

Ivan Turgenev's Bazarov

Roots in Byronism

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The socially unsettled and peasant-filled¹ Russian countryside of 1862 was far from the politics of Victorian England at the height of its Empire and the literary and philosophical realism of European writers of the same period. As English romantic idealism faded with Napoleon's defeat and English Romanticism "died" with Sir Walter Scott, late-blooming Byronic Romanticism began to impress its influence through war-ravished France and on to an isolated Russia wracked by revolutionary elements of its own.

Byron's influence as individual and author seemed always to have greater impact outside of England than within his prudish homeland. While imitators and admirers of Byron the individual and author could be found throughout Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Turkey, and Russia, little more than harsh criticism for his works and exile for his lifestyle emanated from his sometimes beloved, sometimes criticized native Britain, even after his death. Other nations were left to bear Byron's legacy through the future, a responsibility eagerly attempted by an emerging array of Russian Romanticists in the 1830s through the middle 1840s. Voraciously reading Byron's poetry and prose in the original, in translation, and in loose interpretation, these Russian writers dedicated themselves for over a decade to write as Byron wrote and to live as Byron lived. Although short-lived, this worship of a completely new type of hero made an indelible impression upon a young Russian intellectual just beginning to write: Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev.²

Turgenev's first critically acclaimed work was written a short seven or eight years after the death of the last of the Russian Romantics, Mikhail Lermontov.³ Turgenev grew up reading

¹ With the Emancipation Act of 1861, Czar Alexander II officially freed the serfs (on paper) and ushered in a tumultuous period of redefining Russian society without officially-sanctioned serfdom as the society's structural foundation. According to Victor Ripp, considerable changes did not immediately occur: "Existing social arrangements were pushed about a bit but not significantly altered" (188).

² All spellings of Russian words—persons or places—have followed the individual author's conventions. Except in the case of "c" (transliterated "ch", as in 'Pechorin') and the final -y, -ii, or -ij sound (all transliterated as the "-y" sound as in Arkady) the author's preference has been used. This may mean that the same name, like Sergeevich, may be spelled differently throughout the paper. Without knowing the language I would not attempt to alter these spellings.

³ Lermontov died in a duel in 1841. Turgenev wrote most of the stories published in *Notes of a Hunter* (known also as *A Sportsman's Sketches*) between 1847 and 1850. The collection was not published until 1852. Vissarion Belinsky,

Byron's work in English⁴ and in translation, translating Byron's work himself, and imitating Byron in his writing style and content (Magarshack 33). As Romanticism's appeal waned in a Russian intellectual and cultural environment grown tired of idealism, Turgenev's first critical work, *Notes of a Hunter*, was praised for its realistic attention to the life of the peasant because it did not treat the Russian social and political situation idealistically; it was perceived and lauded as a veiled critique of Russian serfdom (Lowe 1989, 23).

By 1862, when Turgenev published what is now known as his greatest work, *Fathers and Sons*,⁵ Byron and Romanticism had long been left behind as idealistic nonsense; yet *Fathers and Sons'* main character Bazarov, the first literary "nihilist," reveals traces of Turgenev's Byronic appreciation and imitation in his Byronically negating revolutionary spirit. Although Bazarov is not directly Byronic in nature and no critical study of Bazarov's character could possibly be completed by focusing solely on his Byronic traits, Bazarov's nihilistic world view certainly traces its roots to the influence of European and Russian Byronism.

To discuss Bazarov in terms of his Byronic traits and ancestry, several terms should be defined. The phenomenon of "Byronism" alone deserves an entire monograph study. It is not my intention to definitively establish a definitive conception of "Byronism;" rather, it is to identify traces of European and Russian Byronic imitations and influences on Turgenev as author and creator of Bazarov. To avoid encountering serious debate on the specific characteristics of Byronism as a literary movement, "Byronism" as understood in this essay can be characterized by

friend, mentor, and leading critic of the day, called the sketches for *Notes of a Hunter* among the best works of 1847 (Lowe, "Bibliographic Sketch" 22-23; "Turgenev and the Critics" 4-5).

⁴ "Turgenev learned French, German, English, Greek, and Latin as child. In later life he added Polish, Spanish, and Italian to his staggering arsenal of languages" (Lowe 1989, 16).

⁵ *Otsii i deti*, literally *Fathers and Children*. Michael Katz says of the title, "I considered changing the title to the more literal *Fathers and Children*. . . . In spite of the explicit sexism of the accepted English title, *Fathers and Sons*, I decided for reasons of tradition and euphony to retain Ralph Matlaw's choice, but to address the role of women in the novel through the inclusion of several articles in the critical apparatus that deal directly with the subject . . ." (Turgenev 1996, vii). [Ralph Matlaw was the editor of the first Norton Critical Edition of the novel.]

the personal and public lifestyle of the poet and by the darkly heroic characters he created which were modeled on his own philosophical conception of himself and his place in the world.

Russian Romanticism will be considered a later extension or continuation of a particularly Byronic brand of European Romanticism that, in its later incarnations, focused upon the perceived demonic and oriental nature of Byron and his characters, often applied to the contemporary political and social situation in Russia.⁶ Though various specific dates have been applied to this intellectual period, this essay will combine and conflate the dating used by D. S. Mirsky and by Charles A. Moser to between 1820 and 1841.⁷ Most often Russian Romantic authors expressed their philosophies in poetry—often in imitations and loose interpretations of Byron’s oriental tales—but frequently chose also to express their ideals in their manner of living.⁸

Nihilism requires at least a working definition; while a more detailed listing of several characteristics of nihilism will be developed later in the paper, a general conception of the term will be a movement of which Bazarov was the first literary example, the creation of whom became a critical defining moment in Russian revolutionary history. Bazarov’s emergence created a dual conception of nihilism—a *philosophical* movement of negation with various precedents, including Byron himself; and a group of individuals devoted to enacting revolutionary reform through *practicing* nihilism’s philosophical principle of negation.

⁶ See D. S. Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature* for an insider’s approach to Russian Romanticism; see Charles A. Moser, *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature* for an outsider’s approach. Each contributes a unique perspective to the particular place of literary development within Russian political and socio-economic history.

⁷ Mirsky approaches Russian romanticism as a flowering of “The Golden Age of Poetry” in Russian literary history. He dates “The Golden Age” from 1808 with the emergence of Russian poetry from “the placid insipidities of the school of Dmitriev” when it “acquire[d] an independent and original accent in the first mature work of Zhukovsky” to 1837, the death of Pushkin (72). Within “The Golden Age” he refers to romanticism as a movement that “was in open revolt against the rules of French classicism” (71) beginning in 1820 and extending to the end of the Golden Age. Moser tries to avoid specific dating of the movement, but capitulates with emergence from sentimentalism around 1815 and displacement by realism in the early 1840s—generally associated with Lermontov’s death in 1841 (138).

