul: it was a secret even to herself; let it remain a secret for everyone" (VII, 234). What is significant here is that Turgenev's narrators claim, and his "pure" characters demonstrate, the lack of precisely that facility that Rudin has: the facility of naming. Speech for Turgenev, especially speech about inner states and "ultimate" realities, is almost inevitably associated with brokenness, with the liabilities of lying. Turgenev's own indirection, and his preference for inarticulate characters, is his way of avoiding both deceit and the "poison" of consciousness.

Turgenev's most explicit essay in the articulation of consciousness is his "Diary of a Superfluous Man," a work that is his most "Dostoevskian" piece, and one that raises explicitly the problem of consciousness and language. Turgenev's narrator sets out to recount his life story, but falls into sentimental profusions and what he calls "speculation" (unomzrenie—literally, a looking at the mind); the project of sincerity is confounded by his own convoluted rhetoric. "I pronounced words truly only in my youth; in my more mature years I've always managed to break myself in two" (V, 188). The superfluous man, like all of Turgenev's broken characters, is by definition incapable of speaking truthfully; Turgenev's unified, whole characters typically exist in a state that is either literally silent or minimally verbal. "Mumu," Turgenev's tale of a mute peasant and his capacity for love, creates in its hero, Gerasim, a figure of sentience without language; the work is emblematic of Turgenev's aesthetics as a whole, implying the conjunction of an artist's craft with silent experience. The possibility that in speaking one will "break" (perelomit') oneself always lurks in Turgenev's prose; we recall the anxiety of his letter about Tolstaya, that even well-intentioned eloquence becomes a form of lying.

The task confronting all narrative—and contemporary Russian literature—was, for Turgenev, the overcoming of romantic eloquence, a task he articulated as metaphoric murder. In a letter of 1857 to Pavel Annenkov, Turgenev spoke disdainfully of the Russian painter Bryullov, whose work was idolized by the Russian painters living in Italy, with whom Turgenev was acquainted: "By the way, I've had terrible rows here with Russian painters. Imagine, ... they ... senselessly babble one name: Bryullov, and without a moment's hesitation call all other painters idiots, beginning with Raphael." Such adulation was distressing to Turgenev because he regarded Bryullov as the incarnation of rhetoricism and falsehood in painting. What is interesting, and pertinent to Turgenev's own aesthetic, is his insistence that true art begins with the death of rhetoric: with the killing of Bryullov and Marlinsky—the latter being the author who epitomized, for Turgenev's generation, the excesses of Russian romantic rhetoric. "We will begin to have art only when Bryullov is killed, as Marlinsky was. . . . Bryullov—that phrase-monger without an ideal in his soul, that drum, that cold and glamorous rhetorician—has become the idol, the banner of our artists!" (P, III, 175). The terms with which Turgenev describes Bryullov—phrase-monger, drum, rhetorician—describe Turgenev's eloquent hero Rudin as well, whose stunning rhetoric captivates at first but is meant ultimately to be discarded for less epiphanic truths. Rhetoric must be killed, to be replaced by simpler speech—or silence. Turgenev's novel opens with a gesture of charity in the face of death; the hero's final deed is, I believe, an attempt to achieve the same simplicity and fullness as was imaged in Lipina's visit. Rudin himself abandons his own rhetoric; it is in Ru-
din's rueful regret, not in Lezhnev's peroration, that the reader finally discovers compassion for this hero.

Rudin's taking to the barricades is intended as a gesture of immediacy, a gesture that signifies not by reference to some other world but by its solidarity, its presence in the here and now. To call a gesture both simple and full—as I have called Lipina's visit to a peasant hut, her offer of medicine and tea—implies its unqualified goodness, its lack of ambiguity. Rudin's final gesture is fraught with ambiguity, however: we cannot judge whether he falls as hero or victim; he remains anonymous—or misnamed—to his fellow soldiers. "—Tiens! said one of the retreating insurgents to the other,—on vient de tuer le Polonais. [Hold on! . . . They've just killed the Pole.] . . . This 'Polonais' was—Dmitry Rudin" (VI, 367). Such ambiguity seems characteristic of all gesture in Turgenev, however—a gesture once performed, or spoken, becomes prey to misinterpretation. Even Lipina's charity is suspect: Lezhnev asks her if she hasn't done it merely to please Lasunskaya—or if, conversely, she won't abandon "good works" once her friend does.

No amount of knowledge can ever remove this essential ambiguity of motive: Turgenev makes duality a necessary aspect of the social—one that he ridicules and satirizes in a character like Pandalevsky, but that is present even in society's loftiest members: "By the way, reader, have you noticed that a person who is extraordinarily absent-minded among his subordinates is never absent-minded with superiors? Now why is that? But such questions will get us nowhere" (VI, 247). Natalya's experience in the novel is an education in reading social behavior. It is, however, an experience that can only teach caution, can never train her to avoid life's ambiguities. Sincerity, the novel seems to say, cannot be a standard of judgment because it can never be known: not just Rudin's but Lipina's, and Lezhnev's, sincerity are obscure, perhaps even to themselves.

