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“ANXIETY ABOUT THE NOVEL” – GENERIC PROBLEMS IN IVAN TURGENEV’S *ON THE EVE* AND FRANK O’CONNOR’S *THE SAINT AND MARY KATE*

ABSTRACT

The article scrutinizes the problems in the generic differentiation between a short story and a novel in Frank O’Connor’s theory based on the works of Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Turgenev, and Anton Chekhov. The article focuses on O’Connor’s criticism of Turgenev’s novel writing and the visible similarities between Turgenev’s *On the Eve* and O’Connor’s *The Saint and Mary Kate*. The comparative analysis justifies O’Connor’s “anxiety about the novel” as a genre he never succeeded in, in contrast to short story.

KEYWORDS: Frank O’Connor, Ivan Turgenev, novel, short story, Irish literature

INTRODUCTION

“I find it hard to follow Edward Garnett and George Moore in their rhapsodies about him [...] To me he is a major writer with colossal faults”, writes Frank O’Connor (1964: 142) on Ivan Turgenev. Despite the criticism targeted at the Russian writer’s novel construction, especially *Накануне (On the Eve)* (1859), the Irish writer lists Turgenev among the most influential short-story writers. The paper scrutinizes the relationship between Frank O’Connor and Turgenev’s literary legacy in search of possible analogies between the approaches of the Irish and Russian writer toward novel and short-story creation. The core of the analysis revolves around O’Connor’s own theory about the novel and the short story, which has frequently been challenged by more recent studies on this topic. Thus, a brief theoretical background on the novel and short-story studies in the Irish context serves as



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a starting point for further discussion on Frank O'Connor's (sub)conscious inferiority complex concerning his inability to write a novel, which Anne Enright (2010: x) has summarized with the following words: "[m]uch of what is said about the short story as a form is actually anxiety about the novel". Therefore, the analysis of O'Connor's critical inquiry into Turgenev's novel writing aims to dislodge his own shortcomings in the skill of novel creation, as well as his incapacity to maintain the distinction between the novel and the short story form. The comparative analysis of Ivan Turgenev's *On the Eve* and Frank O'Connor's *The Saint and Mary Kate* (1932) not only serves as an illustration of the theoretical aspects discussed earlier but also testifies to the overall argument that despite normative conceptions, it is impossible to draw a clear line between a novel from a short story, as these genres often influence each other.

GENERIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A SHORT STORY AND A NOVEL IN IRISH CONTEXT AND BEYOND

The success of a short story in Ireland triggers a continuous critical debate. The traditional portrayal of this genre as national springs from its being treated as a natural continuation of the oral storytelling tradition. However, Heather Ingman (2009: 16) remarks that: "[t]here is an enormous difference between the modern short story with its lyrical intensity, tight structure and focused viewpoint" and its earlier notions of tales that were hybrid forms encapsulating elements of a travelogue, a memoir, a sketch, or a legend. At the same time, she lists foreign influences that shaped the modern Irish short story, paying special attention to Flaubert, Maupassant, and Chekhov (2009: 84–5).

Elke D'hoker (2015: 4), in turn, points to the marginalizing aspect of the traditional definition of the Irish short story, especially the one constructed by O'Connor, as limited to nationalism and realism. Therefore, she proposes a more inclusive notion based on Patrick Lonergan's division of the concept into three strands: regional, national, and cosmopolitan. The third appears to be the most revolutionary since it includes "works by Irish writers [...] transcending national boundaries, while also crossing the boundaries of realism into the fantastic and the mythological" (D'hoker 2015: 8). Hilary Lennon (2015: 165) underlines that Frank O'Connor did not follow his own definition of a short story and at a certain point even admitted: "I am a romantic and the realism is only a kink". Moreover, Lennon (*ibidem*: 153) remarks that characteristics such as "alienation, anti-heroic modes, spiritual bankruptcy, structural gaps, open-endedness, destabilizing narrative structures" are typical for both realist and modernist modes. Inasmuch as these critics provide a fresh consideration of the form by delineating its hybrid character and foreign origins, they still keep it separate from the novel.