⁸ Take Alexander Pushkin and Mikhail Lermontov as prime examples. Both went through a phase of living like Byron and both died prematurely, perhaps attempting to escape Byronic “ennui” in possibly self-inflicted deaths by dueling. Turgenev himself said of Lermontov that he seemed to live a perpetual death wish in an attempt to escape his “profoundly bored” condition; “[Lermontov] felt stifled in the narrow bounds to which he had been confined by

The structure of this paper follows the train of thought by which its ideas emerged. Upon studying Byron's earlier work, particularly an oriental tale like "The Giaour," Byron's personal letters, and "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," I noticed distinct correlation between Byron's dark, biting, incriminating criticism of societal cant and the nihilism of Turgenev's Bazarov in *Fathers and Sons*. I followed up on this possibility by searching for a direct correlation between the concepts of Byronism and those of Russian nihilism, a search that proved relatively unsuccessful because of the connection of Byronism to Romanticism and nihilism to realism, two literary movements often diametrically opposed to one another.⁹ In this study I traced Turgenev's influences in creating the literary nihilist Bazarov and found the connection that I had sought in Turgenev's inspirational roots in Byron, European Byronism, and Russian Romanticism.

Ivan Turgenev was exposed early to Byron and Byronism in both European and Russian forms. His early upbringing may have encouraged him to find in Byron a critic of society's ills, particularly the malaise of Russian serfdom in the 1820s and 1830s. He was born in 1818 in the Orel, near the Turgenev family estate of Spasskoe. His father, interested in other, more attractive women than his wife, died in 1834, leaving Ivan with his heavy-handed, hen-pecking mother whose cruel treatment of the family's serfs repulsed and repelled him (Moser 1972, 4). Perhaps his mother's greatest contribution to Turgenev was her death in 1850, the result of which was a sizeable inheritance that, had he been a better manager of money, would have left him financially comfortable for the rest of his life (Lowe 1989, 22). Spasskoe became a place for Turgenev to gain inspiration, to write, and to be exiled to, though he preferred to travel and live throughout Europe. When he left Russia at the age of eighteen to attend the University of Berlin after deserting Moscow

destiny" (Levrin, Janko. "Some Notes on Lermontov's Romanticism." *Slavonic and East European Review* 36 (1958): 69-81. 79.)

⁹ In fact, several critics willingly discuss the Romanticism of anti-nihilism, notably Geoffrey Clive in "Romanticism and Anti-Romanticism in the Nihilism of Bazarov" and Charles A. Moser in *Antinihilism in the Russian Novel of the 1860's*. As Moser's title suggests, he presents *Fathers and Sons* as an anti nihilistic novel, despite Turgenev's insistence, in a

University and completing his undergraduate studies at St. Petersburg University, it was the last time Turgenev was to remain in his native Russia for eighteen years at a stretch (Moser 1972, 5).

Even before his tenure as a student in Berlin, Turgenev had been writing. His earliest writing illustrates the influence Byron had on the adolescent Turgenev. Transferred to the University of St. Petersburg to be nearer his brother Nicholas (and to find greater intellectual challenges than at Moscow University), Turgenev brought with him “a three-act poetic play—*Steno*—‘a fantastic drama in pentameters, in which,’ he explains in his reminiscences¹⁰, ‘I attempted with puerile clumsiness an imitation of Byron’s *Manfred*,’ ” the action of which occurred in Italy: in the Coliseum, in a mountain cabin, in a Gothic church, and in the cell of a pious monk. By 1837, at the age of 19, Turgenev wrote Alexander Nikitenko¹¹ that he had already written over a hundred poems, begun a long narrative poem, and planned another long poem. He wrote also that he had translated significant portions of *King Lear*, the first two acts of *Othello*, and *Manfred* (Magarshack 36-8). While in Berlin, Turgenev fell under the influence of German post-romantics and Russian Romantics—followers of Goethe, Schiller, and Schlegel—including the anarchist Bakunin, the Romantic Lermontov, and the not-yet-famous Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. Magarshack describes Turgenev during this period as “an admirer of the Russian ‘pseudo-sublime school’ of writers and an imitator of Byron” (33). Turgenev also associated with and befriended several Russian literary critics, namely Peter Pletnyov, who discerned a glimmer of talent in the juvenile *Steno* (38) and Vissarion Belinsky,¹² with whom Turgenev intensely discussed philosophical principles and ideals

letter to K. K. Sluchevsky (April 14/26, 1862), that Bazarov was a nihilist revolutionary: “. . . if he is called a ‘nihilist’ that word must be read as ‘revolutionary’ ” (Lowe 1983, 211).

¹⁰ Magarshack’s earlier translation (1958) of these words can be found in Ivan Turgenev, *Literary Reminiscences and Autobiographical Fragments*: “. . . a fantastic drama in iambic pentameter under the title of *Steno*. . . in which with childish incompetence I was slavishly imitating Byron’s *Manfred*” (105). In general throughout this paper I have used the latest translation available.

¹¹ Alexander Nikitenko was a sanctioned censor with whom Turgenev probably considered it worthwhile to remain in correspondence and good graces; in 1847 Nikitenko had censored the ending to Grigorovich’s *Anton the Unfortunate* and rewrote a new one, which remains the version in print to this day (Moser 1989, 208).

¹² Peter Pletnyov (1792-1865), poet, friend and literary agent of Pushkin, and, after Pushkin’s death, editor of the magazine *Sovremennik* (*The Contemporary*) (Mirsky 100). Vissarion Belinsky (1811-48), literary critic and journalist,

before Belinsky died of tuberculosis in 1848¹³ (Moser 1972, 7). These and later friendships began to haunt him in the years after writing *Fathers and Sons* and *Smoke*, a time during which some of those same critics and friends who had earlier embraced him turned hostile toward him for his ambivalent attitudes toward Bazarov and nihilism.