The novel's opening, with its seemingly unambiguous, elemental dialogue of word and gesture, recalls in this sense Turgenev's longing for simplicity, for that unalloyed truth that his own novel qualifies. The setting of that opening scene assures us that we are in the presence of life's absolutes: pain and death. Such absolutes do not go far, however, in resolving the novel's complexities; they only render more acute the hero's longing to achieve—in the face of death—an act of truth.

The longing to kill rhetoric, the "clamorous rhetorician" is also, in its essence, a longing to dispense with language, to return to pure gesture, to clarity. To turn to Turgenev's own oppositions elsewhere, it is a longing to be done with Hamletic qualifications, to dramatize Quixotic simplicity. The longing on Turgenev's part to dispense with language is, as I suggest in the next chapter, allied to Turgenev's lyricism, and to his critique of social feigning and dissimulation. The longing is also associated with his revulsion at the labyrinths of consciousness, the paralyzing powers of the mind to spin rhetorical qualifications. There is a strong preference in Turgenev for the unselfconscious, the "as yet unspoken," the silent: hence his silent, strong women, from Natalya in Rudin to the heroine of his poem in prose, "The Threshold." In a characterization of the heroine Marianna in Virgin Soil—words that Leo Tolstoy would later recall—Turgenev reiterated what is a rule of all his art: only that is strong in us that remains a half-guessed mystery, even to ourselves (XII, 100). What is characteristic of Turgenev—and what perhaps makes speaking of his work so difficult—is his representation of a state of wordlessness, a state for which the word-burdened artist longs. Turgenev's reluctance to trace with words the movements of consciousness, of motive and counter-motive, stem both from his sense of the ultimate unknowability of such motives, and from his longing to preserve a realm of purity, of "half-guessed mystery," of unconsciousness. One could amass endless examples of such representation; I will quote an example from Fathers and Children, which describes Katya's realization of Arka-
dy's love for her: "Little by little a crimson blush spread lightly on her cheeks; her lips, though, didn't smile, and her dark eyes expressed disbelief and some other, as yet unnamed emotion" (VIII, 368).

The "as yet unnamed emotion" is very much the province of Turgenev's art. The tendency of modernity is to name the depths: Turgenev's characters, and his narratives, typically resist what seems a tyranny of naming. It is such tyranny that Bazarov rebuffs when Odintseva flirtatiously demands that he tell her "what is happening in him now": "What is happening!—Bazarov repeated—just as if I were some kind of government or society! In any case it's not at all interesting; and anyway, do you think a man can always say aloud everything that's happening in him?" (VIII, 298).

The "as yet unnamed emotion" is depicted—in its surface manifestations—but it is not named, for one cannot pronounce what is "happening" inside oneself, or within the other. These passages recall Turgenev's criticisms of Ostrovsky's drama, "The Poor Bride," and his insistence in his review that the "psychologist must disappear in the artist" (V, 391). Turgenev's rule of good dramaturgy is also a rule for his own narrative: "[Ostrovsky's] false manner consists in the extremely detailed and exhausting reproduction of all the bits and pieces of each personality, in a sort of false psychological analysis, which usually ends with each character endlessly repeating the same words, which the author feels express his uniqueness [osobennost']" (V, 390). What Turgenev opposes to this aesthetics of self-statement, of the enunciation of self, is an aesthetics of gesture—of unconscious revelation: "Dearest of all to us are those simple, sudden movements in which the human soul audibly [zvuchno] expresses itself" (V, 392). Audible here are not words but gestures. These aesthetics of gesture, and of indirect revelation in everyday speech, will be Turgenev's own; that he articulates them in speaking of drama only suggests once more the connection of his novels to certain forms of dramatic expressiveness. Turgenev will repeatedly resort to essentially dramatic strategies—the showing of a character's facial changes when the company has left—with comic intent. In Rudin's final action, however, gesture seems an attempt to express directly, immediately, all that the hero's eloquence has failed to convey or achieve. Turgenev puts his aesthetics of intimacy here to a grander—political—use, recapitulates the intellectual's longing for signifying action.

What characterizes both Rudin and "Journey into the Woodland" is an apparently self-conscious effort on the author's part to move from the rhetoric of romanticism to a discourse that is grounded in shared speech, in daily life. Accompanying this rhetorical shift is a commitment to the complexity of appearances—the enigmas and truths of the everyday—rather than to an occult "beyond." Both these works, I have suggested, are exemplary of Turgenev's poetics. Those poetics are not unambiguously realistic, nor are they ever free of the legacy of poetry, of Idealism, of lyrical despair. The overcoming that these works narrate is belied by Turgenev's own prose—prose that bears the marks of his poetic apprenticeship. Turgenev's tendency to literary allusion, his elegant construction of verbal echoes and symmetries of structure, give to his novels a poetic density that asks that the reader "dig" for their meanings. Turgenev's own literary language is grounded in the paradox of his own longings: the longings of a man of consciousness for the wordlessness of immediacy, the longings of a poet burdened with the legacies of literary tradition for the directness of peasant speech, the longing of the intellectual for the silences of the everyday.