A novel has never been considered a genre natural to Irish literature. Its emergence in the Irish context is often associated with the interrelations between Great Britain and Ireland, especially among the Anglo-Irish ascendancy who felt a greater affinity with the British cultural heritage than the Irish one (Foster 2006: 1). Still, the Big House novel became a subgenre specific to the Irish context and “survived as a stubbornly persistent genre in Irish fiction” (Kreilkamp 2006: 61), despite the gradual downfall of the landed estates, accompanied by the marginalization of the Anglo-Irish social class in the twentieth century. Terry Eagleton (1995: 147) contends that the realist novel could not thrive in the Irish context because: “[t]he realist novel is the form *par excellence* of settlement and stability, gathering individual lives into an integrated whole”. For Eagleton, the social and political instability of Irish society throughout the nineteenth century did not allow the realist novel to find its proper place in Irish culture.

A contradictory approach is expressed by Franco Moretti. To him, the *bildungsroman* is a product of the modernity that Europe experienced in the nineteenth century. Moretti (1987: 5) associates modernity with “the youthful attributes of mobility and inner restlessness [...] as permanent revolution”. Thus, youth is the only period of life that can capture “modernity’s dynamism and instability” (*ibidem*: 6). Ireland experiences modernity as late as the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; thus, Moretti’s theory well explains the success of George Moore, Oscar Wilde, and James Joyce with their Irish versions of the *bildungsroman* published at a time when this particular subgenre was already undergoing a crisis in England or France. Even if French naturalism and modernism managed to revive the Irish novel, Moore’s, Wilde’s and Joyce’s works were not understood at home.

Importantly, Moretti challenges the habitual differentiation between a novel and a short story, the former expressing social and cultural stability and the latter standing for the dynamism of change. This rather obsolete distinction served as a basis for Frank O’Connor who rejected the novel as inappropriate for representing the abrupt changes taking place in Ireland at the turn of centuries in favour of a short story that was better suited to express the specificity of those times. Mark Quigley (2020: 276) is one of the few critics who rejects the strict division between the two genres and points to the coalescence of the novel’s and short story’s features in Irish literature, using the example of Seán O’Faoláin and Liam O’Flaherty. However, his viable interpretation does not include the works of Frank O’Connor.

O’CONNOR’S “ANXIETY ABOUT THE NOVEL”

Frank O’Connor did not limit himself to writing fiction, but deemed it appropriate to write essays that served as theoretical justifications for his generic choices, which resulted in the publication of *The Lonely Voice* (1963) and *The Mirror in the Roadway* (1964). The theory he develops heavily relies on three Russian short-story

masters: Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Turgenev, and Anton Chekhov. The way Frank O'Connor (1963: 20) tries to define a short story well illustrates his “anxiety about the novel”: “[c]learly, the novel and the short story, though they derive from the same sources, derive in a quite different way, and are distinct literary forms; and the difference is not so much formal [...] as ideological”. Though he mentions the shared heritage of these two genres, he does not elaborate on this issue but instead focuses solely on the differences that allow him to provide the short story with a separate generic status.

The first and most frequently mentioned aspect of O'Connor's theory is the notion of “submerged population groups”. What links them is their subordinate position, which Michael O'Sullivan (2015: 107) describes as “trappings of group membership [...] externally imposed constrictions on individual human flourishing”. Therefore, the term “submerged” does not imply poor material status but rather “defeat inflicted by a society that has no sign posts, that offers no goals and no answers”, implying the absence of spiritual considerations (O'Connor 1963: 18). Hence, in a short story, the focus of attention is placed not on the individual but rather on the social group that the character represents.

