CHARACTER AND THEME IN FATHERS AND SONS
Gary R. Jahn

When I. S. Turgenev's Fathers and Sons was first published in 1862, Russian intellectual life was marked by open antagonism between generations. Not unnaturally, the majority of those who first read the novel understood its title to be suggestive of that antagonism. Readers of our own time and place, having recently passed through a period of similar bitterness between the generations, easily reach the same conclusion, supported by the sharpness of the polemic between Bazarov and Pavel Petrovich Kirsanov which the novel contains.

The impression that the work concerns a younger generation presenting a united front of opposition to its predecessor becomes, however, weakened and confused as the novel develops. The careful reader will, therefore, be aware of the possibility that the theme of the novel is, instead of being implied at the beginning and confirmed by what follows, developed gradually throughout the work as a whole and made completely apparent only at the end.

The purpose of the present paper is to offer an analysis of the novel's characters and organization in order to illuminate the thematic development which they represent.

Just as the title of the novel suggests its theme, so it also suggests the artistic method by which the theme is to be realized, a comparison between the fathers and the children. Taking the title literally, the reader is confronted with two primary character pairs: the fathers in Nikolay Petrovich Kirsanov and old Bazarov and the sons in Arkady Nikolaevich and Bazarov. By taking the title in the broader sense as indicating a generational rather than a parental and filial comparison, Pavel Petrovich, the uncle of Arkady, may be added to the group of the "fathers." This is clearly justifiable since it is in the relationship between Pavel Petrovich and the younger generation that the antagonism between the generations is most evident.

If we begin with these two groups of characters, the following specific comparisons are immediately suggested: Pavel Petrovich to Bazarov and Arkady, Nikolay Petrovich to Bazarov and Arkady, and old Bazarov to Bazarov and Arkady.

Beyond these comparisons a large group of supplemental comparisons are offered in the novel. These are of two sorts: comparison of the fathers and the sons within rather than across generations and comparison with other characters in the novel, most importantly Mme. Odintsova, Katya, Sitnikov, Kukshina, and the Princess R. (with whom Pavel Petrovich in
his youth carried on a destructive love affair). Thus many new comparisons are introduced into the novel: Arkady is compared to Bazarov and Nikolay Petrovich to Pavel Petrovich; Bazarov and Arkady are matched to Mme. Odintsova, Katya, and Sitnikov; Pavel Petrovich is compared to the Princess R., Nikolay Petrovich to Mme. Odintsova, and Mme. Odintsova to Kukshina.

The presentation of these comparisons is effected in such a way that Arkady and Bazarov are the organizational focus of the novel. The novel falls into two main parts; the first is roughly twice the length of the second. In the first part of the novel Arkady and Bazarov journey together to the four main settings of the novel; chapters 1-11 find them at Marino, the estate of Nikolay Petrovich; chapters 12-15 describe their stay in a provincial town; chapters 16-19 are set at Nikolskoe, the estate of Mme. Odintsova; and chapters 20 & 21 cover the visit of the two young men to the home of Bazarov's parents. It is through these visits that comparisons among the characters are made possible. In fact, since the development of action in the traditional sense is almost non-existent in the novel, one may justifiably conclude that the traveling of the two young men from place to place occurs chiefly to provide action and the interaction that make these comparisons possible.

In a transitional chapter (22) Arkady and Bazarov are separated and then throughout the remainder of the novel are studied individually against the same backgrounds before which the reader has already seen them standing together. Chapters 23-24 show Bazarov at Marino, chapters 25-26 present Arkady at Nikolskoe, and chapter 27 describes the last days of Bazarov at home with his mother and father. The novel ends with an epilog (chapter 28) in which the fates of the main characters are described.

In exploring the thematic development of the novel, this paper will be limited to consideration of a restricted number of the character pairs which might be discussed. I have selected the relationships between Nikolay Petrovich and Arkady, Pavel Petrovich and Nikolay Petrovich, Pavel Petrovich and Bazarov, and Arkady and Bazarov for detailed investigation, for two reasons. First, they are the character pairs with the most direct thematic relevance to the title of the novel. Second, they are the four characters who, together with Mme. Odintsova, receive the greatest amount of attention in the novel (and the role of Mme. Odintsova will be seen to play an important part in the understanding of the relations among them).