Turgenev never admitted to consciously attempting a Byronic lifestyle, unlike Pushkin and Lermontov who readily admitted their Byronic influences. His lifestyle, however, sometimes reflects a Byronic romantic whimsy. His mother seems to have ordered one of her young chambermaids to introduce her fifteen year old son to his own sexuality, his first introduction to sexual love. This was his first of several mistresses, among whom could be counted a peasant-girl whom he impregnated and Bakunin and Tolstoy's sisters (though not at the same time). He loved only one woman—the not so beautiful but remarkably talented Pauline Viardot, opera prima donna and wife to the much older French writer Louis Viardot—whom he met in St. Petersburg in 1843 when Pauline was twenty-one (Lowe 19). They never consummated their love,¹⁴ but he lived near the Viardot family off and on for the rest of his life, almost like a near-platonic version of Byron's *cavalier servante*. His love for Pauline contrasted considerably with his early disregard for his daughter—only later did he take an interest in Paulinette when he returned to Russia in 1850; Pauline offered to raise her, so he sent her to Pauline in Paris late in 1850 (Lowe 22). Turgenev's frustrated love life found literary expression in concentrating considerable characterization to the mysteries of female-male relationships in his novels and short stories. These sometimes

described by Mirsky as “the most genuine, the most thoroughgoing, the most consistent of literary revolutionaries (166).

¹³ These discussions were indeed intense. Moser writes, “Turgenev later recalled that when he once interrupted a conversation of theirs to wonder about dinner, Belinsky remonstrated him quite seriously, ‘We haven't yet decided the question of God's existence, and you want to eat!’ ” (1972, 7).

¹⁴ While no evidence has been found to definitively prove that they did have sexual relations, hints in certain correspondence suggest that they may have had the opportunity to consummate their love several times in 1849 and 1850—an opportunity which Lowe suggests they may well have seized (1989, 21).

meaningful, sometimes frivolous liaisons and their consequences provide evidence in the search for similarities between Turgenev and Byron.

Another theme in Turgenev's life that echoes Byron's is his self-imposed exile from his homeland, Russia. Turgenev chose to spend as much or more time traveling outside of Russia as time living and writing in Russia. Beginning with his graduate studies in Berlin, Turgenev traveled and lived in Germany, France, and England, interspersing sojourns to Russia for long and short periods. Very often his living environment followed the Viardot's moves throughout Europe. While his early travels outside of Russia were grounded in a desire to learn more of European culture (in the Slavophile versus Westernizing debate, Turgenev always remained firmly in the Westernizing camp¹⁵), his later transplantation occurred as a result of negative popular and critical reaction to *Fathers and Sons*. He ceased all correspondence and communication with contemporary critics who had lambasted his ambivalent response to the nihilistic character Bazarov. Following the Viardot family and living with and near his daughter Paulinette, Turgenev found comfort away from Russia, unappreciated at home and warmly accepted in Europe; his works were also highly regarded in translation in France and Germany, and later in England and America (Lowe 29-31). Only in the late 1870s did Turgenev begin to feel welcome in his homeland, though he had always dearly loved Russia and written lovingly of the Russian countryside. It was only at this time that Turgenev reconciled with many critics and writers who had earlier turned on him, namely Tolstoy (Lowe, 31-2). Turgenev died outside of his homeland Russia, but his body was returned and buried in Volkovo cemetery in St. Petersburg in 1883—a Russian literary hero and legend (Magarshack 313).

Russian literature of the nineteenth century seemed always to have extraordinarily deep ties to the social, economic, and political milieu, and Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* was no exception. The

harshest critics of the novel interpreted its characters (Bazarov and Arkady on one hand, Pavel and Nikolai Petrovich on the other) as representatives of specific strata or classes in Russia of the 1850s and 1860s. Fully understanding the character of Bazarov requires placing the novel in its social and political context. Russia's intelligentsia was split between Slavophiles and Westernizers, both of whom believed in enacting sweeping reforms to eliminate the nation's serfdom-based economy and social structure. Since Turgenev allied himself firmly with the Westernizing camp, he and others like him believed that enacting Western democratic reforms would relieve the burden of serfdom. Slavophiles, on the other hand, felt Alexander II had already Westernized the country too much to little avail, calling him the "arch-villain of Russian history"—since the nation remained locked in the social and economic trappings and assumptions of a serfdom-based agrarian society—and that reform needed to take a more Russian track (Lowe 1989, 18). Turgenev had hinted at the theme of emancipating the serfs early in his career with *A Hunter's Notes*, collected and first published as a complete set of peasant sketches in 1852. Turgenev congratulated himself on contributing to the emancipation, a claim that Moser suggests can be substantiated: "The book made a solid political point without ceasing to be art" (1972, 9). The Emancipation Act became law in the spring of 1861, just before Turgenev published *Fathers and Sons* in February 1862. Set in 1859, just two years before the Emancipation Act was enacted, the novel opens to "a world on the brink of extreme change" and presents a view of the confusion and breakdown of social order that these years brought to the Russian countryside (Ripp 191).

Bazarov found his immediate Russian roots in the young revolutionaries of the day, those members of the intelligentsia who had embraced and popularized a concept of negation—particularly Slavophilic in nature, expressing a need to negate the prevailing Westernizing trend of Alexander II's reforms—which emerged as early anarchism and nihilism. These young

¹⁵ Slavophiles wished for a uniquely Russian reform movement; Westernizers preferred applying democratizing reforms

revolutionaries, second generation followers of such leaders as the anarchist Bakunin (whom Turgenev had befriended in Berlin and whose amorous sister he had unfeelingly rejected¹⁶), sometimes complained at Turgenev's depiction of their kind in Bazarov, finding the members of the dominant ruling class—Pavel and Nicholas—much more sympathetically portrayed than the tragic and meaningless figure of Bazarov.¹⁷ These same revolutionaries, like Dmitry Pisarev, interpreted Bazarov as “a disease of our time” that “must be endured to the end, no matter what palliatives and amputations are employed. . . you will not be able to put a stop to it; it is just the same as cholera” (189). Bazarov also became part of the vehicle by which Turgenev expressed a concept that had not yet been expressed in Russian literature, that of the gap between the conservative reforming of the fathers and the radical revolutionizing of the children (sons).¹⁸

While Bazarov's immediate Russian inspirations are known, Bazarov also owes a debt of gratitude to Byron, Byronism, and Russian Romanticism. As early as 1819, at the age of eleven, Turgenev had read Byron's *Childe Harold*, *The Bride of Abydos*, and *Mazeppa* in English (he was master

of the West to the social problems in Russia.

¹⁶ As mentioned previously, Turgenev's affairs with women never quite turned out right. Women seemed to fall for him, but he seemed never to be satisfied with what he had—except for Paulina Viardot, whom he never really had at all. Turgenev experienced the same problems with Tolstoy's sister. Such “problems” made continued relationships with these brothers difficult.