O'Connor derives his notion of a “submerged population group” from Nikolai Gogol's idea of “маленький человек” (“little man”). In Russian literature, this type of hero is constructed as a response to Romantic characters who are outcasts provided with inborn exceptionality. Akakey Akakaeivich, the protagonist of the famous “Шинель” (“Overcoat”) (1842), is an insignificant member of society. His only dream of buying a new coat is not an act of rebellion, but rather his desire to be accepted. The loneliness of this character, to which O'Connor pays so much attention, is the syndrome of modernity – loneliness in a crowd, the paradox of being part of society while at the same time feeling alienated from it. Keeping this aspect in mind, it is questionable to what extent O'Connor (1963: 19) understood the essence of the Russian “little man” trope when he chose it as an exemplification for his short-story characters, who are “outlawed figures wandering about the fringes of society”.

“An intense awareness of human loneliness” is therefore, to O'Connor (1963: 19), what makes a short story different from a novel:

[t]he novel is bound to be a process of identification between the reader and the character [...] and this process of identification invariably leads to some concept of normality and to some relationship – hostile or friendly – with society as a whole [...] I should almost go so far as to say that without the concept of a normal society the novel is impossible (*ibidem*: 17).

To O'Connor's mind, the novel must have a hero – a character that is an individual with whom we identify because we believe in their existence in our own society. It is the condition of society that determines the character and the form of expression. Therefore, “[t]he novel can still adhere to the classical concept of civilized society, of man as an animal who lives in a community [...] but the short story remains by its

very nature remote from the community – romantic, individualistic, and intransigent” (*ibidem*: 21).

Thus, a short story allows for the inclusion of romanticism, or, to use Declan Kiberd’s words (2017: 89), “poetic effects and climactic epiphany”. The idea of a “climactic epiphany” is taken directly from Gogol’s “Overcoat,” to which testify the following words: “[i]f one wanted an alternative description of what the short story means, one could hardly find better than that single half-sentence, ‘and from that day forth, everything was as it were changed and appeared in a different light to him’” (O’Connor 1963: 16). O’Connor uses Gogol’s sentence to define the essence of a short story – an epiphany. He even copies this sentence in his marvelous short story “Guests of the Nation”, which bespeaks O’Connor’s urge to romanticize his realistic stories (Lennon 2015: 167–8). What critics view as romantic, for O’Connor, is more of a dramatic quality. Thus, a storyteller is a better craftsman than a novelist, since: “he must be more of a writer, much more of an artist [...] more of a dramatist” (O’Connor 1963: 22–3).

Inasmuch as Gogol’s “Overcoat” may serve as a good illustration of O’Connor’s short-story structure – “exposition, development, and drama” (*ibidem*: 26) – the character portrayal dislodges some contradictions in his theory. Gogol’s “little man” is by no means romantic, individualistic or intransigent. Gogol’s characters are allegorical. Akakey’s name is derived from the Greek word meaning “not doing evil”, and his surname, Bashmachkin, comes from the Russian word *башмак* (shoe). This primordial attribute of Gogol’s character construction has already been referred to by Boris Eichenbaum in his famous essay “Как сделана Шинель Гоголя” (“How Gogol’s ‘Overcoat’ is Made”) (1918). For the Russian formalist, Gogol’s characters represent a wordplay typical of Russian *сказ* (skaz). Thus, names are used as puns and become part of the comic effect of the story, whose ultimate aim is to: “make it possible to play with reality” (Eichenbaum 1974: 288).