The fact about the relationships represented by the four major pairs of characters which is most immediately evident is that the nature of the relationship has in each case reversed itself, by the end of the novel, from what it was in the beginning.
As the novel opens, the relationship between Nikolay Petrovich and Arkady contains elements of strain and uneasiness which are occasioned by Nikolay Petrovich's concern that communication and affection between his son and himself have been impaired by their belonging to generations which are contending against one another. On the other hand, the affection which Arkady feels for his father is blunted by his resolve to follow his mentor Bazarov in the rejection of the sentimental and by an attitude of gratifying condescension toward his father as a representative of the older generation. By the end of the novel this strain in their relations has been completely removed, as shown by their portrayal in the epilog.

The relations between Nikolay Petrovich and his brother Pavel are extremely close at the beginning of the novel. They have resided together at Marino for many years in harmony. In the epilog, however, it is learned that Pavel Petrovich, despite Nikolay's request to the contrary, has departed from Marino to live abroad, thus severing the close relations between them.

The relationship between Pavel Petrovich and Bazarov is cool from their first meeting and rapidly develops into open hostility. By the end of the novel, however, they have come to share what may well be regarded as the same fate in that both have been withdrawn from the action of the novel, Pavel Petrovich in his removal to Germany and Bazarov in death.²

Arkady and Bazarov are first presented as fast friends and intellectual comrades, but by the end of the novel they have been separated, not alone by the death of Bazarov but previously by Arkady's rejection of Bazarov as a model.

Thus the relations existing among Bazarov, Arkady, Pavel Petrovich, and Nikolay Petrovich are developed from a position of solidarity within generations to a position of solidarity, for Arkady and Nikolay Petrovich, and of similarity, for Pavel Petrovich and Bazarov, between generations. This reversal of positions has important consequences for understanding the way in which the theme of "fathers and sons" is developed in the novel.

The pattern of development by which each of these four relationships is reversed in the novel remains identical. They begin in clarity, elements of ambiguity are introduced, the ambiguities are resolved, and they end in new clarification. The first two stages of the pattern are recounted in chapters 1-21, which recount the travels of Arkady and Bazarov together to the four major settings of the novel. The third stage is accomplished as Arkady and Bazarov revisit separately and respectively Nikolskoe and Marino, and the last stage is reached in chapter 27 (Bazarov's death) and the epilog. This pattern is evident in summaries of the relations among the four main characters.

Nikolay and Arkady. The relations between them are shown to be un-
easy during the first visit of Arkady and Bazarov to Marino. The uneasi-
ness is the result of Arkady’s attitude of condescension toward his father
as portrayed in his disdain of his father’s reluctance to reveal the true posi-
tion of Fenichka in the household, the existence of a half-brother to Arkady,
and in the scene where Arkady removes the copy of Pushkin’s works from
his father’s hands and replaces it with Büchner’s “Stoff und Kraft” [sic].³
Nikolay compounds the strain between the two by the temerity of his con-
duct. Fearing to widen the gap which he detects between his own thoughts
and ideals and those of his son, he retreats into a state of passivity from
which he emerges only to intervene to prevent the quarrel between Pavel
and Bazarov from reaching ugly proportions. Nikolay fears that the close
relationship between his son and himself, which he so fervently desires,
has become impossible because of the differences inevitably dividing
the generations. This fear is clearly expressed in conversation with Pavel:

“So it seems.” Nikolai Petrovich said the same day after dinner to his brother,
as he sat in his study, “you and I are behind the times, our days over. Well,
well. Perhaps Bazarov is right; but one thing hurts, I confess; I did hope,
precisely now, to get on close, intimate terms with Arkady, and it turns out
I’m left behind, and he has gone forward, and we can’t understand one an-
other.” (p. 35)

At the same time, elements of ambiguity are present. The first meeting
between Nikolay and Arkady brings forth a burst of natural affection and
similarity of sentiments between them which suggest the presence of a uni-
fying bond beneath the superficial uneasiness of their relations. These
moments are twice repeated, once in the carriage on the way from the
station to the manor house and later in the manor house itself. Significantly,
each of these scenes is brought to an embarrassed conclusion, in the first
instance by Bazarov and in the second by Pavel. In the first instance Ark-
ady’s exclamations to his father about the fineness of the air and scenery
of his native place are cut short by “a stealthy look behind him” where Bazarov
is following in a separate conveyance (p. 7). Later we read the following:

Nikolai Petrovich tried to articulate something, tried to get up and open
his arms. Arkady flung himself on his neck.