¹⁷ This became the crux of criticism of the novel. Conservative critics rebuked Turgenev for creating and sympathizing with such an evil character as Bazarov and blamed him for the destruction caused by the nihilists in St. Petersburg's mysterious fires of June 1862: the first acquaintance Turgenev met in St. Petersburg on that day upbraided him, “Look, what your nihilists are doing! They are setting Petersburg on fire” (Magarshack 219). On the other hand, members of the hardcore revolutionaries criticized Turgenev for making Bazarov such a weak character and for sympathizing with the predominant ruling class characters in the novel. Turgenev could not win for trying; as Magarshack puts it,

Turgenev was appalled: he noticed a coldness amounting almost to indignation in many people he liked and with whose views he sympathised, and he received congratulations and almost kisses from people whom he regarded as political enemies. He was receiving letters from all over Russia, some of his correspondents accusing him of being a die-hard reactionary and telling him that they were burning his photographs ‘with a contemptuous laugh,’ and others reproaching him for kowtowing to the ‘nihilists’ and ‘groveling at the feet of Bazarov’” (219).

In a letter to poet and critic Sluchevsky, Turgenev wrote how he felt the novel should be interpreted, “My whole novel is directed against the nobility as the foremost class of Russian society” (Turgenev, Ivan. “To K. K. Sluchevsky.” 14/26 April 1862. In *Turgenev Letters* Vol. 2.) This incredible backlash forced Turgenev to continually defend his novel and drove him away from Russia for many years.

¹⁸ The breadth of this gap can be found in the opposing essays of Pisarev (“Bazarov”) and Herzen (“Bazarov Again”). Pisarev represents the younger “sons,” Herzen the older “fathers.”

of many languages¹⁹). Most Russian writers viewed Byron's work in one of two ways: late sentimentalists admired his "vivid" and "tender" sensitivity; later Romantics (many of whom wrote in Karamzin's *Vestnik Evropy*²⁰) emphasized their hero's "bleak colouring" and "rebellious passions" (Diakonova and Vacuro 144-5). In Turgenev's adolescence and early adulthood Byron's struggles and support for national and regional independence movements influenced Decembrists and other revolutionaries in the 1820s. One such revolutionary was Alexander Pushkin, most famous of the Russian Romantic poets, who was exiled to his mother's estate as a result of his involvement in and support of the 1825 uprising (Moser 1989, 170). Pushkin was Turgenev's early idol while Turgenev studied at the University of St. Petersburg; he was even able to meet Pushkin twice while a student (Lowe 16). Pushkin's impact on Russian Romanticism cannot be minimized, particularly as it relates to Mikhail Lermontov, the last famous Russian Romantic writer. Both Pushkin and Lermontov exerted considerable influence on Turgenev. Turgenev certainly read Pushkin's powerful poetry (considered by many Russian critics, even today, to exhibit the ultimate mastery of Russian poetic language), mostly imitations and interpretations of Byron's oriental tales,²¹ and, since Pushkin was his idol for a time, Turgenev would also have been intimately familiar with Pushkin's four year period of living and writing as Byron lived and wrote, from 1820 to 1824 (Diakonova and Vacuro 148). Lermontov wrote his most famous work, a novel entitled *A Hero for Our Time*, in 1841. This same time period in Turgenev's life marked his emerging but struggling writing career; during the decade of the 1840s he wrote many of the sketches for *A Hunter's Notes*. During this time

¹⁹cf. note 4

²⁰ *Herald of Europe*. Founded in 1801 by Russian sentimentalist Nikolay Karamzin after the death of Emperor Paul I and the beginnings of reforms under Alexander I. The journal became the finest of the day, lasting long enough to publish fifty of Turgenev's last poems, part of a collection entitled *Poems in Prose*. During the Romantic period (1815-1841) it published many romantic poems (Moser 1989, 97, 101, 336).

²¹ Pushkin's specifically Byronic (also called southern) poems were "The Prisoner of the Caucasus" (1822), "The Fountain of Bakhchisarai" (1824), "The Robber Brothers" (1825), and "The Gypsies" (1827). They were modeled after Byron's "The Gaiour" (1813), "The Bride of Abydos" (1813), "The Corsair" (1814), "Lara" (1814), "Parisina" (1816), "The Prisoner of Chillon" (1816), and "Mazeppa" (1818). Pushkin's later poetry was not directly inspired by specific works, but was Byronic nevertheless (Brown vol. 3 27).

Turgenev developed a talent for depicting peasants as typically human, not property, and for painting psychologically realistic pictures of these characters with his pen. The famous Russian critic and Turgenev's close friend Belinsky recognized Turgenev's talents and encouraged him to continue writing these realistic sketches (Moser 1972, 9). It would be difficult to imagine Turgenev's developing sense of realistic psychological detail not having been inspired in part by Lermontov's peculiarly Russian portrayal of Pechorin in *A Hero of Our Time* in which the author carefully depicts Pechorin's somewhat Byronically evil motives (Brown vol. 4 240). Furthermore, Bazarov owes a significant debt of gratitude to Pechorin, who may well be the prototype of the early nihilist.²² It is important to note that Turgenev's Byronic influence emerges from Russian Romantic *interpretations* of Byron and Byronism than from the author himself. Bazarov the nihilist finds his roots in the particularly Russian brand of Byronic Romanticism known for its dark powers of negation and contradiction and the corresponding politics of the revolutionary nineteenth century.²³

The philosophical and ideological roots of Bazarov's nihilism can be found in the emerging concepts of political anarchy propounded by Bakunin, an early friend of Turgenev. They can also be found in the Byronic philosophy of negating social and political cant such as found in the narrator's critical position in *Don Juan*. Anarchy was a movement whose growth and spread could be found throughout Russia in the form of revolutionaries bent upon radically reforming Russian society. This underground revolution was felt during the reactionary period of 1848 and following

²² Pechorin writes in his journal of 11 May, "I have an inborn urge to contradict; my whole life has been a mere chain of sad and futile opposition to the dictates of either heart or reason." On 29 May he writes, "I mock at everything under the sun, emotions in particular." Later in the chapter entitled "The Fatalist," Pechorin states, "I prefer to doubt everything; such a disposition does not preclude a resolute character; on the contrary, as far as I am concerned, I always advance more boldly when I do not know what is awaiting me" (Lermontov, 69, 91, 142). This is darker Byronism taken to extremes, when Romantic idealism lingers no longer and is replaced by the power of negation.