Apart from Gogol, O’Connor (1963: 83) developed a similar affection for Anton Chekhov for the very same reason: namely, the Russian writer’s excellence in grasping “the basic human incapacity to communicate” and “a tragedy of human loneliness,” which makes “the whole conception of the submerged population become enlarged and enriched”. However, what transpires in the analysis of Chekhov by O’Connor is the total merging of forms. In both monographs he scrutinizes the same text – *Дуэль* (*The Duel*) (1891). In the first one, the Irish writer treats it as a short story, although he admits that “so far as length goes [it] could be regarded as a novel” (O’Connor 1963: 90). In the second text, he defines the very same work as a “short novel” (O’Connor 1964: 259). Even if he calls it a novel, he still cherishes it for the characteristics he considers typical of a short story. Chekhov’s “concentration on the tragedy of inarticulateness and loneliness” (*ibidem*: 258), “inconsequence and absurdity” (*ibidem*: 257), and “short-story writer’s morality of the lonely individual soul” (*ibidem*: 257) are just a few examples of O’Connor’s failure to distinguish the short story from the novel. However, what he is

certain about is the fact that “Chekhov’s conflict is a vastly intensified version of Turgenev’s” (*ibidem*: 253).

Characters created by Turgenev stand for a certain social group or represent a certain viewpoint. Looking at the majority of his short stories and novels, one may observe that his male characters tend to represent two archetypes: Hamlet and Don Quixote. Thus, Turgenev’s literary works may be read as exemplifications of his theory about human nature, which he presented in his eponymous essay “Гамлет и Дон-Кихот” (“Hamlet and Don Quixote”) (1860). Turgenev’s two archetypes show a significant influence from German philosophy, especially Goethe’s notion of a “fragmented nature of modern man” (Kagan-Kans 1975: 14). Victor Terras (1970: 21–27) points to the Hegelian aesthetic in Turgenev’s approach to writing, since the Russian writer found the universal superior to the particular, hence his characters were more general humans than individuals. All these instances lead Terras to a tentative conclusion that Turgenev was more of an aesthete than a realist writer.

Turgenev’s Hamlet is a modern everyman, since: “[d]oubting everything, Hamlet pitilessly includes his own self in those doubts; he is too thoughtful, too fair-minded to be contented with what he finds within himself” (Turgenev 1965: 96). Turgenev’s essay is frequently read through the perspective of the time when it was delivered; therefore, it is treated more as a response to the socio-political situation of Russia in the year 1860 than as a reflection of his general worldview (Freeborn 1990: 2). Eva Kegan-Kans (1975: 12) refutes this line of argument and claims that: “Turgenev’s obsessive preoccupation with this problem in his own heroes clearly reveals his own awareness of the Hamlet-like nature of his own personality”. Thus, all his works express the conflicting forces of the two sides of human nature: Hamletian and Don Quixotian.

O’Connor (1964: 136) translates the meaning of Turgenev’s Hamlet and Don Quixote theory to serve as an explanation for why Turgenev is a better short-story writer than a novelist: “[Turgenev] is Hamlet, dreamy, cynical, and ineffectual, while the work of the world is done by the Quixotes, even if they are only tilting at windmills. And even suppose we say that Quixote is mad, ‘Who,’ Turgenev asks, ‘knows exactly where reality ceases and fantasy begins?’”. O’Connor notices Turgenev’s ambiguous approach toward his compatriots, thus sees the relationship between how a writer perceives society and how he writes. Consequently, for O’Connor, Turgenev’s short stories are better than his novels, since Turgenev, with his Hamletism, views the Russia of his time as incomprehensible, ridiculous, and unjust.

This assumption stems from Frank O’Connor’s belief that:

[i]n America as in Czarist Russia one might describe the intellectual’s attitude to society as “It may work”, in England as “It must work”, and in Ireland as “It can’t work”. A young American of our own time or a young Russian of Turgenev’s might look forward with a certain amount of cynicism to a measure of success and influence; nothing but bad luck could prevent a young Englishman’s achieving it, even today; while a young Irishman can still expect nothing but incomprehension, ridicule, and injustice. Which is exactly what the author of *Dubliners* got (*ibidem*: 19–20).