“What’s this, embracing again?” sounded the voice of Pavel Petrovich
behind them. (p. 16)

The cause of the uneasiness in the relations between Nikolay and Ark-
ady is evidently the result of their consciousness of their membership in
different generations interfering with an underlying sense of closeness
and affection. The ambiguity is finally resolved when Arkady visits Nikols-
koе by himself and, under the influence of his growing affection for Katya,
it is implied that he has abandoned his desire to view himself as a replica
of Bazarov.
“My sister was under his influence then, just as you were.”
“As I was? Do you find that I’ve shaken off his influence now?” Katya did not speak. (p. 135)

Later, the rift between the two young men is openly acknowledged by both (p. 148).

This renunciation of the priority of solidarity among the younger generation clears the way for the ultimate portrait of Nikolay and Arkady as having given way to the sense of affection which unites them. They settle down to live and work together at Marino following the ceremony in which Arkady has married Katya and Nikolay has married Fenichka. The uneasiness between them has disappeared and they have been united in their mutually shared capability of entering into happy, successful, and permanent love relationships.

Pavel and Nikolay. The close bond which unites them at the beginning of the novel is implied to be the result of their common membership in the older generation. Underlying this closeness, however, are differences of several kinds. From the biographical sketches of the two brothers we learn that from their youth they had been of quite different natures: Pavel extroverted and successful, Nikolay retiring and introspective. While Pavel makes a brilliant career in the capital, Nikolay marries beneath himself and retires to a life of contentment in the country. While Pavel fails abjectly in his love for Princess R., Nikolay enjoys exceptional success in his marriage. Furthermore, during their life together in the country Nikolay comes to adopt toward his brother the attitude of pupil to master, attaching great weight to Pavel’s advice, striving to conduct himself in a way which Pavel will find acceptable, and feeling guilty when he does not succeed, as in his relationship with Fenichka.

This ambiguity is resolved by Nikolay’s forced withdrawal into the concerns of his estate, and by Pavel’s withdrawal into himself, especially following the duel with Bazarov. This is symbolized by the hours which he spends lying on the divan in his room with his face turned to its back and culminates in his departure from Marino to live out his life in a self-imposed European exile. Thus, a relationship which began in closeness is disrupted and ends in distance. The closeness with which it began is in the process shown to have been artificial, the result perhaps of a sense of shared misfortune rather than genuine attraction. When genuine and open affection again becomes possible for Nikolay, it is as though there is no longer a place for Pavel at Marino and so he departs.

Pavel and Bazarov. The relations between these two characters seem to be exceptionally clear in the early stages of the novel. Besides the open animosity of their intellectual views, they are separated by their styles of life, their social conduct, and even their manners of speech. Yet, these
apparent dissimilarities are themselves ambiguous. The intellectual debate between them is wrongly perceived by Pavel as a contest between an insistence upon a set of principles and an insistence upon a lack of principle (the nihilism of Bazarov). What is in fact the crux of the dispute is the contest between two different sets of principles, each supported by a character fully convinced of the absolute validity of the principles which he holds. In manners, also, they are diametrically opposed: Pavel's reserved formality and icy politeness are contrasted to Bazarov's off-hand and even coarse casualness; Pavel's daintiness at table contrasts with Bazarov's robust appetite. Yet, here too we are dealing with a certain similarity between them in that they both hold to their somewhat exaggerated forms of conduct absolutely. In short, the proverbial similarity between opposites is obliquely suggested. Several other details support this suggestion. Both Bazarov and Pavel Petrovich are marked by a pride which reveals itself in a reluctance to shake hands, for instance. At their arrival at the way station near Marino Arkady and Bazarov are greeted by Nikolay Petrovich and we read:

Nikolai Petrovich turned around quickly, and going up to a tall man [Bazarov] in a long, loose, rough coat with tassels, who had only just got out of the carriage, he warmly pressed the bare red hand, which the latter did not at once hold out to him. (p. 4)

Later we read "Nikolay Petrovich presented him [Pavel Petrovich] to Bazarov; Pavel Petrovich greeted him with a slight inclination of his supple figure, and a slight smile, but he did not give him his hand, and even put it back into his pocket" (p. 11).

However, it is too much to say that the first part of the novel suggests that they are more like than unlike. So far it is clear only that they are similar in the degree to which they uphold their dissimilarity. The resolution of the ambiguity must wait upon further evidence to show that the dissimilarities between them are merely conventional or accidental and that underlying them is a similarity which is essential.