²³ Alexander Herzen interprets Pisarev's conception of the origins of Bazarov as follows: "the Onegin and the Pechorins begat the Rudins and the Bel'tovs. The Rudins and the Bel'tovs begat Bazarov" (220). Onegin is the main character of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* (1830), Pechorin that of Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* (1841), Rudin that of Turgenev's *Rudin* (1856), and Bel'tov that of Herzen's *Whose Fault?* (1846-7).

years: in reaction to European revolutionary turmoil Nicholas I clamped down harshly on all freedom of expression, persecuting such emerging writers as Dostoevsky, Dahl, and Turgenev in a period known as the “gloomy seven years” from 1848 to 1855, the year that Nicholas I died and was succeeded by the more reform-minded moderate Alexander II (Moser 1989, 192-3). The reforms required of the young revolutionaries, more sweeping than those intended by the ruling czar, required drastic actions—actions inspired by Bakunin the anarchist and Byron the freedom-fighting revolutionary among others. These revolutionaries interpreted the actions and theories of such men as encouraging a complete overthrow of all social and political structures to allow regeneration from the ground up, *ex nihilo*. Turgenev belonged to an older generation which encouraged sweeping reforms in moderation; he abhorred revolutionary violence, believing Russia should adopt Western ways and democratize the Russian monarchy (Clive 216). Yet Turgenev himself called Bazarov a nihilist (Turgenev 17) because he wanted to create a type that accurately and objectively reflected the young revolutionaries of the day. But Bazarov cannot escape the Byronic influence under which his creator wrote; a close textual reading of the emerging and evolving character of Bazarov provides a familiar contradiction of “nihilistic” Byronism and “idealistic” Byronism.

Bazarov is the “archetypal nihilist” in the sense that Turgenev created him as the first literary nihilist. Geoffrey Clive, in an article entitled “Romanticism and Anti-Romanticism in the Nihilism of Bazarov,” provides a useful, albeit over-simplified, characterization of nihilism as a “specific intellectual-cultural movement.” To discuss the Byronic character of Bazarov’s specific brand of nihilism, Clive’s characterization will provide a useful standard.

Clive provided the following classification of nihilism.

- a) Nihilism is belief in Nothing on instinct.
- b) Belief in Nothing predicated on the impossibility to advance sufficient or necessary reasons for believing in anything.
- c) No sense of values presumably entailed by the proposition that God is dead.

- d) No sense of values arising from the feeling that God is dead.
- e) No sense of moral values if moral values can only be relative or contextual. If everything is permitted, then everything becomes permissible.
- f) No attempted consistency in moral behavior. If truth be the daughter of time, then unpredictability becomes normative.
- g) A sweeping contempt for public opinion and the sources of authority, usually though not necessarily accompanied by conduct intended to shock society. The value judgment that trouble-makers are preferable to organization men.
- h) The deliberate exploration and/or practice of evil.
- i) Indifference to what moves most people most of the time.
- j) Ennui leading to despair and spiritual apathy. As Professor Henry Aiken has formulated the matter: The question confronting us is not what he should do, but whether it is worth doing anything at all.
- k) Disloyal opposition to all 'causes' as representing frauds.
- l) The practice of destruction for its own sake.
- m) The advocacy of destruction for the sake of a totally transformed society in the remote performance.
- n) The conviction on the part of the nihilist that he is God (221-222).

The fact that Bazarov does not conform to the extremes of nihilistic philosophy is precisely the point; Turgenev created the character, though early in the novel prepared to tear down so that others may rebuild (Turgenev 1996, 38), more as a Romantic rebel than as a nihilistic revolutionary like those who burned St. Petersburg (Brumfield 496-7).

Bazarov clearly wishes to sweep away the assumptions and non-scientifically proven "truths" of social, political, emotional, and spiritual life in Russia. He begins by rejecting all common assumptions about serfdom, the foundation of Russian social hierarchy, and its reform, including all of its social and economic ramifications. Nikolai Petrovich, Arkady's father and Bazarov's host throughout the first third of the novel, has developed an enlightened theory of serfdom: he calls his estate of five thousand acres with two hundred serfs a "farm"²⁴ (3), has "in effect" freed the serfs who were once house servants and provided them with duties that carry no responsibilities, and has even hires laborers to work the land and a townsman as a steward, paying the steward two hundred fifty rubles each year and maintaining that the former steward, Peter, is

free²⁵ (8-9). With these “reformed” attitudes, Nikolai and his brother Pavel still adhere to the traditional distinctions between aristocracy and working class, treating the “servants” and laborers with the respect due a member of a much lower class—the class lines remain along with the corresponding social and political attitudes. Thus Pavel and Nikolai still see themselves as aristocrats among peasants, describing the hired steward derogatorily as “a tall, thin man with a sugary, consumptive voice and deceitful eyes” who “tried to depict peasants as drunkards and slaves.” Pavel leaves the conversation with the steward early, seemingly unable to remain in the same room with one of such low birth; Nikolai continues the conversation but seems to understand that the new system of labor is doomed to failure without massive injections of money—an aristocratic assumption (26-27). Neither Pavel nor Nikolai converse with any servant on any other topic except the running of the estate. Bazarov later confronts Pavel and Nikolai about their attitudes toward the peasants, which leads to the following confrontational argument with Pavel:

“Ask any of your [Pavel and Nikolai’s] peasants which of us—you or me—he recognizes as his fellow countryman. You don’t even know how to talk to them.”

“While you speak to them and despise them at the same time.”

“So what, if they deserve to be despised?²⁶ You condemn my course, but whoever said it was accidental, that it wasn’t occasioned by that same national spirit in whose name you protest?” (39)

Bazarov immediately discards the traditional assumptions about social placement in society, treating peasants and aristocrats in the same way; with peasants Bazarov converses comfortably but disdainfully: “[H]e had a special flair for inspiring trust in members of the lower class, although he never indulged them and treated them in an offhanded manner” (15). This was precisely his

²⁴ All references to the novel are from Michael Katz’s 1996 translation in the Norton Critical Edition. All citations are listed as “Turgenev 1996” to indicate Katz’s recent translation. See the Preface to the novel (vii-viii) for more information about this specific translation.

²⁵ “Il est libre, en effet” (9). Nikolai uses French so that the servants will not understand him; French was the “official” language of aristocracy and government, not Russian.

²⁶ The significance of this statement cannot be underestimated in understanding Bazarov’s peculiar brand of nihilism. Bazarov negates and tears down society because society deserves it, not because it is the conventional “thing to do.” Bazarov’s harshest criticism of Pavel is his outward and inward adherence to convention.

manner with almost every other character in the novel. Bazarov considered every human an equal in purely scientific terms—comparing all humans to frogs, stating, “since you and I are just like frogs, except that we walk on two legs, I’ll find out what’s going on inside us as well”—which was his only means of characterizing people (15). Later, when he and Arkady discuss the peasants, Arkady typifies the sentiments of contemporary reformers by saying, “Russia will attain perfection when the poorest peasant has a house like that [‘one that’s so fine and white’] and each one of us should help bring that about.” Bazarov negates Arkady’s sentiments, the social order of Russia’s serf-based society, and the efforts of reform by responding, “I’ve conceived a hatred for the poorest peasant—Philip or Sidor—those for whom I’m supposed to jump out of my skin and who won’t even thank me for it . . . Besides, what the hell do I need his thanks for? So, he’ll be living in a fine white hut while I’m pushing up Burdock; well, then what?” (99) Bazarov’s attitude toward Russia’s serf-based society—disregard for the social order and outright hatred for the deserving individuals—negates both the society’s foundation upon serfdom and attempts at its reform. After Bazarov’s indictment, all that remains is the character of Bazarov himself and his strong negative personal feelings for other individuals, peasants and aristocrats (like Pavel, whom he calls an “idiot”) alike.