For O’Connor, Ireland’s unfavourable social environment facilitates only the development of a short story. Such a diagnosis may be read as a justification of his own unsuccessful attempts at novel writing, in contrast to the success of his short stories which made him “the socially antagonistic lyrical voice” (Kenny 2007: 108). Frank O’Connor belongs to the post-revolutionary generation of writers, who became disillusioned with the post-independence reality in Ireland, embodied by the Free State government and the Catholic Church. In this regard, he developed “ambivalent nationalistic beliefs” (Lennon 2007: 19), which made him interested in other literatures, Russian included. However, it is not Dostoyevsky or Tolstoy that he admires most, but those Russian writers who excel in short story. Thus, he seems to hold ambivalent feelings towards Turgenev, since Turgenev is predominantly associated with the novel form.

THE CONFLATION OF FORMS – *ON THE EVE AND THE SAINT AND MARY KATE*

Considering the literary output dominated by short story collections, with only two novels to his name – *The Saint and Mary Kate* and *The Dutch Interior* – it transpires that O’Connor experienced a significant “anxiety about the novel”. This viewpoint is also supported by O’Connor’s lack of interest in rewriting his novels, in contrast to some of his best short stories (Steinman 1990; Delaney 2019). O’Connor was writing the collection of short stories *Guests of the Nation* and the novel *The Saint and Mary Kate* during the same time period. As he comments:

I still considered myself a poet, and had little notion of how to write a story and none at all of how to write a novel, so they were produced in hysterical fits of enthusiasm, followed by similar fits of despondency, good passages alternating with bad, till I can no longer read them. All the same, for all its intolerable faults, I knew that *The Saint and Mary Kate* was a work of art, something I had never succeeded in producing before (O’Connor 1988: 250).

This also marks the time when O’Connor first read Turgenev’s *Записки Охотника* (*Sportsman’s Sketches*) (1952) to serve as a role model for writing his own short stories (Matthews 1987: 20). In this regard, Turgenev’s work most probably influenced the construction of both Irish writer’s texts.

Turgenev, although representing nineteenth-century literature, did not produce typical realist novels of the time. As a follower of Gogol, his novels are short and episodic; thus, they often resemble a novella or a short story. As T. S. Eliot (1917: 167) remarks, “Turgenev’s peculiarly critical genius made the *conte*, not the novel, his proper form. All his books are elaborated *contes*”. Turgenev’s friendship with Gustav Flaubert, along with the admiration from Henry James, Joseph Conrad, and T.S. Eliot, testifies to the Russian writer’s *oeuvre* transcending the classical realist

convention in favour of more universal aspects, viewing the world as a constant battle between two forces of nature and culture (Lieber 2015: 89). This makes his works more aesthetic and philosophical than is habitually expected.

On the Eve is no exception. Its characters are more representative of submerged population groups than of individuals. Shubin is an artist, Bersenyev is a philosopher, and Insarov is a revolutionist. Even O'Connor (1964: 138) sees Shubin and Bersenyev as Hamletian types. Shubin is the embodiment of egotism. Being overly preoccupied with his art, he despises himself. Yet all this scorn and irony help him thrive. Similar to Hamlet, Shubin “does not love, but merely pretends, and that too, ineffectually” (Turgenev 1965: 101). Meanwhile, Bersenyev, with his analytical mind of a philosopher, is too thoughtful and too self-conscious to act, even when it comes to his infatuation with Elena. Therefore, Isaiah Berlin ([1975] 2013: 311) reads *On the Eve* as a story “preoccupied with weakness – the failure of men of generous heart, sincerely held ideals, who remain impotent and give in without a struggle to the forces of stagnation”.