This evidence is forthcoming in the first visit of Arkady and Bazarov to Nikolskoe and in Bazarov's second visit to Marino. At Nikolskoe Bazarov, to his surprise and chagrin, falls in love with Mme. Odintsova. The mockery which he had earlier heaped upon Pavel for "staking everything on a single card" when "there were so many other fish in the sea" (p. 25), after hearing from Arkady about Pavel's unhappy love affair with the Princess R., now turns upon himself with bitter irony. Indeed, in the materialism of Bazarov and the social brilliance and Casanovian expertise of Pavel there is little room for genuine emotional attraction. Yet both fall victim to love. The circumstances are nearly identical. Both encounter a woman of checkered reputation, both are encouraged by them, fall in love, and then are ultimately rejected by them. Following the termination of the relationship
both strive to return to what they had been before (Pavel makes a few new conquests, Bazarov throws himself into feverish scientific work at Marino) and both fail. Pavel accepts his brother's invitation to retire to the country and Bazarov returns to the home of his father, where he dies. In their inability to succeed in love and the effect which this has upon them, the underlying identity between them begins for the first time to supercede their superficial dissimilarities.

The central scene of Bazarov's second visit to Marino is the duel which he fights with Pavel. It has been pointed out that the duel represents the triumph of the younger generation over the older, and this is certainly true. It is doubtful, however, that in the pattern of disintegrating solidarity within generations and increasing similarity between generations which is being developed in the novel that such a resolution of the theme of fathers and sons is here primarily at issue. Other points of significance in the duel are not far to seek.

Bazarov's participation in the duel is in itself exceedingly strange. With his initially consistent rejection of what he terms "romanticism" nothing could be more surprising than his agreeing to submit himself to that epitome of the romantic, the code of the duel. His very participation suggests a weakening of his principles and implies that he has come to regard himself as something other than the self-assured materialist to whom we were introduced at the beginning of the novel.

Pavel's challenge is also surprising, for the main function of the duel was to provide a means of settling disputes between equals. Since he views himself as an aristocrat and Bazarov as a low-born upstart, it would be more in accord with his principles to have beaten Bazarov with the cane, which he carried for precisely that purpose should Bazarov refuse the challenge.

It would seem, in fact, that the challenge is more pertinent to the development of the relations between them than the duel itself and its outcome. In effect, Pavel, in issuing the challenge, implicitly recognizes Bazarov as his equal, and Bazarov in accepting recognizes Pavel as his. Since this equality between them is achieved at the expense of the principles both have previously adhered to so absolutely, it is justifiable to conclude that at this point the dissimilarities between them have to be regarded as accidental and the similarity between them as essential. This conclusion is, of course, reinforced by the ending of the novel where both Pavel and Bazarov have departed, each in his own way, from the sphere of the novel.

Arkady and Bazarov. Like the relations between Pavel and Bazarov, those between Arkady and Bazarov seem eminently clear in the first portion of the novel, but where the relation is one of animosity between Pavel and Bazarov, that between Arkady and Bazarov is one of
solidarity. As with the other relationships here discussed, however, ambiguities soon appear.

The first is that the relation between Arkady and Bazarov is not wholly one of identity, for it soon becomes clear that Arkady regards himself as the pupil and Bazarov the master. This is reminiscent of Nikolay’s attitude to Pavel and a further similarity is to be seen in Arkady’s sense of guilt at not always living up to the example which Bazarov has set for him.

Second, Arkady and Bazarov disagree as to the attitude which it is proper to adopt to the story of Pavel’s love affair with Princess R. Arkady cannot bring himself to feel the harshness and scorn which Bazarov expresses, and already here he differs from his “teacher” without the guilt which would seem to be a logical consequence of what is manifestly a compromise from principle in favor of sentiment. Third, the statement which Arkady offers of the principles of the “nihilists” does not meet with the full approval of Bazarov.

“Allow me, though,” began Nikolay Petrovich. “You deny everything, or speaking more precisely, you destroy everything... But one must construct too, you know.”

“That’s not our business now... The ground has to be cleared first.”

“The present condition of the people requires it,” added Arkady with dignity; “we are bound to carry out these requirements, we have no right to yield to the satisfaction of our personal egoism.”

This last phrase apparently displeased Bazarov; there was a flavor of philosophy, that is to say, romanticism, about it, for Bazarov called philosophy, too romanticism, but he did not think it necessary to correct his young disciple. (p. 39)

Despite his displeasure, Bazarov says nothing, leaving the reader to speculate as to why this should be. Perhaps even Bazarov needs an idealistic defense, such as that offered by Arkady, for his materialism, even though it smacks rather strongly of that vague romanticism which he opposes.