Bazarov also rejects the authority of Russian political leadership as “spoiled hegemony,” not “enlightened leadership.” The narrator, swayed for a moment by Bazarov’s thinking, describes a certain distant relative of the brothers Petrovich, Matve Ilich, a governmental arbiter and judge whom Arkady and Bazarov travel to ^{***27} to meet. The description could as easily have been in the voice of Bazarov as in that of the narrator.²⁸ Matve Ilich is dispatched to investigate a squabble in

²⁷ In the oppressive literary culture of Russia in the middle and late nineteenth century it became customary to provide blanks for locations and persons to avoid censorship and persecution. Thus, Pavel’s lover’s name is “Princess R.” and the town in which Arkady and Bazarov meet Matve Ilich is named “***.”

²⁸ Turgenev has been criticized most for his ambivalent attitude toward Bazarov. Turgenev writes in “Apropos of *Fathers and Sons*” that “I was involuntarily attracted to him [Bazarov]” (162n). In the same essay he claims, “I share almost all of Bazarov’s convictions with the exception of those on art” (163). When I state that the narrator seems to

which the local governor, “both a progressive and a despot,” is involved. Matve Ilich is not painted sympathetically: he wears ostentatious and somewhat undistinguished and undeserved medals on his chest, is considered a progressive but embodies such egotism that he does not “resemble the majority of such people,” is usually made a fool of, “follow[s] the development of contemporary literature . . . in the same way a grown man who meets a line of young boys in the street will sometimes fall behind it,” and, most damning for narrator and Bazarov alike, treats his subordinates with disdain and disrespect because of their social position, not because they deserve it²⁹ (46-7). Unable to remain with such a character long, Bazarov and Arkady seek the company of a young lady they met at one of the governor’s balls. Bazarov himself never provides a specific indictment of Russian politics; to do so directly would have been dangerous for Turgenev. In the narrator’s description we receive Bazarov’s criticism—a government official whose every action emanates not from nihilistic-based self-reliance (99), but out of obedience to political and societal norms (16-7, 55-6). Earlier, when describing one of the local landowning aristocrats, Bazarov remarks to Pavel, “He’s trash, a lousy little aristocrat” (37), a description which Bazarov later allows to be known applies, as far as he is concerned, to all members of the aristocracy. His disdain for those who perpetuate the status quo, such as the political and social leaders, cannot be overlooked.

Bazarov also rejects emotions which are not common to the base drives of nature, including all assumptions and contrivances surrounding the concept of courtly or romantic love. Upon seeing Anna Odintsova at the governor’s ball, Arkady seems immediately attracted and enamored of her graces. Bazarov, on the other hand, categorizes her scientifically; as the two go to meet her, Bazarov says, “Let’s see what species of Mammalia this person belongs to” (58). While with the lady, Bazarov limited his discussion to “medicine, homeopathy, and botany” (61). Later, after

speaking in the voice of Bazarov, I mean that the author as narrator, from time to time, *does* speak in the voice of Bazarov, particularly when the narrator expresses a particular opinion about some aspect of Russian society. Most such expressions are critical in the novel.

speaking with the lady, Bazarov comments, “ ‘She’s been through many changes, my dear boy; she’s tasted the common bread What a delectable body!’ continued Bazarov. ‘Perfect for the dissecting table!’ ” (61). While Bazarov may not be completely able to control his emotions with the duchess,³⁰ he continues to believe in the importance of debunking the concept of romantic love, particularly after Odintsova rejected him once he had declared his love for her. After leaving the duchess’ estate, Bazarov provides Arkady clear insight into his behavior with Anna Odintsova and explains why he rejects concepts of romantic love.

“Since you don’t quite understand me, let me inform you of the following: in my opinion, it’s better to break rocks on a roadway than to let a woman gain control of even the tip of one’s little finger. That’s all . . .” Bazarov almost uttered his favorite word *romanticism*, but restrained himself and said, “*nonsense*.” You won’t believe me now, but let me say this: you and I fell into the society of women and found it very pleasant; forsaking society of that sort is just like splashing yourself with cold water on a hot day . . .” (85)

Later Bazarov further explains his rejection of emotions in general, referring again to the “beating” he and Arkady took with the duchess:

“Hey! Well, Arkady Nikolaevich, I see you understand love like all our modern young men: ‘Here, chick, chick! Here, chick, chick!’ But as soon as the chick starts to approach, you run like hell! I’m not like that. . . . Look! Here’s a heroic ant dragging away a half-dead fly. Go on, brother, pull! Don’t pay any attention to her resistance; take advantage of the fact that as an animal you have the right not to feel any compassion, unlike us, self-destructive creatures that we are” (98).

Bazarov’s outcry reminds us of his constant characterization of humans in animal terms, implying that it is emotions (“compassion”) that differentiate humans from animals and that those very emotions are the means by which humans destroy themselves.

As for a nihilistic negation of the spiritual realm of life, little direct mention of the religious is made in the novel. Father Aleksai alone represents the Church in the novel, a man about whom Bazarov says only, “I’m prepared to sit down at table with any man” (102). It is Bazarov’s mother’s

²⁹ cf. note 26

description, provided by the narrator, which may indicate either Bazarov's or the nihilist narrator's opinion of religion.³¹ The narrator describes Arina Vlassevna's incredibly superstitious nature intertwined with her devoutly religious fervor; she maintained strict fasts for religious purposes even though she loved to eat; she did not eat watermelon because it reminded her of John the Baptist's head; she was "religious and emotional." These intertwined descriptions of religious devotion and emotional superstition lead up to her social beliefs: "She understood that there were some people on earth who were supposed to give orders and other, simple folk who were supposed to take orders, so she showed no aversion to servility or prostrations; but she always treated subordinates politely and kindly, never let a beggar go away empty-handed, and never condemned anyone outright, although she was partial to a little gossip from time to time" (93). The narrator's connection of religion and superstition with emotion and slavish adherence to established social order provides a clear picture of Bazarov's opinion of religion—a means of suppressing the individual's ability to be completely self-reliant and true to oneself.³² For Bazarov, there is only the natural: "I look at heaven only when I feel like sneezing" (101).