They are juxtaposed with Insarov, a Bulgarian who is an epitome of Don Quixote. Both his love for his country and for Elena is extreme. Led by these passions, he is presented as being constantly in action. Analogous to Don Quixote: “he exists (if one may put it so) outside himself; he lives for others, for his brethren, in the hope of neutralizing evil and outwitting those sinister figures. There is no vestige of egotism in him; his own self concerns him least of all, he completely personifies self-sacrifice” (Turgenev 1965: 94). This “new man” figure, as Kathryn Ambrose (2010: 147) calls Insarov, is an untimely figure, thus doomed to failure due to the predominance of Hemletian pessimism and stagnation at the time. For Isaiah Berlin, this text presents Turgenev’s short period of infatuation with Russian leftist radicals, especially Nikolai Dobrolyubov and *Современник* (*Contemporary*). Turgenev published *On the Eve* there, but he was disappointed by Dobrolyubov’s review. Although the editor admired the character of Insarov, he did not appreciate his Bulgarian origin; he ought to have been Russian to convey an unambiguous rebellious tone. Indeed, Turgenev’s depiction of Insarov as a Don Quixote figure well expresses the writer’s inconclusive approach towards the radicals. On the one hand, he represents progressive views as a liberal democrat; on the other, he dismisses their “dogmatism, their arrogance, their distractiveness, their appalling ignorance of life” (Berlin 2013: 334).

Contrary to his male types, Turgenev’s female character, Elena, is an individual who in a patriarchal world of tsarist Russia seeks freedom for herself. So says Edward Garnett in his introduction to the first English translation of the novel by his wife, Constance Garnett. He reads the story of Elena as a diagnosis of the possible paths Russia could take in the 1850s, especially after the death of Nicholas I in 1855, and “the rise of young Russia in the sixties” (Garnett [1895] 2010: 9) associated with a more progressive Alexander II. This reading of Elena’s character limits the interpretation of the text to a specific socio-political context in Russia, while other critics view the same character more universally, as an embodiment of Don Quixotism (Schapiro 1982: 155; Ambrose 2010: 147).

A similar pattern is visible in O’Connor’s *The Saint and Mary Kate*, in which the protagonist, Phil, like a saint, leads an ascetic life, continuously denying himself education, a better job, and finally, love. His religious tours around churches or his professional choice to become a carpenter like St Joseph turn him into a caricature of an Irish saint, thus we are dealing more with a Hamletian type than an individual character. Mary Kate seems to be an antithesis of Phil, being a girl who seeks love, wants to live life to the fullest, and change her situation for the better if possible. Thus, she may be treated as an embodiment of Don Quixotism.

Signe Toksvig, just after the publication of the novel in the United States, commented on the ending of *The Saint and Mary Kate* in the following words:

a glimpse of hope is left that the poor, good, intense, narrow Phil, who somehow resembles young, Republican Ireland, will come to his senses as well as out of the dark and smelly crypts, and end by embracing and accepting life in all its vivid fullness, life in the enticing shape of a moral, gay, fresh and lovely Mary Kate (Evans 2007: 75).

The critic not only sees binary oppositions in these two characters, but more importantly, she reads Phil not as an individual, but as an allegorical figure, an embodiment of the social conservatism of the post-revolutionary Ireland that O’Connor criticizes so heavily. Mary Kate is a character true to life, she embodies life as it is, or O’Connor’s aspirations for the new Ireland to become more progressive than it was during his life. Even a quick glance at the character creation dislodges a certain analogy between Turgenev’s and O’Connor’s novels since the main characters represent either the Hamlet or the Don Quixote type, “two forces of immobility and motion, conservatism and progress, [which] are the fundamental levers of all existing matter” (Turgenev 1965: 103).

Apart from the typological treatment of characters, there are other literary devices used by Turgenev to make his works philosophical. Among them is a method of “proceed[ing] from individual experience and then generaliz[ing] it into a comprehensive view of life” (Kagan-Kans 1975: 8). According to Kagan-Kans, Turgenev constructs sentences which resemble aphorisms. This aphoristic device is evident in *On the Eve*, as exemplified by the following fragment:

Berseneyev sat down to it, and began to strike some chords. Like all Russians of good birth, he had studied music in his childhood, and like almost all Russian gentlemen, he played very badly; but he loved music passionately. Strictly speaking, he did not love the art, the forms in which music is expressed (symphonies and sonatas, even operas wearied him), but he loved the poetry of music: he loved those vague and sweet, shapeless, and all-embracing emotions which are stirred in the soul by the combinations and successions of sounds (Turgenev 2010: 58).