The lack of solidarity between Arkady and Bazarov grows stronger as they visit Nikolskoe and compete for the affections of Mme. Odintsova. This phase culminates on the estate of Bazarov’s father, where it is only the old man’s chance arrival that prevents their coming to blows (p. 105).

When Arkady visits Nikolskoe alone he abandons himself to his love for Katya and in so doing implicitly abandons also the teaching of his master. Katya then leads him to an implied forswearing of the character he had tried to assume in the imitation of his former mentor (see above, p. 76).

Bazarov, too, comes more and more clearly to recognize the gulf between himself and Arkady. Mme. Odintsova tells him that the two of them
are old by comparison with Arkady and Katya and by his silence he seems to agree. He tells Arkady straight out his view of those who follow the leader and of the essential selfishness and lack of idealism of the true materialist, whereas at an earlier opportunity he had refrained.

Bazarov at first stirred a little in his bed, then pronounced the following: "You're still a fool, my boy, I see. Sitnikovs are indispensable. I—do you understand? I need dolts like him. It's not for the gods to bake bricks, in fact."

"Oho!" Arkady thought to himself, and then in a flash all the fathomless depths of Bazarov's conceit dawned upon him. "Are you and I gods then? At least, you're a god; am not I a dolt then?"

"Yes," repeated Bazarov gloomily; "you're still a fool."

Finally, at his death, Bazarov sends not for Arkady, who began the novel as his closest friend and comrade, but for Mme. Odintsova.

The epilog confirms the break between Arkady and Bazarov. Arkady has abandoned all pretensions to the life of the scientist and social critic and has taken his place beside his father without much thought for Bazarov or his former ideals.

The analysis of the relations among Arkady, Bazarov, Pavel, and Nikolay uniformly suggests that insofar as these relations are the medium through which the theme represented by the title is developed, the reader's perception of the significance of the title is guided through two phases. The reader is first offered what he may, in fact, quite probably be expecting, "fathers and sons" in the sense of "fathers against sons." This initial impression is rendered ambiguous as the novel develops and the work concludes having guided the reader to the opposite, probably unexpected, perception of the meaning of the title: "fathers and sons" in the sense of "fathers united with sons." The novel begins with the assumption that generations are essentially in conflict and ends with the conclusion that generations are essentially the same.

This conclusion opens the way to a yet deeper thematic line in the novel. While the work has proved to be an illustration of the error in dividing human beings arbitrarily by . . . ge, it does not suggest that all divisions of people into categories are erroneous. The novel may be approached as material for meditation on the proper categorization of basic human types, a system which is implicitly justified by its being unaffected by the succession of the generations. In short, "fathers and sons" may be taken broadly to include mankind as a whole.

This suggested meaning of the title transfers the attention of the reader from concern with the process of man's development through time (shown in the novel to be of secondary importance) to concentration on the essential qualities of the human character which, in appearing in successive generations, are suggested to be an essential part of the human condition.
The novel offers a view of humanity as arranged along a linear continuum extending between antinomical extremes. The qualities represented by each of the extremes are various but consistently associated, and the characters in the novel may be thought of as occupying positions along a scale stretching between the extremes.

One of the extremes seems to have collected around it such concepts as will and intellect, the systematic, that which changes; the other is represented by the emotional or sentimental (in a non-pejorative sense), the random, and that which remains the same. All of these are, of course, positive human characteristics and it is typical of Turgenev's pessimism with regard to the achievement of human felicity that the extremes are incompatible with one another. Thus true happiness, represented by a union of all of the positive human characteristics in full degree, is shown to be logically impossible. It is an impossibility that a person could, for instance, possess a full measure of man's potential emotional and intellectual strength simultaneously. As the level of will and intellect is high, that of emotion and sentiment will be low.

The characters of Fathers and Sons fit with exquisite balance into the continuum described above. Using just one set of antinomies, intellect and will opposed to emotion and sentiment, the novel shows us in Mme. Odintsova, a character perfectly representative of the intellect and will, the self subordinated completely to an abstraction, in her case a desire for physical comfort, which is, in effect, the same as the materialism espoused by Bazarov. All her arrangements, including her decision not to fall in love with Bazarov, are designed to insure an unbroken state of material comfort. And she succeeds! One need only compare the smooth efficiency and material comfort of Nikolskoe with the ramshackle Marino. Yet, she confesses herself piqued by a desire to look behind the screen which intellect and will have erected before her emotions. She goes so far as to visit the dying Bazarov, at his request, but does not neglect to wear her white gloves.