These four areas of negation—socio-economic, political, emotional, and spiritual—provide ample evidence for Bazarov's radical nihilism in the cultural-intellectual sense, but there is more to that character than a simple nihilistic motive for existence. It is in Bazarov's relationship to Odintsova that we find a contradictory vein running through the character—that of the romantic.³³ Remarkably for a man who would rather crush stones than be under the control or influence of a

³⁰ This becomes Bazarov's most frightening realization in the novel and the clearest expression of his contradictory nature—he falls in love despite continually and relentlessly heaping ridicule upon all "romanticism."

³¹ cf. note 28

³² Self-reliance as Bazarov phrases it is ultimate truth to one's own "sensations" or instincts. Bazarov explains to Arkady, "I advocate a negative point of view—as a result of my sensations. I find it pleasant to negate, my brain is so organized—and that's that! Why do I like chemistry? Why do you like apples? It's all the same thing" (99). One's slavish obedience to social norms seems to block one's ability to act on one's physical and mental instincts. Note that Bazarov does not allow for emotion to be instinctive—he refers to base drives like hunger and pleasure.

³³ G. S. Pahamov in *Earthbound Flight: Romanticism in Turgenev* (Rockville, MD: Victor Kamkin, 1986) devotes two chapters to romantic love and its expression in Turgenev. The book provides insight into Turgenev's conception of romanticism which differs somewhat from twentieth century conceptions.

woman, a man who calls a freethinking woman an “ugly monster” (58), Bazarov falls deeply in love with Anna Odintsova. Despite his protestations to the contrary and his rationalizations afterward, Bazarov *is* capable of feeling deep emotions, particularly love.

Bazarov was a great lover of women and feminine beauty, but love in the ideal sense, or, as he expressed it, the romantic sense, he called rubbish or unforgivable stupidity; he considered chivalrous feelings somewhat akin to deformity or disease. . . [Yet] [h]is blood caught fire as soon as he thought about her; he could've easily coped with blood, but something else had taken root in him that he'd never be able to admit, something he'd always mocked, something that irritated his pride. (71)

Later, Bazarov reveals that “something”: “Then you should know that I love you, stupidly, madly . . . now see what you've extracted' ” (80). It is here that Bazarov the romantic reveals himself—though only for a brief moment—until he finds that Odintsova does not return that love. He then reverts to his former nihilistic self, though not without a corresponding decline in spirit and increase in boredom, as if the experience of falling in love and being rejected deprived him of some aspect of his drastic self-reliance and confidence.

It is in closely reading the character of Bazarov that direct correlation between the Romantic or Byronic hero and Bazarov as hero can be drawn. In a review of Vronchenko's translation of *Faust* in *Otechestvennye zapiski* (1845, No. 2),³⁴ Turgenev wrote the following characterization of the Romantic hero.

He becomes the center of the surrounding world; he . . . does not submit to anything, he forces everything to submit to himself; he lives by the heart, but by his own, solitary heart—not another's—even in love, about which he dreams so much; he is a romantic, and romanticism is nothing more than the apotheosis of personality. He is willing to talk about society, about social questions, about science; but society, like science, exists for him—not he for them (I, 220).

Understanding this as Turgenev's genuine conception of the romantic hero, written nearly twenty years earlier than the current novel, two specific statements can be made about this characterization as relate to this paper. First, this is not an inaccurate examination of the Byronic hero, whether

³⁴ I could not find this in any other translation, so provide this as repeated in Brumfield 499.

conceived of the author's life or the lives of the author's literary creations. Second, this is not an inaccurate picture of Bazarov in *Fathers and Sons*. According to Willaim C. Brumfield in "Bazarov and Rjazanov: The Romantic Archetype in Russian Nihilism,"

Much in this description [quoted passage above] could well be applied to Bazarov: the last sentence is reminiscent of his outburst against concern for the peasants' wellbeing in the face of his own inevitable death, while the phrase "apotheosis of personality" identifies one of the dominant motifs in Bazarov's character. In chapter X Pavel Petrovich remarks Bazarov's "almost Satanic pride," while Arkady, in chapter XIX, notices "the fathomless depths of Bazarov's conceit," and asks him whether he considers himself a god. Whatever the difficulties in establishing a typology for *homo romanticus*, the passage quoted above suggests that in his commentary on *Faust*, Turgenev presented an interpretation of the Romantic hero which reached its culmination in the creation of Bazarov (499).

We find in Bazarov this egocentrism, this apotheosis, and this existence of society for the hero: Pavel says of Bazarov and the nihilists, "First there's the almost Satanic pride, then ridicule" (41) while Bazarov says of himself, "As for the age—why should I depend on it? Let it rather depend on me" (26). In a letter to M. N. Katkov, Turgenev responds to criticism made by Katkov that Bazarov represented an apotheosis of *The Contemporary*, a revolutionary literary journal by saying, "I hope that . . . the figure of Bazarov will become comprehensible to you and won't give you the impression of apotheosis" (Lowe 1983 I, 199). Regardless of whether Turgenev intended for Bazarov to undergo an apotheosis of personality, his character throughout the first half of the novel suggests a strong egotism that borders becoming god-like, and Turgenev certainly seemed to have this characterization of the romantic hero in mind when creating Bazarov. These characteristics of Bazarov provide a portrait of a hero with remarkably Byronic qualities.

Even stronger evidence of a direct correlation between Byronic romanticism and *Fathers and Sons*—of "viewing Bazarov's nihilism as one component of a Romantic image"—can be found in preparatory remarks for the novel *Virgin Soil* (Nov, 1877):

He writes that there are "Romantics of Realism," who "long for the real and strive toward it as former Romantics did toward the 'ideal,' " who seek in this reality "something grand and significant" (Brumfield 498).

Clive rephrases the argument, suggesting that many of Bazarov's "nihilistic" thoughts are a part of a "Romantic-Idealistic revolt against Romantic Idealism in the name of Realism" (222-3). This opens the door to the possibility that Bazarov is not a revolutionary leader at heart, but a free spirit, *Ein Einzeleager*, whose great strength is his ability to criticize himself; his very "antipathy toward Romanticism gives him away" as a Romantic (224-5). Clive goes so far as to identify specific scenes and areas of the novel in which Bazarov's direct Romantic nature appears. First, he claims that Bazarov's relationship with Arcady reveals his Romantic sensibility, since they pour out their hearts to one another (Bazarov taking the lead in un-Aristotelian fashion), they visit one another's families together, they fall in love at the same time at the same place, and they become virtually inseparable despite their "sweet quarrels." Second, he identifies Bazarov's chronic susceptibility to boredom and restlessness as a Romantic characteristic. Third, he defines as a Romantic characteristic the curse and protection of a hero's "awareness of being aware," identifying Bazarov's personality as an example. Fourth, Bazarov demonstrates a Byronic hatred of cant (225-7). While these Romantic characteristics do appear in the character of Bazarov, reading the novel and the character as a directly Romantic work limits the author's ability to portray his beloved Russia and its characters, perhaps the strongest characteristic of this novel.