Turgenev very swiftly moves from a particular episode concerning Berseneyev to the first generalization concerning all Russian gentlemen and finishing with the universal statement about human soul. Such aphoristic techniques not only signify Turgenev’s love of poetry, but more importantly, they in a gentle way show the discrepancy

between the expectations of the characters and “the reality which imposes itself upon life” (Kagan-Kans 1975: 8).

An analogous device is implemented by O’Connor in *The Saint and Mary Kate*, as one may read:

[i]t is possibly a tragedy that her idol did not know what was churning about in Mary Kate’s pretty head [...] Yet how could he? And even if he had, how could his clumsy adult wits have followed the intricate dance required of him if he were to pursue in word and gesture the patterns which Mary Kate’s intensity of longing created. As we grow older our loves become simpler - the Nature has decreed; we fill up in our minds the mighty chasms that yawn between the moment of tenderness and the moment of indifference (O’Connor 1990: 26–7).

O’Connor, similarly to Turgenev, uses a small episode from the character’s life to construct more general comments on life, which in this particular instance is well visible due to the switch from the third-person narration to a more direct first-person plural form to include the reader in this philosophical musing about the influence of age on the perception of love. Analogously to Turgenev, O’Connor began his writing career from poetry. He never truly abandoned it, to which Hilary Lennon (2015: 150) refers when analysing O’Connor’s short stories in terms of their “poetic realism”.

Apart from poetry, it is drama that has exerted a significant influence on the structure of the plots in these two novels. For Turgenev, theatre played a crucial role in his life. The Russian writer’s literary legacy includes ten plays.¹ O’Connor, too, was influenced by theatre, especially during his early writing career. First, he founded the Cork Drama League, thanks to which Anton Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard* was staged in Cork (Matthews 1987: 50). His short Abbey period, from 1935 to 1939, resulted in the staging of O’Connor’s four plays.² Especially illustrative is the example of his first play, *In a Train*, which was based on O’Connor’s short story, and it depicts the commonalities between these two spheres of literature.

It is no surprise that O’Connor (1963: 48–49) praises Turgenev’s short stories for the author’s excellent implementation of anticlimax, discovery and dramatic irony. However, for the Irish writer, whenever Turgenev introduces these elements into a novel, he fails. Thus, Turgenev succeeds only if his novels express “the organic form”, which O’Connor accounts for in the following way: “People meet, talk in a civilized way about subjects of civilized interest, fall in love, and either marry or

¹ Already in 1943 Turgenev wrote his first play *Неосторожность* (*A Rash Thing to Do*) and in 1846 *Безденежье* (*Lack of Money*). However, between 1848 and 1852, he produced his most well-known dramatic works: *Где тонко, там и рвется* (*It Tears Where It Is Thin*) (1848), *Нахлебник* (*Fortune’s Fool*) (1848), *Холостяк* (*The Bachelor*) (1849), *Завтрак у предводителя* (*Lunch at His Excellency’s*) (1849), *Месяц в деревне* (*A Month in the Country*) (1850), *Провинциалка* (*The Provincial Lady*) (1850), *Разговор на большой дороге* (*A Conversation on the Highway*) (1850), *Вечер в Сорренто* (*An Evening in Sorrento*) (1852).

² *In the Train* (1937), *The Invincibles* (1937), *Moses’ Rock* (1938), and *Time’s Pocket* (1938) (Matthews 1987: 131–47).

separate. They do not commit murder or suicide. The emotions evoked by them are reflective and philosophical rather than dramatic or violent” (1964: 132). It appears that in the cases of both the Russian and the Irish writer, the choice of the novel form turned out to be inadequate since they both lived during the times of dynamic historical change. Even if Turgenev’s works reflect his philosophical views on the duality of human nature, within this duality is imprinted his fear of revolution and the violence associated with it (Schapiro 1982: 63).