At the other extreme are Bazarov's parents—especially his mother—characters with no sort of pretensions to intellect, but seeming to be endlessly capable of emotional attachment. Thus, their life after the death of their son is suggested, in the epilog, to be spent at his graveside.

Moving toward the intellect from the extreme of emotion the characters of Arkady and his father are encountered. Both of them prove in the course of the novel to be genuinely capable of experiencing emotion in their respective affairs of the heart: Nikolay with his beloved wife Mariya and later with Fenichka, and Arkady with Katya. Yet both are attracted also by the intellect. The reader notes in them a respect for the intellect and a desire to form themselves according to the dictates of the progressive intellectualism of the day. Thus Nikolay's desire to keep abreast
of the intellectual development of his son, his institution of modern reforms on his estate, and his respect for the counsel of his brother. So too Arkady's admiration for Bazarov and his evident desire to pattern his own life after that of this mentor. The novel, however, shows that Arkady and Nikolay really have no place in the sphere to which they aspire. Nikolay's reforms are ineptly carried through and do not bring the desired results, while Arkady ultimately renounces Bazarov and his ways to become involved in just such a life as he had at first opposed. The reason for this failure of aspiration is the same in both cases; neither of them is able to sacrifice the emotional sufficiently to allow them to achieve their intellectual goals. Nikolay lacks the firmness of will to contend with the recalcitrance of his peasants. Arkady falls in love with Katya and, facing a choice between Katya and Bazarov, must choose love over intellect.

Bazarov himself finds a place on the scale of human types which is primarily intellectual but marred by uncontrollable vestige of the emotional. His aspirations to the intellectual extreme are both very clear and nearly realized in the novel. His failure to meet the mark is shown most clearly by his inability to control his emotional response to Mme. Odintsova. It is clearly indicated in the text that this response is something other than acute physical desire.

His [Bazarov's] blood was on fire as soon as he thought of her; he could easily have mastered his blood, but something else was taking root in him, something he had never admitted, at which he had always jeered, at which all his pride revolted. In his conversations with Anna Sergeyevna he expressed more strongly than ever his calm contempt for everything romantic; but when he was alone, with indignation he recognized the romantic in himself. (p. 73)

Bazarov the materialist considers himself able to control the physical aspect of his response, but he is unable to control that which underlies it, a genuine emotion which is at the same time impossibly "romantic."

Thus, like Arkady, Bazarov is faced with a choice between his intellectual aspirations and the presence of genuine emotions in his nature. Unlike Arkady, however, he is not able to make a decision. He is close enough to the intellectual extreme that he cannot renounce his aspirations, indeed he considers himself to have achieved his goal rather than to be aspiring to it. At the same time, his emotional response to Mme. Odintsova is so strong that it cannot be denied. He is left in a position from which the only exits are a harmonization of antitheses or death. He is unable to achieve the former, possibly even unaware of the true nature of his difficulty, and so he falls willing victim to the latter. His death, while not perhaps self-inflicted is clearly permitted by him to occur, and the reason that the formerly assured materialist allows himself to suffer this worst of material calamities is best explained in terms of the irresolvable mixture of opposites inherent in the character assigned to him by the author."
NOTES

1 The Russian title of the novel is Otcy i deti; literally translated it is Fathers and Children. Although it is best known in English-speaking countries as Fathers and Sons, we must remember that in any form it should continue to signify a generic sense of relationships within and between generations.

2 The idea that the understanding that each of the major characters of the novel has of himself is superficial and faulty and that this results in a character like Pavel Petrovich mistakenly considering himself to be diametrically opposed to Bazarov, when in fact they are rather similar one to the other, has been well expressed by Charles R. Bachman in his article “Tragedy and Self-deception in Turgenev’s Fathers and Sons,” Revue des Langues Vivantes, 34 (1968), 269-276.


4 The character of the young Nikolay Petrovich is described in Chapter I, that of Pavel Petrovich in Chapter VII.

5 P. 86. Cf above Bazarov’s unwillingness to correct the idealism of Arkady’s statement of the mission of the nihilists.

6 Much the same can be said of Pavel, but with a neat-handed ironic twist Turgenev condemns his representative of the generation of the 1830’s to a lingering, meaningless life (in contrast to the suitably romantic, early death of the Princess R.), while the would-be pure materialist in Bazarov suffers an early, meaningless death (in contrast to the continuing material success of Mme. Odintsova).