Perhaps the best way to read the Byronic influence upon Bazarov is, as Brostram puts it, to consider Turgenev as an heir to Romantic pessimism or *Welschmerz*—"ironic pessimism and despair which could find no relief in the momentary ecstasies of transcendence"—not really an example of nihilistic "absolute pessimism" but of metaphysical doubt and uncertainty (81-2). Yet even this conception of Bazarov leaves something to be desired, for it seems to place the character within a framework in which there is little room for change or development. Some critics have argued that the strongest characteristic of *Fathers and Sons* is that it is the only novel Turgenev wrote which contains a character who undergoes realistic development. Without a doubt, the strong-willed

negating nihilist of the first chapters seems far removed from the bored, restless, resigned son of the last chapters before his death. To explain this development with a Romantic twist, John Mersereau, Jr. in “Don Quixote—Bazarov—Hamlet” relates Bazarov’s evolution to an essay entitled “Hamlet and Don Quixote” in which Turgenev wrote in 1860, “It seemed to us that all people to a greater or lesser degree belong to one of these two types, that almost every one of us resembles either Don Quixote or Hamlet.”³⁵ Mersereau summarizes the essay’s argument with, “These two become, therefore, archetypes, on the one hand, for enthusiastic but naive dynamism with action and, on the other hand, for analytical skepticism leading to alienation and inactivity” (347-8). Inasmuch as Don Quixote and Hamlet contain within them seeds of the Romantic hero,³⁶ a brief discussion of Bazarov in these terms might shed light on Bazarov’s Byronic roots. Mersereau describes Bazarov at the beginning of the novel “ ‘tilting at windmills’ in the guise of Nikolai Petrovich and his effete brother, Pavel” (349). This explains the considerable hostility between Bazarov and Pavel, particularly since Bazarov actively engaged in trying arguments with Pavel that resulted in anger and confusion on Pavel’s part. Mersereau identifies the beginning of the shift toward a Hamlet-like persona when he receives the shock of Odintsova’s rejection of his love, particularly since he was prepared to love no matter what the consequences. This led to introspection and self-doubt, characteristics Bazarov had never experienced before, characteristics which possibly caused Bazarov to escape the boredom of having no real purpose by “willing” himself to die like his Russian romantic counterparts Pechorin, Pushkin, and Lermontov (350). Mersereau’s interpretation allows for Bazarov’s evolution from beginning to end of novel while providing a hint of the influence of Byronic romanticism.

³⁵ This essay is difficult to find in English translation; therefore, the selections quoted are from Mersereau’s article.

³⁶ As discussed in reference to the film *Don Juan de Marco*. The Don Juan character’s artistic interpretations throughout history have swung between Quixotic action to Hamlet-like tortured introspection.

A final suggestion, though perhaps not logically sound, is to present the strong affinity between the biographies of Turgenev and Byron. Both reflect a sympathetic view toward their apotheosis-prone characters: Turgenev finds he believes in almost all of the nihilist positions Bazarov posits throughout the novel, while Byron portrays himself in characters like *Don Juan's* narrator and the Giaour while he deifies himself in Manfred's self-determination and decisive sense of justice. Both experience similar exiles from their homeland as a direct result of their writings—Turgenev's was self-imposed in many cases by Russia's lack of appreciation for his work and by his desire to be near Pauline Viardot; Byron's was forced by English intolerance for his irreverence and misunderstood morality. Tragically, Byron never returned to his homeland, while Turgenev did, hailed a hero of Russian literature. Both reflect an inability to find fulfillment in romantic relationship, and both sired children for whom they seemed to have little regard (although Turgenev eventually accepted and finally learned to love Paulinette). Although these similarities provide little insight into the Byronic influence exerted upon Bazarov by Turgenev, they do present an interesting insight into the similarities of the ill-received author.

No single treatment of Bazarov could possibly do this archetypal character justice. The fact that Bazarov is an archetype at all—the archetypal nihilist—provides a flexible and sliding image which is nearly impossible to pin down with a single characterization. According to Mersereau, Bazarov is one of the first round Russian realistic characters who undergoes a psychological evolutionary development and whose legacy extends to Raskol'nikov, Prince Andrew, Anna Karenina, and Dmitrij Karamazov (354-5). Yet the realistic treatment of character, passed on to Turgenev by Lermontov and Pushkin before him and Henry James within his generation, provides an excellent springboard for the development in Bazarov of what Brumfield called “the culmination” of Turgenev's romantic hero conceived in 1845 (499).

Clearly Bazarov was created from Byronic and Romantic roots. Turgenev idolized the Russian Romantic Pushkin and befriended the later, darker Russian Byronist Lermontov. Turgenev certainly read, translated, and even interpreted Byron's literature, while Byron's life and literature exerted a strong influence on the early Russian Romantics. Nihilism itself is a Russian phenomenon, but Turgenev's literary expression of that movement transcends its Russian roots with Bazarov's conflicting internal struggle between romantic idealism and romantic realism, between pure instinctual negation and romantic love. This struggle within Bazarov provides us the clearest picture of the character's Romantic roots and of his psychological development. While it is convenient to draw direct correlation between Bazarov and Byronism, no direct connection exist—the influence must travel through the revolutionary tumult of nineteenth century Russia, through the interpretation of Byronic heroism into a peculiarly Russian phenomenon focused upon negation, through the censorial power of the czars and the resulting exiles and persecutions, and through the emancipation of the serfs and the corresponding radical shift in social paradigm which emancipation forced. Bazarov is a purely Russian character, and Turgenev is often assigned the title "Russian realist." Only in the past twenty-five years has the focus shifted dramatically to identifying Turgenev's deep roots in Romanticism, attempting to separate the realistic from the Romantic elements in his works (Lowe 2-3). Once overshadowed by such authors as Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Turgenev's fame is returning to the forefront of modern criticism because of his intensely realistic psychological portraits; Bazarov the Byronically romantic idealistic nihilist is one of the best, revealing the complex contradictions that make modern "heroes" great.

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