Once again, no matter how critical O’Connor is of Turgenev’s novel writing, especially *On the Eve*, he appears to have followed a similar pattern of plot structure earlier in his writing career. Analogously to Turgenev, O’Connor seems to include many of the features of a short story in his novel, thus creating a work that is too dramatic for the organic form. Interestingly enough, O’Connor, in his autobiography, mentions a moment when he was talking with W. B. Yeats about *The Saint and Mary Kate*. The poet’s reaction was the following: “I wish you would write that as a play for me [...] My dear boy, that is a play, not a novel” (1988: 308). With *The Saint and Mary Kate*, O’Connor appears to have repeated the very same mistakes he later discovered in Turgenev’s writing. *On the Eve* begins as O’Connor would like, namely, as an example of pure organic form. Shubin and Bersenyev spend time discussing art and philosophy, both hoping to get the attention of the beautiful Elena. The moment Turgenev introduces the third “actor”, Insarov, into the narrative, the action turns more and more dramatic. As O’Connor observes, the novel includes all the features of drama mentioned by him: discovery, anticlimax and dramatic irony. All of them appear in the closing chapters of the novel: Elena’s and Insarov’s clandestine marriage and their departure to Bulgaria, the onset of war between France and Russia, Insarov’s sudden death in Venice, and Elena’s disappearance. The multitude of shifts in action, together with the great anticlimax caused by Insarov’s death, for O’Connor, do not fit the organic form of the novel and are more appropriate for a short story.

However, *The Saint and Mary Kate*, also includes many elements of drama. The beginning seems to follow the organic form since the reader observes the process of Mary Kate’s coming of age and her friend Phil’s difficulties as he experiences the death of his mother and, as a result, becomes an excessively religious person. The action becomes more dynamic when the third “actor” appears, namely her father, Nicolas. Characters travel to Dublin and back to Cork. Phil falls in love with Mary Kate. However, the story has no happy ending, since Phil disappears. Thus, the novel ends with a discovery, which is also an anticlimax and a dramatic irony. The ending seems analogous with the one we find in Turgenev’s *On the Eve*. In both texts, we see a moment when an introduction of a new character changes the pace of the action. The discovery of Elena’s clandestine marriage and Nicolas’s dubious fatherhood, of which he was even unaware, are events that O’Connor would find in a good short story. Thus, the (sub)conscious translation of the short-story form into a novel is what characterises these two writers.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of different critical stances on the short story and novel forms, together with O'Connor's own theory, proves that a clear distinction between these two genres is far from obvious. The "anxiety about the novel" expressed in O'Connor's definition of a short story, which is predominantly based on the notion of standing in opposition to the novel, is also evident in his negative approach to Ivan Turgenev's novels in contrast to his admiration for the Russian writer's short stories. With hindsight, it transpires that despite Frank O'Connor's critical remarks concerning Turgenev's novelistic *oeuvre*, the Irish writer was significantly influenced by the Russian writer's novelistic style. The illustrated similarities between the two novels *On the Eve* and *The Saint and Mary Kate* bespeak O'Connor's (sub)conscious translation of Turgenev's typological character building, based on the philosophical notion of the duality of human nature, and the dramatic plot structure. Thus, the comparative literary analysis, along with the scrutiny of O'Connor's critical texts, sheds some light on the Irish writer's process of artistic development. Therefore, the paper shows that O'Connor's theory of a short story, founded on the notion of "submerged population group" and the dynamism of plot, not only creates too narrow a definition of the Irish short story, but more importantly, these two aspects cannot be viewed as characteristics typical for a short story only since they may also be observed in novels. Consequently, although the short story and the novel are treated as separate genres, their generic distinction still remains difficult to define.

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